

CHAPTER SEVEN

CAREER AND PROMOTION - PERCEPTIONS, SUCCESS AND FUTURE PLANS

Introduction

For most of the principals in the target group, career did not appear to be concerned with upward mobility but with personal satisfaction and change. Although all the women claimed that they had entered the profession because of their love of children and teaching, they had also enjoyed feelings of success and personal fulfilment through their promotions positions. Despite this, few had set clear promotional goals for themselves. Most had not planned future career moves in educational administration. These themes will be explored in greater depth in this chapter.

Career Expectations when Entering Teaching

It is clear from the survey and the interviews that the women principals entered teaching with teaching rather than management as their goal. Although some later applied for promotion to further their career and to become involved in decision-making, none mentioned administration as a goal when they entered teaching. This supports the finding of the literature which contrasts the goals of men, who saw primary teaching a stepping-stone to administration, with those of women (Skelton 1991:287). In the study, the women's reasons for entering teaching were many but they clustered around two main ideas - their affinity with children which led to their desire to teach and the limited number of careers which were deemed suitable for women when they left school.

The love of children was mentioned in various ways by 64% of the sample with love of children and a goal of teaching being mentioned by 64% of the group (see pp. 75 - 6).

Most gave affinity with children as their first or only reason for choosing teaching. Several mentioned the idea of "helping" as important in making the choice - an attraction of nursing too. This suggested that many of the women did view their role as a feminine, nurturing one, an idea discussed in the literature (Acker 1983:123), although this must be viewed with caution as the next most commonly offered reason appears to contradict this.

36% of the group suggested that there were few options, that teaching, along with nursing and banking, was deemed to be "a suitable job for a woman". Such channelling of women into "acceptable careers", terminology used by many of the group, is a reflection of the patriarchal society where women are not

expected to aspire above these "semi-professions" (Acker 1983). Such societal expectations were particularly significant for the older women in the study as their comments suggest:

These were virtually the only two careers (teaching and nursing) to be considered when I left school. (Informant 1, 12/94)

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

I felt it was a suitable job for a woman (teaching or banking). (Informant 7, 12/94)

(There was a) lack of suitable options (Informant 2, 12/94)

Although most of the women achieved well at school, other careers such as medicine were noted as the exception for women (Interview 3, 4/6/95) or as an impossibility, because girls' schools did not teach science (Interview 1, 28/5/95).

Despite this gloomy view which would suggest that these women had little control over their destiny, all appeared to be very satisfied with their career in teaching.

Career and Change

Some change was essential in their teaching lives as many in the group pointed out. Promotion to administrative positions has always provided the only possibility of major change for teachers (Connors 1990:104). Some found solace in the change available within schools, such as the possibility of teaching a different year group, especially when another promotions

position was not available. Another member of the group commented:

I know of one teacher who taught nothing but Year 6 for 21 years. That would drive me barmy.. I think you can get in a rut if you don't apply for promotion or do what I did and switch from secondary to primary though a lot of people think it's a status thing to switch from primary to secondary but there again I wasn't unduly ambitious. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

Most felt very happy in the classroom, expressed regret when removed from it and tried to return whenever possible as a comment from one of the group made clear:

I wouldn't take a non-teaching position. I would resign if there was no teaching.(Interview 6, 27/6/95)

This love of teaching is noted in the literature as a characteristic of women teachers in particular (Burgess 1989:86, Shakeshaft 1987:74). The principals in this study obviously regretted any departure from the classroom and several used their release time to provide release for another class teacher. One, faced with a year group she had not taught before, spent the first part of her release time for the year team teaching with her relief teacher "just learning. I guess that's staff development" (Interview 6, 27/6/95).

It would appear that despite the fact that so many were channelled into teaching, they were content. Although all derived success and personal satisfaction from their promotion, all but one maintained that promotion and administration had not been their goal. They had enjoyed change and had sought this in their teaching but promotion had "evolved" rather than having been sought. It had provided the necessary change and it had been universally enjoyed but it was not stated as a goal for most of the group.

Success of Applications for Promotions Positions

Despite their apparent disinterest in administration, most of the women encountered success when applying for promotions positions. It was clear that many were multiskilled, well qualified, experienced and very competent. 57% had gone straight into the principalship from a teaching position. The remainder had been appointed as Assistant Principal and Religious Education Coordinator prior to the principalship. 64% had been appointed to more than one promotions position. The expectation of success had been high for one of the principals who found her first unsuccessful interview difficult. She explained:

I desperately wanted it to come back to Y and come home... It was my first knock-back and previous successes don't make it any easier... There was a fair bit of pressure on me to get that job - the first time I felt pressure to get a job. (Interview 2, 3/6/1995)

She had also received some encouragement to apply for this position which probably elevated her hopes although she wasn't the only one to apply and to be disappointed. Another who had been a principal for nine years in the same school, had applied for several executive positions in larger schools within and outside the diocese but had not even managed to get to the interview stage. She remained undeterred in her resolve although she admitted:

I guess if I get to the stage where I really and truly can't handle this place any more, I'll just have to speak to him (the Director) and say, "Look do something about it"... I guess if it really gets too bad that's all I can do though teaching Kindergarten is completely different. It really is a challenge. I don't feel bored. (Interview 6, 27/6/1995)

Most of the group (57%) had gone straight to the principalship and only four women had gone on to apply for and receive further principalships within the diocese. 36% of the group

had had only one experience of promotion, their current principalship (see Table 6, p. 86).

All of this last group except one were married women. The difficulties of relocation, one of the barriers to promotion faced by most of the group, influenced many of these women to remain in their current position. Relocation was a major difficulty for those who were married. Several commented on this and one had temporarily abandoned the thought of applying for another position because of family protests. Family concerns were paramount for the single woman in this group too as her sisters and brothers and their families lived nearby and she did not want to move too far away thus limiting her options.

It would therefore appear that the group had experienced a high rate of success in applying for promotion, although 36% had only been promoted once. All the promotions positions held by the group except for one were within the diocese under study. Many had been targeted for promotions positions or encouraged to apply with 36% of the group having held more than one principalship. This success was related partly to their qualifications and partly to the acknowledgement of their work within the diocese. Most were well qualified, though none held more than one degree. Their wide range of skills, their noted ability in teaching and administration and their Catholicity were important in assisting them to gain promotion.

The group studied held 56% of the primary promotions positions in this rural diocese. 64% of the group had held more than one promotions position within the diocese. The difficulty of relocation had not affected their chance of promotion as 50% of the group had never moved for this purpose but it would affect their subsequent chances as few were free to relocate easily.

Although some were diffident about their reasons for applying for promotion, 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.

Feelings about Promotion

Whatever the main reason given to explain their applications, all expressed many aspects of satisfaction concerning the move. For some it was the realisation of progress under their leadership as the following reasons provided illustrate:

...personal satisfaction mainly. Knowing that to date I have accomplished what I set out to achieve. (Informant 9, 12/94)

...achieving goals within the workplace, achieving personal goals, feeling that you have done a good job. (Informant 10, 12/94)

...educational standard and building improvements. (Informant 4, 12/94)

The progress made by the school and community through some basic organisational changes... (Informant 12, 12/94)

Improvement in school building and surrounds, resources and curriculum... (Informant 11, 12/94)

Satisfaction of directing the school... (Informant 1, 12/94)

Implementing new ideas, working to deadlines... (Informant 3, 12/94)

Satisfaction from their work with people inspired many in the group as they noted:

Giving guidance to younger teachers... (Informant 13, 12/94)

Employing and training young teachers, following the development of the young child into the workforce... (Informant 11, 12/94)

Working well with other people.. (Informant 1, 12/94)

Staff loyalty, interaction of the children and professional colleagues...(Informant 8, 12/94)

Assisting teachers, making new friends.. (Informant 3, 12/94)

Working with people - children, teachers and parents I really enjoy. Developing programmes/curriculum to aid people in their growth and development I find rewarding. (Informant 5, 12/94)

Team work with the Assistant Principal, visiting classes throughout the school, close interaction with parents, fellowship with other Principals... (Informant 7, 12/94)

Interaction with other schools... (Informant 4, 12/94)

The networking provided by the principals' association in the diocese was mentioned by two of the principals who found the professional interaction and fellowship an area of satisfaction in their role. One was moved to add:

I think if you're looking for a body of people who were dedicated to the cause of Catholic schools, extremely generous and as a body carrying a tremendous field of influence, I don't think you could go past the principals of the Catholic schools in this diocese. Sometimes you feel you're just a drop in the ocean and you're glad you're in the ocean but when you get with the principals... you realise the scope of influence that just those 35 or so people have with the children they touch, the parents they influence, the parishes they come from and the priests they're involved with and they do have tremendous influence. I think principals should be aware of that. (Interview 1, 28/5/1995)

For some the satisfaction lay in the personal affirmation offered by the position as they reflected:

Confidence in dealing with people... (Informant 6, 12/94)

I discovered I had vision and leadership skills, that my knowledge of curriculum development is better than most and that I can facilitate this to others. (Informant 12, 12/94)

Challenging career- an added dimension to classroom teaching... (Informant 14, 12/94)

Many (43%) enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in decision-making and to have some control over aspects of school life as the following comments illustrate:

... much more satisfying as more control is available. (I) don't have to be hindered by hierarchy friction. (Informant 14, 12/94)

... desire to be more involved in decision-making. (Informant 1, 12/94)

... to have some control over what was happening (Informant 8, 12/94)

Such high levels of satisfaction and the desire to have control again appear to contradict the suggestions in the literature that women dislike administration and would prefer to remain in the classroom (Shakeshaft 1987:74).

Although salary and holidays had been mentioned as reasons for entering teaching and applying for promotion, satisfaction seemed to reflect personal fulfilment or, as one woman said, "Being able to live and strive towards what I believe is fulfilling" (Informant 5, 12/94). Salary appeared to become more important when the woman was the sole breadwinner or was supporting children through tertiary education although many commented that salary was not commensurate with the extra hours of work attached to the position.

Several were diffident about their talents but most (79%) applied for promotion because they were excited by the challenge of the position and they wanted to put their vision into practice. The satisfaction expressed by all the group would suggest that applying for promotion was a positive step.

Perceptions of Career

In her study with young male primary teachers in England, Skelton (1991:287) found that they had set promotional goals for themselves in their first few years of teaching. A similar finding was made in Australia (Connors 1990:118). This was not the case for women, a finding supported in this study. Only 29% expressed strong ambitions for further promotions positions in educational administration while only 43% of the group mentioned the word 'career' in their responses to the questionnaire. All but one of these women were in the 50% of the group who had been teaching for less than 15 years and two of the three unmarried women were included in the group, which could suggest that the term "career" is only acceptable for younger or unmarried women. The older single principal stated very firmly that she applied for promotion because, "I was anxious to further my career" (Informant 4, 12/94). This was her fourth principalship and she had set more goals of further study and working in a Primary (as opposed to an Infants) school for herself. She was also the only one of the group to claim that she had had no support and encouragement along the way.

The remaining 29% of women had spoken of teaching (not administration) as a career (or "an acceptable career" as two explained). Many of the women had mentioned that teaching was one of the few options besides nursing and banking available to a girl leaving school. Only one of these women continued to speak of her "career path" and her future plans. She admitted to scanning the papers,

... in case there's something around which might interest me. There's a big world out there ... Sometimes you have wild ideas when you see someone doing something interesting. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

More of the women spoke of career during the interviews. One principal said she needed "a new career path" (Interview 1, 28/5/95) after 18 years of secondary teaching so she turned to primary. This reflects the earlier findings of this study that change rather than promotion appeared to be a key factor in career for many of the group. This woman even turned down promotions positions in the secondary school in an effort to gain a primary position as she explained:

I suppose mine's atypical. I didn't clearly foresee where I was going at any particular stage. I didn't set out to be a principal of any particular school or even to be a principal. It was just a thing that evolved rather than being envisaged at the beginning. I certainly wasn't 'overduly' ambitious to become the greatest and while money was a factor in that I was the breadwinner, it certainly wasn't an overriding factor. Any job was acceptable as long as I had a job so I wasn't pushed by ambition the way some of the younger people would be. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

Later she contrasted her view with that of young men she'd encountered:

It's surprising that there are so many men principals considering the few men who are employed in schools. To me it seems that sometimes unless they can be boss they don't want to be in it at all, That's a personal opinion. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

According to the survey, only 13% of the teachers in the 14 schools in the study were male. This figure is significantly lower than the percentage of male teachers (18%) in Catholic primary schools in Australia (National Catholic Education Commission Report 1993: 62). It may be related to the small cohort chosen for the study.

For many, career equated with challenge and change. Several mentioned change as necessary for themselves and for their schools. The challenge of learning something new and of developing herself through study were also important for one of the principals although the need to have "a little room to move" (Interview 5, 20.6.95) was also a concern. Others spoke

about their journey although they did not specifically refer to career.

Promotion evolved for many of the group from their teaching. It was not a carefully planned step. An older woman reflecting on her career said:

I didn't set out to be a principal of any particular school or even to be a principal. It was just a thing that evolved rather than being envisaged at the beginning. . I didn't have a lot of self-confidence and I didn't see myself as particularly being a strong leader. I think I developed these qualities perhaps as I went along a bit but once I got into the positions I coped quite well but ... unless I'd been invited, I probably wouldn't have seen myself as applying for principal positions. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

A similar view was expressed by a young married principal at the beginning of her career. She had no definite plans besides to:

...consolidate present position - unsure in the distant future. ...being a family at some stage! (Informant 14, 12/94)

Many willingly took what would be considered "backward" steps in their careers, such as relinquishing a promotions position or insisting on a temporary position, which would suggest that promotion was not the most important factor for them. This contrasts sharply with the male concept of career as "a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige through which persons move in an ordered, predictable sequence" (Ouston 1993:28). It was clear that most of the women had little ambition for moving up through the hierarchy. Several had plans to job share. One, who had been co-opted into a principalship of a Catholic school early in her career, happily relinquished it when the school was amalgamated with another. Another was ambivalent about her next position:

I don't know whether I want to stay in an executive position or go back into the classroom, just for a break or go back a step, I suppose

if you think of it like that, to Assistant Principal in a larger school - to learn all the things I missed out on by not taking the steps before. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

Another moved between principalships, teaching positions and a short stint as a senior administrator without any qualms.

Any job was acceptable as long as I had a job so I wasn't pushed by ambition the way I would imagine some of the younger people would be and perhaps, maybe I shouldn't say it but perhaps the men are more inclined to be ambitious and push for power where that certainly didn't come into it as far as I was concerned. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

One principal had insisted on a one year contract (rather than the usual two year contract) for her role as Assistant Principal so she could "cut" if she didn't feel comfortable. Another mentioned that she was keen "to 'try' the position", suggesting that she could relinquish it if she was not happy (Informant 5, 12/94).

For some women, their view of promotion changed following their first promotions position. Several noted that they had gained in confidence as a result of promotion. One spoke of her lack of aspiration for promotion until she became Assistant Principal at her school and then she had no hesitation in applying for the Principalship when it became vacant. Her only other ambition would be to take on the Principalship if her school expanded to primary level although ultimately she wanted to continue teaching and would resign if that option were not available. Others, despite their success, would not have applied unless invited, as they noted:

I had no aspirations until the position of deputy, no confidence for outside school. I enjoyed that role - the curriculum development and feedback from staff so I had no hesitation in applying for the principalship (in the same school). (Interview 3,4/6/95)

I didn't have a lot of self-confidence and I didn't see myself as particularly being a strong leader. I think I developed these qualities perhaps as I went along a bit but once I got into the positions I coped quite well but ... unless I'd been invited, I probably wouldn't have seen myself as applying for principal positions. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

Another required a great deal of encouragement to apply for her first promotions position. Within a year she had applied for another, "to let them (Catholic Education Office) know that I wanted to come back" (closer to home) (Interview 2, 3/6/95). The following year she applied for two principalships and was successful in the second application. Although, like all of the group, she loved teaching, she would not consider a full-time teaching position. She commented:

I don't see myself giving up the principalship and going back as a full-time teacher which some people do. I enjoy what I'm doing. (I) would consider a deputy's position in a large school. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

Another was enjoying her role as principal and was considering moving on to another promotions position when the time was right. Three more women, including one who had already held four principalships, expressed a desire to move to larger schools.

Promotion appeared to encourage some to look further afield and also to consider further study. As one noted:

I started studying last year for my B.Ed. and I will complete it at the end of 1995. This gives me a little more room to move... I enjoy studying again - enjoy learning! (Interview 5, 20/6/95)

Despite their success, many of the women remained very humble and diffident about seeking further promotion. It was clear that most, unlike the young men in Skelton's study (1991), had not programmed a straight upward career path for themselves. Many spoke of the "luck", the encouragement given them along the way. Why was this so? These women were obviously highly competent yet many had shown a lack

of aspiration such as that noted in the literature (Shakeshaft 1987:91).

Feminists would offer several explanations for the diffidence expressed by the target group. The notion that management is a male domain because it is inhabited by men (Milligan 1994:9; Hall 1993:37) is feasible within this diocese. The structure of the diocese, where all those in authority, such as the consultants and the priests, are male, would send out strong messages about the gendered division of labour (Al-Khalifa 1989:85). The impossibility of relocation for many of the group because of family responsibilities, made further promotion a difficult, if not impossible, goal. In the interests of their own mental health the women therefore may have abandoned any consideration of further promotion. Marshall's suggestion (1984:33) that socialisation does not encourage women to rate their performances highly also appeared to be supported by comments from some of the target group. In one case, at different stages of her career, a woman had twice been offered promotions positions by two dioceses. She admitted when pressed that she was:

a reliable, sensible, commonsense sort of person, not particularly talented in any one area but a steady sort of influence. I don't find it terribly difficult to get along with most people and I'm usually fairly calm, perhaps too plegmatic. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

The deprecating tone is very evident as it was in many of her other disclosures about herself. She spoke of her success often as a factor of her background as a religious. Her invitation to undertake a senior administrative position in the diocese she attributed to her time in the convent, as she would bridge the gap between the withdrawing religious and the emergence of lay people. She thought she was also viewed as "biddable". Later, she moved to another diocese as a teacher and when the principalship in that school became available, she applied "with hesitation ... as she "hadn't had a

lot of experience in being in charge of a large school". This was despite her previous experience. Such diffidence was echoed by others in many observations. A strong lack of self-esteem on entering her first principalship was noted by another woman:

The place had very low morale and we'd lost a lot of students. The students had no self-confidence, the parents had no self-confidence and here was somebody who was coming in who had very little self-confidence too and having to try hard to build it up and make it a Catholic school again. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

One reason for this diffidence could be that 71% of these women still had to juggle the demands of family and school. A principal, who lived in the "schoolhouse" next door to the school, commented:

It was handy to be able to go home to grab a book or the washing off the line. (Interview 2, 3/6/95)

Another with six children had little choice about returning to work when her husband was ill. At this stage she was "desperate to work" (Interview 1, 28/5/95) to support her family.

Family concerns were always in the back of their minds. A woman who had been a principal for several years wondered:

Were my children old enough to cope with my principalship?
(Interview 3, 4/6/95)

Another was pleased that her husband worked from home as there was always someone there for the children when she had late meetings. A similar concern was expressed by another principal.

Family concerns motivated many decisions. A principal who had encountered strong resistance to any further relocation from her family, had considered the move mostly because of

the good education facilities available in the nearby town. A similar motivation operated for a young married woman who had not wanted promotion as it would take her away from her mother but she still regretted the move and planned to move back closer. She explained that her applications were governed by "location" rather than promotion (Interview 2, 3/6/95). Family concerns also affected single women. A woman who had never married was loth to leave the area and the diocese as her sister and brothers and family live nearby.

In several of the cases, the women had been encouraged to seek promotion by their family situation. Sick husbands and failed businesses made the women the breadwinners and forced them back to work. For some this was also an encouragement to apply for promotion to have the "opportunity which would benefit myself and the long term position of my family" (Informant 9, 12/94). The situation could change rapidly though as one woman found when her husband wanted to return to his home town. There was no option for her but to resign. The difficulties of juggling family and school appeared to have influenced many of the women's choices. To further their career in administration, the women needed to relocate, an impossibility for most of those who were married.

These competing demands appeared to have contributed to a lessening of aspiration towards an upward career move by some of the women. One commented on the irony of women being criticised for their career in a society where both parents in most families were forced to work (Interview 2, 4/6/95). Many were conscious of the disapprobation of society as one noted:

I am also often faced with comments that suggest that I could not possibly be a GOOD mother because of my career path.
(Her emphasis - Informant 9, 12/94)

These women had encountered criticism as a result of their promotion. It would appear that society could cope with their job as teachers, but not with their career as managers. By undertaking a principalship, they had overstepped the mark to join men who hold the majority of managerial positions in teaching (Milligan 1994:9) It is hardly surprising then that for some, the promotion position was viewed as a temporary one, providing a useful income to support the family. Two of the women would continue until "the farm was paid off" (Interview 3, 4/6/95) or until "time/money/family commitments change" (Informant 12, 12/94).

Although few demonstrated a strong ambition for promotion, all liked to be involved in decision-making in the school and they gained satisfaction from the improvements they had assisted with in their schools. Most expressed enjoyment at working with people, with colleagues and pupils in particular and they were loth to abandon this contact by undertaking a non-teaching position. None of the women defined career as an upward movement through the promotion system although two admitted that they would find it hard to abandon all administration and undertake a wholly teaching position.

Career in Catholic Schools

Interestingly, although 71% of the group had always taught in Catholic schools, only one woman mentioned teaching as a vocation - "I felt that I was called to this Ministry". Later she defined career as:

a vocation, something God wants me to do - to use my talents in that area to promote the Catholic school and that religion permeates the whole of life. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

In expressing her philosophy of leadership in a Catholic school, she expanded further on this idea of ministry:

I impressed on everybody that it was a Catholic school. I got the priest down more into the school to relate to the kids... I got a Mass once a week at a time that would suit the priest and not before lunch... I've never taught in a state school. I don't think I'd ever want to. I couldn't teach without a value system. It's hard enough in a Catholic school. (Interview 6, 27/6/95)

Another woman, although she did not define teaching as a vocation, did support Catholic education strongly and was suspicious of the motives of those applying for jobs in Catholic schools. For some she felt it was merely a job as she commented:

I have strong convictions about the value of Catholic schooling. The contributions lay people are making are fairly vital... Where they (applicants for teaching positions) have no alternatives, I'm not convinced about the motives. (Interview 1, 28/5/95)

Such a view of teaching as vocation in Catholic schools has received strong support at school, parish and diocesan level. Surprisingly, only one of the group spoke of vocation or ministry in association with the principalship in Catholic schools. This idea has been widely promoted by the church. It was a definition which was particularly apt when pay and conditions were not commensurate with those of teachers in state schools. Christie and Smith (1991:219) in considering career and ministry, explain that an alternative model of career has inspired lay people to undertake teaching positions in Catholic schools:

the fulfilment of a vocational aspiration predicated on deeply felt personal, professional and spiritual values ... has been responsible for motivating faith-filled lay people to work in the Catholic education systems.

The demands of the role of a Catholic school principal in school and parish would classify it as more than a job. In many ways, through work in the parish as well as the school, the Catholic school principal is stepping straight into the shoes of the departing religious. Although only one woman in the target group expressed her idea of career this way, it was clear from their commitment to school and parish that the Catholicity of the school was of major importance to them. That all except one principal in the group omitted a reference to Catholicity in speaking about career would suggest that their perception was not specific to Catholic schools. This would also question whether the greater number of women in leadership positions in Catholic schools could be attributed to a different motivation for these women.

Future Career Plans

In terms of future directions, only 29% expressed strong ambitions in the field of administration. 14% had set clear goals for themselves in education. These women were single and one had already undertaken three principalships.

I would like to find a position in a larger school. (Informant 6, 12/94)
To further my study. To work in a K - 6 school. To change schools.
(Informant 4, 12/94)

Another woman was unsure but thought perhaps a larger school would be the next step. She did not specify the position she would seek there. The last woman in this group, a woman whose family had grown up and moved to other

places, was "relocating because there are no promotions available" (Informant 2, 12/94). At the end of the year she moved to an Assistant Principal's position in a larger school in another diocese.

Most of the total group (71%) were unsure of their plans or expressed a desire to leave. 29% mentioned that they were still enjoying their current position and wished to consolidate that although their plans varied afterwards as the following comments illustrate:

...consolidate my present position - unsure in the distant future...
being a family at some stage! (Informant 14, 12/94)

I hope to continue in role as Principal, Hopefully "move on" when the
time seems right. I enjoy studying again, - enjoy learning!
(Informant 5, 12/94)

...to remain a principal while I feel I am doing the job well. Eventually
I would love to time share - about five days per fortnight, as a
classroom teacher. (Informant 7, 12/94)

To continue in my role as Principal. To move closer back to "home".
To settle. To continue study and self-improvement.
(Informant 9, 12/94)

One woman professed no future career plans. Three were looking forward to retirement although one was still a young woman. She planned to stay until "time/money/family commitments change" (Informant 12, 12/94). Two of the principals had been in an acting position for the year. One of these was looking forward to being with her children, doing part-time work and re-entering the workforce later while the other woman was,

happy to be an Assistant Principal. The position of Principal in a
small community is very draining. (Informant 10, 12/94)

Despite the fact that only 29% were unequivocal about their career goals in education, all of the group had expressed satisfaction in their promotion and over half the group felt a

greater sense of satisfaction from their current position. More than 30 different reasons were advanced for this feeling with most of the women offering several different explanations. 79% commented on their enjoyment of the balance afforded by involvement in teaching and administration. Half of the group explained that their satisfaction related to people and the opportunities afforded by the position for interaction with teachers, other principals, children and parents. The remaining reasons concerned the challenge of leadership and the possibility of realising their vision and achieving goals. Increased remuneration was appreciated by 36% of the group.

Yet in spite of all this, only three of the women had set definite goals in education for themselves. These women were either single or free of family ties. The only other single woman in the group was "happy to be an Assistant Principal" (Informant 10, 12/94) after a year in an Acting Principal's position. Several had taken what could be considered "backward" steps on the career ladder or were looking forward to such a step.

Although great satisfaction was expressed, the principalship was not without problems. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction went hand in hand for most of the women. 43% admitted that they found the demands difficult to handle. Aside from the need to balance church and parish responsibilities and the everyday problems of running any school, the women mentioned several areas of concern. Some related to pay and conditions such as the salary not being commensurate with the responsibility and the superannuation package being preferable in the state system. Longer hours, the lack of release time and the need to be "a jack of all trades immediately" (Informant 9, 12/94) were also problems noted. Three mentioned lack of support from parish and the Catholic

Education Office. For them, this meant isolation, lack of access to inservice and inadequate financial support.

Family was mentioned as a driving force for all but two of the women. Most divided their time and their energy between family and school. The women were concerned not only for their immediate family but also for their parents and siblings.

Summary of the Findings

For most of the older women in the group under study there were few career options for capable girls besides teaching, nursing and banking. Many had been guided into teaching by family and teachers. This contrasted however with the target group's professed affinity with children and love of teaching. None of the group entered teaching with a career in educational management as a goal. Only one of the principals in the study described teaching in a Catholic school as a ministry, an idea emphasised by the church.

Feelings about career encountered in the study clustered around personal fulfilment and the need for change. This contrasts sharply with male views of career from the research (Skelton 1991:287; Connors 1990:118). Some of the target group 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 decision-

making to the possibility of realising their vision for the school. Despite this, few considered a continued upward movement to higher promotions positions as their goal. Many had taken what could be considered backward steps along the career ladder and others were planning a similar path.

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). The lack of female role models in the diocese under study, the difficulty of relocation for most of the group who were married and the effects of socialisation would all have discouraged further aspiration towards promotion. For some, their attitude changed following their first promotion but as most were married, relocation for further promotion was a problem.

It is clear that these women were hard-working, capable and dedicated to the cause of Catholic education. They 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 in applying for further promotion. They had countered many obstacles such as those outlined in Chapter Six, and had handled demanding positions capably. For most (71%) this meant juggling two careers, motherhood and the principalship. Is it surprising then that only 36% of the group expressed a desire to develop their careers in educational management further?

The next and final chapter draws together implications of the findings in the light of the original research questions which

guided the study. Implications of the findings of this study and suggestions for further study will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

By using a case study approach and a feminist perspective, in investigating factors pertaining to women's entry to the principalship, this research project has placed the target group of Catholic lay women primary principals at the centre of the discourse and given them a voice in the debate. In this study it is clear that, although the group under study have experienced similar support and faced similar barriers to those noted in the literature, the situation of these Catholic lay women principals is different in many ways. This chapter will revisit the research questions which provided the foci of the study and examine them in the light of the data collected. Finally, the significance of these findings for women in Catholic education and suggested areas for further study will be canvassed.

Becoming Principals

The women in the target group followed a very similar path to that noted in the literature for women (Evetts 1990; Acker 1989). Typically they were capable students who had been encouraged to undertake further education after school although their career options were limited in many ways by the expectations of the time for girls. The lack of science subjects in the secondary curriculum precluded one of the older women from choosing a career such as medicine. Such a path would not have been seen as appropriate either for girls, whereas teaching, nursing and banking were deemed "natural" for them. Those in the target group who finished their secondary education before the 1980s were channelled into teaching by family and teachers. The notion of teaching as a natural occupation for women is well documented in the literature (Burgess 1989:8); Evans 1988:63; Acker 1989). Younger women had also followed the trend noted in the literature (Abbott 1991:126) in enjoying a greater choice of career. Although none of the target group held more than one degree, all had gained basic qualifications for teaching prior to employment with several undertaking further study later, particularly in the area of Religious Education.

Most of the group had moved between schools in their early teaching career but, for the 71% of the group who married, their mobility decreased markedly, a finding paralleled in the literature (Sampson 1987:31). Breaks in service and part-time and casual teaching followed for most of the target group. This trend also is well documented in research into women in educational management (Grant 1989:44; Ouston

1993:3). The more open job market in Catholic schools, the local application and selection process and the flexibility of this system, particularly in the early days of employment of lay teachers in the diocese were of assistance to many of these women in gaining employment and promotion in Catholic schools after marriage and relocation. Although all Catholic dioceses are autonomous, this trend is also documented in the literature (Christie and Smith 1991:223). All of the group had gained some administrative experience while teaching through a wide variety of delegated tasks and through attendance at inservice courses. The literature suggests that such administrative experience is not accessible for most women (Sampson 1987:34; Ouston 1993:33).

Although 71% of the target group had married and had children prior to the study and had therefore encountered problems such as relocation, they had all enjoyed success in applying for promotion with 57% having had more than one experience of promotion. They had also gained 56% of the primary principalships in the diocese under study, a figure which paralleled that cited in Grady (1994:5). 79% had achieved the principalship within their first fifteen years of teaching, with three of the target group having held nine principalships between them. For some the path had been slower, because they had taken long breaks in service or because they had moved through other promotions positions before the principalship.

Career Expectations on Entering Teaching

Although 71% of the target group claimed to have been guided into teaching by family and teachers and a lack of suitable career options, it was clear that other motivations were also at work. All of the group spoke of a love of children and a desire to teach. The data collected from the survey suggested that teaching rather than administration was seen as an important goal for the target group. Although all of the women in the study gained personal fulfilment from the principalship and enjoyed their administrative role, they claimed to have a special enjoyment of teaching and regretted their time away from the classroom. This parallels the findings of the literature (Burgess 1989:86). After promotion, many continued to take every opportunity to become involved in teaching. Administration was not mentioned as a career goal by any of the group. The literature does support the finding that women are committed to teaching and they do not use it as a stepping stone to administration, a trend found among young men teachers (Skelton 1991:285). Some who seek to explain women's absence from administration, further suggest that women dislike bureaucracy and therefore do not apply for management positions (Shakeshaft 1987:74). No support for this suggestion was found in this case study. 79% of the target group enjoyed the challenge of the position and the opportunity to contribute to decision-making.

Support for Promotion

Many factors assisted the women in the target group to gain promotion. The differences between the appointment process in the state system and those discovered in this case study have had both positive and negative effects on the career paths of the women in the target group. Another factor which assisted these women was provided by the historical forces in Catholic education. The movement of the religious out of Catholic schools persuaded Catholic dioceses to start developing structures to accommodate lay teachers. Support was also provided by the nature of the application system and the smaller size of the diocese under study, both of which allow for greater flexibility in the appointment system. In addition, the many networks of communication were of benefit to these capable candidates although, they could also work to their disadvantage.

i) The Change from Religious to Lay Teachers

The developing nature of the diocese with greater reliance on lay teachers had worked to the advantage of many of the women. To fill the vacuum left by the religious, the diocese needed committed, capable, trained and preferably Catholic teachers. It was not easy to attract such teachers twenty years ago to a rural diocese when remuneration and conditions in Catholic schools were not equal to those of state schools (Christie and Smith 1991:219). Many of these women were already based in the area and known through their connections with the parish. Although not all had started their teaching career in the Catholic system, the greater availability of teaching and administration positions allowed all of the group to find work there after taking

leave. Many were approached about teaching and administrative positions. The very informal appointment system which operated in the 1960s and 1970s, the greater availability of teaching positions and the lack of a highly organised structure at the Catholic Education Office made this possible. Although the job market was tighter when the younger women were seeking work and many accepted leave positions to start with, all managed to find permanent work in Catholic schools although not all of them were trained in Catholic colleges.

ii) Local Application

The path to promotion for the study group varied from themes in the literature because the local application process did appear to be more helpful to women, particularly in seeking their first promotion positions. The advantages were clear for the applicants as well as for the Catholic Education Office and the parish. Most of the women (71%) were married and being able to apply at local level when positions became vacant caused little disruption for their family. Disadvantages such as breaks in service which would have precluded them in a highly organised lock step promotions system (Christie and Smith 1991:226, Chapman 1985(a):3-4) were of less importance in such a local level application although many of those with children were older when applying for promotion and several waited until their family were grown up or family circumstances changed. This is a pattern common to that noted in the literature (Shakeshaft 1987:61).

iii) Qualifications

Within this diocese it appeared that extra paper qualifications, a prerequisite in many applications, were less essential than experience, Catholicity and being known at local and parish level. Many (64%) mentioned being approached about applying for the position. All of the women had never held a promotions position outside Catholic schools although three had held more than one principalship within the diocese. Only one woman had held a promotion in another diocese.

For the Catholic Education Office and parish the advantages of this system were also clear. These women had already proved themselves at the local level both as teachers and as members of the parish and wider community. It is hardly surprising then that for so many the interview should appear to be a formality.

iv) Management experience

Although it has been claimed that women are less likely to be allocated positions of responsibility which would prepare them for administration (Sampson 1987:34, Adler 1993:23), within this diocese small schools and parish work provided many tasks for delegation. All the women noted some tasks which had been delegated to them with over half of the group having undertaken several large areas of responsibility. These included administrative and curriculum areas as well as the feminine options such as welfare roles mentioned in the literature (Ouston 1993:34). Administrative tasks therefore did not hold large fears for most of the group. Another reason for this confidence could be that many moved into administration in small schools or in the school in which they had already taught.

This greater allocation of administrative tasks to the women in the study could be attributable to several factors. The size of many of the schools "allows for the development of staff over ALL areas of responsibility" (Informant 12,12/94). In 64% of the schools in the study the principalship was the only executive position, making assistance from the staff essential. Parish sacramental and liturgy programmes provided another source of training and a necessary prerequisite for an administrative role which included a role in the parish. Additional factors such as school layout increased the delegation of tasks. The dominance of these smaller schools by women could also be significant.

Many of the older women had been fortunate too that the diocese had organised an inservice course in the 1980s to develop management skills for school executives and that this course had been readily accessible, having been programmed during the school week. The literature would suggest that such courses are not available to women (Sampson 1987:33; Ouston 1993:33).

v) Mentors and Gatekeepers

The literature mentions the importance of mentors and gatekeepers and the difficulty that most women experience in gaining their support (Adler 1993:32, McKenzie 1995:2, Evetts 1989:197). This did not appear to have been a problem for the principals in the study. The size of the diocese and the many networks of communication were and continue to be of assistance to these capable women. Aside from the Catholic Education Office personnel, many powerful channels of communication such as the Principals' Association, the religious orders and, very importantly, the priests were aware of the workings of the schools. Through these

channels, most of the women became well known and admired for their work in school, parish and community. Capable women were targeted and several of the groups were seen working together to ensure their application. Comments such as "It was requested of me by the Director and the Parish Priest" (Informant 13, 12/94) and "I was encouraged to firstly from the CEO, secondly by my then principal" (Informant 9, 12/94) were made by several of the group. 57% of the group mentioned official channels of encouragement.

These groups, particularly the priests, were important "gatekeepers" (Evetts 1989:197) and through being noticed in a positive way by them, the women's chances of promotion were increased dramatically. One woman explained, "The Parish Priest there almost invited me to apply which gave me a lot of confidence" (Interview 1, 28/5/95). Another woman when pressed about the Director's knowledge of her admitted it probably was through the nuns. Work in the parish as well as in the school would have increased the women's visibility, an important factor in "triggering" these influential networks (Acker 1989:17).

These networks of support were used to advantage by applicants as many showed in their preparation for interviews. Although it has been claimed that women are not interested in playing politics (Shakeshaft 1987:141, Ouston 1993:7), many of the women in the study appeared to be very aware of the political forces at work. Knowledge of the position, the school and, most importantly, of those likely to be on the interview panel were of assistance, firstly, in deciding whether to apply for a position and, secondly, in being prepared for the interview. Some (Interview 2, 3/6/95) showed a heightened awareness of these forces which allowed them to be very well prepared.

The dominance of management by men and the lack of female mentors have been noted as difficulties for aspiring female candidates (Veir 1993:67, Adler 1993:32, McKenzie 1995:15). However, in spite of the fact that men hold all the positions of power in the Catholic Education Office, the majority of all principalships in the diocese and all the positions of managers of schools (priests), this study found that most of the principals (72%) cited women as role models, a tendency noted for women in the literature (Shakeshaft 1987:115). Senior women who provided encouragement were often religious. It could be argued that the predominance of women religious in administrative positions in Catholic primary schools had allowed the concept of women managers. Because of the withdrawal of these women from the schools and the ageing of the population, such role models and such a network will not continue to have as great an influence.

The citing of women predominantly as role models could suggest that these women are seeking a different model of management. Although the study did not set out to define women's views of management, it was clear that the satisfaction gained from the role was different for the women in the study. Power and technical skills did not seem to be as important for them. Satisfaction for them derived from two broad areas, the joy of working with a large number of people and the challenge of putting their vision into practice. This appears to support research on women's management styles (Adler 1993:113-4). Their interpretation of management differed from a male style which used "instrumental, rational, impersonal or highly political terms" (Burton 1992:11, Blackmore 1989:95) or where "authority equals strength and power and discipline is seen in terms of control" (Askew 1988:56).

Despite the predominance of women as role models, several of the women in the group noted that their role models had

been men because they were the ones in positions of authority. Male principals, consultants and priests, were continuing to provide sponsorship and encouragement for women to undertake administrative positions. Hopefully this is not a reflection of Skelton's comment (1991:284) that women are likely to receive male sponsorship in times of teacher shortage.

vi) The Interview

The interview was an important part of the selection process for teaching and administrative positions. Although the literature stresses the negative possibilities of this system (Milligan 1994:21), the interview provoked both positive and negative responses from the women in the study. For some it was very affirming, allowing them to explain their successes, ideas and plans for the future.

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)

Many reasons could be offered for this situation. In the early days of the diocese, the interview was very informal and unthreatening, a reflection of the developing structure in employing lay staff. In many cases there were few, if any, other applicants. For some of the women today, when the system of application and interview has become much more formal, the interview has continued to be a relaxing and affirming experience. This could be explained by the large number of women who were invited to apply for the position by some of the important "gatekeepers" in the diocese - priests, consultants or ex-principals. In these cases the interview appeared to be a mere formality. One woman even expressed disappointment about it being so short and another was caustic about decisions being made beforehand. The

dangers of cronyism (Milligan 1994:29) are always there but presently the system, although it was not universally praised (see p. 124) appears to be working well for women.

Barriers

Although many support mechanisms were available for the women in the target group, many barriers were also present. Family values, the burden of balancing family responsibilities with a position in educational management and views of the place of women in society were, ever-present obstacles to a career in educational administration for all of the target group. Some of the barriers for the women in the study, however, were innate in the Catholic diocesan system. The demands of the parish and the masculine domination of the parish and the interview system provided particular difficulties for the women.

a) Role Expectations - Family Values

The societal expectation noted in the literature that family should be the most important priority for women (Blackmore 1992:35) was borne out not only among the married women but also among several of the single women. Most of the

group were married (71%) and it was clear that marriage and child-bearing placed the greatest limitations on their careers in education, a finding borne out in the literature (Sampson 1991:133). All the married women had taken breaks in service and most had undertaken part-time or casual teaching at some stage, factors which do not have a positive effect on prospects for promotion. Family responsibilities also made relocation for promotion difficult and placed the women in a no-win situation when trying to balance two careers - motherhood and educational management.

i) Breaks in Service

All the married women in the study had taken breaks in service for maternity leave and raising children. Such breaks in service had an adverse effect on the women's experience in teaching and administration. According to the literature, this is a common pattern. At the time when men start looking for their first promotions position, women withdraw from their paid work to raise their families (Grant 1989:44, Freeman 1990:16). Many of the married principals in the study were older when they achieved their first promotion as this mostly occurred after they returned from maternity leave. This trend was also noted in the literature for women (Shakeshaft 1987:61).

ii) Part-time Teaching

Women who take leave to raise their families are more likely to undertake part-time teaching while their children are young (Ouston 1993:3) and this was also true of some of the principals in this study. Despite the prevalence of this trend, part-time and casual teaching have not been recognised as preparation paths for promotion (De Lyon 1989:76, Freeman

1990:16) One of the principals was made aware of the poor regard in which these were held and was moved to defend her experience:

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

iii) Mobility and Relocation

Marriage in most cases decreased the study group's ability to relocate for promotion, a problem which does not exist for most men (Sampson 1987:31). Although the local application process in Catholic schools (Christie and Smith 1991:223) allowed women in this study to apply for promotions positions as they became available in their home town, continued promotion which required relocation was not an option for most of the married women. Relocation surprisingly also limited the choices for single women as some felt strong obligations to remain in close proximity to support their families.

It was obvious for most of these married women that their careers in education took second place to their husband's position. When they married the women resigned or sought a transfer to join their husbands and one even had to resign her administrative position when her husband moved again. Relocation to pursue their careers further was not an option for most. One woman summed the situation up bitterly;

Promotion of women will never be equal to men until husbands are prepared to relocate and give equal value to the wife's career. (Informant 2, 12/94)

iv) Criticism

Many of these married women, although their careers in education took second place to their family responsibilities and their teaching positions were often an economic necessity, experienced criticism from family and community for undertaking teaching and administration as well as motherhood. This dilemma is clearly outlined in the literature (Blackmore 1992:35, Acker 1983:129). Women are placed in a no-win situation, perceived as uncommitted administrators and teachers because of their family roles and uncaring mothers because of their teaching and administration responsibilities. Several women in the study commented on the frustration and anguish of trying to balance the principalship with motherhood. One commented on the feedback that she could not be a "GOOD mother because of my career path" (Informant 9, 12/94) and another noted the double standard in criticism of women with careers, "despite the fact that most parents are working 9 to 5" (Interview 3, 4/6/95). Societal disapprobation made it clear that the idea that married women should not pursue careers other than motherhood is still prevalent, at least within this community under study.

b) Role Expectations- Teaching vs Management

Gender expectations of women and career had particularly affected the older women who had been encouraged by families and school to enter teaching as one of the "suitable" careers for a woman. This view of teaching as a "natural"

occupation for women is borne out in the literature (Burgess 1989:80; Evans 1988:63).

The situation was different for the younger women who were conscious of other career options. In one case, at a time of teacher unrest and unemployment, a young woman had been actively counselled against teaching by her teachers (Interview 2, 3/6/95). Recent research has supported the trend away from teaching, noting that capable young women are no longer choosing traditional "helping professions" such as nursing and teaching and are turning instead to male dominated professions such as law and medicine (Abbott et al. 1991:126, Connors 1990:109).

It was during the interview that many of the women were first made aware of the barriers and the prejudices to be faced. Although most of the women in the target group had been encouraged to enter teaching, they were often discouraged from tackling an administrative position. This supports the findings of the literature which suggest that the interview could be a difficult experience for women (Milligan 1994:21; Grant 1989:47; Sampson 1991:135). The all-male composition of many of the panels and the lack of training of some of the members, especially the priests, which led to unfair and discriminating questioning (McNamara 1995:56), were some of the problems to be overcome. In some cases body language, positions of furniture and questioning seemed to be designed to make the applicant feel ill at ease.

It was made clear to them through comments at the interview and through their own experience that management was seen as a more "natural" occupation for men, an idea supported in the literature (Bolman & Deal 1992:325, Al-Khalifa 1989:85). The notion that women may work but not aspire to a career, such as management also gained support

in the data collected for this study. As women, they encountered problems of being seen as unsuitable for the job as they would be unable to handle the hard tasks. Such hard tasks encompassed those where power, for example the handling of primary boys (Evetts 1989:193), and technical skills, for example building, were required. Similar findings are mentioned in most of the literature as typical of a male model of management (Blackmore 1989:100). For one principal in the target group, her unsuitability, because she was a woman, was made clear by the priest, who proclaimed:

... 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 6. We'd need a man. (Interview 3, 4/6/95)

Women are often placed in a school culture where "authority equals strength and power and discipline is seen in terms of control" (Askew1988:56), a situation which makes it difficult for them to operate.

It is hardly surprising that such a masculine view of management is held within the diocese under study. Although the percentage of lay women primary principals within this diocese parallels the findings Australia-wide (Grady et al. 1994:5), management within this diocese is in the hands of men and networks of support and role models are strongly male dominated.

c) Diocesan and Parish Structures

While most of the principals demonstrated an awareness of the political forces within the diocese and an ability to work with them, they were also aware of the difficulties posed by

the managerial structure of diocese and parish. Although the Catholic Education Office employs and pays salaries for teachers, and the Bishop, through the Director, offers promotions appointments, the priest is deemed to be the manager of the school. The powers of this position are not clearly defined. Each parish and each priest has a slightly different way of operating.

In most cases, the priest is happy to support the principal and take an "ex-officio" role in the school but disputes with the priest can place the principal in a very difficult situation. A priest who is on side can be very supportive in disputes with students, staff and parents and can assist the school financially. A priest who is not can make his presence felt in all curriculum and policy areas and withdraw financial support or even permission to undertake school maintenance programmes. Unlike CEO personnel, he is always there, privy to all the business of the school, parish and community.

While the demands of the parish varied with the priest and the talent of each principal, they could be quite intrusive. In some ways these women were being asked to fill the gaps left by the withdrawal of the religious both in the school and in the parish. That many were able to do so while balancing home and school responsibilities is a tribute to their commitment, ability and hard work. It is hardly surprising either that these women were looking forward to job-sharing or retirement with only 36% having set further clear promotional goals for themselves.

Perceptions of Career

Perceptions of career expressed in the study varied greatly from those defined in the literature (Ouston 1993:28, Al Khalifa 1989:69). The women spoke of teaching rather than administration as career. It was clear that they were challenged by teaching and that they enjoyed their time in the classroom. This, however, does not suggest that they disliked administration or that they were reluctant to apply for promotion as suggested in the literature (Shakeshaft 1987:83,74). Although the study did support the notion that the principals were diffident about their talents, it did not suggest that they preferred to remain in a teaching position. Except for one, who maintained that she had merely obeyed a directive from the Catholic Education Office, they had all been excited by the challenge offered by their first principalship and had looked forward to being involved in the decision-making processes. They enjoyed the balance and the change offered by teaching and administration.

Although the target group were excited by the challenge of promotion, their goal appeared to be change and self-fulfilment rather than the widely held definition of career as "a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige through which persons move in an ordered, predictable sequence" (Ouston 1993:28). This has implications for women choosing their own paths and not being judged against male paradigms. Implications are also evident for the way "career" is defined. The perception of career as change and self-fulfilment gained from the principals in this study accords more with the suggestion of a woman principal cited in Shakeshaft (1987:87), that success "is measured by the quality of any job held".

Further Career Aspirations

The study did lend some support to the idea that women are diffident about their talents. This could be a reflection of societal expectations of women and girls which do not encourage high aspiration (Burton 1991:15). The channelling of many of the group by their families into a "suitable" career such as teaching was one limitation which had already been imposed on any aspiration towards administration. Disapprobation from family and community and the hostility of some of the priests would further discourage them from applying for promotion. Such self-effacement by women has been reflected in the literature (Shakeshaft 1987:85, Marshall 1984:33). Although all except one applied for promotion in order to be involved in the management of the school, many women claimed that they were asked to undertake the position. This accords with other research findings which suggest that women wait to be asked to apply for promotions positions (Shakeshaft 1987:85). In this study, 86% mentioned that they were encouraged to apply for promotion, with many (57%) receiving strong "official" encouragement which suggested that their chances of success were very high. Several mentioned that they were reluctant to apply for their first promotion and one even asked for a shortened contract so that she could abandon the position if she was unhappy (Interview 3, 4/6/1995). Another woman, the only one who had achieved promotion outside the diocese, was still diffident about her talents (Interview 1, 28/5/1995).

Aspiration was tempered strongly by the limits imposed by their family situation and socialisation. Relocation for further promotion was an impossibility for most. Although

the principals benefited through being known in a small rural diocese, they were disadvantaged in having a very limited choice of schools close to the family home. The demands of the priest that they live in the parish produced further limitations. It seems that limited aspiration for these principals could be interpreted as "an effective mental health strategy" (Shakeshaft 1987:91).

Despite all this, the principals were pleased to have the opportunity for promotion. Many agreed with the findings of the Australian Schools Council (Connors 1990:104) that "... teachers' career futures extend out across a featureless plain with very little on the horizon" and promotion offered change. Their views of career and promotion were, however, quite different from those mentioned in the literature for men.

Although there were many parallels between the experiences of women in the study and those mentioned in the literature, many differences between the situation of the two groups were uncovered. Their path to administration has been different, mainly because the structural features of Catholic schools relating to promotion are unlike those of state and independent schools.

Almost half (43%) of the women had set further clear promotional goals for themselves, although some of these were tempered with a realisation of the current limitations of their family situation. Those who had set these goals were mainly free of family ties. An older woman who was free of family responsibilities, the younger women, and two of the three single women were looking forward to the challenge of further promotions positions.

The remainder of the group were looking forward to job-sharing, retirement or raising a family. This was hardly

surprising when the ongoing demands of the principalship and their roles as leaders in the parish and prime supporter of their families in most cases competed for supremacy.

Although there were many parallels between the experiences of the women in the literature and those in the study, many differences were also noted. Some of these differences are likely to have been produced by the differences in operation of Catholic and state schools. It is clear, however, that stereotypical views of women in management cannot be sustained.

Special Requirements

The largest difference between the findings of research in the literature and those of this case study revolved around church requirements of the Catholic school principal. The involvement of the principals in parish work, their willingness to provide a role model of Catholic leadership and their commitment to the Catholicity of the school were obviously requisites for the position as the interview questions from the priests demonstrated. Practical skills, a proven track record and Catholicity appeared to have been stronger factors in gaining promotion than paper qualifications although extra study in Religious Education was strongly advocated. The necessity for the development of skills rather than a quest for useless credentials and the negative effects that a change to credentialism would have on women's chances of promotion is emphasised in the recent Australian report on teaching (Milligan 1994:28). In this case, many of the women had no further ambitions in

administration because of family situations and they had not pursued further qualifications. They were aware that the situation was changing and that there was a greater necessity for such qualifications if they were to apply for other positions (Interview 4, 18/6/95, Interview 5, 20/6/95).

Implications of the Findings.

From the study it is evident that different structures such as the appointment system, the more open job market, Catholicity, the demands of parish and school and the strong communication networks have clear implications for the chances of women achieving promotion in Catholic schools.

Although more women than men appear to be retaining primary principalships in Catholic schools, the number of women in management is falling despite the large number of women teachers in Catholic schools. Ability does not appear to be a reason for the change. In this study it would appear that many of the principals were very capable and, although they had achieved well in their own schooling, they had few career choices other than teaching.

Women today have many more career options available (Abbott et al. 1991:126). It is therefore important, as Paige Porter (1994:21) maintains that teaching and administration be made more attractive so that the profession will continue to attract capable women to apply for teaching and promotions positions and to remain in education. While many

of the societal barriers cannot be removed overnight, many other structural difficulties for women seeking promotion can be addressed. These could include training of interview panels and ensuring that women are included on them, encouragement for women to consider administration as a career option and the continued targeting of capable women, promotion of an interpretation of management which includes women's experience, timetabling flexibility to allow for women's family responsibilities and consideration of the dual demands of school and parish on the Catholic school principal.

A worrying implication of the findings is that, in line with Evett's (1989:200) research, the more open job market in Catholic schools has been a factor in the appointment of women to promotions positions. What effect therefore will a tightening market have? Major changes have taken place in Catholic education in the last 25 years because of the huge influx of lay people into Catholic education and the need to develop structures to cope with these changes. Women have fared reasonably well within these structures and capable women must continue to have support and sponsorship to ensure the best applicants gain top positions. They must not be treated as "a reserve army of labour" which can be shed in times of stress (Blackmore 1992:25, Evetts 1990:95, Milligan 1994:29). Women managers have rated more highly than men on a structured analysis frame (Bolman & Deal 1992:328) and they have been found to be "more task oriented" and have "a more democratic and less autocratic style" (Adler 1993:113-4). Women therefore should be encouraged to apply for senior positions in educational administration and they should be encouraged to remain in those positions. An effort should be made to overcome difficulties, such as those noted by the women in the study, which would discourage them from remaining. If fewer women are attracted into educational administration, will a

new paradigm of masculine management further lessen future chances of promotion for women?

Another implication of the findings relates to the promotion process. To ensure that women are treated fairly, interview panels must undergo training to ensure consistency across interviews and the elimination of discriminatory questioning. This policy could be framed according to the recommendations from McNamara (1995:56) for the preparation of all interview panel members.

Teacher education courses need to include leadership units which outline and develop skills and encourage both men and women to consider administration as a career option. It is important that many paradigms of management be explored. A study of teacher education courses in America pointed to the increasing "masculinisation" of the courses (Maguire and Weiner 1994:123). Teacher education courses should also include units on gender issues both for benefit of the participants and of their future students.

Courses for extra qualifications which are deemed necessary for a teacher or administrator should be scheduled to allow participation by all those who wish to attend. Women's family responsibilities need to be considered in such timetabling. The management course which had been sponsored by the diocese under study in the 1980s was mentioned positively by many of the target group. Its scheduling on school days made it more easily available for women with family responsibilities.

Finally, an interpretation of management which includes women's experience should be promoted not only for potential principals but also for those participating in interview panels for the principalship. This is important not only to encourage more women to consider management as a

career option but to ensure that a more collaborative style of leadership is welcomed by selection panels.

From the study it was clear that the target group all enjoyed teaching but that they also sought change and fulfilment. While few paths or rewards such as remuneration are available for those who wish to continue teaching, the male paradigm of career as upward mobility to management will dominate. This will devalue teaching as a career and allow it to continue to be categorised as a "semi-profession" (Acker 1983).

Areas for Further Study

Although the study does not attempt to speak for all lay women in Catholic education, it does, in considering the experience of the total population of lay women primary principals in one Catholic diocese, suggest many areas for further study. The situation of Catholic lay women principals in this rural diocese is probably not unique.

Several comparative studies could be undertaken to examine the situation and career paths of:

- a) primary women principals in Catholic schools compared with those in state schools. Aspects such as motivation and the support mechanisms and barriers faced by the two groups could be considered. What effect do the application and selection processes in Catholic schools and state schools have on women's

decisions and success? Is motivation different in choosing to teach in a state or Catholic school?

b) men and women primary principals within one diocese. How similar are their paths and the support mechanisms? How do promotion experiences compare? Are men's roles in the parish similar to those of women?

c) primary women principals in two or more dioceses. What are the differences between the appointment systems and the communication networks? Are the demands of the parish similar?

d) primary women principals in a city and a country diocese. Is the principal's role in the parish as demanding in a city diocese? Does the possibility of commuting to many schools allow women in the city to set more career goals or do they have more male competition for positions?

e) older and younger women principals in several dioceses. Is there a change in aspiration and in career paths?

Further questions arising from this study which could be explored include:

a) What effect does "the wife and mother" image of women in the Catholic church have on women's applications for promotion ?

b) What effect does the strong historical role of women religious in educational administration in Catholic

schools have on the aspirations of lay women and on their chances of success in applying for promotion?

c) Why are women more successful in gaining principalships in Catholic Primary schools compared with Catholic secondary schools?

d) Why has the percentage of Catholic women primary principals fallen since 1983 ?

e) What is the position of women in middle management positions in Catholic primary and secondary schools and which further ambitions in educational administration do these women profess?

f) What is the dominant paradigm of management in Catholic schools and do paradigms differ between dioceses? Does the faith dimension of the Catholic school modify the definition proposed in much of the literature?

g) How do priests view their role in the selection process for promotions and teaching positions? How do they view their role as school managers?

Concluding Remarks

As this study demonstrates, gender expectations of women place constraints on them throughout their careers. In spite of the increasing participation of women in the paid

workforce, many of the women studied found that their prime role was still viewed as a private domestic one. They were constantly judged against male paradigms.

Although, through the structures in the appointment system to Catholic schools in the diocese, this group experienced more support than that noted in the literature for women, there are worrying signs that this support might not continue if the labour market tightens and more men apply for these management positions.

These women are strongly committed to the cause of Catholic education and have contributed greatly to the life of Catholic schools and the Catholic church. It is important that their contribution is recognised, that their voices are heard and that they are able to contribute to the debate on women in management.