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1-2007

## Journal of Women in Educational Leadership, Vol. 5, No. 1-January 2007

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"Journal of Women in Educational Leadership, Vol. 5, No. 1-January 2007" (2007). *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*. 209.  
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# Hurray for Volume 5!

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Marilyn L. Grady

We celebrate the fifth volume of the *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership* with this issue. We appreciate all who have contributed to the journal through their service as reviewers, authors, and subscribers. All are critical to the journal's success.

In this issue we feature manuscripts by Sperandio concerning women in Bangladesh, a manuscript by Wallin and Crippen concerning superintendent leadership style, and by Wojtalik, Breckenridge, Gibson Hancox, and Soberhart concerning the effects of childhood themes on women's aspirations toward leadership. Koeppe, in *Women in History*, provides a biography of the last monarch of Hawaii, Queen Liliokalani, and Boatman reflects on twenty years of women's leadership. In *Voices in the Field*, Danielson and Schulte reflect on their work as academic department chairs. Each contribution enriches our understanding of leadership and the work and roles of women leaders.

As always, I welcome your comments related to the journal and the manuscripts presented to you. Send your comments to me at [mgradyl@unl.edu](mailto:mgradyl@unl.edu)

Proposals and Registrations for the *21th Annual Women in Educational Leadership Conference* are being accepted! For information about the conference contact Marilyn Grady at [mgradyl@unl.edu](mailto:mgradyl@unl.edu)

# Women in History

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## Queen Liliuokalani

Tina Koeppe

In 1982, a bronze statue of Hawaii's last monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, was placed on the state capital grounds. In the dedication brochure, she was described as the "Polynesian chieftess of olden times, in whom centuries of tradition had bred a belief in the sacred bond between a people and their land; the strong-willed, well-educated Victorian monarch who valiantly defended her inherited sovereignty and made it her overriding duty to safeguard and preserve Hawaiian independence."

Liliuokalani was born in Hawaii in 1838 into the family of a high chief. She attended the Royal School, run by American missionaries and received a high quality education and learned to love music, writing and politics. Liliuokalani was given the Christian name "Lydia" as a child. Her brother, Kalakua reigned as king in the late 1800's. During his leadership, Kalakua gave governing power to a cabinet composed of non-Hawaiian members. To Liliuokalani's dismay, this cabinet had succeeded in passing a constitution that gave voting rights to foreign residents but denied the vote to most Hawaiian natives. When Kalakua died in 1891, Liliuokalani inherited the throne and became the Queen of Hawaii.

During her reign, Liliuokalani was determined to restore the power and authority of the crown and saw it as her mission to preserve the islands for the native residents. Many American missionaries and businesspeople had settled in Hawaii during the nineteenth century and as their population grew, they tried to weaken the monarchy and gain political power. Although beloved by the native Hawaiians, the new queen had several factors working against her, including an economy severely damaged by tariffs on Hawaii's sugar industry. The American media at this time was highly political and religious and humiliated the native Hawaiians and Queen Liliuokalani and depicted them as barefoot, uncivilized savages. At various times in her life, Liliuokalani was accused of sorcery, adultery, promiscuity and treason.

Queen Liliuokalani's strategies and tactics included a series of formal written protests that contested how she and her people were represented in the news stories of the time, which were directed at the American public and politicians. All of her forms of resistance were non-violent and sought to express that she was the champion of her people. In 1893, when

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Queen Liliuokalani tried to institute a new constitution; American businessmen in Hawaii called upon the United States government to intervene. John L. Stevens, the American minister in Hawaii at the time, ordered troops from the USS Boston ashore, to protect American businesses and property. In 1894, the last reigning monarch of the Hawaiian Islands was forced to give up her throne when Hawaii became part of the United States. A provisional government was established which later became the Republic of Hawaii.

Following an arrest for an alleged uprising, Queen Liliuokalani spent a total of 21 months imprisoned or confined, primarily in conditions where she was prevented from receiving visitors or news. During this time, Liliuokalani spent her days composing traditional style Hawaiian songs and lyrics, as well as beginning to write her book, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*. During her life, Liliuokalani would write more than 200 songs, including the anthem, "Aloha Oe" (also known as "Farewell to Thee").

In 1898 Hawaii was annexed to the United States by a joint congressional resolution. Queen Liliuokalani was released as a private citizen and lived in Honolulu. After her imprisonment, Liliuokalani failed in her attempt to regain the throne, and formally renounced her royal claims. Much of the remainder of her life was spent in the United States, where she unsuccessfully entered against the federal government claims totaling \$450,000 for property and other losses. The territorial legislature of Hawaii finally voted her an annual pension of \$4,000 and permitted her to receive the income from a sugar plantation.

Liliuokalani remained an indomitable spirit, honored and revered by her people as a queen to the end. She died in 1917 at the age of 79 due to complications from a stroke, still waiting for justice. Queen Liliuokalani remains a popular symbol of Hawaiian character and spirit and is a cherished connection to the island's past.

In 1993, U.S. President Bill Clinton signed Public Law 103-150, the “Apology Resolution” to acknowledge the 100th anniversary of the January 17, 1893 overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii, and to offer an apology to Native Hawaiians on behalf of the United States.

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# **Women Leading and Owning Schools in Bangladesh: Opportunities in Public, Informal, and Private Education**

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Jill Sperandio

In this article I describe the extent to which Bangladeshi women have taken advantage of the increased opportunities both to lead and manage educational institutions and to own them. I use data from government and informal sector educational institutions and interviews with female private school owners collected during fieldwork in Bangladesh. I discuss the factors that may militate against women taking advantage of developing opportunities particularly in the formal and private education sectors in Bangladesh. Adopting a critical feminist perspective and an awareness of sociological research relating cultural differences to educational leadership, I conclude by recommending methods of ensuring progress towards gender equity in educational leadership in the public and private education in Bangladesh.

The underrepresentation of women in educational leadership and management, from school to national level, continues to be a feature of education systems worldwide. This is particularly the case in the countries of South Asia, where teaching has been overwhelmingly male-dominated (Haq & Haq, 1998). Many governments have acknowledged the need for gender equity supported by conscious policy making and implementation to induct women into managerial positions in education, but few have translated intent into action. Women in South Asian countries have limited representation as principals or assistant principals of schools and colleges, or hold positions in the higher levels of educational policymaking. This is the case in the formal public education sector in Bangladesh.

However, changes in the delivery of education within Bangladesh have the potential to provide many new opportunities for women to become involved in leading and managing schools and other educational facilities. The Government of Bangladesh (1990) acknowledged the difficulty of

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meeting universal education goals given the limited nature of existing educational facilities and the financial resources available. As a result, the Government, in conjunction with the Bangladesh National Commission of UNESCO (BNCU), has authorized a number of developments in the field of non-formal education that reach out to deprived groups within the school-aged population (Ministry of Education, 2005-2006). In addition, the expansion of the private education sector has been rapid and includes schools and universities; some licensed by the government but many remaining unlicensed (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2002).

These developments have created more leadership and management positions in formal and informal education sectors. They have also offered opportunities in the private education sector for entrepreneurial individuals to open and manage new schools. In this article I describe the extent to which Bangladeshi women have taken advantage of the increased opportunities both to lead and manage educational institutions and to own them. I use data from government and informal sector educational institutions and interviews with female private school owners collected during fieldwork in Bangladesh. I discuss the factors that may militate against women taking advantage of developing opportunities particularly in the formal and private education sectors in Bangladesh. Adopting a critical feminist perspective and an awareness of sociological research relating cultural differences to educational leadership, I conclude by recommending methods of ensuring progress towards gender equity in educational leadership in the public and private education in Bangladesh.

## Background

The People's Republic of Bangladesh has a population now estimated to be 147.4 million people (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2006), 77% of whom live in rural areas (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics [BANBEIS], 2004). Annual per capita purchasing power is US\$ 2,100 (CIA, 2006). The literacy rate for both sexes for those 15 years and older is 43%, and for females 31.8% (BANBEIS, 2004). The population is

predominantly Muslim (90%), and Hindu. The national language is Bangla although English is widely spoken and understood and was the language of instruction in public secondary schools until 1970 (CIA, 2006).

Formal structure of education in Bangladesh has many characteristics inherited from the British system established when the country was part of the British Indian Empire and subsequently from the educational system of India. There is a three-part education system in the formal government-operated sector. This consists of five years of primary or elementary education, three years of lower or junior secondary, and two years of secondary schooling leading to the Matriculation Examination (World Educational Service, 2004). Two years of higher secondary education follows, leading to university entrance. Since Bangladesh established itself as an independent state in 1970, the language of instruction has been Bangla (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2002).

More than 20% of all elementary schools and 97% of all secondary schools are privately owned. Additionally, sixteen private universities are modeled after higher education institutions in the United States in that they offer four-year bachelor's degree programs, use a credit hour system and follow the U.S. academic calendar year (BANBEIS, 2004). A very visible group of schools in the private sector are English-medium; at the secondary level, these schools prepare students for the British 'O' and 'A' level examinations that are administered by the British Council in Dhaka, and externally graded.

A large group of religious schools, the *madrasahs*, some of which are private and some government supported, are generally linked to mosques and rely on public donations to the mosques. The *madrasahs* provide a basic Muslim religious education and literacy to more than three million children of whom 46% are girls (BANBEIS, 2004).

### **Non-Formal Education**

A very different situation exists in the non-formal education sector consisting of donor-funded schooling initiatives, where the donors range from social entrepreneurs to large charities such as World Vision and Christian Aid to Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) funded through international aid agencies. In the Fourth Five Year Plan for Universal Primary Education, 1990-1995, the Government acknowledged that although efforts to increase enrollment in primary school, particularly for girls, had led to improvements, it was unable to deliver primary education to all school-age children (Jalaluddin & Chowdhury, 1997). It therefore formally recognized the importance of non-formal education and repeated its appeal for a multi-front attack on illiteracy by expanding non-formal primary education,



strengthening the government mass literacy centers and mobilizing NGOs (Government of Bangladesh, 1990).

Notable among the providers of non-formal education has been the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) operating the Non-Formal Primary Education program (NFPE) that controls more than 34,000 schools in predominantly rural areas catering to more than a million students (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee [BRAC], 2004). The schools have been tailored to meet the needs of the poor who cannot afford even the low costs associated with government schooling, either due to monetary or opportunity costs. More than 70% of the students enrolled in the schools are girls.

## Women in Leadership Roles

### The Formal Education Sector

Women are underrepresented in all areas of the education system in Bangladesh, with the exception of the non-formal sector. Women occupy few top level positions at the policy making and implementation levels in the Ministry of Education and the Directorates with the exception of the position of Minister of Primary Education (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Percentage of Females in Positions in the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh*

Position	Total Positions	Females	%
Ministers, Secretaries, Directors	27	4	14.8
Deputy and Assistant Secretaries and Directors	111	27	24.3
Research and Education Officers and Trainers	61	33	54.0

(Source: Arzoo, 2003)

In the government schools and colleges, women's representation at head and assistant head levels is low in comparison with men despite the fact that a number of these schools and colleges are single sex girls where female head teachers and assistant heads are mandatory (see Tables 2 and 3).

In the government madrasahs, none of the three superintendent positions are held by women, despite the large numbers of girls in these schools (see Table 4).

Table 2

*Percentage of Females in Positions of Head/Deputy Heads Teachers in Government Funded Colleges in Bangladesh*

Position	Total Positions	Females	%
College Heads	242	42	17.4
Assistant Heads	164	42	25.6

(Source: BANBEIS, 2006)

Table 3

*Percentage of Females in Positions of Head/Assistant Head Teacher in Government Funded Secondary Schools in Bangladesh*

Position	Total Positions	Females	%
Head	313	71	22.7
Assistant Head	343	92	26.8

(Source: BANBEIS, 2006)

Table 4

*Percentage of Females in Positions of Head/Assistant Head Teacher in Government Funded or Licensed Madrasahs*

Position	Total Positions	Females	%
Head	8,316	236	2.8
Assistant Head	6,565	113	1.7

(Source: BANBEIS, 2006)

### **The Non-Formal Education Sector**

Women have a much higher representation in both school leadership and policy making and implementation in the non-formal education sector, although no aggregated data are available. This has been in response to the deliberate policies of international organizations and charities to implement gender equity in their hiring. Motivated both by philosophical considerations

and the practical need to qualify for external funding of their projects, Bangladeshi NGOs have also adopted internationally recognized gender equity standards. Outstanding in the development of non-formal educational facilities that both serve girls and promote female leadership is the BRAC educational program.

In the BRAC schools, more than 90% of head teachers are women who are married and live within the local community. BRAC school teacher/school head positions for one room rural schools require a minimum academic qualification of a Secondary School Certificate (SSC). The academic qualification may be relaxed for exceptional candidates but ten years of schooling is a minimum requirement. The teacher must be prepared to complete the teacher training course of at least 15 days at any of the BRAC training centers within the first year of employment. She must be a permanent resident of the village in which the school is located, be accepted by the community, be married, and have another source of income for her family (as this is regarded as a part-time job that has an honorarium of \$ US 20 per month). Additionally, she cannot bring her children to school during school time, and cannot have family restrictions or social barriers for conducting co-curricular activities.

The selection process involves a panel of Regional Managers, Quality Assurance Specialists and Area Education Managers, who short list 3-5 qualified women. The short-listed candidates are interviewed and take a written test to establish their mastery of mother tongue, math, English, and general knowledge. Two successful candidates are selected for each school position, one of whom goes on for training, the other who serves as a backup in the case of sickness or dropout on the part of the selected applicant (A. Tapan, personal communication, July 2, 2006).

At the trainer and administrative level, women now hold approximately a third of available positions in the BRAC organization, which has actively promoted female leadership at its Program Organizer (PO) level, tailoring recruitment to women in isolated rural areas. A PO must have a minimum qualification of a Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC). Program Officers supervise 12 to 16 schools, and their work covers three areas of leadership and management. The first concerns the opening of new schools that involves meetings with local communities, site selection, teacher and student recruitment, communication with local government, school budget development, supplying the school, and parent contacts. The second group of activities concerns the operation of new and reopened schools, involving bi-weekly school visits to supervise schools, monthly refresher training for teachers, attending and coordinating monthly parents meetings, organizing school committee meetings, maintaining contact with local government and

others influential in the community, transferring students to formal education, school repair, and parent contact. The third area in which PO's are active is that of office management that includes the writing of school supervision reports, weekly meetings with area officials, maintaining documents and stock registers, and teacher attendance and leave.

Not only have the positions of school teacher/head of school and of program officer provided a large number of secondary school educated women in rural areas with work outside the home, training and an opportunity to use both their education and leadership and management skills, but they have also revolutionized Bangladeshi village communities. The leadership of village schools by women has done away with the stereotypical role of the male teacher or *master*. It has provided these women teachers with status in society, financial independence, and also political recognition. More than 400 female teachers were elected as community representatives in local union-level elections in 2002 (BRAC, 2004). Women program organizers also defy norms regarding women's seclusion and limited physical space by bicycling or motorcycling from school to school across the countryside. In doing so, they provide important role models for the female students in the schools they serve.

### **The Private Education Sector**

The Government's inability to expand the formal secondary education sector has led to the rapid growth of private secondary schooling, colleges, and universities since the 1980s. Table 5 indicates the corresponding opportunities that this expansion has provided for school administrators. However, the percentage of these positions that have been secured by women is markedly smaller than that of the formal sector. Women are either not seeking these positions, or are failing to secure them.

Table 5  
*Women in Educational Leadership in the Private Education Sector*

Position	Total Positions	Females	%
College Heads	2,368	135	5.7
Assistant Head	419	31	7.4
Licensed School Head	16,664	1,079	6.5
Licensed Assistant School Head	12,888	1,067	8.3

(Source: BANBEIS, 2006)

## **Women Entrepreneurs in Private Schooling**

The expansion of the private school sector has, however, offered a group of women an opportunity to own and lead schools. A group of prominent, private English medium schools are owned by women, in some cases funded by family assets, in others by loans obtained from banks. Interviews with seven of these school owners indicated that there were a number of commonalities in their experiences. The women come from elite social groups. They are highly educated, often schooled in English medium schools run by Christian missionary groups or the Catholic Church, and then at local Bangladeshi universities in the period prior to Bangladesh gaining independence from Pakistan.

These women set up schools shortly after independence in 1972 in response to a middle and upper class backlash to the change from English to Bangla as the language of instruction in government schools. Private schools were not legally recognized at this time, and as such, the women took advantage of a loophole in the law which allowed tutoring businesses where class size did not exceed nine students. While initially providing English medium schooling for the owners' children and those of friends at both primary and secondary levels, the schools rapidly attracted the children of people powerful in the new government. This clientele offered the women protection from prosecution as they expanded, and ultimately the opportunity to purchase school sites and negotiate bank loans, services not previously offered to women. These women went on to expand their small businesses to become high prestige educational institutions marked by high student achievement as measured by student success on British public examinations. All the women attributed their success to their determination to maintain high academic standards and be responsive to the niche markets that they served (Y. Murshed, personal communication, June 26, 2006).

The women founders of these schools were, in some instances, able to utilize family connections and family financial resources. However, one female pioneer in the private school business broke new ground by gaining both loans without family collateral (commercial banks up to this point did not loan to women) and by persuading the government to make available government land and schools abandoned with the partition from Pakistan in 1975 at fixed prices for private school developers. The success of this woman opened the door for many others to follow.

Private English-medium schools have been given a further boost by the globalization of the garment industry which is a major contributor to the Bangladeshi economy. This industrial growth has helped develop an affluent middle class with family and business connections in Britain, the United

States, and the Middle East. However, although the existing female-owned and operated schools have continued to thrive, an initial survey of new schools suggests that women are no longer finding it easy to enter the market. With expectations rising among the middle and upper class client population with regard to standards of school facilities and teaching, new schools are being developed by consortia of businessmen with large financial resources and extensive commercial experience. Women attempting to start up new schools with limited financial assets may find it difficult to compete.

### **Analysis**

The opportunities offered by an expanding non-formal and private education sector, a more gender sensitive approach to filling civil service positions in the ministries and directorates at government level, and the high profile of women in elected government positions, provide opportunities and a favorable climate for women to assume more management and leadership roles in education. Although the numbers of women who have done this has increased during the past decade, particularly in the non formal sector where opportunities have been tailored to the needs of women, women's involvement does not appear to be keeping pace with the expansion of opportunities available to them. Failure to fill positions as school leaders reduces the opportunities available to women to bring a fresh perspective to school leadership, redefine power and power structures in policy making in education, and provide role models and mentors for new generations of women less bound by traditional social constraints. As Heck (1996) noted, "school principals definitely play a key role in translating changing societal aspirations into educational experiences desired by the community" (p. 93).

### **Factors Discouraging Women from Taking Leadership and Management Positions**

The key question posed by Jensen (2003) regarding underrepresentation of women in educational leadership is, "to what extent are women actively encouraged or discouraged from applying for management and leadership positions [in schools]?" (p. 5). Cultural considerations must play an important part in answering this question for any given group of women and a number of researchers have explored this issue. Cubillo and Brown (2003) examine how the "glass ceilings and glass walls" (p. 278) that face women aspiring to leadership positions vary from culture to culture, but that successful negotiation of these barriers had commonalities across cultures with women attributing their success to familial support and encouragement. Norris and Inglehart (2000), discussing the larger issue of women assuming

societal leadership roles in a world-wide study, noted that “culture matters” (p. 14) and that available opportunities and favorable attitudes towards women’s leadership, by themselves, “are not sufficient to produce effective breakthroughs in the structural and institutional barriers, especially in the short term” (p. 14). Shakeshaft (1989), building on models explaining women’s lack of achievement in obtaining educational management positions in the USA (Hansot & Tyack, 1981), depicts internal barriers to success, such a low self image, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation or aspiration as resulting from the social context of men holding power and privilege over women in society at large. A study of barriers to women managers’ advancement in education in Uganda (Brown & Ralph, 1996) also noted the effects of reduced access of women to education, the experiences that females have in education which are different to the experiences of males, and the additional social responsibilities that the majority of girls and women hold.

A study of the problems faced by women aspiring to leadership positions in Pakistan (Memon, 2003), a country with a similar social and religious structure to Bangladesh, suggested that women in South Asian patriarchal Moslem cultures face a number of challenges. Women from middle and low socio-economic backgrounds face competition not only from males, but from women of elite backgrounds with access to information, resources and mobility, and who may use the *Queen Bee Syndrome* (Edson, 1988) to discourage, rather than encourage, other women. Women operate in a culture of male dominated management in which women managers do not challenge their male counterparts’ views in professional settings. Women become passive participants and do not learn skills and advance up the career ladder as a result. Women have multilevel social responsibilities and are cautious about seeking promotion if this would mean a move away from their home. In more traditional households in the existing patriarchal society, issues of *pardah* or seclusion, dependence on men due to lack of personal assets, and the lack of female support groups militate against women pursuing careers. Women do not conform to the ‘tough’ and ‘authoritarian’ style that males in the profession adopt, and they are therefore seen as ‘too weak’ to operate effectively in large schools and educational organizations. Traditional hiring and promotion procedures and requirements discourage or disadvantage women, especially when they require many years of experience in the educational labor force and previous leadership experience, or involve recommendations or interviews with predominantly male superiors. Women may face harassment from their male peers or superiors in the workplace that discourages them from pursuing a career (Memon, 2003).

Although there is little research on the experiences of Bangladeshi women who seek careers in education and aspire to management and leadership positions, studies of the effects of promoting girls' secondary education in Bangladesh by subsidizing school fees suggests that traditional attitudes toward women could well discourage them seeking such positions. Sarker, Chowdhury, and Tariq (1995) noted that education for girls is mostly perceived as a domestic benefit, enabling them to get better husbands, to help their husbands, or to teach and better look after their own children. Sweetser (1999), in a report exploring gender relations, non-formal education, and social change in Bangladesh, noted a marked generational difference in attitudes towards women. She described the attitudes of older men, which included their disapproval of 'modern trends' of women or girls going to school, working in the fields, arranging their own marriages, riding bicycles and motorcycles, taking up seats on buses, and being served in a shop first. Sweetser also noted that "typically, the first benefit of girls' education cited by villages pertains to their future roles managing the home economy" (p. 19). One male interviewee in this study stated he believed it was pointless sending girls to secondary school because they would still have to bribe someone to get a job, and "What they really need . . . is a husband" (p. 18). However, Raynor (2005), in her study of girls' access to education in Bangladesh, noted that "most people linked girls' education to employment, but for the men/boys interviewed, the stated reason was almost exclusively financial, whereas women/girls linked employment to such things as 'independence' confidence and worth" (p. 95).

Raynor (2005) also noted that Bangladesh government support of gender equity has a chequered history. Bangladesh ranks 76th out of 78 countries on the UNDP Gender Empowerment measure. When the Government of Bangladesh ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), it maintained reservations on all articles calling for women's equal rights in the family (Jahan, 1995). Moni (2005) highlights the 'rewriting' of the National Women's Development Policy adopted in 1997 with the aim of creating an enabling environment for the empowerment of women and furthering gender equity in line with the requirements of various international conventions to which Bangladesh is a signatory. Among the changes proposed is the replacement of the commitment to appoint women to 30% of all government posts to ensure women's equal and full participation at all levels of decision making including the policy making positions of the government by the less stringent one "to increase participation and increase existing quotas of women in decision making positions" (p. 3).



Currently the lack of expansion in the formal government secondary school system due to financial constraints also contributes to a lack of opportunity to move into administrative positions. Positions only become available on the retirement or resignation of incumbents, with a group of highly qualified and long-serving practitioners waiting their turn. In situations such as this, the only women who would meet the formal qualifications, which include school employment, are employed in girls' schools so that increased female representation in secondary school administration would mean women moving from the single sex to coeducational schools allowing other women to take their place in the girls' schools. Given traditional attitudes to women in Bangladeshi society, selection committees staffed by older males are unlikely to look favorably on women applying for leadership positions.

It is important to note that women are underrepresented in the teaching profession in general, representing only 34% of the teachers in government secondary schools, 18.6% of the teachers in non-formal and private schools, and 36% of the teachers in primary schools, both government and private (BANBEIS, 2004). Over all, less than 6.5% of all teachers and administrators in the government and private schools are women.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

Women's underrepresentation in educational leadership in Bangladesh appears to have many causes ranging from traditional attitudes linked to patriarchy and religion, to the lack of a pool of qualified women due to limitations in access to secondary education for girls, to a failure of the government to adopt measures that would open up leadership positions to women. Clearly there is a need for research that focuses on the experiences of women aspiring to, and holding management and leadership positions in all branches of the education system in Bangladesh. Women's perceptions of the barriers they face and how they can be overcome, together with the benefits they perceive for both themselves and society at large by occupying such positions are important to determine what measures to take to create a more gender equal situation.

However, there appear to be a number of measures that could be taken to increase both the pool of women qualified to move into leadership positions, and to ensure that positions are made available to them. Raynor (2005) noted

many of the education programs operating in Bangladesh to improve girls' access to secondary education have as an objective the channeling of girls into teaching, partly to ensure that girls have female role-models in schools,

partly because teaching is seen as an 'appropriate' job for women, but also to meet the needs of the ever-expanding education system. (p. 90)

Although increasing girls' access to secondary education and increasing the pool of women teachers in a traditionally male-dominated profession is clearly an important first step, career counseling that includes developing aspirations and expectations of leadership experience is important to countering traditional male expectations that education will simply be used to enhance family well-being and teaching is an end in itself.

The BRAC model that targets women for leadership positions, providing training and a work environment sensitive to women's needs, which include the ability to work near home, to have the support of the community, and an opportunity to advance up a scale of increasing responsibility, should be emulated in the formal education sector. The evidence from BRAC suggests that not only do individual women benefit from such leadership opportunities, but that once gained, women employ their leadership skills in many other spheres to the enrichment of society at large.

Women entrepreneurs in the private education sector are currently limited to an elite group of well-educated women who enjoy the backing and resources of their families. However, the opportunities for individual women to undertake this type of entrepreneurship may well be limited by the increasing costs of developing schools, and a lack of understanding of the ways in which schools can be made cost effective while delivering high quality education. At the lower end of the socio-economic scale, government, NGOs, and other related agencies are providing many opportunities to promote entrepreneurial skills among women (Chowdhury, 1998; Chowdhury & Naher, 1993). However, there appears to have been no consideration given to promoting school ownership among women of lower socioeconomic status, although the need for schools clearly exists. A study of private schooling in India noted its potential for providing an income flow for lower caste families (Tooley & Dixon, 2003). Existing provision of loans and training to low income women to start private schools as commercial ventures should be given serious consideration given that it would both increase the well-being of these women and their families, and provide an important service to the communities in which they live.

Increasing female representation in the leadership of schools and colleges, as well as the policy making branches of the Ministry of Education should be a priority for a government committed to gender equity. Bangladesh should follow the example of countries such as Uganda by requiring all government and licensed private schools to appoint a male and female administrator to the position of head and deputy head of school, thus

increasing the number of women with the required experience to help determine educational policy. Similarly, the qualifications needed for promotion, particularly those relating to length of service in the teaching profession, should be reviewed in recognition of the limited opportunities women have had to obtain a secondary education, which in turn limited the representation of women in the teaching profession. The government should honor its commitment to a minimum 30% of women at the policy making level, the internationally recognized minimum needed for women's voices to be influential at this level.

The ability of women to assume leadership and management roles in all sectors of the Bangladesh education system deserves further study. Attitudes and traditional community structures are changing, and women must position themselves to be active participants in the change process if they are not to be further disadvantaged.

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# Superintendent Leadership Style: A Gendered Discourse Analysis

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Using a blend of social constructionism, critical feminism, and dialogue theory, the discourse of nine Manitoba superintendents is examined to determine if it illustrates particular gendered assumptions regarding superintendents' leadership style. Qualitative inquiry and analysis methods were utilized to identify emerging themes, or topics of talk. Six topics of talk emerged in the discourse regarding leadership style. Since "talk is a form of social action worthy of study in itself" (Chase, 1995, p. 25), each of these topics was analyzed to illustrate how men and women in the superintendency in Manitoba negotiate a gendered social action when they talk about leadership.

## Introduction

Discussions regarding gender and the superintendency inevitably begin by recognizing the persistence of the disproportionately low representation of women in the superintendency (Brunner, 2004; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Grogan, 2000; Reynolds, 2002; Skrla, 2003; Wallin, 2005). This finding is reflected noticeably in Manitoba, Canada where, during the 2004-2005 school year, only 5 of the 37 public school division chief superintendents were women. Bryant (2004) illustrated this situation by making three points regarding the Manitoba context: (a) since 2001 at the University of Manitoba alone, 66% of the graduates with a Masters in Educational Administration were women; (b) 65% of the teaching staff in Manitoba are women; and (c) 45% of inschool administrators are women. There is no lack of qualified females in the profession to warrant a low representation in the superintendency.

So what contributes to this glaring inequity? Studies of female superintendents suggest that females do not experience the same level of encouragement, mentorship or sponsorship as do males, and that they continue to face gender bias and gender discrimination (Bell, 1995; Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999, 2000b, 2003; Grogan, 1996; Kamler & Shakeshaft,

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1999; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Tallerico, 2000). Although some researchers have argued that there are significant differences in the ways in which men and women lead that may impact on the perceptions of their effectiveness (Bjork, 2000; Brunner, 2000a; Chase, 1995; Gilligan, 1982; Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, & Steele, 1996; Pounder, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999), others have argued that leadership style has little to do with gender and/or more to do with accommodations to socially constructed leadership norms (Astin & Leland, 1991; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly, Karau & Johnson, 1992).

Women who do attain superintendencies and attempt to conform to its social constructions find themselves in a no-win situation. If they are perceived as caring and collaborative, they are deemed not tough enough for the job; if they "act tough," they are perceived to have betrayed their socially constructed gender roles and are, therefore, unheeded or labeled as "bitches" (Bell, 1995; Brunner, 2000b; Grogan, 1996; Kamler & Shakeshaft, 1999; Tallerico, 1999). In fact, the "silencing" of women in the position and their socialization into the bureaucratic, male-defined culture of schools and leadership, has become a topic of major research interest in the United States (Bjork, 2000; Blount, 1999; Brunner, 2002; Chase & Bell, 1990; Enomoto,

Gardiner & Grogan, 2000; Grogan, 2000; Grogan & Smith, 1998; Murtadha-Watts, 2000; Skrla et al., 2000; Talerico, 2000). Added to this is the understanding that the nature of the position of superintendent has changed dramatically in the past decade (Grogan, 2000), which has implications for both men and women in the position. There are few Canadian studies that examine the role of the superintendent (Crippen & Wallin, in press), and even fewer comparative studies of males and females to help determine whether findings are in fact shaped by gender or the role of superintendent itself (Pounder, 2000).

The purposes of the study were: (a) to determine whether the experiences of female superintendents in Manitoba are comparable to the findings in other studies on women and the superintendency; (b) to provide opportunities for both male and female superintendents to offer their understandings of superintendent leadership style in Manitoba; and (c) to compare the discourse of male and female superintendents to determine whether their talk illustrates particular gendered assumptions regarding the leadership styles of men and women.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory is grounded on four central ideas that are helpful for achieving the purposes of this study: (a) knowledge is socially constructed; (b) learning can lead development; (c) development cannot be separated from social context; and (d) language plays a central role in development. In Vygotsky's (1978) estimation, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being; on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness" (p. 19). Critical theorists, actively engaged in the pursuit of social justice, extend Vygotsky's understanding and center it directly on social action. They focus on how the reproduction of socially constructed oppressive norms create structures that constrain individual and group opportunity (Lees, 1995). These theorists also analyze how it is that the routinization of social structures often cause those oppressed to engage in and perpetuate their own victimization, either unconsciously or through the silencing of voice. In extension, the cause of oppression does not situate itself within the individual, but rather within the structural problems inherent in a society underpinned by discriminatory social norms (Tierney, 1989). Fay (1987) suggested:

It is the job of critical theory to provide a historical narrative which reveals how it is that the relevant social actors came to be what they are, namely, actors playing a role in a drama about which they are ignorant but which

gives their activities the point and meaning they have, and which defines the possibility for radical change open to, and even demanded of them. (p. 71)

As “relevant social actors” in the drama of education, superintendents obviously shape and are shaped by the social norms that produce the socializing influences and the structures within which they work. It becomes necessary to examine, therefore, how the role of the superintendent as it is currently socially constructed might work to perpetuate gendered norms regardless of the sex of the person in the role.

In his later work, Vygotsky (1986) stressed the importance of language to the nature of human consciousness:

Thought and language, which reflect reality in a way different from that of perception, are the keys to the nature of human consciousness. Words play a central part not only in the development of thought but in the historical growth of human consciousness as a whole. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness. (p. 94)

Other theorists concur. For example, Bakhtin (1986) suggested that “language and the word are almost everything in human life” (p. 118). Foucault (1980) stated that dialogue was central to the understanding of ontology, the very nature of how we perceive social reality. Bohm (1996) recommended that dialogue be examined for its ability to mirror the assumptions of the larger society:

Dialogue is a multi-faceted process, looking well beyond typical notions of conversational parlance and exchange. It is a process which explores an unusually wide range of human experience: our closely-held values; the nature and intensity of emotions; the patterns of our thought processes. (p. vii)

Shields and Edwards (2005) linked these ideas to educational administration and suggested that “dialogue is central to being, to relationships, and to understanding” (p. 17). By extension, then, the words used by school superintendents as they come into social contact with others become important cultural artifacts that not only reflect particular values and assumptions, but also have the potential to perpetuate or change the values and assumptions of others. However, superintendents may at different times vary in the degree of awareness of the assumptions that are inherently embedded in the language that they use to describe their activities and beliefs. It is for this reason that a discourse analysis that “focuses on attempting to explore some of the ways in which the use of language itself structures our assumptions” (Cukier & Thomlinson, 2005) can be invaluable



for making sense of gender inequalities or gender differences within superintendents' experiences of leadership.

## **Methodology**

We report on the gender-based findings of a study on superintendent leadership in Manitoba. Four female superintendents and five male superintendents were interviewed to obtain data related to their leadership practice and experience. All who consented to participate were aware that gender was a topic under study. Both researchers in this study were female academics from the University of Manitoba. One of the researchers had experience as a Manitoba superintendent.

Informants were asked questions related to two areas that have been found in the research to be affected by gender: (a) leadership style and (b) mentorship experiences. The culminating question of the interviews, which is the focus of this paper, asked respondents whether they believed men and women exhibited different leadership styles, and if so, to characterize those leadership styles. Respondents were asked to provide examples from practice that would corroborate their responses in an attempt to address the limitation of self-response; however, it must be acknowledged that the study remains exploratory and perceptual in nature because of this limitation.

The data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed according to qualitative research guidelines (Moustakas, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Tateson, 1982). Reductive analysis (the identifying, coding and categorizing of data into meaningful units) was used to identify themes and patterns in the data. Since, as Vygotsky (1986) stated, "the relation between thought and word is a living process" (p. 94) observed in social dialogue, each narrative was analyzed to determine whether the dialogue of Manitoba superintendents illustrated particular gendered assumptions regarding the leadership styles of superintendents. Commonalities and/or anomalies were determined through careful comparisons of the informants' discourse.

## **Findings**

Superintendents were asked to reflect on whether they believed there were differences in male and female leadership styles. The subsequent narrative responses are organized below.

### **Male Superintendent Responses**

First, the five male superintendents (100%) exhibited discomfort when the question was phrased in relation to gender. Even though they were aware that

gender would be part of the discussion, one of the superintendents responded, “Oh God, I don’t know if I want to touch that.” The question was not avoided by anyone, but the comfort level was certainly not as high when males responded, perhaps because they were responding to two female researchers, one of whom had been a superintendent in Manitoba. All of the male respondents spoke to *perceptions* regarding differences in male and female leadership styles. One of the superintendents clarified these perceptions by suggesting that

There’s this belief that men as leaders are more concrete-sequential, into power, I’m the boss. I’m going to do it whether you like it or not, and that they’re more business-oriented and that women tend to be more feelings oriented, and let’s get along.

Another of the superintendents suggested, “I think it’s perception. I don’t for a minute think it’s because ladies would not have the ability. . . . But there’s a shift happening, but it is that slow, because we still have only five ladies today.” Interestingly, this man suggested that women “are allowed to be superintendent assistants” and he put the responsibility of inequitable hiring onto school boards “because of a lot of ingrained stuff that from a leadership style is perceived to be better.” A third superintendent suggested,

I have female, I mean we have female administrators, and they’re some of the best people I’ve ever worked with. My ladies that we have in those principalships are certainly very compassionate. . . . I’m having a hard time catching a pattern here. They really have their own approach to things.”

Another participant responded:

I think good leadership is pretty much the same. Having said that, you can’t separate the leader from their gender. I mean, if you’re a man, you’re a man, if you’re a woman, you’re a woman. Those who are effective operate with similar styles. I think women—to become leaders in today’s world—have probably had to adopt some of the styles that men have used that have been successful. I don’t think a leader today can be weak or weepy or sucky; they aren’t going to get along. Therefore, I think women in leadership have had to be tougher than what I have seen in the past, but by the same token, men, to succeed today, have had to become more feminine, if feminine means listening more, arguing less, being more empathetic and more collaborative, and the net result is probably a much closer style and therefore less difference by far than anything I’ve seen in the past.

The language used by these superintendents nudges open underlying gendered assumptions, even though on the surface the message is meant to

suggest that women are good administrators and the leadership styles of men and women have begun to meld. The use of the possessive pronoun (“my ladies” or “I have female administrators”) promotes an objectification of women as possessions, and the term “lady” often perpetuates particular notions of what is considered to be appropriate behavior and deportment. The suggestion that “leaders today can no longer be weak or weepy or sucky” implies that women once were that way, and that it has been to their benefit that women have “had to adopt some of the styles that men have used.” Of course, when women are patronizingly “allowed” to be assistant superintendents, but not superintendents, the blame can be placed on to the shoulders of those who do the hiring. In fact, those who are currently in the role may help to socially construct through their own language the stereotypes of women as weak leaders; or the perception that there may be a danger in hiring them because they might be “weak or weepy or sucky;” or at the very least, unlike the men who have been successful in the past.

Three of the male respondents (60%) discussed what they saw as differences in the leadership styles of the men and women administrators with whom they have worked. One of the respondents indicated, “females, I think, are more process oriented as opposed to males, more open to discussion.” This respondent also said, “female administrators used to dress in power suits, but people are now dressing like people, not like objects.” It is difficult to know whether or not this comment reflects the notion that women no longer feel that they have to dress according to masculinized constructions of power, but this respondent viewed the change positively. At any rate, there is a recognition of the fact that women, at least in the past, had made accommodations to a masculinized role by wearing “power suits.” A second male respondent suggested, “women today tend to be more articulate and, I think, perhaps better educated [than men].” A third offered the following perception:

In general men and women often view problems and issues differently and analyze things differently. I found the females that I worked with in leadership roles [to be] far more analytical than the men are. I don’t know if that’s related to gender or just the people that I worked with. My experience is that women seem to have a greater capacity for attention to detail. . . . The female principals that I’ve worked with have probably been stronger in coaching of teachers and understanding of the teaching-learning environment. I’m not sure why that is.

The same superintendent also suggested that women administrators are often challenged more:

There is an expectation among staff and parents that the most important role of the administrator is usually the managerial aspect. I think that's probably been one of the reasons that men have been dominant in numbers in administration. And partly, because for whatever they may be perceived as, because they're male, more managerial. . . . In the principals that I've worked with as their supervisor and dealing with contentious issues, it has definitely been more difficult for women . . . they get challenged more than they need to be.

What is interesting in these comments from men is that they reflect the findings in other research that has most often elicited the views of women only. Some of the comments suggest that women do have a more feminine style of leading (process oriented, attention to detail, understanding of the teaching and learning environment); another indicates women are more analytical (usually a masculine trait); a third suggests that they focus on developing appropriate qualifications; and a fourth comment validates the notion that women face obstacles in their role because of their gender.

#### **Female Superintendent Responses**

Only one of the four female superintendents (25%) questioned whether or not there were differences between male and female leadership styles. In her estimation, there were so few female superintendents in the province that she had too few examples with which to compare, and she was leery of essentializing the leadership styles of women and men:

I don't have a lot of examples of women to compare with, and I probably can find a woman that had the same kind of demeanour as some of the men. . . . I can tell you what people are compared to me, I don't know if I can tell you what they're like for all women.

The remaining three women were adamant that there was a difference in the leadership styles of men and women. Perhaps one of the most significant perceptions was outlined in the following comment:

Males are about posturing and image and all about how many years you've been on the role, committee work, salaries, number of assistants—there is no talk about education, and when there is, it's dismissed as a topic that's getting in the way.

However, two of the superintendents suggested that the leadership styles of men and women are gradually melding, and that “the old regime at the table is changing, and I've noticed the dialogue over the last few years has changed, too.”

Some of the women respondents spoke of the impact their gender had on the working relationships between them and other administrators. One female superintendent found that male administrators acted awkwardly in her presence:

There was no joshing with me, you couldn't talk to me about golfing because I didn't golf, you couldn't talk to me about the hockey game because you weren't sure if I watched hockey. So there was never any of that kibitzing before you actually started in on that dialogue . . . maybe I was perceived then as being too professional to be engaged in that . . . but I didn't want to be perceived as a threat.

One of the superintendents alluded to the lack of mentorship, "I noticed in my first years with the men I never phoned them and they never phoned me. I mean, heaven forbid that I might have a question to ask that they would laugh at." This comment reinforces the sense of isolation and insecurity that manifests itself at the outset of the career as superintendent. The same superintendent also alluded to the idea that women have to ameliorate their own personal style of leadership with masculine characteristics to succeed in the role:

You almost have to have male mannerisms. That kind of strength to be able to wield it. You have to be able to command with a sense of presence and to say with authority that I know that here's the data, here's my recommendation. You have to be able to pull that off.

Comments such as these suggest that some women perceive that they have to take on masculine characteristics, perhaps at the expense of their own personal style, in order to "pull off" what others will perceive to be "good" leadership, which is still very much a masculinized social construct (strength, command, presence, authority).

Given the fact that many of these women indicated that they had not had the kinds of access to socialization or mentorship as males, what was very interesting about this group was that the women interviewed had no more than cursory relationships with each other. One would suppose that because there were so few female superintendents in the province, these five women would naturally connect with each other for support and mentorship. This, however, was not the case. In fact, one of the superintendents suggested, "I don't have any kind of relationships with the women superintendents." Although the women lamented this fact, they also seemed to accept it; some indicated that personality differences mattered more than gender, and two spoke of the idea that "lots of women don't like powerful women," or that (and here the superintendent also included assistant superintendents in her

estimation), “females are stooping to the same mannerisms and putdowns of their colleagues as some of the men.” These kinds of comments suggest that, rather than creating a network that could offer mentorship and support not only for themselves, but also for aspiring superintendents, these women worked primarily in isolation from each other. Underlying these comments may be an individualistic determination to succeed, and (dare it be suggested) a determination not to acknowledge a gender tie with others because of a perception that it might weaken their position in this very limited club. It may also reflect the fact that the superintendency is by its nature an individualistic role, and those who are attracted to it are those who work independently from others. Such a supposition, however, would be supported more strongly, if both females and males had not spoken of the many colleagues they phoned when dealing with critical issues. Very seldom did these women phone each other for advice.

Some of the superintendents noted that women need to “know more” than men in order to be perceived as adequate: “women are hard on themselves because they do expect that they are going to need to know. Men say they don’t know or they fake it.” Yet, another woman uttered a somewhat contradictory statement:

Women tend to be more willing to say that somebody else might have a better idea, and they’re willing to use the expertise of all these people and not feel threatened by that—not feel that it’s an indictment against them that they didn’t know.

There is some discrepancy for those women who feel that they need to be “experts” and those who are comfortable enough to designate without feeling that it is a poor reflection on their knowledge base. These comments may reflect personality differences or length in the role. Men are depicted either as being more upfront about their knowledge (or lack thereof), or decidedly more dishonest about not knowing (though it appears as though they succeed in hiding it).

Only one superintendent spoke directly about the role of power when she suggested that some of the men with whom she works

perceive power in that everybody obeys them and they sit on the pedestal and everybody bows to them. If I’m powerful, it’s because the people around me . . . I’ve given power to them, and they are doing a good job, so I look good.

Underlying this idea, however, lies an assumption that power exists in the hands of the person in the role, who can then “give” that power to others for

an individualistic purpose (I look good). Another superintendent spoke more broadly of the differences between men and women as visionaries:

Women pay more attention to detail. They may have a vision and think more deeply about how they are going to achieve that vision and what needs to be put in place to support that vision. Men have a vision and leave the details to others. They are more action-oriented; they want to get there, get there fast, and they don't necessarily think about the fall-out.

Embedded within this comment is a view that suggests that although both men and women can be visionaries, it is the particular way of putting that vision into place that differs between men and women. Women are viewed as more thoughtful about how to achieve the vision and the potential unintended consequences of its application. Men are viewed as being aggressive, quick, and often thoughtless in the process of implementing their vision.

In terms of working style, one superintendent suggested, "females are more conciliatory or more apt to look for consensus, more apt to consult, more apt to be attuned to and aware of impact and ramification." Along with this went the idea that

females try to provide support for people to be successful. Males tend to expect perfection without giving it the support it needs. Females are more apt to help people build on their strengths to avoid repeating a mistake, or helping them understand the nature of their mistakes, whereas males are a little more unforgiving.

Yet another superintendent suggested the following:

Men have tended to be very black and white on issues. They are pushed more easily into an authoritarian style if they feel somewhat threatened by somebody—they switch very quickly. Now women tend to be more involved in shared decision-making, tend to have a greater level of trust in people, tend to be willing to give up some ownership of things and delegate.

All of these comments are embedded with notions of women as the thoughtful supporter and the pacifier. Men are presented in these comments as having unrealistically high expectations (since they do not provide support to go along with their expectations), inflexible, intolerant of other views, individualistic, and aggressive when threatened.

Interestingly, one of the superintendents stated that males were more emotional when dealing with teacher incompetence:

Women are still better at calling a spade a spade. A woman is far more likely to take on a teacher in difficulty and work with her. Men are more willing to put up with things. . . . Men, if they're pushed to having to do it, usually try to find a reason out of it. Men are much more likely to get emotionally involved with the teacher, feeling badly for her . . . almost a reversal of what you would think. Women are known to be caring and nurturing, but when it comes to these kinds of things, I've noticed that the men find it very difficult to pull the trigger. . . . The women tend to see it as part of their responsibility . . . men find it difficult in their heart to look at a person in the face and say you are not cutting it. And they will use every method possible to figure out a way around having to deal with it.

The language illustrates a number of assumptions regarding gender and leadership. First, the idea that women are more attuned to teaching and learning is supported, even if that means dealing with, supporting, and/or dismissing incompetent teachers. Second, some very strong, assertive language was co-opted by the superintendent to illustrate the "tough" nature of dealing with incompetence: "calling a spade a spade," "pulling the trigger," and "you are not cutting it." It would be interesting to undertake a discourse analysis to see whether or not the use of language by men and women changes by virtue of the topic under discussion. The third assumption suggests that men are nonconfrontational, or that they remain afraid of facing an emotional situation, even, perhaps, a woman's tears (since in this case the pronouns used to describe the incompetent teachers were female).

## Discussion

Six topics of talk settled out of the discourse on leadership style: (a) stereotyping language; (b) mixed messages; (c) a blending of styles; (d) isolation; (e) women as dynamic leaders; and (f) males as aggressors.

### Stereotyping Language

The first topic of talk based on leadership style was illustrated by the stereotyping, paternal and possessive language used when male superintendents spoke about women in leadership roles. The use of possessive pronouns was utilized by three of the male superintendents when they referred to "my female administrators" or "my ladies." Such language, although it may be subconscious, implies a possessive, paternal, and dominant role of male superintendent over female administrator, and harkens back to the times when women were the property of males. In all fairness, however, given the focus of the question on gender, none of the men spoke of other male administrators, so it is unclear if those same superintendents



would also have used the terms “my male administrators.” Regardless, however, the use of the possessive language by the superintendents connotes a particular type of leadership—an individualistic leader who holds power over others and who views those people as belonging to him because they work for “his” organization. As well, the use of terms such as “ladies” connotes particular images of femininity within the organization. This idea is reinforced in the findings on mentorship which suggested that males tended to value most highly female personal mentors who could be characterized as the loving, quiet and unassuming Madonna, and female professional mentors who could be characterized as the committed and caring school marm. The fact that one superintendent recognized that women were “allowed” to become assistant superintendents tends to reinforce a paternalistic, and gate-keeping attitude that may still keep women out of the superintendency. Finally, when speaking about the blending of leadership styles, one superintendent spoke first about women leaders and then moved in to a discussion about how leaders could no longer be “weak or weepy or sucky,” which implies that women were apt to behave that way . . . at least in the past. This same superintendent suggested that male and female leadership styles have blended, and that as females have become “tougher” males have become more “feminine.” The superintendent elaborated on what he meant by “feminine” but did not elaborate on what he meant by “tougher.” Presumably, the latter term explains itself, and perhaps the superintendent felt that the first term needed to be elaborated upon so that males were not associated with being “weak or weepy or sucky.”

### **Mixed Messages**

A second topic of talk from male superintendents occurred over the mixed messages regarding the question of whether or not males and females had different leadership styles. Male superintendents spoke to “perceptions” regarding the differences in male and female leadership styles, which in effect generalized the question. Three of the five men responded that they did see some differences in the leadership styles of men and women. Traits mentioned supported the idea that women have a more feminine style of leadership, although one of the men suggested that the women with whom he has worked are often more analytical, which is more often attributed to a masculinized ethic of justice than the feminized ethic of care (Noddings, 1984). One of the superintendents had noticed that women tend to have appropriate qualifications, which is supported in the Manitoba data available regarding the graduation rates of women with masters degrees in educational administration. Another of the five male superintendents indicated that women faced obstacles in their roles because of their gender; another

acknowledged that women are “allowed” to be assistant superintendents, which implies that women are not “allowed” to be superintendents. Although such findings have been documented in other studies that have examined women in leadership, the data here represent awareness by male superintendents who have not generally been included as participants in many of the studies on women in leadership.

### **A Blending of Styles**

The third topic of talk spoken by three male (60%) and three female superintendents (75%) included the perception that the leadership styles of men and women have begun to blend. Whereas men suggested that leadership was based on personal belief and that effective leadership was not based on gender, the female respondents suggested that there were differences, but they had minimized over time. Terms like, “the old regime is changing” connote the idea of a boys’ club operating at the superintendent level, and men mentioned that “that era was basically a time for the boys to get together and hear stories . . . they’d butter themselves up for a couple of days and vent like hell and then go back to work. But there’s a shift happening.” Although the shift was viewed positively by respondents, two female superintendents intimated that this blend was not always positive, as it sometimes meant that females had to become more like men, or that females indulged in behaviors that were unbecoming to them. This observation suggests that women may have their own socially constructed gendered notions of how women should behave.

### **Isolation**

The fourth topic of talk alluded to a sense of isolation and lack of support experienced in the early stages of the female superintendents’ careers. Discourse revolved around the awkwardness of working with males who did not know how to socialize with female superintendents, fear of asking for support due to worries that they would be laughed at, pressure to take on masculine characteristics to be perceived as being effective, a lack of networking between and isolation from other female superintendents, and feeling like they had to be experts at their positions in order to prove their worth. None of the males in the study alluded to factors such as these, but it would be interesting to find out if males new to their position also had these feelings of insecurity. Some of the women indicated they had to take on masculine characteristics (being tough, not needing help, acting individualistically, having expert knowledge) to succeed. Two points become evident: (a) as long as female superintendents do not maintain relationships with each other, they will not become supports for each other or for new

females who may benefit from the mentorship of an organized group of female superintendents; and (b) it would appear that at least some of the female superintendents believe that there is a socially constructed masculinized standard of leadership in Manitoba to which they feel pressure to conform.

### **Women as Dynamic Leaders**

The fifth topic of talk revolved around female superintendents' views of the leadership styles of women. Only one woman outwardly recognized a danger in essentializing the leadership styles of all women similarly, or in illustrating differences from men. Three female superintendents spoke of the blending of styles between males and females. However, even with these points as qualifiers, the female superintendents suggested that they worked towards shared leadership, one superintendent suggested that sometimes shared leadership was spearheaded for an instrumental purpose ("it makes me look good"). In general, women superintendents viewed women leaders as visionary and thoughtful, conciliatory and consultative, supportive and collaborative. They were also described as being more responsible in matters of teaching and learning. These findings are evidenced in other studies that have examined the leadership styles of women (Brunner, 2000a; Chase, 1995; Gilligan, 1982; Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, & Steale, 1996; Pounder, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999). However, the findings on mentorship offer a more dynamic view of women in leadership. When the female superintendents were asked to describe actual female mentors, they described women who utilized masculine and feminine traits in their leadership style. Perhaps the discrepancy can be explained by the nature of the question itself. By asking men and women to speak to differences in styles by gender, the question may have in fact brought to mind socially constructed images of masculine and feminine leadership traits. In this way, the question itself may have set up the dichotomous standards in the minds of the respondents, and they responded accordingly in their talk, even though their actual experiences with mentors illustrate that "real" human beings tend to exhibit some overlap in masculine and feminine styles in particular situations or overall.

### **Males as Aggressors**

The final topic of talk related to the understandings women had of male leaders. Only one of the superintendents qualified her words by suggesting that she could not essentialize her comments to all men or all women. The comments relayed by women supported the idea that they believed there is a hyper-masculinized leadership style to which most male superintendents conform. Just as male superintendents used language on mentorship that

perpetuated socially constructed stereotypes of women, female superintendents used language that perpetuated socially constructed stereotypes of men. Given the fact that women have fought hard against having to conform to stereotypical social constructions, it is unfortunate that the hyper-masculinized social constructions of male leadership still hold such sway. This finding contrasts with the findings on mentorship whereby female superintendents described many male mentors as being caring, compassionate advocates for children. It might be that the question itself once again set up a dichotomy based on social constructions to which these women responded accordingly. If such was the case, however, it begs the question of why male responses to female mentors hinged on stereotypical imagery when gender was not specifically a factor in the mentorship questions.

## Conclusion

A discourse analysis of the narratives of male and female superintendents yielded interesting results regarding the gendered nature of superintendent leadership. It appears from the narratives that the experiences of female superintendents in Manitoba are comparable to the findings in other studies on women and the superintendency (Bell, 1995; Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000b, 2003; Grogan, 1996; Kamler & Shakeshaft, 1999; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Skrla et al., 2000; Tallerico, 2000). Many of the responses from male and female superintendents recognize that women have faced gender bias, have had to conform to masculinized social constructions of leadership, and have utilized a style of leadership that includes an emphasis on shared leadership, collaborative processes, and a focus on teaching and learning. Although males were more apt to speak about perception rather than their personal views, they did describe many of the characteristics spoken of by females (with a few exceptions), and included the fact that females were often more highly qualified than males, yet tended to face more obstacles because of their gender. It could very well be that their recognition of "perception" is in fact a recognition of the socially constructed nature of leadership. However, by distancing themselves from the perception in their talk, men did not have to directly state whether or not they agreed with those social constructions.

In terms of future implications, Gadamer (2002) advocates that people must communicate with each other for the purposes of sharing and refining meaning. Foucault (1980) suggested that it is in communication with one another that people learn to clarify their ideas and construct a renewed sense of reality. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that social interaction plays a

fundamental role in learning, particularly through the use of language. Language, then, can not only perpetuate old social constructions; it can also help to generate new ones. According to Vygotsky (1978), the zone of proximal development can be understood as the zone at the edge of one's established understandings. This is the place in one's human consciousness where new knowledge can be extended and/or created. Shields and Edwards (2005) contended that "[d]ialogic understanding holds rich promise for the unique context and goals of educational leaders. This promise arises from the development of new knowledge, new modes of reasoning, and the potential for mutual action" (p. 83). In Bakhtin's (1986) view, it is through social interaction and dialogue that such learning is piqued.

What this means is that authentic conversations (Clark, 2001) regarding gender assumptions must be generated among superintendents, so that such dialogue can stimulate the learning necessary to change social constructions regarding leadership styles. However, such conversations require trust and develop over time. Fortunately, the seeds of this learning already exist in Manitoba. There are female superintendents across the province who have developed trusting work relationships with male superintendents, primarily because there are only 37 public school divisions in the entire province, and the strong provincial organization, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents offers conferences as well as regional superintendents' meetings that bring these professionals together regularly. If authentic conversations regarding gender assumptions could be spurred among female and male superintendents, perhaps the essentializing social constructions of leadership styles mentioned by both male and female superintendents would lessen. According to Shields and Edwards (2005), four types of knowledge can be constructed during dialogic interaction. These are: (a) knowledge about how others perceive a particular subject; (b) knowledge that the other gains about you and how you perceive a particular subject; (c) knowledge that is generated as the two views are synthesized; and (d) knowledge that one gathers about one's self in terms of one's prejudices and situatedness, and the more nuanced (and changed) understanding of the subject as a result of the process. The idea is not without its pitfalls, however, since there are so few women in the superintendency that their views may be as easily ostracized as accepted in an overt (and generally uncomfortable) discussion on gender. Perhaps a better idea would be to spur an authentic conversation on the role requirements of the superintendency, with an attendant discussion on how male and female superintendents have utilized their leadership styles to fulfill those requirements. This idea was supported by one of the male superintendents who suggested that the environment

was more inclusive today; there's more female representation certainly and there's more cross-group representation so it is opening up. I think there is a kind of opening up of the minds around these types of issues and of the type of leadership we're looking for.

In a discussion such as this, new understandings of practice may be constructed, and the zone of proximal development could expand as superintendents learn from and about the multiple leadership styles, both feminine and masculine, exhibited by female and male superintendents. For in the end, what is necessary is an avoidance of social constructions of unidimensionality in the styles of either sex.

Critical theorists suggest that deconstruction is one of the first steps toward reshaping the power structures and knowledge claims of our society (Lees, 1995; Starratt, 2001). Along with the clarity that comes from deconstruction, can come a commitment and a moral obligation to social and cultural transformation (Lees, 1995; Slater, 1994; Starratt, 1993, 2001; Tierney, 1989). However, unless those who, often unknowingly, perpetuate those knowledge claims recognize how their cultural assumptions perpetuate what is unjust and what is worthwhile, little will change. Dialogue becomes the means to spur this recognition, deconstruct past social constructions, and reframe new social transformations.

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# There's No Place Like Home? The Effects of Childhood Themes On Women's Aspirations Toward Leadership Roles

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This qualitative study explores the impact of childhood themes on women's aspirations toward leadership as suggested by the Eccles Model of Achievement Related Choices. Using intensity sampling, the research solicits childhood gender-related experiences of women in leadership and non-leadership roles through interviews, focus groups, check lists, self-esteem measures and journaling. Using a phenomenological approach, themes prevalent in the childhood homes of the participants are identified, coded, sorted and compared. The findings indicate that the messages sent to the participants about their own capabilities and the expectations their parents held for them are of greatest impact. These messages form the women's values regarding education, career choice and leadership potential.

Dorothy's words in the 1939 MGM silver screen adaptation of L. Frank Baum's tale *The Wizard of Oz* (as she is about to click her heels and leave the Emerald City) should be a cause of concern for all women. After her victory over the wicked witch, her battle with the haunted forest and her confrontation with the winged monkeys, she tells Glinda, the good witch, and the Tin Man how the experience has changed her. When the Tin Man asks what she has learned, she states, "If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own back yard" (Warner Home Video, 1999).

This portrayal of female acquiescence is one of many that permeate our fairy tales, childhood films and television shows. These gender-biased messages are peppered with themes of dependence and helplessness. Although they may be subliminal, they are in our homes, our libraries and

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our schools, through the words we use, and the roles we play. These themes of female helplessness and male dominance continue to influence children, shaping their opinions of male and female roles and influencing their feelings of self-worth, self-esteem, self-confidence and aspirations for leadership. The effects of these messages may play a part in the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles.

Although women have made gains, the shortage of women in leadership remains a far-reaching concern (Addi-Raccah & Ayalon, 2002; Lublin & Brewer, 2003; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). Literature indicates there continues to be an underrepresentation of women leaders in the fields of business, science, medicine, education, research and public office (Addi-Raccah & Ayalon, 2002; Bloot & Browne, 1996; Brunner, Grogan, & Prince, 2003; Coleman, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2003; Johnson, 1999; Lublin & Brewer, 2003; McCabe, 2001; Morrison, White & Van Velsor, 1992; Skinner, Robinson, Brown, & Cates, 1999; Skrla et al., 2000; Tesch, Wood, Helwig, & Nattinger, 1995). Many of these authors indicate that both external and internal barriers may influence this underrepresentation.

External barriers are obstacles to advancement that exist outside the control and influence of the individual seeking advancement and include sex-role stereotyping and discrimination (Hudak, 2001). Gender-bias is defined as prejudice towards a specific gender without just cause. One bias reflects the belief that men make better leaders than women. This misconception can be a fundamental obstacle when selecting leaders (Lublin & Brewer, 2003). Perceived preference for male vs. female leadership style serves as an external barrier for women on the climb (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999). Walby (1990) argues that the criteria used to recruit and hire administrators favor men over women. Hearn (1990) and Shepard (1999) also assert that the external barriers of recruitment, selection, evaluation and reward systems in most school districts ensure that women are less likely to serve in a leadership capacity. Brunner et al. (2003), in their study of women superintendents, state that since men have dominated the role for so long, they have become the standard for the position.

Although external barriers persist, internal barriers are also present. Internal barriers refer to the personal conflicts experienced by females and

the internalization of values which women or society create, choose, exercise, or maintain (Hudak, 2001). Internal barriers such as poor self-image, poor self-esteem, socialized role expectations, and modest career goals that inhibit women from aspiring toward leadership roles are also prevalent (Fitzgerald, 2003; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Golub & Canty, 1982; Hansot & Tyack, 1981; Hudak, 2001; Shakeshaft, 1987; Tindall et al., 1978).

Although research supports the notion that women are successfully advancing in leadership positions, it also shows that they still do not aspire to leadership roles as often as men (Skrla et al., 2000). For example, the superintendency remains male dominated with the selection of females increasing from 11% in 1930 to only 14% in 2000 (Brunner et al., 2003). Causes remain a topic of inquiry. Many are convinced that equality among the sexes, or gender equity, is no longer a critical issue. After all, more women now hold highly influential, high paying jobs (Hudak, 2001). Although this may be true, women in leadership positions still do not approach a level proportionate to men (Hudak, 2001) and continue to remain underpaid as well as underrepresented (Brunner et al., 2003). Supportive evidence suggests problems still exist with how men and women are socialized, creating internal, gender-biased values, which inhibit females from seeking leadership status.

Rhodes (2004), in his book *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*, argues that differences between men and women are “hardwired” genetically, rather than a mindful choice. He asserts that cultural pressures force women to work outside the home when that is not what they really want to do. He discards the idea of socialization, states that men are innately more competitive and aggressive, and considers these characteristics in females as uncommon. However, researchers have explored the socialization factors that influence both sexes, including parental attitudes, post-school opportunities, gender roles portrayed in the media and existing inequalities by gender in the family and workplace (Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin, & Frame, 2001). This study acknowledges that there may be differences in the way we are hardwired but holds that the influence of social factors plays a major role. It is not the purpose of this study to support or negate the fact that differences may exist between males and females; rather this research delves more deeply into the influence of societal factors on the choices women make.

The belief held by men and women that males are dominant and females are helpless begins in childhood. Gender researchers conducted a unique study involving 1,100 elementary school children (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The children were asked what life would be like if they woke up one morning and were the opposite gender. The responses were disturbing.

Forty-two percent of the girls stated something positive about being male. They said they would be more secure, would not worry so much about what people thought about them, would be treated with more respect and would make more money. Ninety-five percent of the boys could not think of one advantage to being female. In fact, 16% of the boys indicated that they would rather commit suicide. One boy responded "I would kill myself right away by setting myself on fire so no one knew" (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 84).

Through words, literature, movies, television and music children are surrounded by themes of male dominance and female helplessness. Of strong impact are the messages containing gender-biased themes sent to children by parents during their formative years. These childhood themes defined as both covert and overt, take hold rapidly and strongly influence the attitudes children carry with them into adulthood and ultimately affect the career choices they make.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

Eccles' (1987, 1994) Theoretical Model of Achievement-Related Choices conceptualizes gender differences in achievement patterns in terms of choice and takes us beyond the question "Why aren't women more like men?" to the question "Why do women and men make the choices they do?" It examines socializers and their impact on women's self-perceptions and capabilities. The purpose of this study is to illuminate the Theoretical Model of Achievement-Related Choices (Eccles, 1994) by exploring the relationship between gender-related childhood themes and women's aspirations toward leadership. This theory purports that the socialization that occurs in a child's formative years strongly impacts adult behavior. In order to explicate this theory, early childhood gender-based messages of women in leadership and non-leadership roles are compared. The goal of this study is two-fold: (a) to identify the themes prevalent in the childhood homes of women in leadership and non-leadership positions, and (b) to determine if there is a relationship between these themes and the participants' aspirations for leadership.

### ***Literature Review***

Theoretical frameworks support the influence of society and culture on the aspirations of women towards leadership positions (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Eccles, 1987; Lewin, 1938; Weiner, 1974). Theorists acknowledge the effects of social and cultural influence on adult behavior (Eccles & Hoffman, 1984; Huston, 1983). Gender theory, socialization theory, and achievement theory attempt to explain the influence of early childhood experiences on

adult career choices: however, these theories fail to take into account the societal influence on the definitions of achievement. Eccles' Expectancy X Value Theory (1987, 1994) acknowledges the influence of socialization on achievement relating specifically to task value and task cost.

The Expectancy X Value Theory (Eccles et al., 1983) is a theoretical model of achievement-related choices that addresses gender differences in educational and career selection. Instead of looking at why women are not more like men, the model theorizes as to why women make the choices that they do, lending support to the effects of socialized internal barriers (Eccles et al., 1983).

The Eccles model links achievement-related beliefs, outcomes, and goals to interpretative systems like causal attributions, to the input of socializers (primarily parents and teachers), to gender role beliefs, to self-perceptions and self-concept, and to one's perceptions of the task itself. The model specifies that the choice to engage in an achievement-related task is the result of two sets of beliefs: the individual's expectations for success (self-confidence) and the extent to which the individual values the task. Task self-confidence and subjective task value are powerfully influenced by gender socialization processes, including messages from parents, teachers, textbooks, and the mass media (Eccles, 1994).

The foundation of the model is based on the interplay of four factors: (a) gender and cultural stereotypes, (b) beliefs and behaviors of the child's primary socializers, (c) the child's self-perceived aptitudes or locus of self-esteem, and (d) the child's experiences related to achievement. These conditions or events are peppered by the child's perceptions and interpretations of these beliefs, expectations, attitudes, gender roles and stereotypes.

Based on this interplay, the child develops an expectation for task success and learns to place a certain value on the task based on these experiences. Each of these factors or themes are assumed to influence both the expectations one holds for future success at the various achievement-related options and the subjective value one attaches to these various options. Therefore, this model predicts that women will most likely apply for positions that they think they can master and that have high task value for them. Women's expectations for success depend on their confidence in their intellectual abilities and on their estimation of the difficulty of the position.

### **Gender-Role Stereotypes**

Gender-role stereotypes are defined as jobs, activities, tasks or expectations attributed to one sex. Gender-role stereotypes can result in ill-conceived

perceptions of the talents or capabilities of the individual. Because men and women are socialized differently, they acquire different self-concepts, different patterns of expectations for success and different values and goals (Eccles, 1994).

Research shows the effects of gender-role stereotypes on career aspirations. Females in educational leadership have increased during the last decade; however, since the education profession is more than 70% female, they remain proportionally underrepresented. Women constitute approximately 14% of the superintendents in the 14,000 U.S. school districts (Brunner et al., 2003; Glass, Björk & Brunner, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). The superintendency continues to top the list of the most gender-stratified executive positions in the country (Björk, 1999; Kawakami, White, & Langer, 2000). Men are 20 times more likely to advance from teaching to the top leadership role in schools than are women (Skrla, 1999). These facts remain even though there are a larger number of female students in educational administration doctoral programs than males (Grogan, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1990).

### **Socializers' Beliefs and Behaviors**

Socializers are individuals who communicate powerful messages about competencies and expectations. The beliefs and behaviors of these individuals can highly affect the beliefs and attitudes regarding the competencies of others through the messages they send (Eccles, 1994).

Research indicates that men are perceived to be more capable of leading than women (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkrantz, 1972). Tindall et al. (1978) found that men were ranked higher by men and by women in terms of leadership in small task groups. Golub and Canty (1982) hypothesized that if sex role expectations influence the assumption of leadership, and if women as well as men believe that women do not make good leaders, they will defer to men whenever men are present. Neither study pursued the dynamics behind these behaviors but only guessed at the forces at play. In both studies, females deferred leadership to males (Golub & Canty, 1982; Tindall et al., 1978).

### **Differential Aptitudes**

Perceptions about one's capabilities and talents can be termed differential aptitudes. A person's self-concept or perceived aptitude for a specific task influences task selection (Eccles, 1994). Perceived self-concept relative to aspirations for leadership has been investigated (Golub & Canty, 1982;

Hansot & Tyack, 1981; Hudak, 2001; Shakeshaft, 1987; Skrla et al., 2000; Tindall et al., 1978). A lack of confidence is a recurring explanation offered for women's underrepresentation in leadership roles. This perceived lack of aptitude affects a woman's motivation to seek leadership positions. As Merrick (2002) stated: "Many women have bought into a self-defeating paradigm: a fear of success, a reluctance to legitimize the exercising of authority, a tendency toward self-minimalization" (p. 95). This reflects the belief that women are faced with barriers that keep them from entering into leadership roles, even with the proven success of the skills they bring to an organization.

### **Previous Achievement-Related Experiences**

Gender roles mandate different primary activities for women and men, and these gender roles influence the definition one has of successful performance of those activities (Eccles, 1994). Research indicates that previous achievement-related experiences send messages of expected success or failure in those areas. Denmark (1993) stated that typical female socialization does not promote leadership ability in the workforce, but instead prepares women for domestic roles as wives and mothers or in lower level traditional jobs. Shakeshaft (1989) asserted that women are limited by societal expectations, parental guidance, self-aspirations, and society's attitude toward appropriate male and female roles. Men, she stated, are socialized to seek professional success while women are socialized to assume the traditional role of homemaker and mother.

The preceding literature review suggests the following research questions for this study:

- What themes were prevalent in the childhood homes of the women participants?
- To what extent did these themes influence attitudes of the participants toward leadership?
- Is there a significant difference between the childhood themes of leaders and non-leaders?

### ***Methodology***

This study utilizes a qualitative methodology based on phenomenology, a search for meaning over a search for rules (Creswell, 1994; Shank, 2002). Qualitative methods humanize situations and focus more on process rather than product. Dilthey (1961) first proposed that we seek *Verstehen*



(understanding) of human beings by empathizing with them. Phenomenology involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Oiler, 1986). In support of the Eccles et al. (1983) and Eccles (1994) Theoretical Model of Achievement-Related Choices, we investigated the influence of early childhood themes on women's aspirations for leadership and non-leadership positions utilizing a qualitative, descriptive approach. Interviews, focus groups, self-esteem measures, gender-message checklists, and journaling were utilized.

### **Research Design**

An intensity sampling was used for selecting the participants. This method, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Patton (1990), involved selecting participants representing "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely . . . but not unusual cases" (Patton, 1990, p. 171). Eight Caucasian participants were selected. Two females held senior positions in business, including a CEO and a bank president. Two held senior positions in education, including a principal and a dean. Of the four non-leaders, two were in education and two were in business. None of the participants anticipated movement in their careers at this life stage.

Each completed an informed consent form and participated in a 90 minute semi-structured interview. The interviews were closer to conversations among colleagues, exploring the research questions, rather than the traditional format of "expert" researcher questioning research "subjects." This collaborative technique has been discussed and supported by many as a successful research interviewing technique (Chirban, 1996; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Lincoln, 1993; McCracken, 1988; Mischler, 1986; Scheurich, 1995).

The study used open-ended interviews, which were tape recorded and later transcribed. The participants journaled by narrating and reflecting on any gender-related experiences they encountered during a two-week period. Journaling, a powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), enabled the participants to take notice of the world around them through a new lens which is key to understanding the world (Shank, 2002).

All completed the 25 items of the short form of the Index of Self-Esteem (ISE), developed by Hudson and Proctor (1976), that measures the evaluative component of self-concept. Scores of the leaders and non-leaders were compared and a gender-message checklist was completed to investigate the themes related to gender present in their childhood homes.

Two 90 to 100 minute focus groups followed, involving both those in leadership roles and those in non-leadership positions. This allowed leaders and non-leaders to compare childhood events illuminating more fully individual experiences and their affect on aspirations and career choices. Focus group prompts elicited individual gender-biased experiences. Member checks were used throughout.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis, data collection, data interpretation, and narrative report writing occurred simultaneously. The information collected from the interviews, journals, focus groups and assessment protocols were sorted into categories (Creswell, 1994). This analysis identified themes, issues, and recurring motifs (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). A coding procedure isolated, counted, and interpreted the themes or categories that formed the basis for the emerging story. The process involved “segmenting” the information (Tesch, 1990), developing “coding categories” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), and “generating categories, themes, or patterns” (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The codes included: EL-Education Leader, BL-Business Leader, EN-Education Non-Leader and BN-Business Non-Leader. Pseudonyms were assigned. Education coding included: D-Doctoral Degree, B-Bachelor Degree, M-Master Degree, HS-High School Diploma, #-highest grade completed. Others included M and F for male and female, Y and N for yes and no, M and D for married or divorced. Table 1 shows participants’ demographic information and educational levels of their parents.

### **Results**

In this study, we examine the impact of childhood themes conveyed by a purposive sample of women relative to the Eccles Model of Achievement-Related Choices (1987, 1994). We discern childhood themes and socializers and the comparative effect of these agents on the adult women’s career choices and perceived options. The data gathered conveyed early life themes and experiences that provided an understanding of the influences of early childhood messages on career choices. Meanings and interpretations are reviewed relative to the key components of the Eccles Model of Achievement Related Choices (1987, 1994).

Table 1

*Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Demographics	EL 1 Mia	EL 2 Linda	BL 1 Kate	BL 2 Millie	EN 1 Tracy	EN2 Karen	BN1 Beth	BN 2 Rose
Education	D	D	B	B	B	M	HS	HS
Career Choice	Director Spec. Ed.	HS Dean	CEO Credit Union	Bank Pres.	Teacher	School Psycho.	Retail	Domestic Engineer
Age	52	45	48	59	45	46	58	47
Marital Status	D	D	D	M	M	M	M	D
# of Children	1	0	2	1	2	2	1	2
Birth Order/# of Siblings	4/6	4/5	3/3	2/2	6/6	2/3	1/2	6/9
Sibling Sex	3 F 3M	2F 3M	1F 2M	1F 1M	4F 2M	2F 1M	2F	6F 3M
Mother's Education	B	HS	HS	HS	HS	HS	HS	9th
Father's Education	HS	B	HS	HS	6th	HS	HS	9th

## **Gender-Role Stereotypes**

### ***Male and Female Roles***

Within gender-role stereotypes, several sub-themes emerge: (a) male/female roles; (b) dominance, submissiveness, and helplessness; and (c) occupational choices. The literature shows that by age five, children have clearly defined gender-role stereotypes regarding appropriate behaviors and traits (Huston, 1983). Parents can either encourage or discourage the individual from considering or dispelling gender-role stereotypes. In addition, children appear to monitor their behaviors and aspirations in terms of these stereotypes (Eccles & Hoffman, 1984; Huston, 1983). These gender-role stereotypes were abundant in all but one of the eight participant's childhood homes.

Rose's (BN2) experiences regarding expected gender-roles in her home is typical of the stories told by the participants. Rose's (BN2) parents sent her messages of very specific male and female expected roles in the household, ones that were strongly gender-biased. She explains, "We all had chores. The boys did the lawn and the garbage but they could run off any time they wanted. The girls stayed home until the chores were done. My father would book us for babysitting jobs. If we had plans we had to cancel them." The females in Rose's (BN 2) home were sent a clear message that their *place* was maintaining the household. The boys' script included independence and the girls' script did not.

The gender-related messages sent to the women of the leader group are characterized by different themes. Mia (EL1) states, "I think gender roles were subtle. My dad was not a handyman. My mom could take apart a lamp and a toaster and put them back together. Everybody was different in my family and no one fit into gender stereotypes." Social agents can either encourage or discourage individuals from developing gender-role stereotypic beliefs. Mia was raised in a home where gender role deviant options were legitimized. This environment, free from gender-biased messages, permeated into her adult life. She stated "As an adult, I have always fought those gender stereotypes. I have always done guy things just to show I could do it."

Although the messages sent regarding male and female roles differed, the expected role in the family appears to have little to do with the individuals' aspirations later in life. Engaging in typical male-female tasks and responsibilities in the home did not inhibit a woman from aspiring to educational and career achievement. Other messages appear to have a greater effect.

**Dominance, Submissiveness and Helplessness**

The themes of male dominance, female submissiveness and helplessness are evident in the research data. Beth (BN1), a member of the non-leader group, grew up seeing her mother as an “ogre” and her father as the submissive parent. Beth was belittled and criticized by her parents; she received approval only when she cleaned, cooked or did laundry. She explains, “My father was just a delightful man but my mother was overpowering, overbearing, wicked and controlling. I think she took his self-worth away. They were both critical and demanding.” Beth’s scripts include a very dominant mother who did not foster independence or self-worth in her children. The male-female roles she experienced carried atypical themes of female-dominance and male-helplessness.

The theme of parental dominance did not necessarily indicate gender-bias or social scripts dictating helplessness or submissiveness. Kate (BL1), the CEO of a credit union, experienced gender-stereotypes in the roles of her mother and father, but believes that expectations for all siblings were the same and did not differ because of gender. “My dad was definitely dominant. He would come home, have a Manhattan and watch TV. My mom would prepare meals. She did everything and was definitely submissive. Even with this, I wasn’t treated any differently than my brothers.”

Millie (BL2), the president of a bank, shared a different story. She revealed a family environment reflecting a strong work ethic and maternal strength. She saw her mother as the parent in command. She explained, “She was the dominant parent. My father was very giving. He never said no to me. My mother was tougher. The combination worked. She was a strong influence in our lives.” Dominant mothers and dominant fathers were mixed equally among the groups. The person *in charge* did not appear to affect the career goals of the participants studied. The messages, however, sent by these individuals involving the capabilities and expectations of the females had a major impact.

**Occupational Choice**

The Eccles (1994) model emphasizes parents as role models. They are sources of reinforcement, providers of information, and primary resources for opportunities for their children. Occupational choice, then, can be greatly influenced by parents’ gender-stereotypic role expectations. Karen (EN2) shared that her parents expected her to go to college. She was also expected to enter into the field of education or nursing. Her brother was expected to enter into law. Beth (BN1), the product of a highly critical home environment without encouragement for higher education or a career, works in a home furnishings store. Her occupational choice mirrors her expected

role in her childhood home. In her current household she maintains the same role as she did when she was a child. She receives personal gratification for keeping a clean home, cooking elaborate meals and decorating exquisitely. Beth's occupational choice reflects a gender-stereotypic role that was reinforced during her childhood. Beth's experiences show the force of family processes (e.g., parents' role modeling, attitudes, and behaviors) that contributed to her occupational identities and choices. This scenario supports the primacy of parents in shaping children's career aspirations (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993; Grotevant & Cooper, 1988).

Tracy (EN1) attributed career guidance to parochial school and her extended family. She relates that her mother's side valued education. Her father's side, however, expressed that it was "ludicrous that a female would get an education." Tracy, a teacher with no aspirations for administrative leadership, has shied away from leadership paths and admitted to being fearful of such endeavors. She is submissive to her husband and her son although she reports feeling this is wrong. The input of her parents, their gender-role beliefs, and their perceptions of her self-worth have all played an important role in Tracy's life choices.

## **Socializers' Beliefs and Behaviors**

### **Perceived Expectations**

Within the socializers' beliefs and behaviors, both perceived expectations and perceived field of options emerged as sub-themes. Although the majority of the participants' parents did not graduate from college, their educational aspirations for their children played a critical role in their educational and career choices. Beth (BN1) recalled no direct influence from her parents. "My parents had no career aspirations for me. They never suggested college." Tracy's (EN1) social reality was one of self-preservation and survival. The messages sent to her by her mother were selfish but delivered the nuance of being strong and self-sufficient. She shared her experiences during her focus group discussion. "My father never had any interest in my schooling. My mother pushed me to go to college so she could collect the Social Security check." Tracy's (EN1) encouragement by her mother to go to college was a result of her mother's need for financial help rather than for career aspirations for her daughter. The childhood theme of self-preservation also contributed to Tracy's choice to reach a level of education that would enable her to improve her life condition. She selected education because it fit the stereotypic gender-role schema. She reported she did not feel capable of leadership and saw men as more able to lead. She states "We were brought up to believe that women are here to wait on the men."

### **Perceived Field of Options**

A person's perceived field of options is defined as the educational and career opportunities believed to be available. The interplay of one's perceived options, expectancies for success at those options, short and long range goals and gender-role self schema are influenced by the behaviors and goals of one's socializers. The options presented as available, attainable and appropriate were ingrained in the messages sent to the women participants and strongly influenced their career choices.

Kate (BL1) acknowledges strong parental support for college and open career options, a strong theme among the participants currently in leadership roles. "It was expected for all of us to go to school. I was ready to graduate and we began to talk about college. They let us all grow in our own directions." Millie (BL2) was provided encouragement and support to "go where no woman has ever gone before." Mia's (EL1) story is another demonstration of open options and encouragement. Although she selected education as her career path, she expressed an interest in politics and leadership at an early age.

Parents may influence options considered through less direct, more psychological means. Providing or withholding support for various alternatives can have a lasting impact (Eccles, 1987). Linda (EL2) states, "I was going to be a teacher since I was old enough to talk. My parents bought me the chalkboard and everything I needed for playing school." These messages had a strong effect.

Five of the eight participants had parents with college aspirations for them and the same five completed college. Once again, this supports the Eccles' theory, linking the individual's expectations for success and the importance or value the individual attaches to the various options perceived as available by the individual. Socializers, primarily parents and teachers, are assumed to influence both the expectations one holds for future success at the various achievement-related options and the subjective value one attaches to the options. These expectations and the value attached to the various options, in turn, influence choice among these options according to Eccles' (1994) theory.

## **Differential Aptitudes**

### **Perceptions of Competency**

Within differential aptitudes, perceptions of competency and general self-schema were sub-themes. Perception of competency is defined as the opinion one has regarding one's capabilities. If females think more effort is needed to succeed as an engineer or a doctor than as an elementary teacher, or a nurse,

they may opt for the more female-stereotypical occupations, especially if they place high importance on having a career compatible with their anticipated family roles (Eccles, 1987). Self-esteem or self-confidence, then, may be better termed expectations for success. Eccles (1987) theorizes that this expectation for success is related to the socialization process. A woman's self-esteem typically may not suffer because she chooses one occupation over another because she is socialized to accept certain roles.

In order to assess perceived competency or self-esteem, all participants completed the Index of Self-Esteem (ISE). Seven of the eight participants' scores indicated a positive self-concept or self-satisfaction within the groups. When the scores of the total group were examined, a difference was evident in three of the scores. The scores did not indicate significantly low self-esteem; however, the participants with the lowest self-esteem ratings described their mothers in negative terms including such descriptors as weak, submissive, critical, or docile. They described their fathers as the dominant parent. Because females are typically stereotyped as less competent than males, incorporation of gender-role stereotypes, in the case of their mothers, into one's self concept could lead girls to have less confidence in their general intellectual abilities than boys. This, in turn, could lead girls to have lower expectations for success at difficult academic and vocational activities (Eccles, 1987).

This research indicates an association between parents' perceptions of their children's skills and the adults' own perceptions of their skills and self-concepts. Although the participants' scores on the ISE indicate no significant self-esteem problems, the statements they made indicate otherwise, supporting the strong impact of childhood themes on the women's beliefs regarding what they can and cannot do.

Tracy (EN1), whose home was characterized by a very dominant, abusive father and submissive mother, summarizes this belief when she states, "I would have liked to have gone into either medicine or nursing, but I didn't have enough confidence. Family support just wasn't there." Tracy pursued teaching and shied away from leadership. Tracy's score on the self-esteem measure reflects the lowest self-esteem. She described herself as "withdrawn" and is currently on medication for depression.

### **General Self-Schema**

Self-schema is defined as a person's self-image. This image consists of many component parts including the schema regarding the proper roles of men and women and their short and long-term goals. This self-schema can change over time as goals and family roles change.



Karen's (EN2) story demonstrates this concept. She was sent the message that women are teachers or nurses and men are leaders. She stated that she would "rather work for a man than a woman," sharing that women are "much too critical." Karen's assimilation of socialized gender role schema had a powerful effect. She rejected activities classified as typically male.

Along with parental beliefs and expectations, task value also plays an important role. Eccles (1987, 1994) acknowledged that career options may not be considered because they do not fit the individual's gender role schema. Denmark (1993) stated that typical female socialization prepares women for domestic roles as wives and mothers or in lower level traditional jobs in the workforce. Both Karen (EN2) and Tracy (EN1) selected occupations where they could balance the roles of motherhood and a career. Their self-schema included aspirations for higher education and a career; however, these aspirations were peppered with the socialized gender-responsibilities of homemaker and mother.

## **Previous Achievement-Related Experiences**

### **Parental Relationships**

Parental relationships and affective memories emerge as sub-themes. Parental beliefs regarding gender-roles and career expectations influenced the life choices of the participants. Linda (EL2) views her mother as dedicating her life to her children and as a nurturing individual. Millie (BL2) witnessed a strong work ethic from her mother and a message of equality. She states, "My mother was a strong figure in my life. She worked so we could go to private high schools and colleges. She was a central figure. She taught us never to quit." Millie (BL2) saw her as strong, valuing both education and career. This gender message played an important role in Millie's (BL2) educational and career aspirations.

The maternal perceptions of the leader group all portray a positive image. The perceptions of others were quite different. Tracy (EN1) describes her mother as a survivor but sees her as powerless. "My mother was a very weak person. When there was a crisis in my family, my older sister came to the rescue." Beth (BN1) reveals damaging perceptions of her mother. "My mother was wicked and critical. She was controlling and diminished my father's self-worth. I never respected or admired her."

The women who view their mothers as supportive and nurturing show the greatest achievement-related gains. All four of the leader-groups describe their mothers in positive terms. They completed college and are working in professional management fields. The women who see their mothers in a

negative way have neither achieved management positions nor see themselves doing so.

### **Affective Memories**

Affective memories are defined as those emotional recollections that have impacted the individual. Mortimer, Lorence and Kumka (1986) found that higher levels of emotional support and attachment to parents have been linked to greater career maturity. These findings further suggest that certain affective dimensions of the parent-child relationship might modify the messages that parents transmit to their children, children's receptivity to these messages, or both.

Mia (EL1) saw her father as strong and supportive of her mother as she entered the teaching field later in life. "My mother went to Duquesne to get a teaching degree. It took her 10 years. It was interesting watching my dad support her efforts." Mia's (EL1) experiences with her parents were positive and socialized her to view her world and its options without gender-bias. This gender-role deviance contributes strongly to Mia's gender-free perceptions of career options and opportunities.

### **Aspirations Toward Leadership**

The Eccles Theory (1987, 1994) legitimizes females' choices as valuable on their own terms rather than as a reflection or distortion of male choices or values; however, this research indicates that, for many, these choices are based on a somewhat distorted perception of the female's true competencies.

Women in this study who view their mothers as strong, independent, hard-working and successful completed college and pursued leadership positions. Mia (EL1) and Linda (EL2) selected the field of education, primarily female-dominated, and aspired to and obtained positions in a still male-dominated administrative arena. Millie (BL2) climbed her way to the top position in the banking business. Mia (EL1) stated her life "would have been easier" if she were male, reflecting on the gender-issues she faced as she entered into educational administration. "I was the first female administrator in the area. I didn't get invited to 'guy' things such as golf outings." Although she did enter into the leadership arena of education, Mia expressed a desire early on to go into politics but ultimately did not.

Linda (EL2) reflects that her career selection was based on a female-typical choice. "I probably would have done something different because men weren't elementary teachers then." Linda's movement into educational leadership, a predominately male-dominated arena, reflects her early parental messages of college and career expectations. She attributes her movement

into leadership as a result of male administrators who saw her potential and mentored her. Millie (BL2) sees her womanhood as contributing to her leadership success. "I would hope that if I were a man I could have accomplished as much as I have as a woman." Although Millie denies being "handed anything," she attributes much of her success in the banking business to male mentors who saw her potential and encouraged her along the way. She describes difficulties she faced entering into a predominately male-dominated field. "I was the first college-educated female hired." She experienced isolation and jealousy until she was able to prove her capabilities. "I ate lunch by myself. The women resented me."

The non-leader group envisions a different scenario had they been born male. Karen (EN2), who shied away from leadership positions, states, "If I were born male, I would probably be a lawyer. I would probably have been steered into management." Karen envisions herself capable of leadership if she were a man. She states that she "does not want that responsibility" and is fearful of "staff supervision" and "speaking in front of groups." She does not see those fears existing if she were male.

Beth (BN1) evidences self-deprecating comments in her vision of being born male. "Since I am not easily educated, I don't think I would be successful in administration. As a male I probably would have been educated and very successful." Beth equates maleness with the ability to be educated. These projections on being male support this research in its search to ferret out the impact of childhood themes on women's aspirations for leadership.

## **Discussion & Conclusions**

The results illuminate the relationship between early childhood themes and the adult women's aspirations for educational and vocational achievement. It supports Eccles' (1987, 1994) theory that women's aspirations for leadership are not sex based differences, but differ among women based on the influences of early childhood experiences, primarily parental expectations. The findings suggests that these messages are a result of the parents' expectations and not parental modeling of typical gender-roles. That is, when the parents endorsed gender-biased themes of female helplessness or submissiveness, the females see themselves as helpless or submissive as they entered into adulthood; they also made educational, career and leadership choices based on these socialized competencies. When the themes of female heartiness, independence, and expected educational achievement are prevalent, the women's educational, career and leadership choices reflect those themes. The findings of this research are discussed relative to the themes or messages that prevailed in the childhood homes of the women participants.

### **Childhood Messages Regarding Career Options Highly Impact Career Choice**

The research supports Eccles' (1987, 1994) theory suggesting that women enter into occupational fields that are closely tied to parental messages regarding their place and expected capabilities. Five of the eight participants were expected to go to college. These five achieve that expectation. Two of the eight were socialized for domestic roles and pursued careers linked to this area. Participants selected domestic fields when those areas were reinforced in their childhood homes. Higher education and professional careers were pursued when viewed as viable options.

The impact of childhood messages as evidenced in the Eccles (1987, 1994) theory and as clarified in this research, is supported by the developmental theory of Super (1990). The theory recognizes the family as a strong influence on self-concept and on career maturity. Empirical literature also gives credence to the primacy of parents in shaping children's career aspirations (Grotevant & Cooper, 1988; Mortimer et al., 1986; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984). Much of the literature, however, focuses on the structural features of the family, such as socioeconomic status or parental occupation, rather than the parental socialization process (Grotevant & Cooper, 1988; Schulenberg et al., 1984). Findings of this sociological literature indicate that the parents' level of education and occupational status are associated with children's educational and occupational aspirations. This is not a finding of the current study. Family processes including expectations, attitudes and behaviors have proven to have impacted educational and career aspirations and not parental levels of education or career choice. In fact, only two participants had a parent who earned a college degree. Fourteen of the 16 parents represented in this study had a high school education or less.

### **Females are More Likely to Choose Higher Education When Parental Expectations Include this Aspiration**

Eccles' (1994) model acknowledges the influence of one's parents, teachers, role models, and peers on educational and occupational decision-making. The research acknowledges the importance of these intimates but has identified the role of parents as the strongest socializer impacting lifelong career decision-making choices. Five of the participants state that college was not an option; it was an expectation, and they lived up to that expectation. Parental expectations have been shown to have an over-riding effect on the adult woman's career selection and her ability to move into leadership roles. Several investigators have documented a positive link between parents' expectations for their children's eventual educational attainment and the children's own educational expectations and self-concepts

(Halle, Kurtz-Costes & Mahoney, 1997; Phillips, 1987). This research and the research of Eccles (1987, 1994) confirm the powerful influence of parental expectations on educational attainment.

It is critical to note that the gender-roles played by the parents of the participants did not indicate a pattern in the educational and career outcomes of the women interviewed. All eight participants reported the typical male-female gender-roles of father as breadwinner and mother as homemaker as apparent in their homes. This stereotypical role modeling did not impact the women's educational or occupational choices. The educational level of the parent also did not predict the educational achievement of the child. What influenced them significantly were the *expectations* that their parents had for them. If the parents expected higher educational goals, the women attained them. If the parents did not place *value* on higher education attainment, neither did the children. The groundwork for future leadership aspirations was woven into the messages sent about viable career options, educational worth, and themes of female success and independence.

### **Women are Less Likely to Aspire to Leadership Roles When Sent Messages of Female Helplessness**

The research shows a relationship between the childhood themes regarding the role of the female and themes of helplessness and submissiveness, either sent directly or observed in mothers. The three participants, who grew up in homes where females were taught to be submissive, did not aspire to leadership roles. The non-leaders have also transmitted the notion of females as submissive in their current homes. Research demonstrates that sexual inequality still occurs between husbands and wives and reveals itself in the different ways that parents treat male and female children (Atwood, 2001). This parental bias puts daughters at a disadvantage.

According to Dowling (1981), helplessness is a socialized typical feminine behavior. Tibbetts (1980) suggests that women have been socialized to experience satisfaction and achievement vicariously by functioning in a supportive or submissive capacity. Tracy (EN1), Beth (BN1), and Rose (BN2) were socialized to experience satisfaction by taking care of household chores. Tracy (EN1) and Rose (BN2) were also socialized with the idea that men are in charge. These theoretical constructs all support the Eccles' Theory (1987, 1994) showing the consequences of socialized helplessness on women's career choice making ability. Dowling (1981) terms this the "Cinderella Complex," stating that women learn early in life not to have high self-esteem and to be helpless. This behavior, as illuminated, presents a conflict for the female as she attempts to enter and advance within a male-dominated hierarchy.

### **Women are More Likely to Choose Careers that They are Socialized to Value**

Women make decisions based on the value they *learn* to place on certain tasks and on their *learned* confidence in their ability to complete the task. These beliefs have been strongly influenced by parental expectations and impact women's movements into leadership positions. Four of the participants entered into the field of education because it was an expected choice for women. Three participants explained that they valued their career selection because it allowed them to balance a career with motherhood. Two participants remain in education and one in house cleaning because of the flexibility those careers provide in managing dual roles. This research supports Eccles' Theory (1994) showing that choice regarding career decisions is based on a balance between task value and task cost. The choice options, however, are strongly influenced by socializers, primarily parents.

Shakeshaft (1989) asserted that women are limited by societal expectations, parental guidance, self-aspirations and society's attitude toward appropriate male and female roles. Men are socialized to seek professional success, while women are socialized to assume the traditional role of homemaker and mother. Finding a balance, then, between family and career remains a compelling task for women. Since females are traditionally expected to manage the home and the children, aspirations for a career with additional leadership responsibilities may not be valued over family obligations. Marriage and family responsibilities are commonly accepted as one of the most significant barriers to female movement into leadership. Women are taught to value the domestic role and are unable to maintain a balance between the two, therefore, abandon plans for career advancement.

### **A Woman's Self-esteem is Directly Related to Her Perceptions of Her Mother**

The research brought to light the subtle, yet deep, effects of negative maternal memories on the adult women's self-esteem. When memories were compared to the scores on the Index of Self-Esteem, a relationship was evident. The women who used negative referents to describe their mothers were also the women whose scores on the ISE indicated lowest self-esteem. These women were members of the non-leader group. Perceived maternal helplessness or submissiveness affected the beliefs these women held regarding their own strengths, talents and educational worth.

According to Betz (1994), the important variable influencing individuals' perceived range of career options is not their measured abilities, but their beliefs concerning their competence in various domains. If the women in this study received negative female references and messages of female

helplessness and submissiveness, it would be postulated that they would develop low self-efficacy expectations in regards to career choice and leadership aspirations. The results of this investigation supports this point, at least in our limited sample. The messages sent to Tracy (EN1), Beth (BN1), and Rose (BN2) resulted in lower self-esteem scores and no expectations for leadership roles.

### **Mentors are Needed for Women to Move Into Leadership Roles**

The educational and career paths chosen by the leaders were strongly influenced by their parents' expectations. The groundwork was set by the themes of achievement permeating their homes. Mentors persuaded the women to take that first step into leadership. Encouragement and confidence in the women's abilities were paramount in the women's choice to *opt in* to leadership. The leaders had strong parental encouragement. Their success in leadership was a result of the interplay between their abilities and their capabilities as perceived by their male mentors.

### **Future Research**

The research findings make salient the importance of parental messages on the educational and career choices of adult women. The implications are quite complex and reveal the need for further investigation in many areas. Further investigations illuminating the gender messages in today's homes are recommended. A qualitative study involving young parents may be useful in assessing the messages present in early childhood homes. Identifying children's gender-role perceptions may also be useful in further revealing the messages regarding gender sent to children.

The findings also suggest further investigation into the relationship between parental expectations and women's leadership aspirations. Given the apparent link between perceived self-worth and movement into administration, a more comprehensive look at self-esteem may be enlightening. An attempt to measure the individual's perceived competencies rather than feelings of worth may ferret out the socialization influence and give a more complete picture of the women's assessments of personal abilities.

To develop effective intervention strategies, researchers need to look to theoretical models of sex typing, stereotyping, and discrimination. To date, no known research is available that investigates models of attitude change and children (Bigler, 1999). Cognitive-developmental perspectives might be useful in examining the cognitive processes involved in the revision of children's gender-role beliefs (Liben & Bigler, 1987). Understanding the

cognitive processes involved in the re-teaching of revised gender messages seems crucial for designing effective intervention strategies.

### **Implications for Leadership Development**

Using the dimensions of the Eccles Theory (1987, 1994) as a guide, recommendations for change follow. Gender-role stereotypes, socializers' beliefs and behaviors, differential aptitudes, and achievement-related experiences are discussed across various life sectors. These variables could articulate the changes that may encourage women to *opt in* to leadership.

Bigler (1999) stated that gender stereotyping is both pervasive among children and resistant to change. This research also shows the lasting impact of the socialized gender-bias that takes root in early childhood. Changing the parental messages sent to children will not be an easy task. Parent education is necessary to inform parents of the impact of words, actions, and expectations. Efforts focused on addressing new parents through school systems may be a first step. By creating a gender-fair environment in schools and communicating messages of female strength and heartiness, we may begin to weaken the messages of gender-bias existing in the homes of young children.

In order to change how girls perceive themselves and their capabilities, we need to provide new social scripts that illuminate the strengths and talents of the female gender. *Social Stories Unlimited* (Gray, 1995) is an approach to teaching social skills through improved social understanding. Social stories can send gender-free messages and themes of educational and career options to children. Delivering new, gender-fair messages regarding abilities and career options is paramount.

Administrators have a responsibility to facilitate a school environment in which all stakeholders know that equity is a high priority. Climate, curriculum, instruction and career options are areas where gender equity must take precedence. Mewborn (1999) suggested solutions for creating a gender-equitable school environment. She suggested replacing instructional materials that contain evidence of gender bias including: sexist language, photos or stereotypical roles. Career days are suggested as a means of opening options to girls. Instruction needs to be tailored to provide equitable teaching practices.

### **Summary**

Using the Eccles Model of Achievement Related Choices (1987, 1994) as a guide, the study ascertains the effects of early childhood themes on women's



aspirations toward leadership. It illuminates the relationship between the messages women receive and the educational and career choices they make. Themes prevalent in the women's early childhood homes regarding gender-roles, expectations for success, and career aspirations influence the choices the women make in their personal and career paths. Role models in regards to parental education or parental careers does not prove to affect the women's educational or vocational aspirations and neither did gender-stereotyped role models of the parents. The messages sent to these women about their own capabilities, and the expectations their parents held for them were of greatest impact. These women did not model their parents, but, rather, modeled the expectations their parents had for them. These expectations or messages determined what choices the women made regarding their educational and career goals. They formed the women's values and lifelong perceptions regarding education, career choice and leadership.

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# Twenty Years of Women's Leadership: Have We Come "A Long Way, Baby?"\*

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Sara A. Boatman

I'd like to share with you some thoughts from my last 20 years of leadership study and what I've come to understand during this time about women in relationship to leadership. Consider these remarks personal reflections on some of what has been written and discussed about leadership and especially about how women relate to leadership. Let's wonder together if we've come a long way in our thinking about leadership and how women's unique voices relate to it.

## **20 years ago we were just beginning to think about leadership in a broader way than simply a series of skills and abilities.**

We were generally either thinking that leadership and management were the same thing, or thinking that leadership was the opposite of management, and it was good and management was not good. For example, Bennis wrote in 1989 that management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right thing. We hadn't yet figured out that it's possible to do both and to do both well.

In the mid 80's we were beginning to appreciate James MacGregor Burns' 1978 work that introduced us to transforming leadership. Some of us bought into his concept that without the moral dimension, it wasn't leadership; it was power-wielding.

In the mid-80s we were beginning to be profoundly influenced by the work of Bennis and Nanus who in 1980 told us from their research that leaders had a vision, communicated that vision, inspired trust in themselves and their vision, and influenced followers to become better in pursuit of that vision.

So, we were on the cusp of profound change in our thinking about leadership 20 years ago.

\*A keynote address, given at the 20th Annual Women in Educational Leadership Conference, October 9, 2006.

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**20 years ago we were also just beginning to think about how women related to the leadership process, and this thinking created some significant changes in our thinking about women and leadership.**

Many of us had read, about 10 years previously, the work of Hennig and Jardim in their 1976 book *The Managerial Woman* in which they argued that organizations were like the military and functioned like male team sports, so women had to learn about strategy, winning, achieving a goal. They contrasted this approach to girls' games which emphasized turn-taking and cooperation, simple and fluid rules that could be reformulated (hopscotch, jump rope); role playing (dolls, house); imagination and seeing the future (fairy tales). They wrote that women got "bogged down in definitions of process—in planning—in finding the best possible way," seeing a career as "personal growth, self-fulfillment, satisfaction, making a contribution to others, doing what one wants to do." They suggested that women lacked men's focus on the all-important question, "What's in it for me?"

In 1981 many of us read Anne Wilson Schaefer's important book *Women's Reality* in which she contrasted the white male system (being in front; knowing the answers; strong; all-knowing) with the female system (enabling others to make their contributions; encouraging others to develop capabilities). Schaefer presented a different perspective than that of the Simmons College researchers, and many of us found this approach useful because it described what we did.

Marilyn Loden (1985) suggested that while a typical male framework was hierarchical, competitive, and based on positional power, a typical women's framework was team-oriented, cooperative, and based on personal power.

In a mid-1980s television interview, Rosabeth Moss Kanter said that she ran her company like she managed her family: with a strong focus on relationships and helping others to carry out tasks since there were far too many for any one person to do on his or her own.

**Somewhere in the early 90s, I began to see how newly emerging ideas about women's leadership and newly-emerging ideas about leadership generally were coming together in a dramatic way.**

The work of Burns (1978), Bennis (1985), Gardner (1990), Bass and Avolio (1987), Kouzes and Posner (1987), and others began to suggest a new paradigm of leadership. This new leadership was

Visionary  
Empowering  
Morally responsible

And this was what women's leadership had been like all along! More about these ideas later.

**20 years later, we understand much better, I think, the complexity of leadership. From my perspective, here are some of the positives that have provided us with a nuanced and much more useful perspective of leadership:**

First, we embrace a number of different perspectives on how to make sense of leadership and how to draw accurate conclusions and make reasonable predictions about the leadership process—it's not just leadership means the man at the top giving command and control messages.

We know that certain *traits* can be useful to leadership; for example, Ann Richards' wonderful sense of humor.

We know that leadership involves certain *behaviors*; for example, Rosa Parks moved into perpetual leadership by her refusal to give up her seat on the Montgomery bus.

We know that leadership means adjusting and adapting to fit specific *situations or contingencies*; for example, Hillary Rodham Clinton adjusted her approach as Senator and achieved much more credibility than she had as First Lady.

We know that leadership involves *power and influence*; Eleanor Roosevelt is considered in some quarters the most influential woman in recent history because of the choices she made regarding how she used her leadership.

We know that leadership can result in *transformation and social change*; for example, Betty Friedan's leadership influenced the women's movement in transformational ways.

We know that leadership includes an *ethical dimension*; for example, Mother Teresa always behaved in ways to allow her to do the best for those with the least.

Second, we recognize that leadership and management are two distinctly different processes and that both are valuable and essential. The best leaders have management skills and abilities because these help get tasks accomplished. Women have been managing forever, and management skill helps when they are engaging in leadership.

Third, we recognize that leadership is a relationship—and thus it has less to do with position than with personal qualities, intellectual orientations and emerging in a particular situation; thus, anyone can engage in the leadership relationship, regardless of organizational or group position.

Fourth, we recognize that leadership is about influence. Someone said that without influence and persuasion, leadership is just cheerleading. While cheerleading is often important, we now understand that influence must be present in the leadership process.

Fifth, we recognize that leadership is most definitely about ethics—and that there are persons who exercise leadership who do so from a positive moral foundation that assists the common good and that does no harm, and there are persons who do so in a way that is at the least self-serving and at the worst evil.

**20 years later it is possible to see fairly easily how the leadership that is considered most effective today is more frequently demonstrated by women—not by all women, and also by some men. It's just that what we believe is the most effective leadership is demonstrated by women more frequently and more consistently. Here are the three characteristics that I believe are most frequently demonstrated by women—and that assist effective leadership.**

First is reflection and self-awareness.

Women tend not to define ourselves exclusively by our jobs; our identities are complex and multi-faceted.

Our personal awareness and confidence is continuously honed by wide exposure to life experiences: work, service, cultural diversity.

Leadership is about learning—and women are equipped to do this well.

Second is empowerment—the word used most frequently to demonstrate our leadership.



Judith Rosener (1990) captured this best years ago in the *Harvard Business Review*: women are interactive leaders, encouraging participation, sharing power and information, enhancing other people's self worth, getting others energized and excited about their work.

We are more eager to share power than to wield it: Jean Baker Miller (1986) explained that women tend to equate power with giving and caring, nurturing and strength, seeing power as an instrument of public purpose rather than as a tool for personal ambition.

Third is transformation—to create conditions so that persons, and therefore groups and communities, change to become practitioners of leadership themselves.

Women tend to be pretty passionately committed to making the society better. We are comfortable sharing power, and work best in flat, collective organizations.

When we think about Bass and Avolio's (1994) characteristics of transformational leadership we can certainly tie them to what we know about women's leadership:

Having idealized influence (being considered as a respected role model)

Demonstrating inspirational motivation (sharing high expectations and promoting creative thinking)

Having intellectual stimulation (questioning old beliefs and assumptions)

Giving individualized consideration (showing personal attention to others)

The dyadic relationship is a key distinguishing feature of transformational leadership, particularly as it is used for mentoring and support. Think how frequently women leaders use this powerful relational connection.

James MacGregor Burns (National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs, 1993) studied women's leadership and made this comment about it: "Traditionally when we talked about transformational leadership, it was a white man on a white horse galloping to the rescue and being transformational. Now when we are talking more about transforming leadership, we look at how the original leaders become transformed themselves. The power of this idea is that you really bring about lasting change; rather than telling people where to go or what to do. You modify your original leadership and it becomes a big collective effort. This has often been the case in mass movements and social movements. In doing so the

concept of transformational leadership becomes less elitist, more democratic, and related to leadership by women.”

**So, have we come a long way, baby? We are still doing what women find easier to do with respect to leadership. In some quarters we are discovering that what we do works exceedingly well.**

Following a qualitative study of 100 top leaders, McFarland, Senn, and Childress (1993) concluded,

a new leadership culture is emerging which encompasses empowerment, vision, and the shared values of integrity, trust, respect and honesty. Moreover, leaders increasingly relate to people through caring, collaboration, facilitation, consensus building, networking and inspiration. Not long ago, these attributes were thought to be inappropriate in leaders.

They identified key characteristics for what they termed 21st-century leadership as

- Communication (asking questions, empathetically listening, openly sharing perspectives, inviting ideas)
- Balance (seeking harmony among responsibilities, using integrated, whole-brain thinking)
- Empowerment (shared power, diffused leadership, facilitation and coaching)
- Collaboration and teamwork (creating web-like structures, interactive and multidisciplinary teams)
- Broad vision (promoting systems thinking and family perspectives)

They stated,

Many traits thought to be important for 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership, including these, are traditionally thought to be ‘feminine.’ While these traits are in both women and men, they’re more natural for women. It will be increasingly important for women and men to learn from and teach each other regarding leadership.

The bad news, of course, is that we are still battling bias. I tell my women college students when they tell me I worry too much about the role of women in organizations to never take their situation for granted since they are speaking to a woman who was institutionally discriminated against throughout her career, and the fragile gains we have made must be protected

at all costs. But—for the first time in my lifetime a majority of the U. S. citizenry reports that it is ready for a woman president, and we have two women out there right now who are looking pretty clearly at running. Times are a-changing.

Marie Wilson (2004) in her book *Closing the Leadership Gap: Why Women Can and Must Help Run the World*, writes,

when I look at the issues we face, and when I think of the changes we need, I am as convinced as I have ever been that our future depends on the leadership of women—not to replace men, but to transform our options alongside them.

We have come a long way in the past 20 years in how we are thinking about leadership, and in how we envision women relating to the leadership process. As one of my favorite poets, Robert Frost wrote, however, we have “miles to go before [we] sleep.” I do believe, however, that it’s a journey in which there is no turning back.

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# Voices of Women in the Field

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## The Top 10 Things We Learned about Being a Department Chair\*

Lana Danielson  
Laura Schulte

This article documents the top 10 things we learned in our transition from being a faculty member to becoming a department chair. We were recruited as department chairs in the same year and quickly recognized each other as administrative colleagues. During our “internship” in the chair position we frequently identified lessons we were learning, jokingly adding them to our “Top 10” list. What follows is our refined list of advice we would share with other new chairs.

### **1. Find a trusted friend.**

Trust has been defined as the “belief that those on whom we depend will meet our expectations of them” (Shaw, 1997, p. 21). In our first year as chairs we came to trust one another. This trust developed gradually as a result of repeated interactions with and observations of each other. During our weekly lunch meetings we felt comfortable discussing issues that concerned us and sharing our personal feelings about them. We recognized in each other the integrity that guided these confidences. We came to trust one another because we respected each other’s competence, believed the other would follow through on commitments, and felt we had a colleague who cared and was concerned for our well being (Noddings, 1986; Schindler & Thomas, 1993; Shaw, 1997). Having a colleague who listened, who knew when to provide sound advice and when to let us discover our own answer, was an important key to our growth as administrators.

### **2. Give yourself permission to learn.**

The first year of the chair position is filled with new responsibilities for budgeting, scheduling, hiring, negotiating, and evaluating. Some tasks had clearly defined procedures while others left considerable ambiguity about

\*A version of this manuscript appeared in *The Department Chair*, 16(4), 21-22.

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how to proceed. We needed to give ourselves permission to “learn the ropes” as well as the culture of the administrative organization (Louis, 1980). Because we were new chairs at the same time, we compared procedural understandings with one another and together figured out when to ask for help. We often reminded each other that the learning curve was great and would take time to master. We gained new appreciation for resiliency, for “trying again tomorrow” when the end of the day left us feeling a bit discouraged about what we had accomplished.

#### **3. Integrity is everything: Be genuine; be fair; be consistent.**

Integrity has been ranked as the most important component in workplace relationships (Schindler & Thomas, 1993). We define integrity as doing the right thing when nobody is watching, acting on one’s principles and demonstrating one’s commitments both publicly and privately. Along with being genuine and demonstrating integrity, a department chair must foster “organizational justice,” which requires putting fair procedures and processes in place and consistently adhering to them (Dessler, 1999). As department chairs we led the largest and smallest departments in our college, but regardless of department size, we found fostering organizational justice essential in keeping faculty and staff members motivated and productive. Most faculty and staff members are willing to cooperate if they believe you are genuine, fair, and consistent.

#### **4. Figure out what motivates each faculty and staff member and use it.**

As chairs we recognized the need to learn what motivates faculty and staff members in order to maximize performance (Kerr, 1999; Vroom, 1964). Because we work in the field of education where financial rewards often are not available, we frequently had to rely on non-financial rewards such as

praise and recognition of performance. The distribution of non-financial rewards “tends to be consistent with the principles of effective rewards” (Kerr, 1999, p. 68), thus creating our own means by which to reinforce their contributions proved to be of value to our faculty and staff. Genuine affirmations for contributions, celebrating successes, and sincere empathy for personal and professional challenges nurture a sense of well-being, a cohesion among colleagues that permeates a unit and fosters collaborative, productive relationships among professionals.

#### **5. Capitalize on the strengths of others – be willing to delegate when appropriate.**

We recognized the importance of fostering interdependence in our departments. One way to do this was to delegate authority, thereby empowering the faculty and staff members who were capable of handling the responsibilities of a given task (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Supporting the competence of faculty members by identifying appropriate opportunities to delegate leadership strengthens a unit. Recognizing good ideas and assisting faculty and staff in actualizing them was an important responsibility for us as chairs. We believed that our position was about influence, not power, and we embraced the idea that our primary work was to remove obstacles or create opportunities for faculty and staff to be productive. Operating on the premise that the “ideal” professional environment is one in which faculty could both contribute and grow, it was incumbent upon us to delegate wisely by assessing both our degree of confidence in another’s ability to be successful and by recognizing their readiness for a new challenge. When there was no one available who had the expertise, interest, or time to take on another task, we learned that it was better to continue to do the task ourselves.

#### **6. Talk less, listen more.**

In our new roles as chairs we found we spent a lot of our time talking with and listening to the faculty and staff members, which differed from how we allocated our time as faculty members. We had to learn how to listen as well as how to make ourselves heard. We needed to get the faculty and staff members involved in our decisions, and the best way to do that was to ask them for their input and listen to them before acting (The Walk the Talk Company, 2003). We quickly learned that leadership “is a dialogue, not a monologue” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 15). We found that listening to faculty and staff members’ ideas resulted in greater ownership of decisions and increased progress on departmental initiatives.

**7. Trust your instincts (but back them up with data).**

We empowered our faculty and staff members by delegating authority and listening to them. Nevertheless, we knew as chairs we were ultimately responsible for outcomes (Offermann, 2004). We learned early on to trust our instincts while verifying them with data. This meant gathering and interpreting both soft and hard data (Collins, 2001; Goffee & Jones, 2000). We needed to read verbal and non-verbal cues from faculty and staff members while, at the same time, we had to interpret numerical data from budgets and programs to make the best decisions for our departments.

**8. Leave a paper trail. Never leave a paper trail.**

Although we needed data to make decisions, some situations called for putting information in writing, thereby creating a paper trail, while other situations required a mental trace with no paper trail. Policies, procedures, and minutes of meetings are examples where we created a paper trail (Dessler, 1999). We could draw upon the written documents in the future when necessary. On the other hand, when dealing with personnel, we oftentimes relied on our mental trace, recalling how personnel responded in similar situations.

**9. Choose your battles.**

As chairs we needed to choose our battles and focus our attention on what we considered to be most important. For example, neither of us would compromise when it came to our students and the programs they deserved. We believed in setting high standards for our programs and expected faculty and staff members to follow our lead. We had to demonstrate with our actions “an unwavering resolve to do whatever must be done to produce the best long-term results, no matter how difficult” (Collins, 2001, p. 36).

**10. Keep your sense of humor.**

Recognizing that a department chair's mood and behavior influence the moods and behavior of faculty and staff members (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001), we learned to maintain our sense of humor even in the stressful times. We provided each other with a means to reflect upon stressful situations, saving our meltdowns for each other. The ability to laugh at ourselves and to find the humor in situations generally stabilized emotions, allowing us to regroup and think more clearly about what needed to be resolved.

## Conclusion

Documenting our journey as new chairs these past two years has been therapeutic for us. We are very fortunate to have had each other to confide in because “finding a trusted friend” has been instrumental in our ability to do the other nine things on our top 10 list.

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# FIRST THINGS FIRST: WRITING STRATEGIES

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## The Gold Standard

Marilyn L. Grady

The “gold standard” in educational leadership journals is the research-based article. An article that is data-based will find a publication outlet much more readily than an opinion-based article. Although “N of 1” accounts are interesting, space in academic journals is a scarce commodity.

Since your writing time may be limited and you may have a promotion and tenure clock to spur your writing frenzy, you would be wise to focus your efforts on research endeavors. Consider that the timeline between the submission of a research manuscript and its publication in a refereed journal may be as long as 18 months. For those who are expected to “Publish or Perish,” wise use of time and effort is critical.

For this reason, those who must publish should have at least three projects in motion at one time. This will allow for constant research, writing, and submissions so that the timeline will not pose a threat to publication success.

Another strategy that may be useful is using the national professional meetings cycle to pace the research, writing, submission process. By submitting a proposal for presentation at a national conference, one is spurred by the conference deadline to complete the research project, prepare the manuscript, and prepare the presentation. Feedback from conference attendees can strengthen the manuscript. After the conference, the goal must be to submit the manuscript to the appropriate refereed journal.

Often research studies result in two types of manuscripts. There is the research manuscript that is suitable for the refereed, research-based journal and there is the practitioner-based article that is suitable for the non-refereed, professional journal. These two types of articles are directed toward two very different audiences. The research journal reaches a small audience of academic scholars. The professional journal reaches a large audience of practitioners. Research conducted in the field of educational leadership should reach both audiences.