

STRESS WITHIN THE LIVES OF FEMALE  
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

By

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25

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Administration and Foundations  
Faculty of Education  
University of Manitoba

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May, 1995



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Développement humain	0758
Enseignement	0350
Immunologie	0982
Loisirs	0575
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Médecine et chirurgie	0564
Obstétrique et gynécologie	0380
Ophtalmologie	0381
Orthophonie	0460
Pathologie	0571
Pharmacie	0572
Pharmacologie	0419
Physiothérapie	0382
Radiologie	0574
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Chimie analytique	0486
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Chimie nucléaire	0738
Chimie organique	0490
Chimie pharmaceutique	0491
Physique	0494
Polymères	0495
Radiation	0754
Mathématiques	0405
Physique	
Généralités	0605
Acoustique	0986
Astronomie et astrophysique	0606
Électromagnétique et électricité	0607
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Particules (Physique nucléaire)	0798
Physique atomique	0748
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**Sciences Appliquées Et Technologie**

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### Abstract

Stress is a daily part of life for educational administrators. Because no one is exempt from stress, an important issue for modern educational administrators is how to deal effectively with it. The purpose of this study was to examine what causes stress for female administrators and the coping strategies which they employ to effectively handle their stress. It asked female administrators not only to identify their stressors and coping techniques, but also to express their opinions on gender differences regarding role definition, stress, stressors and stress management strategies.

Qualitative data were collected from semi-structured open-ended interviews with nine female educational administrators from six Boards of Education across Northwestern Ontario. Analysis of the interviews revealed the common stressors to be interpersonal relationships, balancing their many role responsibilities, the Ontario government's Social Contract, and time management. The respondents used a number of common stress management techniques such as physical activity, talking with others, self-talk, emotional release techniques and problem-solving processes.

However, while there were common themes expressed by many, each female administrator also revealed a variety of stressors and coping strategies unique to herself. All believed that the experience of stress is an individualistic experience, suggesting that each individual reacts differently to different events and that each individual develops her own repertoire of coping strategies which works for them.

Most participants believed that there were gender differences in the stressors. The most commonly expressed difference was that women have the additional stressor of balancing their personal role responsibilities of mother and wife with their career role responsibilities of educational administrator. The women interviewed believed that male administrators experienced less stress because their wives assume household and family responsibilities, and that the roles of father and husband do not carry with them the same time and energy demands as that of mother and wife.

If the goal for administrators is to manage their stress and thus to prevent burn-out, this study provides female and male administrators with some insight into dealing more effectively with the stressors found within their lives.

### Acknowledgements

There are a number of individuals that have allowed this thesis to develop and reach completion. To all these people, I am indebted and I thank them with humility and gratitude.

I remember fondly my aunt, Mrs. Louise Dunnett (Hudson), who was a female educational administrator, a Principal in Seven Oaks School Division, in the late 1950's before Affirmative Action was even a thought in the minds of society. She shared her many wonderful experiences with me and her role modelling led to my aspiration to become an administrator. She became my mentor and helped me to cope with many stressors when I did indeed become a Principal. I miss her deeply as she passed away in June 1993 but I know that she would be very proud of this thesis and its role in helping future women administrators deal with today's educational demands.

Appreciation is extended to my faculty advisor, Dr. J. Anthony Riffel, who provided guidance and support throughout the journey of creating and writing this research document. He always provided me with some thought-provoking questions and constructive suggestions as we met during each stage of development. I would also like to thank the other two members of my defense team, Dr. Jon Young and Dr. Kelvin Seifert for their input. Their patience and support is gratefully acknowledged.

I am most indebted to the nine women who took time out of their hectic and stressful schedules to allow me to interview them. Their personal stories and perceptions were most informative. They allowed me an opportunity to delve into the

subject of stress in an exciting new way.

I would be remiss if I did not mention my parents who taught me to believe that I can do anything upon which I set my mind. The personal confidence and self-esteem which they encouraged has allowed me to achieve much success and personal satisfaction within my life.

Lastly, I am thankful to have my supportive husband, Ted, by my side. His grammar teacher qualities taught me much about unity and coherence in my writing. He taught me the value of writing simply and concisely. Also, I thank Ted for his daily encouragement to reach for the stars. I could not have accomplished this thesis without him.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Research Questions .....	1
Personal Background to the Study .....	2
Educational Significance of the Study .....	5
2. THE LITERATURE .....	9
Definition of Terms .....	11
Working Assumptions About Stress .....	13
Stressors .....	15
Coping Strategies .....	19
Female Stress Issues .....	23
3. METHODOLOGY .....	38
The Interview Approach .....	38
The Interview Schedule .....	39
The Sample .....	40
Data Collection .....	41
Limitations of the Study .....	42

4. INTERVIEW SUMMARIES .....	44
Alexandria .....	45
Brittany .....	49
Cara .....	53
Danyelle .....	57
Eveline.....	62
Fiona.....	67
Gina .....	73
Hillary .....	79
Janelle.....	86
5. THEMES IN THE DATA-- The Meaning of Stress.....	88
6. THEMES IN THE DATA-- The Identification of Stressors.....	93
Interpersonal Relationships .....	94
Balancing Their Many Role Responsibilities.....	98
Social Contract.....	103
Time Management.....	105
Preparation, Anticipation and Fulfillment of New Positions.....	107
Feelings of Isolation .....	110
Managerial and/or Communication Styles.....	113

Lack of Understanding of Role Responsibilities by Others .....	116
Other Stressors Identified .....	117
<b>7. THEMES IN THE DATA--Coping Strategies.....</b>	<b>119</b>
Talking and Networking with Others .....	119
Physical Activity.....	123
Emotional Releases.....	127
Self Talk.....	130
Problem-Solving Process .....	133
Supportive Husband and/or Family.....	136
Positive Attitude and Sense of Humour .....	138
Other Common Coping Strategies.....	141
Bibliotherapy.....	148
<b>8. THEMES IN THE DATA-- Female Stress Issues.....</b>	<b>153</b>
Multiple Role Responsibilities .....	154
Proving Themselves .....	159
Managerial and/or Communication Styles.....	161
Importance Placed on People and Relationships.....	168
Personal Responsibility.....	172
Maternal Style.....	173
The Role of Feelings.....	175

Stress in Lives of Female Administrators

viii

The Desire for Cooperation and Peace.....	177
Bureaucratic and Hierarchial Administrative Structures .....	179
9. CONCLUSIONS .....	183
10. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	189
A Final Comment.....	195
REFERENCES.....	196
APPENDIX A -- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE .....	205
APPENDIX B -- LETTER SOLICITING PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT.....	207

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The purpose of this research was to study, from the perspective of female educational administrators, the current stressors faced by educational administrators as well as the stress management strategies which are used in effectively dealing with their stress. This study also asked nine women administrators to discuss their perceptions of gender differences with regards to the experience of stress, causes of stress and coping strategies. It was my belief and general hypothesis that the women administrators interviewed would express the perception that their most stressful stressors were dealing with interpersonal conflicts and for those in traditional family relationships, the guilt they experienced attempting to balance their home and work lives.

### Research Questions

The following questions formed the basis for the research conducted in this study:

1. How is the concept of 'stress' perceived by female educational administrators?
2. What do female educational administrators perceive as creating stress within their lives? What are their stressors?

3. What strategies do female educational administrators report using to effectively cope with their stress?
4. Do women administrators perceive that there are gender differences between the way that men and women define and fulfill their administrator roles, experience stress, identify the stressors in their lives and cope with their stress?

The focus of the study would be the data gathered from the last question as women expressed their perceptions regarding gender differences and the total experience of stress.

#### Personal Background to the Study

When I was an administrator in Manitoba, I found my first year very stressful. However, there were a number of stressors in my life above and beyond the administrative position which added to my stress. I was a full time teacher and administrator within a new school and community, teaching a grade which I had not previously taught. I was also president of my local teachers' association and I started back to university to take my Pre-masters in Educational Administration. I was single at the time and involved in many social circles seeking a potential mate. Combining all these demands upon my time and energy, I learned a lot that year about managing stress. I learned some very practical strategies which I have continued to practise successfully since that time. The many events experienced during the course of that year spurred my interest in the area of stress and stress management. I believe that

stress management is of primary importance in successfully carrying out the role of school administrator. I also came to believe that there are a number of stressors external to the school workplace which have a very strong impact on the management of the administrative position. I experienced the cumulative effects of stress which occur when stress from your personal life affects and adds to the stress experienced in your professional life.

In 1987 and for the three years following, I joined the Equality in Education Resource Team of the Manitoba Teachers' Society and delivered Stress Management workshops to teachers across Manitoba. Moving to Ontario, I became part of the "SOS" or "Strategies on Stress" team with the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario. I have personally delivered fifteen workshops to women teachers across the province while the team as a whole has delivered over one hundred workshops. The team was forced to grow from seven members to twelve members in order to accommodate the number of workshop requests. Although these workshops have all focussed on stress and the classroom teacher, many female administrators have also participated. In the upcoming year, we are proposing the development of a workshop specifically designed to address the stress and stressors experienced by women in "Positions of Added Responsibility" such as Principals, Vice-Principals, Consultants, Coordinators and Superintendents. I look forward to working with other interested team members in the creation of this highly requested workshop and hope to be able to share the findings from this research.

I have learned about the idiosyncratic nature of stress, stressors and coping strategies from the workshops delivered and from networking with stress team members. Stressors identified during the workshops ranged from workplace stressors such as no windows in the classroom and interpersonal conflicts with other teachers, administrators, and family members to the attempts of many female teachers to balance,

without guilt and anxiety, their many personal and professional role expectations such as mother, wife, teacher, adult education student, community club president, Sunday School teacher and so on. In the fifteen workshops delivered in the past three years, the common stressors identified by female teachers and administrators include:

- Ministry of Education and Training documents and reports such as the Common Curriculum, Outcome Based Education, Standards in Mathematics and Language Arts and the Royal Commission on Learning.

- Interpersonal Relationship Stressors such as parent concerns and pressures, conflicts with a principal, colleague or parent, conflict with and among students, accusations of assault and/or abuse, loss of parents, mentors and/or aging colleagues and managing personal obligations.

- Curriculum Issues such as meeting individual student needs, integrating special needs students within the class, effects of media violence on students, implementing the Ministry's Standards in Language Arts and Mathematics, and providing extra-curricular activities.

- Management Issues such as long term, short term, and daily planning, covering the curriculum, administrative pressures with deadlines, report cards, budgets, etc., performance appraisals and evaluation reports.

In this past year, an additional stressor which has frequently been identified has been the Social Contract. The Social Contract is a three year provincial government mandate imposed upon the "broad public sector" (which includes education) and designed to help cut the province's debt. There are many aspects of this mandate. It requires each Board of Education to save a large lump sum of money determined by the size of the board and many other factors. Employee are to contribute 4.75% of their salary by taking unpaid leave days ("Rae Days"). As well, each Board is to make permanent staff reductions by 4.75% over the three year period. Because of the

mandated number of school days per year, Professional Activity/Development days have been taken and used as the unpaid leave days. Depending upon the age of teachers employed by a Board, the staff reductions have been accounted for by retirements in some cases and by lay-offs in other cases. Overall, this government mandate has had a major effect on the morale of teachers and administrators. Reduced funding for all resources across the Board as well as the reduction in Professional Activity/Development days and in staff has created many negative feelings. Class sizes have also increased as teachers and assistants are being cut. Many teachers and administrators have expressed stress as a result of this cost-cutting measure.

With regards to unique effective coping strategies, one woman administrator proposed that she uses ironing to "work out the wrinkles in her life" while another teacher indicated that she chooses to look at family albums to remind herself of the great times that she and her family have shared together. These types of unique approaches to stress management tended to be evidenced at each workshop offered. I became acutely aware that there were possible gender differences through listening to the voices of women.

### Educational Significance of the Study

This thesis is based upon interviews with nine women currently holding "positions of added responsibility". It is based upon the belief that we can learn a lot from the strategies which these women use to overcome the stress within their administrative lives. Many of these women were "trailblazers" as they expressed the fact that they were among the first women to move into such positions within their

Boards of Education. One participant commented that this "topic is very timely with regards to the changes in gender in administration over the past few years." As such, "these women had no maps to follow and few role models to emulate (Better-Reed, 1994)" (Russell, 1994, p. 1). The coping strategies which work for them may help other women who are trying to maintain their own administrative positions despite stressful inequities within the system.

What these women offer to other female educational administrators is not a formula for the "right way" of successfully managing administrative stress. They offer a repertoire of coping strategies which have worked effectively for them to share with others. "While each administrator must adapt these strategies to suit her own unique style and situation, it is sometimes extremely helpful to know what has worked for others in the past" (Russell, 1994, p. 1). One participant noted in her interview:

"We can only speak from our own experience and if we only have one experience, we don't know how that compares to others. I would be interested to see if others have the same opinions and if I am part of the norm, or if I am a way off base."

Russell (1994) suggests the following educational benefits to gathering the stories of women:

"Whether based on women's diaries and journals or research studies, such as the ones on which this paper is based, stories through which women share their experiences can serve several purposes. According to Cooper (1987), reading about these experiences serves to "assuage our sense of isolation and validate our perceptions: 'I'm not crazy. Someone else felt this way before.'" (p.98) Writer, Beth Milwid (1990), sees the kind of "collective story" which documents the challenges women face in "breaking into all-male fields" as useful because it demonstrates that they face "a remarkably similar set of challenges", despite having unique personalities and positions (p.4). Stokes (1984) argues that it is important to document and quantify women's experiences of exclusion so that they will recognize that the barriers they experience are neither of their own making, nor a reflection of their personalities and competence. Such work, she suggests, "provides a focus for organizational change" (p.1). Their experience is equally important to the next generation of women who will follow them into leadership positions." (1994, p.1-2.)

Thus, the educational significance of this research is its value for other women administrators who are currently experiencing similar stressors to hear the stories and practical effective strategies employed which may prove useful to apply to their own situation. This research also validates for many women that they are not the only one struggling with specific stressors and gives them comfort in learning of others' experiences. As well, this study has value for future women administrators to learn from the pioneers who have had a rocky road to travel.

The need for further research in the area of stress and administration is suggested in articles by Swent (1990), Roberson and Matthews (1988), Milstein (1992), Lam (1988) and Cooper(1988). Lam (1988), a Manitoba researcher, concludes his article with:

"there is definitely a need for more studies of the multiple causality of stress, as well, as the less obvious, but equally damaging sources, to bring about a more long-lasting remediation or relief to the hard-pressed educational leaders."  
(p.263).

In doing an ERIC search for articles and books on the topics of "Women Administrators" and "Stress", I found only nine matches. Of these nine matches, only two were available within Manitoba. It would appear that there is a noticeable lack of available literature on this topic within Manitoba. In doing the ERIC search for "Women Administrators", it was noted that this descriptor has only been recognized in the Thesaurus since 1990. It would appear that this is an important new field with little research available at this time.

Because of the small size and the nature of the sample, generalizations to other administrative situations cannot be made. However, it is anticipated that insight will be gained which may be valuable to future research with larger sample sizes and samples which are representative of more varied administrative situations. This study will

identify and address issues for future research in the area of stress and educational administration. Grant (1994) writes:

"In real terms any effort that contributes, even in a minor way, to improving an individual's quality of life is justification enough to pursue this study. Research results are rarely powerful enough to dictate policies and practises but the intention is to contribute to what Cohen and Garet (1975) have termed the dialogue of policy making, and so to inform practitioners." (p.4).

Although this research does not propose to change policy, it is designed to inform practitioners and help them deal with stress.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Literature

Although there is a lot of literature available looking at stress and the classroom teacher, there is relatively little available relating stress to the educational administrator. From the research literature which has been reviewed, two key points need to be addressed.

Much of the research found to date focusses on data collected using American administrators. Most samples were composed of secondary school administrators. (Williamson & Campbell (1987), Roberson & Matthews (1988), Cooper (1988), and Lyons (1990)). The largest number of research studies available on the topic of administrator stress appear to be reported in the National Association for Secondary School Principals Bulletin.

Because of the recent efforts of Affirmative Action encouraging women to strive to hold administrative positions, most of the research samples in studies done to date have predominantly male subjects. Moreover, most of the research which has been done to date has been done by male researchers. Of the research found with an ERIC search looking at "Educational Administrators" and "Stress", all articles which were located were written by male researchers. Of the nine matches in the ERIC search for "Women Administrators" and "Stress", there were six written by female researchers. For the purpose of this study, the sample is composed entirely of female administrators and I am a female researcher. The interview data which were collected in this study can

only be analyzed and compared to the research findings which are presently available. This hints at the potential for new findings to occur which may offer a different perspective to past research which has been done.

Most of the research found to date has also narrowed its focus to include only workplace stressors. Most of the research found used a survey format rather than an interview and it would appear that subjects were asked very specific workplace questions regarding stressors and stress management strategies (Swent (1983), Cooper (1988), Gmelch (1988), Lamm (1988), Milstein & Farkas (1988), Roberson & Matthews (1988), Savery & Detiuk (1988), Wiggins (1988)).

Recent general stress research tends to emphasize the interconnectedness of workplace and home stressors and their cumulative effect on the individual within the workplace (Swick & Hanley (1985), Krusor & Blaker (1992), Sullivan (1993), and Minden (1994)). For the purposes of this study, participants were not restricted to discussing only workplace stressors. The option was left open for the identification of stressors from all aspects of their lives. Stressors such as family conflicts and dealing with teenage children living at home were two such stressors which were identified in this study. These types of stressors are not apparent in the research dealing with administrator stress found to date. The interaction and interdependency of stress levels experienced as a result of an individual's personal and professional lives was recognized and accepted within this study. Krusor and Blaker (1992) suggest:

"The relationship between work and family is reciprocal. Kanter states, "...if the emotional climate at work can affect families, so can a family's emotional climate and demands affect the members as workers."" (p.30).

### Definition of Terms

"**Stress**" has been defined in various ways in the plethora of books and articles written on the subject. One of the most commonly quoted definitions is Hans Selye's, a pioneer in the field of stress research:

"Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any type of demand made upon it, whether the demand is pleasant or not. It is the wear and tear within your body." (Alley, 1980, p.5).

Other definitions tend to refine parts of Selye's definition. Brimm (1990) adds that the bodily response may be either physical or psychological. He also suggests that the demand may be an action or situation. Caplan (1978) focussed on stress in the workplace and thus suggested that the demand may be "any characteristic or feature of the job environment which poses a threat to the individual." (Maples, 1980, p.25). For the purposes of this study, stress was defined for participants in opening discussion as being any reaction or response which an individual perceives to occur as the result of the influence of external or internal factors. It was also described as the frustration or anxiety which is caused by perceived demands and pressures from outside and/or within yourself. As the intent of this study was not to examine the physical or psychological symptoms of stress, these were only occasionally mentioned and not a focus of the study.

Important to this research study was a clear understanding of the term "**stressor**". From the above definition of stress, the action or the situation which causes the stressful reaction within the individual may be viewed as the "stressor". Wiggins (1986) defines stressors as "the external and internal demands upon persons" (p.120). These demands are perceived by individuals as challenging the person's belief

systems and/or coping abilities. Stressors may be viewed as any identified external condition or event which has created some type of physical reaction for an individual. Using this approach, specific stressors identified by people may be individualistic but may also fall into common themes or categories.

**"Coping strategies"** was defined as conscious acts or events which the participant practises for the perceived purpose of reducing her personal stress level. It became evident that all people develop their own repertoire of strategies allowing them to successfully cope with the stress within their lives. Just as the experience of stress is individualistic, so is the management of stress. However, coping strategies may also fall into common themes or categories. Gmelch (1988) developed a taxonomy of coping strategies when he categorized 156 techniques gathered in interviews with people from all walks of life.

Throughout this study the acronym "PAR" will be used in various settings. "PAR" stands for "Positions of Added Responsibility" and is a term used by teacher federations in Ontario. It is used to describe anyone in the position of Vice-Principal, Principal, Curriculum Coordinator/Consultant, Department Head, Superintendent and/or Director whereby the person is given additional responsibilities beyond that of regular classroom teaching. The nine women interviewed in this study are all Principals, Curriculum Coordinators/Consultants or Superintendents of Education with their respective Boards of Education. This study will focus on the stress issues which these women in PAR positions perceive as being unique to a female in an administrative position.

### Working Assumptions About Stress

1. **Stress is pervasive and cumulative.** It affects all aspects of our lives. The stress we experience in our personal life strongly influences our ability to cope with stress in our professional life. When stress levels are high in one area of life, additional stress is more easily created in other areas. Swick and Hanley (1985) suggest:

"Out-of-school intrapersonal stress may arise with feelings of inadequacy about one's personal life. Teachers who feel unsure about their capabilities or functioning as a spouse or a parent, or whose personal life is unhappy or disorganized due to temporary or long-lasting familial changes, must cope with the extra disadvantage of out-of-school stress as well as with whatever may be waiting at school." (p.15).

Minden (1994) reinforces this concept suggesting that "for most people about half of the stress level comes from personal life and the rest from work." (p.3). Thus, it is generally perceived that stress within one's personal life has an effect on the ability to cope with stress within one's professional life. There is a reciprocal interaction between these two aspects of life.

Recently, a new book appeared on the market, Coping with the Stressed-Out People in Your Life by Nathan and Stuart (1994) which claims to contain strategies to help people "connect and interact supportively with anyone who is upset, withdrawn, depressed or preoccupied with stress, and stop the destructive domino effect of stress." (Promotional Flyer). They emphasize that the stress of others becomes your stress when you are exposed to the stress of those around you.

2. **Stress affects each person differently.** Actions or situations which may generate anguish for one administrator may be viewed by another as an acceptable daily

part of their administrative role. This was discussed with participants within each interview. Monteiro (1990) supports this assumption:

"Although stress is a measurable fact, one's reaction to it is highly subjective. It is a person's perception and appraisal of an event that makes it stressful. The belief that negative consequences will follow leads to stress. Such a cognitive process differentiates a stressor from a stimulus and determines the nature of the stress reaction." (p.80).

In the same light, coping strategies which are effective for one administrator may indeed be stress-inducing strategies for another administrator. Each person channels stress in an appropriate or an inappropriate way based upon his/her past experiences.

**3. People act according to their perceptions.** Neidhardt, Weinstein, and Convry (1991) make the following statement, which was often paraphrased for participants of this study just prior to the discussion of stressors :

"There will be no attempts made to make light of any stressors affecting you. If something bothers you, it needs attention, no matter how trivial it may appear to someone else. Therefore, it is very important that you do not underrate yourself. Don't feel inadequate because you seem to react more to stress than others around you. It may simply be that they respond in less apparent ways." (p. 7).

**4. Stress is inescapable. People cannot live without it.** A certain amount of stress is perfectly normal and actually desirable as stress acts as a powerful source of energy necessary for action. When stress becomes excessive and chronic, we must learn to harness and manage its negative effects in order to avoid the physical illnesses which tend to accompany it. The opposite is also true. Experiencing too little stress can be as unhealthy and unsatisfying as too much stress. The goal for each individual is to gain the benefits of stress and avoid the potential risks of stress.

## Stressors

In reviewing the research available through the ERIC search for "Educational Administrators" and "Stress", there are some valuable insights gained into common stressors which were identified in study after study. Brimm (1990) did an analysis of past research which had been done regarding stressors as identified by school administrators. He concluded the following:

"much of the research data which has been reported reveals that the major causes of job stress among school administrators are role conflict (Kahn, Wolf, Quinn, & Snoek, 1964); work overload (Piatt, 1981); inadequate compensation (Brown & Carleton, 1980; Hendrickson, 1979); interpersonal conflict with parents, teachers, and students (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Washington, 1980); and increased administrative responsibility (Brown & Carleton, 1980; Hendrickson, 1979)." (p.65).

These tend to be the recurring stressors in much of the current research as well.

McGrath and Gmelch (1985) created a conceptual scheme identifying four basic types of stressors: role-based, task-based, boundary-spanning and conflict-mediating stressors. These will be reviewed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Task-based stress "is specifically concerned with the lack of resources - supplies, personnel and time - that inhibit the smooth execution of the administrators' responsibilities." (Lam, 1988, p.252).

Cooper (1988), from his intensive surveying of secondary principals across forty-eight states, found that eight of the ten top stressors identified were task-based stressors which have their origin in the day-to-day administrative duties of the principal. Williamson and Campbell (1987) identified four major stressors in their research and found the "single factor accounting for the majority of stress was management of time" (p.109). Lyons (1990) reflects upon the high activity levels and time management as major stressors among the seven stressors he identified. Other

studies suggesting the importance of time and resource management include Wiggins (1985), Lam (1988), Roberson and Matthews (1988), Whan (1988), and Brimm (1990).

Role-based stress was described by McGrath and Gmelch (1985) as arising because of incongruencies within an administrator's beliefs and attitudes concerning his/her role within the organization and the expectations placed upon the administrator.

**Role conflict, role overload and role-based stressors** are frequently identified within the other studies. Role-based stress has been described as " stress which arises from conflicts over job responsibilities in the organization" (Cooper, 1990, p.86). Savery and Detiuk (1988) suggest that the two major stressors which primary and secondary teachers in Australia must cope with are role overload and role conflict. Because principals serve as members of the superintendent's administrative team as well as the school instructional team, Lyons (1990) suggests that conflicts exist when directives from the central office are contrary to the goals and expectations of the school staff members. Role overload implies that the perceived expectations of the administrator position exceeds what the administrator believes is realistic. Erez and Goldstein (1981) studied role ambiguity and role conflict in relation to the stress experienced by elementary school principals in Isreal and concluded that role stress forced the principal to choose managerial duties to the detriment of his/her pedagogical duties. Numerous studies suggest that the administrator's perceptions and attitudes towards their role definition serve as a primary stressor. In this study, female administrators will reflect upon gender differences in role definition and the feasibility of additional stress resulting from the differential definitions.

McGrath and Gmelch's (1985) final two broad categories revealed were boundary-spanning stressors and conflict-mediating stressors. Both of these categories involve interacting with other people or interpersonal relations.

Boundary-spanning stress arises due to the large number of interactions with other people that an administrator encounters within the realm of school-community relationships. As Ministry mandates demand more and more input from parents and community "partnerships", the potential for the number of daily interactions with these stakeholders increases as does the potential for differing values and opinions regarding any issue.

Conflict mediating stress is generated by the pressures and demands placed upon the administrator to resolve conflicts between various stakeholders within the school setting. These stakeholders may include students, parents, educational assistants, cooperative education students, student-teachers, supply teachers, classroom teachers, other administrators, different lobby groups with different mandates (eg. Association for Community Living), and others.

The importance of maintaining good **interpersonal relations and communication** has been revealed in most studies. It has been identified using various terms such as relations with supervisors and subordinates (Williamson and Campbell, 1987), dislike/lack of acceptance by co-workers, lack of communication, and inability to satisfy conflicting demands of various peers (Wiggins, 1988), poor interpersonal relationships (Sarros, 1988), Problem solver - Peacemaker's role (Lyons, 1990), and interpersonal relationships (Brimm, 1990). Lyons (1990) points to the importance of good interpersonal skills to the successful management of an administrator position when he notes:

"the overall effectiveness of the principal hinges on his or her ability to resolve these interpersonal conflicts....The process is time-consuming and stressful. Sometimes the principal has little to show at the end of the day other than the peace that has been restored and/or maintained." (p.45).

In reviewing all the stressors which have been identified in past research studies, it is necessary to keep in mind the reciprocal nature of stress and the interactions between

stressors in quite varied aspects of the job. Inherent in an administrator's suggestion that role overload is a stressor is a time management concern. Often there is an accompanying statement that there is not the time required to complete the job expectations. As was noted, both boundary-spanning stressors and conflict-mediating stressors have the common element of interpersonal interaction. Both require communication and conflict-resolution skills on the part of the administrator in dealing with diverse groups of educational stakeholders. Lam (1988) found in his study:

"Implicitly and explicitly, school administrators must have felt that pressure or stress on one aspect of their job invariably increased stress on another area even though by nature and sources, these stressors were very different." (p.255).

These studies reviewed all tended to focus on the job-related stressors. When looking at the plethora of general books and articles on stress, very little regarding actual stressors is generally included. Sullivan (1993) devotes a chapter to the "Special Stressors of Women" and Carr-Ruffino (1985), in her book The Promotable Woman, deals with some gender differences regarding stressors. These will be discussed later.

Carr-Ruffino (1985) lists some of the common sources of stress mentioned by Dr. Selye as being "(1) psychological upsets, (2) anxiety (from your reactions to life events), (3) overwork, (4) drugs (including medications), (5) chemicals (including additives and residues in food), and (6) excessive noise and air pollution." (p.140). She goes on to report the findings of an American study which surveyed working women in management. These women were asked to describe the job condition which they believed to be most stressful. The results indicated that "'work load always too heavy", followed by pressure to work very fast, lack of authority to carry out responsibilities, tight time deadlines, and the threat of costly decisions connected to actions they take or decisions they make" (p.140) were the most stressful stressors. In a similar English study, women managers identified those above as well as "lack of consultation and communication, perceived need to perform better than male peers, sex

disadvantage in career advancement, career-related dilemma concerning whether to start a family and office politics" (p.140).

### Coping Strategies

Before reviewing the literature on the effective **stress management** or **coping strategies** used by educational administrators, Gmelch (1988) suggests the following propositions be considered:

1. the individual is the most important variable - not one coping technique is equally effective for all individuals in all situations;
2. prescription of coping techniques must be sensitive to cultural, social, psychological and organizational differences; and
3. individuals who cope best display a repertoire of techniques to counteract different stressors in different situations." (p.138).

Gmelch, in attempting to develop a coping taxonomy, concludes that:

"coping is an art, not a science and therefore should be personalized. ... no technique exists which controls, manages or reduces stress for all people in all situations. The solution rests in holistic interventions to assault problems on many levels, ie. to develop a comprehensive set of coping strategies." (p. 223).

In the research reviewed to date, there is little consistency among articles regarding coping taxonomies and also among the results found in the research studies as to which type of coping strategy was the most effective for the most administrators. Many different coping taxonomies were presented.

Monteiro (1990) proposes a taxonomy designed at the Brooklyn College Principals' Center and based upon Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy. The taxonomy divides effective stress reduction strategies into three levels - Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor. Swent (1990) categorizes stress reduction strategies into three similar groupings - 1. Physiological Activities, 2. Cognitive and Psychological Activities and 3. Interpersonal and Organizational Management Skills.

Monteiro (1990) further categorized the strategies within each grouping as those which are appropriate for "Band-aid" Treatments and those which are appropriate as Life Style Strategies. Swent (1990) noted that coping strategies may be viewed as those usable for immediate or short-term reduction of stress and those appropriate for managing long-term stress. Monteiro (1990) and Swent(1990) both concluded that it is important that principals engage in activities in all categories and that they learn to move beyond the cognitive category to realize the role that the emotions and the body may play in coping with stressors.

Swent's (1990) research revealed that the majority of administrators in his study used physical activities as their major source of stress reduction. This contrasts with the study done by Bailey, Fillos and Kelly (1987) who found that identified 'exemplary' principals scored higher in using the socio-psychological category of coping strategies (eg. therapy, church, friends, support groups, family and solitude) than the physiological category. They found that physiological patterns appeared to be less evident than their other three categories - socio-psychological, avocational/recreational and management skills.

It would appear in reviewing the research to date that each article has chosen to categorize their coping strategies using different but similar terms. Many have broken their strategies down into three or four categories, others are more detailed with five to seven categories. Roberson and Matthews (1988) used a taxonomy devised by Feitler and Tokar which has five categories and found "The types of strategies reported by Georgia principals in order of most frequently used to least frequently used were: Physical, Mental, Psychological, Direct and Destructive." (p.81). This taxonomy is one of few found which included inappropriate stress reduction strategies such as drug abuse, alcohol and tobacco use and excessive eating. These are listed under the title of "Destructive Strategies".

Cooper (1988) had principals select their stress-coping preferences from seven categories - Consultative, Workaholic, Eat/Sleep, Exercise, Time Out, Recreation/Passive and Active. He found that "the top three choices are: discussing concerns with colleagues in education (consultative), delegating tasks or assignments to others (active), and taking work home (workaholic)." (p.87).

The categorization system developed and used by Gmelch (1988) is the taxonomy which was used in this study. Gmelch collected 2,356 coping techniques and categorized them into the following seven groupings: Social, Physical, Intellectual, Entertainment, Personal, Managerial, and Attitudinal. His research revealed that the managerial, attitudinal and social categories were used most frequently followed by intellectual, physical, personal and entertainment. He concludes that effective coping consists of building a repertoire of techniques equally balanced in all seven categories. Singular categorical techniques may be effective in specific situations but "the moment that stress attacks, educators may not always be able to jog or meditate." (p.223).

There are many general stress books and articles available over the counter which propose any number of different coping strategies. Many suggest various relaxation techniques, such as scanning and progressive relaxation, hypnosis, deep breathing, autogenic suggestions and affirmations, and imagery training to name a few (Charlesworth & Nathan (1993)). Carr-Ruffino (1985) proposes that stress can be best managed by using some of the following strategies: Using time management, support networks and assertion, taking an assertive approach to health, taking care of nutritional needs, exercising regularly, controlling your environment, commanding your inner resources (your personal power), living in the present, mastering relaxation techniques, visualizing the results you want and learning to let go. A few of these were suggested within the research reviewed as they are in the many workshops delivered.

Self-talk is a strategy which is described in many of the stress management resource books but which was not mentioned in any of the research articles reviewed. Butler (1981) and Helmstetter (1987) promote positive self-talk, defined as "the constant internal dialogue", as being one of the most influential strategies for controlling the physical and emotional effects of stress. Butler (1981) calls self-talk "The Language of Self-Support" and she notes:

"Hans Selye, who originated the stress syndrome concept, agrees when he says, "In our life events, the stressors' effects depend not so much upon what we do or what happens to us but on the way we take it." How we construe a situation and how we take it brings us back, of course, to our own self-talk, to what we say to ourselves about a critical incident." (p.7).

Both Butler (1981) and Helmstetter (1987) offer stress management suggestions through strategies for promoting positive self-talk.

Russell (1994) describes the role of a positive attitude and a sense of humor in helping women managers cope in a traditional male system. She noted that "Whether describing how they dealt with a crisis, the people in the organization they most admired, or their own definition of success, the importance of a positive outlook and a sense of humour was the most common theme running through the interviews." (p.7). One respondent commented that "you've never seen a pessimist be successful in the history of mankind." (p.7). One strategy which was proposed by a respondent within Russell's study was to force a smile, "regardless of how you feel and then bitch afterwards or pound the wall, but take it." (p.7). Humour was discussed as being used for a variety of functions such as taking control of the situation, of resisting the role of the victim, of helping them fight isolation by making connections with colleagues, and dealing with difficult or stressful situations. Russell noted with regards to the respondents "Most of them could be described as very positive in their approach to life." (p.9).

Potter (1987) emphasizes the importance of having a social network upon which to draw in order to cope with stress. She notes that "Social support acts as a buffer against stress and burn-out" (p.44) promoting the influence which support systems and networks can have in reaffirming an individual's competence and self-worth. She suggests that:

"The modern workplace is a social environment. Succeeding on the job requires more than just accomplishing tasks. It also means building productive relationships. You can improve your effectiveness by taking time to build a network of allies." (p.46).

Having a supportive network of friends and co-workers is a coping strategy which has been identified in other books which were reviewed such as Shakeshaft (1990), Witkin (1991), FWTAO (1992) and White (1992). Witkin (1991) talks about the value of female friendships to women and looks at socialization patterns which lead women to relate to other women. She notes that "not only is friendship more natural among women, it also fills a number of basic needs in our lives. Your female friends can add warmth, fun and meaning to your life in a way no one else does." (p.284).

It would appear that people develop their own repertoire. They may try something new if it fits with their personality and lifestyle but in general, they will resort to those coping mechanisms which have worked for them in the past.

### Female Stress Issues

Research information regarding gender and stress is beginning to surface as it becomes recognized that females and males respond differently to stress and stressors. As the number of women in administrative roles increases, there is more research being conducted with the goal of helping them deal with the special stressors they face.

In this section of the Literature Review, there will be a number of issues explored. Initially, research looking at the differential physical effects of stressors on men and women will be reviewed. Research investigating the differential effects of social role expectations for men and women will be explored. The general conclusions of these studies are inferences regarding the increased obligations which the roles of mother and wife carry when compared to the roles of father and husband. The issue of balance which women administrators attempt to establish between personal and professional lives will be addressed. Other female stress issues which will be reviewed include the need of women to prove themselves in a traditionally male-oriented system, the different management and communication styles which men and women stereotypically demonstrate, different philosophies with regards to hierarchy and bureaucracy and the importance of relationships and networks to women's ability to cope with stress. Special female stressors which plague most women such as body image, self-esteem, and victim-like thinking will conclude the section.

Adler (1993) writes that researchers are currently investigating the differences in the physical reactions to stress experienced by men and women. She notes:

"Researchers don't know yet why men's and women's immune systems perform differently in response to stress. It may be in part because one sex finds a problem, such as a marital conflict, more stressful than the other does." (p.8).

In examining the research done by Kiecolt-Glaser, it was found that "women's endocrine and immune functions change more than men's and that the changes in women are more closely related to the behaviours during interaction - the negative behaviour in particular."(p.8). This suggests that perhaps negative interpersonal relationships may be more stressful for women than men. Adler (1993) writes:

"Many researchers and lay people alike believe that women are more affected than men by stress related to their personal relationships. Men are believed to be more wrapped up in their jobs." (p.10).

She also added that:

"Many studies, including those as recent as 1992, have argued that women are more affected by their relationships with their children than men are, because "women more than men are socialized to feel responsible for the quality of their family relationships." Dr. Barnett and her colleagues wrote. Women define themselves by their relationships more than men do, those studies found. For example, researchers have argued that employed mothers will feel more guilty than employed fathers about not being as available to their children." (p11).

Aneshensel and Pearlin (1987) support this notion, suggesting that "problems and frustrations encountered on the job and at home are differentially distressing to women and men (Pearlin (1975). Men are found to be more depressed than women by strains encountered at work, while women were more depressed than men by marital problems." (p.86).

In reviewing the literature on social role expectations and gender, Barnett and Baruch (1987) suggest that the "effects of the same role combinations may be different for men and women; many researchers argue, for example, that the combination of paid worker and spouse roles are more beneficial for men than for women (Cleary & Mechanic (1983); Gove & Tudor (1973))." (p.122).

Barnett and Baruch (1987) report on two hypotheses which have been developed to explain the interdependency of social role obligations and stress. The Scarcity Hypothesis put forth by Goode (1961), Cosner (1974) and Slater (1963) states "the more roles a woman occupies, the less energy she will have, the more conflict she will experience, and the more negatively will her well-being be affected." (p.123). It is generally accepted with this hypothesis that the social role obligations of mother and wife are very demanding with regards to time and energy. The Expansion Hypothesis, proposed by Marks (1977) and Sieber (1974), points to the many positive gains to be enjoyed from occupying multiple roles. They note that "most of the literature on negative effects of multiple role involvement, such as role strain and role conflict, has centered on women." (p.125) and that "because the roles of husband and father are

viewed as subordinate to the employee role and traditionally have involved fewer obligations, issues of conflict and strain are rarely addressed." (p125) with regards to men. Barnett and Baruch (1987) suggest that in the past, men defined success in terms of meeting their goals within their work environment while women defined success in terms of having a happy marriage and experiencing motherhood. They note that times are changing and with additional research there is "increasing evidence that for women as well as men, the more roles one occupies, the greater the chances of being physically healthy, more satisfied with life and less depressed." (p.122). Thus, the Expansion Hypothesis is gaining support with time and research.

Carr-Ruffino (1985) supports the Scarcity Hypothesis for women noting:

"For example, when they accept the primary responsibility for the children and the housework, there are simply more things going on in their lives - things they perceive as crucial. ... women who have not resolved inner conflicts concerning their career role and their wife or mother roles are subject to added stress." (p.139)

This supposition is confirmed by Morrison et. al. (1987) who state that "living a full life is more challenging and more difficult for female executives than it is for the male colleagues. ... Many women find that they have the major responsibility for the household, maintaining a relationship, and child-rearing." (p.113). Apter (1993) supports this perception in her book aptly named Working Women don't have Wives. Krusor and Blaker (1992) note that "women are generally expected to the 'emotional glue' of a marriage and family. Coupled with a full- or part-time job, work and family expectations become contradictory." (p.30). The FWTAO (1991) noted that within the sample of female administrators whom they surveyed, family responsibilities was a significant deterrent for women considering applying for a PAR position.

Aneshensel and Pearlin (1987) propose that because "work is defined as centrally important to men and the family to women, then problems in these areas may take on an added potential to evoke distress." (p.86) In discussing "Stress Between

Occupational and Family Roles", they discuss the interdependency of stress among many roles and suggest that " a given role may be experienced as stressful not because of anything inherent in the role itself, but because it is incompatible with other important social roles." (p.87). The example which they offer to support this belief is that of a woman experiencing work-related stress, not because of the work but because her " working results in conflict with her husband or because she is taxed by an overload of household tasks." (p.87). They concluded that "Due to different normative expectations for appropriate behaviour, the roles of wife and mother are likely to be more time consuming and expansive, to invoke more areas of responsibility, and to be more disruptive of other social roles than the roles of husband and father." (p.87). Swiss and Walker (1993) support this notion noting "Society's traditional expectations exert no pressure on fathers to star as both parent and professional." (p.3) and adding that "despite the rapid evolution and expansion of women's roles in the last decade, the roles of men at home have barely moved" (p.4). The women interviewed within their study strongly suggested that few changes have taken place in the last decade regarding men assuming more responsibility in the home and with the family.

Shakeshaft (1989) reports on a study done by Fisher in 1978 in Michigan whereby:

"only 34% of the women teachers agreed that for women a successful marriage and a successful job as a school administrator are compatible. This means that 66% of the women teachers didn't believe that the two full-time jobs could be successfully carried out at the same time by a woman. For males to be fathers, husbands, and school administrators entails not two careers, but one. For most men, family responsibility is work responsibility - bring home the paycheck. For most women, work responsibilities are added to home tasks." (p.89).

Swiss and Walker (1993) make the point that while we often refer to a "working mother", we rarely hear people in society talking about a "working father".

Barnett (1993) proposed that as the "role patterns of men and women become increasingly similar, we need to rethink our ideas about gender differences concerning the effects and importance of work, marriage and children." (p.10). Adler (1993) discussed a 1989 study that found "when men and women have similar household responsibilities, men are almost as strongly committed to the family role as are women" (p.11).

Much ado has been made of the "Superwoman" syndrome whereby a working wife and mother continues to maintain all the responsibilities of the home while carrying the additional burden of her job responsibilities. Hardesty and Jacobs (1986) write:

"It is sad and frightening that women are still casualties to unrealistic societal pressures and the relentless competition of the workplace despite the growing recognition that the corporate Amazon is only a media-manufactured myth. Women are even forming clubs for "reformed" superwomen. To get women off the superwoman "treadmill", an outfit called Superwoman Anonymous celebrates the "joys of doing nothing for a full five minutes." (p.336).

Women are starting to realize that they cannot do it all. This has been a slow process and many women are still in the early stages. Swiss & Walker (1993) in their book, Women and the Work/Family Dilemma, write:

"Despite increasing numbers of professional women entering the work force. . . despite proving themselves as capable and talented in their professions as the men who sit next to them in their offices . . . women still assume all the public blame and experience the private anguish when it comes to the potential collision between their careers and their children. Today, more than ever before, women with strong career ambitions who also want to be successful parents face a disturbing dilemma: how to reconcile these two critical goals without compromising the quality of either one." (jacket cover)

This hints at the problems which female educational administrators experience in trying to balance their personal and professional lives.

Swiss & Walker's (1993) book analyzes interviews held with over 902 professional women, all of whom had graduated from Harvard's Business, Law and Medical schools. They point out that not only do women face a "glass ceiling" when in

administrative positions but also a "maternal wall - a transparent but very real barrier that significantly hinders a mother's ability to balance successfully work and home." (p.5). They propose that balancing family and work persists as one of the major stressors in American life today and quote "a recent Time/CNN poll reported that "helping women balance work and family" is the top concern of the women's movement." (p.55)

Swiss & Walker (1993) discuss role overload in the context of women's attempts to balance their family and work role responsibilities effectively. They suggest that when there is not a good fit between career and children, women demonstrate signs of role overload such as guilt, stress, fatigue, questions about competence and professional burn-out. "In neither role do women have a sense of a "job well done". Their frustration builds as they realize that their husbands - as fathers and professionals - suffer no such conflict and few challenges to the roles they have chosen." (p.41).

Apter (1993) supports this notion suggesting that women often experience depression when they are unable to meet all the perceived demands of their many roles. Women who establish family as their first priority suffer intense stress as they attempt to balance a strong desire for career with their perceived desire to be the perfect mother. A Canadian Conference Board of Canada study reflected the effect of a poor balance on the workplace suggesting that "Many workers are so exhausted by their struggle to juggle work and family that they can't perform up to par." (Bueckert, 1994). Krusor and Blaker (1992) discuss the relationship between family stress and employee productivity noting that:

"The most powerful influences on how people distribute their time and energy between jobs and family life are sex role and work expectations. ... As society views child care and housework as primarily the mother's responsibilities, many mothers will likely experience 'negative spillover' from family to the workplace. In a survey conducted in 1980, working women overwhelmingly reported not having enough time to meet their home and work obligations." (p.31).

The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (1991) discuss the importance of a supportive husband and family to a female administrator's promotion and success within her role. They offer strategies of encouragement for women interested in PAR positions on their opening page such as "Select your husband carefully." (cover page). In reviewing sources of encouragement for female administrators, they noted that "complex issues relating to the role of family members were raised, particularly the support available from family members in combination with the importance of family responsibilities." (p.7). In discussing barriers to promotion in a study across Ontario, they reported that "Evidence overwhelmingly confirms the hypothesis that family responsibilities remain a major concern, and that more women would be interested in PAR if they could find away to balance their professional and family lives." (p.9).

Carr-Ruffino (1985) alludes to another stressor which is occasionally identified by women in management positions, that being the need to prove themselves. She notes that "women are likely to experience more stress than men in the process of establishing their credibility and advancing within an organization because of the stereotypes and other barriers." (p.139). She also refers to an English study which identified a "perceived need to perform better than male peers" as a stressor for women managers. Morrison et. al. (1987) support this suggesting that women executives believe that they must put more time and energy into their job than their male counterparts to be acceptable and accepted. Russell (1994) recalls a comment from an interviewee, "I cannot afford to be average or to meet the minimum requirements for the position." (p.4) as she discusses the performance pressure which female administrators experience. Swiss and Walker (1993) related the perceptions of one respondent in their study:

"Mine was the first generation that thought - just maybe- that if we worked twice as hard and twice as long, we could have it all. And we did get more choices. But we have done better at playing according to the men's rules than changing them to our own." (p.48)

Fassel (1990) relates women's self-esteem to their work ethic and suggests that "women's hidden fears of inadequacy actually drive us to perform" (p.58) in order to be perceived as indispensable. She quotes Stern (1988) as suggesting:

"Our unconscious goal is to be so desirable, so smart, so competent, so giving, so perfect, that others will be convinced they can't get along as well, if at all, without us. In our efforts to guarantee career security and advancement, to hold on to our relationships, and mostly, to create and maintain a positive image of ourselves, we pretend we are infallible and that nothing is beyond our scope." (p.15)

Fassel (1990) maintains that women obtain their identity from their achievements and from their need to do everything perfectly in such a way that we please others. When these desires become obsessive, women become workaholics.

Gender differences in communication styles are discussed at length in books such as How to Talk so MEN Will Listen by Woodall (1990), You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation by Deborah Tannen (1990), Working Together: The New Rules and Realities for Managing Men and Women at Work by Baridon and Eyler (1994) and Men and Women: Partners at Work by Simons and Weissman (1990). Woodall (1990) notes:

"Women are acknowledged as having great strength in areas of communication that are vital to business (and family) harmony. The communication skills that foster this strength include listening, consensus building, and facilitation. These characteristics, while essential to group communicating, sometimes work against their goals of being listened to, of being powerful." (p. 30).

Siress (1994) promotes her newest book, A Working Woman's Communications Survival Guide with the following descriptor:

"What a woman doesn't know - or doesn't say - can torpedo her career. It's not just education, training and experience that get you ahead. It's speaking the

language and knowing the unspoken rules of a business culture that reflects male standards and behaviour. And it's doing it in a way that doesn't undermine your self-esteem or entrap you in female stereotypes that can hold you back." (Promotional Flyer).

Russell (1994) discusses a number of barriers to women in administration and suggests that "Key among these are men's preference for working with other men which tends to isolate women from important supply networks." (p.4). Women tend to feel stressed when others withhold information and communication breaks down. She recommends that "Men need to be made aware of the unconscious ways in which their male bonding practises shut women out of important information networks and deny them valuable opportunities to learn and develop." (p.15).

Russell (1994) looks at the role of socialization in establishing different communication styles:

"Cava (1988), drawing on the work of Gilligan (1982), credits women's strong communications skills to the fact that girls tend to be socialized to sense others' needs. As a result, they see themselves as part of "a web of relationships and feel threatened by isolation", while boys tend to "learn from their fathers to seek independent achievement. Ties to others threaten their (boys') self-esteem" (Cava, p. 11). The concept of the web is used by Helgesen (1990), as well, in her study of women's leadership with its emphasis on relationships. ... Men's development stresses separation, achievement and competition while women's development stresses relationships, attachment and cooperation." (p.13).

Women experience stress when they feel compelled to participate in the competitive nature of the male organization, as well as when things go awry with their relationships. They strive to maintain many positive, cooperative relationships with others.

Simons and Weissman (1990) discuss the importance of acknowledging the existence of gender differences in communication and management styles. They offer tips to both genders on how to best deal with the opposite gender's stereotypical approaches to communication and management. It is suggested:

"Today women must continue to learn skills that have traditionally been seen as male skills. Men will have to become more proficient at things women have been taught to do. What these are can be seen more clearly by looking at what takes place in organizations which are run largely by women. Women-run organizations tend to offer a focus on the individual and personal fulfillment. This results in greater organizational effectiveness and better bottom line results." (p.54).

There is more research being done and more literature appearing on the market delving into the gender styles which improve the efficiency of the workplace. Morrison et. al. (1987) note that:

"Over the years, many people have argued that the abilities and attitudes of male managers are very different from those of female managers. Historically, the perceived differences have been used to keep women out of management. But now it has become fashionable to say that the differences are beneficial, that women will complement men in the management ranks and bring a healthy balance to business." (p.48-49).

They go on to suggest some of the stereotypical differences reported in the literature, "One commonly cited difference is that women are more people-oriented and less authoritarian than men and use a more participative management style." (p.49). However, in their research findings, these differences did not hold true and they concluded that "Gender differences in management style may be mainly in the eye of the beholder." (p.49). Their findings suggest that "executive women are more like executive men than they are different in terms of their goals, motives, personalities, and behaviour." (p. 50).

Shakeshaft (1990) looks at the "Differences Between the Ways that Men and Women Manage Schools" and suggests that "Not only are women's day-to-day interactions different from men's, women's styles of administration offer contrast - sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically - to the ways men manage schools." (p.166). She goes on to note:

"there are some differences in the ways they spend their time, in their day-to-day interactions, in the priorities that guide their actions, in the perceptions of them by others and in the satisfaction which they derive from their work. These

differences combine to create a work environment which is different for women than for men." (p.170).

The FWTAO (1991) suggest that "women are finding ways to integrate their female strengths into leadership roles, thereby adapting these roles, although for the trailblazers, it has often been a difficult and lengthy task. Not only is the level of acceptance of female leadership styles growing, these styles are becoming increasingly valued." (p.9) As women become a larger part of the workforce, the traditional androcentric philosophy is being adapted to incorporate women's ways of communicating and managing. Russell (1993) commented on gender differences with regards to conflict resolution. She noted that women tend to:

"bring those together to negotiate a solution, and to develop skills in staff and students that will serve them well beyond the current crisis. Several men interviewed referred to the different management styles of their women colleagues and described ways in which they used strategies they had learned from observing these female colleagues, suggesting that females may in subtle ways be changing management styles." (p.14-15).

Workplaces are being challenged to accept the important contributions women's styles can make to the daily operation of the organization.

Women tend to hold differing views of hierarchial and bureaucratic structures compared to men who have traditionally created them. Ferguson (1984) discusses, in her book The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy, the inherent components of an ideal bureaucracy and suggests that:

"Managers who break these rules and seek to humanize, perhaps even democratize, relations within their offices are posing a fundamental threat to the organization; even if their offices function effectively, they are subverting the hierarchy, undermining the official value system, attacking the organizationally defined identity of other managers, and propagating relationships within the organization which are antithetical to the legitimated ones. Small wonder that managers who do attempt such reforms are seldom rewarded and often punished." (p.12)

The typical management styles of women tend to humanize the workplace and to work counter to many of the traditional qualities of a true bureaucracy. This can create stress

for women managers. She discusses the bureaucratic requirement of depersonalization and isolation. She reflects upon the importance of relationships to women and notes:

"If we see that the human self is created by a process of interaction with others, in which individuals arrive at their own unique identity through viewing themselves from the perspective of others, then the destruction of personal relations through bureaucratization threatens the foundation of self-identity. It is the sentiment of isolation that describes most immediately the character of social life within the bureaucracy. Men know and interact with one another as role occupants. In each of their disparate roles, they are recognized as representatives of a different type of skill and talent. At no point do they acknowledge each other as entire persons. If recognition is one of the bases of personality, the system of roles fails to provide support for a unitary definition of personality." (p.13).

Ferguson makes a case against bureaucracies as they have been traditionally defined.

Helgesen (1990) describes a web-like hierarchial structure which became evident through her studies of women managers. "The new system is circular; positions are represented as circles, which are then arranged in an expanding series of orbits." (p.44). Women chose to define their position within their organization as being in the middle of things rather than at the top. She writes "Inseparable from their sense of themselves as being in the middle was the women's notion of being connected to those around them, bound as if by invisible strands or threads. This image of an interrelated structure, build around a strong central point and constructed of radials and orbs, quite naturally made me think of a spider web - that delicate tracery, compounded of the need for survival and the impulse of art, whose purpose is to draw other creatures to it." (p.46). Analysis of diary studies indicated that women portrayed this construct in the "management structures they devised and in the way that they structured their meetings." (p.46) She relates the importance of group affiliation to this construct as having a higher value than individual achievement. Thus, Helgesen talks of a "Web of Inclusion" to describe the feminine version of the traditional masculine hierarchy. The "web of inclusion" is most concerned with the bondage and

connections among its membership rather than the isolation and depersonalization characteristic of true hierarchial systems.

Russell (1994) talks of the vital role which networks and support systems play in allowing women managers to cope with the isolation which often accompanies their position. She suggests that "isolation remains a major problem for women middle managers. Having fewer people with whom to discuss and work through problems probably limits one's ability to improve problem-solving and decision-making skills." (p.9). Every women manager whom Russell interviewed spoke of her feelings of being alone or on her own. It soon became evident that networks and support systems provided "sources of strength, support, and inspiration for these managers." (p.10). She also found that her respondents indicated that "managers' information networks and informal networks were more important to their functioning than training." (p.11). They also related important functions of their support systems as being to help each other in the middle of a crisis, to allow each other to vent their frustrations and nurture their personal growth. They provide a stress release for women managers which is not to be found through other coping strategies. Russell concludes that "However important women's networks are for their nurturant qualities, they do not make up for the fact that women are still excluded from the more powerful male dominated networks where information critical to organizational operation is shared." (p.12). She also noted that "support groups and friendship networks among women workers are serving as models for male workers." (p.6).

Sullivan (1993) talks of women in general as having "special stressors": body image, self-esteem and victim-like thinking. With regards to body image, Sullivan notes that different body types have been desirable throughout the ages and different cultures. She lists descriptors which men and women gave themselves in a self-appraisal and concludes:

"Men do care and worry about their appearance, but their sense of value or worthiness throughout time has not depended on it. The feeling of not being okay, of being ashamed of their physical appearance is a major "silent" stressor in women's lives. It can permeate thoughts and actions, decreasing self-confidence and self-worth." (p.24).

She goes on to discuss self-esteem and stress suggesting that a lack of self-esteem can cause unlimited stress in the lives of women. She notes that "feelings of unworthiness can manifest itself as anxiety around people whose approval we want or tasks we feel we could never do well."(p.28). She suggests that women question why their significant others within their lives (husbands and children) care for them and that they sometimes spend the bulk of their waking hours dwelling on these concerns. "We may compensate by trying to be perfect. Or we may feel like we can never do enough and then exhaust ourselves trying, which leads to anger and frustration. We may avoid the pain of low self-esteem by exhibiting obsessive behaviours." (p.28). She concludes the chapter suggesting that victim-type thinking is a prevalent attitude in today's society and she reflects upon the negative effects of this attitude upon our immune system. She recommends that action is needed in order to step out of this attitudinal syndrome.

Many of these female stress issues were identified by participants within this study. Some of the issues were identified as stressors by the women whom were interviewed, while others became apparent in discussions of gender differences with regards to fulfilment of the administrative role and the identification of stressors. Some were elaborated upon in great detail while others were briefly mentioned in passing. As the topic of gender differences and female stress issues forms the focus of this study, this body of research reviewed was important in supporting or negating the perceptions of the women within this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

This study examined four main areas: the perceptions of women administrators regarding their personal definition of stress; their perceived stressors or sources of their personal stress; their personally effective strategies for managing their stress; and their perceptions regarding gender differences in the definition of stress, in the identification of stressors and the coping strategies used. The data which were gathered were the perceptions of female educational administrators. To best gather the desired opinions, perceptions and/or points of view, it was necessary to talk directly with the women administrators. Because of the personal nature of the individual's perceptions, the selection of a methodology that allowed each participant to speak freely and openly about the topic was required.

### The Interview Approach

An interview approach was chosen as the best way to address the research questions. The interview methodology allows face to face questioning. Grant (1993) discusses the power of the technique and its many advantages:

"First, this style of research enables a subject to articulate in his or her own words how a situation is perceived. In order to gain insight into understanding an individual's perceptions, the interview also provides the ability to probe for more information or ask for elaboration on a relevant point. The advantage of being face-to-face offers the chance for the researcher to identify useful non-verbal clues that might be missed with other methods. These capacities to

clarify ideas will add to a more complete understanding of the perceptions, and, therefore, the ability to satisfy the research questions." (p.48).

Fournier-Gawryluk (1993) suggests that "participants tend to be more motivated to participate in a study regarding personal issues, particularly if negative feelings are involved, when the approach is one of an interview." Thus, an interview format was chosen as the methodology best suited to the nature of the research.

The interviews in this study were semi-structured and open-ended. They were semi-structured as each participant was asked the same questions in the same order as they appeared on the Interview Schedule. They were of an open-ended nature as the questions allowed for individuality in responding to the probes asked by the interviewer. Often there were points which would emerge which were not necessarily foreseen by the interviewer and these tended to present some valuable insights into the topic being discussed. As Grant (1993) suggested with his research "the intent in choosing this type of design was to combine the benefits of a structure that gives some uniformity among subjects with the flexibility of being open ended to allow participants to express their perceptions freely." (p.48)

### The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule used in the research is found in Appendix A. The questions were created as a result of prior reading of research done in this area, open-ended probing techniques studied at a facilitation conference, and insights gained in "SOS" or "Strategies on Stress" workshops. The questions were discussed with another woman administrator prior to conducting the formal interviews. The design of the questions with regards to their coherence and their ability to ascertain the desired information from participants was reviewed.

It should be noted that I was not especially interested in whether the participants could define the term "stress". This question was included primarily as an opener to clarifying the difference in meaning between the two terms "stress" and "stressors". Each interview was started with a clarification suggesting that "stress" was the physical reaction which individuals experience caused by external and/or internal "stressors". This set the stage to then move into the discussion of "stressors".

Most questions started with the phrase "As a woman and an administrator". This opened the platform for the women interviewed to reflect upon any gender differences they had experienced and to look at the effects of combining the gender with the role.

Questions were designed to account for differences in stressors and coping strategies when dealing with on-the-spot stressful situations and with long term lifestyle applications.

### The Sample

Prior to any research being conducted, permission was obtained from the University of Manitoba Ethics Review Committee. Letters were sent to ten possible participants explaining the nature of the research and asking their permission. A copy of this letter and consent form can be found in Appendix B. Nine of the possible ten female educational administrators accepted the invitation to participate. Not hearing from one administrator, I telephoned her to ensure that she had received the letter. She noted that she was very interested in the topic but explained that she had taken on too many responsibilities and felt that she was too 'stressed' to try and find the time for the interview.

The criteria identified for sample selection was that the women to be interviewed were currently holding "Positions of Added Responsibility" in Northwestern Ontario. The names of the women holding these positions for the three public Boards of Education were obtained from a 1994 "PAR" directory sent out by the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario to all "PAR" women. To obtain the names of the women in PAR positions in the separate Boards of Education for these three towns, telephone calls were made to the boards. After identifying myself and the purpose of the request for the names, the names were given over the telephone. The names for all those who qualified to participate in this study were placed within a box and randomly selected. There were twenty-three female educational administrators within the six boards which took part in the study. Although the total sample number selected was ten, one participant chose not to take part in the research.

#### Data Collection

Each participant was sent a copy of the interview questions a week prior to the scheduled interview date. This gave the participants an opportunity to think about the type of questions which I would be asking and in most cases, notes were made to help them prepare for the actual interview setting. "I made some notes so that I wouldn't forget anything important," was a common comment made by participants. Many expressed appreciation at having some time to think through the questions and to "gather their thoughts".

All interviews were recorded onto audio-cassettes and later transcribed as was indicated to the University of Manitoba Ethics Review Committee. Since many of the transcriptions were quite lengthy, varying from fifteen to forty-five pages, a summary of each interview has been prepared for the reader which maintains the overall integrity

of the information provided by the participant. Upon the approval of this thesis, the tape recordings will be destroyed.

Most of the respondents appeared quite excited about being involved in the study and were pleased to have been selected. Many talked about the cathartic release which the interview provided. Some expressed that reflecting upon the questions helped them gain a better picture of their past year's experience and that they had used this experience to guide their development of goals and plans for the upcoming year. One participant suggested:

"thinking about the questions was therapeutic in itself. It helped me to focus on the year that just ended and to make some plans for the year ahead."

#### Limitations of the Study

This was an exploratory study and as such was limited to the examination of four areas of interest: what does stress mean to a female educational administrator, what causes stress in their lives, what strategies do these administrators use to effectively cope with their stress and do they perceive that gender differences exist with regards to fulfilling the administrator role, to experiencing stress, to defining stressors and to coping strategies which are effectively employed.

The results of this study are based upon the perceptions of the participants at the time of the interview. The same interviews may produce quite different results if they were given at another time of year, another stage in the participant's life or after a memorable life event. There are a number of variables to consider which may influence the participant's perceptions expressed.

The fact that I knew all the participants prior to the study may have an influence on the validity of the perceptions expressed. In some cases, perhaps the participants opened up more to me than they would have to a stranger. On the other hand, knowing the participants may also be viewed in some cases as having a detrimental effect as participants may have chosen not to express the perceptions which they perceived I was seeking rather than their true beliefs. Also, if they perceived, for whatever reason, that their opinions expressed would not be kept confidential in a small town setting, their responses may have been more of a formal surface nature rather than the indepth beliefs which they do indeed hold.

As the interviewer interacting with the participants, it is obvious that the results may have been influenced by my non-verbal body language or my reaction to statements made by the interviewees. As well, the fact that the interviews were held in different locations at different times of the day could influence the results. Some interviews were held in the administrator's office during or after school while others were held in the participant's home after dinner. The relaxed setting of the participant's home may have encouraged more open conversation than the office setting which was interrupted by telephone calls and teachers making inquiries about bus accommodations and students.

Lastly, it must be recognized that the sample chosen represents a very small group from a small area of the province of Ontario. Participants tended to be very interested in this study and keen to participate. They had not had many opportunities in the past to be involved in research such as this. Thus, generalizability to a larger population is limited. However, the data collected are of value to other female educational administrators experiencing stress and as a building block for future research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Interview Summaries

There were nine female educational administrators who participated in this study and each has given her consent to be quoted within this document. Interviews were conducted from mid-May to the end of June in 1994, with the exception of one interview which was held during summer holidays due to scheduling difficulties. Four of the interviews took place within the participants' homes while the other five took place within their offices. The four interviews held within homes all took place after dinner in the evening of a school day. The five interviews held within participants' offices occurred either during school hours or immediately after school. The interviews varied in length with the shortest being thirty-five minutes and the longest interview being two hours and fifteen minutes.

The summaries which are provided here are just that -- summaries. However, they will give the reader an opportunity to get a flavour for the types of responses which were generated by the research questions asked. Some direct quotes will be incorporated while some general comments will summarize the stories told by the participants. Stressors and coping strategies have been categorized according to Gmelch's (1988) taxonomy to allow readers to note the commonalities at a quick glance.

For the purpose of the study, all names of the participants and anyone named within the interviews have been changed to allow anonymity for the participants.

Fictitious first names have been given to each female educational administrator interviewed and these names will be referred to throughout the document.

The interview summaries have been organized such that the first four summaries are Principals, the next two are Superintendents of Education and the last three are Curriculum Coordinators/Consultants. The last interview has been woven into the Data Themes for reasons explained at that point.

### Alexandria

Alexandria is an elementary Principal who has been an administrator for over ten years. She is in her late forties and married with no children. Alexandria was very excited about taking part in the study as she is always very interested in women's issues. She is very supportive of women and active within her women teachers' federation.

The interview started with her comment that it could be a cathartic experience for her and she would just "let it all hang out".

Stress was defined by Alexandria as "a strain, a pulling, either positive or negative, but it is a strain on your emotional state and your physical state." She found it was difficult to rate her current stress level as she views her stress on a "fluctuating scale depending upon what I am comparing it with."

In identifying her stressors, Alexandria identified a number of stressors in her life.

Social Contract. As the Social Contract Negotiator for her Women Teachers' Association, she expressed a "frustration of having no control over what is going on".

Interpersonal Relationships. "Whatever is going on with the staff, or individual staff members or between staff members, has a great effect. I am pretty sensitive to

that and that can create a stressor." She went on to discuss student interactions and her role as the chief disciplinary person creates stress, as does dealing with parents and upper administration. She rank ordered "mediating problems or things that are happening between adults" as her second most stressful stressor.

Managerial Stressors. Alexandria noted that deadlines, paperwork requirements and time pressures were concerns. She listed her role as staff evaluator as her greatest stressor. Public speaking was also a stressor identified. An interview for a bigger school was identified as a potential stressor in the future.

When Alexandria was asked how she identified her most stressful stressors, she suggested that "a lack of confidence in what I am doing makes these the most stressful" as well as a strong desire on her part "to keep everything peaceful and cooperative".

In identifying her effective coping strategies, she suggested that she had a very supportive spouse who was always there when she needed him and that the following strategies worked for her:

Physical Strategies. Alexandria listed walking in the morning, taking a recess duty to get fresh air and walk around, "having a coffee or five coffees", eating healthy foods, taking a Vitamin B complex, not eating too much sugar, getting enough sleep, having a bath in the evening, having sex, and occasionally having a glass of wine as her physical strategies.. She did note, "I don't drink on a regular basis. I consciously try to avoid alcohol in stressful situations. I don't want it to become a way of coping with stress."

Entertainment Strategies. She revelled at her opportunity each evening to watch two soaps - "mindless television shows" - which she tapes during the day.

Attitudinal Strategies. She talked of forcing herself to smile, self talk such as "saying to myself "You've got it pretty good", and a technique which her husband taught her:

"He told me to think that it is only a 3D movie. So look at the situation as though it were a 3D movie and take yourself out of your body. Perch yourself somewhere else and say, "In the long run, in the great scheme of things, this won't matter one hill of beans. It is insignificant compared to a real significant problem."

Alexandria also commented on recently refusing a request from her director to sit on a committee. She stated:

"He came over to me and asked, "What, I thought you would sit on this." I just told him, "Bob, I don't have the time!" and smiled. He was trying to pry other reasons out of me but I just said no. There will be other things which I want to do later."

This led to a discussion on learning to say "No" without the guilt that usually accompanies it and she expressed her desire to learn to be more selective. She expressed a concern that administrators often feel pressured to do it all and aren't selective or focussed on priorities. She notes that "you feel like you have to keep adding and adding and adding" and suggests that competition is important to the director and so he highlights that type of activity. She is learning to cope with this stressor.

Alexandria had many perceptions regarding gender differences and similarities. With regards to the definition of the role, she noted "I think that there are real differences." She explained the emphasis on competition that has been institutionalized by the men in administration within her Board. She discussed how difficult it was not be drawn into the "mentality of competition" and she did not "particularly like feeling that. I see us working together for the common good." She expressed a perception that "male administrators seem to believe that their day is over at 4:30 pm. and they are

gone from the school." unlike herself and other female administrators. She expressed some concern over her difficulty with balancing her roles and separating her roles:

"I find it very difficult to balance my life at home with my life at school. I find that I carry my school home with me and I can't always get it off my mind. I always feel like I should be doing the many things left unfinished at the end of the day and feel guilty when I try to take some time for myself. Sometimes I will plan a weekend to relax and then I experience guilt the whole weekend because of the school things I should be doing. I may as well be doing the things which are bothering me as I don't relax anyway. I don't think that the men I know carry this guilt with them and I believe that they are better able to separate their school life from their home life."

She continues to comment that for female administrators, the "number of outside roles which they hold beyond their role as female administrator places a lot of stress on them."

She suggested that parents treat the male administrator differently from how they treat female administrators and she rationalized this:

"I would bet that parents would be more reluctant to call the males at home than they would be to call me at home or the other female administrators. But that is just a feeling. Maybe it is a positive factor. Perhaps the parents feel comfortable enough to talk to me when they have a problem and feel comfortable enough to know that I will not reject them when I am at home or at school. So it could be a positive thing."

She suggests that men do not always consider the many roles the women administrators hold and gave an example of going to a conference with a male administrator:

"He had a wife at home packing his suitcase and making sure that all was in order and he didn't have anything to plan for. It was my responsibility to make sure that the laundry was done. Not that I even have a family. This is a big difference. It seems that males don't have as many roles as women do."

With regards to gender differences within coping strategies, Alexandria proposed that coping strategies are individualistic. She suggested some strategies which another female Principal employs (ie. sewing, working around the house and

visiting with her granddaughter) and relates these to what she perceives as the strategies which many male administrators use (golfing, working with their hands or other types of physical labor, refinishing furniture or painting).

### Brittany

Brittany is a secondary school principal who has been an administrator for less than five years. She is in her late thirties and married with a young baby at home. We met in her school office at 3:30 pm. after a day of school. She had written meticulous notes and she appeared very organized and ready for the interview. She answered the questions quickly and with confidence. We were interrupted four times by the telephone and by knocks on the door by staff and students; however, each time she carried on with the exact word of the sentence with which she had left off.

When asked for a definition of "stress", Brittany indicated that she had given this a lot of thought and came up with "life in the nineties, a state of being, a way of living, and the thing it meant most to me was juggling." She talked of juggling her family, her staff, her students. and described the results of this:

"You end up with no time for yourself. You end up with very poor eating habits and very poor sleeping habits. You try to cram in everything. You lack exercise. Juggling all that was the big thing that I thought meant 'stress' to me."

When asked to describe a stressful situation or event, Brittany explained in detail about a recent suicide of one of her students and the stress which this created for the students, staff, and community. She described her role in attempting to meet the needs of all the groups and how she had handled the stress. She commented that "you just have to get yourself through those situations. It wasn't until about two weeks after that that it hit me what really happened."

In listing her various daily stressors, she suggested:

Interpersonal Relationships. The problems which her students have was listed as a daily stressor. She discussed that these were not simple problems which bandaids could remedy but sexual assault and legal problems which needed a lot of attention.

Managerial Stressors. Here she emphasized telephone interruptions and interruptions by staff and students when she was trying to do some work in her office were frustrating. Brittany noted that the telephone was her number one stressor. Also, she listed expectations from the Ministry of Education such as the many changes accompanying the Transition Years, Drug Education and Safe Schools: Anti-violence Policy development were stressful.

Time concerns such as:

"the daily racing out of my office at 5:00 pm. to pick up my fourteen month old baby. To pick him up, get him home, feed him, feed my husband who is only home for a hour because he is working nights."

and finding the time to get everything done when everyone else wants something done for them right away were suggested. She commented that she makes a list but rarely gets to it. She also discussed moving into a new school and found it stressful to choose the furnishings for the new building.

Personal Stressors. "My fourteen month old crying at home" was a stressor. She noted that he is not a sleeper and she is up with him at least three times each night. She also proposed:

"you never have time to sit down and have lunch or a coffee break. You don't get any time to do anything for yourself. And I know that you should make time to do that. But, I am bad. I don't."

When asked about what makes these stressors the most stressful in her life, Brittany suggested their frequency and the lack of control she felt over her own life. "I have

found that the higher you go up the Administrative ladder, the less control you have over your life."

In discussing the coping strategies which she uses to deal with her stress, Brittany proposed the following:

Physical Strategies. She enjoys walking with friends.

Entertainment Strategies. Occasionally she enjoys sitting and watching television noting that "a movie or a sitcom is a big thrill and a real release because I don't do it very often".

Social Strategies. Here she listed talking with close friends who are also teachers, having a supportive husband at home and going out for dinner with friends as being stress relievers.

Intellectual Strategies. She noted that she enjoys reading books such as The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Perfect Parenting, and Ward and June Cleaver Don't Live Here Anymore.

Managerial Strategies. Brittany does some paperwork at home as a strategy and she suggested:

"As I never get my paperwork done at school, and that bothers me, (although it is not a priority for me), another thing I do after having put Thomas to bed is I sit down and do paperwork for school. Then I can go to bed ready to sleep as I feel like I have accomplished something in the day and that I am ready to go on with the next day. I find that to be a weird release. But it works."

She also noted that she takes time off at home and she spends time with her son. She placed a strong emphasis on her planning skills as helping her deal with her stressors:

"How I deal with these stressful events is plan. I am a big planner. With the Transition Years, I drive people crazy with more meetings than you can ever imagine. But, we have to plan; we have to know what we are going to do ahead of time."

Attitudinal Strategies. Brittany always looks towards the future. She will often reflect to herself, "Today may be really bad but that doesn't matter because tomorrow is

Friday". Looking forward to trips and planning for something special in the future helps her. Brittany suggested that she finds stressful crises easier to deal with than the little everyday things.

When asked to reflect on gender differences, Brittany was of the opinion that there are definite differences in how male and female administrators fulfill the demands of their role:

"I really believe that when men have a job like this, they can really concentrate on their job. If they have a meeting at 7:00 pm., it doesn't matter because they go home and have their dinner and their wife does the dishes and takes care of everything. Last night I had a dinner meeting to go to at 5:30 pm. I had to run from here to the babysitter to pick up Thomas, get him all changed and bathed and fed and out the door back to the babysitters for 5:30 pm. Most men would not have that pressure at all. They would go home and get changed for their meeting and go on to their next one. Women are not so lucky."

She commented that men do not feel the social pressure from society to juggle as many roles compared to women and noted that women "still feel like we have to juggle everything. We just can't give it up to anyone." She hinted that delegation or other solutions may be helpful in the future.

Brittany also discussed that as a female:

"in a role where there really isn't very many females, you have to prove yourself. Whether we like it or not, we have to do it. I find that it is even more so since all the Employment Equity mandates have come into play, because people assume you got the job because you are female. They don't look at all the qualifications which you have and think that you would have the job regardless of Employment Equity. I have found that I have really had to prove myself."

She commented that she perceives that her students treat her differently as a woman in her administrator role and that she has never been verbally or physically attacked. She suggested that this may be because the "students see me as a 'mother' image and hold onto the belief that you don't hit a woman."

She believes that males and females experience stress and deal with it as individuals. In talking about gender differences in stressors, she suggested the

variables of family makeup and the ages of the children affect overall stress for women. She commented again on the fact that the male administrators have their wives at home to care for the children and do those things which personally create stress for her. She felt that males used similar coping strategies and noted that in talking with others, it had been discussed that exercise, getting out with friends and talking with people in similar positions were strategies everyone tried to adopt.

### Cara

Cara is an elementary Principal in her first year of administration. She is in her early forties, is married and has teenagers living at home. The interview was held in her school office at 3:30 pm. and she appeared somewhat weary from the events of the day. It was obvious that Cara had thought about the questions and she had jotted down a few words to jog her memory. She noted that she thought of other comments as she talked her way through the interview.

When asked to define "stress", she suggested that stress is "anything which alters my physical or mental or spiritual well being. It is something which I experience as a result of a change or incident." She continued on to describe it as the effect created when something went wrong or bothered her or she felt pressured or out of control. She extolled a feeling of powerlessness "to do what I believe I should be doing or what I believe is right, based upon the experiences I have had."

In identifying the stressors within her life, she suggesting the following:

Social Contract. "If I hear Social Contract one more time, I will scream!"

Managerial Stressors. Cara listed making decisions about staffing and the allocation of work and subjects as a stressor. She noted that some of these decisions were being made by the Board and that they were being made "despite our beliefs and

negative feelings about their outcomes. I am quite a naive kind of person who thinks that if you present points to the positive, that those points will be considered in the ultimate decision and accepted." She was upset to find that decisions were being made otherwise.

Interpersonal Relationships. Bad feelings among staff members such as when there is a misunderstanding and people are angry with each other was a stressor identified. Cara also listed conflicts on staff and disciplining children as creating stress in her life.

Cara discussed the stress created when she is torn between two loyalties. "I am thinking of a particular conflict where I was torn between a parent and a staff member. Knowing that I have loyalty to both of them is a stressor to me but also a part of being in administration." She highlighted the fact that she had many people to whom she must answer.

Personal Fears. Cara expressed the fact that she has not been sleeping well because she has "little subconscious fears that I will forget something that is really important".

Managerial Stressors. Cara also feared forgetting to cancel a supply teacher and other such administrative details.

When Cara was asked what made the stressors she suggested the most stressful for her, she responded:

"I think they are all people things. Those are the things which cause my stress. It is not appointments or paperwork but people issues. It is incidents which have to do with people and relationships which is the common aspect."

When discussing coping strategies which work for Cara, she suggested the following:

Physical Strategies. Cara suggested walking a lot and doing housework, something she defined as an activity over which she had some control, as relieving her stress.

Social Strategies. She noted that she has a supportive husband also in administration with whom she likes to talk and also a secretary whom is a great listener. Verbalizing stressors out loud was a strategy Cara uses and both her husband and her secretary allow her this release.

Intellectual Strategies. Cara identified that she had attended workshops where stress was discussed in groups and the coping strategies of others were shared.

Entertainment Strategies. She enjoys reading a mindless book which puts her into a different world.

Attitudinal Strategies. Cara reflected on going to church and having a faith to help her through rough times. She discussed how "the use of prayer on a daily basis works well for me." She commented on her sense of humour and her ability to laugh at things and to put them into perspective. Cara mentioned her ability to separate issues as an effective strategy as "I leave one behind while I deal with another."

Managerial Strategies. Making time for herself and being able to remove herself from the situation when facing a crisis are two strategies used. With regards to her time, she mentioned that she has two teenagers at home and sometimes she must leave things behind to spend time with them.

When Cara was asked for her perceptions concerning gender differences and similarities with regards to how men and women define and fulfill their roles, she suggested:

"...in my experience with male administrators, I find them to be more removed and unemotional about decisions in a stressful situation. But, as a woman, I find that my reaction is much more emotional and much more a gut reaction rather than mind."

She goes on to hypothesize that "when an incident or something has to do with feelings, I think it will cause more stress for a woman than a man."

In relating her views on gender differences with regards to stressors, Cara noted that a feeling of lack of control creates stress for both genders. She also suggested that the number of years of experience and other factors than gender affect the individual ability to deal with stressors. She noted that both genders had the same reports to do, the same paperwork and the same routines with which to deal. She then goes on to explain that other areas may be less stressful for men than women. She offers the following example and explanation:

"For example, I think that when I have to discipline children, I do it like a mother, as that is what I am, that is where I am coming from. Not to be sexist, I think there are differences between how a mother and father define their roles in a family. Therefore, in administration, I am sure that there is a difference in how these stressors affect them. I think that I might be more emotional about children's difficulties than a male administrator because I have always been very involved with my own children's education. I know what sort of things were important to me and I feel that experience really makes a difference as to how I will deal with children. I always think before I act as to how I would have wanted my children to be treated in this situation. I think that there are differences in that way between females and males."

With regards to coping strategies and gender differences, Cara proposed that outside interests and sports were two strategies employed by both genders to relieve stress. She noted that the actual activities may not be the same but that these were two common themes mentioned by many administrators with whom she had daily interactions.

Cara's interview was concluded with a statement regarding the recent introduction of female administrators to her board:

"I think had you done your thesis a couple of years ago, you might have gotten different results. I have been watching the number of female administrators increase. We have two female administrators within our group and both of our appointments were this year. So, last year, you would have gotten a different perspective."

### Danyelle

Danyelle is an elementary Principal in her late forties. She has been an administrator for less than six years. She is married with teenagers living at home as well as older children who are living on their own. The interview took place at 8:30 pm. in her home over a cup of coffee. She had misplaced her Interview Schedule so I gave her a new copy when I arrived. She read through the questions and wrote a few notes as I was drinking coffee.

When asked for a personal definition of "stress", she suggested that 'stress' to her is:

"the little aggregations throughout the day, the week, the month, that tend to make you feel, or to create, an inner tenseness within your system, often without you being aware of it."

Danyelle added the symptoms which she experiences such as "the tense shoulders, the confusion, the spinning mind and the shortness of breath" to the discussion of stress.

In describing her stressors, Danyelle quickly and confidently suggested the following:

Interpersonal Relationships. Confrontations with parents was the first stressor named and she supported this with a recent example which was still upsetting to her. Later in the interview, she discussed a parent whom was "particularly critical of me and made me feel very incompetent and gave me low self-esteem." She commented that different discipline styles were involved and that this one parent is very difficult to deal with. "I think every school probably has at least one parent like her." Thus, she listed parents screaming at her as a major stressor.

She went on to suggest that staff arguments and hassles and juggling all the personnel within her schools (educational assistants, coop students, Futures students, parents and staff and students) posed stressors for her. She noted this is frustrating because "sometimes it doesn't even seem pertinent to school and the students."

Danyelle also listed "a student who is out of control" as a major stressor.

Managerial Stressors. Here, dealing with emergencies such as a whole school evacuation and the phone ringing were described. Also, the new Principalship which Danyelle was anxiously awaiting to take over in the fall was a stressor.

Social Stressors. Family related stressors were described by Danyelle. Her son was leaving for college and she felt the stress of getting him ready and off as well as his absence next year.

Danyelle also commented on "stress associated with any change in life. Death and perhaps birth of a grandchild are possibilities." as well as the graduation of her daughter from Community college at the end of June.

When asked what had made the stressors which she had listed the most stressful for her, she commented upon the degree of interruption when you are trying to get something done. She concluded:

"I guess it is the higher level thinking and problem-solving which they all have in common. You have to shift your mind into a different mode than your normal operating mode and think, "Okay, what do I want to do here?""

In describing her effective coping strategies, Danyelle suggested the following:

Physical Strategies. Danyelle walks three miles every day, enjoys sitting in the jacuzzi and/or swimming daily in her pool. She gets her hair done and looks forward to having a weekly massage at the hairdressers. Danyelle explained that her massage therapist is presently teaching her to deep breathe and offered the comments:

"She tells me to think about my breathing. I tend to keep it all inside such that when I get to her on Saturday morning, she says, "Oh, my goodness, what happened this week?" She can tell where the stress is and it is usually right across my shoulders. And she is trying to train me to move from the shallow

breathing which I tend to do. She has taught me the difference between the shallow breathing and the deep breathing. So I am trying to make a conscious effort to use that tip."

Danyelle also commented on how helpful her half hour drive to and from school was as a means of working through stressful events. "I have a half hour drive to rehash things through so that I am not coming through the door like a screaming idiot."

She also mentioned that she enjoys doing physical interior decorating and renovating activities such as painting and the maintenance required by the apartment block which she and her husband own.

Attitudinal Strategies. Danyelle believed that being a good listener helps her. She asks others for their input and does not pretend to be an expert with all the answers. She nods and lets others diffuse while thinking through the issue in her own mind.

Managerial Strategies. She has learned the value of taking time out. Sometimes at school, Danyelle will walk around the block or walk around the school to get away from everything. She is a proponent of "MBWA" or "Management by Walking Around". She noted that she does some paperwork and when she needs a break, she takes a tour of the school walking up and down the stairs.

With regards to her new job, Danyelle noted:

"Being prepared, spending a lot of time just thinking about what I am going to do, what my entry plan is going to be, is how I plan to help deal with the stress."

An additional strategy which she suggested at the conclusion of the interview was having a lady come in and do her cleaning as this relieves the pressure and allows her to help her husband manage the apartment block which they own.

Intellectual Strategies. Danyelle noted that she has attended many workshops and that she enjoys reading articles in magazines and other print materials. Books she

recommended included The Joy of Working which helps women deal with rejection and Celebrating Anger which offers different strategies to use when you are upset or angry. Danyelle talked about the 'silent scream' as one such strategy.

Social Strategies. Danyelle belongs to an organized networking group called "WIN" or "Women in the Nineties". They go out for lunch or dinner and talk about strategies for dealing with stressful situations.

When asked to reflect upon gender differences, Danyelle reflected upon a recent experience she had had on an interview team for an administrative position. She explained:

"There was a real difference in the calibre of the interview and the way that each was prepared for the interview. The women all had excellent covering letters and resumes which were very extensive. The male just had a short blurb on a piece of paper. When the questions were asked, the women were very thorough and they answered extensively, going on and on and on."

Danyelle continued on with a comment on her perception that women still feel the need to prove themselves in their administrative position. She noted:

"I think women feel that they must be twice as good as the men. We push ourselves higher and harder. Whether it is real or imagined, I don't know. But, I have heard from other Principals who say that as they look around at the pool of people that they can only see women as being logical choices for the PAR positions as they stand out. The women are busy getting their qualifications. We are given the tough jobs often and we do a good job. When we do a good job, then we are given more. It never stops."

She also labels women as being "jugglers" and comments that women do not seem to know when to say "No." Women continue to add to their repertoire of roles and responsibilities.

When queried for her perceptions regarding gender differences in the experiencing of stress, Danyelle had the opinion that women internalize stress more:

"We tend to think, again, that we have to be the peacemakers. That's inbred and therefore we try to smooth the waters and try to solve everyone's problems.

... I think men scream more and blame others more. They don't really own up to their responsibility in a conflict situation from what I have observed. They seem to think that louder is right, bigger is better. If they scream louder, then they are going to be right."

She went on to suggest that most of the women she knows attempt to cope in similar ways, with walking being the most common strategy. She also commented that she has noticed that a lot of the males she knows use alcohol as a means of coping.

When asked about the gender differences regarding stressors, Danyelle noted that the sexes share many of the same stressors and that it is also an individualistic experience. "Everyone copes with different events differently." Some events are stressful to some and some are not. In terms of similar stressors, she suggested:

"We find that the stress comes from the top down, that the administration is pushing the stress down a level. The way that they cope affects our lives. And the management style of the top really influences the whole system. We as middle managers are pushed. I think that the men are more resentful of external expectations. The men think, "I have to manage the school. That is all that I have to do. I don't think I should have to do extra-curricular system responsibilities." I don't feel that way. I feel that I have competent people in my school and if I can't be of assistance to help the system, there's a problem. I have a system perspective. ... I am guessing that they feel more comfortable in their school as it is their territory, just as teachers feel comfortable in their classroom. "

Danyelle concluded the interview by suggesting some additional variables which she believes influence an administrator's coping ability:

"I am wondering about age difference, if that would make any difference. Now, as I am in my late forties, I am no longer afraid to stand up to the males. What's the worst thing they could do to me? I am not afraid to stand up to administration. What's the worst thing that they could do to me? I don't have any of those fears and I don't feel threatened by very much any more. I don't feel good sometimes when I get criticized. But, basically I feel good about myself. I try to do the best that I can do without making mistakes. At least I am doing something. I am not sitting and hiding somewhere."

She continues to expand upon this fact and describes characteristics of women going through menopause according to her readings:

"You seem to see women going into their fifties with this confidence, this inner confidence which just comes from within. You realize that there are no external fears out there. I think when we are younger we are always afraid of what "they" are going to think or say. Then we realize that there is no "they". I am me and I am comfortable being me and if you have a problem with me, then that is your problem. I wonder if young administrators have that inner strength or insight?"

Danyelle also comments that general life experiences such as death of a parent and the stages your children pass through help individuals learn to cope and develop character.

### Eveline

Eveline is a Superintendent of Education and she has been an administrator for over ten years. She is in her late forties and married with older children in her home only in the summer and holiday seasons. The interview was held at 1:30 pm. in Eveline's office. She had some notes written on the Interview Schedule and it was obvious that she had thought about the questions prior to the interview.

When asked to offer a personal definition of "stress", Eveline suggested that stress means:

"those things which happen to you whether through your work or your personal life or anything else that you are doing that causes you to suffer physical and emotional trauma, that whole sense of anxiety and pressure that comes towards you."

Eveline identified the following stressors in her life:

Social Contract. She identified this as one of the big stressors for her this year and she compared it to an octopus which just keeps spreading. She commented:

"It's what it has done to so many areas within which I have to work. It seems that every time I turn around, it has had an impact on this or an impact on that. Then the reactions that it has had on people create stress. ... it stands out head and shoulders above everything else."

Eveline elaborates, suggesting that "the one thing that the Social Contract has brought out which I personally find very difficult to work with is negative attitudes and negative behaviours" within others.

Interpersonal Relationships. Eveline suggested that some of the people with whom she works cause stress for her. With regards to the influence of the Social Contract, she noted that "the whole morale issue and how to deal with it and work with people" poses a major stressor. She describes co-workers and teachers who have developed deep negative attitudes and how this negativism starts to eat them up. She reflects that "You can feel it hanging around and when you are talking to them, trying to deal with something which should be fairly straight forward, the situation turns mean."

Eveline talks of dealing with the "fallout of all the things which are going on and trying to keep positive myself." She indicated that she gets upset with herself when she finds herself getting caught up in the wave of negativism which others are experiencing.

Managerial Stressors. Eveline emphasized that she experienced stress in trying to balance her whole life, her personal life with her work. She explained:

"The fact right now is that the balance is not very good so I find myself being placed in situations where I am trying to explain myself a lot. That goes on daily. I find it difficult to find time to do the things at home that need doing and to spend time with my family. I am always riding that guilt trip."

She starts off each day justifying how she is spending her time and what she is going to be doing. She goes on to rationalize that her family react they way they do because they are hurt and believe that everything else is more important to her than they are. They "ask "What about me?" when you have all these other things going on."

Time was another stressor identified as she noted that she is being asked to do more and more with less and less. She also listed appointments and meetings as stressors.

Attitudinal Stressors. Eveline identified a feeling of high anxiety resulting from being bombarded with issues and responsibilities. She noted:

"I feel that I am the one that has all the spears pointing at me. I feel like I have to dodge the bullets. I find that I feel like I am the target and that gets to be a high stressor."

She spoke of all the different aspects of her job and the 'overwhelming' feeling she experiences at times. She finds it difficult to keep up with, and stay ahead of, all the expectations.

Social Stressors. Eveline also noted that there are the normal stresses associated with lifecycles such as people dying and getting sick.

When asked about commonalities which make these stressors the most stressful, she expressed the perception that it is the quantity of roles and responsibilities which are common. She explained that she tries to deal with the quantity by prioritizing them and shifting the activities around so that she has some down time to get organized between them.

In looking at Eveline's coping strategies, she suggested the following strategies:

Managerial Strategies. She suggested that she will prepare herself in advance for stressful situations whenever this is possible.

Eveline noted that she maintains some strong routines and by doing things the same way all the time, she reduces her stress.

She commented how important it was to her to organize her life. She suggested:

"I try to organize my life. I have taken things out of my life which really used to be important to me. I don't worry about my house everyday. I don't care if there are a few dustballs anymore. I know that worrying is stupid and I am just creating a bunch of stress for myself which I don't need. ... if I keep some organization with the regular things that go on in my life, then I can fit the other things in and keep my stress under control more."

Physical Strategies. She does some stretches whenever possible and noted that she will do head and shoulder stretches while driving in the car.

She enjoys physical activities such as curling in the winter and golfing in the summer. She remarked "The one area that I know works for me is physical activity."

Attitudinal Strategies. Eveline commented on the importance of keeping a positive frame of mind. She uses the following strategy when going into a potential negative and stressful situation:

"I say to myself, "Count to ten". If I have to, I count to ten again. I set myself up to say "Don't get mad. Don't get angry. Don't get frustrated." I lower myself into a more passive mood."

She also noted that in some situations, she becomes a good listener. She avoids getting involved and keeps herself insulated from the emotional trauma. "I will just sit and listen."

Eveline avoids stress by dealing with things one at a time. "I don't let them build up. I try to isolate situations. ... I take one day at a time. I only look one day ahead in terms of what I have to do. ...Then I look at it in pieces ... and break the day down."

She talks about stress as being a source of energy and emphasizes that she shifts, rather than reduces, her stress to make use of this energy source. "I take my energy out of one context and place it in another to reduce my stress. This helps me more than actually taking all the energy and trying to dissipate it."

Intellectual Strategies. Eveline reads books and attends workshops to help her with stress.

Social Strategies. She talks to other people. She especially noted that she talks with her yoga instructor and "with others about the things that they do to help themselves with stress."

In reflecting on gender differences, she remarks that she perceives definite differences in how male and female administrators define and fulfill their role demands.

She reflected on the 'feeling' dimension of women and suggests:

"I feel personally, according to my opinion, that women are far more sensitive and caring. As a result, when things happen in the workplace, women are more sensitive to their effects and recognize the effects in other people. ... most women tend to be a little more sensitive to things which men accept as being the routine things of the day. Men may believe that things just happen. I tend to get more into the human side of the situation and look at how the person will feel as a result of the event."

She comments on her perception that it is healthy having men and women work together as they each bring a different perspective with them to the issue. "It helps us to round the picture a little more."

Eveline also comments on the belief that women must prove themselves in an administrative position which is traditionally a male role. She proposes:

"Women also have to go a little bit further than men. They have it harder. They do. Whether it is our own fault that we feel that way or not, I can't rationalize it. But I do know that most women that I know in these positions work harder and longer than most men. They have this feeling that they have to perform a little bit better in order to equal the men's performance."

She briefly touched on the stereotypes which still exist and believes that because she is a woman, "there is an expectation that I am going to act and react a certain way from a male's perspective."

In looking at gender differences in the experiencing of stress, she expressed the perception that stress is individualistic. She commented on the rising number of physical illnesses which women are now experiencing as they are being exposed to administrative positions which were typically male positions. But she concluded that "everybody has different levels (of stress) which they can handle and different ways that they can deal with them."

With specific questioning regarding gender differences and the identification of stressors, Eveline believes her stressors are somewhat different based on the nature of

her position. She notes that she has more stakeholders making demands upon her than your average school Principal. She concludes "I am working on this larger scheme of things and trying to keep everyone generally happy, but not everyone specifically."

She suggests that males and females have some different coping strategies and some similar coping strategies. She notes that everyone develops their own repertoire of strategies and that not all strategies work for everyone.

The interview concluded discussing the difficulty encountered in trying to measure 'stress levels'. We discussed the fact that the interview questions really only measure the person's individual perception of what they are experiencing. Also the fact that this study is a qualitative rather than a quantitative study was suggested, as perceptions rather than numerical measurements are being explored.

### Fiona

Fiona is a newly appointed Superintendent of Education although she has been an administrator for just less than ten years. She is in her late forties and married with teenage children living at home. She is currently living apart from her family because of her position and commuting home each weekend. The interview was held in Fiona's office at 1:30 pm. The interview opened with Fiona commenting that she had made some notes as she had thought about the questions and she added:

"thinking about the questions was therapeutic in itself. It helped me to focus on the year that just ended and to make some plans for the year ahead."

When asked for a personal definition of "stress", Fiona suggested that stress was:

"anything that motivates a change in your behaviour, either positive or negative. It can energize you or it can leave you just feeling absolutely worn out, like a dishrag. It is a force which is out there. Sometimes you can label what the stress is and sometimes you are not even aware of what it is. It does change your behaviour in some way."

In identifying her current stressors, it was interesting that many stressors which Fiona suggested were gender related. Her stressors were:

Social Contract. She discussed the deteriorating effect that this had on relationships with administrators and teachers as well as its effect on her ability to fulfill her role when there were no Professional Development days during which to work with staff.

Interpersonal Relationships. Fiona expressed concern that the Social Contract initiated negative relationships between administrators and teachers.

Learning to communicate with the men of her Board was an expressed stressor and Fiona related her perceptions on the gender differences in the communication styles. She noted that "because you don't stamp your feet or shout, sometimes my point of view was not taken seriously. So, I had to find ways to let my colleagues know when issues were really important." As well, she explained that her male colleagues "are not used to sharing the information or not certain how to share confidential or difficult situations" with a woman administrator.

Fiona also discussed the stress of dealing with different communication styles in relation to interacting with principals. "I was working with male and female principals with different styles of dialogue. I learned to adjust to different people regularly."

"Maintaining relationships, in terms of professional relationships, friendships and family relationships" was also suggested as a major stressor.

Managerial Stressors. Her physical and communicative isolation from the males at the main board office was a concern. She expressed the following concern:

"As a woman, being isolated from the main board office when all of my colleagues were male and they all work there, created stress for me. There was a lot of informal information which was shared amongst them and I don't believe that it was intentional, but they would forget to inform me. They would forget that on their way to the coffee pot that they had talked about something, thinking I knew about it, when I didn't. That was a stressor for me in trying to make sure that I was current and that I was part of the decision-making."

Fiona also found that her managerial style was different than her colleagues and thus a stressor. She describes her concern as such:

"I found, as a woman, that my management style was different. My style tends to be less confrontational. I don't want to get into a power struggle. Sometimes, people interpret that as I don't have a bottom line. That was stressful sometimes, as I would think that I had a situation solved. Because I was not very forceful about it, others would comment, "Oh, I didn't think that you meant what you said." I had to get used to that."

Fiona also commented that balancing time lines and telephone calls and writing reports and attending meetings was a stressor. She noted that it was the time pressures or demands which caused her the most stress. "My greatest stressor is trying to balance the time commitments in terms of meetings and doing things within the Board and the office and at a regional level and within the schools, which is where I would like to spend more of my time."

An additional stressor proposed was organizing meetings as well as shifting gears between meetings as she goes from one meeting to the next meeting with very different stakeholders and mindsets involved.

Report writing and the process which Fiona goes through to write reports created stress for her.

Personal Stressors. The fact that Fiona lives apart from her family and spends eight or more hours each weekend on the road travelling home creates a stress in her life. She commented that "I go home, I get into a new environment and I just get

settled in when it is time for me to pack up and come back." Commuting to her home is to continue for the upcoming year and Fiona noted that "continuing to cope with this long distance relationship with my husband is stressful."

The fact that her children are both leaving home in the upcoming year was another stressor which Fiona addressed. "Knowing that they are not there will have a stressful effect on me." Her daughter's attendance at university will create some financial uncertainty which Fiona projected would be a stressor.

When asked to suggest the coping strategies which she uses effectively, Fiona proposed the following:

Managerial Strategies. She plans and organizes her day with the help of her secretaries. She noted that her secretaries are very supportive and added:

"They are very good at saying "No." to people as I always try to squeeze in one more appointment or one more meeting. They have helped me a lot in terms of saying "No, she can't do that today." as I find it very difficult to say "No."."

Part of planning her day includes scheduling some time at home between meetings whenever possible.

Fiona tries to keep a journal where she writes about all her experiences. This has worked well in the past but she did not find the time this past year because of her new situation and her many time commitments.

Social Strategies. Fiona commented on how she had worked hard to "develop a network of people with whom I can talk" in her new location. She emphasized how important it is for her to talk through her concerns and stress.

Personal Strategies. Fiona uses an emotional release as a means of reducing her stress. She commented "I might just go somewhere and have myself a nice little cry and get it out of my system. When I come back, I have that out of the way and I am ready to deal with the issue again." This is her way of getting past the emotional blockage which clouds many stressful issues.

Music was later discussed as a strategy used. "Depending on the mood I am in, I may want something quiet or something to spark my energy."

Intellectual Strategies. Fiona attends workshops, listens to audio tapes as she drives each weekend in the car, watches TVO programs and reads. She recommended Gloria Steinem's new book, Revolution from Within and Stephen Covey's The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

Physical Strategies. She tried to do exercises once or twice a week but this was also not successful with her time commitments this past year.

In terms of gender differences, Fiona spoke quite confidently about differences in a number of areas which affected her ability to fulfill her role. As was mentioned earlier, she believes that there is a difference in communication and management styles which has created stress for her. She also views a difference in problem-solving styles. She commented:

"The other thing that really helps me is having someone to talk to. I don't want someone to tell me what to do. I think that this relates back to the different communication styles between male and female colleagues. When I discuss a problem with a male colleague, they will have ten alternatives. "You can do this and this and this." They are fine. However, when I discuss things with a female colleague, she often will ask questions to allow me to come to my own answer. Most of the time I know inside what it is that I want to do but I don't want to be told. I need someone to listen and to facilitate me coming to my own conclusion."

Fiona expressed her perception that men are better able to say "No." and to restrict the boundaries of their role. She suggested that:

"men have the advantage of being able to limit their role. Personally, I find it difficult to put a limit on my role. In order to do the job efficiently, I am sometimes not as efficient as I could be. I want to maintain, support and develop the relationships which go along with with position. I think sometimes men don't feel as obligated to do that. ... Maintaining the relationships is really important to me. There are times when I have to say, "Here is the bottom line. This is it." But I tend to extend my job probably further than I need to."

The other major gender difference which Fiona expressed was the whole issue of the multiple female roles with accompanying responsibilities which most males do not experience. She explains:

"as a female administrator, you don't let go of that role of parent, housekeeper, laundry person, etc. ... If I try to get home for that hour between meetings which I talked about earlier, I have to prepare my meal when I get there. My male colleagues go home to a meal that is prepared, enjoy it, sit down for a few minutes and rush back to the next meeting. I prepare it, eat it, clean up and sit down for five minutes if I am lucky."

Generally she states that the experience of stress is not gender based but an individualistic experience. She suggests that it is different for each person and that while some people thrive on stress; others try to avoid it.

She perceives that stressors are similar for most female administrators with the exception that she believed that perhaps she had more evening commitments than other PAR positions. In looking at male administrators' stressors, she noted the only difference she could perceive other than those mentioned was the difference in home responsibilities. "Unless you have a full-time, live-in support person, I think that all those home things add to your stress."

In describing gender differences in coping strategies, she believed that there are some differences. She emphasized the importance of have someone to talk things over with and felt that this did not have the same emphasis for male administrators.

In concluding the interview, Fiona addressed two additional family issues to the information requested on the Biographical Information form. She discussed two situations of which she is aware where adult children were moving back into the family home with babies and grandchildren in tow. She also discussed the whole issue of child care arrangements which are necessary for female administrators, especially when travel is an integral part of their job responsibilities.

She talked of a recent article she had read discussing female superintendents and the number who were opting out because of the stress. She noted that the article discussed family as being one of their major stressors. She was not able to find the article.

### Gina

Gina is a Curriculum Consultant with less than six years of administrative experience. She is in her early forties, is married, and has teenagers living at home. The interview was held in her home at 6:30 pm. She had a notepad at her side where she had written notes to herself. She appeared excited and anxious about the interview.

In defining "stress" in her own words, Gina suggested that the one word would be 'change'. "I think it is how your body responds to any demands, either an outside demand or a demand which comes from inside."

In describing her stressors, Gina started off noting that she had been "thinking about this and I have had job-related stress and family-related stress. I think of the two, the family stress was the worst for me to deal with." She spent the majority of the interview talking about her family stress. At one point, she asked, "Are you wanting personal stress things too or more just job-related?" In turn, as the interviewer, I asked her "Do you think that the personal stress influences the job?" to which she responded:

"Well, certainly it does. She (her sister) works in the Board Office too and so she would call my office. I would pick up the phone and it was a daily stress with which I had to deal. It was on my mind all the time. My job helped me to keep busy and to not think about it a lot but then there would be those moments when it would come back and I would think about it again."

The general stressors which Gina identified within her life were:

Managerial Stressors. She suggested that telephone calls were a stressor. She also talked at length about her recent application for a principalship and the preparation

process through which she went. She talked of the stress of writing the resume and of preparing for the interview. She spoke of deadlines and organizing for meetings as being stressful. Having her administrator ask her to do something which was not part of her daily planned agenda posed a stress as did trying to fit in everything which she would schedule. She noted that sometimes she gets herself involved in too many things.

Budget time was discussed as a stressful time as she was never certain as to whether or not her consultant position would be cut to save funds. She would be teased a lot about the possibility and she "was really devastated." In the passing of years, she has learned "to toughen up a bit and not look at things so personally."

Social Stressors. Gina talked of the frustration which she experiences when other people do not understand her job responsibilities and criticize her accordingly.

Personal Stressors. Running her home and getting her family out the door to school each morning posed stressors for Gina. She commented:

"I would come home at night, and I have a family, so I was trying to deal with them, preparing supper and everything else that goes with my family role.... So, just getting up and getting the family organized. Getting everyone off to school. ... There is all that kind of family related stress on a daily basis."

Having teenagers in the home was also discussed. She explained that she and her husband have always supported their kids in any of their sports activities. As one son was living and playing hockey in another town, it was often stressful to make the effort to attend all his games.

Gina also noted that she and her husband were in the process of trying to sell both their house and their cottage to buy their dream cottage on the lake. Maintaining the necessary tidy appearance and the weekly upkeep such as cutting the grass at both places was stressful.

The argument or conflict experienced between Gina's sister and herself and the two families was her major family stressor. She explained the problem in detail and how it had consumed her thoughts for the whole year until it was resolved.

Attitudinal Stressors. Gina discussed running a huge conference where she forgot to thank one person and she dwelled for days on the one negative aspect of the day rather than the many positive aspects. "Those kind of things make me feel like I am beating my head against the wall."

She also commented that sometimes she believes that she can do more than she is capable of doing and she no longer enjoys those activities originally designed as stress relievers. "I'll say, "Yeah, I can do that." and then I look at my week and shudder."

In describing her job satisfaction, Gina explained that she always puts her best effort forth on the job. However, she concluded the discussion suggesting that "trying to find a balance and do the best job that you can is a stressor."

In describing her effective coping strategies, Gina suggested the following:

Entertainment Strategies. Gina indicated that she likes to rent movies when she wants "to be entertained and to have a few laughs." She and her husband enjoy going for a car ride and use the ride as a thinking time without interruptions.

Physical Strategies. When stressed after her interview, she poured herself a big drink. Sometimes she sleeps when she can't handle any more stress. She curls in the winter and noted that when she is on the ice skipping, she doesn't think of anything but the game. Gina walks every morning, come rain or shine, with two other women.

Social Strategies. Gina likes to do things with friends such as go for a boat ride or just visit or play cards. She enjoys this on Friday night to unwind from her week's events. She belongs to a sorority and also to a women's group called "WIN" or "Women in the Nineties". She noted that she had a good friend, a cousin, with whom

she liked to talk and with whom she can really open up. She also discussed having an aunt that "always makes me feel good. If I ever have had a bad time regarding a family situation, something sad, I always feel like I want to call her. She always makes me feel good. She always says the right thing." Gina also reflects on talking to other people in the office to help her with stressful events.

When she needs some advice, she is not hesitant to talk with a lot of people. She will phone someone and ask for their help.

She commented on her supportive husband and boys who help her around the house. She noted that housework can create stress when she gets behind.

Attitudinal Strategies. Gina uses a lot of positive self-talk to help her get through stressful events. In preparing for her job interview, she noted:

"I just kept saying to myself, "You will get through this! You have got to. Look, you have done this and you have done that. You will get through this. Right now, you are thinking you can't do this or get it all done. But, you just have to think that you can get through it." And, I usually do."

Gina also noted that in times of stress, you have to be able "to count on your family and not be afraid to talk things out."

Gina reflects upon her own personality and notes that she is "a positive person. I never look at the negative." She takes one day at a time and one step at a time in planning for a change or special event.

Managerial Strategies. Gina noted that she tries to manage her time wisely and to be organized. She gave as an example the fact that she always makes her haircut appointments one month in advance so she can plan it into her schedule. She noted that she does "like to have things planned. That relieves my stress so that it doesn't all pile up on me."

Gina makes lists for herself and accomplishes things listed by delegating some work to her supportive secretary.

She tries to be prepared for a stressful situation and that increases her comfort level. As with her interview, she gives a lot of thought to what she is going to say. She noted that she is "extremely organized. I don't leave anything to chance."

Intellectual Strategies. Gina noted that she reads articles, books and magazines as well as attends workshops to help her with her stress. She noted that she had ordered some books on communicating with the public and ways of marketing your school to prepare her for her new Principal position.

In reflecting upon gender differences with regards to how administrators meet the demands of their roles, Gina proposed:

"Women take their job more seriously and worry more about it than men. ... I feel that we project our mothering role onto our jobs. We want everything to run smoothly with as little chaos as possible. We will do whatever we have to do to create a peaceful "win-win" situation. Women tend to be very thorough and we like to do the extra little things that men wouldn't worry about. ... We go out of our way because we want things to be really special. We want it to be really nice. Of course, it puts more stress on us because it is more work."

Thus she concludes that women are more thorough and add that "little frill" to everything that they do.

She also proposed that women take things more personally and worry more about things than men. Women "take their job home with them more too." She suggests that "men seem to be able to shake it off. Women tend to take things more personally or harder or more seriously. They seem to take things more as a personal affront than men."

Gina also perceives that women in administrative positions still have to work harder to prove themselves. She noted:

"I feel that I have to work twice as hard and I still feel insecure at times. I want everything to be perfect and I want to let everyone know that I can handle all the work. Yet, I look at the other men in the office and the piles of unfinished work on their desks. They don't appear phased. They seem to believe that they have put in their day and they can just leave at 4:30 pm. to enjoy their evenings. I feel that I have to get everything done or at least, the major projects, before I can relax."

Gina also commented upon the "lack of family obligations which men have":

"Women have to run their family and home as well as their job while men have wives to do all those tasks for them. Trying to juggle all the roles can become difficult. As I was saying, I am lucky that I have a supportive husband and that my two sons help out. But, I still feel that men have it a lot easier as they only have their job responsibilities to occupy their minds."

In responding to the question concerning gender differences in the experience of stress, Gina perceives that this is an individualistic experience. However, she does make some generalizations concerning the physical symptoms of stress:

"I feel that women show their stress more than men. Women tend to express their discomfort with things while men will often keep their stress inside. I think that this is good as it is better to get your stress out in the open and to release it than store it up in your body. However, I think for women the key is to learn the socially acceptable place to release it."

In relation to stressors, she suggests that job-related stressors are similar for both male and female administrators. She supports this belief using the Social Contract as her example. However, she also reiterates her belief that:

"women administrators have family obligations which create stress for them which are similar to myself. I do believe that the male administrators do not get themselves as involved in family-related stressors compared to the women. Also, women have the added stressor of trying to balance their home and job responsibilities which the men do not appear to have."

In reflecting upon gender differences and coping strategies, Gina suggested that everyone has different coping strategies while we share some of the same ways. She proposed:

"I think each of us has developed our own unique ways while we have other strategies which are universal to all administrators in all PAR positions. .... When we try each other's strategies to see if they will work, some do and some don't."

The interview concluded with Gina suggesting that she had enjoyed the exercise and that it was good for her to have to come up with answers to the questions.

### Hillary

Hillary is a Curriculum Coordinator whom has been in an administrative position for less than six years. She is in her late forties and is married. She has teenagers living at home as well as older children who are out on their own. We met for the interview in her office at 4:30 pm. She had gone home for a break and returned to her office for the purpose of the interview. She appeared somewhat anxious about the interview but also very interested in being able to share her experiences with others through the study. It quickly became revealed in the interview that 'stress' was not something new to Hillary. She talked of being in the process of learning how to control her levels of stress. She noted that she had "experienced a serious personal illness which I thought may have been caused by stress. So that was when I learned that I had to let go of it." She also noted that she was not willing to suffer the consequences that stress can cause and so "I have had to learn to manage my stress." She had written detailed notes on a notepad to guide her through the interview and help her remember her many points.

When asked for a personal definition of "stress", Hillary noted that:

"stress is a frustration or a feeling of powerlessness when I have no control. It (this question) also made me realize that I am a control freak. As soon as I don't have control of a situation, I find it becomes stressful for me. So, it is not when I encounter a problem but when the solution to the problem lies with someone else and I have no control over it, that I feel stress."

She went on to discuss her feelings of powerlessness and lack of authority to accomplish what she was supposed to do. When asked to rate her current stress level, she responded with:

"Well, I had a hard time, I must admit, separating my personal life from my job and I guess I have a hard time separating the two at the best of times. I find my

work is a salvation to me sometimes when I am stressed at home. It gives me something different upon which to focus."

She then talked of her job and personal stressors. She proposed the following stressors as affecting her life:

Managerial Stressors. The many changes proposed by educational authorities and the Ministry and teachers' reactions to change were major stressors in her curriculum coordinator position. The aging staff who are virtually teaching with a 'retired' attitude were described as very frustrating. She noted: "There is a general feeling out there that I only have 'x' number of years to retirement and I want to coast." She suggested that it was frustrating to deal with those attitudes when your job is to implement change.

Hillary describes Ministry of Education initiatives as a stressor as there are high expectations with a lack of support with regards to personnel and money and time offered for their implementation.

She rank ordered "lack of time to get the things done that I know have to be done and that I want to get done" as well as a "lack of resources" as third and fourth in rank ordering her stressors.

Social Contract. This is creating stress as she suggested because: "we are asking teachers to change, we are asking them to do more with less, and now we are telling them in a lot of ways that what they are doing is not valued as much. We haven't gotten a raise around here in ages."

A spin-off of the Social Contract, Hillary commented on Rae days being a stressor as her job entails the delivery of professional development. "People are saying that we need the professional development and yet there is no time. Again, you lose that control. You know what the need is, you know how to solve the problem, but it is out of your hands."

Interpersonal Relationships. Here, Hillary talks about staff morale issues and the Board's solution of striking a Morale Committee.

She also believes that stress is created when others do not understand her role responsibilities and she has to defend herself. "Other people's perceptions of what I am doing in my particular job are not always clear and I found that if there was something that they did not understand, they would bring them up at the Morale Committee meeting. I would try to tell them that that was not the way it was but they did not want to listen and I ended up having to defend my position. I didn't feel like I should have had to do that."

Hillary also noted that a stressor is "when the beliefs and values of co-workers are really opposed to my own." She described conversations with teachers who were not on the same "wavelength" as herself and the frustration she experiences as she sits and listens to them espouse a view which is contrary to her own. She noted that she does not want to come across as "preachy or self-righteous" so she just listens and leaves the situation frustrated.

Hillary commented on the negative attitudes of administrators in various leadership experiences which she has shared with them. She was very conscious of the fact that often she feels that she over-reacts and refers to the cumulative effect of stress. "It is generally like the straw that broke the camel's back. ... I know that I was over-reacting to the situation and yet it was just one of those things that bothered me." However, she rank ordered the attitudes of co-workers as being her number two stressor.

Attitudinal Stressors. Hillary commented that often when a situation does not go as she had planned, she feels responsible for whatever reason. "Somehow, I felt like I was responsible for the behaviour of these grown up people." She noted that she takes things personally and experiences stress.

She added to her rank order of stressors a fifth stressor as we were going through the interview. She noted that "I hate when I am put into a situation where I am expected or obligated to show up for something." She disliked feeling that she has to do something which she doesn't want to do and it creates a social pressure within her leading to stress. "When other people start placing obligations on me, that I 'should' do this or I 'should' do that, then I get stressed."

Personal Stressors. When asked to rank order her stressors, Hillary ranked her family as her number one stressor:

"Family came up on top. I probably feel this way because if you were to ask me what my priorities in life are, family would be number one. So when things are not working out there, I am stressed."

She noted later in the interview that she had learned a lot about stress and its management as a result of having a house full of teenagers.

Intellectual Stressors. Hillary indicated that a future stressor would be taking the Principal's course which was coming that summer. She perceived that "if I were to get into that type of position, I would probably have to learn a few more coping skills."

When asked about her daily stressors, Hillary took a different approach and discussed many variables which affect her daily experience of stress. She noted that her daily stressors change as a result of : "my family and what is going on at home, the timing of things that happen ("If you are on overload already and then one more thing drops on your plate, I react differently."), her state of health ("If I am under the weather in some way, it affects my coping ability"), and how big the responsibility is that is given to her ("Sometimes there are nagging annoying little things and other times, you may have a deadline to meet with no one cooperating and it becomes a major stressor.").

When queried about any commonalities regarding the stressors which she ranked as her most stressful, she commented on their degree of importance to her life and the degree of control, or lack of degree of control, which she has over them.

In describing her coping strategies, Hillary suggested the following techniques which worked effectively for her:

Attitudinal Strategies. The first strategy which Hillary chose to address was the relinquishing of responsibility and control over others. She notes:

"Something that I have found that I have had to do was learn that I can't control people and I have had to learn that they are responsible for their actions and the consequences which come out of them. A lot of that came from having a house full of teenagers. I really realized that no matter what I wanted for them, they are not put on their earth to make me happy. They are put on this earth for their own lives and to learn from their experiences. Some of those times have been really tough and I guess in a small way, I have been able to transfer my coping strategies to my work. That has been a big one for me - letting go."

When she becomes embroiled in a stressful situation, Hillary indicated that she often will step back and look at the situation and ask herself "Why has that little thing bothered me so much?" at which point she attempts to put the event into a more objective perspective. She will often ask herself, "What more could I have done to change the outcome?" and work through the scenario of a stressful event within her mind making mental notes of changes she could make for future events.

Physical Strategies. Hillary started taking weekly Tai Kwon Do classes and indicated that this helped her let things go and leave her problems behind.

She also revealed that "doing something helps me" and noted that she enjoys going outside and working in her garden as a stress reliever.

Hillary noted that she tends to turn to sleeping as a means of responding to stress. She found that "my natural way of dealing with stress if I don't deliberately do something is to sleep. I found that when I am stressed, I am extremely tired. It is like I

have sleeping sickness. So unless I choose to do something else to alleviate the stress, I might as well just hibernate."

Entertainment Strategies. Taking a quiet walk or sitting in her back yard enjoying the sounds and sights of nature were suggested as an effective strategy for Hillary. She noted:

"As bizarre as this sounds, I can go in the front door and out the back door and it is like a whole different world. You see the river and the trees. ... I can just go outside and relax and calm down. I can sit down and have a cup of tea for fifteen minutes and get a grip on things that are bothering me when I need that break."

Managerial Strategies. When placed in a stressful situation, Hillary tends to "stop and assess the situation. I find that I become more stressed and faster if I react because then I am also stressed by my reaction. My reaction intensifies the whole thing that much more." She went on in the interview to suggest that in a stressful situation, she attempts to separate herself from the situation and objectively assess her reactions. "I ask, "Is there a better way to react to it?" I try to think before I do anything if at all possible." She refers to this strategy as a 'problem-solving process'. She asks herself questions such as "This is the situation. What are my options here? What will happen if I choose this or that?"

Hillary commented on the importance of good communication and its role in eliminating the development of stress.

Intellectual Strategies. Hillary reads print literature such as the Joy of Stress. She noted that she read a lot of self-help books when she realized that she was having trouble with her stress.

Social Strategies. She noted that she also turns to friends or colleagues when she is seeking some help and advice. She talks of the importance to women of having a support network to help deal with the feelings of isolation that many women administrators experience.

With regards to gender differences as to how males and females define their administrative role and fulfill its demands, Hillary expressed that she believes that there are basic differences.

She also perceives that women administrators, because they are in what was traditionally a male role, must work hard to prove themselves. She proposed that "a female in an administrative role feels a lot more like they have to prove themselves. Males have just come to accept administrative roles as their right whereas females probably feel that they have to work twice as hard as the males to be acceptable. Maybe I am overstating that point but that is how I feel."

She also indicated that a woman's socialization affects her role as an administrator. She proposed:

"I think there is a basic difference in the way that males and females deal with things too. I think that women tend to feel more responsible for other people. Maybe that is part of that 'mothering' role, the feeling of being responsible for other human beings. So I think that females carry that over. It is a learned thing, of course. We have all been taught in those ways."

She hints of differences in managerial styles when she suggests that there are differences in the ways that administrators deal with others and then refers to differences between assertive and aggressive behaviours. She noted that "Aggression is thought of as a positive quality in a male but not necessarily in a female."

In looking at how the genders experience stress, Hillary expressed the belief that stress was an individualistic experience but also that there were differences. The differences she proposed here were:

"Women want something more out of the job than just a job. Women want to be socially accepted and that's what I am finding with the women I know in these positions. It is good to have a support network because if you don't, you feel like you are all alone. To men, it doesn't appear to me that it matters so much to them if they are accepted. They just go outside of their job for their social acceptance. It doesn't seem to me to be quite the same."

Hillary believes that all administrators, female and male, experience similar stressors. She did state that she believed as a result of her position as a curriculum coordinator that she had less control and authority compared to a school principal. She also noted that there may be some differences because males "are not as concerned with consensus building or being the nice guy all the time" compared to women.

Hillary expressed the opinion that coping strategies were probably different for each administrator depending upon their experiences in the past and their evolution of strategies which work effectively when dealing with stress.

The interview concluded with Hillary suggesting that "teaching itself has become a very stressful job and so it just stands to say that an administrator's job will be stress-ladened."

#### Janelle

Because of the extensive nature of the interview with Janelle, her comments will serve as the introduction to the major data themes which have been repeatedly appearing within all the interviews. Before beginning the analysis, a brief introduction to Janelle and her experiences with stress are in order.

Janelle is a Curriculum Coordinator with over five years of administrative experience. She is in her early fifties and is married with older children who no longer live at home. Arriving at her home at 4:30 pm., Janelle took me for a tour of the beautiful grounds surrounding her home. She then proceeded to serve a homemade lasagne dinner. Her husband joined us for the meal. After clearing the table, we began the interview.

Janelle had written out many notes on a notepad. She noted:

"I have made some notes. I do not necessarily plan on following them, but when I thought of things, I thought I had better jot them down to help me remember all that I wanted to say tonight."

As the interview lasted over two and a half hours (with a short coffee break), she managed to cover all her notes and more. She has an expansive command of the English language but she often appeared to experience difficulty being concise. She commented on the style of others being a stressor as she recognized that her style is different. At times, she would ask, "What question are we dealing with?" when she found herself off track. However, in the process of transcribing her interview, it became evident that she had managed to cover all the common data themes which others had discussed intermittently, and with great detail and substantiation of her points.

Janelle was very excited about participating in this study. She is currently working on her Masters and seeking a topic for a major paper. She believed that she had a lot to share with others on the topic of stress because in the previous year she had taken ten days off work prior to Christmas "due to job-related stress" and then in April she developed an ulcer. I had decided, as the interviewer, to lend her an empathetic ear and to become an active listener. Rather than attempting to keep her on the topic of the specific questions, I let her ramble to see where she would go. When she commented, "I hope that you don't mind that I am all over the map on this topic, as that is the way that I work.", I nodded my approval to let her go.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Themes in the Data

#### The Meaning of Stress

Each interview was started with a discussion regarding the concept of "stress" and participants were asked to suggest their own personal perceptions of stress. It soon became evident that a common theme was a lack of control leading to the physical manifestations of stress. Some participants chose to use one word to explain their perceptions of "stress", with words such as "change", "juggling", "life in the nineties" and others suggested. Some participants expressed difficulty in capturing the true essence of stress with words. Reference was made to the positive and negative aspects of stress and to its cumulative toll when stress from various aspects of their lives interacted and combined.

When asked for a personal definition of "stress", Janelle stated:

"I think if I had to use one word to describe what "stress" means to me personally, it is disempowerment. It is anything or any situation where I feel I have no control over either the environment or the course of events or something. I feel very frustrated and so it is a negative situation for me. So, it is then a negative situation where the feeling is such that I have no control."

A lack of control was the terminology used to define stress by Alexandria, Brittany, Cara, Hillary and Janelle. Although Alexandria does not use the terms within her definition, in the course of her interview, she does make reference to the "frustration of having no control over what is going on" in reference to the Social Contract and other

stressors. Janelle spoke of the causes of her ten day leave due to job-related stress, with the resulting cause being her lack of control:

"I was completely feeling like I was being brushed aside and as though I really had nothing to contribute. That is what it really boils down to when we talk about disempowerment and loss of control. Not that we need to control for power but the loss of power to control your own job and things that you know you are capable of doing."

Other participants such as Cara, Fiona and Gina emphasized that stress was caused by, and often created, change. They viewed stress as something causing an alteration in their physical, spiritual, emotional or mental state. Some talked about their awareness of their stress and noted that in some cases, they were not conscious of the stress they were experiencing.

Brittany's description of stress as being 'juggling' was certainly discussed by a number of participants but she was the only one who chose to define 'stress' in terms of juggling her many social role responsibilities.

Alexandria and Hillary were the only two talking about the positive aspects of stress. Hillary noted "I read the Joy of Stress but I haven't quite managed to accept that there is a great deal of joy in stress. So most of my answers will deal with the negative."

Janelle expressed the opinion of many when she said, "I know what stress is but to try to put it into words and actually tie it down is difficult." Each participant offered their own unique definition of stress based upon her experiences and beliefs.

Janelle makes reference to the cumulative effects of stress when she noted:

"... That was sitting on top of another very stressful situation. It compounded all my stress and it just sort of blew up."

Others indicated that this was observed in their experiences as well. Alexandria talks about how her stressors are interwoven to create her current stress level described in the interview. Gina asked in the interview if I was wanting personal stressors or just job-

related stressors. When I asked her if she believed that the personal stress she had experienced had influenced her job, she responded with:

"Well, certainly it does. She (her sister) works in the Board Office too and so she would call my office. I would pick up the phone and it was a daily stress with which I had to deal. It was on my mind all the time. My job helped me to keep busy and to not think about it a lot but then there would be those moments when it would come back and I would think about it again."

This hints at her understanding that stress in one role within her life was being carried over to another role and adding to the stress being experienced there.

Hillary appeared to view stress as a constantly shifting experience and she was the only participant to reflect on the variables which influence her stress level each day. She suggested that her daily stressors change as a result of : my family and what is going on at home, the timing of things that happen ("If you are on overload already and then one more thing drops on your plate, I react differently."), her state of health ("If I am under the weather in some way, it affects my coping ability"), and how big the responsibility is that is given to her ("Sometimes there are nagging annoying little things and other times, you may have a deadline to meet with no one cooperating and it becomes a major stressor.").

Eveline was the only participant who made reference to stress as being a source of energy. Later on in her interview, she discussed that rather than trying to dissipate her stress level to reduce her physical manifestations, she attempts to shift her stress to a more functional energy form.

" I find that I tend to reduce my stress most by shifting my energy. I believe that stress is energy. I take my energy out of one context and place it in another to reduce my stress. This helps me more than actually taking all the energy and trying to dissipate it."

This is the approach developed by Pertik and Senter (1990) in their book devoted to helping students channel their stress into positive energy forms. Hanson (1985) also

talks of using stress to fight stress or how individuals can shift their energy to work for them in a more positive mode.

### Discussion

The responses offered by the participants with regards to this question often gave me some insight into their understanding of stress. In many cases their definitions of stress actually identified a major stressor for them.

Feeling out of control is a major cause of stress for any individual. Swiss and Walker (1993) note that "Loss of control is not easy to accept, particularly for women accustomed to being in charge." (p.30). Witkin (1991) proposes that "the higher one's sense of control, the less one's stress." (p.283). Russell (1994) promotes the flipside, "Taking Control", as one of the survival strategies which her respondents emphasized. She notes that her respondents' "view of control involves making choices, choosing not to be a victim of circumstances. Taking control ... may increase one's sense of individual power." (p.15). Books which suggest assertiveness training as a coping strategy emphasize the importance of people believing that they are in control of their situation ((Carr-Ruffino (1985), Charlesworth and Nathan (1984) and Miller and Smith (1993)). Carr-Ruffino (1985) suggests that the prevention of burnout:

"requires an assertive approach to dealing with people that gives you more control over your life and helps you avoid becoming the victim of others' manipulations, games and whims." (p.145).

Thus, the lack of control is frequently dealt with in the literature whether discussing victim-like attitudes (Sullivan,1993) or assertive behaviours which help individuals to deal with their feelings. Swiss and Walker (1993) conclude that "Unless a woman is willing to take the risks that come with fighting back, her career and her self-esteem can be devastated if she lets others define her work ethic." (p.35).

Change has been identified as a major educational stressor in literature. Fullan (1993) addresses the burnout which can result from being constantly bombarded with change and the cynicism which results. Hanson (1985) talks of the "Three Major Changes Contributing to Today's Workplace Stress".

Most respondents tended to identify external sources as creating stress. Janelle was the only one who discussed at length her internal sources of stress, those personal beliefs and values which created stress within her life.

In responding to the question as to whether or not male and female administrators experienced stress similarly or differently, seven indicated that the experience of stress was an individualistic experience and not gender-related. One respondent, Danyelle, expressed that she believed that there were differences. She noted that "women internalize stress more" than men and discussed the need experienced by women to always be the peacemakers. She perceived that "men scream more and blame others more. They don't really own up to their responsibility in a conflict situation from what I have observed."

Asking the participants to define stress in the beginning of the interview allowed me to clarify my definition of stress for the purposes of this study, and led to a brief discussion regarding the differences in definition between "stress" and "stressors", the next topic on the Interview Schedule.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Themes in the Data

#### The Identification of Stressors

Participants were asked to suggest daily factors which influenced their stress levels. They were also asked to describe intense stressful situations. They were asked to rank order their top five stressors and to suggest what common element existed to make these the most stressful stressors of all the stressors listed. Many of these questions were prefaced with the words "As a woman and an administrator" which encouraged the participants to express any perceptions regarding gender differences.

In mapping out the many stressors expressed by participants, it soon became obvious that the common stressors included interpersonal relationships and balancing their personal and professional role responsibilities. All nine participants reflected on these stressors. Eight of the nine participants demonstrated agreement that time management, the Ontario government's Social Contract and the anticipation of, or recent promotion, to a new PAR position were major stressors. Feelings of isolation within their current role was described by six participants while different communication and management styles was identified as a stressor by five participants. All three Curriculum Coordinators/Consultants identified a poor understanding of their job responsibilities by others as being a stressor and this tied in closely with criticisms which were received at budget times when there was a threat of staff cuts. Each of these data themes will be reviewed with Janelle's interview woven into them.

1. **Interpersonal Relationships:** In every interview, it became obvious that the women administrators were very concerned about their relationships with others whom crossed their daily paths. Sentiments were expressed with regards to their relationships with students, teachers, parents, Principals, other administrators and stakeholders within their professional roles as well as their own family members within their personal lives.

Janelle perceived her troubled relationship with two different administrators as leading to her taking ten days off school for job-related stress and her ulcer. In each situation, she was made to feel that she was not capable of doing her job and not valued as a member of the system team. The stressor leading to her experiencing physical symptoms of stress in both situations was conflictual interpersonal relationships. She drew the following conclusion:

"It seems to be working with people which upsets me. The things in the environment are temporary stressors. But, the people whom you work with don't change the way that they do things. You have to learn to work around those who have caused you great distress."

In describing her relationship to one administrator with whom she must work, she noted:

"To me, he is saying that he doesn't trust me to do my job. I found that during this period of time, my professional self-esteem just absolutely plummeted and I began to doubt that I was capable of doing my job. That was how he made me feel."

She continued on to suggest that:

"We all have difficult people with whom we have to deal. When you are in a very small system with only two schools ... it is trying. You are often consumed. You spend a lot of your time dealing with them and ironing out problems."

Alexandria was very concerned with the stress created by daily interpersonal interactions, and noted "Whatever is going on with the staff, or individual staff members or between staff members, has a great effect. I am pretty sensitive to that and

that can create a stressor." She discussed student interactions and her disciplinarian role as creating stress, as well as dealing with parents and upper administration. She ranked "mediating problems or things that are happening between adults" as her second most stressful stressor.

Brittany talked of her relationships with others but indicated that her students' problems were a major daily stressor. She discussed the complexity of these problems which bandaids could not remedy. Problems such as suicide, sexual assault and other legal problems demanded a lot of her attention. Although many of her stressors listed tended to be of a managerial nature, there were people and relationships involved in each stressor which she identified.

Cara talked of her stress as related to interpersonal relationships. Bad feelings and conflicts among staff members such as "when there is a misunderstanding and people are angry with each other" was a stressor identified. Cara also listed disciplining children as creating stress in her life. She talked of the many people to whom she must answer as creating stress.

Danyelle expressed similar concerns. Confrontations with parents was the first stressor named and she discussed a particular parent whom was "particularly critical of me and made me feel very incompetent and gave me low self-esteem." Parents screaming at her was listed as a major stressor. She suggested that staff arguments and hassles, juggling all the auxiliary personnel within her schools (educational assistants, coop students, and Futures students) as well as dealings with parents, staff and students were stressors for her. When personnel working within the same classroom had a personality clash, it was her job to help them work out some type of solution.

Eveline discussed the stress created by the negativism and low staff morale which the Social Contract has inspired. She noted that "the whole morale issue and how to deal with it and work with people" posed a major stressor. She described co-

workers and teachers who have developed deep negative attitudes and how this negativism had started to eat them up. Her relationships appeared to be important to her.

Fiona also expressed concern with her interpersonal relationships. She talked of the negative relationships between administrators and teachers which were initiated by the Social Contract. She discussed learning to communicate with the men of her Board as being a stressor. As well, she explained that her male colleagues "are not used to sharing the information or not certain how to share confidential or difficult situations" with a woman administrator. These interpersonal relationships caused stress for her. Lastly, Fiona expressed that "Maintaining relationships, in terms of professional relationships, friendships and family relationships" was also a major stressor.

Gina's interview focussed on the "falling out" she had had with her sister. This created the most stress for her in the previous year. She discussed the effects of having others criticize her fulfillment of her job and how devastating this was for her. She also talked about the importance she placed on having someone to talk with regarding her stressful solutions, whether it be a personal friend or her secretary or her aunt or someone from a more organized networking group to which she belongs. Much of her interview centered around her feelings regarding the interpersonal relationships within her life.

Hillary talked about staff morale issues as a major stressor. She emphasized the importance of being in control and she discussed the stress she experiences when she is dependent upon others to fulfill her job responsibilities. It would appear that interpersonal relationships were important to her and her feelings of job satisfaction. She also discussed the stress resulting when others do not understand her role responsibilities and she is a position where she must defend her job to others. She noted that co-workers with beliefs and values which are different than her own create

stress. As a Curriculum Coordinator, she proposed that she must hone her interpersonal skills to get the cooperation from teachers which she so strongly desires. Hillary commented on the negative attitudes of administrators in various leadership experiences which she had shared with them. She rank ordered the attitudes of co-workers as being her number two stressor.

Thus, interpersonal relationships was a stressor identified in all nine interviews. The women administrators emphasized the importance of functional, effective relationships and how they valued having cooperative positive people surrounding them in their administrator role.

The respondents within this study supported what has been revealed in most studies of administrator stress in the past. They discussed the importance of good relationships with supervisors and subordinates as was identified by Williamson and Campbell (1987) in their study. The participants discussed the stressful effects of lack of communication as identified by Wiggins (1988) and poor interpersonal relationships as suggested by Brimm (1990) and Sarros (1988). They discussed the time and energy which these relationships required as proposed by Lyons (1990). Conflict-mediating stress was one of the four broad categories devised by McGrath and Gmelch (1985) in their research and it would appear that this study supports the findings that interpersonal relationships and the conflicts which are precipitated are a key stressor for administrators.

McGrath and Gmelch (1985) also proposed boundary-spanning stressors as a broad category, which deals with the stress arising from the large number of interactions with people external to the school system whom administrators encounter on a daily basis. Alexandria and Danyelle talked of all the auxiliary personnel with whom they deal in their schools and the frustration which results from trying to

coordinate, and mediate among, these many stakeholders. This supports McGrath and Gmelch's research findings.

**2. Balancing their Many Professional and Personal Role Responsibilities:** All nine women interviewed talked about their responsibilities to their home and their families and the difficulty which they experienced trying to maintain a balance between these personal home responsibilities and their professional work responsibilities.

Janelle expressed some concern that one of the causes of her extreme experiences with stress was the lack of balance within her life. She talked about being a workaholic and described herself:

"Over the last couple of years, I have had to learn to deal with my workaholism. When I do something, I just dive in and it becomes my whole life. I consume myself in it. I did this with this job. I was staying at work until 7:00 or 8:00 pm. at night. Sometimes I would come home for supper and then I would go back and work until midnight. I reached the point where I realized that I didn't have a life."

As a result of taking her time off and her ulcer, she has come to realize the value of maintaining a better balance. She is currently working to develop an improved balance. She suggested:

"I am getting into my personal life and away from my job. There are many things which I do to try and get my mind off the job and on to other things. ... I have been focussing on family more and it has put better balance into my life. I think that that is a key word too - balance. I think that that is one of the things I have really learned to do this year, find some 'balance'. I look on the stress-related things which have happened and reflect upon their effect on me as a person. I always felt like such a strong person but realized that I am not invincible but I am expendable. I came to accept that. I realized that I needed a better balance of other things in my life. Having this new granddaughter was probably the best thing that happened to me. Focussing more on family and realizing how good having that balance was for me, helped me deal with my stress."

Alexandria reflected upon her lack of balance within her life and the guilt which she experiences when she tries to take time for herself and her family. She expressed:

"I think that this leads to the whole issue of balance. I find it very difficult to balance my life at home with my life at school. I find that I carry my school home with me and I can't always get it off my mind. I always feel like I should be doing the many things left unfinished at the end of the day and feel guilty when I try to take some time for myself. Sometimes I will plan a weekend to relax and then I experience guilt the whole weekend because of the school things I should be doing. I may as well be doing the things which are bothering me as I don't relax anyway."

She discussed the stress created by the number of outside roles which female administrators hold and suggested that the many family roles and obligations which women hold "weigh heavily upon a female administrator."

Brittany used the term "juggling" rather than "balancing" when she talked of the many roles which she works to maintain. She talked of juggling her family, her staff, and her students in her initial definition of "stress". When asked about her daily stressors, Brittany reflected upon the daily racing home to take care of her small baby and her husband. She listed her fourteen month old crying baby at home as her fourth most stressful stressor and suggested that she had not had a full night's sleep since he was born. She spoke of the fact that male administrators had wives at home and as such, they did not have to worry so much about trying to balance as many roles. "When men have a job like this, they can really concentrate on their job."

Cara talked of the dominant role which her job occupies because of its newness and how she is hoping to make more time for herself and her family in the future. She noted "I just haven't been able to do that this year. So I don't believe that I have been doing that well" regarding balancing her home and job responsibilities. She talked of her two teenage children who require part of her time. She noted that in order to give them the time they require, she often would have to eliminate or omit other obligations.

Danyelle also talked of juggling many roles and responsibilities. She talked of juggling all the auxilliary personnel in her school. She identified that she had family related stressors and suggested that getting her son off to college in the summer was one such stressor. She looked at the age of a woman administrator's children as being a variable in determining the amount of home stress. She commented that she has raised one teenager who is out already and successful and that she is glad that she had her children when she was young unlike some of her friends. She noted that she was "glad that the house is quiet and that I can put my feet up and that everything is in its place." when she returns home from school each day.

Eveline noted that she is currently concerned with her lack of balance within her life. She described the damage that was occurring in her family as a result. She stated:

"The one difference as a woman would be in trying to balance my whole life, my personal life, with my work. The fact right now is that the balance is not very good so I find myself being placed in situations where I am trying to explain myself a lot. That goes on daily. I find it difficult to find time to do the things at home that need doing and to spend time with my family. I am always riding that guilt trip. I have to explain first thing every morning where I am going to be. Yuck. .... And no matter how much you say to yourself, "I am not going to carry around somebody else's problem" you do. You know the reason that your family react a certain way is because they are hurt. They believe that everything else is important and ask, "What about me?" when you have all these other things going on."

Eveline also talked of her frustration trying to balance all the expectations of her job and stated that she often gets an 'overwhelmed' feeling trying to keep up with her many role responsibilities.

Fiona expressed concern with balancing her many role responsibilities when describing a bad day she had recently experienced. She had had four different meetings to attend and/or chair. In the midst of her meetings, she received a call from her daughter in Thunder Bay. She noted: "I knew that I couldn't do anything about it but I started thinking, "Do I really want to do this? This is too much. Let me off the wheel." I was going from one meeting to the next to the next. I find the greatest stressor is

trying to balance the time commitments in terms of my job expectations". In this case, her family commitments added to her stress. She noted the stress resulting from balancing her time commitments as she talked about going home on weekends and the unsettling feeling she had living away from her family. She discussed coping with a long distance relationship with her husband and the influence her family stress had upon her overall coping abilities. When looking at gender differences, she discussed with envy the fact that male administrators had wives at home to carry many of her responsibilities and concluded that "maintaining your regular routines of home, or in my case, two homes can be stressful." Fiona's interview concluded with her discussion of an article she had read recently about the number of female superintendents who were opting out of their positions because of the stress. She noted that the article talked about family as being one of the major stressors.

Gina talked openly of her two kinds of stress - job-related stress and family-related stress. She noted "of the two, the family stress was the worst for me to deal with." In explaining the stress she went through recently in applying for a Principal position, she continued to emphasize her family responsibilities and how these interfered with her preparation process. She talked of "coming home at night, and I have a family, so I was trying to deal with them, preparing supper and everything else that goes with my family role." and getting the family off to school in the morning and getting the family organized and the joys of having teenagers in the house adding to the daily stress she experienced. She concluded with "There is all that kind of family-stress on a daily basis." She spoke of her son moving away from home and the financial obligation attached to that move. She mentioned that she and her husband always supported their sons' sports activities and that this entailed spending many hours on the road travelling to their games. She talked of selling their house and

cottage as being an added stressor. She concluded with "trying to find a balance and do the best job that you can is a stressor."

Hillary suggested that she had difficulty separating her roles:

"Well, I had a hard time, I must admit separating my personal life from my job and I guess I have a hard time separating the two at the best of times. I find my work is a salvation to me sometimes when I am stressed at home. It gives me something different upon which to focus."

In looking at the variables which affect her daily stress, Hillary suggested that her family and what is going on at home is an important factor. "If I can leave the family behind when I come to work, it helps." When rank ordering her stressors, Hillary expressed:

"Family came up on top. I probably feel that way because if you were to ask me what my priorities in life are, family would be number one. So when things are not working out there, I am stressed."

She described how she had learned a lot about letting go of her stress and coping strategies from living with a house full of teenagers. She discussed how she has been able to transfer some of her coping skills to her work.

Much of the literature dealing with administrator stress identifies stress created by role conflict, role overload, and role expectations. However, in general, these stressors are defined in relationship only to the workplace. Cooper (1990) defined role-based stress as "stress which arises from conflicts over job responsibilities in the organization." (p.86). The findings from the respondents within this study suggest the need to extend this definition to "stress which arises from conflicts over job responsibilities in the organization and home responsibilities in the family." Not one participant within this study reflected upon role conflict whereby differences existed between directives from above and beliefs and values at the school level as was found by Lyons (1990). There was most definitely "role overload" suggested by all participants but again in a very liberal definition of the term. Unlike Lyon's (1990)

definition restricted to the administrative role, the participants in this study expressed concern with role overload in the number of roles they occupied and the unrealistic expectations when these many roles were combined. Because of their many role responsibilities beyond their administrative responsibilities, role overload became a stressful concern. Morrison et. al. (1987) suggest:

"Yet all of the executives had the challenge of weighing and juggling their personal and professional pursuits. As women, most of them were under constant strain as they tried to switch from one role to another. They felt pressure to conform to one role or another, without the freedom to combine them." (p.115).

Morrison et. al. (1987) speak of women being "judged on their personal life as well as on their job performance. If they indicate to more senior executives that their personal life is important, the suspicion that it will take precedence over their career grows." (p.114). For this reason, it is suggested that some women "deliberately try to convince their colleagues that their personal life is not important, or at least that it couldn't possibly interfere with their career." (p.119). In this study, Hillary was very clear as to her priority and placed her family as number one over her career. She possessed the confidence to express her beliefs in the interview and to relate the role of her family in both creating stress and in helping her learn important coping strategies.

Thus the influence of each participant's family and their ability to balance their job and home responsibilities was a theme which was identified in all nine interviews. Many suggested that this was a gender difference and so more will be written on the influence of family on a female's ability to cope with stress when the themes in the data reflecting female stress issues are discussed.

**3. Social Contract:** Alexandria, Brittany, Cara, Fiona, Eveline, Gina, Hillary and Janelle all identified the Social Contract as a major stressor within their lives as administrators. Janelle commented:

"The Social Contract played a major role in my first real stressful situation that I have encountered in a long time. It resulted in my having to take a week off work before the Christmas holidays, actually ten days, due to job-related stress."

The actual cutbacks in salary resulting from the Social Contract were rarely mentioned by the participants. One of the ramifications of the Social Contract which created stress in the lives of these women administrators was the elimination of Professional Development days at a time when the Ministry was introducing many new initiatives. This had a strong impact, especially for the curriculum coordinators, whom are responsible for curriculum and policy implementation. Another ramification of the Social Contract was the low staff morale which was created and which all these women administrators have had to deal with in varying degrees. The general lack of control they experienced with the Social Contract was a stressor for others.

Cara stated, "If I hear about Social Contract one more time, I'll scream!" Gina noted that the Social Contract had affected us all, regardless of our gender. It was a stressor for everyone.

As Eveline stated, "That would be the one stressor that I believe stands out for me and it stands out head and shoulders above everything else." She added that "the one thing that the Social Contrast has brought out which I find personally very difficult to work with is negative attitudes and behaviours." She discussed the whole morale issue which she attributes to the Social Contract and which she finds is a constant source of frustration for her in her daily interactions with people.

The first stressor which Fiona suggested was the Social Contract. She noted:

"I think the one that came to my mind right away (stressor) was the Social Contract as it was a major stressor for me. The relationships between administrators and teachers all became very negative. Also, because we lost all our Professional Activity days, it added stress for me as I was trying to make changes. Being someone new in the job, I wanted those days to work with staff and they were gone. "

Hillary listed the Social Contract as a stressor for her and a lot of other people, suggesting that "we are asking teachers to change, we are asking them to do more with less, and now we are telling them in a lot of ways that what they are doing is not valued as much." She added:

"I found Rae days were a stressor because as part of this job, you are responsible for professional development. People are saying we need the professional development and yet there is no time. Again, you lose that control. You know what the need is, you know how to solve the problem, but it is out of your hands."

In going back to the literature, the Social Contract affected each respondent as it created stress due to a mandated decrease in finances and resources of all types - supplies, personnel and time. McGrath and Gmelch labelled this broad category as task-based stress. Although not one participant referred to the decrease in supplies as a result of decreased budgets, they did reflect upon the negative influence upon personnel, the low staff morale, which the Social Contract had created. They also reflected upon the lack of professional development time resulting from the Social Contract mandate and its influence upon their fulfillment of their positions. As Eveline noted, educators are being asked to do more and more with less and less resources available.

**4. Time Management:** Time and its scarcity in terms of completing all perceived requirements for the role was a common stressor identified by six participants within the study. Janelle talked about her concerns with the time element and expressed how she contributes to her own stress through her misjudgement of time:

"...there are some things which I do, the way that I operate, which cause me stress. I am always late for everything. I try to do that last little thing before I leave. There always seems to be so much to do and not enough time to do it. I always want to do just one more thing. I think that I am still going to have enough time to get to that next meeting on time. But, then I find that I am always racing around late. I hate it. I hate driving in the car thinking about how late I am going to be when I arrive. I have caused that. It is nobody's fault but my own."

She continued to describe the process she uses in completing projects. She indicated that she knows she will need a big block of time for any major project and because she knows that she will not get that block at the office, she tends to do all the little things which "put together, the minutes add up". By then it is 4:00 pm. and she has not started her big project. She commented:

"To me, it is frustrating because often I am in the eleventh hour trying to finish something off. Once the big thing is done, I say that I am never going to leave things again and that I am going to be a better person, better organized, focus better, tackle this type of work first the next time round. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't."

She gave a lengthy description of the many time wasters which are built into her job such as dealing with the maintenance of the equipment at the office and the replenishment of supplies. She noted that no one takes responsibility to refill the stapler or buy a new typewriter ribbon or even change the toilet paper roll in the bathroom and that these little stressors take time away from her real responsibilities.

Brittany noted that "finding the time to get everything done when everyone else wants something done for them right away." was a big stressor for her. She talked about finding or making time for herself as a coping strategy which she wished she could adopt more successfully; she just never could find the time. These tend to be challenges for most educators.

Eveline noted that she was being asked to do more and more with less and less and time was one of the resources which she was running short on when it came to fulfilling her job responsibilities. She suggested "you continually feel like you are just running on air. Time would be one of my big ones."

Fiona explained that it was the time pressures or demands on her time which caused her to feel the most stress. "My greatest stressor is trying to balance the time commitments in terms of meetings and doing things within the Board and the office and

at a regional level and within the schools, which is where I would like to spend more of my time."

Gina indicated that she likes to manage her time wisely and be organized to avoid creating any additional stress. She discussed her organizational strategies such as making appointments ahead of time, keeping lists for herself and planning. She noted "That relieves my stress so that it doesn't all pile up on me."

Hillary rank ordered "lack of time to get the things done that I know have to be done and that I want to get done" as third on her list of stressors.

The usage of the term 'time' was often included in explanations of other stressors or concerns within the lives of these female administrators. Everyone expressed a desire for more time in order to accommodate all their professional and personal role expectations.

Time was a common stressor identified in the literature. William and Campbell (1987) found in their study that the management of time was the single factor accounting for the majority of stress. Lyons (1990), Wiggins (1985), Lam (1988), Roberson and Matthews (1988), Whan (1988) and Brimm (1990) all identified time as a stressor within the lives of educational administrators. Time appears to be a very valuable commodity and its management is ultimate to the individual's feelings of career fulfillment.

**5. Preparation, Anticipation and Fulfillment of New Positions:** It was interesting to note that eight of the nine women interviewed were anticipating stress in the future when they applied for a Principal position or they had recently been promoted to a new position and they were anticipating stress as a result of adapting to their new position.

Janelle talked of applying for a principal position on a particular school if it were to open up. Her rationale for applying for this position was most interesting. She

would apply for this position only because she was afraid that another person she had in mind would get it if she didn't. She had strong feelings that the other person was not the right person for the job. She commented regarding "the fear that this person will become the next Principal sits in the back of my mind. I don't want it to happen. I don't necessarily want to become the Principal. I know that there are some people who just want to be Principal for the position, for the power and the status and the image. I don't think that those are the right reasons for wanting the position." She discussed the head start she would have because of her skills and knowledge gained as Curriculum Coordinator. However, she also expressed fear that "choosing that Principalship and interviewing for the job and finding out that the other person got the job could prove stressful" to her.

Alexandria projects that eventually she will be seeking more of a challenge and looking for a move. She talked about the fears associated with an interview and the preparation process for the change. It was interesting as she had begun to question her desire to move to a larger setting. "I used to think that I would move into a larger school when one became available but now I am questioning that desire. I like where I am and I am not so sure that I want to change. I am finding more and more women beginning to doubt that "bigger is better" unlike their belief in the past."

Brittany is not being promoted but looking forward to moving into a new school building in the upcoming year. She discussed all the planning which she and the staff had been doing. She noted that the move was starting to become part of each day's conversations and activities. "Right now we are sitting down and choosing furniture for an entire new school. I have trouble picking out my own livingroom furniture let alone furniture for a whole school." This created stress in her current daily life, as will the actual move in the near future.

Cara discussed the stress of being in a new position. "I have not been sleeping as well as I used to sleep. I have these little subconscious fears that I will forget something that is really important." She went on to relate forgetting to cancel a supply teacher and commented on all those little details which she worries about forgetting in her first year as Principal. She expressed the belief that next year would be less stressful as she would be more familiar with the expectations and paperwork requirements.

Danyelle was starting a new Principalship in the fall and listed her new job as a potential stressor. "Being prepared, spending a lot of time just thinking about what I am going to do, what my entry plan is going to be, is how I plan to help deal with the stress. This is a new school for me with new people." She asked herself "What is my strategy going to be?" and made some plans accordingly.

Fiona was in a new position and expressed some concern over the reassignment of Professional Activity days to Rae days as this limited her ability to work with her new staff making some necessary changes. She spoke throughout her interview of some of the adaptations she had had to make in her new position and the stress which they had caused her. Learning to relate to men who were not used to working with a woman, dealing with the new information network and finding the key players, working out of a building which was ten kilometres from the Board Office and keeping on top of new directives were some of the stressors of her new position.

Gina had recently applied for a Principalship and had received the position for the fall. She explained the stress which she experienced in terms of writing her resume and preparing for her interview. She talked about all the activities she was doing in preparation for her new position such as attending a staff meeting in June, ordering books on communicating with the public and marketing your school and talking with

each staff member individually regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the school according to their perceptions and other strategies.

Hillary reflected upon her desire to take a Principal's Course in the upcoming future and suggested that "if I were to get into that type of position, I would probably have to learn a few more coping skills."

It was interesting to note that each of them, with the exception of Eveline, who spoke of retirement, indicated that they were interested in pursuing their careers further and/or had recently achieved a new plateau in their careers. For each of them, this meant additional stress as they planned for the changes to their current ways of living.

Shakeshaft (1989) refers to a study done by Edson (1981) which revealed that:

"female administrators, in contrast to the men who participated in the study, generally aspired beyond the position of principal as their ultimate career goals ... when compared with their male counterparts, women showed greater desire to advance more than one step up the organizational ladder." (p.92).

The women administrators within this study appear to have aspirations for advancement which they have recently fulfilled or which they are anticipating fulfilling in the near future. This stressor appears to be the only one identified which may be viewed as a positive stressor. Positive or negative, stress is experienced by the body the same way.

**6. Feelings of Isolation:** There were feelings of isolation identified by six participants as sources of stress in their lives. These feelings of isolation were expressed as being created by communication differences between genders and by physical distances between offices within their Board.

Janelle discussed the importance of having others with whom to talk and the feelings of isolation which she experienced working in a small board situation. She talked of meeting with other women and the value of having "an out and out "bitch" session":

"I think that women find out that they are not alone in their feelings about the situation or the person. I think that when you work in small boards, this can be

a problem, as there are so few people that things get blow out of proportion because the person starts to think that "I'm the only one experiencing this. I am all alone here.". It tends to magnify. Whereas, where you have other people to talk with, you find out that other people may have similar problems with which they have to deal. It makes you feel better. It is therapeutic."

Alexandria discussed a desire to have more opportunity to talk with other administrators, male and female, regarding problems she was experiencing. She noted that in one incident dealing with upset parents, she felt alone in her problem:

"Until I said something to one of the other female administrators, we didn't know that this was going on in both schools. She said, "Oh, my god! You're going through that too! Well, we're going through it. Can I tell you about what we are going through right now. How would you handle that kind of situation?" And then we find out that another female principal is going through the same thing. I think that we do not, as women, have an opportunity to talk about these things. I know for sure, that with the male individuals which are in our board, the egos get so involved. They could not say to you, "This is really a problem for me."

Danyelle talked of feeling different than everyone else and how she had questioned herself. She noted that she "was different until I got out in the world and got to Toronto and that was when I learned that others had similar aspirations. I felt, "Oh, I am not strange. I'm normal." Through sharing and networking with others, she began to feel that she was not alone in her personal aspirations to be more than a classroom teacher.

Eveline noted that she experienced high anxiety as a result of her perception that she is the one everyone blames when things go wrong. She noted that "I feel that I am the one that has all the spears pointing at me. I feel like I have to dodge the bullets. I find that I feel like I am the target and that gets to be a high stressor." She noted that it is the nature of her position to be responsible to many different stakeholders and that this causes her to feel different and isolated from the experiences of the other administrators.

Fiona talked about isolation as a result of the difference in communication styles used by herself and the male administrators she deals with on a daily basis as well as by the physical distance between her office and the main board office. She commented that "As a woman, being isolated from the main board office when all my colleagues were male and they all work there, created stress for me." When we discussed the cause of her communication breakdown, I asked her if she thought it resulted because of the distance between offices or if she believed it was gender issue, to which she responded, "I think that it is both. I think it is a combination. I think that some of it is distance. But I also believe that part of it is because I am a woman. They are not used to sharing the information or not certain how to share confidential or difficult situations." The two factors combined to create feelings of isolation as Fiona noted that often she was not part of the decision-making process and often she was not informed about changes to meeting dates and other informally shared information.

Hillary discussed the importance of having a support network in place "because if you don't, you feel like you are all alone." She expressed that she does not perceive this as being as important to men. The rationale which she suggested was that it was important to women to be accepted by others and that men do not place the same value on this acceptance within the workplace. "They just go outside of their job for their social acceptance." Hillary strongly supported the need to talk with others as a means of preventing the feelings of isolation for women.

There are many gender issues intertwined within these feelings of isolation and these will be dealt with under the themes in the data reflecting female stress issues. The isolation which results from different communication styles will be reviewed. The FWTAO (1991) notes that isolation that many women feel when they are the only woman or one of the first women to successfully be chosen for a traditionally male role. They suggest that "women must overcome this isolation and focus on

establishing their credibility in a chilly, sometimes hostile environment." (p. xvi). Fassel (1990) espouses that women receive their identity from their job and their achievements within their job. As such, their self-esteem is achievement-dependent. When information is withheld or there is a communication breakdown, this interferes with a woman's ability to fulfill her job demands and hence affects her self-esteem and feelings of job satisfaction. Stress is created. As Hillary suggests, men go outside their job for social acceptance unlike women. For women administrators within this study, talking with others in order to confirm their feelings and beliefs regarding similar situations is an important coping strategy which helps them deal with their stressful feelings of isolation.

**7. Managerial and/or Communication Styles:** Having to deal with other administrators and staff whom had varying styles of communication and management were stressors for six participants. Janelle spoke at length about the stress she experienced in trying to deal with her Director's style:

"It is very hard to get anything done which requires a lot of thought because he has a tendency to have a different style or orientation than myself. This is another interesting thing that at one point caused a lot of stress for me, but I have now accommodated it. He tends to be a very linear sequential type of person and I'm a very divergent abstract kind of person."

She went on to explain his method of working through his mail and through his agenda when meeting with her and did suggest:

"We have both come to try and understand how the other works, to realize the differences and to accept them and accommodate accordingly. Mind you, I probably (This is a biased statement, I know) have let him have his way more. If he wants to go down his list, that's fine. It doesn't bother me as much any more."

Alexandria discussed the "mentality of competition" and described the gender differences which create stress for her:

"I think that the men that I have met are more competitive than the women are. Whereas the women would call each other or a man just to ask how to do

something or for an easier way of going about some procedure, the men don't do that same sort of a thing. Although you find them calling the women, they would never call each other. There just seems to be a certain amount of competition there. I think it is hard, as a female administrator, not to be drawn into that mentality of competition. It seems to be so much a part of the whole structure that it is really hard not to start feeling that kind of competitive edge."

Alexandria continued to speak of her director and his competitive nature as contributing to her perceptions. She noted: "I think that he is really big at competitions. That is important to him, so he highlights that type of activity."

Danyelle discussed the influence of the management style of the men in upper administration in her board. In discussing gender-based stressors, she noted:

"We find that the stress comes from the top down, that the administration is pushing the stress down a level. The way that they cope affects our lives. And the management style of the top really influences the whole system. We as middle managers are pushed."

She discussed the stress which was created as a result of the managerial style of the upper administration within her board.

Fiona talked of the different management and communication styles as being a stressor. In explaining her view that communication styles were a stressor, she noted that she had to learn to work "with male and female principals with different styles of dialogue. I learned to adjust to different people regularly." She also spoke of learning to communicate with the men on her administrative team. "I think that women communicate in a way that is different than men and so because you don't stamp your feet or should, sometimes, my point of view was not taken seriously. So, I had to find ways to let my colleagues know when issues were really important." With regards to management styles, she talked of gender differences and how this created some stress for her in her current position:

"I found as a woman, that my management style was different. My style tends to be less confrontational. I don't want to get into a power struggle. Sometimes, people interpret that as I don't have a bottom line. That was stressful sometimes, as I would think that I had a situation solved. Because I

was not very forceful about it, others would comment, "Oh, I didn't think that you meant what you said." I had to get used to that."

Eveline discusses the gender differences between males and females definition and fulfillment of their roles but does not mention the terms management style or communication styles in her description. She hints that there are differences when she states that:

"Sometimes I actually think that it is really good the men and women do work together because we do bring two sides or perspectives to an issue. A lot of times as the Director and Superintendent of Business and myself sit down and talk together, they bring a more administrative perspective and then I will tend to ask them, "Hey, but what about ...?" It helps us to round the picture a little more."

Thus, Eveline does not refer to these differences as a stressor but rather believes that they add to the richness of the administrative team.

Hillary commented upon the way that males and females dealt with others, discussing the concepts of assertion and aggression. She concluded that "Aggression is thought of as a positive quality in a male but not necessarily in a female." She reflected on the stress which was created by the differing expectations, accepted behaviours and styles of men and women.

Daggett (1993) talks of how the educational system promotes a concrete sequential teaching and learning style and concludes that there is a need for more random abstract teachers and thinkers. It would appear that Janelle has experienced stress because of her unique random abstract learning style which contrasts sharply with the linear sequential style of the administrators with whom she deals on a daily basis. There were no specific management or communication styles identified in the research studies reviewed as being stressors.

In reviewing the literature on communication and management styles, there has been a lot written recently. The gender issues and the accompanying stress created will be dealt with under the "Female Stress Issues" section.

#### **8. Lack of Understanding of Role Responsibilities By Others:**

Many expressed that dealing with others who did not understand the complexity of their job was a stressor. Janelle noted:

"It made me realize that other people do not understand my job. They only see how I relate to them, here I am speaking of teachers, and they see the services I deliver. I have always felt very positive about that as they have always given me the impression that they feel that I deliver a valuable service to teachers. I felt that they really appreciated the service. But they do not appreciate all the other things that come with the job - the liaising with Ministry and all the Ministry commitments which you have to do."

This was a stressor common to the three Curriculum Coordinators/Consultants interviewed and each described the misunderstanding in relation to the fear that their positions were going to be cut. Hillary had noted that "Other people's perceptions of what I am doing in my particular job are not always clear.... I end up having to defend myself." Gina suggested a similar situation, only adding that this happens every year at budget time:

"Budget time is always a stressful time. The first year that this happened, I was really devastated. I was really stressed out. I thought, "I have worked so hard and all they are talking about is cutting my position. Every year with the budget cuts, there is stress as to what is going to happen to you. ... You hear comments that people are saying, "If you have to cut anywhere, you better cut the consultants, because you know we don't need them. They are a frill."

She adds "there is a lack of understanding of the job responsibilities."

There is little written in the literature reviewed which suggests that the role confusion of others contributes to the stress of an administrator. This may be a stressor unique to curriculum coordinator positions within this study because of the nebulous job descriptions which usually accompany such a position and the lack of power and authority which they possess.

**9. Other Stressors Identified:** Janelle, as did each of the other respondents, identified unique personal stressors. Janelle identified two additional stressors which are worthy of mentioning.

Janelle identified a lack of trust in her capability to perform her job as being a major stressor and one which led to her ten day leave due to job-related stress. She talked of originally working with a male administrator whom expressed:

"This is a new job. I was allowed to create this job. There are certain things that need to be done. (They were given to me.) I trust you and I know that you do a good job. If you have any questions come and ask me."

She noted that his trust gave her a comfortable feeling. She worked hard with positive results and successful feelings about herself. She noted that her frustration began when "this new person came along who, all of a sudden, doesn't allow me to do what I believe is needed. The lack of trust came through in many small ways." She gave examples of some specific incidents and concluded "incidents like that really make you doubt yourself. I was upset as this inferred that he didn't trust me to do my job." The resulting feelings of self-doubt were devastating for Janelle, as she noted "my professional self-esteem just absolutely plummeted and I began to doubt that I was capable of doing my job."

The other stressor which Janelle identified which was different than other respondents was ergonomics. She talked of the noise level in the small board office as becoming "quite loud and overpowering" when all the administration were present. This created stress for her as she suggested that she couldn't concentrate to do the things which needed doing. She talked of frustration created by the poor upkeep and maintenance of the machines and equipment within the office. She noted:

"I have tried to deal with this in a positive way. It has never really been determined whose responsibility it is to keep the supplies in stock. So, nobody does it unless they have a need. I find that very frustrating."

She spoke of having to go shopping for a typewriter ribbon because there were none left in the supply room and having to refill the stapler every time she used it and "even in the washrooms, no one takes responsibility for replenishing the toilet paper." She commented that all these little things become quite frustrating to all involved.

Gina and Danyelle both expressed concern with their body weights. Gina suggested that her weight was a daily stressor and noted:

"I am always worrying about dieting and that is stressful. I joined "Back to Weight Watchers" again and I am not really doing all that well. I haven't gotten myself back into the groove of it. So I worry about that. That is stressful and that is a day to day stressor. Every time I have something to eat, I think I should not have eaten that."

Danyelle commented that she knew that other women administrators walked to relieve their stress and noted that "maybe they do it better than I do, as they seem to be able to keep their weight down better than I can. I have a problem with my weight that I just can't get a handle on. All the others seem to handle it."

These are the type of comments which Sullivan (1993) addresses when she notes that women have a "Body Image" stressor. Both these respondents referred to their desire to lose weight and the stress which that desire created for them. Both expressed a discontent with their current body.

In response to the question discussing perceived gender differences with regards to stressors, one respondent indicated that they believed that the stressors would be individualistic and were not gender-specific. Five suggested that the stressors would be similar for both genders and seven perceived that the stressors were different for male and female administrators. These numbers do not add up to nine as some respondents indicated that some stressors would be the same while others would be different.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Themes In The Data

#### Coping Strategies

There were a large number of different coping strategies identified by the participants. There were also a large number of common strategies proposed. All nine respondents suggested that physical activity and talking with others were effective stress management techniques for them. Eight respondents commented on the importance of positive self-talk, the use of a problem-solving process to work through a stressful situation and the importance of being able to release their emotions in a time of extreme stress. The importance of a supportive husband and family was offered as a coping strategy by five respondents, as was having a positive attitude and a sense of humour. Four respondents suggested watching television provided stress relief while three proposed that learning to say "NO!", deep breathing exercises, planning, listening to music and driving were coping strategies which worked for them. All participants discussed reading books and attending workshops as there was a specific question in the Interview Schedule which addressed these "Intellectual" strategies.

**1. Talking and Networking with Others.** The importance of having others to talk and network with regarding strategies for dealing with stressful situations cannot be underestimated in the lives of these women administrators. Janelle spoke of discussing her stressful feelings about the Social Contract with other curriculum

coordinators and discovering that she was not alone in her experience. When she becomes upset, she suggested that she talks to her secretary as part of releasing her emotional energy and that her secretary acts as a real sounding board. In discussing her ten days leave due to job-related stress, she noted:

"When there were periods of high stress, I know I had to talk about it. I would come home and sit and talk with my husband. I also get along well with everyone in the office and if I need to talk, my secretary and I talk and discuss things through. She will confide in me and so we have that really good working relationship. She understands my job and I understand her job because we work so closely. So it is really good to be able to talk about things and get them out in the open. I feel better."

In discussing the problem-solving process which she works through in an intense stressful situation, Janelle emphasized that she does nothing while she is angry or upset. "I take the time to calm down. I may talk about it with someone, my secretary, my husband, my friends whom I walk with, or any ear, for the sake of having someone listen. Then if I feel that I need someone's input, some suggestions, I can ask."

Alexandria spoke of the importance of talking with others about stressful situations such as upset parents. She felt somewhat relieved to know that she was not the only one experiencing such problems and concluded with the statement "I think that we do not, as women, have an opportunity to talk about these things." She noted that she wished there was more time provided for talking, as she noted "One of the things that we miss out on is getting together on a regular basis to discuss things like this. If we had a chance or an opportunity to talk about the stressors, it would be beneficial."

Brittany reflected on her coping strategies which she uses when she has a rough day and noted that "I have close friends that I go for walks with and talk with and the fact that they are teachers really helps as we can have some good "bitch" sessions."

In Cara's interview, she noted that she turns to her husband and secretary in times of stress:

"Generally the way that I deal with stress is to talk to my husband a lot. He does administration work too. He is not in education and so he has a different perspective but yet we have our commonalities. We discuss a lot of things. I am his sounding board and vice versa. If I am able to verbalize it, it helps. My secretary is a great help also. Even if she is busy, I don't mind. It is not so much that she is going to respond or that she is even listening to what I say, but that I am able to verbalize it out loud is a great release."

In discussing workshops on stress which Cara had attended, she commented that she enjoyed discussing stressors in groups and hearing other people's solutions.

Danyelle talked of being a good listener and learning from other's sharing their coping strategies with her. She talked of belonging to a formal networking group:

"We have our PAR networking groups, our "WIN" or "Women in the Nineties" group. Some of us have gone to a stress workshop in Toronto and we shared that with the group. Talking to the other women in our PAR group once a month at our meetings helps. Once a month we always go out for dinner or lunch and we will talk about something that was stressful. The last PAR meeting was stressful for me because one of the Principals had gotten upset with me and told me to suck rocks. We went to lunch and we talked together about how we would handle this. They helped me work it through."

In listing her coping strategies, Eveline stated "I talk with other people. I talk to my yoga instructor and I get different strategies. I talk with others about the things that they do to help themselves with stress."

Fiona stressed the importance of being able to trust those with whom she talks. She commented:

"The other thing that really helps me is having someone to talk to. . . . Having a couple of people to talk with whom I can trust explicitly is very important. To know that they are not going to be judging you because you are having a nervous crack-up is crucial. To be able to spill it all out makes me feel better. Then I can go back to the issue again."

Fiona expressed a real need for others to talk with when she noted "I have worked to develop a network of people with whom I can talk. I can't keep phoning my friends in my home town. So, I am developing a network of people within this town with whom

I can talk." In discussing her strategy to solve a family related stressor, she again referred to the importance of talking about it and airing all their expectations. Fiona's interview concluded with her summarizing her beliefs:

"I believe as a women, it is more important for me to have someone to talk things over with. . . . When I was a Principal, there was a network of four women. We were such a tremendous support for each other. I really valued that. I thought it was excellent. I miss it now."

Gina spoke of the importance of friends to her ability to cope with her stress. She commented that "at the end of a busy week, we like to do things with our friends such as going in the boat across the lake. I really like to socialize with people. I am a very social person." She also talked of belonging to a sorority and to a formal networking group called "WIN" or "Women in the Nineties". When she is stressed and seeking help, Gina remarked that she likes to "talk to a lot of people. I am not afraid to phone someone and ask for help. If I knew that you were an expert at "x", I would say, "Well, I am phoning her." and I would do it. I would talk to somebody." When Gina was asked what she does to learn about something such as stress, she responded with "I talked to some of the others in the office. Just talking to people helps me. I have an aunt that never had any children and she and I were always very, very close. She always makes me feel good. If I ever have had a bad time regarding a family situation, something sad, I always feel like I want to call her. She always makes me feel good. She always says the right things."

Hillary commented on the relief she experienced when she talked over a stressful situation with some other administrators. She noted that "sometimes, misery loves company. But, it is nice to know if you are over-reacting. It made me feel better to know that other administrators had felt disappointed."

In reporting on coping strategies which Goldstein (1992) advises for superintendents, she heads the list with "Get a good support system of family and

friends." followed by "Find confidants and allies in your community. They can give feedback to your ideas and sometimes just be good listeners." (p.10). Bailey, Fillos & Kelly (1987) found that the exemplary principals within their study scored higher in the socio-psychological category than in others. The socio-psychological category included coping strategies such as friends, support groups, family, and solitude. Cooper (1988) found that discussing concerns with colleagues in education was one of the top three coping strategies used by the principals within his study. He concluded his study with the recommendation that "principals should consider organizing monthly meetings with fellow principals to share job concerns and frustrations. Principals should attend state and national conventions and develop a network of colleagues to share job experiences." (p.87). Lyons (1990) proposed that administrators "find and maintain a network of trusted professional and personal friends. Few forms of therapy are as effective as mutually satisfying two-way communication between trusted colleagues and friends." (p.47) He goes on to suggest that these people should have positive and enthusiastic personalities and the importance of avoiding the "prophets of doom" or "black clouds". Monteiro (1990) discovered that "one of the most important stress-coping strategies is belonging to a support system with people who share and give feedback." (p.85). He discusses the importance of "supportive comraderie" to the mental health of administrators. Much of the research reviewed suggested that talking and networking with colleagues was a key coping strategy for educational administrators.

**2. Physical Activity:** All nine respondents spoke of physical activity as being a major stress reliever. Many commented on walking on a daily basis with friends while others chose other forms of activity such as Tai Chi, yoga and aerobics. Most expressed that physical activity was the one coping strategy which brought them the most relief in times of stress.

In reflecting on her daily coping strategies, Janelle noted:

"First of all, I try to keep physically in good shape. I think overall health is important. I usually walk three miles every day. I used to do a lot of aerobics and I used to jog, but as I am getting older, I am slowing down. I am now into fast walking which I understand is every bit as good for me as jogging and less stressful on certian bones. To me, it makes all the difference in how I tackle things and how I work on the job. When I get a good aerobic workout, I can take anything with very little stress or frustration."

She added that she is a "fair weather walker" and that once the temperature goes below minus ten Celsius, she stays indoors. This caused her to reflect upon the temperatures during the period when she was experiencing her high stress and to query herself:

"It is interesting that you mention that because it would be interesting, in retrospect, to chart this past year. When I think back to those times of high stress, I do not know if they were periods when I was not doing my aerobics because of the weather. So, my ability to cope really deteriorated. I know myself well enough to know that if I can get a good aerobic workout, I can tackle the world and do anything. So, I know the importance. It is really my own fault when I don't walk. I could do to an aerobics class or go swimming or do something. I have to be more careful of that during the cold months and at least try to do something physical."

When Alexandria was asked about coping strategies, she suggested that she goes for a walk or has sex. Alexandria prefers to walk by herself in the morning to wake up and to think about the day ahead. Brittany talked of going for a walk with friends and talking over stressful situations while walking. Cara spoke of the effectiveness of walking as a coping strategy when she was teaching but noted that recently she had not found the time to walk because of her many responsibilities as a first-year administrator.

Danyelle walks three miles every day followed by a jacuzzi which is located in the basement of her home. She also tries to swim each day in the summer in the pool located in her back yard. Danyelle spoke of having a weekly massage as a means of relaxing her muscles.

Eveline spoke of doing "some stretches even if they are just minimal ones. Sometimes when I am driving my car, I roll my head and stretch my shoulders to try to get rid of some of the stress. I try to get involved in a few physical things. For example, I curl in the winter and golf in the summer. A lot of times when I golf, the walk just takes over. So the one area that I know works for me is physical activity." As did others, Eveline concluded with regret that she had been finding it hard to find the time for this activity this year. "This year, I just haven't been able to make a commitment to the time."

Fiona recognized the importance of physical activity to stress management when she commented "I know some people who go for walks or do some physical activity to limit their stress." She admitted that she tried to exercise at least once a week over the winter but meetings always seemed to be scheduled for the specific evening of her class. She also commented that she did not try to exercise "as a way to relieve stress. I did it for my own physical health. I did find that on the nights when I exercised, I did feel good. So, I did try."

Gina talked of curling in the winter. She commented that she thinks of nothing but the game for the two hours she is on the ice with her team. She also spoke of walking to relieve her stress. She walks with two others at 6:00 am. in "rain, sleet or snow. That helps to relieve my stress. We walk for about forty minutes. We walk four days a week, with Wednesday being the day we give ourselves a break. I like to walk. It certainly hasn't helped my weight any but it just clears your mind to start the day."

Hillary talked about working in her garden, noting that "I find if I do something physical that it helps me." She has also started taking Tai Kwon Do and suggested that "it helps me to let things go and to leave them behind. I find that in that hour that I am

in the class, I have forgotten whatever I was uptight about prior to the class. It is good that way."

Physical activity was a coping strategy which was reportedly widespread in its usage by administrators in various research studies reviewed. Roberson & Matthews (1988) found that principals in Georgia chose "Physical Activities" as their most frequently used coping strategy. They reported that "about 30 percent of the principals reported that they used physical coping strategies more often than the other types. Reported most often were activities such as exercising, jogging, sports and brisk walks." (p.81). Swent (1990) noted that "several responses indicated the value of hard work or physical exercise as a diversion activity that allowed them to put some emotional distance between themselves and their work." (p.71). Swent found in this study that "physiological activity was the most frequently used means of stress management, with approximately two out of every three administrators responding in this category." (p.72). He reported that 85 percent used some form of exercise to help cope with their daily stress and suggested that this may be explained because "physical exercise has long been an acceptable form of activity to work off tension." (p.72). Lyons (1990) suggested that administrators should "develop some activities that you can use to reduce your anxieties and stress" (p.47). He suggests various activities, with physical exercise and sports being two on the list. He concluded that "All of these activities may serve as a safety valve to relieve your mind of job-related issues. Moreover, the appropriate physical activities will enhance your overall physical health." (p.47) Monteiro (1990) notes that exercise may be viewed as a "Band-aid" treatment as well as a Life Style strategy in his "Taxonomy of Stress Coping Strategies". He emphasizes the importance of administrators moving beyond the cognitive challenge of stress to realize that the body and emotions are also involved in the stress coping process.

Many stress management books promote the role of exercise in coping with daily stress. Sullivan (1993) lists "Exercise and massage" as one of ten stress management techniques which she deal with on the audio-cassette "Stress Management for Women". Witkin (1991) talks of "cathartic activities", listing walking, calisthenics, jogging, swimming and team sports as being vital to "relax our bodies, make good use of the extra adrenaline produced during stress, and direct "nervous" energy." (p.291). Carr-Ruffino (1985) writes of the benefits of regular exercise and comments on the extra energy experienced when exercise is completed. She also reflects upon the fact that "Busy managers often find it difficult to take time for adequate exercise." and emphasizes that it must be given top priority. She suggests that the exercise should be enjoyable and that is more often accomplished when it is combined with social interaction.

**3. Emotional Releases:** Eight of the participants indicated that they had developed a means of releasing their emotions to help them cope with stress. Some of these were physical releases while others were mental or psychological releases. They spoke of using these releases to help themselves move past their emotional reaction to a stressful situation onto a calmer, more objective problem-solving state.

Janelle spoke of her release in the following way:

"Everybody's way of coping is different. I know that my immediate reaction is to get very frustrated but then I soon get through the emotional thing. I shout and scream and work it out. I sit in my desk and scream. My secretary will ask what happened and I will explain it to her and then I feel better."

She stated that she believes that "it is really good if something has happened which really irritates you to not hold it in but to let it out. I don't kick the dog but I scream or talk about it."

Alexandria spoke of consciously checking off her physical symptoms of stress when she is in a high stress situation. She noted that she tries to "breathe deeply. I get

myself a "time-out" if I need it. If I feel like I am going to say things which I may be sorry for or react in a way that might be overzealous, I take "time-out" to sort out my emotions."

Cara talked about verbalizing her emotional response out loud to her secretary and not really caring whether or not her secretary was even listening to her dialogue. "That I am able to verbalize it out loud is a great release."

Danyelle spoke of taking a "time-out" by walking around the school building and getting away from her office and telephone. She also commented that she had a half hour drive home each day and that this allowed her time to "rehash things through so that I am not coming through the door like a screaming idiot." She spoke of a strategy which she had learned through reading called the "Silent Scream".

Eveline talked of putting herself into a positive frame of mind and counting to ten to relieve the emotional frustration. "I say to myself, "Count to ten". If I have to, I count to ten again." I set myself up to say "Don't get mad. Don't get angry. Don't get frustrated." I lower myself into a more passive mood. Then when I go into the situation, I usually diffuse it because the other person expects me to get angry back and I don't. So, gradually the conflict gets reduced and I can put the discussion back on a more even keel." She also talked about avoiding involvement as one of her coping strategies. Eveline noted: "Another one which I use, depending upon the situation, is to go into the situation and just listen. Don't get embroiled in it, just sit back and let all that high energy slosh around and keep yourself insulated. I will just sit and listen." This is one way she uses to avoid emotional stress from building in the first place.

Fiona noted that she had a number of releases. She reflected the importance of talking things out with someone else. She also suggested that she used to write about all her experiences in a journal as a therapeutic strategy. She commented that:

"If there is a really bad situation, there is an emotional outburst as well. I might just go somewhere and have myself a nice little cry and get it out of my system.

When I come back, I have that out of the way and I am ready to deal with it again."

She discussed the fact that many "times we get caught up in the emotions and there is a blockage there" in terms of thinking rationally and objectively. She concluded noting that she can depend on her secretarial staff to support her in times of stress:

"I find that my colleagues in this office are really supportive as well. On those days when I am just pulling my hair out, I am quite comfortable saying, "I have had it!" and being able to blow off steam. It is good to get it out and once it is over, I am set again."

Gina suggested that she talks her stress away. She spoke of calling a friend and cousin:

"If there is something that is really bothering me, I like to deal with it. As painful as it is, I like to talk things out. I have a very good friend who is also a cousin of mine. We can really talk. I often call her on the phone and I will deal with things openly. I like to get it out of the way."

Hillary talked of turning to nature to let go of her stress. She goes to her peaceful backyard, sits down, has a cup of tea and takes in the beauty of the river and the trees in order to calm down. She noted that this allows her an opportunity to "get a grip on things that are bothering me when I need that break."

All the respondents except Brittany reflected upon some means of coping which helped them to deal with the emotions they would experience in either an intense stressful situation or as a result of accumulated daily stress. Most strategies were unique to the individual and yet, in each case, they allowed the respondents to function more effectively within their environment.

There was very little in the reviewed research which dealt with the types of releases which these respondents identified. Gmelch (1988) was the only study which mentioned crying as a coping response and he placed it within the Attitudinal category. In analyzing the frequency of coping responses used, his study results showed that the

Attitudinal category was one of the three most frequently used categories. Cooper (1988) talked of "Time-Out: Taking a short break." as being a stress-coping category. However, it was not in the top five of the seven categories which he used in his study. Swent (1990) talks of administrators spending a short period of time walking within the work environment as a strategy used by a few.

Simons and Weissman discuss the "Language of Emotions" indicating that "many women cry, smile, or look confused when they are actually angry about something." (p.45). Carr-Ruffino (1985) devotes a section of the chapter to "Handling Emotions Constructively". She discusses the fact that women "are blessed with the ability to express their emotions more freely than men" and talks about the problems which can develop in a male-dominated workplace when feelings are not expressed in an acceptable format. She talks of expressing these emotions without acting them out and goes on to develop sections on "Experiencing Feelings Without Acting Them Out" and "Expressing Feelings to a Trusted Friend". Carr-Ruffino suggests strategies for dealing with these feelings in a socially acceptable manner. Many of the respondents interviewed did in fact act out their feelings in acceptable places with accepting colleagues. They tended to be very discriminating as to with whom they chose to share their emotional outbursts. While some screamed and cried, others talked the stressful situation out with trustworthy friends and co-workers.

**4. Self-Talk:** Eight of the nine participants indicated that they used self-talk when placed in stressful situations. Some used positive self-talk while others commented on their negative self-talk.

Janelle reflected upon her self-talk in many situations. In some cases, her self-talk was negative. When she was experiencing extreme stress just prior to her leave, she noted:

"...the bottom line is that when you lose the feeling that you are a valuable person in your position, that is the highest point of stress. That is the point

when I said, "If this is going to continue, I don't want it. I can't work within this situation. I am just doing mechanical things. I am wasting myself here doing this, plus my self-esteem is hurting. I want out." This was very stressful for me."

In other cases, she talked of her positive attitude and her belief, "It's not me, it is them who have the problem.". She discussed avoiding black clouds and talking to herself and with others in a positive manner.

Alexandria told of a technique which her husband had taught her to use in a stressful situation:

"He told me to think that it is only a 3D movie, so look at the situation as though it were a 3D movie and take yourself out of your body. Perch yourself somewhere else and look at the situation and say to yourself, "In the long run, in the great scheme of things, this won't matter one hill of beans. It is insignificant compared to real significant problems." Saying to yourself, "You've got it pretty good." helps too."

She commented upon her usage of this technique as being very effective for her and the self-talk which is involved as helping her to cope with many situations.

Brittany made reference to the satisfaction which she derives from her job and commented that she often has to "stop and say to myself 'Get a life!'. In discussing her strategies, she reported that she is always looking towards the future, making statements to herself such as "Today may be really bad but that doesn't matter because tomorrow is Friday." She commented that she takes one day at a time and discussed the usage of her self-talk to help her deal with stress.

Danyelle talked of her self-talk in relation to her problem-solving process. She commented that at one point, she thinks "Okay, what do I want to do here?". She weighs the many alternative solutions.

Eveline spoke of trying to find the time and energy to do the fun things in her life and the activities which she knows will help her manage her stress. She commented that "I often say to myself, "This will reduce my stress - DO it!"". When in a stressful

situation, she uses self-talk to help her. "I say to myself, "Count to ten.". If I have to, I count to ten again. I set myself up to say "Don't get mad. Don't get angry. Don't get frustrated." I lower myself into a more passive mood."

Fiona talked of a technique which she had learned from a facilitator in a Strategic Planning Seminar. "He said that you have to stop interrupting yourself. I am like that. I have ten things going on at one time in my mind. So, one of the things that I try to do is to focus on where I am. I try to forget my other commitments and think only of the one that I am working on at that time. When it is finished, then I move on to the next one." She reflected on talking to herself to keep on task.

Gina spoke often of her self-talk. She generally used self-talk to help herself cope with a stressful situation. "I'll say, 'Yeah, I can do that!'" When discussing writing an exam, she noted that she "just kept saying to myself, "You will get through this! You have got to. Look, you have done this and you have done that. You will get through this. Right now, you are thinking you can't do this or get it all done. But, you just have to think that you can get through it." And I usually do." In reflecting upon her new Principalship, she commented that she turned "to my old belief, "I will do this. I will get through this. I have done this in the past."" Gina also talked of using self-talk when she is organizing and planning activities. She suggested that:

"I want to do all those little things that are going to make the day go smoothly. Certainly, there will be the odd person that will throw things off. But I will think about the fact that "so and so is probably not going to like this...". I will even think, " If he says this to me, I will respond with ...". I think about what I might say."

Hillary used self-talk in attempting to establish the rationale for an event creating stress within her life:

"A lot of times when I step back and look at the situation, I ask myself, "Why has that little thing bothered me so much?" I realize that it was a little thing in

the whole scheme of things. I ask, "Why would that make me question my whole position or worth?"

She also uses self-talk in her problem-solving process, as she noted "I ask, "Is there a better way to react to it?" I try to think before I do anything if at all possible. . . . I say "Now, this is the situation. What are my options here? What will happen if I choose this or that?"

The respondents used self-talk as a stress management strategy when it was of a positive nature. Self-talk of a negative nature can create more stress rather than reducing it. Butler (1981) and Helmstetter (1987) both promote the value of positive self-talk in reducing stress. Gina is a prime example of a person who uses positive self-talk to give herself the confidence she seeks in a stressful situation. Janelle, on the other hand, uses self-talk but more often in a negative manner when she is reflecting on the situation. Self-talk which is neutral such as Danyelle asking herself, "What do I want to do here?" may be viewed as positive or negative depending upon her reaction to the question in the specific situation.

**5. Problem-Solving Process:** Eight of the respondents referred to using a problem-solving process when attempting to deal with an intense stressful situation.

Janelle talked about releasing her emotions through screaming and talking with her secretary and once her mind was cleared, she moved onto face the problem. She noted "I recognize that it is a problem and I tackle it in a problem-solving fashion. I use all the skills that I developed from all those workshops on creative problem-solving."

She goes on to elaborate:

"I think when I am in any type of stressful situation, I tend to react the same. I get angry if something has happened and then I get verbal and usually yell or scream. I talk to my secretary. I have to get the stress out initially to anybody who will listen. Then I sit down and think through the situation. I tend to write things down. I like to put things down on paper. Then I can see a situation more clearly. I can put the pieces together and see a way of dealing with things. That usually helps."

Alexandria turns to her 3D technique to help her solve her problem. She noted that she takes herself "out of the situation" and puts it into proper perspective as her means of working through the stress.

Cara talked about her personal characteristics which help her in a stressful situation. She spoke of the importance of flexibility and of her ability to withdraw herself from the situation in order to gain perspective. She noted:

"I had mentioned removing myself. Specifically, when I am dealing with a situation, I know that I am going to be as fair as I can in the situation. I will listen to both parties and I will present any information which might help them to come to an agreement. I try to be as impartial as possible. I have always been like that. That is part of my naivete too. I really believe in fairness above all else. Knowing that helps me. I know that I will not pick favorites."

Danyelle spoke of turning to "higher level thinking and problem-solving skills" in commenting upon the commonalities of all the stressors which she had listed. However, she did not elaborate on the problem-solving process which she used. She spoke of asking herself "What do I want to do here?" as being the first step in the process.

Eveline talked of her "skills" which help her to deal with stress, although she commented that "these are not necessarily skills in dealing with stress." She described various strategies which she uses and suggested that her choice of strategies was dependent upon the situation. She talked of the importance of preparing herself. "If it is a situation where I know that I have to come and present some information, then I go in knowledgeable. Unless the other person has much more information than I do, I go in feeling justified with what I am doing and presenting." She discussed that she solves other situations by just sitting back and listening. She concluded this discussion noting that "the bottom line is if you know it is coming, you can work towards finding a way of handling the situation which will not necessarily diffuse it, but at least let you

deal with it." It would appear, that unlike Janelle who discussed using the same process for every situation, that Eveline's problem-solving process varies with the type of stressful situation she faces. She also offered the following suggestion: "I just deal with them on a one by one basis."

Fiona discussed solving stressful situations by clearing her mind and focussing on the situation at hand. Fiona and Gina both spoke of the importance of organizing their day to prevent many stressful situations from arising. Gina reflected upon the attitude of taking one day at a time and breaking situations and activities down into small units. She talked of taking "one step at a time".

Hillary referred to a problem-solving process. She commented:

"As soon as I feel tenseness coming on, I try to separate from the situation and assess it regarding how I am reacting to it. I ask, "Is there a better way to react to it?" I try to think before I do anything if at all possible. I think I am aware now. That is the first step to helping yourself to stop the symptoms of stress. What I do is similar to a problem-solving process. I say now "This is the situation. What are my options here? What will happen if I choose this or that?""

Each respondent commented on her own problem-solving process. While some, such as Janelle, applied the same process consistently, others, such as Eveline, varied the process depending upon the situation. Swent (1990) reported that administrators within his study tended to turn to other colleagues when solving problems and noted that "creative problem-solving with staff was viewed as an aid to reducing job stress." (p.72). Roberson and Matthews (1988) found that only thirteen percent of their participants used what they called "Direct" coping strategies. Direct coping strategies included "planning ways of dealing with stressful situations such as getting advice from a friend or supervisor, rehearsing coping behaviours, or consciously thinking about alternative responses." (p.81). They concluded their research suggesting that "What principals need are direct coping strategies to

supplement the indirect strategies which they are currently using." (p.82). Monteiro (1990) acknowledges that a Life Style strategy in the Cognitive domain is "becoming an active problem-solver and avoiding letting problems fester". Active problem solving with a positive approach whereby the many alternatives are discussed and weighed acts as a coping strategy for many administrators.

**6. Supportive Husband and/or Family:** Five respondents referred to the importance of having a supportive husband and/ or family members to their effective dealing with stress.

Janelle commented on her personal life:

"I am very fortunate that my personal life is so stable and stress-free. I really think that when I listen to others talk about their lives. Personally, I believe that for some people, their whole life is more stressful than their job. So, when I come home it is great. I love my life. ... (when under extreme stress) I come home and sit and talk with my husband."

She spoke of the importance of her granddaughter and discussed the fact that her granddaughter had come at a time in her life when she needed to learn to focus on her personal life. "I found this year, with a new granddaughter, I have been focussing on family more and it has put better balance in my life."

Alexandria commented that she has a "very supportive spouse who is there for me if I every need someone to dump on or whatever." She talked of her husband helping her to learn the 3D technique which she effectively uses as a strategy for dealing with stressful situations.

Brittany also remarked that her husband is very supportive of her position and its requirements, but that he is also very busy with his job.

Cara talked of dealing with her stress by talking to her husband a lot. "We discuss a lot of things. I am his sounding board and vice versa." When asked what she does to help cope with her stress on a daily basis, talking things over with her husband

was number one. She also spoke of her teenage children and the time which she spends with them.

Gina commented regarding the importance of her family to helping her deal with her stress:

"I am really lucky because my husband is very supportive. We work together and he helps me around the house. Those kinds of things get me down, when I really get behind at home. The kids are really good too. They look after their own things."

Danyelle, Eveline, Fiona, and Hillary did not directly comment on her supportive husband and/or children even though they frequently discussed them throughout their interviews.

Swiss and Walker (1993) reported on the importance of a supportive husband to the success of the women managers whom they had interviewed. Often the husband's support was a key factor in allowing these women the time commitment and opportunities necessary to make it to the top. If we consider the balancing of personal and professional lives as a major stressor, it only follows that having a supportive husband and family who can help reduce the expectations and responsibilities on the woman administrator's personal life would be a great stress reducer. Gmelch (1988) placed "talking with spouse" in the Social category of coping responses within his taxonomy. This category was the third most frequently chosen category for stress reduction. White (1992) suggests that Myth #9 of the ten biggest myths about working women is "Men are the enemy". (p. 10). She found in her research interviews that "six of the eight married executive women profiled name their husbands as their number one mentors, not only serving as their cheerleaders but for the most part agreeing to put their own careers second." (p.10). In her concluding chapter, she offers strategies for women to "make the workplace work for you" and strategy number 9 reads:

"Make sure your husband supports your work. It's virtually impossible for a woman to demand that her colleagues, underlings and superiors take her seriously if her husband won't. A solid marriage is one that is based on teamwork: mutual respect and mutual career support. And teamwork means that the male member of the team is not permitted to assume that the female member is going to fulfill the role of chief cook and bottlewasher along with that of being a full-time wage-earner. If both members of a couple are working 9 to 5 or 9 to 9, a working woman's other half either has to pitch in and help with housework, cooking and the kids, or agree to pay for outside help." (p.216).

This strategy was not commonly found in many research articles, perhaps because most of the studies used male samples and restricted their surveys to workplace strategies where a supportive spouse and family were not discussed.

**7. Positive Attitudes and Sense of Humour:** There were five respondents whom commented on the role of a positive outlook upon their effective stress management. Closely related, three reflected on their sense of humor and ability to laugh as playing an important role in their success in dealing with stress.

Janelle often spoke of taking a positive approach towards a stressful situation. She made statements such as "I tried to deal with this in a positive way." or "Being the positive person that I am, ...". She reflected on her coping strategy of avoiding "black clouds" in each staffroom and noted:

"I have always thought of myself as a very positive person and very optimistic. I think in this job, you have to be positive to survive. I think that positivity should be one of the requirements of the job. I can see why it is so important. I think that was one of the things which ran out this year. I always felt that it would really take a lot to get me to that point of being stressed out that I would have to take time off work. I didn't think that I would ever get an ulcer. I really didn't. I know that I am very conscientious and that I really dive into things and I am a very emotional person, but I didn't think that I would ever let anything get to me that much. I have always felt that I could handle it. Essentially, I am a positive person, but I guess we all have our breaking points. I try to be around positive, fun-loving people."

Alexandria talked of needing something more positive in her life than spending her day disciplining students. She talked of forcing herself to smile when she does not

feel positive. Danyelle talked of dealing with an upset parent and offering her "a positive idea about what she could do about it." She also indicated a positive attitude was important.

Eveline discussed a major stressor was dealing with the general feeling of negativity and negative attitudes of staff. She noted that she often would like to say to these negative people, "Hey, you are not dieing. You are not dead. You haven't lost a child. Your best friend doesn't have cancer. Get a grip on yourself." She noted that she gets stressed when she can feel herself getting dragged down into this depressed attitude. She remarked, "Normally, I appear as a very positive type of individual and it bothers me to think that I am getting caught up in this wave." Fiona also spoke of putting herself into a positive frame of mind prior to going into a stressful situation where emotional issues were about to be discussed.

Gina suggested within the interview that she is "a positive person. I never look at the negative. I always think if I got one good idea out of a workshop, then it was a success. I never go into anything looking for the negative. It has to be really bad before I think anything negative. I can usually find something positive about everything."

With regards to a sense of humour, Janelle had recently listened to a audio cassette while driving and remembered the quote "You can't get an ulcer when you are laughing." This was meaningful for her because of her recent ulcer and she commented, "I liked that. I will have to work on my humour and looking at the lighter side of things."

Cara reflected that she could still laugh. "I still have the ability to laugh. Sometimes that relieves a lot of stress for the other people involved. I can still laugh about things and put them into perspective."

Gina spoke of laughing as one of the strategies she uses to let down after a stressful day. She commented that when she gets home on a Friday night, "I do not want to think about anything. I just want to be entertained and to have a few laughs." Later she noted that she likes to socialize and often "we play cards and have some laughs".

The importance of maintaining a positive attitude and a sense of humour are promoted in many of the stress management resource books as well as numerous research studies. Monteiro(1990) listed Positive Thinking and Affirmations as "Band-Aid" treatments as well as Life Style strategies for stress. Gmelch (1988) placed optimism and laughing as Attitudinal strategies and found that the Attitudinal category was one of the three most frequently used categories of coping responses. Lemley (1987) suggested from his research that in order to deal with cynicism, a subtle indicator of stress, that a principal should say positive things. He also speaks of inappropriate humour as being a sign of stress and suggests that learning to laugh at truly humorous things is a coping strategy. Lyons (1990) talks of finding trustworthy colleagues whom are "positive and generally enthusiastic about life. Conversing frequently with prophets of doom will be of little help to your mental health." He promotes positive attitudes and behaviours as being important to stress management. Roberson and Matthews (1988) talk of Psychological strategies and reported that sixteen percent of their sample used these coping responses most frequently. In this category, they listed coping techniques such as "thinking about how things could be worse, finding someone to blame, making jokes about the situation, praying, or looking ahead to when the stressful situation would be over." (p.81). Swent (1990) assessed the use of cognitive/psychological activities as coping strategies and concluded:

"A number of responses related to a positive attitude toward the development or maintenance of a sense of humour. The need for a positive attitude seems more

essential now than ever before to maintain effectiveness as a school administrator. Decreasing resources, less public confidence in education and continuing parental pressure make today's education a real challenge. It is no place for a negative thinker." (p.73).

Russell (1994) reviewed the importance of a positive outlook and a sense of humour when reflecting upon her study of survival strategies for women managers. She spoke of smiling through a stressful situation as being one coping strategy, which supports Alexandria's forced smile strategy. All of Russell's respondents commented on the value of these two strategies to their success within their organization.

Many other stress management resource books such as Hanson (1989), Witkin (1991), Carr-Ruffino (1985), and Pertik and Senter (1990) promote a positive attitude and humour as means of reducing stress. As Witkin (1991) suggests, "laughter can even promote healing. ... It lights up our faces, relaxes our muscles, lowers our sense of vigilance, restores our objectivity, and enhances hope." (p.308).

**8. Other Common Coping Strategies:** There were a number of other strategies which were addressed by three or four participants. While four participants indicated that watching television reduced their stress, three respondents suggested that saying "NO!", deep breathing techniques, driving, listening to music and planning were strategies which helped them deal with their stress. These strategies will each be briefly described according to the participants' perceptions.

Watching television was used by four participants, Janelle, Alexandria, Brittany and Fiona. Janelle curbed her "workaholism" by becoming involved with a television show which came on at 5:00 pm. daily. Prior to that, she used to stay at the office until 7:00 or 8:00 pm. and sometimes she would go back after supper, staying until midnight. She commented:

"So, I got hooked, deliberately, on the "Young and the Restless", which comes on at 5:00 pm. I started watching that and got hooked on it. That was really, really good for me because it got me out of the office at 5:00 pm. That has become my deadline ever since. I have to get home to watch the "Young and

the Restless". Sometimes, I come home and I turn it on but don't even watch it. I will just putter around while the TV is on. But it has gotten me out of the office at 5:00 pm. which is really good. That is almost a normal office day."

Later in the interview, Janelle indicated that when she does watch TV, "I don't watch it too much anymore", she chooses light comedy such as "Cheers" and "Murphy Brown".

Alexandria remarked that she enjoys watching ""The Young and the Restless" which is something totally mindless." Later in the interview, she commented that she watches two programs daily, "The Young and the Restless" and "The Bold and the Beautiful". She noted that "the two of them are an hour and a half in total and watching them acts as a stress reducing time. I have them taped every day so that I can watch them when I come home. Usually, I watch them before I am going to bed around 9:00 pm."

Brittany commented on watching television, noting that "I do this very very seldom so that when I do, it's a treat. We live in the country and so we only get CBC. I'll watch a movie or sitcom and for me, that's a big thrill and a real release because I don't do it very often."

Fiona talked of watching television but she spoke of watching educational TV. She responded that she watches TV Ontario as a means of learning new concepts and information on subjects such as stress.

Watching television was discussed in Gmelch's research articles as an entertainment strategy for reducing stress. He found that it was the least frequently used category of coping responses. Roberson and Matthews (1988) listed watching television and movies in their "Mental Coping Strategies" category and found that twenty-three percent of their sample used Mental strategies most frequently. Bailey, Fillos and Kelly (1987) noted that their "Avocational/Recreational" category was "very

important personally" to their sample and that principals indicated that they were more likely to choose these types of coping responses over physiological and socio-psychological categories. Goldstein (1992) suggest that Superintendents "Be entertained. Go to a movie." (p.10). Most self-help stress management books do not specify television as a stress reducer although they do discuss the role of entertainment and relaxation in the overall scheme of stress reduction.

Learning to say "NO!" without accompanying guilt and anxiety was a coping strategy which was identified by Alexandria, Danyelle and Fiona. Alexandria talked of saying "No." to her director when she had been asked to serve on a committee. She talked of his reaction and how she had handled the situation. She suggested that administrators must learn to be more selective of the activities that they choose to do. "I think that sometimes we feel like we have to do them all. We don't pick and choose. As Administrators, we often aren't selective at all for ourselves." She talked of feeling pressured to say "Yes." to all initiatives.

Danyelle spoke of women having to be jugglers because they did not know when to say "No.". "We are always saying, "Yes, sure we can handle that." We take on more and more." She talked of the importance of learning this valuable strategy.

Fiona commented that she was thankful for her secretaries who would say "No." for her. "They are very good at saying "No." to people as I always try to squeeze in one more appointment or one more meeting. They have helped me a lot in terms of saying "No, she can't do that today." as I find it difficult to say "No. "." Her secretaries help her with this strategy in order to reduce her stress.

There has been much written on the topic of assertiveness and learning to say "No." without guilt and anxiety. Lemly (1987) suggests that administrators "learn the use of the constructive "No."" as a strategy to overcome stress caused by assuming

responsibility for everyone's problems. Witkin (1991) offers advice with regards to saying "No.":

"Learn to say no without feeling guilt (as to a child).  
Learn to say no without justifying yourself (as to your spouse).  
Learn to say no without defending yourself (as to a parent).  
Learn to say no graciously, not tentatively (as to your lover).  
Learn to give explanations, not excuses (as to your boss)." (p.300).

Self-help resource books such as Charlesworth and Nathan (1984), Carr-Ruffino (1985), and Miller and Smith (1993) devote whole chapters to assertiveness training and its role in stress reduction.

Three respondents remarked on their usage of deep breathing techniques as a means of coping with their stress. Alexandria commented that in her conscious checking off of her physical symptoms of stress, she tries to breathe deeply. Danyelle talked quite extensively about the lessons which she had been receiving on developing her deep breathing techniques:

"When I go to the lady who gives me my massage, she is trying to teach me to deep breathe when I am in the middle of something intense. She tells me to think about my breathing. I tend to keep it all inside such that when I get to her on Saturday morning, she says, "Oh, my goodness, what happened this week?" She can tell where the stress is and it is usually right across my shoulders. And she is trying to train me to move from the shallow breathing which I tend to do. She has taught me the difference between the shallow breathing and the deep breathing. So I am trying to make a conscious effort to use that tip."

Eveline remarked that there are some simple techniques which help reduce stress such as deep breathing which she had learned at her Yoga class.

Breathing techniques were not mentioned in one of the research studies reviewed. They were proposed in a number of self-help resource books such as Charlesworth and Nathan (1984), Pertik and Senter (1990), Witkin (1991), Carr-Ruffino (1991), Sullivan (1993), and Miller and Smith (1993). Breathing exercises are promoted as being a quick and easy way to relax the body and calm down the mind in an intense stressful situation.

Planning as a coping strategy was suggested by Brittany, Eveline and Gina. Brittany spoke of looking forward to trips and planning for the future as a coping strategy. She also spoke of planning for big events such as the Transition Years reform or moving into a new school as a stress reducer. "How I deal with these stressful events is plan. I am a big planner. ...we have to plan; we have to know what we are going to do ahead of time."

Eveline reflected on her planning and prioritizing of tasks as helping her reduce her stress. She attempts to plan some personal time into her daily work plans as she commented that otherwise, "you just start to walk around in this fog." She plans her strategies for meetings and situations where she is going to be called upon to present information. She also commented that she reduces stress by keeping some strong routines and planning her week. "If I keep some organization with the regular things that go on in my life, then I can fit the other things in and keep my stress under control more."

Gina reported that she manages and plans her time wisely. She related this to her personal life when she reflected upon the fact that she "makes our hair appointments one month in advance so that we know when they are. I keep a fairly good calendar at work. ... I do like to have things planned. That relieves my stress so that it doesn't all pile up on me."

Almost every research study reviewed referred to planning as a coping strategy. Planning was categorized as a Managerial strategy according to Gmelch's (1988) taxonomy and he found that the Managerial category was one of the top three categories which were most frequently used. Swent (1990) found that only twelve percent of his sample used organizational management skills the most frequent of his three categories of coping responses. Roberson and Matthews (1988) placed planning into their "Direct" category and found that only thirteen percent of their sample reported

using the Direct coping responses most frequently of the five categories within this study. Goldstein (1992) suggests that Superintendents need to "Improve your organizational skills and your ability to manage time." (p.10) which would entail using planning techniques in order to reduce their stress. Other books discuss the role of planning in the development of time management and organizational strategies which help to reduce stress.

Three respondents, Danyelle, Gina and Janelle, indicated that they found driving was a form of relaxation and that it helped them reduce their stress. Danyelle noted that "one thing that is very helpful is that I have to drive a half an hour to work" adding that this time gave her an opportunity to "rehash things through so that I am not coming through the door like a screaming idiot." Gina reflected that her husband and her will often go for a car ride as they "find it very relaxing". She explained that they enjoyed the isolation from the rest of the world which it provides, as well as the quiet time for thinking. She noted "it is nice to know that you don't have to go anywhere or answer any phones" during the time spent in a car concluding, "It is great thinking time". Janelle expanded on her enjoyment of driving and how she used the time for creative problem solving:

"I find driving very relaxing. A lot of my job requires me to be in different places and that involves driving. I don't just totally relax as I drive. I put on some tapes. ... When I am driving on a job-related trip, it gives me the time to think. I have to have that quiet time to get away from the job but also quiet time to reflect about my job. A lot of the job is being creative, working with what's available in a creative way. I need to free my mind to do that. I have found that the first half hour to hour that I am driving, I have solved more problems. I have sat in the office and the solution just wasn't there. But, in the car, all of a sudden, it just comes to me. The most natural solutions become evident when I am in a relaxed environment. These don't tend to come when I was back in the office. I need to free my mind. The first hour that I am on the road, I have more creative ideas and solutions to things than I can have in a whole month in the office."

Janelle went on to explain the process she uses to write down her ideas on a pad of paper as she is driving. She noted that she tries "to focus my eyes on the road and on

my driving, but also try to concentrate on writing my thoughts so that they are still legible. I want to be able to read them at a later time and say, "Oh, yes!" They act as a spark." She did comment that once she had almost hit the ditch writing down her idea but she is generally careful to coordinate the two activities. She also suggested that her ideas tended to peak in the first hour noting "the flow of ideas gradually diminishes such that the last hour, I am in slow gear. When I am arriving, I am in a whole different frame of mind." Janelle uses her driving time as a constructive creative thinking and recording time which reduces her stress as she solves the problems within her life.

Driving is one of those unique coping strategies which is not specifically singled out in stress resources as a coping response. However, it appears that it was identified by the participants within this study, with some very positive problem-solving and relaxation resulting.

Listening to music was also a strategy suggested by three participants. Janelle commented that she has many tapes and that she enjoys listening to music. "I listen when I am at home working and when I am driving in the car. I find music very relaxing." Fiona also suggested that music was another release for her. "I like all different kinds. Depending on the mood I am in, I may want something quiet or something to spark my energy." Eveline commented on the fact that some people use classical music as a stress reducer but that it does not have that effect on her. "I like classical music but it does not induce me to rest and relax. I need some other way." She goes on to explain how she attempts to shift her energy as a means of reducing energy rather than "actually taking all the energy and trying to dissipate it."

Listening to music may be discussed under the "Entertainment" or "Personal" categories of coping responses within the literature. However, it is rarely promoted as a major strategy for the reduction of stress. Sullivan (1993) discusses the role of sound

and music in the overall scheme of stress reduction and offers it as a strategy to be combined with others to form a completed repertoire.

**9. Bibiotherapy:** Because there was a specific question within the Interview Schedule which asked about the strategies the participants used to learn about a new concept such as stress, all nine respondents commented on books which they read to help them deal with stress.

Janelle suggested that she reads a lot as a stress reducer. The books are not necessarily educational non-fiction type books. She responded with "there are many things which I do to get my mind off the job and onto other things." She also talked about reading self-actualization books and suggested the belief that "most people are constantly trying to improve themselves". She talked of Hans Selye's book on stress as being one which had had an impact upon her. She also talked of listening to books on audio cassettes. She commented on a book tape by John Dyer, a teacher in Alberta, and remembered the quote that "The biggest cause of burn-out is thinking that you don't make a difference." This was especially meaningful for her based on her experiences in the past year.

Alexandria suggested that she turns to books, workshops and lectures to learn something new. Brittany noted that she reads a lot of books and especially "likes all the female books which are out on the topic of stress". She suggested three books for other female administrators, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey, Perfect Parenting and Ward and June Cleaver Don't Live Here Anymore. The last two books deal with parenting issues and "how to mix your family and your career in the 1980's and 1990's".

Cara talked of reading "mindless" books to relieve her stress as they "put me into a different world. It takes me away from the kind of readings that I have to do as an administrator. So, it reduces the stress in two ways." Danyelle discussed reading

articles in magazines and other print materials. She recommended two books, The Joy of Working (author unknown) and Celebrating With Anger by Angela Jackson. These are books which she has loaned to other administrators to help them deal with situations. The Joy of Working helps people "dealing with rejection" while Celebrating With Anger presents "different strategies to use when you are upset and angry".

Eveline suggested that she also turns to books and workshops to learn something new. She could not think of a specific title to recommend but had one in her mind that was like the I'm Okay: You're Okay type of book.

Fiona recommended two books also, Gloria Steinem's new book, Revolution from Within and Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. She suggested that Gloria Steinem's book was helpful, practical and down to earth. She recommended it for both men and women but particularly for women.

Gina suggested that she reads books and magazines to learn about something new, as well as attend workshops wherever possible. She talked about having ordered some books for summer reading on "communicating with the public and ways of marketing your school" to help her get off to a good start with her new Principalship.

Hillary commented early in the interview that she had read The Joy of Stress and noted that she did not agree with all of its propositions regarding stress. When asked about learning something new, she suggested that printed literature was her best source of information. She also reflected that she had read a lot of books to help her with her stress. "I have read practically them all. I was on a real spurt for a while. I guess I knew that I was having some trouble with my stress. I read a lot of the self-help books. I read a lot of articles and things which just helped me to focus."

Bibliotherapy, or the reading of self-help books, has become a popular hobby and as such, acts as a stress reducer for many individuals. Miller and Smith (1993)

offer a bibliography of books which they recommend on the topic of stress and stress management. Witkin (1993) promotes bibliotherapy as being "self-paced, not expensive, unambiguous, educational, and often the first step toward therapy." (p.296). She also suggests that sixty percent of psychotherapists recommend that their patients read self-help books for guidance and support. She concludes with a buyer beware and notes that books do not work for all problems and that individuals may need to seek human interaction to remedy some concerns. Reading and attending workshops are both coping responses within Gmelch's (1988) Intellectual category. As such, this category was selected as the fourth group of coping strategies used most frequently to deal with stress.

### Discussion

There were a few other unique coping strategies suggested by individual respondents. For example, Brittany describes taking work home at night and spending time completing paperwork as an effective coping strategy for her. Cooper (1988) refers to this as also being a coping strategy which he placed in his "Workaholic" category. He found that taking work home at night and on weekends was one of the top three choices of principals as a means of coping with administrative stress.

There were a number of physical activity strategies discussed by participants. Hillary discussed enjoying gardening as a means of stress reduction. This was a coping response which Gmelch (1988) had identified in his Personal category within his taxonomy. Many participants discussed physical wellness strategies such as their diet, the amount of sleep they received, their desired absence of alcohol within their lifestyle, and the importance of fitness. These are frequently discussed in self-help

resource books such as Charlesworth and Nathan (1984), Hanson (1989), Witkin (1991), and Carr-Ruffino (1991).

In analyzing all the coping strategies with regards to Gmelch's taxonomy, it would appear that there were two Social strategies (talking with others and supportive husband/family), two Physical strategies (walking and deep breathing), two Intellectual strategies (reading and attending workshops), two Entertainment strategies (watching television and reading), two Personal strategies (listening to music and gardening), three Managerial strategies (saying "No.", planning and problem-solving processes), and four Attitudinal strategies (self-talk, emotional release through crying, a positive attitude and sense of humour). Of the top five strategies identified by the participants in this study, talking with others is Social, physical activity is Physical, self-talk is Attitudinal, emotional releases are Attitudinal and problem-solving processes is Managerial. Gmelch (1988) found that "the Managerial, Attitudinal and Social categories were used the most frequently followed by Intellectual, Physical, Personal and Entertainment." (p.228). From the results of my study, it would also appear that Managerial, Attitudinal and Social categories were most frequently chosen, with the one noted difference being the frequency of use of the Physical category. All nine participants discussed the importance of physical activity to their control of their stress.

In response to the question as to whether or not male and female administrators employed the same or different coping strategies to help them deal with their daily stress, five participants indicated that they perceived coping strategies to be individualistic and felt that they were not able to make gender-specific generalizations. Two expressed that they believed the coping strategies were similar between genders and six expressed that generally they felt that the coping strategies were different. These do not add up to nine, as some participants such as Alexandria expressed that she believed that in general, coping with stress was an individualistic experience and then

she proceeded to explain how they may be the same and also be different. She commented:

"I think some of them would be the same and some of them would be different according to their individuality. I know that one woman Principal sews and works on her house. She finds things like that take her out of her stress. She visits with her granddaughter. As for men, I think that lots of them golf, maybe work with their hands, work in the yard or other types of physical labor jobs as a kind of stress reliever. I know one male Principal that works on refinishing furniture or paints. Once again, it is individual according to what each enjoys and what works for them."

Eveline also suggested that they are different with some similarities and after giving an example, she concluded that they are probably individualized. Janelle expressed:

"I believe that there is a set of coping strategies out there and everyone picks the ones with which they feel the most comfortable. I would have to look at a larger sampling than our board to see if you could categorize the strategies according to gender. I think in many ways, it become a very personal thing. I am not sure that the gender difference comes into play here."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Themes In The Data

#### FEMALE STRESS ISSUES

This chapter is somewhat different from the rest in that it deals entirely with the perceptions of the individuals. Unlike the findings reporting the stressors which the nine female educational administrators faced in the real world and the coping strategies which they actually practised, this chapter offers some insights into their beliefs regarding the different stressors and coping strategies which men and women within a similar position experience. Some readers may comment that the perceptions of these respondents are stereotypical and overly simplified when one looks at real life. However, these are the perceptions of the nine women interviewed and as such, these perceptions govern how they fulfill their roles as administrators and how they deal with the stress within their lives.

All nine women expressed the perception that their multiple role responsibilities created stress within their lives which affected their abilities to fulfill their administrator roles. Comments were made comparing the time and energy requirements to fulfill the father and husband role with the requirements to fulfill the mother and wife role. Six women described a perceived need to prove themselves within their role. As the first women within administrative positions within their boards, they believed that they must set the example and pave the road for women of the future. Six commented on the different managerial and communication style of men and women and how this had had an effect on their ability to fulfill their positions. Six respondents also expressed the

importance which they place on people and relationships to the successful fulfillment of their administrative role. They presented their perception that men place more emphasis on the successful completion of a task than their relationships with people. Five respondents discussed gender differences with regards to accepting personal responsibility for their decisions and actions. Five women commented on the influence of their maternal views upon their management style and their treatment by students within their roles. The important role of feelings and intuition in making decisions, and the additional stress which was experienced as a result, was discussed by five respondents. Five women also suggested that their strong desire for cooperation and peace and their strong dislike of confrontation and disagreement created additional stress within their administrative roles. Two respondents expressed concern with the influence of the male-created linear hierarchy and bureaucratic structure on their stress levels. Within each of these nine female stress issues, perceptions were expressed by the respondents as to the male views and practises currently in place in contrast to the female views and practises.

**1. Multiple Role Responsibilities:** In reviewing the responses of the participants, a common female stress issue which surfaced was the gender difference with regards to the number and expectations of role responsibilities. This was reflected in the female administrators' attempts to balance their many roles. Four participants verbalized their perception that because male administrators had wives at home to relieve them of the home and family responsibilities, male administrators faced less overall stress. They suggested that as female administrators and mothers and wives, they had increased stress resulting from attempting to meet the multiple role expectations placed on them by society and themselves. All nine respondents spoke of the stress created by trying to balance and juggle their many roles. They spoke of their

family-related stress and their expectations in terms of household responsibilities. Their perceptions strongly support the Scarcity Hypothesis regarding multi-roles responsibilities.

Alexandria discussed this gender concern when she spoke of differences in fulfilling the demands of the administrative position. She noted:

"I always remember when John was around as Curriculum Coordinator. He would say, "Okay. Let's get ready. I will be ready to go at x:00 pm. You should be ready to go with me." He didn't realize that I was going to have to go home and wash my clothes and make sure that there were all pressed and ready to go. It was going to take a little while longer than fifteen minutes to pick up my suitcase. He had a wife at home packing his suitcase and making sure that all was in order and he didn't have anything to plan for. It was my responsibility to make sure that there was food in the cupboard and make sure that the laundry was done. Not that I even have a family. This is a big difference. It seems like the males don't have as many roles as women do."

Alexandria suggested at a later point in the interview "I think for many female administrators, the number of outside roles which they hold beyond their role as female administrator places a lot of stress on them. For example, there are many family roles which women hold." She talked of "outside obligations as weighing heavily upon a female administrator."

Brittany expressed a similar opinion. She noted that men can "really concentrate on their job" and gave the following scenario:

"If they have a meeting at 7:00 pm., it doesn't matter because they can go home and have their dinner and their wife does the dishes and takes care of everything. Last night I had a dinner meeting to go to at 5:30 pm. I had to run from here to the babysitter to pick up Thomas, get him all changed and bathed and fed and out the door back to the babysitter's for 5:30 pm. Most men would not have that pressure at all. They would go home and get changed for their meeting and go on to the next one. Women are not so lucky."

She suggested that men "do not have to juggle as many roles. I believe that they traditionally do not feel like they have to. As women, we still feel like we have to juggle everything. We just can't give it up to anyone." She makes reference here to the "Superwoman Syndrome".

Cara does not come right out and discuss the differences in terms of the perceived extra responsibility carried by women administrators. However, she does make the comment that "Not to be sexist, I think that there are differences in how a mother and a father define their roles in a family." She reflected on how this affects the way stressors are defined by male and female administrators. Danyelle discussed that women are often portrayed as "jugglers" because of the many roles they assume and the many tasks which they take upon themselves. Eveline revealed the difficulty which she was experiencing trying to balance her whole life, her personal life with her work life. She spoke of changing her life in order to reduce her stress within her personal life and the importance she places on organizing her household responsibilities:

"I try to organize my life. I have taken things out of my life which really used to be important to me. I don't worry about my house everyday. I don't care if there are a few dustballs anymore. I know that worrying is stupid and I am just creating a bunch of stress for myself which I don't need. I try to organize my week in terms of my house."

She went on to discuss her development of a routine for household chores such as grocery shopping. Eveline did not openly discuss the possibility of her husband taking on some of these responsibilities but instead discussed the guilt which she experiences in trying to "find time to do the things at home that need doing and to spend time with my family. I am always riding that guilt trip."

Fiona discussed the many role responsibilities which she maintains as a mother and wife which add to her stress as an administrator. She noted:

"I also think that as a female administrator, you don't let go of that role of parent, housekeeper, laundry person, etc. Even if you hire someone to assist you with that, it is still your responsibility to make sure that the supplies are there, the door is left unlocked, the cheque is on the counter and other tasks. If I try to get home for that hour between meetings that I talked about earlier, I have to prepare my meal when I get there. My male colleagues go home to a meal that is prepared, enjoy it, sit down for a few minutes and rush back to the next meeting. I prepare it, eat it, clean up and sit down for five minutes if I am lucky. Even things like taking your suits to the dry cleaners and picking them up. All those little things add up. So, maintaining your regular routines of home, or in my case, two homes, can be stressful."

Later on in the interview, she added that she perceives women and men administrators as having different stressors, noting "unless you have a full-time, live-in support person, I think that all those home things add to your stress." as a woman.

Gina talked extensively about the increased stress assumed by women because of their family responsibilities. She suggested:

"One of the main differences which I see between men and women in PAR positions is the lack of family obligations that men have. Women have to run their family and home as well as their job while men have wives to do all those tasks for them. Trying to juggle all the roles can become difficult. As I was saying, I am lucky that I have a supportive husband and that my two sons help out. But, I still feel that men have it a lot easier as they only have their job responsibilities to occupy their minds."

In discussing gender differences with regards to the identification of stressors, Gina continued to emphasize the difference in the role obligations. She indicated that "all the women administrators have family obligations which create stress for them which are similar to myself. I do believe that the male administrators do not get themselves as involved in family-related stressors compared to the women. Also, women have the added stressor of trying to balance their home and job responsibilities which the men do not appear to have."

Hillary talked of her difficulty separating her personal life from her job. She listed what is happening to her family and what is going on at home as one of the factors which affects her stress level. She talked of the stress she experiences as a result of her family responsibility. When asked to identify her stressors, she noted that "family came up on top. I probably feel this way because if you were to ask me what my priorities in life are, family would be number one. So when things are not working out there, I am stressed." She talked of learning stress coping strategies as a result of living with a houseful of teenagers. Although she does not compare this source of

stress between the genders, she made evident her perceived stress experienced as a result of her mother and wife role responsibilities.

In relating these findings to the literature which has been reviewed, it would appear that these respondents' perceptions are in line with many research findings. Their perceptions support the Scarcity Hypothesis as they expressed the more roles with which they must contend, the less energy and time they have to devote to each role and the more stress they perceive themselves experiencing. Barnett and Baruch (1987) suggested that "the more roles one accumulates, the greater the probability of exhausting one's supply of time and energy and of confronting conflicting obligations, leading to role strain and psychological distress." (p.124). That was the sentiment expressed by all the respondents within this study. Their perceptions of the heavy load which they must carry because of the social role obligations are supported by Carr-Ruffino (1985), Morrison et. al. (1987), Apter (1993), Krusor and Blaker (1992) and Swiss and Walker (1993).

There is also support in the literature for the perceptions expressed regarding the limited role obligations of male administrators as fathers and husbands when compared to the all-encompassing role obligations of female administrators as mothers and wives. Aneshensel and Pearlin (1987), Barnett and Baruch (1987), Shakeshaft (1989), Apter (1993), and Swiss and Walker (1993) all discuss the gender differences regarding obligations to family and household, emphasizing that husbands and fathers have very few time and energy demands placed upon them compared to wives and mothers. Hardesty and Jacobs (1986) suggest that "despite supportive husbands, most women - as ever- have to shoulder the burden of the family, including great aunts and third cousins as well as children." (p.335). They quote statistics which notes that "almost 60 percent of working wives do more than ten hours of housework a week while barely more than 20 percent of working men do." (p.335).

Brittany hinted at her refusal to give up doing things and the stress which she experienced as a result of believing that she had to do it all herself. Hardesty and Jacobs (1986), Carr-Ruffino (1985) and Swiss and Walker (1993) all discuss the stress experienced by women managers and administrators who fall into the Superwomen Syndrome.

Hillary spoke of her priorities and noted that her family was number one over her career. Apter (1993) discusses that women who establish their family as their first priority experience stress because of the guilt and anxiety they suffer in trying to balance their family and work obligations.

**2. Proving Themselves:** Six of the respondents addressed the female stressor of perceiving the necessity of proving themselves within their positions.

Alexandria discussed the pressure which she experienced to do it all and prove that she was capable. She commented that administrators "aren't selective at all for ourselves" and noted that her director made her "feel like you have to keep adding and adding and adding. I guess it is this whole competition thing that keeps coming up again and again. I think that he is really big at competitions. That is important to him, so he highlights that type of activity."

Brittany responded that "as a female, in a role where there aren't very many females, you have to prove yourself. Whether we like it or not, we have to do it." She expressed her perception that this has gotten worse since Employment Equity mandates have come into existence, suggesting that "people assume you got the job because you are female. They don't look at all the qualifications which you have and that you would have the job regardless of Employment Equity. I have found that I have really had to prove myself." She described a situation where a police officer asked to speak to the Principal of the school and when she responded, "he said, "No, the man." She concluded that "people really still assume that men are in these positions."

Danyelle espoused her perception that "women feel that they must be twice as good as the men. We push ourselves higher and harder. Whether it is real or imagined, I don't know." She spoke of women being given the tough jobs and doing a good job thus earning their promotion up the ladder.

Eveline confers with the perceptions expressed by the others. She noted:

"Women also have to go a little bit further than men. They have it harder. They do. Whether it is our own fault that we feel that way or not, I can't rationalize it. But I do know that most women that I know in these positions work harder and longer than most men. They have this feeling that they have to perform a little bit better in order to equal the men's performance."

Gina expressed a similar perception when asked about gender differences with regards to role fulfillment. She suggested that:

"I think women feel that they have to prove themselves in a PAR position. At least, I do! I feel that I have to work twice as hard and I still feel insecure at times. I want everything to be perfect and I want to let everyone know that I can handle all the work. Yet, I look at the other men in the office and the piles of unfinished work on their desks. They don't appear phased. They seem to believe that they have put in their day and they can just leave at 4:30 pm. to enjoy their evenings. I feel that I have to get everything done or at least, the major projects, before I can relax."

Hillary responded in a similar manner when asked regarding gender differences in terms of how men and women define and fulfill their roles:

"I think first of all that a female in an administrative role feels a lot more like they have to prove themselves. Males have come to just accept administrative roles as their right whereas females probably feel that they have to work twice as hard as the males to be acceptable. Maybe I am overstating that point but that is how I feel."

The perceptions expressed by these six respondents is supported in some of the research reporting gender issues. Carr-Ruffino (1985), Russell (1994), Morrison et. al. (1987) and Swiss and Walker (1993) all suggests that this is a common stressor. Morrison et. al. (1987) note that women executives "often expect a lot of themselves, sometimes even more than others expect of them. So they endure the pressure to do an

enormous job, driving as close to perfection as they can get." (p.16). Fassell (1990) would support this notion and suggest that this leads to women workaholics. Janelle recognized and discussed the symptoms of her workaholism while others simply described their need to work longer and harder to meet their perceived job demands.

**3. Managerial and Communication Styles:** Six respondents discussed indepthly the effect that gender-based managerial and communication styles had upon their stress levels.

Janelle explained the chaos which results when her director and superintendent are in the office. In the past this has created stress for her but she noted that she has learned to adapt to their ways of doing things. Speaking of her director, she noted that " he has a tendency to have a different style or orientation than myself. This is another interesting thing that at one point caused a lot of stress for me but I have now accommodated it. He tends to be a very linear sequential type of person and I'm a very divergent abstract kind of person." She noted later on that "we have both come to try and understand how the other works, to realize the differences and to accept them and accommodate accordingly. Mind you, I probably (This is a biased statement, I know!) have let him have his way more. It doesn't bother me as much any more."

When asked to reflect upon gender differences in relation to role definition and fulfillment, Janelle perceived the following:

"There is certainly a stereotypical administrative mindset which has been traditionally a male perspective. The clear, conciseness, the "let's get down to business", the no fooling around, the concrete sequential type of approach or mindset has dominated the administrative position in the past and is still very much a part of the present. When I relate this to my own situation, I think that I am different."

She goes on to explain the fact that the men with whom she works have "a different way of dealing with things." She explained that :

"When we would meet, he expected everything right up front. "Just give me the facts." was his common expression. When I deal with something, I have to

explain the whole picture so that the other person knows everything. I explain things that are important. I believe that you need to be able to see the big picture. He used to get very frustrated and impatient with that. "What's your point? Get to the point." was his response. I used to get fluffed because of his impatience and I felt that I had to do it my way. Once again, I learned to try and be a little more concise. He learned to be a little more understanding of the fact that I dealt with things differently. He came to recognize me as a creative person, which I think is one of the things that brings me to this job and that creativity is an important aspect of this job."

Janelle revealed in the interview that often she would ask herself, "Had I been a male in this position, would he have said that to me?" after a request or a comment had been made. With regards to communication styles, she concluded that:

"I find often that the men are not open and upfront about things. I prefer people to be open and upfront. I can sit down and talk with people very frankly. I am not afraid of dealing with negative situations. But, sometimes people find it very difficult to communicate. It may just be a basic communication problem with some people. I find it difficult to deal with people who are not open and upfront and who do not communicate when they should be."

She discussed how she gets stressed when people keep everything to themselves and have the power which that knowledge brings to them. She also gets frustrated when they fail to "communicate information which they are supposed to pass along in order to allow you to do your job."

Alexandria spoke of differences in the way that men and women define and fulfill their role, suggesting that "there are real differences". She discussed the "mentality of competition" and described the differences:

"I think that the men that I have met are more competitive than the women are. Whereas the women would call each other or a man just to ask how to do something or for an easier way of going about some procedure, the men don't do that same sort of a thing. Although you find them calling the women, they would never call each other. There just seems to be a certain amount of competition there. I think it is hard, as a female administrator, not to be drawn into that mentality of competition. It seems to be so much a part of the whole structure that it is really hard not to start feeling that kind of competitive edge."

Alexandria continued to speak of her director and his competitive nature as contributing to her perceptions. She noted: "I think that he is really big at competitions. That is important to him, so he highlights that type of activity."

Danyelle commented on differences between how men and women deal with stress, which referred to their communication style. She noted, "I think men scream more and blame others more. They don't really own up to their responsibility in a conflict situation from what I have observed. They seem to think that louder is right, bigger is better. If they scream louder, then they are going to be right."

Danyelle discussed the influence of the management style of the men in upper administration in her board. In discussing gender-based stressors, she noted:

"We find that the stress comes from the top down, that the administration is pushing the stress down a level. The way that they cope affects our lives. And the management style of the top really influences the whole system. We as middle managers are pushed. I think that the men are more resentful of external expectations. The men think, "I have to manage the school. that is all that I have to do. I don't think I should have to do extra-curricular system responsibilities." I don't feel that way. I feel that I have competent people in my school and if I can't be of assistance to help the system, there is a problem I have a system perspective."

Eveline suggested that gender differences occurred and was the only respondent to suggest that there were positive ramifications to these differences. She noted that she believes that she brings a human side to a discussion while the men with whom she works bring a more administrative perspective. She commented that "Sometimes I actually think that it is really good the men and women do work together because we do bring two sides or perspectives to an issue." She concluded that "It helps us to round the picture a little more."

Fiona's perceptions as to gender differences with regards to management and communication styles were discussed under the "Stressors" section. She noted that "learning to communicate with men was a concern. I think that women communicate in

a way that is different than men and so because you don't stamp your feet or shout, sometimes my point of view was not taken seriously." Fiona also discussed within her interview another difference in communication styles between men and women. She commented:

"The other thing that really helps me is having someone to talk to. I don't want someone to tell me what to do. I think that this relates back to the different communication styles between male and female colleagues. When I discuss a problem with a male colleague, they will have ten alternatives. "You can do this and this or this." They are fine. However, when I discuss things with a female colleague, she often will ask questions to allow me to come to my own answer. Most of the time I know inside what it is I want to do but I don't want to be told."

Janelle had commented on a scenario in which her male administrator began telling her what to do. She noted that "What I have a real problem with is having not only the problem but also the strategy dictated to me. I feel that I am very capable and trained. I should be the one to decide the best way of doing something. The situation was such that I was being told how to do my job." Janelle's situation appears to support Fiona's perception, that men offer alternative solutions rather than letting an individual come up with their own solution. Janelle's male administrator was telling her what to do when she felt capable of making her own decision.

Fiona also discussed her management style as being different than the males with whom she works on a daily basis and noted:

"I found as a woman, that my management style was different. My style tends to be less confrontational. I don't want to get into a power struggle. Sometimes, people interpret that as I don't have a bottom line. That was stressful sometimes, as I would think that I had a situation solved. Because I was not very forceful about it, others would comment, "Oh, I didn't think that you meant what you said." I had to get used to that."

Hillary commented upon the way that males and females dealt with others, discussing the concepts of assertion and aggression. She concluded that "Aggression

is thought of as a positive quality in a male but not necessarily in a female. So I think there are some basic differences there."

In reviewing the literature regarding differences in styles, Daggett (1993) spoke of a school system which is very supportive of the concrete sequential learning style. Janelle expressed that she experienced stress when dealing with her administrator because of their two different styles. She talked of his linear sequential style and her divergent abstract style. She did not seem to perceive that this was a gender difference but certainly a difference which created stress for her until she learned to modify her own behaviours to meet the style of her male director.

In Janelle's perception of the stereotypical male administrative mindset, she refers to the business-like attitudes of men in contrast to the humanistic approach of females. Eveline also made reference to this perceived difference between genders. Simon and Weissman (1993) speak of women-run organizations as focussing more on the individual and personal fulfillment. Shakeshaft (1990) and Morrison et. al. (1987) discuss that female administrators tend to demonstrate a preference for people tasks while males tend to gain more satisfaction from administrative tasks.

In discussing gender differences in communication styles, Janelle commented on her need to "explain the whole picture so that the other person knows everything". Danyelle also spoke of having a system perspective in contrast to the men within her experiences who tend to limit their focus to their own school. Russell (1994) noted that her respondents indicated the females' need to see the big picture, which is supported by Janelle and Danyelle. Helgesen (1990) suggests that women's and men's ways of leading differ in that men lacked time for reflection as they became involved in the daily tasks of their company while women tended to focus on the ecology of leadership. She suggests that today, unlike in Mintzberg's era,

"both male and female managers tend to be more big-picture oriented as a result of the advent of a global economy. What distinguishes the women's view of

the big picture, however, is that it encompasses a vision of society - they relate decisions to their larger effect upon the role of the family, the American educational system, the environment, even world peace." (p.25)

Janelle also spoke of men as wanting to get down to the facts and Shakeshaft (1990) notes that "The content of female speech is more likely to be centered on emotional and personal issues than on impersonal, factual subject matter.

It would appear that Fiona experienced the negative effects of her female communication style as was suggested by Woodall (1990). While she was communicating her opinion in a collegial non-confrontational manner, she was accused of not stating her point strongly enough to be recognized. As Woodall noted with regards to female communication styles, "These characteristics, while essential to group communicating, sometimes work against their goals of being listened to, of being powerful." (p.30). This supports Fiona's finding that sometimes her view was not taken seriously. Shakeshaft (1990) quotes Booth and Butterfield's (1984) study which indicated that "female executives may not be listened to as closely as are their male colleagues, thus creating environments in which women must try harder to stay equal." (p.175).

Fiona's experiences in dealing with the male administrators at the Board Office support Russell's (1994) hypothesis that men prefer to work with other men and tend to isolate women from important information networks. Fiona commented that often the men will discuss things on their way to the coffeepot and forget to pass the information on to her. Fiona noted "There was a lot of informal information which was shared amongst them and I don't believe it was intentional, but they would forget to inform me." Russell (1994) and Cava (1988) support Fiona's perceptions when they note that women tend to feel isolated and stressed when men withhold information and communication breaks down. Cava (1988) talks of women as viewing themselves as

part of a web of relationships and notes the sense of isolation which is experienced when they are left out of these relationships. Helgesen (1990) found in her studies that women actually "scheduled in time for sharing information" (p.27) unlike men from Mintzberg's study, who experienced "difficulty sharing information" (p.14). Mintzberg had found:

"Sitting at the top of the hierarchial pyramid, Mintzberg's men had extraordinary access to information: from within the company, because all information flows to the top, and from outside the company, because of their extensive network of contacts. This information constituted the chief source of their power, but since they tended to derive their personal identity from the power of their positions, they were reluctant to share the source of their power. The result was a tendency to hoard information, to be more avid to collect than to disseminate it; this was the chief weakness Mintzberg in the managers he studied." (p.14).

It may appear in Fiona's case that this characteristic is still present in part in her administrative setting.

Swiss and Walker (1993) discuss the "microinequities" which exist in the male-created workplace. They define microinequities as "destructive but nonactionable aspects of the work environment that occur at the level of individual decision-making - instances in which people are treated inequitably but not in a way that can be taken to court." (p.24). They continue to discuss the stress these microinequities create for women, noting that "they may severely constrain a woman's career progress and blur her perception of her own competence. They often are hidden in the informal channels of communication within an organization; their source may be the people who have the power to make decisions." (p.24). Russell (1994) supports this perception. Fiona's and Janelle's experiences with the men in their boards may be viewed as microinequities which created stress within their lives.

Simons and Weissman (1990) describe women-run organizations as demonstrating "more democratic, participative, consultative management" and "less autocratic, domineering, ego-involved management". (p.54). They also suggest that

women place more emphasis on process and fairness within the process. "Collaborative decision-making" is a key to greater organizational effectiveness in women-run organizations. These stereotypes were supported by the perceptions of Janelle, Alexandria, Eveline, Fiona and Hillary. Cara talked of her sense of fairness which prevails throughout her daily interactions.

Just as Eveline suggested that the two genders working together allows a more balanced solution, Simons and Weissman (1993) note that "Studies have begun to show that some activities, like negotiation, mediation, and personnel selection are done better by women and men working together rather than individually or in same sex groups." (p.54). Morrison et. al. (1987) also support this notion when they suggested that "women will complement men in the management ranks and bring a healthy balance to business." (p.49).

**4. Importance Placed On People and Relationships:** Six participants expressed the perception that women were more stressed by people problems than men. As interpersonal relationships was identified as a major stressor by all nine respondents, it would appear that within this sample, women are indeed affected by their relationships with others.

In discussing the importance of people and relationships, Janelle noted that "It seems to be working with people which upsets me. The things in the environment are temporary stressors. But the people whom you work with don't change the way that they do things." She stated her belief that "I love working with people. Based on what other people have told me, it seems that working with people is one of my strong points." She reflected that when she felt that she had "failed in relationships with people" she started to question herself, with the result being her self-esteem went down and she started doubting herself. Because of the emphasis which she placed on working with people and her positive self-image which revolved around successful

interaction with others, when she began experiencing problems dealing with others, she became stressed. When asked to reflect on gender differences with regards to stressors, Janelle responded with:

"I don't think that men probably get as stressed out about relationships or interpersonal dealings as women do. I think that they get more stressed out about a report not handed in on time. I think male administrators are problem-solvers. But, knowing the way that they work at things in a straight-line, linear approach, they get frustrated when something happens which upsets their direction and focus. It goes back to getting the job done. That is the most important thing for men. When I think of jobs and upper administration, it is more related to paper things and to policies. There are people dealings in getting the policy written and ready but their major focus seems to be on the completion of the task."

Janelle proposed her perception that female administrators are more people-oriented than male administrators, who tend to be more task-oriented than female administrators.

Cara expressed that the commonality among all her identified stressors was the interaction with others. "I think that they are all people things. Those are the things which cause my stress. It is not appointments or paperwork but people issues. It is incidents which have to do with people and relationships which is the common aspect."

Eveline talked of women being "far more sensitive and caring. As a result, when things happen in the workplace, women are more sensitive to their effects and recognize the effects in other people. ...generally speaking, most women tend to be a little more sensitive to things which the men accept as being the routine things of the day." In discussing the stress created by the Social Contract, she relates her level of stress to its effect on the people with whom she works. "The whole morale issue and how to deal with it and work with people is a major stressor."

Fiona discussed the importance of her relationships to her in her new position:

"I want to maintain, support, and develop the relationships which go along with the position. I think sometimes men don't feel as obligated to do that. So, I think that is one major difference which I have noticed since I have entered this position. Maintaining the relationships is really important to me. "

Gina talked of being a very social person and enjoying socializing with other people. When she experiences stress, she commented that she likes to talk to a lot of people.

Hillary reflected upon gender differences with regards to the experience of stress and suggested that:

"women want something more out of the job than just a job. Women want to be socially accepted and that's what I am finding with the women I know in these positions. It is good to have a support network because if you don't, you feel like you are all alone. To men, it doesn't appear to me that it matters so much to them if they are accepted. They just go outside of their job for their social acceptance. It doesn't seem to me to be quite the same."

In looking at the effects of stress upon the male and female bodily functions, research has been done which suggests that females are more stressed by personal interactions than are males. As was noted in the "Review of Literature" Adler (1993) writes:

"Many researchers and lay people alike believe that women are more affected than men by stress related to their personal relationships. Men are believed to be more wrapped up in their jobs." (p.10).

She also added that:

"Many studies, including those as recent as 1992, have argued that women are more affected by their relationships with their children than men are, because "women more than men are socialized to feel responsible for the quality of their family relationships." Dr. Barnett and her colleagues wrote. Women define themselves by their relationships more than men do, those studies found. For example, researchers have argued that employed mothers will feel more guilty than employed fathers about not being as available to their children." (p11).

Aneshensel and Pearlin (1987) support this notion, suggesting that "problems and frustrations encountered on the job and at home are differentially distressing to women and men (Pearlin (1975). Men are found to be more depressed than women by strains encountered at work, while women were more depressed than men by marital problems." (p.86).

Simons and Weissman (1990) suggest that women-run organizations tend to demonstrate "a greater responsiveness and concern for individual feelings, ideas, opinions, ambitions, and on- and off-the-job satisfactions." (p.54) as they focus upon the individual and personal fulfillment. Russell (1994) talks of the role of support networks and networking in, and the importance of relationships to, the survival of women in managerial positions. Gilligan (1982) discusses female and male socialization patterns and suggests that "girls tend to be socialized to sense others' needs. As a result, they see themselves as part of a "web of relationships and feel threatened by isolation."" (Russell, 1994, p. 13). Shakeshaft (1990) talks of the human orientation of female administrators compared to the task orientation of male administrators. She also noted that there were differences in communication styles such that "female managers .... stressed interpersonal relations through communication more than did males." (p.181). In conceptualizing the female world, Shakeshaft's first characteristic described is "(1) Relationships with Others are Central to All Actions of Women Administrators. Women spend more time with people, communicate more, care more about individual differences, are concerned more with teachers and marginal students, and motivate more." (p.197).

Helgesen (1990) commented on women leaders scheduling time on a daily basis for sharing information as being motivated by "women's concerns with relationships. Lots of give-and-take kept the network in good repair." (p.27) She comments on the choice of words which many of her respondents used and notes that "These are words that above all emphasize relationships with people." (p.28). She supports the views of the women educational administrators within this study as it would appear that relationships are perceived as being very important to an administrator's success and her ability to cope with the pressures of the position.

**5. Personal Responsibility:** Five respondents commented on gender differences with regards to accepting personal responsibility for their decisions and their actions.

Janelle noted that "I feel overwhelmed at times with things and believe in the old adage, "We have met the enemy and he is us." I am aware that there are some things which I do, the way that I operate, which cause me stress." She discussed the problem she was having with one male administrator and the feelings which she had experienced because of the situation. When she asked for help, it "was pointed out to me by another male administrator..."Uhuh, but that is how you perceive it." So the blame came back to me. It was my fault for perceiving it and letting it get to me. That didn't help. It was like a double wammy." She felt that the blame was being shifted to her in place of the male administrator accepting responsibility for his behaviour and actions.

Alexandria spoke of the commonality among her many stressors as being her lack of confidence in what she was doing, whether it was in staff evaluations or in mediating conflicts. She assumed responsibility for her actions and would like to learn more so that she felt more confident in her decisions and behaviour.

Danyelle made a comment that the men "don't really own up to their responsibility in a conflict situation from what I have observed."

Gina discussed her experiences when others were criticizing her position and suggesting that it be cut to save money. She noted that she learned "to toughen up a bit and not look at things so personally." Later in the interview, she commented that:

"I think that women take their job home with them more too. It may just be that they show their worry more. Men seem to not worry about things. I think of some of the things that have happened to some of the men in our office or some of the things that have been said to them, and I cringe. I would die if that happened to me or was said to me. Men seem to be able to shake it off. Women tend to take things more personally or harder or more seriously. They seem to take things more as a personal affront than men."

Hillary discussed feeling responsible for the behaviours and actions of others and the stress which she experienced as a result. She talked about taking things personally and feeling as though she should have done something differently to change the results of a situation. She noted that one of the big coping strategies which she has learned through experience is letting go. She commented:

"Something that I have found that I have had to do was learn that I can't control people and I have had to learn that they are responsible for their actions and the consequences which come out of them. A lot of that came from having a houseful of teenagers. I really realized that no matter what I wanted for them, they are not put on this earth to make me happy. They are put on this earth for their own lives and to learn from their experiences. Some of those times have been really tough and I guess in a small way, I have been able to transfer my coping strategies to my work. That has been a big one for me - letting go."

Simons and Weissman (1993) speak of women-run organizations as demonstrating "more concern with responsibility" (p.54). Witkin (1991) discusses the importance of women learning to give up control in their lives as a means of avoiding stress and suggests that women "have to stop holding ourselves responsible for everyone else." (p.83). Alder (1993) suggests that "women more than men are socialized to feel responsible for the quality of their family relationships." (p.11). It would appear that women transfer this sense of responsibility to their work lives from their family lives. Lemley (1987) suggests that administrators "learn the use of the constructive "No."" (p.134) as a strategy to overcome stress caused by assuming responsibility for everyone's problems. He informs administrators of their need to "redefine ownership and shift boundaries to escape responsibility" in order to reduce stress. There is very little research available in studies and books reviewed which refer directly to the acceptance of responsibility as being a gender-specific characteristic.

**6. Maternal Style:** Closely related to the discussion of role responsibilities and expectations, five participants discussed the influence of their motherly role on their management styles. In some cases, they perceived that they experienced increased

stress as a result of their motherly style, while others believed that it was to their benefit and hence reduced their stress.

Janelle commented on her perception that women tend to be:

"more people-oriented and more sensitive to people issues. They are not quite as business like or officious. I think women are more sensitive to different things than males are. Maybe that is stating the obvious. There is a difference here. I think most women have been mothers and nurturers in some form, even if it is just with a husband. They have taken care of other people most of their lives. I believe that where men are more interested in getting the job done, women get the job done or they wouldn't be there, but they are more divergent. I find most male administrators to be more linear."

Brittany reflected on the influence of being a woman in an administrative role and commented that the "students see me as a "mother" image and hold onto the belief that you don't hit a woman." She sees this as a stress reducer as she perceives that she does not have to deal with as much student violence because of her gender.

Cara reflected that handling her disciplinary role from a maternal background created additional stress for her:

"I think that when I have to discipline children, I do it like a mother, as that is what I am, that is where I am coming from. Not be to be sexist, I think there are differences between how a mother and a father define their roles in a family. Therefore, in administration, I am sure that there is a difference in how these stressors affect them. I think that I might be more emotional about children's difficulties than a male administrator because I have always been very involved with my own children's education. I know what sort of things were important to me and I feel that experience really makes a difference as to how I will deal with children. I always think before I act as to how I would have wanted my children to be treated in the situation. I think that there are differences in that way between females and males."

Gina makes the statement in describing gender differences with regards to role fulfillment that women "project our mothering role onto our jobs. We want everything to run smoothly with as little chaos as possible."

Hillary also comments on a gender difference with regards to managerial style with reference to women's "mothering" attitudes. She suggested:

"I think that there is a basic difference in the way that males and females deal with things too. I think that women tend to feel more responsible for other people. Maybe that is part of that "mothering" role, the feeling of being responsible for other human beings. So I think that females carry this over. It is a learned thing, of course. We have all been taught in those ways."

While Russell (1994) mentions the value of the parenting role to women in building their "bank of skills", Shakeshaft comments "women's traditional roles as wife, mother and daughter - roles that call upon women to promote and maintain harmony within the family" (p.190) are important to their administrative role when resolving conflict. Gilligan (1982) talks of an "ethic of care" within which young girls are socialized. This "ethic of care" is reflected in the importance of interpersonal relationships and connections to women. (Shakeshaft, 1990).

**7. The Role of Feelings:** Another closely related perceived gender difference which has created additional stress for five respondents was the female administrators' emphasis on the feelings side of their nature. Many times during the interview, Janelle described her feelings and the role of her intuition and her gut feelings in determining her stress coping ability. She made comments such as "I would have liked to talk more and said more but I have to be sensitive to his feelings as well. We are dealing with human beings here. I can't make this other person feel badly while I am explaining my feelings about how he treated me. I have to be so careful to come to some understanding without damaging the relationship." When something is bothering her, Janelle explained that she will sit down with someone and say, "This is the way that I am feeling about this. I can't help the way that I feel, but this is the way I am feeling because of this. I hope that you can understand." She discussed her feelings and used the term "feel" and "feelings" frequently during the interview although she did not identify this as a gender-related issue.

Janelle also reflected upon her understanding that she had learned the appropriate times to release her feelings and to withhold them. She noted that in stressful situations, "I do not let my feelings show. ... I handle my feelings very tactfully and professionally."

Alexandria also often spoke in terms of her feelings. Statements were made such as "I don't like that kind of feeling." and "I don't particularly like feeling that.". In responding to some of the questions regarding her perceptions of gender differences, she would preface or conclude her comment with a statement such as "I really don't know but I feel..." and "But that is just a feeling." .

Like Alexandria, Cara used the term "feelings" throughout the interview. She commented "I know that, as a woman, everything that I do is very tied to feelings, even the way that I handle situations with the discipline of children. One of the most stressful times for me is when there are bad feelings among staff members. When there is some kind of misunderstanding and people are angry with each other, until that is resolved, I experience intense stress and that is the most stressful situation for me." When responding to a question regarding gender differences in defining and fulfilling role demands, Cara perceived that men tend to be "more removed and unemotional about decisions in a stressful situation. But, as a woman, I find that my reaction is much more emotional and much more a gut reaction rather than mind. That's how I see my role as a female administrator to be different." She concluded with the statement that "when an incident or something has to do with feelings, I think it will cause more stress for a woman than a man."

Eveline suggested that while men don't always look beyond the task at hand, she tends to "get more into the human side of the situation and look at how the person will feel as a result of the situation." She perceives that this is a gender difference in managerial styles.

Gina responded to a question regarding her coping ability in a stressful situation with the following statement:

"I am really heavy into the feelings side of my personality and I go a long way to avoid confrontation. I don't like it. I don't want to intentionally hurt anybody. When we did those personality tests, I am an extrovert and a feeling person. Those are my two areas. I know that that is a weakness with me. I also know that in my job, I have to deal with it. I am aware of it. It is something that I work on all the time. I think I am effective in my own way."

Even though Gina reflected upon the negative aspect of being heavy into her feelings, she did not extend the concept to be a gender issue or express that she was more stressed by this tendency than male administrators would be.

Simon and Weissman (1993) comment that in women-run organizations, there is "a greater responsiveness and concern for individual feelings," (p.54). Helgesen (1990) opens her book with a description of feminine principles which

"reflect our culture's basic presumptions about the differences between how men and women think and act. We feel, many of us, that women are more caring and intuitive, better at seeing the human side, quicker to cut through competitive distinctions of hierarchy and ranking, impatient with cumbersome protocols. Our belief in these notions is more intuitive rather than articulated; we back it up with anecdotes instead of arguments." (p.5)

Although it is commonly espoused that women are more guided by their feelings and intuition, there does not appear to be a lot written in the stress management literature which was reviewed with regards to the positive or negative consequences of this concept.

**8. The Desire for Cooperation and Peace:** Five respondents discussed the influence of their desire for cooperation and peace or their dislike of confrontation and disagreement as creating stress within their lives.

Janelle talked about approaching her main male stressor "in a nice way but an honest way". She also reflected upon her role as the "Peacemaker" where she is "called in when there is a certain situation where someone is needed to act as the facilitator in

the ironing out of a situation. I enjoy that type of work with people. I feel comfortable with people and people situations." She spoke often of making efforts to avoid confrontation and to promote a "win-win" philosophy.

Alexandria suggested that one commonality among all her stressors identified was the desire to "keep everything peaceful and cooperative. In some of the situations where you are negotiating, although you begin negotiating for a "win-win" situation, the fact is that people might be upset with each other. I don't like that kind of feeling. How upset each person is and how much the negotiation is going to affect each person's life affects the stress I experience."

Danyelle made a direct comment about women's desire to keep peace while discussing how men and women experience stress differently:

"We tend to think, again, that we have to be the peacemakers. That's inbred and therefore we try to smooth the waters and try to solve everyone's problems. But, we're learning. We're learning that everyone has to resolve their own problems. I think that this whole topic of violence in the schools and conflict resolution has taught everybody. It has certainly taught me a lot more about how to help children solve their differences. I think men scream more and blame others more. They don't really own up to their responsibility in a conflict situation from what I have observed. They seem to think that louder is right, bigger is better. If they scream louder, then they are going to be right."

Gina discussed her strong desire to avoid confrontation even though she recognized that it is a daily part of her job. She discussed her perception that "women want everything to run smoothly with as little chaos as possible. We will do whatever we have to do to create a peaceful "win-win" situation." She suggested that this created additional stress for women.

Hillary discussed her lack of authority and suggested that "I mollycoddle along and hope that people will be cooperative, and when they decide not to be, I find that I become stressed." When asked regarding gender differences with regards to stressors, she responded "Regarding the males, I would say that the males are not as concerned with consensus building or being the nice guy all the time."

Tannen (1990) supports the desire of the respondents to be cooperative as she suggests that "The role of peacemaker reflects the general tendency among women to seek agreement. " (p. 166). She speaks of women's inclination to seek agreement as being an advantage to a managerial position as women are "more inclined to consult others and involve employees in decision making, and everyone agrees that employees are more likely to implement a policy efficiently if they feel they have played a part in making it." (p.182). However, she also cautions that women's "avoidance of confrontation opens them up to exploitation. In a word, they don't stand up for themselves." (1984). She looks at women's and men's views of conflict and notes that "It may seem at first that conflict is the opposite of rapport and affiliation. Much of what has been written about women's and men's styles claims that males are competitive and prone to conflict whereas females are cooperative and given to affiliation." (p.149). She adds that "To most women, conflict is a threat to connection, to be avoided at all costs. Disputes are preferably settled without direct confrontation. But to many men, conflict is the necessary means by which status is negotiated, so it is to be accepted and may even be sought, embraced and enjoyed." She does caution that women's fears of conflict may be viewed as a weakness and she comments that "Successful women may be especially prone to this weakness because they are likely to have achieved success by getting along with people - not fighting with them. In order to get along with people and be liked, many women learn to avoid confrontation." (p.183).

**9. Bureaucratic and Hierarchical Administrative Structure:** Two respondents commented on the influence of the male-created linear hierarchy and bureaucratic structure on their stress.

Janelle talked of the levels of bureaucracy and the attitudes of her male colleagues. In reference to one specific situation, she commented:

"This was an older administrator who had administrated in the old style and as a result, the situation is, what I would term, a rigid bureaucracy. Everyone is very aware of the hierarchial structure and where you are in that structure. Whereas, this goes against my orientation. I really feel that in education, there is a team. I do not think of anyone, from regional directors to those in the Ministry, as being any more important to getting the job done than the next person. We each have an important role to play and a job to do. My job is different from the next person's and I couldn't do his/her job and I am not sure that he/she could do mine. We all have a job to do and there is no hierarchial structure. It is all just one unilateral group working together and that is the way it should be."

Later on in the interview, she spoke of learning to cope with this same male administrator and suggested that he is " a very sensitive, understanding person. It is just this one little fact. Based on his hierarchial upbringing, he is so engrained in his ways regarding his position and who he is. I know that his treatment of others lower on the hierarchy is not done intentionally. That is good and that is bad. It is engrained and it is a hard thing to try to get anyone to change their whole way of thinking about structure. You know that it is going to continue and you will have to learn to deal with it. Accepting that makes coping much easier."

At one point Janelle explained how she became stressed when she was being given secretarial tasks to do by her male administrators. She reflects on the position of secretaries within her hierarchial version:

"I do not mean to put down what secretaries do, because I do not know what we would do without our secretaries. I feel that they do an important job equal to what I do. All our jobs are important. Some of us just get paid more than others to do it, unfortunately, which creates an artificial hierarchy."

In discussing her top five stressors, Janelle listed that feeling like she was being patronized posed a stressor for her. She noted her perception that "male administrators tend to do that with their women administrators". She spoke of being treated in a condescending way and concluded that "a lot of that occurs, I believe, in organizations which are hierarchial. The more bureaucracy there is, the more condescension there will be. It goes against the feeling that we are all working together as a team."

Although Alexandria does not use the terms "hierarchy" or "bureaucracy", she talked about institutions which created divisions among administrators. She commented that she sees administrators as "working together for the common good" and that she sees "some of the things that are really instituted as causing a heightening of the competition in some ways."

Simons and Weissman (1990) describe the characteristics of women-run organizations. They propose that these organizations exhibit "less concern with title and formal authority, more concern with responsibility and responsiveness", "Less concern for empire building, power, domination, and consciousness about one's turf", "more decentralization" and "more democratic, participative, consultative management; less autocratic, domineering, ego-involved management". (p.54). Ferguson (1984) talks of the depersonalization of a true bureaucracy and the importance of the sense of isolation to the character of social life within the bureaucracy. She reflects upon the management styles of women as working counter to many of the traditional qualities of a true bureaucracy. These support some of the comments made by Janelle with regards to her views of a hierarchy versus the views and depersonalized linear perspective of some of her male colleagues.

Helgesen's (1990) discussion of the web of inclusion is supported by Janelle's perceptions of everyone having a role to play within the organization and her belief that one person is as important to the success of the organization as the next. Janelle talked of not viewing an organization as running successfully as a hierarchy but rather that everyone works on the same playing field with interdependency the key to success. Helgesen talks of women scheduling time to share information and suggests that this:

"Sharing was also facilitated by their view of themselves as being in the center of things rather than at the top; it's more natural to reach **out** than to reach **down**. They tended to structure their companies as networks or grids instead of hierarchies, which meant that information flowed along many circuits, rather than up and down in prescribed channels." (p.27-28).

This somewhat reflects Janelle's views of hierarchy where everyone has a role to play which is equal to other roles rather than inferior or superior in position.

Tannen (1990) talks of the disadvantages of women "maintaining an atmosphere of community rather than hierarchy." (p.182). It would appear that research is just beginning regarding the female's view of effective structures and that traditional hierarchies and bureaucracies are not viewed in a positive light.

### Discussion

These nine female educational administrators discussed their perceived gender differences not only in how males and females fulfill and define their administrative roles, but also within the stressors which they face and the coping strategies which they practise. The nine female stress issues discussed in this chapter indicate that these women believed that some of the stress which they experience is gender-related. They offered their perceptions of differing ways that male and female administrators fulfill their roles because of their gender. For women entering into administration, a field which has traditionally been male-dominated, as well as those currently holding administrative positions, learning to recognize and cope with these female-related stressors may play a vital part in their success within their administrative role.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Conclusions

As a qualitative study, this research collected the perceptions of nine female educational administrators regarding the stress within their daily lives. Four research questions were addressed with perceptions being gathered through an interview format. Some of the data gathered confirmed the results of previous research studies. In other cases, these women verbalized and conceptualized into a concise format many feminine issues which had not previously been viewed as potential causes of stress. Many of these issues have been addressed in feminist literature but never before connected with the stress which they create for women in educational administrative positions. It was an exciting study with many revelations.

In discussing the concept of "stress", there were some commonalities as well as some unique approaches to the definition process. It became evident that stress to these women was generally experienced when they felt a loss of control. This loss of power or disempowerment was a key in discussing stressors throughout all the interviews. Even though some women did not address this within their definition of the concept, they verbalized it frequently in the course of their interviews. Some related stress to change and the anxiety and frustration which results, while others described stress as being "juggling" with reference made to the many aspects of their lives. It was revealed that many were aware of the interdependent nature of stress and the reciprocal

relationship between their job-related stress and their family-related stress. Five respondents also discussed the therapeutic release which their interview served.

In response to the many questions which attempted to identify the cause of their stress, the respondents proposed the following stressors as playing a role within their successful fulfillment of their administrator position: interpersonal relationships, balancing their personal and professional role responsibilities, time management, the Ontario government's Social Contract, the anticipation of, or recent promotion, to a new PAR position, feelings of isolation, and different communication and management styles. A poor understanding of their job responsibilities by other educators was a stressor identified common to the three Curriculum Coordinators only. These were many of the same stressors which had been identified in past research studies exploring stressors faced by educational administrators. The common stressors identified by the respondents correlated well with prediction made prior to the study. It was proposed that the three most frequently identified stressors would be interpersonal relations and communication stressors, role conflict, role overload and role-based stressors, and task-based stressors. Interpersonal relationships and balancing their many role responsibilities were the most frequently identified stressors, as they were proposed by all nine respondents. The task-based stressors were identified by six respondents when they commented upon the Ontario government's Social Contract, which has cutback supplies and personnel, and time management as specific stressors.

An unforeseen discovery with regards to identified stressors by the respondents was that these were many of the same factors described by Shakeshaft (1989), Russell (1994), FWTAO (1992) and others as "barriers" to the advancement of women in educational administration. The stressors which these nine women identified with the greatest frequency were some of the same stressors commonly identified in "female barriers to advancement" research studies. It would appear that once women advance

into administrative positions, the barriers to this advancement continue to plague their successful maintenance of their positions.

There were many commonalities within the coping strategies which these nine female educational administrators practised. The most commonly used strategies proposed included physical activity, talking with others, positive self-talk, the use of a problem-solving process to work through a stressful situation, the release of their emotions in a time of extreme stress, the importance of a supportive husband and family, a positive attitude and a sense of humour, watching television, learning to say "NO!", deep breathing exercises, planning, listening to music, driving, reading books and attending workshops. The coping strategies which were identified were very similar to those identified in many research studies with educational administrators.

It would appear from the research studies that both male and female administrators incorporate many of the same coping strategies into their repertoire. Although there were a few strategies proposed which may have been expressed from a female perspective, these same strategies could be viewed as important to a male administrator coping with daily stress. The importance of a supportive husband and family may be changed to the importance of a supportive wife and family for a male administrator. Men and women may choose to watch television shows as a coping strategy even though the type of program which they choose to view may be quite different. Male administrators may also read books as a coping strategy and while some may be similar professional books, males may choose different subjects and themes than these women discussed. Most of the coping strategies which these nine respondents suggested may be viewed as effective for all individuals and not necessarily gender-related strategies. All respondents agreed that people experience stress differently and must develop their own repertoire of coping strategies which permits them to function effectively in today's educational environment.

Most of the respondents expressed that they perceived definite gender differences between how men and women define and fulfill their administrative roles as well as the stressors they experience and the coping strategies which they use. These gender-related differences were perceived as often creating stress for women administrators. Many participants discussed their noticeable absence of a "wife" to carry out household and family responsibilities. They discussed the stress which they experienced as they attempted to balance their many personal and professional roles. They revealed the importance of talking with others as a major gender differences and they also discussed the role of feelings and intuition in their daily decision-making process. Other issues which were revealed included a perceived need to prove themselves within their role, different managerial and communication style of men and women, the importance which they place on people and relationships, the personal responsibility which they accepted for their decisions and actions, their maternal style, and their strong desire for cooperation and peace. Two respondents expressed concern with the influence of the male-created linear hierarchy and bureaucratic structure on their stress levels. Within each of these nine female stress issues, perceptions were expressed by the respondents as to the male views and practises currently in place in contrast to the female views and practises.

Few of the nine female stress issues described in Chapter Eight can be found in research studies done to date on the topic of stress and educational administration. These women have expressed concerns which have been written about in much of the feminist literature but never expressed from the perspective of the stress which these issues create for women in educational administrative positions. It is Chapter Eight which makes this study unique in that the nine women educational administrators interviewed revealed not only their perceptions of gender differences with regards to how men and women fulfill their administrative roles, but also the stress which is

experienced as a result of these differences. There has been little studied and documented in this area to date.

The frequency with which these female stress issues were identified during the interviews would seem to suggest that for these nine women, and probably others, these issues are very real. Readers may make comments as to the stereotypical nature of some of these perceptions, but for the respondents, this is their real world. As most of the research studies reviewed to date used male samples and tended to restrict the data reported to work-related issues, and as most of the data collected were done so by means of surveys, this study opens a whole new world of research findings and of future research possibilities.

With regards to specific questions asked in the interviews, it quickly became evident that for most participants going "back to the classroom with less responsibilities" was not viewed as a positive option. In asking the question from the Interview Schedule :

5. Have you ever had a day were you came home and questioned why you continue as an administrator? Where nothing went right and you felt like asking to be transferred back to the classroom tomorrow? Can you describe that day for me?

many women expressed that they had been out of the classroom for many years and did not see a transfer to a classroom setting as a positive alternative. They expressed that going back to the classroom after having been out for ten or more years with all the changes in educational philosophy and methodology would be like starting a new career. As the Interview Schedules were mailed out in advance of the interview, I clarified this question suggesting that if this was not a positive option for them, to please simply describe a bad day they had experienced.

It was interesting to note that in this sample of nine female educational administrators, all nine respondents were married and living within a traditional family

setting. Of the nine respondents, only one had a young family to care for at home. The rest all had teenagers or older children on their own. Their families had grown up allowing these women more time and opportunity for personal development and growth. Some respondents commented that the age of a female administrator's family could have a major bearing on the stress which she would experience. No respondents commented on the effect that alternative family settings may have on the stress experienced.

The perceptions expressed by these nine women indicate that women in administration today are still on the frontier and working to establish female credibility in a traditionally male-dominated environment. Many commented on the timely occurrence of this study and felt that they were still in a period of proving themselves as "trailblazers" to those higher up in educational administration. Affirmative Action and Employment Equity are just beginning to make a difference and these women perceived that many changes were still required before there would be equity among genders seeking future promotions. Morrison et. al. says it best when they noted that "Being a woman where few, if any, women have been before is a liability that creates stress." (p.16). Janelle noted:

"We can only speak from our own experience and if we only have one experience, we don't know how that compares to others. I would be interested to see if others have the same opinions and I am part of the norm, or if I am way off base."

As more and more females are taking their place on the administrative team, educational institutions are beginning to change and adopt some of the many positive aspects of the feminine style. For those women breaking the trail, it is often a time of both frustration and discovery.

## CHAPTER TEN

### Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations regarding practise and further research which are clearly evident from the data collected during the interviews.

Many respondents indicated a desire for more formal and informal sharing opportunities with other female and male educational administrators. Boards of Education may wish to organize an optional half day a month for male and female administrators to meet. During this time, the administrators may set up their own agenda to discuss relevant issues and concerns. This would be a different meeting time than traditional monthly Principal meetings where the agenda is generally struck by the Director and/or the Superintendent of Education. This new meeting would provide time for sharing and brainstorming. Feelings of isolation may be reduced as administrators come to realize that many of them are facing similar dilemmas each day.

It would also be advantageous to set aside time for female administrators to get together on a regular basis in order to discuss identified concerns. The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario provides some funding to each Women Teachers' Association to encourage PAR networking and leadership opportunities. This allows women in PAR positions to meet and talk with other women about their issues in an informal atmosphere. Often these "meetings" are organized in a home setting or restaurant during the evening. The "Women in the Nineties" networking group described by some of the respondents is funded by PAR Networking grants and

appeared to offer its members an excellent opportunity to discuss concerns and to work on eliminating the feelings of isolation. However, not all Women Teachers' Associations make use of this special funding. Perhaps this should be more strongly promoted because of its value to its PAR membership. Networking with others was clearly indicated in this study as an important female strategy for reducing stress.

It would appear that there is a role to be played by Educational Assistance Programs and personnel. Currently in the six Boards of Education whose administrators were interviewed there does not appear to be any EAP's in practise. They do exist on paper. At the present time, it is the responsibility of the individual experiencing stress to seek professional counselling on his/her own behalf from his/her federation and/or local mental health unit. Having someone available for staff at all times and someone who can develop stress prevention programs promoting positive healthy lifestyle strategies may prevent the loss of a worthy administrator in the future whom has become overwhelmed with the stress in his/her daily life. An administrator, such as Janelle, may benefit and experience less serious effects from her stress if she had someone to counsel her at the early stages.

There is also a role to be played by teacher federations as a result of this research. Conference themes in the future may be "Coping with Modern Educational Stressors". The FWTAO stress team delivering workshops could make use of some of these findings to enhance the current workshop package which is presently in place for teachers and administrators. Administrators may benefit from a workshop specifically designed to meet their needs such as "Stress in PAR Positions" which has been proposed. I have begun to share the results of this study with the "Strategies on Stress" workshop participants who took part in two workshops delivered this spring. Examples from the study would be proposed in order to confirm for the women taking the workshops that their perceptions were shared by female administrators across the

province. I injected results and strategies where ever they added credibility to the presentation. In the future, I will share the results of this study in any workshop which I present whenever the findings support the topic being explored.

Teachers' federations and boards of education may wish to establish workshops for male and female administrators to facilitate an understanding of the different managerial and communication styles. Men and Women: Partners at Work (Simons and Weissman, 1990) is an activity book designed to be used in a workshop format. Its goal is to encourage men and women to understand, respect and improve communications between the sexes in the workplace. Institutions may choose to promote such workshops to help make the educational environment a more effective and less stressful setting.

It is a recommendation that stress management programs be incorporated into post secondary education courses in universities and colleges. Many new administrators become overwhelmed in their first year on the job. Stress management components need to be built into Principals' courses to help aspiring teachers develop effective coping strategies needed as an administrator. The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario are running three leadership courses in the upcoming summer and there is a line at the bottom of the applications reading "Stress management strategies will be incorporated into each day's program." More of this type of infusion into current programs is necessary.

The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario are also attempting to help women teachers and administrators experience less stress trying to balance their home and work lives by offering Child Care funding for women educators who attend workshops, conferences, retreats or other federation-sponsored events. This funding allows a women administrator/teacher to hire a sitter to care for dependents within their personal home setting. One teacher with a handicapped husband received this funding

and as a result, she was able to attend a workshop with her mind at ease while a special worker spent time with her husband within their home. This type of funding helps women whom are concerned about meeting the demands of their many roles by allowing them the freedom to attend leadership activities while their families are in good hands.

More federations, boards of education and institutions need to be looking at their current policies to see if means may be provided to better meet the needs of their mothers on staff. Is there some allowance made for mothers to stay home with sick children? How is this handled within the collective agreements between teachers/administrator and boards of education? Are flexible teaching arrangements encouraged and promoted which allow a woman teacher/administrator to meet the needs of her family? Businesses are starting to make changes to allow mothers the flexibility sometimes required. Are educational institutions looking at changes in the future?

When reviewing the educational significance of this study, the value for other women administrators who are currently experiencing similar stressors to hear the stories and practical effective coping strategies employed by these nine female educational administrators was proposed. This suggests that there is a need for these research results to be publicized. Results may be publicized through newspaper or magazine articles as well as being included in books which compile articles exploring the concept of stress such as Gender and Stress with editors Barnett, Biener and Baruch (1987) . To date, one article published within the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario Newsletter entitled "Dealing With Stress" (January/February 1995). The article suggested over seventy different coping strategies which teachers may choose to practise in order to deal with the stress within their lives. This publication is distributed to over 40,000 female teachers and administrators across Ontario. Another article is currently being written which would

be a synopsis of this research study with the desire being to have it published in the upcoming school year. My goal is to write a book exploring in depth the many female stress issues and make it available to female educational administrators across Canada and the United States.

When looking at future research, the most obvious study would take these same Interview Schedule questions and interview a sample of nine male educational administrators who were matched for factors such as administrative position, age and family status. It is my belief that there would be vast differences in the data and perceptions which would be collected. I cannot foresee a male administrator discussing a family quarrel as a major stressor nor can I foresee them suggesting that their paternal style affects how they manage their positions and communicate with others. I would project that this study may have differing results depending upon whether the interviewer was male or female. I would suspect that the answers would be more formal and of a surface nature with a female interviewer. It would be most interesting to see if given the opportunity to express their perceptions of gender-related stress issues, similar or different issues would be identified.

It could also prove interesting to repeat this study with female educational administrators but have a male interviewer. Again, I perceive that there may be very different data collected as I believe that these women felt more comfortable expressing their perceptions to another female who can relate to some of their experiences. Because I could identify with so many of the issues which these nine women revealed, it would also prove interesting to have a male administrator take these same transcripts and search for common themes within the data. Would he identify the same themes? From a male perspective, would there be different themes revealed and explored?

This research study used a sample composed of nine women in various PAR positions - Principal, Curriculum Consultant/Coordinator and Superintendent of

Education. For more concise findings in the future, a similar study may be established focussing on only one type of educational administrator. Researchers may choose to select all Principals or all Superintendents. This would offer findings which would be more generalizable to a specific group to help them deal with their stress.

It has become evident that all of the nine respondents within this study are members of traditional family units. All respondents were married and talked about the importance of "supportive husbands and families". This study did not explore the degree and nature of that support in any depth. None of the respondents were single, divorced or living within an alternative family situation. Further research may be proposed which selects a sample of women whom are single, divorced, or living in alternative family units to determine the importance of the stable traditional "supportive family" to the female administrator's ability to cope with stress.

It would appear according to the perceptions of the participants interviewed that balancing the societal expectations of their many social roles, personal and professional, was a major stressor and gender issue strongly identified. Further research to someone supportive of these perceptions may investigate strategies used by women in educational administration as well as in other walks of life to help cope with this imbalance. Researchers would need to work at operationally defining the concept of "balance" and devising a research method which would quantify the time and energy which female administrators devote to their many roles.

Someone speculative of these female perceptions may wish to pursue a quantitative research study to investigate the difference in time and energy demands between the social roles of mother/wife and father/husband. Swiss and Walker (1993) note that today's generation of professional women are:

"left to struggle individually, without models for how a dual-career marriage can or should function. Studies point to the continuing imbalance between men and women in which responsibilities at home continue to be a heavier burden for women, regardless of salary, hours worked or level of position." (p.51).

### Final Comment

As this is the first study, or one of the first studies, to encourage educational administrators to expand beyond their professional work environment to include their personal home environment, it has set the stage for further research in the future. More research needs to be done with both male and female samples in a larger scale to confirm if the findings within this study are transferable to other situations. The female stress issues revealed by participants within this study may be unique to female administrators within a Northwestern Ontario setting. However, it is my prediction that similar findings would be discovered with larger samples and in other geographical areas of the province. It is the predictions of others that similar findings would be discovered using male samples but this remains to be seen. The opportunity to discover if these stress issues are truly "female" issues is there for researchers of the future.

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APPENDIX A -- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

WHAT IS "STRESS"?

1. In your own words, what does "stress" mean to you?
2. How would you rate your current stress level today in this very hour - high, moderate, low or relaxed?

WHAT ARE THE STRESSORS?

3. As a woman and an administrator, can you think of any stressful times or particular events, positive or negative, which stand out for you in the current school year?
4. As a woman and an administrator, can you suggest some daily factors which influence your stress level?
5. Have you ever had a day where you came home and questioned why you continue as an administrator? Where nothing went right and you felt like asking to be transferred back to the classroom tomorrow? Can you describe that day for me?
6. What did you do to help yourself cope with your stress that day?
7. Overall, regarding the many stressors you have identified, can you rank order your top five stressors? What makes these the most stressful for you? (frequency, degree of stress created, etc.)

HOW DO YOU COPE?

8. How would you rate your ability to cope with stress on a daily basis - excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, or need help?

9. How would you rate your ability to cope with stress in an intensely stressful situation - excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, or need help?
10. Describe what you do to cope with stress on a day-to-day basis? in an intensely stressful situation?
11. When you want to learn about something, such as stress, where do you turn?
12. Can you predict any stressful events in your future? How do you plan on coping with them?

#### ARE THERE GENDER DIFFERENCES?

13. What does being a female in an administrative position mean to you? Do you believe that there are any important differences between female and male administrators regarding their definition of their roles and their fulfillment of the demands placed upon them?
14. Looking more specifically at stress, in your opinion, do you believe that women and men experience stress differently or do you see stress as being an individualistic experience?
15. Do you view your stressors as being different in any way from the other female administrators within your board? From the male administrators within your board?
16. Do you believe that your coping strategies are the same or different than other administrators within your board?

#### CONCLUSION

17. Are there any other questions that I should have asked you that would have thrown some light on the issues I am exploring - stress and the female administrator?
18. Do you have any questions or comments you wish to make regarding this study?

APPENDIX B -- LETTER SOLICITING PARTICIPATION  
AND GAINING CONSENT

March 29, 1994.

Dear Female Educational Administrator,

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a study which examines the nature of your stress, the identification of stressors within your life and the stress management strategies which you use to cope with your stress. The study is being undertaken as part of my Masters studies in the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations under the supervision of J. A. Riffel. The study is of value because it can help us to better understand the stress experienced by the female administrator and it should provide some insight to other female administrators by suggesting practical and effective stress management strategies.

You are among ten women randomly selected from six boards of education within Northwestern Ontario to participate in the study. Specifically, you will be asked to respond to some interview questions. It is estimated that your interview will be one hour in length. The interview will be taped and later transcribed with all identifying characteristics removed. The tapes will then be destroyed.

The interview questions will be designed to address the following issues:

1. What is stress?
2. What do female administrators perceive as creating stress within their lives?  
What are their stressors?
3. What strategies do female administrators use to effectively deal with their stress?

4. Do women administrators perceive that there are gender differences between the way that men and women define and fulfill their administrator roles, experience stress, identify the stressors in their lives and cope with stress?

The questions will be sent to you one week prior to the scheduled interview time for your advance consideration. Your responses to these questions will be kept in strictest confidence. At no point within the thesis will your name or any information which could be used to identify you be reported. You have the right to withdraw at any time should you desire. Upon completion of the study, a summary of the thesis will be provided for you.

Should you require additional information, please contact me by telephone at \_\_\_\_\_ or write to me at \_\_\_\_\_. Your cooperation and assistance are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time and your support for this study.

Yours truly,

Mrs. Joan Martin.

I hereby give my consent to participate in this research project. I will be contacted to arrange an interview time within two weeks after receipt of this signed consent.

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(Signature of Participant)