

Women's Experiences in Administration in Christian Faith-Based Schools

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine: (a) the impact of faith on female administrators in Christian faith-based schools; (b) the career paths of female administrators in Christian faith-based schools; and (c) the supports and challenges faced by female administrators in faith-based schools. While female administrators in public schools have been researched in detail, the role of a female as an administrator in a faith-based school has not been explored.

This study used a qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviews with twelve female administrators in faith-based schools. Data were analyzed through a naturalistic inquiry methodology utilizing the constant comparison and narrative analysis methods. Findings indicated that the women who pursue administration positions in faith-based schools experience additional tensions associated with their roles: expectations specific to the faith-based nature of the organization in which they work and issues related to how their leadership intersects with their sex in an organization that has pre-conceived notions of a woman's place within a ministry organization. Not only are these women expected to fulfill the role of a school administrator, but they must also be strong in their faith in God. To be able to achieve success in their careers these women rely on personal supports from family and friends and professional supports they seek out. Though faced with a number of challenges, they pursue excellence in their roles as administrators and strive to serve in ways that reflects their strong faith and dependence on God.

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To my children, Matthew (and Trinda), Christopher (Mercedee and Jacob), Andrew and Katie: thank you for allowing me to be a student at University along with you. I hope my example as a lifelong learner will encourage you to continue to pursue higher education. Thank you also for being so patient during all of the evenings and weekends I spent away from home or locked in my office completing this degree.

To my husband Bill: this degree is partly yours. I couldn't have done it without your constant support and encouragement. You are my greatest cheerleader. You have helped me achieve a wonderful dream. I will love you forever and always.

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Chapter One

Introduction

While completing a Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education in 2006, I wrote a term paper titled “The Balancing Act.” In that term paper, for a gender issues course, I told my personal story. I explained that, by choice, I had placed my career on hold to be a wife and a mother to my four children and to support my husband in his career aspirations. Then, following a life threatening health concern with my husband, I felt compelled to return to work. Much to my surprise, doors opened quickly that led to full-time employment in Halifax, Nova Scotia and then in Winnipeg, Manitoba. After working in an independent school in Winnipeg for two and a half years I was approached to consider administration. In total, I had only six years of teaching experience. While I was not a veteran teacher, I did have an abundance of leadership experience and felt I was called and gifted to lead.

In the past ten years, while an administrator in a faith-based school, I completed the Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education as well as an abundance of professional learning opportunities such as Cognitive Coaching and Walk-Through Training. I have served with education organizations and lead professional workshops for educators. In September of 2009 I embarked on a Master’s program. Considering a Master’s degree came at the invitation of Dr. Dawn Wallin, who wrote the following at the end of the gender issues term paper: “Come back and do your Masters. This paper is the basis of your thesis. A”. Since receiving that comment I have formulated a thesis in my mind that opens

up the possibilities for me to examine my own career path in an academic forum while also conducting research that resonates with other women who find themselves in a similar leadership position in faith-based schools.

I knew I wanted to explore women in leadership in education. Following conversations with Dr. Jerome Cranston, it became evident that my thesis needed to reflect upon my experiences and understanding of leadership within the context of faith-based schools, as this story uniquely adds to the research literature on women in leadership. While there is an abundance of research on women in leadership in education and some research on women in leadership in churches or faith-based organizations, there is little to no published research on women in leadership in faith-based schools. It may be that I am the first to explore this topic, which hopefully will support other women who find themselves in these positions.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to explore women's experiences in administration in faith-based schools. Specifically, I was interested in studying: (a) the impact of faith on female administrators in faith-based schools; (b) the career paths of female administrators in faith-based schools; and (c) the supports and challenges faced by female administrators in faith-based schools. It is my goal for this project to encourage women in their role as administrators in faith-based schools and to offer support and advice to women who might be interested in these positions. It was also my hope to extend the literature that does exist related to women's experiences in leadership roles by being sensitive to the

contexts of faith-based schooling. The purpose of this work was to examine the intersections of leadership, women's issues and faith. The intent of this descriptive study was to provide voice to the women who lead in faith-based schools through an examination of the challenges and opportunities that exist for these women and of the extent to which their faith influences their understanding of their leadership roles.

The underlying research question of this thesis is: what are women's experiences and understandings of the principalship in faith-based schools? In order to respond to this question fully, four sub-questions have been designed:

1. How do female principals in faith-based schools describe the nature of their principal role?
2. What challenges and/or issues do female principals in Christian faith-based schools face, and to what extent do these challenges/issues influence job satisfaction and performance, and life away from work?
3. What supports do female principals put in place individually or believe could be put in place systemically, to offset or enhance their ability to face or deal with these challenges/issues successfully?
4. How does the faith of female principals in faith-based schools influence their understanding of leadership and the role of the principal?

The findings of a pilot study that I conducted for a qualitative research course (de Monyé, 2011) affirmed the significance of this topic to research in educational administration. I found there are female administrators in faith-based schools who feel alone, limited and isolated in their role. Though the findings of

the pilot study aligned generally with prior research on women in leadership in Canadian public school settings (Wallin, 2005; Wallin & Crippen, 2007; Crippen & Wallin, 2008; Wallin, 2008; Wallin 2009; Kachur-Reico & Wallin, 2010), the study departed from related research in its emphasis on the power and influence of faith within these leadership contexts. Certainly, my findings suggested that these women need to feel empowered and supported to lead with confidence. It is my hope that this project will give voice to these women's experiences and become an impetus for connecting women in faith-based schools in ways that encourage conversations with and support one another. And although there are similarities, I also wish to contribute understandings of how the experiences of women in leadership in Christian faith-based schools differ from, or are similar to, the experiences of women in leadership in public schools.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this thesis as defined:

1. **Biblical worldview:** A biblical worldview is interpreted by Jesus' worldview – his view of life. A biblical worldview means understanding and living life from God's perspective (McDowell & McDowell, 2010). The Bible is the foundation on which a biblical worldview is formed.
2. **Christian faith-based school:** For this study a Christian faith-based school is defined as an independent school that teaches from a biblical worldview and incorporates Christian principles into the culture and teachings of the school. This includes Protestant and Catholic schools.

3. **Worldview:** A worldview is what we assume to be true about the basic makeup of our world. We interpret our experiences through our worldview (McDowell & McDowell, 2010).

Rationale/Significance

Within faith-based schools in Western Canada there are a limited number of female administrators. The Association of Christian School International (ACSI) Western Canada, supports many of these faith-based schools. ACSI Western Canada is part of the international organization of ACSI. In Western Canada there are 78 ACSI schools. Of the 78 ACSI schools, 33% (or 26 out of 78) are led by female principals. Eighteen percent (or 14 of the 78 schools) have female vice principals. Less than 1% or 4 out of 78 of ACSI schools in Western Canada have both a female principal and vice principal. These percentages are consistent with international ACSI schools.

Association of Christian School International (ACSI) documentation indicates that less than 50% of ACSI schools are led by women. Larger schools are most likely led by males. Small schools tend to be led by women. This is consistent with research of ACSI schools in Western Canada. Research shows that in large Christian schools in Western Canada (population of at least 600 students) with more than two administrators, only one is female. This is true for the large ACSI schools in Western Canada as defined in Table 1. In 2011 each of these schools had three or more administrators. Only one of the administrators was female. Of these schools, the largest faith-based ACSI schools in Western Canada, all with a student population over 600 and three or

more administrators, only one (Bears paw Christian School) was led by a female principal.

These data suggest that the majority of faith-based school leaders, like church leaders, are male. Research into the experiences of women in faith-based schools is limited or possibly non-existent.

Table 1

Populations of Large Faith-Based Schools in Western Canada

School	Location	Population (2011 data)
Linden Christian School	Winnipeg, MB	887
Bears paw Christian School	Calgary, AB	600
Glenmore Academy	Calgary, AB	698
Mennonite Educational Institute	Abbotsford, BC	1470
Pacific Academy	Surrey, BC	1085

It is my hope that this research will open the topic for discussion and encourage women to consider the role of an administrator in faith-based schools. It is my intention that this study will encourage those women already in this role and will give them an avenue to openly and confidently discuss their experiences. I hope that as women hear about this study and come together to discuss the findings they will develop deeper relationships and support one another through conversations and in prayer. As one participant in the 2011 research study (de Monyé, 2011) stated after reading her transcript, “I didn’t know I felt that way, that I said so much. That was so therapeutic.” I believe that for this woman having the opportunity to talk openly about her experiences in a

confidential setting allowed her freedom to share and sort out some of her frustrations.

Delimitations of Study

A few delimitations helped frame the parameters of the study:

1. Twelve female administrators in Christian faith-based schools in Western Canada were interviewed in this study. Most contacts were made through the directories of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) Western Canada and the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools (MFIS).
2. Female administrators were contacted by telephone and then by email based on information available in the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) Western Canada directory, Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools (MFIS) online directory and school websites.
3. The method for collecting the qualitative data from the faith-based school administrators occurred through one semi-structured face-to-face interview lasting approximately one to one and a half hours which was recorded and transcribed by the researcher.
4. The results of the pilot project (de Monyé, 2011) were used in this thesis with approval from the University of Manitoba Education Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). The information gathered in 2011 was used verbatim. Due to the richness of the 2011 pilot project and the research of this study no further contact with the participants of the pilot project was considered necessary.

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations of the study include:

1. The subjective nature of qualitative research includes fewer participants in order to provide thick description and elaboration of experience rather than quantitative generalizable conclusions. Participants' responses to open ended questions were summarized; the results found strands or topics upon which to base my conclusions. Although the use of qualitative research is not directly a limitation in that it provides rich information that quantitative research cannot provide, never-the-less, the findings of this study are not specifically generalizable to other contexts or studies. The intent of this study was/is to provide themes for discussion that may or may not resonate with the experiences of others, and add to the knowledge base already in existence.
2. My personal biases may have influenced my interpretations of the findings. We all have our own biases and viewpoints on how we see things work around us. Therefore, my own biases may have influenced my understanding of the participants' responses, ultimately affecting the findings. I am a female administrator in a faith-based school and therefore have a personal investment in the topic of study. Additionally, I know other women who have experienced limitations in their quest to obtain leadership positions and I have faced limitations in my own journey to leadership. I feel that I am lacking in some positive mentorship experiences; I find that I engage in more mentoring of others than I have

experienced myself in terms of being mentored. There are a limited number of women in administration in faith-based schools as the majority of leaders in faith-based schools are male. Also, I did not interview myself prior to conducting the qualitative research course pilot project. I wrote the questions and proceeded to interview the participants. Later I realized that I should have answered the questions personally prior to interviewing each subject. This I did at a later date. I know that the participants' responses to the interview questions became a bias to my own answers to the interview questions. I have now answered each question in detail and wrote my story of entering administration. Since I am the only person coding the data my personal biases shaped the coding and analysis process though I engaged in reflexive techniques to attempt to limit this.

3. Though I thought the participants might be apprehensive about what they shared with me and concerned about how I might interpret and share the information, I found their responses to be both open and honest. A limit with any interview is the guarded response or self-censorship of the participants. Given their high profile jobs, these women might have feared both political and personal repercussions that may possibly be linked to them despite all of my attempts to protect their identities. Their "code of silence" could permeate the interview as they might be fearful of being "found out" or fearful of speaking poorly about their working environment should they have experienced discrimination. Given that each of these women represent the senior leadership of a faith-based school, it might

have been difficult for them to separate or share their personal experiences while maintaining political and confidential loyalty to their schools. In some cases I found this to be true, but overall the responses were shared honestly.

4. The participants were given an opportunity to review their interview transcripts and any requested changes or deletions were made. The use of full confidentiality and anonymity attempted to address this issue, but it still may have be an issue for individual participants. I found this was not the case; in contrast participants were satisfied with their transcripts as only minor changes were requested.
5. In order for the participants to remain anonymous, there was some information that I wanted to share related to their interviews but was unable to share. Some information that the women shared with me may have compromised the source of the information, and thus compromised anonymity or confidentiality. Given the political nature of this work, I was careful to ensure that the respondents had the opportunity to complete member checks of the information they provided and the personal experiences of respondents were reported only in the general themes that they represented.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter consists of the introduction, purpose, rationale/significance, definition of terms, delimitations, limitations and organization of the report. The second chapter presents the

literature review and the conceptual framework for the study. Chapter Three includes a description of the study environment, participant selection, researcher positioning, data analysis, confidentiality, and ethics. Chapter Four outlines the findings of the research and Chapter Five provides conclusions and recommendations for practice and future study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

For a qualitative research university course I conducted a pilot project for my thesis. I interviewed three female principals from faith-based schools. I was not fully prepared for the direction that the research took. I anticipated that answers to the questions for the pilot project would be similar to my own: I am tired, I rely on outside sources for support, I was called to lead, I often feel isolated and alone. I anticipated discussion on confidence and insecurity. I anticipated women in faith-based schools might feel marginalized. However, my project turned in a direction that I was not fully prepared to explore, but now realize is necessary to fully embrace the needs and experiences of women in administrative roles in faith-based schools.

The women in administration positions in faith-based schools in my pilot project understood leadership to be their calling; they considered themselves to be servant leaders and they spoke of their deep faith in God. Their responses indicated a belief in social justice, compassion to all, and a desire to be relational in their leadership practice. My surprise came at their deep need to be heard due to a sense of keen isolation. One participant stated, "I feel so alone in my position; I have no one to talk to" (de Monyé, 2011). Much of this isolation stemmed from a blanket of secrecy around their roles, often due to the nature of schooling in faith-based schools and the stand-alone perception of independent schools. Isolation also stemmed from the lack of collaboration between the various Christian faith-based schools. Faith-based schools are often part of

organizations like the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools (MFIS) or the Association of Christian School International (ACSI) but they are not part of a school board or organization that intentionally provides regular networking opportunities for collaboration and professional development. The consequence of this independence rather than inter-dependence became isolation for these women as they felt they could talk to no one about the challenges they faced due to an implicit (and sometimes explicit) “code” that would not favour them speaking negatively about their school inside or outside their doors. For many of these women, the interview became the first time they were able to share their triumphs and concerns and be heard in a safe environment. Thus, the key finding of the pilot project focused on the need for women principals in faith-based schools to connect and encourage one another in order to help them share and develop platforms for voicing their concerns and experiences.

To this end there are many topics in the research literature that must be explored to fully understand the context of women in administration in faith-based schools. This literature review incorporates literature from American and Canadian secular and Christian academic sources, topics related to women’s leadership styles, issues facing women in leadership, the nature of the role of the principal, and faith-based leadership. A review of predominant leadership styles is necessary as a point of reference for determining how women in this study define their own leadership styles in their role as principal. The literature on issues women face in leadership is important because it helps to conceptualize the research history that describes the primary challenges and supports women

in leadership face, and/or how these issues impact job satisfaction, performance, and work/life balance. The literature on the role of the principal is important to consider in the extent to which this literature (which is generally related to the public school system) aligns with the nature of the role of the principal in Christian faith-based schools. However, because the literature that directly discusses women's leadership in Christian faith-based schools is almost non-existent, I extrapolate from current literature in these other areas to consider how female principals' issues in Christian faith-based schools may be contextualized.

In preparation for this thesis, I read an abundance of literature on the topics of leadership, and women in leadership. To frame this thesis, it is important to review the research that exists on women in leadership in education. This review will provide a contextual background for the research. Determining the representation of women in school administration (superintendents, principals and vice principals in the United States and Canada) is not an easy task. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) in their book *Women and Educational Leadership* found in their American study of women in educational leadership that the "majority of studies on women leaders are reported in dissertations; few white men study women or people of color; and studies have shifted from gender comparisons to studies of women in their own right" (p. 35). Unfortunately they also state that "many studies on gender and leadership reach a limited audience and do not add to the theoretical or practical foundation of the discipline" (p. 36). The sources of research available indicate that the representation of women in educational leadership does not exist in proportion to the number of women in

the teaching profession. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) note that while women constitute approximately 75 percent of the teaching force, they do not proportionately represent administration positions in the elementary and secondary levels or in the superintendency (p. 28).

Grogan's and Shakeshaft's (2011) research revealed that men are forty times more likely than women to advance from teaching to the superintendency (p. 28). While it is difficult to determine how many women have received certification for the superintendency, the data show the female dominance in degrees in education. In 2006-2007 women earned 78.7 percent of bachelor's, 77.3 percent of master's and 77.3% of doctoral degrees in education (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 30). Wallin and Crippen (2007) cite similar statistics in the Manitoba (Canadian) context where in the 2004-05 school year only 5 of 37 public school chief superintendents were women. They found that there was no lack of qualified females in the profession as "(a) since 2001 at the University of Manitoba alone, 66 percent of the graduates with a Masters in Educational Administration were women; (b) 65 percent of the teaching staff in Manitoba are women and (c) 45 percent of in-school administrators are women" (p. 21). This information clearly shows that looking at the pools from which administrators are selected; women are underrepresented in school administration.

Women are also underrepresented in the research in administration. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) contend that "gender research in school administration is generally thought to be studies of women or studies that compare women and men" (p. 31). They found that the history of research on

gender and administration is one that began with a social change agenda. The studies focused on the numbers of men and women in administration positions and why there were more men than women. The research then shifted to the question of female approaches to leadership and to seeing the world from a female lens, instead of comparing male and female behaviours within a male paradigm (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 33). This shifted the focus to understanding the world of women by comparing the experiences of women, not measuring female experiences compared to male experiences (p. 34).

Researchers caution that findings of studies of administrators that are predominately male do not accurately represent the experiences of women. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) refer to Tallerico's work which states "we need more than just a handful of researchers working toward this end in the future" (p. 35) as the research on women in school leadership provides an additional perspective and informs practice for both women and men.

Within the literature on women in administration much information is focused on leadership styles and gender. For this thesis, research will include the role of the principal, women in leadership, women's issues in leadership and faith-based schools/organizations. First I will define leadership qualities and skills and then look at leadership styles pertinent to women in administration.

Leadership Qualities and Skills

The principal is the leader of the school. In the book *Learning from Lincoln*, Alvy and Robbins (2010) list ten key leadership qualities and skills of principals: (1) Implementing and sustaining a mission and vision with focused

and profound clarity; (2) Communicating ideas effectively with precise and straightforward language; (3) Building a diverse and competent team to successfully address the mission; (4) Engendering trust, loyalty and respect through humility, humor and personal example; (5) Leading and serving with emotional intelligence and empathy; (6) Exercising situational competence and responding appropriately to implement effective change; (7) Rising above personal and professional trials through tenacity, persistence, resilience and courage; (8) Exercising purposeful visibility; (9) Demonstrating personal growth and enhanced competence as a lifetime learner, willing to reflect on and expand ideas; and (10) Believing that hope can become a reality (p. 4). Credibility is a key factor.

Participants in this study understood the need to lead with credibility integrity and to improve their leadership practices to improve and enhance student learning while carrying out the distinctive mission and vision of their school. Jim Collins (2005) states, “success in carrying out the mission and vision of an endeavor – a cause – should be a primary gauge of leadership success” (p. 11). Collins goes on to describe “Level 5 Leaders” as “leaders who are ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the movement, the vision, the work – not themselves – and they have the will to do (whatever it takes) to make good on that ambition” (p.11). Administrators in Christian faith-based schools have the dual responsibility of leading an educational organization while supporting the faith-base of the church or faith-based organization that supports the school. Mission and vision statements in faith-based schools are written from educational

and religious points of view. Administrators are responsible to uphold educational integrity and standards while also ensuring faith principles are carried out. As Alvy and Robbins (2010) point out, that school leaders can “waiver from neither” (p. 12) and must possess a strong sense of responsibility and commitment for both.

School administrators strive to create great school teams. As Whitaker (2012) states, education is about “people not programs” (p. 6). Collins (2005) suggests that we must look at the “who” before the “what”. Collins found that good leaders “first got the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus and the right people in the right seats – and then they figured out how to drive it” (p. 13). Administrators must invest in people to develop them to be great teachers in order to have great schools (Whitaker, 2012). How they go about leading has been argued to be different for women than men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Crippen & Wallin 2008; Wallin 2005). Though not all researchers agree that difference in leadership styles accrue by virtue of one’s sex, the subsequent section reviews the body of literature that exists on females’ leadership styles.

Leadership Styles

In terms of leadership style, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) state that there are preferences and approaches that characterize the leadership of many women. They identified five leadership styles often aligned with women’s ways of working: relational leadership, leadership for social justice, leadership for learning, spiritual leadership and balanced leadership. I will include in my

discussion a sixth leadership style, that of servant leadership, as I believe this type of leadership style is often characterized as a model of leadership in faith-based schools due to the Christian belief in Christ as a servant. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) state that several studies view women's approach to leadership as "servant leadership" as "women seek to serve others by being the facilitator of the organization, bringing groups together, motivating students and staff, and connecting with outside groups" (p. 90), by ministering to others. I will also include research on two distinct views on women in ministry viewed by evangelical churches (Gundry & Beck, 2005) as I believe these points of view influence the role of a female administrator in particular types of faith-based schools.

Relational leadership styles focus on being in a relationship with others horizontally rather than hierarchically and working with and through others. Because some have argued that women tend to be uncomfortable with individualistic power, scholars have redefined the concept of power to consider power *with*, or shared with others, not power *over* (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 7). In this type of leadership, power is tied to the importance women place on relationships. Decisions, for example, are made with the consideration and input of others. Women leaders who enact this type of leadership are described as being collaborative, caring, courageous and visionary. In short, "relational leadership is about facilitating the work of others who share the power and authority to collaboratively craft direction" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 10). I

believe that relational leadership comes naturally to many women, whether or not one believes women are born with these tendencies, or are socialized to be so.

This literature also suggests that women, more so than men, identify educational careers as social justice work. For many women social justice “is a passion for doing work that involves making a difference in the lives of students who have not been served well by the current systems” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 13). In their review of literature Grogan and Shakeshaft elaborate that studies confirm that women with leadership styles that emphasize social justice also value moral and servant leadership (p. 13).

Spiritual leadership is a strong theme found in research on women leaders, especially women of colour (African American women); this finding has important implications for this thesis. While Grogan and Shakeshaft describe a spiritual dimension of leadership, they do not specify that for many leaders a strong faith in God has shaped who they are as leaders. They include broad definitions of spirituality, religious beliefs, self-knowing and native spirituality as impacting the ways in which women lead. Never-the-less Grogan and Shakeshaft found that women discuss the relationship between spirituality and the way they model behaviour and inspire others, and they acknowledge the importance of their spirituality to their success and ability to deal with conflict. These women believe that their spirituality gives them hope to keep working for change (p. 15).

Women leaders often make decisions based on priorities for student learning (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 19). Research shows that women

leaders spend more time in the classroom than their male counterparts and therefore are often highly motivated to make changes to provide better learning opportunities for students (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 18). Women leaders are more likely to introduce strong programs of staff development, foster instructional change that improves learning, and focus on student growth and development. This echoes Whitaker's comment that "leadership is about people, not programs" (Whitaker, 2012, p. 6). School administrators must serve their school community, staff, students and parents, well.

Similar themes are found in work by Crippen and Wallin (2008) with female superintendents. Crippen and Wallin (2008) state that "education advocates for a participatory/transformational style of leadership because of the increasing diversity of challenges facing educational leaders" (p. 547). They also suggest that "authentic leaders are moral leaders who understand their own values and beliefs" (p. 547). By the virtue of the school where they work, leaders of faith-based schools are expected to strive to maintain strong morals and values based on biblical truths.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is an important element to explore for leadership style in faith-based schools as there is much literature on servant leadership from both secular and Christian perspectives. My perspective is from the Christian perspective following Jesus' example as a servant leader. Blanchard and Hodges (2003) state, "Jesus modeled the true servant leader by investing most of His time training and equipping the disciples for leadership when His earthly

time was over” (p. 21). The Bible (New International Version) reveals Jesus’ words on leadership in John 14:12-13, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things because I am going to the father” (p. 1158). The model of Jesus as the servant leader is the model to which most faith-based leaders in Christian schools aspire, that they must “understand their position as being on loan and as an act of service, look beyond their own season of leadership and prepare the next generation” (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003, p. 21). I argue that the expectation is that an administrator in a faith-based school, whether male or female, is expected to, and believes, that he/she must provide such leadership to the school community.

Robert K. Greenleaf (1970), a Quaker, first defined the term servant leadership from a secular perspective. Though many of the premises are similar, the secular perspective of servant leadership does not acknowledge or embrace the model of Jesus as the ideal servant leader.

Crippen (2005) summarized Greenleaf’s work and refers to Greenleaf’s revelation of the concept of servant leadership after reading the book *Journey to the East*. Crippen states: “Greenleaf saw Leo (a servant in the story) as a model of a servant leader. Leo was a leader but his nature was a servant. Greenleaf believed the message of the story was that one has to first serve society and through one’s service a person will be recognized as a leader” (p. 4). Greenleaf, in his essay, *The servant as leader* (1970) describes the servant leader in the following manner:

The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...The leader-first and the servant-first are to extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first, to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? (p. 7)

Greenleaf, though a Quaker, used secular language rather than biblical language even though he worked with business and churches.

Crippen and Wallin (2008) explained Greenleaf's ten characteristics of servant leadership and the extent to which superintendents, as educational leaders in Manitoba, articulated and emulated these ten characteristics. The ten characteristics include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community. The superintendents in the study mentioned foresight,

conceptualization, building community, stewardship and growth of others most often (p. 158). Crippen and Wallin (2008) found that none of the superintendents exhibited all ten characteristics. Even so, they concluded that “the superintendents of Manitoba feel a moral imperative to shape education through service to others” (p. 159). Crippen and Wallin (2008) further state “the servant leader is committed to the individual growth of human beings” (p. 549). The commitment to build community and to seek service opportunities to the community is also a characteristic of a servant leader. These themes resonate with leaders of faith-based schools as they strive to build the local and global community through mission and outreach opportunities for their students.

Administrators in Christian faith-based schools, while aware of the secular perspective, frame their understanding of servant leadership from a biblical worldview, using Jesus as their model. Jesus came to serve, not be served. For example, Jesus modeled servant leadership when he washed the disciples’ feet in John 13:1-17. He set an example to his disciples and said, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example for you that you should do as I have done for you”. In Mark 9:35 Jesus says, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.” In Mark 10:44-45 Jesus repeats almost the same words, “whoever would be greatest among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1087). Jesus urges his followers to serve, to “give our lives” for the sake of others and to be more concerned for others than ourselves. His words command the leaders of

Christian faith-based schools to be servant leaders. Jesus' definition of leadership has nothing to do with power or personal gain. Administrators in faith-based schools who understand Jesus as the model of servant leadership grasp this concept and strive to lead like Jesus. Though this is certainly the model of servant leadership for which administrators in faith-based schools strive, for many women in these leadership roles, the goal is exhausting when they attempt to combine that level of leadership expectation with their lives outside of the school.

Barriers and Challenges to Women in Leadership

There are a number of barriers and challenges that women face in leadership roles. The following section will explore a number of these challenges.

Balance

Achieving margin or balance is an area of interest that is known to be an issue in the literature on women's issues in leadership. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) found achieving balance to be an issue for many female administrators in faith-based schools stating "women leaders strive for balance between responsibilities at work and at home" (p. 21). From my own experience I know the commitment of hours and energy needed to be an effective leader. My hours often extend beyond an 8:00-4:00 commitment. I am exhausted at the end of the day and I have attempted many ways to seek balance in my life.

Author and speaker Dr. Richard Swenson is an expert on balance or margin. Swenson articulated the need for margin and the harm we are doing to

ourselves by not allowing margin in our lives. Swenson's book, *Margin* (2004), contrasts a life with margin and one without; a marginless and margined life:

Marginless is being asked to carry a load five pounds heavier than you can lift; margin is a friend to carry half the burden.

Marginless is not having time to finish the book your reading on stress; margin is having the time to read it twice.

Marginless is fatigue; margin is energy.

Marginless is red ink; margin is black ink.

Marginless is hurry; margin is calm.

Marginless is anxiety; margin is security

Marginless is culture; margin is counterculture

Marginless is the disease of the new millennium; margin is its cure

(p. 13).

I argue that many women leaders in faith-based schools live a marginless life; though their goal is to move towards a life of margin. Swenson (2004) claims that the pace in which we live is destroying one's physical and emotional energy; stating the majority of people are sleep deprived, poorly nourished and lack physical activity (p. 54-57). Social supports are crumbling as the family dynamic is destroyed by family dysfunction, and people are working long hours resulting in less social time, resting time, and laughing time. The lack of margin has influenced our time and finances. People are overspent in time and money. The amount of consumer debt in North America is at an all-time high as people continue to consume what they cannot afford. Technical advancement and

progress contributes to marginless living. Swenson (2004) explains, “we find ourselves in the midst of an unnamed epidemic. The disease of marginless living is insidious, widespread, and virulent” (p. 15). In response, Swenson suggests solutions to marginless living. Margin, in short, is the ability to make space in one’s life for what is important. Margin can be restored by being intentional to live within one’s limits, uncluttering one’s life, consciously slowing one’s pace, prioritizing values, and reducing stress (p. 69-70).

The need for margin or balance is found in other research of educational administration. In her research on superintendents in Manitoba, Wallin (2009) found that “women still maintain a larger share of home duties; the balance between professional and private lives may be more difficult for women; and males tend to have greater spousal support for managing home responsibilities” (p. 20). Wallin went on to share the thoughts of a male superintendent who suggested, “I’m not sure I would have been able to handle what my wife did, if she had gone on and done her Master’s while we had two young kids; I don’t know. She put her career on hold and let me do those things” (p. 20). Wallin found that the “difficulty often lay in achieving perspective between family and work” (p. 39). Many evenings and weekends were spent completing work related assignments. When Wallin (2009) asked what measures they put in place to achieve balance female superintendents offered some strategic suggestions:

- a) making the attempt to never bring work home;

- b) bringing their children to work on weekends and planning to have lunch or dinner with them in order to provide breaks and balance in the work routine;
- c) consciously planning evenings where one had to purchase tickets or make commitments to ensure personal time was privileged on occasion;
- d) creating a personal sanctuary for self, family, and friends where one can regenerate, combined with needing to know when to withdraw from work and focus on personal life. (p. 39)

Further to this, five women in Wallin's study (2009) indicated that, in their view, "female senior administrators have to work harder, longer hours, and multitask in order to be granted the same credibility as their male colleagues" (p. 22). Within the faith-based school environment this is also true. Faith-based schools usually function as "stand alone" organizations without the support of a school division. The full running of the school from policy to photocopying is done within the confines of the school building with only limited outside support. Therefore, I contend, most faith-based school administrators work harder and longer hours to be granted the same credibility as public school leaders. To do this they require support in their professional, but also their personal lives.

Wallin (2009) was also interested to find out "what kinds of supports senior administrators rely upon in their personal and professional lives" (p. 25). Wallin found six supports of senior administrators:

1. strong positive relationships with other senior administrative

colleagues;

2. supportive relationships with spouse/partner;
3. opportunities for professional growth;
4. adequate career advancement opportunities;
5. support from family/friends;
6. encouragement from a personal mentor. (p. 25)

This is a question I was curious to understand in the lives of female administrators in faith-based schools: I wondered if the supports superintendents rely upon were similar to the supports female administrators use in their lives so that they avoid “running on empty.”

Knowing what fills one’s tank when one is running on empty is necessary to live a life with balance. Wayne Cordeiro, in his book *Leading on empty* (2009), shares his experience of burnout and finding balance in his life. Cordeiro reached a point of burnout, a nervous breakdown, that he “didn’t expect would happen to him” (p. 14). The pressures of his job, his drive for excellence, and his role of pastor of a large church was unsustainable. He developed physical symptoms that indicated he was unable to continue the pace he had set for himself, as his serotonin levels were completely exhausted and as a substitute his body was replacing serotonin with adrenaline (p. 25). Cordeiro met with a counselor who explained that “serotonin gets depleted and needs to be replenished. The overload of expectations was too much. Depression takes the place of initiative; your indecision and anxiety increases. You begin to feel a greater need for aloneness and isolation” (p. 26). Cordeiro was a typical Type A

leader. I see these same characteristics in many of my observations of other school administrators.

This lack of margin or balance is evidenced in the research that documents the high prevalence of divorce among female administrators. Loder (2005) explored the concerns of work and family for women administrators. Loder found that women had difficulty balancing their roles as wife and administrator. There were concerns about conflict and not having enough time for their spouses. Sandy, a thirty-year-old principal said she was “completely stressed out” (p. 760) as a principal and because of her long hours drifted apart from her husband. She stated “I’ve learned I can’t neglect him” (p. 760).

The women Loder (2005) studied commented that being a principal was difficult if their children were young. Some postponed being a principal until their children were older. Loder states that of all the strategies that administrators used to balance work and home, spousal support was paramount. Women depended on their spouses for support for childcare and household responsibilities. For some of the women, their spouses had flexible hours to attend to child related activities.

Wallin (2009) found similar results with the superintendents she interviewed. They believed “that in order to do well in their work life, they needed to maintain harmony at home” (p. 29). Further to this Wallin (2009) found that women “view their supports in a more networked fashion, including their spouses/partners in their broader understandings of family” (p. 29).

Faith-Based Leadership

Exploring a topic involving women in leadership in Christian faith-based schools requires a survey of literature of the evangelical church's view of women in the church. While researching information on the role of women in leadership in faith-based organizations, it became abundantly clear that most books on this topic are written by men. Two recently published books resonated with me and helped me to collect my thoughts on women in leadership in faith-based or Christian organizations. One of the best books I read was *Gifted to lead* (2008) by Nancy Beach. Beach (2008) begins her book by contrasting the female roles in the 1960s to the roles women play today. Women of the 1960s were "part of a generation that prescribed a distinctly bordered role" (p. 23), as that of a homemaker. Beach goes on to explain the way her life evolved and how her natural leadership gifts emerged and were recognized by some forward thinking male church leaders. Beach acknowledged that there has been much written on the theology behind the writings in the Bible and questions the belief that the teachings of the Bible were written for men only. Beach concedes that in 1 Corinthians 12 (*The Holy Bible*) the "Holy Spirit distributes the gifts as he desired" (p. 26) and that being female does not limit these gifts. This statement is the footing for the title of the book, encouraging women that they are "gifted to lead" (p. 26).

Beach encourages leaders, men and women, to have four traits of character to ensure effective leadership: humility, self-confidence, sense of humour, and integrity (p. 36) that are similar to the traits of servant leadership.

Beach goes on to say that in church settings women are denied the opportunity to lead or teach, because they are women. In some situations women have to accept that this is the position of the Christian organization for which they are connected, or go elsewhere. Women experience pain and frustration as they are held back from using their leadership gifts, while other organizations or churches welcome women in leadership.

In a second book, *Why not women?* Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton (2000) defend the role of women in the church through an examination of the scriptures. These authors suggest that “man’s” tendency is to interpret scripture for his own needs, not as an understanding of the context of the passage written. For example, in the book of Timothy, Paul is writing to Timothy about the church of Ephesus. The verses in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 are often used as an excuse to limit women’s involvement in the church:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1275)

When Paul wrote this passage he was referring to one particular woman who was a deceptive woman in Ephesus. Cunningham and Hamilton (2000) argue that this passage was not to be used to deny women the ability to teach or lead.

Rather, it is man's interpretation that changes the context of the Bible to suit his own needs. What Paul is saying here is that women should be given the opportunity to learn as in the day of Paul's writing they were not. When Paul said that a woman should learn in quietness and submission he wasn't requiring anything different of this woman than he required of every church member, male and female as well as students in that day. The reason why Paul commanded this woman not to teach was because she had been teaching false doctrine. If one were to look at the full passage in context, 1 Timothy 2:1-15, one would understand that Paul is stating "the general principle that God wanted all to pray and live quiet, peaceful lives" (Cunningham & Hamilton, 2000, p. 228).

Further to this, 1 Timothy 3:1-13 is another passage of scripture that is misunderstood and taken out of context to suggest that all men should have power over women:

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must

also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

If one was to read this passage without the context of the time and place it was written one would assume from biblical perspectives that women were not to lead. Cunningham and Hamilton (2000) concede that "the structure of the letter and the content of Paul's message suggest that Paul fully intended women to serve in the leadership of the church" (p. 230). They argue that Paul is not withholding leadership responsibilities from godly women; in fact he worked with Priscilla and her husband Aquila in beginning the ministry in Ephesus and affirmed Phoebe as a fellow servant, deacon and exemplary leader of the church.

The question, therefore, is why women are less represented than men in leadership within the church, and why does the church limit women in leadership roles? It was found in this study that female administrators do feel limited in their leadership role because they are female. It is possible that the faith basis of the

school affiliation and interpretation of the Bible will influence the view of women in leadership. For example, the church with which Linden Christian School in Winnipeg is an adjunct ministry allows women in leadership roles, but not as deacons or pastors. In contrast, the church I attend allows and encourages female deacons.

The book, *Two views of women in ministry*, by Gundry and Beck (2005), further explains the church leadership's point of view. According to Gundry and Beck (2005) in evangelical churches there are two views of women in ministry: the egalitarian perspective and the complementarian perspective. The egalitarian perspective refers to equal ministry opportunities for both sexes as the basic definition of an egalitarian is "one who believes in the equality of all people" (Kassian, 2005, p. 249). The complementarian perspective sees ministry roles differentiated by sex. These perspectives are based on interpretations of the scriptures.

Egalitarians contend that an exploration of the Old and New Testament teachings would suggest that there should be equality between the sexes. Therefore, these individuals should ask a particularly important question:

So if no first-century leadership activities were distinctively male in character, why the impasse about women in leadership? And if there are no qualifications that would prohibit women from serving as leaders, why do some persist in excluding them today? (Gundry & Beck, 2005, p. 63-64)

Egalitarians support their ideas with numerous scripture references to argue their point of view of women in leadership and authority. Egalitarians affirm the distinction of male and female and “see it as basic to God’s created design and essential for the kind of partnership God intended” (Gundry & Beck, 2005, p. 103). They agree to be “made male and female is to be created in God’s image” (Genesis 1:27). They also believe that to “become one” is a divine creation and a profound mystery that mirrors the one-spirit relationship between Christ and the church (Gundry & Beck, 2005, p. 103). Egalitarians see male and female “as equal yet complementary who, when in a relationship of mutual submission, function as equal to the task of co-dominion over creation and coworkers in the church” (Gundry & Beck, 2005, p.103).

While a compelling argument of women in leadership in the church, complementarians use numerous scripture references to argue that women should not be in leadership in the church. For example in the Old Testament, women are in roles of leadership except the priesthood. In the Gospels women are in areas of leadership, except in Jesus’ inner circle as a disciple. In the book of Acts women are in leadership roles except as elders/overseers. Arguments continue that the apostle Paul restricted women from one position, that of an elder or overseer (Gundry & Beck, 2005, p.180-181). In short the complementarian allows:

...women in all areas of leadership within the church except the highest office. They conclude that “male headship is a timeless, God-ordained principle for the home and church, but unlike its

manifestation in secular society or other religions, among God's people it is limited to the highest office and even then transformed into a model of servanthood that puts others, especially women, above self. (Gundry & Beck, 2005, p. 181)

The view of the church which houses my school is that of complementarianism. This view also dictates the view of the school leadership since, at the time of the writing of this study, the church's senior pastor was also the Chief Executive Officer of the school.

I have learned that my sex plays a role in my place on the administration team. My administrative responsibilities include those related to Kindergarten to Grade 4 which is common in the literature that suggests that female administrators are more apt to be found in early year's schooling. Wallin (2005) states "a final commonly mentioned hiring/selection factor was that women remained at a disadvantage for certain positions, particularly the high school principalship, because stereotypical notions about the nature of discipline, physical stature, and/or women and athletics" (p. 144). This is supported in the book, *Speak softly and carry your own gym key: A female high school principal's guide to survival* (Hicks, 1996). In the forward of this book, written to the author Anna Hicks by Leonard O. Pellicer, University of South Carolina, reference is made to the 1909 classic, *The American high school* where John Franklin Brown states:

Generally speaking, men make better principals than women, especially in larger schools. They are stronger physically, possess

more executive ability; they are more likely to command the confidence of male citizens; they are more judicial in mind; they are more sure to seize upon the essential merits of a question; they are less likely to look at things from a personal point of view; they are likely to be better supported by subordinates; and simply because they are men, they are more likely to command the full respect and confidence of boys (p. vii).

Hicks (1996), by telling her story as a high school principal in a southern town in the United States, reveals that things have not changed as one would expect in the past 100 years; rather women are still underrepresented, underpaid and underappreciated (p. vii).

My journey in scholarship around women's leadership in faith-based schools has occurred because I wondered if female administrators in faith-based schools have to work harder to prove themselves because they are women. I wondered if the view of women is different in schools of different faiths. I wondered about the pain and frustration they might feel as they seek to live out who they believe God designed them to be (Beach, 2008, p. 44). It was interesting to explore these questions further as I completed this thesis.

Christian Feminism

Further to the topic of women in leadership is the necessity to explore the concept of feminism in relation to the church. As female Christian leaders, we must understand the evolution of feminism and the influence of feminism in the church. For this paper, in addition to academic readings on feminist theory, Mary

Kassian's book, *The feminist mistake* (2005) explores the impact that radical feminist theology has made on the church and culture. Kassian explores the rise of feminism and the suppression of women and their role in the church. Kassian (2005) states, "feminist theology was written out of an experience of oppression in society...feminist theologians believed that sex discrimination was the root of all other forms of oppression" (p. 64). Radical feminist theologians believed the key to world liberation was the liberation of the world's largest oppressed class: women. Much time was spent interpreting the Bible based on preconceived ideas and definitions.

Kassian (2005) states that based on the work of these theologians, a new doctrine of feminist theology developed: "feminist theologians believed they had a mandate to develop doctrine that affirmed their current experience as an oppressed class and that pointed to their own liberation...they systematically examined all doctrine and theology of the past" (p. 113). By renaming their world, these feminists began to align biblical teachings with their feminist vision. For example, "Christians believe the biblical teaching that humans exist to serve and bring glory to their Creator, God. Feminist theory...shifted the emphasis to: God's purpose was to assist humans to realize liberation, wholeness, and utopia for themselves" (p. 114). Radical feminist theologians went on to redefine Jesus, sin, salvation, the church and eschatology (end times) to their own advantage. The most radical of this group even redefined God with generic language.

Feminist theology is an important element in this project as women's experiences in administration in faith-based schools is explored. The church and

a faith-based school cannot be separated, as in most situations; the faith-based school is connected to a church whose doctrinal statements are the foundation of the school.

Academic literature such as Wallin (in press) states that there is no “definite answer” on feminist theory and that “there are 5 avenues of feminist theorizing that have conceptualized and problematized issues of/in educational administration” (Wallin, in press, p. 1). Understanding the theories: “liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, poststructural/postmodern feminism and most recently in Canada postcolonial feminism” (Wallin, in press, p. 2) helps one understand his/her interpretation of the term feminism. Wallin (in press) states that it is important to “first locate the individual feminist’s social location” and the “bias that may be shaping the understanding of feminism” (p. 3) when listening to a participant’s response to a question. Considering the dynamics of the study group of this thesis: Canadian, white, English-speaking, heterosexual, middle class, Christian women, means they speak from a “privileged social location” (Wallin, in press, p. 3) of women.

Do I consider myself a feminist? When I first began my academic journey I resisted characterizing myself as a feminist, but after much thought and learning about the nature of feminism I have changed my mind, though not to any radical extent. I believe I am a conservative feminist. I believe that I am a strong, independent woman who has grown up with many strong male and female influences in my life. I believe in women having a voice. I believe in women in leadership. I believe that women can do all that men can do. Does the word

feminism scare me? Yes, because it often comes with negative connotations, and has perhaps been deliberately positioned so by those who would prefer women not to affirm themselves as feminists. The difficulty of being a Christian and a feminist is reconciling the church's view of women and the submissive expectations the church places on women. I know and understand the frustrations some women who have been called to leadership roles within the church and faith-based school face, thus, this thesis. It is my own desire to reconcile this tension that brings me to this work, but not one that would have me question my faith, as I believe it is my faith that also shapes my views on leadership and provides me with the gifts I have to practice my calling.

Called to Lead

I believe that I was called by God into my role as vice principal at a faith-based school. I believe that God had planned my career before I realized what I was called to do. I believe in the words in Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1254). A calling is believed to be the voice of God. This may be akin to secular female administrators' views that they have been "shoulder-tapped" to consider the position, or had "been at the right place at the right time". Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor and Founder of Willow Creek Community Church, defines a calling best;

I wonder if people understand how precious callings really are.
How much thought God goes through before he taps a person on
the shoulder and says,

Here's an assignment for you. I've crafted it for you. It might be a difficult one but I want you to do it. I'm going to grow you up through it and I want you to be faithful to it.

I fear that people take these callings far too lightly, and they bail far too quickly. (Hybels, Leadership Summit Notebook, 2011, p. 30)

The calling into an administration role in a faith-based school is not an easy calling. I know that God prepared me for the calling into administration. As stated, my teaching experience was limited when I entered administration, but my volunteer leadership experience in schools and churches was vast. I watched God close doors to other ministry opportunities before he clearly opened the doors to the Christian school in which I work. I know that He planned my time at this faith-based school, my role as an administrator, and the study for this Master's degree far before I was aware of the calling on my life to serve God in this way.

I know this because ten years ago God clearly closed a door in my life to open another. I was offered a full scholarship to complete a Masters of Divinity in Youth and Family Ministry at Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia. This was a new program at the college. I was going to end my teaching career and enter full time ministry as the Youth and Family pastor at our church while completing a Master's degree. Within days of accepting this call, my husband was asked to relocate to Winnipeg, MB. My husband had been very successful in his career while working in Winnipeg prior to his heart surgery. I submitted to my husband's needs, put my own desires on hold again and moved our family back to

Winnipeg. Much to my surprise, just a few months after returning to Winnipeg, I was offered a teaching position at Linden Christian School. I replaced a teacher who was moving to Halifax. Two years later I was asked to consider a position as a vice principal. Now, ten years later I am completing a Master's degree and am in a role where I do youth and family ministries as an administrator in a faith-based school. There is no doubt in my mind that God called me to my administrative role in a Christian faith-based school. My story affirms that calling.

I remember God speaking into my teenage years, calling me to be obedient to Him and to serve Him well with the gifts he had given me. I recall hearing God's voice clearly, prodding me on to do His will. I did not expect God's will was for me to lead a large Christian school in Winnipeg. To do so I must trust Him fully. The calling of other women in administration in faith-based schools may or may not be similar to mine. The pilot project I conducted prior to this thesis indicated that women clearly felt they were called into the position and that God had equipped them to fulfill the role. The faith component of women administrators in faith-based schools is at the heart of their roles. They must understand biblical truths and lead with a heart for God.

Faith

Knowing what one believes and why one believes it is important for an administrator of a Christian faith-based school. One needs to understand the fundamental truths of Christianity. They must understand some unshakable biblical truths. Faith-based schools have doctrines of faith and church-related understandings to be followed to be affiliated with the church, whether Christian

or Catholic. Within the Christian school where I work, as that is the environment that I know best, the doctrine of faith is non-negotiable. Although the following passage is lengthy, I include the doctrine of Linden Christian School to demonstrate an example the clear expectations of faith for principals and other employees working in Christian faith-based schools:

The Word of God: We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error as to fact as well as purpose in the original manuscripts, written under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

The Trinity: We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three Persons, that these are equal in every Divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

God the Father: We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the lives of people, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and spiritual death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ: We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary death for the sins of all people, His bodily resurrection for the empowering of the new life for all who believe,

His ascension into Heaven, His perpetual intercession for His people, and His personal, visible return to earth. We believe that He was truly God and perfectly Human.

Holy Spirit: We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide. We believe that He is God.

Sin: We believe that sin is falling short of the holiness and perfection of God; that it is rebellion against God. We believe that every person is a sinner by nature and by choice and is, therefore, under condemnation to spiritual death and eternal separation from God; that every person is in need of a Saviour from sin. We believe that Satan is a real entity who is attempting to lead mankind to further rebellion against God.

Regeneration: We believe that the Holy Spirit regenerates those who trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour. We believe that they become a new creation in Christ Jesus. We believe that their faith in Christ gives them eternal life and the confidence of a place in heaven.

Christian Life: We believe that those who trust Christ as Saviour reveal God's grace in their lives as they seek to live their lives according to God's will as revealed in scripture. This is a response

of love to God in view of His mercy and grace. Our acceptance with God depends on God's gift of salvation through Christ rather than our own efforts to please Him. (Linden Christian School, 1987, www.lindenchristian.org)

Administrators determine the spiritual, social and educational climates of their schools. Spiritually, school administrators articulate the school's mission, vision and core values that direct the school course. Faith-based schools and organizations "rarely rise above the standards of their leaders" (Gangel, 2002, p. 10). This is the "Law of the Lid" as stated by John Maxwell in *The 21 irrefutable laws of leadership*. Maxwell states,

"Leadership ability is the lid that determines a person's level of effectiveness. The lower an individual's ability to lead, the lower the lid on his potential. The higher the leadership, the greater the effectiveness" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 1).

In other words "your leadership ability always determines your effectiveness and the potential impact on your organization" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 1). This is a great responsibility of the leader of a faith-based organization to not only lead as a strong educational leader, but also as a strong spiritual leader.

According to Gangel (2002), effective educators must be "men and women of prayer, godly educators guarding the academic integrity of the school that can manage people and tasks well and be anchored in deep relationship with the immutable God while balancing healthy family relationships and outside activities" (p. 11). This seems to be an insurmountable task, considering the

spiritual realm and the work within the faith-based school environment. Along with this, administrators are also curriculum and instructional leaders, and must be fiscally responsible stewards as financial resources are not as abundant and therefore do not allow for the breadth of programs or personnel found within the public system. The bottom line is that beyond the administrative functions of the faith-based school administrator, there is also the spiritual leadership required to ensure the distinctive of the school. On top of this, female leaders must navigate the gendered realities of the church and/or those who lead within it. This is a huge responsibility.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of female administrators in a number of Christian faith-based schools. This study is qualitative in nature as its intent was to provide participants with an opportunity to share their career experiences. Participants provided a rich and diverse array of experiences and responses to the questions presented in an interview format.

The following questions were the basis of each interview:

1. How do female principals in Christian faith-based schools describe the nature of their principal role?
2. What challenges and/or issues face female principals in Christian faith-based schools, and to what extent do these challenges/issues influence job satisfaction and performance, and life away from work?
3. What supports do female principals put in place individually or believe could be put in place systemically, to offset or enhance their ability to face or deal with these challenges/issues successfully?
4. How does the faith of female principals in Christian faith-based schools influence their understanding of leadership and the role of the principal?

There are two major traditions of research: quantitative and qualitative. This thesis followed the qualitative research model. Qualitative research usually takes place in naturally occurring situations and stresses a phenomenological model in which realities are rooted in the subjects' perceptions (McMillan, 2008,

p. 11). There is a focus on “understanding and meaning based on verbal narratives and observations rather than numbers” (McMillan, 2008, p. 11). Researchers look for data that is authentic to their subjects being interviewed by choosing purposeful sampling. Thus, the story that the subject tells, based on the questions of the researcher, is truly authentic to the subject and his/her environment.

The purpose of qualitative research is to investigate the complexity and context of topics from the understanding of participants rather than external causes. Qualitative research tends to occur in naturalistic settings. A variety of qualitative techniques may be used: participant observations, in-depth interviewing which can be unstructured, open-ended and nondirective, semi-structured interviewing, focus group interviewing, gathering life history, archival research, and fieldwork. These techniques allow the researcher to gain new ideas and perspectives on things already known or to acquire more information on a subject area to get a broader and better understanding of the subject.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explain five features of qualitative research:

- 1) Naturalistic – qualitative research has actual setting as the direct source of data. The researcher is the key instrument of the research. Data is collected by being on the premises and supplemented by information gained by being on location. The researcher’s insight is the key instrument for analysis. Qualitative researchers are concerned with context and therefore visit the setting to best understand the

research. Since qualitative researchers understand that human behaviour is influenced by the setting in which it occurs.

- 2) Descriptive Data – The qualitative data is descriptive. Data includes interview transcripts, field notes, videotapes and other items rather than statistical information. Data is analyzed to keep the richness of the story and the reports contain quotations to describe the situation. Researchers look for clues to gain a better understanding of what is being studied.
- 3) Concern with process – Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than outcomes or products. They ask questions such as:
 - a. How do people negotiate meaning?
 - b. How do certain terms and labels come to be applied?
 - c. How do particular notions come to be taken as part of what we know as “common sense”?
 - d. What is the natural history of the activity or events under study?
- 4) Inductive – Data is analyzed inductively. Data pieces are interconnected. The direction of the study may come after time has been spent with the subjects of the study. The researcher cannot assume that enough is known to recognize important concerns before the research.
- 5) Meaning – Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their lives, or participant perspectives. The focus on

questions such as: a) What assumptions do people make about their lives? b) What do they take for granted? (p. 5-8)

Qualitative researchers want to capture perspectives accurately. Within education, qualitative researchers are asking questions to discover “what they (the participants) are experiencing, how they (the participants) interpret their experiences and how they themselves structure the world in which they live” (Psathas, 1973 cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 8). Qualitative research in education allows a better understanding by asking questions of the people they are learning from to discover “what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live” (Psathas, 1973 cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 8). Qualitative research allows people to share their stories for the researcher to construct a context from which to understand the world through the eyes of the participants.

I incorporated a phenomenological qualitative research approach using naturalistic inquiry in my attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations. Phenomenology is the reflective study of pre-reflective or lived experience. In this research I have attempted to study the lived experiences of female administrators in Christian faith-based schools and interpret the meaning of their experiences in the interviews.

I used feminist interviewing techniques as an approach to understand the research gathered from the participants. Using a qualitative methodology and feminist interviewing techniques, I attempted to collect and represent the

perspectives of the women in administration in Christian faith-based schools. Their untold stories gave a voice to others who feel marginalized in their role as a female administrator. As I approached this project, I understood that this study would affirm differences among women in faith-based schools and promote their interests. It was hoped that their shared experiences would support the definition of feminism and “include the aspirations to live and act in ways that embody feminist thought and promote justice and well-being of all women” (DeVault & Gross, 2007, p 174). Feminism is viewed as a social justice project which is linked to critical social theory as it “problematizes gender and brings women and their concerns to the center of attentions...to attend to women and gender, and it challenges feminists to learn and attend to others’ liberation and justice struggles” (DeVault & Gross, 2007, p. 174-175).

Beyond the possible challenge of discussing feminism within a faith-based context there may be challenges to the research process. DeVault and Gross (2007) suggest two challenges for feminist interview researchers: 1) constructing a rationale for labeling research feminist without reproducing the false homogenization and separations of historical feminism and 2) the challenge to adapt new theorizations of feminism so that they serve empirical projects...projects in which researchers engage with others and produce new knowledge (p. 175-176). These challenges to the research process were not a concern in this research. More of a concern was the participants’ understanding of feminism.

When using interviews as the main method of research, DeVault and Gross (2007) suggest the following are important to feminist research: active listening; the opportunities afforded by a focus on language, narrative, and discourse; interviewing ethics and the risks of “discursive colonization” (p. 176). DeVault and Gross (2007) suggest that the social contexts of people’s lives are historically situated and constituted through people’s activities, and the research process itself is an integral aspect of the construction of knowledge about society (p. 176). In this research it is important that these women are not placed into a mold which depicts them arbitrarily constructed as has happened with Third World Women. Through interviewing the researcher gathers information of people’s experiences in a certain area. The open-ended, semi-structured interview is favored by feminist researchers. Active listening is key to the interview process. Active listening goes beyond hearing what one wants or expects to hear. As the researcher it was important that I put my biases aside and truly listen to the stories of the women. I found that the answers to each interview question were found beyond the specific questions and often found intertwined with the answers of other interview questions. DeVault and Gross state that “as researchers we must be cognizant of the fact that feminists may be divided by relations of power and privilege, and that listening may require that we acknowledge the ignorance of our own privileges may have produced before we can hear what others wish to tell us” (p. 183). While listening, researchers must look for hidden meaning in what has been shared, what lies beneath the explicit

speech (p. 183). Researchers must be attentive to the structures and organization of language, talk and discourse as people tell their stories.

By responding to the research questions participants were able to share their experiences and make sense of those experiences. The semi-structured interview was framed with open-ended questions to allow for a more in-depth and detailed account of the participant's experience. By interviewing one-on-one I established rapport and allowed for a comfortable setting in which the participants could share their experiences. Even though it is said that the interview process is an artificial encounter, the open-ended interview involved a relatively intimate face to face time; the best approach as it allows women to talk more freely (DeVault & Gross, 2007, p. 189). While the formal interview was the main avenue to gather information I spent at least thirty minutes with many of the participants, prior to the interview, touring their school and having a relaxed conversation. When it was time to turn on the audio recorder the women had already spent time with me discussing their role informally while showing me their school building and telling me about their school. The use of an interview facilitated my understanding of the participants' role as an administrator in a faith-based school.

Participant Selection and Description of Study Environment

I used purposeful and criterion selection to select participants for this study. I selected women who were principals or vice principals in Christian faith-based schools who I felt would best help me understand the phenomenon given criteria for participation based on the research questions to facilitate an

expansion of my developing ideas. For this thesis, I conducted twelve interviews with female administrators in Christian faith-based schools in Western Canada. I recruited the participants using their contact information in the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) Western Canada online school directory and/or the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools (MFIS) online directory. I chose women that I had met formally or informally at ACSI or MFIS events as I had already build rapport with these women. To allow greater anonymity I chose female administrators from three provinces across Western Canada. I did this as the pool of possible participants was limited in Manitoba.

Using a telephone transcript, I made phone calls to female administrators from my selected list of Christian faith-based schools until I was able to confirm the number of interviews desired. Only one prospective participant denied my request. I emailed each confirmed participant a copy of the telephone script, interview questions and a personalized consent form.

I arranged a mutually convenient time and place for each interview. I interviewed each female administrator for approximately one to one and one-half hours. Eleven of the interviews were face-to-face and one was by telephone. Nine interviews were held in the participants' school office. Two interviews were held in a conference room at a conference and one was held by phone in my home office. Eight of the interviews that were held in the participants' schools included a tour of the school either before or after the interview. During the tour I gained more information about the school and the diversity of the participant's role as a school administrator. Since the information learned from this informal

time was not recorded, I did not use it formally as part of the data collection. This time did give me valuable insight into the school environment. I also visited the websites of each school to learn about the school prior to the interview.

I used a digital voice recorder to record each interview. Appendix A provides the interview questions used as a basis for the semi-structured interviews. I transcribed each transcript verbatim and changed the names of people and places by using pseudonyms. For the words that reveal places, I removed the name of the school, church or university and wrote the generic term 'school', 'church' or 'university'. I emailed the transcript containing the pseudonyms to each participant for a member check reinforcing the words that were in the consent form, "You will have one week to verify the information on your transcript, after which I will assume that you are comfortable with the information and I will proceed with data analysis." Three of the participants requested changes or deletions to the transcript. Two participants noted spelling or grammatical errors. Six participants approved their transcripts as written. One participant did not respond to my emails for a member check. After the third email I choose to accept a no reply from this participant as permission to proceed with the data analysis.

When I completed each interview I gave each participant the book *Gifted to lead* (2008) by Nancy Beach. The participants received the book at the end of the interview or I mailed it to them. With the book I gave each participant a card thanking her for her time and participation in this research project. Eight of the

twelve participants requested a copy of the results of this study on their consent form.

Researcher Positioning

As I mentioned earlier, I am a female administrator in a Christian faith-based school and therefore have a personal investment in the topic of study. Additionally, I know other women who have experienced barriers in their quest to obtain leadership positions and I have faced barriers on my journey to leadership, barriers imposed on me as a female administrator in a Christian faith-based school.

While I thought, due to the personal nature of the questions, some participants may have a difficult time responding honestly and openly to the questions, this was not the case. The conversations were rich with many pertinent details. Further notes to this point are found in the limitations section in Chapter One. My positioning certainly shaped the ways in which I analyzed the data that the participants provided to me. The use of full confidentiality and anonymity attempted to address some of these issues of confidentiality, as did the use of member checks of transcripts, verifying preliminary findings with participants, and disclosing generalized themes only, rather than particular incidents which may have had the potential to identify individuals.

My bias in this project was influenced by my position as an administrator in a faith-based school. For each of the topics developed in my thesis I have my own experiences, experiences that may or may not be similar to the women whom I interviewed. I live a full life. I am a wife, mother, daughter, vice principal,

friend, mentor, volunteer, and student. There are many demands on my time and energy. It has been necessary to prioritize my roles in life so that I can keep my priorities in order, and to ensure that the time I have each day represents and reflects my priorities. The majority of my waking hours are work related. I usually work from 7:30-5:00. I rarely take lunch even though it is scheduled into my daily calendar. The urgent events of the day shift the planned events to the end of the day. Knowing what needs to be accomplished the next day, I often end up working past 5:00 to complete the tasks so the next day can start fresh again.

When my work day is complete, I have a family and home waiting for me. Once again priorities are important. I have learned to manage time as many women do, and to choose my priorities in the home, such as housework (I changed/lowered my expectations), to ensure that I was present with my family. While my spouse is extremely supportive of my role as an administrator, he also has demands and responsibilities at his job. Therefore we have come to work together and share the responsibilities of home, with the majority of the home responsibilities still resting in my hands. I have strategized to achieve balance. Finding balance is not easy.

I know what it is like to hit that wall, to have nothing else to give. I need to be intentional to fill my tank. My time with my spouse and family, focused on my marriage and family, fills my tank. Fortunately my children were older when I entered administration. I could not imagine being a school administrator with preschool or elementary aged children. However, even though they are older,

my children still need me. Shortly after becoming an administrator I asked my children how they felt about my new job. They responded that they liked it; they knew I had lots of meetings at night, but also knew that when I was home, I was home, and I refused to do more work. I also could not have succeeded in my role had my husband traveled as he did when I was home full time with my children. His support and the support of my family were and are critical to my success as a school administrator. My role as a mother has also influenced my role as an administrator.

I have asked to take on more responsibilities in my job related to older grades but have been told that as a woman I am better suited for the younger students. My colleagues, all male, often comment that they could not do my job, that is, to work daily with young children. It appears their concerns relate more to their own sense of lack of ability than my sense of ability. Although there may be some natural “fit” with many women and children related to “maternal instincts,” I also believe my sex should not determine my skills to lead in other areas of administration in the school.

My positioning is shaped by the fact that I am a Christian and I see the world with a biblical worldview. I was born into a Christian home and raised in an evangelical Baptist church. I do not claim to be a theologian nor do I have an abundance of theological training. I do not have a doctrinal understanding of other faiths. I understand the truths of the bible as summarized in the Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic [Christian] Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen

<https://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=220>).

I believe that people are given free will to accept or deny Christ. I believe in the trinity of God and that I am filled with the Holy Spirit. I understand my identity as a child of God. I know that I was chosen by God before creation and that by my free choice I have accepted Jesus and my personal Lord and Saviour. I have been adopted into God's family through Jesus Christ. I know that I have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and that my sins, past, present and future have been forgiven because Jesus died on the cross for mankind. I believe that my eternity will be with Christ. I rejoice in what I read in the scriptures in Ephesians 1:3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1253). I have already received all of the spiritual blessings that are in Christ. I believe what is written in the scriptures in Ephesians 1:4-7:

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1253).

I am a woman who chooses to honour and glorify God in my life and I have been called to serve in a Christian school. I am intentional and value my quiet time with God in prayer and devotions as this is an important aspect of keeping my focus on Christ. Being a Christian and living a life that honors God is the most important thing to me.

In my church life experience, I learned to take a more silent approach in my former church, a fairly conservative church with a complementarian point of view. While I had strong teaching, administrative and leadership gifts, I was not invited to be part of the strategic planning and leadership of the church. I often felt that my gifts were a threat to the men who were leading the church. I was not the only woman not allowed to provide input; no women were allowed. The stories in *Gifted to lead* (Beach, 2008) resonated with me as they were often my story. I often wondered why women with leadership gifts were a threat to the men in church leadership. I often felt underappreciated for the leadership gifts I possess.

Because of my experiences in life and work, I recognize that gender equity or inequity in the church is based on the understanding and perceptions of a woman's place in the church or in a faith-based school. The view of the leadership of such organizations, egalitarian or complementarian, impacts the challenges that women face each day.

My analysis of this research is based on my life experiences as a woman, my experiences in the church, as a leader in a faith-based school, my biblical worldview and my faith in God. As I analyzed the data, I looked for the faith story in each of the participant's stories, and how they understood the intersection of their work and faith.

As stated, my story may or may not be the same as those of other women but my experiences do put me in a position understand the experiences of other female administrators in Christian faith-based schools. This study also allows me to compare my story to theirs and share our experiences as female administrators in Christian faith-based schools.

Data Analysis

The interviews were audio taped and then transcribed by myself. Each participant had the opportunity to see and review the transcript of the interview after it was transcribed to change anything with which she may not have been comfortable. Upon completion and transcription of all interviews, and verification of any changes from the participants I began analyzing the data I had collected.

Relying on an approach called "constant comparative analysis" by Guba; I took one piece of data (from one theme or one interview) and compared it to all

others (cited in Patton, 1990). I labeled chart paper with each interview question and posted the chart paper around a classroom. I reviewed the responses of each participant to the specific interview question. I cut the transcripts into sections based on the participants' responses. For each interview question I compared the participants' responses to each question. I looked for similarities and differences and began to understand the relationships between the data. I was able to compare one woman's experience to another's based on the interview questions that were asked of each participant.

Initially I chose constant comparative analysis by comparing one woman's experience to another. There were limitations of this initial method, as there was much fullness in the stories of these women's lives. The stories needed to be told. In the end, I used a constant comparison approach related to each interview question. I also used the women's narratives to support my findings. Thus, I have somewhat of a hybrid approach that blends constant comparative and narrative analysis. Had I chosen to use narrative analysis solely, I could have used more narrative description in my findings. A narrative analysis is focused on how people use the story form to make sense of their lives to themselves and others.

Clearly subjective, the results of this research are my interpretations of the facts. There were many times that I felt like I was talking to myself as their stories were so close to my own. My journey as a female administrator in a faith-based school influenced the way I examined each interview.

I examined each piece of chart paper containing the participants' responses to the specific question. As I read through the responses I developed a coding system to look for themes, regularities and patterns in the responses or data. The words and phrases that were repeated throughout the participants' responses became the coding categories. I mapped the themes to show the interconnections between them. Once the themes were established I read through the cut-up statements from the transcripts and looked for good quotations that illustrated the themes. After the themes were developed, I employed quantitative measures to analyze and report the qualitative data as consensus, supported or individual themes. This was accomplished by marking each of the topics or themes with the number of subjects who mention that theme. In the order that the themes appeared in the interviews, I put the themes into file folders. I labeled the file folders with the names of the themes and made connections between themes and the explanation of the themes.

In reporting themes, Lincoln and Guba (1985) summarized three ways that themes can be identified: (1) consensus themes – when the majority of the women state the same thing; (2) supported themes – when approximately half of the women state the same thing; (3) individual themes – when only one or two women state a theme. In order to categorize the information Guba (cited in Patton, 1990) suggests the researcher begins looking for similarities and differences between the different categories. After the themes were developed, I employed quantitative measures to analyze and report the qualitative data. This was accomplished by marking each of the topics or themes with the number of

subjects who mention that theme. Connections were then made between the data and the literature.

The time before and after each interview also provided rich information that added credibility to the participants' responses. This time was relaxed and informal. I found that the conversation leading up to and following the interviews added to my interpretation of the interview. I was unable to use this information in the coding part of this research as I did not record or transcribe this conversation. The observations I made about each school during this informal time and tour of the school added to my understanding of the role and work environment of each of the participants in this study.

The following four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), were used for establishing reliability and validity of the qualitative research.

Credibility. This criterion is an assessment of the believability and trustworthiness of the research findings from the participant's perspective. During the interview I researched, restated, summarized, or paraphrased the information received from each participant to ensure accuracy. Following the transcription of the interview, I conducted member checks, and asked participants for critical feedback on their transcript.

I also used a form of persistent observation (identifying the characteristics or elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304)) as I interviewed the twelve participants in an attempt to access ample data. Credibility

was enhanced to the extent that I used multiple interviews as one attempt to confirm data and/or findings between sources. I also compared the literature with findings in my data sources.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the degree that findings can be transferred or generalized to other settings or contexts, or populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a qualitative researcher, I enhanced transferability by detailing the research methods, contexts, and assumptions underlying the study. I used thick description to provide a detailed description of the experiences of participants that included my interpretation in addition to the observed content and process. In this way, the methods and findings were documented as carefully as possible to provide for opportunities of transfer across settings, contexts or populations.

Dependability. Dependability is concerned with the stability of results over time and the importance of accounting for changing contexts and circumstances. As the research process unfolded, I carefully documented any changes or circumstances that accrued and affected the original plan of research and that therefore impact the findings and analysis. I found that the responses and experiences of the participants were similar to my own and affirmed the direction of this study.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent that the research findings can be confirmed or corroborated by others. I was looking for disconfirming evidence or searching for accounts that differ from the main accounts as well as looking for confirmatory evidence that demonstrated the

common experiences of women leaders. The findings detailed in Chapter Four will detail my work in this area. I also explored the responses of participants from across Western Canada to see how their experiences compared.

Confidentiality and Ethics

This project obtained ethics approval from the University of Manitoba Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. The project included twelve participants from across Western Canada. Each participant was instructed that participation in the study was voluntary, and that the anonymity of those who chose to participate would be assured in the final document. Participants were assured on the consent forms and at the beginning of each interview that they could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Only aggregate data was reported to further protect the confidentiality of participants. Participants were assured that all responses were anonymous and that the names of participants' names would not appear anywhere in the results. The data are securely stored on a password protected computer file as it is required by the University of Manitoba guidelines. Printed data were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. Confidentiality was further assured through the use of pseudonyms for the participants, schools, churches and communities under study.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research methods that were utilized for this study. The study is qualitative in nature to provide participants with an opportunity to share their experiences. I incorporated a qualitative research

perspective so that I could examine the lived experiences of women leaders in Christian faith-based schools. Once the research was complete I analyzed the data by looking for themes to report on and identify. I selected women who I thought would best help me understand the lived experiences of female administrators in Christian faith-based schools. Chapter Four outlines the findings of the research, and chapter five reports on conclusions and implications for research, practice and theory.

Chapter Four

Results

This chapter is largely descriptive in nature, focusing on presenting the themes that I identified in the responses of the participants based on the questions posed during the interviews. As a result of the participants' responses to each interview question, the data collected has been coded into themes and illustrated using direct quotations from the participants to portray their thoughts and feelings. The quotes are verbatim from the transcripts with the exception of omitting general colloquial language such as "um", "like", "yeah" and repetitive use of articles (e.g. and, then, that, this) but these deletions in no way changed the meaning of what was said. Results are further related to the literature in terms of leadership qualities and skills and women's issues in leadership, as well as personal reflection on my role with administration in a faith-based school. As indicated in Chapter Three, the interview questions (Appendix A) were designed deliberately to draw out responses related to the research questions, which guide and inform this study:

1. How do female principals in faith-based schools describe the nature of their principal role?
2. What challenges and/or issues face female principals in Christian faith-based schools, and to what extent do these challenges/issues influence job satisfaction and performance, and life away from work?

3. What supports do female principals put in place individually or believe could be put in place systemically, to offset or enhance their ability to face or deal with these challenges/issues successfully?
4. How does the faith of female principals in Christian faith-based schools influence their understanding of leadership and the role of the principal?

The results presented in this chapter are based on interviews with twelve participants in three provinces in Western Canada. Six participants were principals, three were vice principals, two were teaching principals and one was a retired principal. Nine principals were from Protestant schools and three were from Catholic schools. Ten of the participants worked in urban schools and two worked in rural schools. Eight of these schools were “stand-alone” schools, meaning they were not affiliated or physically connected to a church or parish. Four schools were connected to a church or parish. The student populations in these schools ranged from thirty to nine hundred students. The tuition costs of the schools varied from \$1500.00 per family to approximately \$5000.00 per student. Some principals received salaries comparable to the public school system while others were paid well below that of a public school principal or vice principal within their province. For example my salary is 90% of Winnipeg School Division, one year removed.

The interview questions (Appendix A) asked the female principals focused on their role, joys and challenges, leadership styles, support systems/balance, women in faith-based schools and personal faith. These questions were formed

to get in-depth and detailed information about their experiences in administration and also covered topics reflecting upon the five ways women lead as outlined by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011).

When reading the excerpted selections from the interviews, it is important to realize the biblical worldview of these women and the depth of their faith in God. Their answers are shaped by the way they see the world; through the truth of God's word, the Bible. The Bible is the guidebook for their lives. Their faith in God is the common thread that connects their voices and their stories. Faith is a major theme in this study.

Career Paths

The first question asked principals to describe their career path in education and their role as an administrator. They were asked to consider; (a) what lead them to enter administration, and (b) the nature of their work and role as an administrator.

Entering Administration

Half of the women interviewed for this project had education experience in both public and faith-based school settings and half of the women had education experience in faith-based school settings alone. The education experience of the participants varied: five participants held a Bachelor of Education degree; four held a Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education or course work towards a Master's degree; two participants held a Master's degree and one held a Doctorate degree (but not in education).

When asked why the participants entered administration the answers were varied. No consensus theme emerged. Instead there were supported and individual themes such as needing more of a challenge, being encouraged or invited to do so (shoulder-tapped), feeling that it was their vocation of calling, had never considered or desired administration, or saw that there was a need. For some of these women there was more than one reason shared when they answered the question. Table 2 outlines the responses. The participant numbers for each table are randomly selected and not assigned to individual participants, in order to protect their anonymity.

Table 2

Career Paths to Entering Administration

Theme Participant	Encouraged or invited	Saw a need	Never considered	Considered it a vocation	Needed a challenge or change
1	X				
2				X	
3		X			
4	X				
5					X
6		X			
7			X		
8				X	X
9			X		
10		X			
11			X		
12	X				
Totals	3	3	3	2	2

The three participants who were encouraged or invited into the role received the invitation from the current administration with whom they worked. These women had established themselves as leaders within their schools in roles such as teacher leaders or department heads. One participant had been working in the school when an administration change was occurred.

Within, a day or two I was approached “would I take that responsibility on?” and I was blown away by that. Jaw dropping, and so I said “yes” I would consider it after I had caught my breath and then decided yes I could do that and they were still offering me part-time. The school was smaller then. So I decided to take it on and that’s been the journey. Then it was well one more day, one more day and so I can’t remember what year it was that I actually took on the full-time responsibility and because the school was growing in terms of evolving you might say. I kind of evolved and grew with that in terms of leadership. So the long answer to a short question is the administrative role found me, I didn’t search for it or aspire to it even.

She was asked to consider the role of vice principal and realized the role found her.

For another participant, her response to being asked to consider administration prompted a reference to the Prayer of Jabez in 1Chronicles 4:10 which states “Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request” (*The Holy Bible*, p. 429):

I actually said to them [school/church leadership team] I am not very administrative. I like people. I don’t like paper and they said they are looking for a leader and you are ready to take leadership

roles and so we would like you to come and do some of the things that I don't have time to do and because God said I am about to expand your territory. I couldn't say no, so I said okay I am willing to try it. Then they felt they needed a vice principal and again before that happened God said to me "I'm about to expand your territory" and I wasn't going to argue with Him but I said the same thing to them; my real strengths are people, they're not paper and I like to work with people and not so much with the computer stuff.

This participant was willing to accept this new challenge. After this participant accepted the role as a vice principal she felt affirmed that this was her calling and approved by God.

This is similar to my story. There was an administrative change in my school. I had established myself as a leader in my area of the school and had considered administration at some point in my career but did not expect it as quickly as it happened. The new administration challenged me to apply for the vice principal position and I did so. When it was discovered that I was an applicant I was challenged by several long term staff members regarding why I thought my qualifications would suit this role. I explained my point of view. I was the successful candidate and changes were made to the expectations of administrators at my school. Namely, up to the time of my hiring, administrators of the school were expected to be members of the church of which the school was a ministry. For family reasons I was unwilling to move my family to a new church. The church deacon board and school board agreed to my attendance

and membership at a sister church. This opened the door for other vice principals at my school to attend other churches. However, the school principal is required to be a member of the church as he is considered a member of the leadership team of the church.

Three participants saw a need and were willing to step into the role of administration to fill the need. One participant stated,

To be honest it had never been a desire of mine. I found that I enjoy it more than I expected I would, but my passion is teaching and I love curriculum so that was kind of where my passion lies but basically need the first time. I did administration as a VP because it was my third year teaching I said I can't be a principal so they had someone come in part-time because basically she had a full-time job but had a teaching degree so I was not quite principal but I did a lot of the "principal-ing" and the following year she said I can't do this anymore and so there wasn't anyone else to do it so I stepped in. I started as a plain Jane teacher and that was fine by me and then I had taught here at the school for four years and found the same sort of situation where an administrator was stepping out and they advertised and saw not a lot of interest so I found myself doing it again and my husband had vowed we wouldn't do it again so then we had to have a lot of talk about that and he said he was willing to let me do it again. So, it wasn't something that was a goal of mine.

In this situation this woman stepped in to fill a need. Surprisingly she found she enjoyed the role more than she expected.

Three participants had not considered administration as a career option. One participant who felt that the role had “chosen” her was pursuing a graduate course in guidance when she considered administration:

I think it kind of chose me if that makes sense. I never thought of myself as a school administrator. I am an educator through and through and when I was in the classroom I thought that is what I'd wanted to do for the rest of my life and because I'm a lifelong learner I thought I would go back to school and take some more courses. I was actually going in the counseling direction and that's what I was going to be continuing my post-bac work in counseling and then as I continued studying I thought wow there's a world out there that is very intriguing and I believed that maybe there was a place for me there and so the opportunity presented itself here in the school in the vice principal position. I feel this is part of my fabric and who I am and the educators in this building helped form and shape who I am and I thought maybe there is a call here for me to also give back to the community what was given to me. And so even though initially there wasn't an interest there it became a strong interest and the opportunity presented itself so I kind of put myself in that direction and continued studying and I think that was the best choice for me.

This participant found that the role was a good fit for her once she invested her talents into administration.

Two participants strongly felt it was their calling, with one using the word vocation. One said she realized it was her calling after she was in the role for a period of time. Another of the participants said:

Of all the questions you had on this sheet that was the most difficult to answer and in reflecting on it the only answer I can give you is it was my vocation. It wasn't something I aspired to, that I spent a lot of time thinking about. When I look back on my life, my life's journey you just see that God has been leading you step by step until you got to this point so in a sense it just happened, but I was prepared for it by all those little steps that led up to it.

Vocation has a couple of meanings but in understanding her family story, she is using the word vocation to describe her role. It is interesting to note that although these above participants felt called to the role, they had not aspired to it.

Another participant felt called to administration based on her desire to lead from a young age:

Well I've always wanted to be a teacher and I always felt I had other gifts so since I was little, I was fourteen I was already assistant coordinator for catechism in the church so I always had some of those leadership skills. At age eighteen I was already on a board for a community association and being vice president and so forth, so I always felt that part of my skills was that of leadership,

management, working with others. When I was teaching out at another school division I always took a lot of administration courses as it was recommended by people, you know you should look further and you have the leadership skills. So I eventually, twelve years ago, I entered full time administration.

She had sought out opportunities to acquire training in administration prior to becoming an administrator. She felt administration was a natural fit based on her leadership gifts.

Two participants said they needed more of a challenge to their teaching role. One participant stated:

Well, I think, I have been in education for a long time and in my research I've done you can grasp a five to seven year plateau in education whether you are in a classroom or whatever you're doing and then there is a steadying of the plateau, a leveling off, and then something changes. You get excited about the curriculum, maybe a different grade level, maybe you changed schools and then the plateau starts again and I guess for me it was the plateau of saying you know I'd like to know what those other guys do in administration. I've been the classroom a long time and I'm kind of curious so it was more curiosity and a collegial curiosity because I was working with a group in the public system at the time and a master's program was available to us and it was kind of a collegial piece we were all similar ages and all had been in education a long

time and had these plateaus and something has changed in our lives curriculum, location, something came up with another plateau you could almost graph it, it was just time to learn more.

The other participant who desired a challenge stated:

I think I was looking for more of a challenge than just being in the classroom and I tend to be a little bossy so it kind of fit and at one point our school was looking for teacher/administrator in our satellite school and so they asked me if I would be willing to take that position and I thought I would give it a try and since then discovered I am probably pretty good at it, there's areas that I'm not but I'm probably pretty good at most of it so I kept up with it.

Even though they did not expect to be in an administration role, many of the participants felt that they had been prepared for this role because of the various leadership roles they filled in their personal and professional lives. This is similar to my story. I felt that becoming an administrator in a Christian faith-based school was God's call on my life and that because of my faith I am able to manage the role, as a sign of worship and to glorify God.

Nature of their Work

Table 3 provides information related to the administrative loads versus teaching loads of the participants. Seven of the administrators had designated roles of 100% administration time. Three of the administrators taught one course, one had a 40% teaching load and one was 100% administration and 100% teacher. She taught full-time and was expected to fulfill her administration

role after school hours or on her limited prep times. Table 3 defines the administrative and/or teaching role of the participants (participant numbers are randomly selected).

Table 3

Administration versus Teaching Load

Theme Participant	Full time administration	Mostly administration, teaching one course	Approximately 50 administration /50% teaching	Fulltime teaching and administration
1	X			
2	X			
3			X teaches 40%	
4		X		
5		X		
6				X
7		X		
8	X			
9	X			
10	X			
11	X			
12	X			
Total	7	3	1	1

When the participants were asked to consider the nature of their work as a school administrator, consensus theme descriptors emerged such as:

educational leader, change agent, business manager, and instructional leader.

The participants' responses to this question aligned with the studies of women in administration in schools which focus on five ways women lead: through relational leadership, leadership for social justice, spiritual leadership, leadership for learning and balanced leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The participants' responses, though expressed in different words, focused on the five ways women lead. One participant explicitly described her role as, "Well, you know, educational leader, I would say in all aspects of the word would describe it not only the teacher of teachers but also a leader of creating young, strong women with a voice to do good in the world." Her words also indicated a strong sense of social justice from a feminist perspective that focuses on women. Table 4 outlines the words use to describe their role as an administrator in a faith-based school (participant numbers are randomly selected).

Table 4

Role of a Female Administrator in Faith-Based Schools

Theme Participant	Educational leader	Instructional leader	Business manager	Change agent/ visionary	Caretaker/ Bus driver
1	X	X	X		X
2	X	X	X	X	
3	X	X	X	X	X
4	X	X	X	X	
5	X	X	X	X	
6	X	X	X	X	X
7	X	X	X	X	X
8	X	X	X	X	
9	X	X	X	X	
10	X	X	X	X	
11	X	X	X	X	
12	X	X	X	X	
Total	12	12	12	11	4

Participants also used words like visionary, facilitator, instructional leader, networker/communicator, teacher of teachers, evaluation and assessment, and manager of people. They spoke of the management aspect of administration such as policy developer and maintainer, timetabling, scheduling, paperwork, business leader, registrar, and school board liaison. For many of these women there were also financial responsibilities such as budgeting and fundraising. As

one participant explained her role, with varied responsibilities, she shared her desire to serve the school community well:

Well I kind of want to look at myself as a facilitator for the staff here. So I'm looking to make myself available to make their role easier. I do the paperwork, I do the planning, I do the scheduling, I try to create an atmosphere where they feel if they have issues in their class they can come to me and I will help them resolve those issues. I also try to be the "mother hen" of our elementary school so I meet the children at the door every morning and I do bus duty at the end of the day just to welcome them in and to say good bye at the end of the day. Other duties as assigned really come into play I think because anything that needs to happen we really try to make it happen and I will try to help out wherever I can.

She shared her desire of leadership for learning, relational leadership and balanced leadership. Her use of maternal language was very evident in the statement: "I also try to be the mother hen of our elementary school so I meet the children at the door every morning and I do bus duty at the end of the day just to welcome them in and to say good bye at the end of the day."

One participant defined her role as a "Jack of all trades" (note not a "Jill of all trades"):

It's grown as I've learned more of the job but currently where I am now I am a policy provider. I don't write the policy I make sure that the policy is upheld; however, I have a lot of access at the board

level to propose the policy, human resources, and curriculum development. Ambassador, from time to time an accountant although I have an excellent business administrator that works with me, building budget, monitoring budget, encourager, overseer of teachers in terms of teacher competency and discipline etc. and of course loving the kids. I'm in the classroom still which I think gives me credibility but it's also where I started and what I love to do. So a little bit of this, a little bit of that I just call it the glue and truly building a community, the resident ambassador, you really are you really are the speaker of the vision, putting the vision in front of the people you don't always own it alone and I hope that we never own it alone. I was one of these people surrounded by people who are smarter than I am and have that leadership team that I work with. You know the board is my covering, my boss so to speak but within that it almost sounds like a "Jack of all trades" but it's something you grow into and I think that the important thing is I've grown in administration.

This woman used a lot of words to describe her varied role. The themes of relational leadership, leadership for learning and balanced leadership emerged from her response.

A supported theme emerged which focused on the school building or facility and in some school settings the necessity to be a caretaker as well. Some female principals, due to the limited caretaker time in the building and

financial restraints, were responsible to dispose of trapped or dead mice, clean up vomit and unclog toilets. One participant explained:

This has been the week of the mice in our school. We have mice in our school. This week I have had to go and dispose two mice, one of which was still alive, we didn't kill it. I caught it, its poor little tail was caught in the trap and so I caught it and boxed it we gave it to our organ person who disposed of it. I am sure and one which had been dead for some time, so I mean that kind of thing if you are a bit squeamish.

Another participant stated:

I've unplugged toilets. Sometimes, our caretaker is also a bus driver and so sometimes they'll take him out of the school to do field trips for various groups so he is not always around. So vomit, okay, we'll clean that up, oh plugged toilets, I've mopped floors, I've spot wiped walls, we take care of the bleeding noses and I don't think administrators in junior high and high school have any idea what it's like to be an elementary administrator with the things that happen in elementary, cause kids are different.

Another participant described her role as a fulltime teacher and fulltime administrator and the building maintenance with only limited caretaker time:

We have a janitor that comes here but at the end of the day and kids have duties so that is part of what they do. Right from when they were little until grade twelve we vacuum the floors twice a

week, they put library books away, and they wash all of the windows on the outside, they take the garbage out, they do crosswalk, they do flag, they do kitchen, they have to wash all the dishes from the kitchen because the kids really do use the kitchen they use our forks, knives, plates everything they have to that`s all and it`s good for them.

This administrator even drives the school bus and takes students on camping trips and international mission trips. These women understood the definition of servant leadership and modeled it daily in their schools. Limited in external and internal resources these women fulfilled roles and served beyond their job description. This administrator also modeled a keen desire of exposing her students to the needs of the local and global community.

Within the faith-based schools the importance of outreach is demonstrated through mission trips and service opportunities in local and global organizations as well as raising funds for Christian organizations. This illustrates a form of social justice. At my school students travel to Guatemala for mission trips, participate in Days of Service in local organizations, fundraise for organizations like World Vision, Compassion and Samaritan`s Purse and support missionaries around the world. Similar opportunities were provided to students in other schools as they also participated in international mission trips.

A supported theme emerged as that of family counselor, which may be considered a form of relational leadership. As discipline issues occurred, principals felt they were viewed as family/parenting counselors as many parents

did not know how to parent or would not support the discipline responses of the school. One participant described how she counsels parents:

I often have parents come in and there are times when my secretary and I feel like we need to be counselors because parents will come in and just pour their heart out and I just have my box of Kleenex handy and I just let them talk, we can pray together, we can cry together. I don't know if the gentlemen on my admin team would be doing that.

This participant compared her ability to relate to parents with those of her male counterparts. She contrasted the openness, vulnerable and emotional care she displays towards parents with the limitations of the men on the administration team of her school. She wondered, "would the men share the tears?" In her role she cares for the emotional needs of the school community. Another participant stated the counseling nature of her role like this:

Sometimes they'll come to you, "my child is not eating" and I like to hear some of those stories so I can help other people but again I am saying that's not my job but I may be able to give them resources or contact this person so maybe they can help them. I sometimes think it's kind of balancing things and having an ear for the parents and you also have the parish that is attached to and that is something that I wasn't, that I didn't have a lot of experience with because my last faith school that I worked at was diocese so that wasn't really attached to one particular church.

Another participant had a similar point of view and voiced some frustration of the parents she encountered. She felt that some parents shift their parenting responsibilities to the school:

This is a trend that I've seen, not with a lot of parents but enough to make it really noticeable is I want to say sometimes parents don't know how to parent or choose not to parent and would like to be more of an equal with their child than actually be the disciplinarian and so they offload. Families offload the discipline on to the school and so when the child has rarely heard the word no that's not the right thing to do or no you can't behave like that or that's inappropriate and then the principal or the teacher has to say that, you know that's tough for some students to handle because they haven't heard that and so I think what I am trying to say is that families are off loading the parenting to the school and I would prefer the shared model of parenting. Yes I am the parent here, we are the parents here for six to six and a half hours per day but you are the parent for the rest of the day including the weekends. So relinquishing authority to a school I think it's huge these days so we deal with the fall out of that.

As is evident above, some participants felt it was not their role to counsel families and that the church or other resources could do so. Participants did feel responsible for the spiritual well-being of their teachers, staff, students and families connected to the school. One principal said it was her role to, "provide

for the spiritual care for the teachers under my care and for their families apparently too, assemblies for the kindergarten to grade four and the memory verse, setting that all up.” The participants were open to praying with and counseling families. Participants worked to develop their relational and spiritual leadership in their schools.

A consensus theme emerged that these women worked long hours and that their role as an administrator was much more than that of a public school administrator. One participant had been a principal of a public school prior to working in a faith-based school. Her perspective of the contrast of the two roles was enlightening:

There is a slight difference between private and public as an administrator so what I am going to do I am going to tell you about the public. First of all, in the public school division you're really a sub-manager as you have a superintendent who guides everything; you have a division who is your back people. In private you don't have that you are that person. I find that my job entails paperwork, just as all jobs do; it's supervisory, I have a staff that I am trying to guide and encourage it's a lot of liaison between the parents, the board and the school and I always feel my job as administrator here is to protect my staff and also to encourage them but also be their PR person. For the school I am the PR; I go out every morning, greet the parents, and greet the children that's my PR role. When they come in you'd stop and you'd talk to them. A lot of them in

private school because you are a business and a school – a funny role but also you are the community leader it's an interesting role, parents look to you for solutions, teachers look to you for solutions, children look to you for solutions being that person that they lean on because you don't have this kind of support group behind you that is called a division, you are the division. I also do a lot of meetings because if there is something going on in this building I need to know, and so really a lot more meetings than I would have ever expected but you have to be there because you are the person who needs to know you cannot depend on someone else's knowledge I feel.

This statement begins to define the balance of work and home sought by the participants in this study. Balance will be explored in the next section as a challenge of leadership.

The role of an administrator in Christian faith-based schools is varied in its defined role and its unwritten expectations. I believe this is partly due to the support staff limitations within faith-based schooling. As explained by the participant above faith-based schools operate without the support of a school division and superintendent. Since there are financial limitations on faith-based schools the staff resources in areas such as public relations, policy development, student services support, and guidance counselling often fall on the shoulders of administration. This is true in my role. While we have counselling support available to older students, it is limited for younger students. I spend a lot of time

providing parenting advice to parents and helping parents talk through challenges in their lives. In situations that I cannot handle I refer them on to a list of counselors approved by the school. I am a school administrator, not a school counselor and recognize my limitations in this area.

Challenges and Joys

The next series of questions asked participants to describe what challenges they faced as they moved into administration and if they believed that any of these challenges were faced more so by females rather than males, or if some of them related directly to the fact that they were female. Secondly they were asked to share the benefits or joys have they experienced from being an administrator.

Challenges

There were many challenges faced by women in administration in faith-based schools. The list was immense and varied. Challenges varied from personal challenges such as balance, time management, lack of self-confidence, and family dynamics to work-specific challenges such as staff relationships, technology, money concerns, and decision-making. Surprisingly one woman stated that the challenges she encounters were her joys, which I will discuss at the end of this section. It appears that some of these challenges emerged from the issues that were pressing during the time of the interview or school year, while others were more universal. Table 5 represents the challenges mentioned by the participants in this study (participant numbers are randomly selected).

Table 5

Challenges

Theme Participant	Relational challenges	Operational challenges	Confidence or lack of confidence	Balance/ time	Family needs
1		X		X	
2	X	X			
3	X	X		X	X
4	X		X		
5	X	X			
6	X	X	X	X	X
7	X		X		X
8	X			X	X
9					
10	X	X			X
11	X	X	X		
12		X	X	X	
Totals	9	8	7	5	5

Balance

The consensus theme emerged that participants found it difficult to balance work and home as work tended to consume the majority of their waking hours. This is reflected in the chart above as balance/time and family needs (combined total of 10). In order to do their job well the participants needed a supportive and understanding immediate and extended family, especially a

supportive husband. The participants worked long hours outside the home, in demanding roles, and then were expected to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as wife and mother in the home. The consensus theme that emerged when asked “How do you balance life beyond school?” was “not well”. Repeatedly the women shared that balance was not easy to achieve and that they were overworked, one stating she was a “workaholic”. This “workaholic” found prioritizing her professional and personal responsibilities difficult:

It’s a real hard balance sometimes to figure out what’s your priority, it’s very, very difficult because your heart and responsibilities are here in my profession, but they’re my children and my heart responsibility is even more there...And that’s really hard for me because my husband and I are both workaholics. I realize not everyone is a workaholic like I am. I guess they need some down time too.

Another participant explained the challenge to balance work and home:

I think balancing home and administrative duties can be a bit of a challenge sometimes. My husband gets frustrated when my teachers will call me at home. And I think that frustrates him to a great extent because he’s not phoning his employer. It’s a balancing role between I could spend another three hours at the office today but I need to go home and be there for my dog, my cat, my kids and my husband and so it’s been a balancing act I think it’s not always balanced.

Another woman shared similar sentiments, admitting her difficulties in finding balance:

Each year it seems maybe a little more stretching, we took on the challenge of identifying special needs students in the grade 1-2 class and a lot of that work would happen with the resource teacher. We don't have someone [resource teacher] so you know that's been an extra and then lots of other extra things we do fall on my shoulders and so to kind of draw those lines is tricky. I don't know if I have very good balance to be honest.

While the women spoke of a deep need for balance, they also described strategies they put in place to achieve work/home balance. One participant described her actions this way:

Number one is even though it is hard to turn off what's happening at school and sometimes you need to process things. I do have to say, I literally "kiss the brick" when I leave this door, when I leave the building. I have to have that distance to say you know what I am now moving into my vehicle and I'm going to go to my personal life so it's a mental note that I say to myself even though I do go home and process things. I sometimes find that's where I think more clear when I'm away from this building, when I'm away from the school, when I'm away from the people. I can just think about the things in a more clear fashion. Clarity is very important to me in judgment, clarity and judgment and I find that my safe place is my

home. So I would have to say it's a real disconnect, trying to disconnect with the workplace.

Another participant spoke of the need of someone to hold her accountable and help her to maintain balance after admitting she often works twelve hour days. At home she has established some boundaries, "We made a household rule that I do not use the computer in the evening. So once I leave school there is no computer time and it has changed our lives. We actually talk; we sleep because otherwise you could work 24/7." Her husband helps her achieve balance: "You need that help otherwise you get into a spin and you don't realize you are spinning until someone else reminds you."

In contrast, while this woman struggled personally with balance she supported others in achieving balance:

...I have to counsel her to just leave it at school. This weekend is not when you are going to solve this discipline problem, walk away, we'll deal with it Monday and we actually schedule when we are going to deal with these problems because we're just going to hang it up for now and not think about it. It's a constant effort and it's much easier with someone else in the building working on that same goal with you.

Another participant shared the ways she tries to achieve balance. Sometimes she goes to work early to accomplish the work left over from the day before:

It's sometimes tricky, I sometimes go home knowing I'm going to have to go in a little bit earlier tomorrow because I'm not staying

here tonight or I'm going to have to work through my lunch to get this done because there is a deadline on it but I also don't want to get to the point where I'm causing friction in my house because I am staying at my work for hours and it's not always successful. Sometimes even though I'm trying to make that commitment there's still friction at home because mainly I've put in more than what they thought was adequate time at home or whatever. And so, there are times when I feel like I am on the tightrope you know and I'm slipping sometimes one way or the other, hopefully I don't fall off too often. Fortunately it's not too high off the ground; it's like a training high wire.

Reflecting on literature and personal experience this analogy represents the challenge well: thinking of the administrative role as a balancing act, as if on a tightrope, between home and school.

Another participant spoke to the demands of family and how those demands put limits on her professional dreams and choosing to put graduate work on hold. While desiring to pursue further education this woman chose family first and realized the needs of her family came before her educational dreams. Another woman shared her strategy for balance; that of being able to say "no" to the requests made for her to do more:

You know what the word "no" has become part of my vocabulary and I think it is because I am more confident in who I am and I'm not doing it because I am a slacker or I'm not a good friend, I'm

doing it to take care of me and I have to prioritize because of my position and I am a person who needs my rest. I need to sleep probably a good seven hours a night and if I don't then I'm not going to be effective, I know that so that means you have to say no to some things. So I guess with age you really become to know yourself and what your limits are and so you learn to say "no".

Another participant justified her commitment to her job by suggesting she works the hours she does by choice:

If I'm really honest school takes up the majority of my life, my children are older and so I mean I could choose to watch a movie or I could choose to read a book, or read the Bible or listen to tapes that encourage me. So I think in that way I have a little extra to actually do that right and spend time with God worshipping or whatever. So school has given me focus and a reason and I am actually seeing fruit from what I do and that makes me happy. So what if I do spend more than my forty or fifty hours it's my choice, they're not making me do it.

While her family was her number one priority, her job and the fruits of her labor brought her true joy.

The women expressed the need of their spouse and family to help them achieve balance as has been referred to above. Additionally, women expressed their gratitude for the support of their husbands, as without spousal support they realized they could not achieve success as an administrator. One woman stated,

“Well, I couldn’t do this again, without a loving spouse.” She continued her story, understanding there is time to work and time to play:

...this has been hard and I’m not real good at it yet. It is the weekend and I don’t have to work through the weekend, I may do a bit of homework on the weekend but you know how you could work all the time and think you are working ahead and you’re not. It’s still a day by day and I don’t mean we don’t plan and all those things but I think finally saying I did enough now, I’ve done it at a good level done it at above mediocre level so now I’m going to play for a while.

These women have developed strategies to find balance while being overly committed to their roles as female administrators in faith-based schools.

Through the analysis of the interviews it became evident that some of the women knew, in theory, how to take care of themselves while other participants consistently put the needs of others before their own.

Time Management

The lack of time to accomplish all that is expected to manage all of the professional expectations and the resources needed was discussed as a challenge. One participant described the grace she gives herself when she cannot accomplish all that is expected of her. She found most often that she was limited in time and resources:

So in that recognizing it is going to take a lot longer but I don’t...there is resistance for some of those schools for example

trying to move up the academic levels of the students is a long term goal. And then the other thing is probably in what I can do what I have time to do and what I can do well. And so I definitely recognize that there is all kinds of, something came across my desk which I thought would be brilliant to do and having to come to the terms I don't have the energy or time to do it and I don't know who I can pass it to so it won't happen and I have to be okay with that.

Another participant described a lack of time this way:

No, I do have people that make me work harder to accomplish my goals and sometimes I have to take longer than I anticipated, work a lot harder, approach it from a different perspective but generally speaking once I have created a goal it's because I have thought long and hard and that truly is the best place to be at this time so we make it happen.

One participant stated that time management and self-discipline were challenges:

The number one challenge I had is time management, followed very closely with learning to manage myself so that I can interact with people the way it needs to be done. Self-discipline I guess would be my number one priority and challenge because as you interact with people you realize that God is asking me to be someone different to grow in different areas so, I would say that's my challenge.

Again work needs and expectations came before the participant's own professional development. The desire of this participant was to develop further professionally but the job expectations limited her own professional growth.

Lack of Confidence

Limited professional development lead to a lack of confidence in some women as they felt they had not developed the necessary skills for the job. For some, entering administration without prior training was daunting. Two women described that their lack of skills or knowledge as a challenge. One participant shared her feelings of a lack of confidence, especially leading others:

I think, for me personally it was my own challenges and I was very competent in my classroom and my curriculum but having the confidence to lead others - to be seen in that leadership role. I'm not an out front person by nature so I think being in the spotlight more, and I don't mean that in a weird way the expectation to lead. You know I like to see the things being lead, I think my biggest challenge to be in that position is being the spokesperson or having the confidence to do that and that's the thing that grows with success. You do your job well, you work hard, you know what the best thing is for the school and pretty soon that respect, I guess that is what it is, for your position it happens rather than saying give me respect because I have a title on my door its more I don't care what the title on my door is, respect me or the position for the job that happens because of it, the benefit to education because of it.

Another participant explained her lack of confidence this way:

Only my own lack of skills you know I would think that not...I don't know the biggest deterrent you would have is your own abilities and disabilities and sometimes it is a pro to have an ability and it's a pro to have a disability but in my life if I wanted to accomplish something I could do it. I only had one job that I didn't get and essentially it didn't affect where I ended up and you know what God answered "guess what I have a better plan" and the plan was better. Even the year at the other school was so difficult it was a learning experience and because I was willing to tough it out.

Another year I got a job that was much better and the good Lord watches out for you and leads the idiots the way they should go.

This participant understood that God's plans were greater than hers and while there were challenges that all things did work together for good. Her words "you know what God answered "guess what I have a better plan" and the plan was better" reinforced her faith perspective and understanding of Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1212-1213). God's plan for her life was better than her own.

Work Related/Operational Challenges

The participants discussed a number of specific work related and operational challenges within their jobs and career development. The demands and expectations of the job dictated the priorities for many of the participants.

For example, one participant discussed how there were so many demands on her time that the professional development she desired was delayed in order to meet the daily demands of the school.

I would say that is the biggest one managing between family time and work including PD like this year I feel like I barely did any PD for myself because of the needs of the school and a couple of PD's that I signed up for I didn't even go and I think I have to be stronger and really take time for myself and just keep nourishing myself because otherwise you can't give to other people but when you're by yourself, you have pregnancies, you have people retiring and a couple of new staff members on board at school it's hard.

Staffing changes were the main focus of the school year and consumed time that participants would have preferred to use for personal and professional growth.

This participant went on to describe her frustrations as demands on her time that prevented her from accomplishing her professional goals:

I think sometimes the amount of work can. You may set five goals for the week and it doesn't happen. Like I wanted to do ten evaluations this year, it's not going to happen. It won't happen like I'll be happy if I complete four by the end of the year but I've had to change my goals and say I wasn't expecting retirements and I wasn't expecting pregnancies. I won't be able, I was expecting to do more PD for myself, it didn't happen but I need to set some goals and say these goals I'm not going to negotiate, I need to be

stronger on that and not negotiate and others will be up for negotiation.

Her response showed her flexibility to make priorities in her day.

Along with this, participants found communication with stakeholders a challenge:

Those would probably be the two big challenges - managing the time and keeping a good form of communication with all your stakeholders, it's a lot of people. I have amazing parents and community members but if I give them this much space or room they will take it. It's me being on top of everything or being made aware to make sure it's going in the right direction.

These women leaders felt they needed to be all knowing, fully aware of the daily operations and needs of the school. This is an impossible task. The job expectations exceed the numbers of hours in the day to achieve all that needs to be done.

With the role of principal comes the right to make decisions and the ability to communicate and uphold those decisions even when others do not agree.

This is also a challenge to some participants:

You know we're dealing with people and sometimes tough decisions have to be made and as administrator you are the bearer of those decisions and you have to articulate them in a way that is direct but yet, you know, pastoral and I think that is a gift. I don't think it comes naturally it is something you have to work on and I

think after being in it after a few years, you find a way to take the sting out of some kinds of discussions and conversations. So I would say making the tough decisions and sticking to them, I would say maintaining integrity and to maintain integrity in this type of business you need to be extremely consistent and have open communication so that's a challenge.

This participant, while realizing she had to make tough decisions, also recognized the spiritual leadership of administration and the pastoral care required by a faith-based school community. She also spoke of integrity. This was a common thread throughout the conversations with these women as they shared their faith in the way they responded to the questions.

Other operational challenges included the added responsibility of money matters such as budgeting and fundraising. Finding and maintaining qualified faith-based teachers, suited to the school community was also a challenge, especially when some school's salaries were very low for qualified teachers.

One participant explained this challenge as follows:

The other challenge, I was thinking about, the other challenge I have to say that we run into is we are a school but we are faith-based school and it's getting more and more difficult to find teachers who have both of those qualities. So that's a big challenge. They might be very fluent and masters at the subject but we're looking for a different type of package and that's becoming more and more of a challenge so when we find someone

we try to hang on to that person, and nurture them even more here. So that's another huge challenge in our hiring... At the end of the day we are...Catholic schools are an arm of the Catholic Church and so that Catholic identity has to be first and foremost otherwise you lose that identity and if you lose that identity then you're not going to be a Catholic school.

The distinctive aspect of faith-based schooling is ensuring the teaching of the faith doctrine is secure. Each of the schools has mission and vision statements and faith doctrines that guide the daily operations of the schools and the education provided to the students. Qualified Christian teachers are needed to ensure the school maintains its distinctiveness as a faith-based school. As noted by most participants, faith-based schools often compensate their teachers at salary levels lower than those of the public school system. For example Linden Christian School compensates their teachers at 90% of Winnipeg School Division, one year removed. When hiring employees for faith-based schools the faith of the individual is examined to ensure his/her belief systems are in line with those of the school. At Linden Christian School new employees are interviewed by the school administration and the church leadership also interviews new teachers. New administrators go before the church deacon board and school board for final approval. New employees are asked to share their faith story or testimony and show evidence of on-going spiritual growth in their lives. They are expected to be active in a Bible believing church and have regular church attendance. They are also required to sign a contract that includes a lifestyle

commitment with a list of behaviours that can result in termination of employment. The confirmation of employment goes beyond the ability to teach. Similar expectations are evident in other faith-based schools. It is the responsibility of the principal of a faith-based school to provide spiritual leadership.

Operational challenges also included the ability to provide valuable professional development to teachers, especially in rural areas. Financial and geographic limitations are the main cause. Sometimes the competition of a faith-based school versus the public school in a small community is a challenge. These two issues were discussed by this participant when asked if her rural school aligned with the local division for professional development:

We have sometimes, not a lot recently but we have. I've been asking the teachers which you would specifically like to be in so that, I send my staff one at a time to places so we don't usually go as a staff and being in the location we are at, it's not always a friendly environment that we go into, because there is definitely hostility for our school to be open and so I don't always want to put my staff into that situation. But personally, I don't have any problem with, we have a good relationship with the principal and the administrators in the public school system so that's fine it is just when it comes to the other staff it isn't always the same.

The local community can be a challenge for faith-based schools. This participant alluded that faith-based schools are often viewed as places that

“steal” students from the public school system. Another example of local issues is described by another participant, is the influence one local church tried to have on the religious teachings of the school. One church felt that the proper version of the Bible was the King James Version and requested that the school use only the King James Version, even though the church was not connected directly to the school:

We have a strong influence from a local church which I mentioned is where most of the kids come from they have a real passionate belief about King James being the proper version of the Bible and only King James so at the school we have agreed that we will only read the King James out loud. Students can choose to have a different Bible of their own to work with in class but it is only King James out loud and so that’s not my personal faith stance but I am trying to be integral to myself and my beliefs but also to the beliefs of the kids.

In this situation this participant had to compromise her beliefs for peace in the school community. She submitted to the request of the church.

Another participant expressed a personal challenge that affected her role as an administrator. She spoke of her health concerns. She had encountered several health issues that were causing people around her to question her capabilities of doing her job. After a time of rest she returned to work well and prepared to face the challenges ahead of her.

Another woman discussed changes that were happening in her school and the challenges that emerged when top-down divisional policies were imposed upon the school. She expressed deep frustrations with changes that she could not control and the impact these changes were having on the school.

One participant, much to my surprise, described the challenges she faces as joys. She stated:

Well, we talked about the word challenge, that's to me a joy, a challenge is joyful especially if you know what the end of that challenge, if it resulted in a win, win situation so challenge I find joyful. I find challenge stimulating and energizing and I love the fact that my job is not the same every day. It's not, there's lots of curve balls that happen what you have written in that agenda book it changes from day to day and I love that. I love that it keeps me very engaged in what I do every day.

Even when I went back to read this participant's transcript she did not complain about her role as an administrator. She was a "glass half full person" with a positive attitude of her role as an administrator of a faith-based school. She expressed herself in a way that illustrated how her actions and perspectives did serve her school community with complete joy.

Joys

The female administrators spoke of great joy in doing their job each day. They gave a variety of responses as listed in Table 6. Table 6 describes the primary theme of joy for each participant; although many discussed threads of joy

that interconnected with other themes (participant numbers are randomly selected).

Table 6

Joys

Theme Participant	Leading a Christian school	Relationships within school community	Personal growth	Academic growth of students	Professional growth of staff
1	X	X			
2				X	
3	X				
4		X			
5					X
6	X				
7			X		
8				X	
9			X		
10	X				
11			X		
12		X			
Total	4	3	3	2	1

Relationships

The relationships the participants developed within their school community, with teachers, parents and students brought them much joy.

Relational leadership was important. One participant summed it up this way: “I

just love the positive energy. You get to meet all the people right; we have the best jobs in the world, they're tough but they're also amazing." Another administrator stated:

It's the parents and the students. It's the fact that, as a teacher you have twenty six parents as a vice principal you have a hundred or you have two hundred depending on how many families there are and also you have the ability to impart God principles to so many. It's seeing the teachers that are having a hard day and being able to pull them aside and pray for them and say you know that it's okay. When I first came here the grade two teacher's and I the first year we team-taught grade three, she had thirteen and I had thirteen and we would come to the devotions in the morning and we would leave crying and then we would say, pull ourselves together and what a better place to be than in a place where everyone is giving you hugs, all the kids. It was God's provision for us and it was just the right thing and so my relationship with the kids and the parents are what I value most.

For this participant the faith-based context of the school and "imparting God principles" brought her joy. Another administrator described the joys she experiences with her school faculty this way:

So that really excites me and I'm proud of that. I'm very proud and joy-filled that we have an amazingly dedicated professional faculty. I don't think that is a coincidence I think that word is out there that

this is a great place to teach and that people would love to come and teach here and that starts from the head, that starts from the top and I think we have built a really good and professional reputation, a really good professional learning community and I'm proud of that and that makes me very joyful.

Her joys were built on relationships. Another participant said she also found joy in the growth of her teachers and staff, and the relationships she developed with students over the years. She appreciated the words of affirmation when a student would return and thank her for the investment she made in their lives:

I'm always happy to see the staff achieving potential, not just the students but the staff. We've been trying to get everyone kind of computer literate and so when they go and take a course and they can come back and celebrate. "Hey look what I can do with my class." That's exciting for me. I'm trying to encourage them to do that and so that gives me great joy to be able to do that, and even when children come back and say you know what you were an important role in my life and not just as a teacher.

Beyond relationships with staff, relationships with present and former students resonated with most administrators. One woman affirmed the above comments with these words:

But kids will come back and tell me I made a difference, how you dealt with us. Kids will come from high school and will say I remember sitting in these chairs in your office when I was in trouble

and I'll say yes and look how far you've come. You've come a long way and we can celebrate that together and there's great joy in that. I get a lot of hugs, even from high school students and that's kind of sweet.

While some administrators describe some parent interactions/relationships as a challenge, another administrator described her experience interacting with parents as a joy:

I have an amazing parent council but even within the parent council I work really, really close with the chair who is amazing and works super hard with all our sub-committees and it's so easy for one sub-committee to be out of control or I'm getting the wrong information or she gets the wrong information so it's, there are a lot of good people but its making sure that they have the goal of the school so I'm really focusing more and more on the mission statement for the school and literally telling the parents its living, learning and serving so we're living our faith, we're learning our faith more and our academics and we're serving.

Two participants reflected on themselves personally in responding to this question and focused on their personal growth as a joy. One stated:

Oh my goodness, you just learn so much to me the learning is amazing like you're always growing; things I know today are things I didn't know last year. Learning to deal with people and it's beautiful to see kids, working with the kids, seeing them starting

school, their achievements and the graduation and whether it's a grade eight grad or a grade twelve grad I mean the joy is so similar it's just that sense of accomplishment.

A second participant shared a similar sentiment:

Personally, the confidence that I have in myself has soared I never thought...I have had a lot of struggle in my life and I never thought in my wildest dreams God would use me this way and this letter I got from one of my students today is just God saying, God giving me the encouragement again. I always wanted to be a teacher like when I was little but I never saw myself as a principal and when I look back at my life I can see where God has led me into different roles and into different situations. I always tell my students that do everything that you can do if you can handle the time restraints and those kinds of things because God will use those things in your life and just the joy of looking at where God has placed me and the role He has given me is huge.

It was encouraging to hear the joys these women encountered in their roles and the way they gave glory to God for the joys they experienced. For this woman the words of encouragement from students were words of affirmation from God.

Student Learning

Three of the administrators spoke to their ability to be change agents as a way they experienced joy. Seeing the professional growth of their teachers brought joy. Professional growth in the teachers led to enhanced learning for the

students. Professional growth was important to these administrators. Their joy in learning influenced the staff. One administrator stated:

I love being a change agent, I love seeing what changing an idea will do when it is well placed with a leadership team with strong teachers and to see change happen for the better. To come out of the industrial model to offer, in my case, what I like to see a community of teachers and learners working together. So in terms of the opportunity I have had as an administrator to see that happen are much greater than a classroom teacher so it's enlarging the opportunities to be a change agent.

Seeing the relationship of "a community of teaches and learners working together" brought her joy. Another participant explained it this way:

What I enjoy the most and the thing that gets me out of the bed in the morning and keeps me going all day long is that ability to be a change agent for the positive for the entire community. In the classroom I used to love seeing those light bulbs go off in children's heads and see them grow. Well we do it on a much bigger scale as an administrator. We have an impact on all the parishes, we have an impact on all the parents, on the kids, on the teachers, um that is just so exciting that these little changes we make, or these little suggestions that we toss out or these areas that we affirm and people grow as a result of that.

Another participant shared her desire to prepare students for the 21st century:

I love creating so that whole aspect of being able to create or improve programs for our students, you know to prepare these young women for the 21st century it really excites me so we have done a lot of that. When I took on this job my dream was to take our students or start a mission, a service mission program, so two years for the very first time we took a bunch of girls on an international trip where we built a house for a single Mom and her three girls, so women helping women. Last year we went back again to the same community. I am not going back this year because I have to spread that out with my teachers.

As change agents these women strive to make a difference in the lives of the students in their care. This comment also spoke to the joy this participant felt when engaging their students in social justice issues and making small changes in the world globally. For these participants, mission opportunities to reach the local and global community with the love of God were important.

Another administrator stated a similar sentiment of the joy in supporting one another as a school community, support that influenced the personal lives of teachers: “The small school community where you all work together, if someone gets sick you make dinner for them, that kind of thing, it is humbling and an amazing community to work in.”

While these women experienced challenges in their roles as administrators in faith based school they also encountered many joys, which they celebrated.

Professional and Personal Supports

To achieve success in their roles as female administrators in faith-based schools the women interviewed required many professional and personal supports.

Professional Supports

Professional supports, or leadership for learning, included professional development opportunities to develop teachers and enhance the learning of students. Short-term professional development was stated as one of the major supports to these women in their role. Local organizations were cited for providing valuable professional learning for these women. They noted organizations such as the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools (MFIS), the Council of School Leaders (COSL), Manitoba ASCD, the Manitoba Teacher Society's annual Special Area Groups in Education (SAGE) conference and the Catholic Schools for providing valuable one or two day events. Only a few of the administrators had completed Cognitive Coaching and Walk-Thru Training. Some women had pursued and completed graduate level work while others held only a Bachelor's degree. Table 7 outlines the educational training of the participants in this study (participant numbers are randomly selected).

Table 7

Education

Theme Participant	Bachelor of Education	Some graduate work	Post Baccalaureate Diploma/ Certificate	Master's Degree	Doctorate Degree
1			X		
2					X
3	X				
4	X				
5				X	
6	X				
7		X			
8	X				
9			X		
10		X			
11				X	
12	X				
Totals	5	2	2	2	1

An email sent to the participants asked if they held a Level 1 School Administrator's certificate or Level 2 Principal's certificate. The participants' responses revealed that seven administrators held a teacher's certificate only; five held a Level 1 Administrator's certificate and only two of the participants held a Level 2 Principal's certificate. Those with a Level 1 Administrator's certificate

or Level 2 Principal's certificate also held teaching certificates, but for this table those results are assumed. Table 8 provides the results (participant numbers are randomly selected).

Table 8

Certification

Theme Participant	Level 1 School Administrator's Certificate	Level 2 Principal's Certificate	Teacher certification only
1			X
2	X	X	
3			X
4			X
5			X
6			X
7	X		
8	X		
9	X	X	
10			X
11			X
12	X		
Total	5	2	7

One woman stated that she contemplated going back to school to continue her education but it was not the right time. Another wondered if she'd ever finish her degree:

I haven't completed it; I have done courses towards it. I look at as if I don't know if I'll ever get it finished but I'm working and as long as I am out there taking courses and learning, this is a good thing. I can't do a course every year. Sometimes I think I could do one this summer, it doesn't always work.

There were limitations to attending professional development opportunities for administrators in rural schools due to job responsibilities, financial restraints and their rural location. For these rural administrators it was encouraging to hear that they initiated their own professional opportunities, unique to their situation.

Table 9 shows the value placed on professional supports (participant numbers are randomly selected). Consensus themes emerged as the participants valued the conversations with other administrators, collegial supports and professional development. Reading educational literature and mentoring emerged as supported themes.

Table 9

Other Professional Supports

Theme Participant	Professional development opportunities	Mentors	Conversations/ networking with other administrators	Collegial support (teachers, office staff)	Educational literature
1	X		X	X	
2	X	X	X	X	
3	X		X	X	X
4	X			X	X
5		X	X	X	
6	X		X		X
7				X	X
8	X	X	X	X	
9	X		X		X
10			X	X	
11	X		X	X	X
12	X		X	X	
Total	9	3	10	10	6

One woman made an interesting observation regarding professional development opportunities that are not lead by Christian organizations and presented with a biblical worldview. She stated:

...because of where our school is located I don't have that access all the time. So I think that those (ASCI) are some of the best ones,

of course you do PD days with professional development and that's been good but I do find, that resources that do not have God as a center are really shallow in many ways and they don't have the wisdom of God in them and so even dealing with other staff members I prefer to find resources that are written from a faith based perspective because there's a wisdom in there that you just don't find in other resources.

One woman shared her appreciation of attending events where she could meet with other administrators and learn from the conversations at professional development events, "making a point of going to ACSI meetings and just the little bits we are able to share personally and each of us are going through gives me a little baseline of where other people are at." Other women felt the same need for conversation and support from other administrators:

I've attended quite a few conferences either the NCA Conference that is usually somewhere in the states or the LA Congress in Los Angeles it feeds leaders in Catholic schools. We have a network of our schools all across North America. Once a year the leaders meet to talk, to discuss I find that amazingly nurturing. Also relationship building, you meet people, we have the same issues even though we are thousands of miles away there are similar issues and also responses and resolutions how do you solve different issues. I find that is pretty amazing.

One woman was bold enough to seek out the people she needed to support her in her role:

I remember my very first year as administrator at my last school and it was like now what do I do? Everybody goes off to their classes the first day and you sit there wondering “what’s my job here exactly?” The first of school is always so awkward right. So what I did I phoned up principals in some of the schools that are well respected in town, and that’s how you and I got to meet each other and I said can I come and visit and you guys were just incredible. It was so nice to walk into your school and see how things work and get to meet those people and they’re always just a phone call away.

Another woman expressed her appreciation for other principals, who supported her, especially when she was less experienced in her career,

Lots of PD (professional development), lots of PD. I come from twenty-five years of doing PD. I have some close friends who are principals who I can run the ideas by. My first full time job as a principal I had three principals on call all the time and any big decisions I would call them and two of them it was quite interesting I would see them, the pattern between one and the other but it was really good because they themselves had other principals and there were a couple of times where one of them would say “you hang on

for half an hour girl, I am going to be calling this other principal and I'll get back to you on that one."

Others also expressed appreciation to the people who were mentors in their lives. Mentors were from various walks of life, those from the church, school or community. Some held other roles in the school, while others worked in different schools. The experience and advice of the mentor was greatly valued. One woman expressed her appreciation in these words:

You know sometimes I meet up with the principal from another school and sometimes we pencil things and sometimes we will cancel things, we're so busy but to just be a support. That's one thing one mentor was really good when I started at my former school. He was the principal at another school... and he emailed and he said you know I'd like us to meet once a month as much as possible and you know we did it. I did it for about two years. It was really nice, there was one principal that hardly ever came but it was three of us most of the time and it was nice and like I said I was new again at the high school and had questions what are you doing? Do you let grades 11's and 12's alone in the weight room? I would go with simple questions instead of me calling a lawyer. Is this normal? I would see this happening at the school, oh, what is your opinion of that? So it was a nice little lunch that we would have and he was amazing so it was great just to pick his brain. From time to time I still call him and pick his brain.

Another participant expressed her appreciation of a mentor with a similar worldview as follows. She appreciated that he was also a Christian and could guide her with Godly counsel:

It started for me in the public system where I was the first administrator and they had the leadership vision to have a mentor, he was from another province and he came into the school I was working in and he would mentor us as new administrators and he had a plan and a program that he did, but he would just come in and he would book an afternoon with us. He would ask so what are you feeling? What's working what isn't working? It happens that he was a Christian. He was in the public school system but when you're a Christian talking to another Christian and you connect so I had the huge privilege of being mentored my first three years...I had the privilege of having this mentor for three years and it just the neatest thing without judgment, a mark or anything, just to debrief and I think that is something every principal needs, male or female, you can't hold it all in and when your husband, your wife, your spouse is not an educator, even if they are you just can't unload. There's confidentiality, all kinds of things, this way it was beautiful, it was an opportunity, he was saved, he was mature he'd been everything from a kindergarten teacher to a Dean of Students at a university and you know not too much rattled him he would just listen, he wouldn't feel sorry for you, he wouldn't baby you but he

would just drop those little nuggets of wisdom for you to chew on, for me to chew on. I just, to me, that was just the beginning and then always know, part of what he taught me, always hire people around you they're smarter than you in the areas you need help in and use that team don't just have a bunch of yes people around you use that team, grow yourself and then expand that.

I was surprised to see that only four participants spoke of the impact of a mentor in their lives. I wonder if this aligns with Wallin's (in press) work which finds that "mentorship is usually viewed as a positive way of easing the entry into leadership positions, it also may be a way of socializing people into strict roles definitions or presumed leadership styles or "gender scripts" to which women may feel pressured to conform" (Wallin, in press, p. 18). It is possible that these participants are so independent that they do not want to conform to a role imposed upon them. This study affirms Wallin's (in press) research that:

...amidst the challenges they face, they also speak of being focused on their career development, of developing supportive networks, of focusing the energies on teaching and learning, of fostering the professional growth of others, of an awareness that they are role models for other women and champions of equity for others, and of being politically astute and using their positions to advocate for change" (Wallin, in press, p. 21).

Beyond professional development opportunities many women expressed the abundance of reading they do to improve their abilities as a leader. They

explained that they read professional magazines or books on administration.

One woman stated, “Okay, there are tons and tons of great books out there that have really helped me a lot so I try best to be in a book as often as I can when it comes to leadership that has been very good.” Some women were involved in book studies or professional learning communities with their colleagues. Others read books that helped them grow in their walk with God. The distinctive quality of a faith-based school is that books with a biblical worldview become commonplace on the shelves of administrators. While there are many excellent secular books, Christian faith-based administrators strive to grow in biblical understanding and knowledge as well. One woman stated:

I have read books, the latest one I read was its not *Communities of grace* but it is written by the guy that does the whole *Communities of grace*, thick book, very dependent on the Holy Spirit, coming into your school and doing what God tells you to do and yet at the same time very practical. It was by a whole bunch of professors and teachers of ASCI schools ...what’s it called? Oh, *Schools as communities*. And it’s a whole bunch of people, it’s a compilation and it was very, very good in terms of what school should be and what kinds of things are kingdom values and kingdom principles.

One participant referred to a book on Christian education she is studying with her staff, to develop them professionally and spiritually:

We are working through the book *Kingdom living in the classroom*. So what we’ve been doing we’ve been reading about a page or

page and a half a day and then talking about it and then going on and debriefing and praying and that has been such a good thing to unify our staff and the kids, the kids feel it.

Other professional supports included on-site support staff such as an administration/school leadership team or secretarial supports. The ability to have a collegial conversation with those inside and outside their school was invaluable. Some women spoke of having a confidant just a phone call away. One participant described her support group in these words:

So I find situations like that calling on other experienced people, hearing how they are going to address it and in some situations one person wasn't enough I needed an opinion of at least two sounding principals and then I could run it by and make a plan and then come back and say okay this is my plan and this is how I am going to be dealing with this situation and I think I was very successful and probably ninety-nine percent in these situations by taking the time but having that support group.

Another woman put it this way, "I can think of seven or eight people I have no problem phoning up right now and just asking for help on something and that has been very, very good for me, because, because of where our school is located I don't have that access all the time."

The ability to converse with others in a relationship of trust is paramount in developing a network of other principals for advice and support:

Yeah there are other women in our elementary schools actually that, there are a couple that I have a really close bond with and we'll share but you know how our lives get so busy it is hard to pick up the phone or what is better, which we have done, is to shoot out a short email saying if you have five minutes can you give me a call then so we are both ready for the conversation. So yes, the answer to that question is yes, there is a couple that I would trust with certain types of information.

Only three participants referred to the school board as an area of support. The school board was not considered by all participants as an area of support. Perhaps the interview did not probe in the right direction to get at the necessary questions to reveal this support. Perhaps it was not an area of support high on the list of the supports of the participants. School personnel who were a daily part of the school community were referenced more consistently than the school board.

Those who did refer to the school board were grateful for their support. Participants used words such as: "he is a wonderful support and is also the school liaison and so if I have an issue with contracts that's who I contact", "a gifted board" or "they are very kind". Other participants appreciated their school boards but shared some limitations such as: "my school board is very good with helping me but none of the people on the board are teachers so unless I explain everything to them they don't understand really what's going on" and "our board is fairly involved especially for feedback so we meet once a month and go over

everything at board level so that's a commitment outside of school time". At no time was the board considered a problem or concern of the participants. The participants seemed to have positive and respectful relationships with the school boards.

Spiritual Supports

Prayer with a colleague or having an accountability partner was also a support to these women. Staff devotion and prayer times were a priority in many of the schools. These times provided spiritual and professional growth to the participants. One participant stated:

...what are we doing here then we might as well close the doors and go to a public school because if we are not calling to God in prayer what are we doing. So we've definitely, that influence of not only having myself in prayer and devotions but also our staff, that has been a huge, huge because if the staff are having difficulties getting along, seeing eye to eye and having a hard time with each other during the day and if they just leave then the next day is hard again. At the end of the day when we pray together as a staff, and we pray together every day as a staff and it makes a huge difference we can connect, we can say, okay, what happened here and we can work things out.

Another participant expressed appreciation for her prayer partner at her school:

I think having a prayer partner has been something that has been important. Somebody I can go to and say this is my problem today,

please pray for me or I have to meet with this parent about this issue that is really severe, can you throw out can you throw out a fleece for me because I'm going to need it.

One woman shared how her staff upholds each other in prayer:

Well I think the easy answer there is it directs a path you know it's interesting I could be at any one place on emotional scale but I come into my staff and we can join together and we can pray and uphold each other...if one part of the body is hurting...I can come to that staff and we can uphold each other.

She went on to say that the biblical/scriptural foundation provides the strength to deal with tough situations:

...there's a resource on a spiritual level and we don't just pray, we pray first, but having the foundation of scripture, or prayer of worship together as a community that is a huge strength...I said we've prayed this through before and God will. You know this confidence in how God will open a door I know that, I know it in my head, I know it in my heart but to be surrounded by people who support that like mindedness that body and faith you can't touch that so I guess what it does for me is lower the stress level a whole lot because we have this strength and this confidence in God together, together and that strengthens my faith alone and I'm doing devotions in the morning and you know I have this "ah ha" moment and I bring it to the staff we celebrate.

In these examples, not only did they pray but also they celebrated the answers to prayer. Tough decisions were covered in prayer, asking for God's wisdom and guidance.

Many of the women who worked in Protestant faith-based schools spoke of their Bible times, reading scripture and doing personal daily devotions. Others spoke of the devotions that are done with staff members. The administrators from the Catholic schools spoke of the spiritual leaders in their schools or parish and the value of knowing that the spiritual leaders and parishes were praying for the school regularly. One Catholic school began praying on a regular basis and formed a faith group within the school for teachers:

Basically they pray the rosary, the Hail Mary's there are twenty of them but it was called on the run because it was really, really fast so there was no time to meditate or anything it was race because it would start at 8:20 and they had to get it done by the bell and of the course the rosary is, it's a wonderful prayer but it's not for all and I wanted to be respectful to the group so I started a staff prayer once in a while just a different style, let's pray about something else and so it evolved, and evolved and evolved to a point that the faith committee said "you know I think we need to have it every week" and I went "yes that was my idea".

Another woman described the blessing of being able to pray as desired and publically, not privately as in a public school:

I think in a faith-based school you have a lot of support that you don't necessarily have in a public domain that you can rely on. I can go to my staff and say, hold on, we just need to stop and pray and we will and there's such power in a group of people praying over a problem that you can't access that power in other places and I've been in public school staff meetings where you have factions that are not on the same page and the staff room is awkward to be in and the staff are sniping at each other and you feel lonely and I don't feel that in a faith-based school. You're all working from the same viewpoint and you work together as a team and yes there are issues and yes there are frictions that need to be resolved but if you can come at it with a faith then you all have the same idea about how to resolve it.

Another participant spoke of the differences in living out her faith in a faith-based school:

When I was in another school division this year, to make a comment like "Thank God for our blessings", "thank God we are today", that would be an uncommon comment whereas here you know I say it is "a wonderful day, praise the Lord" it is not an issue so it is a nice freeing thing.

One participant said she could not be an administrator in a public school because of her faith; that she felt a faith-based school was the best place for her to work:

Well I believe passionately that my faith is a part of everything I do or it isn't really my faith, so it intersects with everything that I do and you know as I said before, would I want to be a principal in a non-Christian environment? No because it is so much of who I am and so it definitely intersects with my role as an administrator.

Another participant shared the importance of her faith as a principal in a faith-based school:

There's no intersection, it's one in the same. I wouldn't be in this position if I didn't have my faith. I would never survive this position without my faith and it would have no purpose without my faith. My faith is really the essence of who... at least I try to make it. We deal with people all the time and we want to be Christian in the way we deal with people. Our vision for the school for leading this community has to be God inspired and why do we get up every morning and do it. Because it is the will of God and so let's do it well enough that He can accomplish His goals through us and any principal you talk to in a Catholic school or a religious school that is the core and I talk with other principals that talk about just skipping away to the chapel, you know step aside to reflect and pray and I find myself often in meetings just pausing for a second "Lord I need help I don't know what to say to this person. I don't even know how to understand what they are telling me it's so reassuring to have a God that's right there.

Another woman explained the importance of faith and how her words and actions influence her staff:

And then, so we had to learn as a staff to say, this is what has happened, I am sorry and please forgive me and, I've not found that this is the case in other schools especially where we are a Christian school. We try our best to act in a Godly manner that wasn't the case in a school where you don't have faith based employees. It's very small but the difference is we all claim Jesus Christ as our Lord, that's the difference. So if you claim Him as Lord you better act that way on a daily basis and try to convey that to a staff member who is having a bad day or a bad week or a bad month. It's almost difficult to do because you sound "judgy" and I don't want to be the judge and jury but at the same time I need to set the tone for the staff and so I do notice how I say things and what I allow myself to say. I'm allowing my staff to talk that way and so it really does make a difference.

The faith of the participants was paramount to their ability to be courageous leaders of faith-based schools.

The faith of the participants permeated every decision and interaction.

One administrator explained that as a faith-based school, assumptions are made that families are living out their faith away from school:

Even when I'm dealing with parents here I assume everyone is Catholic and I know they're not, but I just assume. What did you do

yesterday? I went to church, did this, did that. And they're quite good they never make a comment back and it's like if you don't know, learn about it.

Personal Supports

The consensus theme of personal supports, spouse and family, and faith/prayer was a thread throughout this thesis. The participants spoke with honor and deep appreciation of the encouragement and support of their husbands. Husbands were sounding boards and places of refuge. Many participants expressed that they could not fulfill their role without the support of their husbands. Coupled with this was the support of their children and extended family. Table 10 shows the areas of personal support for the participants in this study (participant numbers are randomly selected):

Table 10

Personal Supports

Theme Participant	Immediate family (spouse/children)	Faith/prayer	Friends	Extended family
1	X	X	X	X
2	X			X
3	X	X		
4	X		X	X
5	X	X	X	
6	X	X		
7	X	X	X	
8	X	X		X
9	X			
10	X	X		
11	X	X		
12	X	X	X	
Total	12	9	5	4

One participant described the support of her family with these words:

I would have to say my children and my husband are my number one supporters. They were very proud of me that I would take on that challenge and they are extremely understanding because of the demands of this job. I'm not always present to the home but there's understanding there and we have kind of an agreement or

understanding that during the school year that there are times that I have to miss things because I'm being called here.

Another participant expressed her appreciation with the following statement:

My spouse has helped me and above all that the confidence and tolerating my work ethic and give me lots of space, actually pushing me once in a while to grow and that's a treasure. You know that you can come home and have someone that doesn't resent your time or resents your passion but helps promote it, I tease him because he is my biggest cheerleader you know and I don't know what I would do if I didn't have that at home it wouldn't be worth it you know.

And another woman shared the need of the support of her husband:

He is, because I wouldn't have taken on the principalship this time if he wasn't willing to live and have me do it again because he knows he has to give a lot too. Is it frustrating for him? Yes, I don't know if it is a male/female thing, or if it's, a lot of men are this way, or they might all be I don't know, but he is very goal oriented himself and he has had to put a lot of goals and desires of his on the backburner with having the children home and with demands of my job. So is he always willing and able and loving doing it? No and sometimes I may have taken advantage of him too much and I've had to recognize that. I'm an oldest and he is a youngest, he lets me push, push, push so far and then he's like "woom", here's the

wall and then he's pushing back and "whoa, hold on what's happening?" So keeping the communication going so that I'm not taking advantage of him too much is part of our dialogue. But yeah, definitely he's supportive I wouldn't or couldn't do it if he wasn't.

While other participants stated that their husbands were not resentful of the time and efforts these women invested into their schools, this participant recognized that her husband did not "love it". She recognized that at times she has taken advantage of his support and that he does, at times, resent her commitment to her role as an administrator in a faith-based school. This demonstrates that even with supportive spouses there is still tension in the marital relationship because of the demands of the job. This finding is consistent with literature on educational leadership in public schools.

Many participants referred to their husbands as "cheerleaders". One participant simply stated: "If my husband wasn't behind me I wouldn't be here". Another woman said: "Well, I've accessed my husband I couldn't have done it without him, absolutely there's no ifs, ands or buts". This same woman expressed her appreciation for her sister and brother who are in similar educational roles.

One woman expressed her concern of causing stress to her husband as he is her sounding board and the one whom she shares her concerns. She stated:

You have to be careful too how much you can talk to who about what, I'm pretty closed but I share things with my husband as I feel

I can but if I dump too much on him then he feels stressed. I feel better but he feels worse and that bounces back to me so I think a lot of it too is personal walk wise just laying a lot of it down in front of the Lord and going blah, here we go and you help me walk this through.

She went on to say:

I'll talk to my husband and the repetition and dialoguing out with someone else helps me process and so I think that is my biggest strategy and you know going okay Lord you help me process this through and I'll make my best decisions having time to process and I am noticing that about myself too and I've gotten more comfortable saying to people leave it with me and let me think and think it through.

Another participant's comments supported the theme of family as she said:

You know what that has got to be family...our family is spread out a bit, our children, but they're always in contact and you know what that's really important. My personal family, I have sister and she has the craziest point of view yes you can be in a family and be different personalities. I'm older and so our personalities match that age group but she teaches, we also bowl together on Wednesdays and when we're driving together she is listening to my complaints and I am listening to her complaints.

Many of these women spoke of the personal support they received from their family and friends within their faith-based community. Participants also expressed their dependence on God as a personal support. Faith, prayer, small groups/Bible studies also provided supports which will be further discussed in the next section on faith. They spoke with gratitude knowing people were praying for them and that they could turn to their friends and family to ask for prayer. Many of the women in Protestant schools were involved in small groups (or life groups/Bible studies) in their church community. The people in their small groups were a support and encouragement to them. They also spoke of the prayer network within their schools and the accountability of other Christians.

Faith

Working in a faith-based school requires that one has a solid understanding of biblical truths, spiritual faith, and a biblical worldview. Mark Mittelberg is a Christian apologist who defines a spiritual and reasonable faith as:

...a wise, spiritual faith...a commitment of trust based on solid, though incomplete, evidence that we're believing in the right things and moving in the best direction. This understanding of *faith*...is in sharp contrast to the fuzzy and often misguided definitions we see floating about in contemporary culture... (Mittelberg, 2008, p. 221-222).

When asked about their faith, participants responded with phrases that confirmed that their faith was the distinctive of their role as an administrator. So much of what the participants said was consistent with each other and spoken

with passion that many examples are provided below of how faith is integral to their administrative role. One participant shared:

I never stopped, people always knew I was Catholic and from where I stood but here it's like there is no difference. I can continue my faith all day long and I don't have to be explaining.

Another participant shared similar sentiments:

There's no intersection, it's one in the same. I wouldn't be in this position if I didn't have my faith. I would never survive this position without my faith and it would have no purpose without my faith. My faith is really the essence of who... at least I try to make it.

A third participant said:

I think that is the strength of the Holy Spirit which we have access to as Christians in our day to day, in our day to day it's like it could take letters it's not the big things that's going to get us, it is the little things you know it's not the big things we're going to be or well known for its that little things day by day, little tasks done well, "well done good and faithful servant," that kind of thing. It doesn't have to be the big wow it's that absolute commitment, its constancy that day to day level of how you deal and that comes from beyond my flesh that comes from faith in God you know.

And a fourth participant spoke of her faith with these words:

It's been my life and I really believe that part of being a servant leader is knowing your core and part of my core is my faith in God,

my faith that He is, He will not abandon, that He is, not only omnipresent but loves with boundlessness and that in that quiet place when, I said before, when I need to go to a quiet place to ruminate and discern that's where I find my faith and my God and that helps me resolve, you know, think about process and when, like this and this and this align then it's the right decision and I think all three of those pieces, there is God. There is God up here in my head, in my heart and in my gut, so when all of that aligns and I really believe that.

A common thread was repeated by this participant:

I believe passionately that my faith is a part of everything I do or it isn't really my faith so it intersects with everything that I do and you know as I said before would I want to be a principal in a non-Christian environment? No because it is so much of who I am and so it definitely intersects with my role as an administrator.

This participant simply stated:

My faith intersects everything so it's who I am and what I love about teaching in a Christian school is you can actually speak into people's lives using your faith.

The participants articulated their faith as an intrinsic part of their inner being. The participants understood God's high calling in their lives as women of faith and leaders in faith-based schools. They understood the spiritual responsibility of their role and the moral standard for their lives. Through these interviews it

became apparent these women lived their lives with the moral imperative of the Bible. The Bible was their moral compass and guidebook for life. As Christians they understood sin and the necessity to avoid sinful behaviours.

Most Christian school employees are required to sign a doctrine statement of faith and lifestyle commitment that clearly defines expectations of character and behaviours that are expressly forbidden in scripture or are deemed to be incompatible with Christian standards. Lifestyle commitments may vary depending on the faith-base of the school as some faith-based organizations have different opinions about homosexuality, for example. Lifestyle commitments may include behaviours that are to be avoided and could cause job termination, such as:

1. breach of trust of confidence;
2. lying or deceit
3. extramarital sexual relationships (adultery)
4. premarital sexual relationships (fornication)
5. reading or viewing pornographic material
6. homosexual relationships
7. theft or fraud
8. physical aggression
9. abusive behaviour
10. sexual assault/harassment
11. using illicit drugs
12. criminal activity

These behaviours, based on an interpretation of the scriptures, are incompatible with Christian standards. While this list may differ in Christian faith-based schools (based on interpretation of the scriptures) it aligns with the scriptures as found in Colossians 3:5-10:

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1265)

For example, Linden Christian School employees are expected to:

...commit themselves to a God honouring life style in accordance with Scriptural principles. This will include regular church attendance, personal disciplines of Bible study and prayer, faithful stewardship of time, talents and resources and intentional investment in the lives of others. (Linden Christian School Doctrine Statement of Faith and Lifestyle Commitment, 1987)

This also aligns with scripture as found in Colossians 1:9-12:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1259)

In general and for most of these participants of Christian faith-based schools, they and other school employees are expected to be living lives that reflect an understanding of scripture and thus a Godly lifestyle.

The schools included in this project had mission and vision statements that clearly explained the faith stance of the school. To better understand the participant in this study I visited the school websites and I was able to view mission statements that included statements like; “love and serve God”, “quality education for the whole person, taught from a Biblical perspective...develop a Biblical world view and become responsible, growing disciples of Jesus Christ, who glorify God through a life of service to Him and to others”, “helping children achieve their full, God-given potential”, “a set of moral values...a personal and active faith in God”, “to provide a quality Christian education”, “assist students in their pursuit of Christ”, “to work with parents to train students in the way of life

presented in the scriptures”, and “to direct and guide the child towards a saving knowledge and trust in Jesus Christ the Truth; to attain understanding, wisdom and righteousness and to lead to responsible service to the Lord in all areas of life”. These statements are from the participants’ school websites, but to protect the confidentiality of the participants short statements have been used without disclosing the school. I believe this aligns with the themes found in work by Crippen and Wallin (2008) with female superintendents. Crippen and Wallin (2008) state that “authentic leaders are moral leaders who understand their own values and beliefs” (p. 547). The moral imperative of the administrator in faith-based schools is the word of God, the Bible. The participants in this study have, by virtue of their choice to work in a Christian faith-based school, publically confessed their Christian values and beliefs. They would be working in other school environments if they did not understand personally the values and beliefs presented in the Bible and expected by the faith-based school in which they work.

Personally, I guide all of my work by the Linden Christian School (1987) mission, vision and core values which state:

Mission

With a commitment to excellence, Linden Christian School provides a Christ-centred education that equips students to love and serve God.

Vision

Linden Christian School is a biblically-based learning community

where all students grow to be devoted followers of Christ, insightful thinkers, discerning decision-makers, and compassionate community members.

Core Values

We believe in a Christ-centred education based on a biblical worldview.

We believe in excellence and the development of godly character.

We believe in providing a safe, caring learning environment that focuses on the whole person.

We believe in equipping students to serve in the local and global community.

Christian schools are seen as an extension of the home and come alongside parents in teaching children Christian principals. One administrator shared:

I think the other piece too, my personal faith and working in a Christian environment, I don't know if there is a Christian school in the world that doesn't say our mission is to integrate home, church and school. You know like those three work together in building a foundation it is really encouraging to me to know that parents may disagree with the little pieces but at the end of the day we share a commonality, not all parents, some of them, we are all at different places in our journey. I think we have more like-mindedness than not and that's a huge difference.

Faith-based schools have doctrine statements of faith, and mission and

vision statements that parents are required to sign and support. Parental support is paramount as schools teach with a spiritual/biblical perspective. Even non-Christian parents are expected to support the spiritual foundation of the school. Many faith-based schools have an open enrolment policy, but keep a balance of Christian and non-Christian families. Faith-based schools continue to teach with a biblical worldview so that all students will learn about God regardless of their faith background. One participant put it this way:

We like to have a balance. We don't like to have so it's balanced towards just people who have a faith, we like Christians to influence the non-Christians, but we are open and we are very open and honest to parents. I sit here and I tell them you are going to be told Jesus is just one of your people, but we will teach your child that Jesus is the only way to God and if they come home and you're telling them something different they're going to be confused so will you support? That doesn't mean they have to say or believe it, but will you support us in what we are teaching your child and not talk against it you know when they come home as they will just be confused. Sure, no problem we just want them to go to a good school. So we're really upfront about who we are and what we believe and if they still want to send their children here, great.

Another administrator stated:

We go (to church) every week because that is just what we do. We need that connection with the church every week to remind us that

we are body and you know what I just find that as a Christian and as an administrator in a church based school you need that blanket and I need to be able to relate to people who have a religion and who don't. Our church, the church, is an aging church and so a lot of our students are not from our church. We have children with no religious background, we have parents with no religious background, this is a wonderful opportunity to let them see we are not all crazy Christians right? We are caring, we are kind and regardless of who you are we care for you. So it affects everything we do from the time you get up till the time you get up the next day it affects you.

As Christians working in faith-based schools the participants claim the promises of God's word and understand the basis of their faith. They are expected to act in ways that are consistent with the Scriptures and show grace, mercy and love.

Feminism

Feminist theory was a concept that I needed to explore as I had never seriously considered myself to be a feminist given the negative connotations that often surround its conceptualization, whether real or perceived. My reconciliation of this topic is explored in Chapter Two. My upbringing and understanding of my place as a woman in the church influenced my understanding of this question. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the same issues faced the women of this study.

When the participants were asked if they considered themselves to be

“feminists” they struggled with their response. Many of the participants were able to describe their personal journey and how they contribute as a female administrator and leader in their own Christian community but seemed resistant to characterize themselves within the context of feminism. Their limited understanding of, and lack of engagement with, feminist theory led to responses that were ambiguous, contradictory, or outright skeptical of the value of feminist thought in relation to their experiences. Yet, these women understood the valuable contribution they made to their schools and articulated views of themselves as strong female leaders. They had a much easier time describing their experiences as women leaders than they did theorizing those experiences using words that could put them in conflict with church doctrines or their perceived understandings. Their concept of feminism was based on their upbringing and teachings of the place of a woman in the church and home that then impacted upon their understandings of themselves as administrators in faith-based schools. Their knowledge of egalitarian and complementarian church perspectives of the roles of women influenced their responses. Because they were familiar with church perspectives on their roles, women who understood themselves to be egalitarians were more open to considering themselves feminist, whereas those who have accepted complementarianism rejected an acknowledgement of themselves as feminist.

While the women had the interview questions in advance and had time to consider their responses, they struggled with this question, with one woman saying “you kind of snuck that question in”. The data suggest, that, rather than

rejecting feminist theory outright, there should occur some open discussions of various perspectives on feminist thought, and how these may be reconciled with women's understanding of their faith perspectives, and of themselves as faith-based leaders. For example, most of the women articulated a liberal feminist point of view, suggesting that women should have equal opportunity for leadership as males, and/or the structures of their role should be equally accessible and/or remunerated as that of men. Others articulated standpoint feminism in their articulation that men and women may have different standpoints from which they consider their roles, but that they all have something valuable to contribute to leadership.

Some of their lack of understanding of feminism was articulated in their responses that essentialized or homogenized all female's experiences as being similar to each other (or different from all male's experiences), and/or that they felt they had to constantly compare men and women in dichotomous ways. One participant offered contradictory information that stereotyped men/boys and women/girls. She then suggested that men should be preferred in leadership roles, but contradicted her point by stating that there should be equal pay for equal work, and that she thought she had done a good job as an administrator:

Personally...when I was first asked to put my name in as teacher and principal, I refused because I said I believe that man should be in the role of administrator. That is what I personally believe and for the reasons he isn't emotional like I am, well most of them aren't, and men think in a different way than women do and when it

comes to administration there is so much, so many decisions to be made and some that need to be made very quickly without any emotion and I have a hard time separating that a lot of times and I don't know if women necessarily know how to hold their tongue at times either and those kind of things need to happen so am I a feminist, I don't think I am. If there was man that would want this job I would be totally good with that because I do recognize that a man would do things a different way than I do. Do I think I've done a terrible job, no I don't think so I really like my job but do I think women should have equal pay? Yes they should! Equal pay for equal work, absolutely. Are we built the same? No we're not and God is not a woman, never had been, never will be and I actually believe that. I stand up for my boys in school and I talk to the girls an awful lot about how we as women need to respect the men in our life and boys need to be boys, boys and girls are different and if you don't know that just come into my middle years classroom and you can see how they are different. The boys need to get out and explore they need to get their hands dirty, they need to get into stuff. Girls need to talk their emotions through and guys don't want to hear about that they want short, fast sentences, they need short Bible verses, and they need short instructions.

A second woman clearly articulated a feminist point of view, but because she was unfamiliar with feminist theory, she struggled to articulate her resistance to

more radical views of feminism with her perspective that women should receive equal opportunities, obtain independence, and be recognized for their capabilities:

I guess in some people's eyes I would be. I don't see myself as a feminist per se. In my mind a feminist is usually stridently out there voicing women's rights and that's probably just from my age but in other ways I can see, yes. I'm a feminist because I believe that women can do a successful job just the same as men can and I believe we can be given opportunities to do that. I believe that I'm an independent woman who has capabilities and strengths and if that makes me a feminist then yes I am a feminist. My Dad raised me to be very independent, I didn't need a man to achieve and I still don't. So, yes I think I am...and I don't, I guess we've come a long way baby, we don't need to march the streets anymore. Yes there are still issues that need to be brought to the forefront for women but I do believe we are making enough strides that we don't need to be strident in the way we approach things.

Another participant was adamant that she was not a feminist even though she clearly articulated that she believed all men and women should be provided with opportunities based upon their gifts:

Do I consider myself a feminist? No, no, no, no. and I've said that. I'm not somebody who you know, is about women's rights. I just think God uses us equally and we have important things that the

school and the church need.....I bought a book by Danny Silk called *Powerful and free, Confronting the glass ceiling*. People who are not in leadership don't see that there is a ceiling that we women hit except in the world out there, there are women in all the major corporations but in the church they're held back because of the verse that says "Women should not talk in church, women should not whatever..." and I am not a feminist. What if there is a guy and a lady and this guy is more qualified, pick him. But if this person's more qualified give them the job. I think that we both bring different things to the table and they're both good.

While this participant shared a story about the absence of women in the church, she also felt that women should have an equal place in the church for the betterment of the church (egalitarian perspective). She provided a liberal justification for her answer by saying the job should go to the most qualified person, regardless of his/her sex. Another participant spoke of the different gifts that individuals bring to their work, but spoke openly also of resisting the label of feminism unless it was nuanced with better understandings of what it meant:

I think there are some areas that I have some gifts in and with a lot of practice have gotten better at where maybe I would lead better than someone who is male. How you work all that out is a process so I don't like the term feminist because of all the connotations so if someone just asked me that without wanting a lot of explanation I

would say no, but if you let me define it in terms there is a lot of strength in female, there's a lot of benefit in female leadership.

The participants had different understandings of the word feminism, though most defined feminism from at best a liberal perspective. This is not surprising given their upbringing with only two frameworks for understanding the role of women in the church, one of which (complementarianism) nullifies their opportunity entirely, and the other (egalitarianism) is a conservatively liberal view that allows for their participation in various roles:

When I first read the questions, absolutely, depending on how you define feminism. But as I thought about it more I thought well, no I believe in the dignity of all people. I hold everyone else around me to that same standard so if that's what feminism is then yes, but if it's not, then I'm not. Does that make sense? Like I'm not rebellious, I'm not out to prove women power by any sense of the imagination. I'm a strong woman and I know what I want and I recognize I am a leader for all these people in this community

Many of the women talked of liberal perspectives of equality:

I am not a feminist I am an equal opportunity. You know it's interesting, like yes, I am glad we get to vote, I am sad that people don't take advantage of it enough but I never would have been out burning my bra or something because then you'll get into that way, way right-wing and you have lost your perspective I like to be in the middle....I am not a feminist but I do believe that I have strengths.

Another woman explained:

I believe that humans can have a voice and not have to be labeled a feminist. A woman can have a voice, I think it's a developed voice, I think it's an informed voice, I think it is an educated voice but I don't think you have to be a feminist to have that voice. I think you have to be an educated person to have that voice.

A third took a more radical stance by suggesting that Jesus was feminist. Her justification of this stance speaks to a standpoint perspective that men and women brought different gifts to their leadership:

I would say yes. I do in the sense that Jesus was a feminist and what I think and mean by that, that he brought women out of being furniture or chattel into a position of equality, different but equal. I think that I believe that women can do whatever God calls them to do I don't think we are defined by our gender, praise God. Except that God made us different and so there are some things women can do way better than men and vice versa and that's okay we're still equal, just different and ...so I kind of think it is the same things because of the fairness and equality but a difference and the difference is good.

I believe that the participants' responses to feminism were influenced by their faith and biblical worldview of feminism. The question made them struggle with their understanding and definition of feminism given their lack of prior experience and understanding of theory. I think the long time teachings of

society and the church made these women struggle and attempt to justify their response. Consistent with Wallin's work on feminist theory (see Chapter Two) these women needed to define their own understanding of feminism based on the context of their "privileged social location" (Wallin, in press, p. 3) which will bias and shape their understanding of feminism.

The faith background of these women brings a bias to their view of feminism. As they responded to this question it was evident that they did not want to be viewed as radical feminists as defined by the liberal movements of the 1960s. While unable to articulate this, the participants' responses focused on social feminist theory which recognizes that "human nature is 'created historically and culturally through dialectical interrelations among human biology, society and human labor' (Calas & Smircich, 1996, p. 220). Gender is socially constructed and impacted by intersections with sex, race, ideology, patriarchy and capitalism" (Wallin, in press, p. 9). This study provided a collection of standpoints of female administrators in faith-based schools, and much like the work by Kassian (see Chapter Two) these participants spoke to affirming their current experience within the context of doctrine and aligning with biblical teachings their role as an administrator.

As leaders in faith-based schools, participants shared there was still an underlying current of a woman's place in the "church." In analyzing the interviews as a whole, the women who were in stand-alone schools rather than those in schools connected to a church seemed more independent or confident in their role as a woman in leadership. This was evident by the confidence they

shared when speaking of their leadership role. It is possible, that the reason those women who were more unsure of discussing their role as 'leaders' was because of the hierarchy of the church or that a male was in the CEO or principal role and they felt submissive in their role.

The participants were provided the interview questions well in advance of the interview. When this question was asked you could see and hear hesitation in the participants' responses. I realized that if it took me several months to resolve my thoughts on feminism, it would also take time for the participants. I think this was evident in the way they framed their answers, one participant saying "you kind of snuck that one in there" at the beginning of her response.

Consistent with my own struggles, these women had difficulty coming to terms with their view of feminism. In Chapter Two, I took the time to justify my stand of feminism. Through the four years it took to review and understand current literature on feminist theory, I realized that I am a woman who wants other women to have a voice; that I am a conservative feminist whose view of feminism is influenced by my faith and social teachings over the years. This is an area where in many ways I could relate and find parallels in my own beliefs with the participants. The women in this study continued to hold on to

...the biblical teaching that humans exist to serve and bring glory to their Creator, God rather than the feminist theory which shifts the emphasis to: God's purpose was to assist humans to realize liberation, wholeness, and utopia for themselves (Kassian, 2005, p. 114).

Summary

This chapter addressed the interview questions posed to each participant in the study. As a result of the participants' responses to each interview question, the data collected was coded into consensus, supported or individual themes and illustrated using direct quotations from the participants to portray their thoughts and feelings. The participants' responses to the interview questions provided insight into the administrative role of these women in faith-based schools and the depth of their faith in God.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Included in this final chapter are the summary of findings of the research, a discussion that situates the findings within the current research and literature, and the conclusions I reach about women as administrators in faith-based schools. In addition, this chapter offers implications for practice, research and theory and presents questions for further study.

I was surprised by the support and enthusiasm of the women participating in this research and their willingness to share their stories. I was not surprised to find out that their stories were similar to my own; in fact there were times that I felt like I was talking to myself. I was amazed by the richness of the conversation with these women. Rapport was built quickly and the conversations were comfortable and sincere. There was laughter and tears. These women shared their hearts. Our similar faith backgrounds and roles as administrators in faith-based schools were our commonalities; we were sisters in Christ (like-minded by our faith) before the conversations began. The time went by quickly as questions were asked and stories were shared. Some women wrestled with their responses so that it did not seem as though they were speaking negatively about their school. Others told me more than I think they expected to say. In the end many were surprised by the answers they gave to their questions. This was evident from the responses to their transcripts. Some women responded to the transcripts with words like, "I didn't know I felt that way" and "That was so therapeutic."

Discussion and Summary of Findings

Various themes emerged through the qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts from this study. During the course of this research I found the representation of women in administration in faith-based schools to be quite varied in the scope of their job responsibilities, educational pursuits, and training. Some participants lead affluent schools with rich histories while others lead struggling rural schools. Some of the women held Masters or Doctorate degrees while others expressed how little opportunity there was to further their educational aspirations. Achieving credentials and certification necessary for holding leadership positions in education depended on time, age of their children and accessibility to a local university. In fact the further a university was from where these women worked the less likely they were to pursue graduate education. This aligns with Wallin's and Crippen's (2008) work on the superintendency.

When discussing career paths it became evident the paths taken and the reasons why participants entered administration were varied. No consensus theme emerged. Instead there were supported themes such as needing more of a challenge, being encouraged or invited to do so, feeling that administration was their vocation or calling, or that they had never considered or desired administration but it just happened. Those who felt called also did so to fill a need within their school. Half of the participants had worked in faith-based schools for most of their careers, while the other half had experience in both public and faith-based schools. Of the twelve participants five participants held a

Bachelor of Education degree; four completed a Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education or course work towards a Master's degree; two participants held a Master's degree and one held a Doctorate degree (but not in education). Ten of the administrators worked in urban schools while two worked in rural schools. The school size ranged from 30 to 700 students. Some schools were more affluent than others. Nine schools were Protestant and three were Catholic. Nine of the women were principals. Three were vice principals. The vice principals had male principals as heads of their schools.

The search for work-life balance was a consistent theme for all participants. The challenges and strategies to achieve balance were varied amongst the participants. Some of the women were full-time in administration while others struggled to find time to administrate while also holding a demanding teaching position. This multi-role expectation was most evident in the rural schools. Some of the participants had children living at home, while others were empty nesters or had no children. Those with children at home were better at limiting their hours at work. Those who were empty nesters or had no children were more apt to work hours beyond the school day.

Four participants were encouraged to accept an administrative position based on their education, training and stage of life, with one saying she felt that she had been preparing for this role "all her life". Three saw a need and were willing to meet the need by stepping into an administrative position, even though they lacked in training and experience. Two participants knew it was their vocation. Many of the women commented on life experiences that prepared

them for the role as an administrator. Many of the participants felt that God's hand was in their life, preparing them for their role as a school leader. Their words align with the scriptures in 1Corinthians 2:9 it says, "However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" the things God has prepared for those who love him" (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1223). God had been preparing them for their role as an administrator.

Some of the participants felt unprepared professionally and grew into the role craving any professional development opportunities available and sought out others who would come alongside them to mentor them in their new role. They sought out short-term professional opportunities and aligned themselves with faith-based organizations that provided professional development and professional connections relevant to their school. Along their career path, five of the participants took time to complete further university education, with two completing a Master's degree. Those who did not pursue further university training felt limited by geographic location, and family demands and job expectations. None of the participants took a career break to pursue higher education. Instead the participants completed university course work while working full-time.

When asked about the nature of their work, these women talked of their varied roles. One prevalent was as educational leader, defining their role with words such as school leaders, curriculum leaders, administrative leaders, managers and spiritual leaders. Due to the varied size of their schools the

responsibilities as an administrator in a faith-based school varied. The words used to define their role resonated with that of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1991; Crippen, 2005; Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). Depending on the size of the school and support staff, some administrators also acted as caretakers and bus drivers. What came through clearly is their role was not limited to the textbook definition of a principal. Instead, these women were willing to do whatever it took to ensure the day to day operations of the school functioned as they should. These women also discussed their role as family counselor; helping parents with family issues, child needs, or appropriate discipline.

When describing their role as an administrator it was not surprising to hear participants use language consistent with strong leadership practices along with relational language. Relational leadership styles focus on being in a relationship with others horizontally rather than hierarchically and working with and through others; the concept of power to consider power *with*, or shared with others, not power *over* (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 7). In this type of leadership, power is tied to the importance women place on relationships. Through the analysis of these interviews, it was evident the women in this study are collaborative and caring. They spoke of a desire to be strong educational leaders allowing them to make decisions based on priorities for student learning (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 19). Analysis of these interviews is consistent with and supports the research which shows that women leaders are focused on student learning and spend much time in the classroom and therefore are often highly motivated to make changes to provide better learning opportunities for students (Grogan &

Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 18). Those interviewed emphasized and spoke of strong programs of staff development, fostering instructional change that improved learning and focusing on student growth and development. They stated they did their best within time and financial restraints and kept student learning as a priority.

Wallin and Crippen (2007) acknowledge that leadership styles that have been considered more feminine are actually becoming more sought after in present day leadership circles. With a growing body of literature in this area it appears both men and women are in some ways being freed from gender-based leadership styles. I wonder if these leadership styles are sought after in faith-based schools as they are in public schools. I would contend that the relational aspect of leadership would be strong in faith-based schooling based on the biblical teachings to love God and love others. This study would support the need for there to be more women in administration positions in faith-based schools and an affirmation of the value they bring to the role.

It is not surprising that a number of the participants thought they never would be in the position they are today. Some of the participants did not see themselves in formal leadership positions and expressed many barriers that got in the way of them accessing such roles. Barriers such as self-confidence, time, family demands, work load, and time management surfaced from this study. Personally I could not have fulfilled my role as a vice principal when my children were young. I was able to do so because they were older and with the constant support of my husband.

The results from this research aligns with the work done by others (Wallin & Crippen, 2007; Young, 1994), which suggests that multiple types of barriers, both professional and personal, continue to keep women from attaining leadership positions. Coupled with this is the influence of the church; the church's view of women in leadership and the barriers women face as the church changes their points of view regarding women in leadership in the ministry (Beach, 2008; Hybels, 2010; Wurzbacher, 2010). While this was not a focused topic within the interviews, it was an underlying theme in the literature reviewed and validated by the participants interviewed. Such research identifies the strong role that cultural values, socio-political practices, and gender-structured policy play in determining the access that women have to the leadership of faith-based schools. It is necessary for church leaders to change their minds about women in leadership and to support the women who are accessing these roles and achieving success. Surprisingly, the women did not openly admit the gender barriers in their positions, although biases and barriers related to gender emerged indirectly through other topics. Because these women have been able to access school leadership positions in faith-based schools, it is not surprising in one aspect that a handful of participants would suggest they had not faced gender barriers. However, about half the participants, despite success in their careers, acknowledged barriers and challenges for women aspiring to the principalship in a faith-based school because they are women. Their candid responses and feedback are invaluable for women and those interested in women's issues.

Spiritual responsibility was a dominant part of their role. This is the distinctive difference from administrators in secular schools. The participants were women of strong faith and moral convictions and were committed to leading a faith-based school. They spoke of their personal faith life through devotions and Bible readings and prayer. They understood their responsibility for nurturing the spiritual lives, as well as academic lives, of their staff and students. Spiritually, they knew they were impacting people for eternity. It was their prayer that each student would become a follower of Christ and come to understand that his/her eternity was secure in Christ. They understood the simplicity of the message in John 3:16-17:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1140)

They also understood the Great Commission as stated in Matthew 28:18-20:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1072)

In the scriptures in John 1:11-13 it says that to become a child of God (to be a follower of Christ) one must believe:

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1137)

This was also evident in the mission and vision statements from each school which spoke to the spiritual development of students. For example Linden Christian School's vision states "Linden Christian School is a biblically-based learning community where all students grow to be devoted followers of Christ" which summarizes what is stated in the above scriptures.

When discussing the challenges that the participants encountered during their career, personal and professional challenges emerged. Personal challenges focused on the balance of work and home. The participants acknowledged the challenge of balancing career and their personal life. This is a challenge for most people, and would be especially so in such a vast and busy position as a school administrator. The participants talked about the struggle to maintain a work and home life balance. Despite their busy career schedules they still had responsibilities and duties at home to which to attend. Maintaining the responsibilities at home alluded to in the literature is a complex balancing act (Beach, 2008; Fiorina, 2007; Wallin, 2009).

Almost all of the participants commented on the time commitment and the challenge of balancing of both work and personal lives. It was difficult for them to find a healthy balance between the expectations of work and home. Work

consumed their thoughts and they had to be intentional to leave work at a decent hour and focus on their family. Repeatedly the women said they were overworked and that there were not enough hours to accomplish all that needed to be done. Participants spoke of the sacrifices made to ensure their professional lives were successful and to achieve balance. They said they visit with friends less often; do not take care of themselves physically, work long hours, take work home with them, and juggle school related meetings with personal activities with school meetings taking priority over personal activities. Participants spoke of the need to have an accountability partner (usually their spouse) in helping balance work and home. They also shared the need to balance work conversations at home. One participant said she needed to remember to play. This research aligns with that of Wallin (in press) as women continue to have the primary responsibility for managing their households (p. 22). Like the participants of this study “women administrators speak to the challenges of balancing home and career given issues of time management issues and family-role conflicts which can engender a heavy sense of guilt for not “performing” to their perceptions of expectations either at work or at home” (Wallin, in press, p. 23).

I believe in some cases the women put these pressures/expectations on themselves (as I do) but the truth is, while working in a faith-based school there is a valid argument and evidence through these interviews that more expectations overall are placed on administrators. These greater expectations are unlikely to differ much between women and men in faith-based schools.

Personal reflection and experience suggests perhaps that men are more disciplined in leaving work for the next day and delegating what needs to be done. The participants of this study were self-proclaimed “mother-hens” or caregivers and expressed how they are better at ensuring others were finding balance in their lives, the vice principals or teachers, but were not able to find balance themselves. These findings align with those of Wallin (2009) who found that the “difficulty often lay in achieving perspective between family and work” (p. 39). The measures put in place by the superintendents in Wallin’s 2009 study aligned with the strategies shared by the participants interviewed (see Chapter Two).

Professional challenges focused on internal work challenges such as staffing changes, questions on decisions made by the principal and lack of time. Several of the participants spoke of the challenges faced when dealing with difficult situations, when other stakeholders in the school (parents, staff, and school board) did not agree with a decision made. Three participants discussed their authority to make decisions and stressors experienced when their authority was challenged. Participants spoke of the positive relationship they had developed with the clergy but that this relationship took time to develop and required well established boundaries. Overall the participants felt less stress when trusted by the clergy to run the school well.

Despite the challenges, participants thoroughly enjoyed their jobs. One participant stated the challenges were the joys as she knew she was making a difference. The participants valued the relationships with staff and students and

the school community as a whole. They shared statements of pride for their school and the potential of their school. Their words of praise were glorifying to God as words of thanksgiving for the opportunity they had to be administrators in faith-based schools. These women understood the source of their strength to do their job was their faith and dependence in God. They openly gave thanks to God for the opportunity to serve Him as an administrator in a faith-based school. I believe that because of the faith of these women, even in diversity, they were able to claim the truth of scripture and lead with a Godly influence.

In contrast to the challenges cited by the participants, numerous supports were cited. The participants felt a primary professional support system for them at work was the leadership team in their school. This team included other members of the administrative team, school board and clergy. While some of the participants cited their leadership teams as being a primary support for them in their positions, some felt they were not fully accepted because they were women. Feeling support and strength from all people on their teams was seen as a huge asset for doing their jobs effectively.

Other professional supports included: administrative assistants, parent advisory councils, mentors, colleagues, students, and administrators from other faith-based schools, administrators from other public schools and professional development opportunities. Participants were intentional in seeking out valuable short-term professional development. The participants without post-secondary education desired to pursue such opportunities but were limited by work, family demands and geographic distance to an educational facility. Often financial

restraints at the school level limited professional development opportunities.

While this does not align with research in the public school system and women in leadership it is a reality for administrators in faith-based schools due to financial restraints and thus perhaps a limitation for women in faith-based schools who wish to pursue further education.

Some participants shared their mentorship experiences. They mentioned both female and male mentors who helped facilitate their growth and development into leadership positions. Their mentors were very significant people in their lives and were valued for their likeness of faith. Other participants shared their longings for a mentor or person to come along side of them to share their experiences. As is often my experience, many of the participants felt alone. It is hoped that this research will be a starting point for women to connect and share their needs and support one another.

Personal supports included family (husbands and children), extended family and friends. For those who were married, husbands were their number one support. Participants were vocal in recognizing the support of their family. Having a family that has the ability to manage at home, without the mother's support, was very important; as all of these women put much time and energy into their careers.

The participants expressed gratitude for the support of their spouse while recognizing the demands of their job was often difficult on their marriage and they had to be intentional to have personal time. The participants in smaller schools shared how their husbands were probably the only ones in the

community with whom they could share their frustrations, while at the same time they did not want to bring their husband into their frustrations. Several of the women spoke of the prayer support received from their small group or Bible study as well as personal time with God. Their faith in and dependence on God were their main supports. The participants also credited their friends and small church groups for prayer support and encouragement. They also acknowledged the deep need for personal prayer and Bible times to sustain them each day.

The participants were open in defining if anything or anyone had ever prevented them from achieving their goals. The challenges, personal and professional, discussed above were identified as the main limitations. From this question, some personal insecurity emerged as participants admitted that their own lack of confidence was sometimes a challenge and hindrance to achieving their professional goals. Two women discussed their struggle in getting their emotions under control and not taking things personally. I understand this struggle as I am known to be a person whose emotions are close to the surface. Over my years as an administrator I have set personal goals such as “no tears”, “no fear”, and “deal with the issues”. There are times when I am speaking or praying about something that is close to my heart that my eyes will well up with tears and my voice will shake. In no way does this show that I am emotionally unstable. Instead it indicates that a topic or situation has touched my heart and that I care deeply. I have learned to embrace that emotion and not be ashamed of it.

The participants were able to discern for themselves the need to show personal grace and realized they could not accomplish all that they desired; it was not possible. As they spoke it was evident that they had their priorities in order and that their main focus was on God, their family and friends and then their careers. They understood what was of value to them personally.

It became evident that the participants' faith drove their work ethic. The participants spoke of the joy they found in their role as administrators and they gave praise to God for that role. As Christians we are told that whatever we do we do for the glory of God. In the scriptures we read in Colossians 3:23-24:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (*The Holy Bible*, p. 1266)

The added dimension of working in a faith-based school made the job an extension of self. Participants perceived that if the job is not being done with excellence then God was not being glorified. One participant said, "I try to do the best job that I can for God". I think this is one reason why the participants put pressure on themselves by working beyond the hours of the school day.

Their faith also sustained them in difficult situations. When faced with a difficult decision, participants turned to prayer with God or asked for counsel of other Christians. They felt encouraged knowing people were praying for and with them. Two participants said they could not work in a public school setting as their faith was central to their role and they could not see themselves limiting

their religious freedom to share their faith at school. The participants felt their faith permeated every aspect of their person.

Church involvement was an area of conflict for a couple of participants as they did not always agree with church imposed rules on the school. One example of this was the church enforcement of using only the King James Version over the New International Version of the Bible in the school setting. This was also a challenge in dealing with the influence of the church over the educational expertise of the staff in the school setting. One participant referred to the support of the former Manitoba Education liaison to independent schools and her role in defining the church's influence over the school. In her school this session was attended by the clergy and principal so they both received an understanding of the church/school relationship. The administrators in stand-alone schools as compared to schools connected to a church seemed to have more authority in decision making. This would be a question of further interest in a future study. Little, if any, literature exists on this topic and is an area not dealt with in the secular literature on women in leadership.

The participants' faith and understanding of the scriptures and understanding of feminist theory also influenced their view of feminism. The women tried to justify their answers to the question on feminism. There were contradictions in their responses. While some participants were firm in their responses, others struggled in their articulation and were confused with how to respond. They were trying to justify their response by talking about the equality of men and women. I think their confusion stemmed from their understanding of

feminism from their generational lens and the way feminism has evolved over the years. I believe that their faith influenced their view on feminism and the doctrinal teaching from the church influenced the way they answered this question. Throughout each interview, it was evident these women were strong independent thinkers and want women to have a voice. I also believe that the doctrinal teachings of the church influenced their response as they answered what would be “expected” from women of faith.

In preparation for this study I examined the contrasting doctrinal teachings of the church to support my view of feminism. I think the majority of participants in this study held the egalitarian perspective rather than the complementarian perspective. Their words supported the egalitarian perspective which refers to equal ministry opportunities for both sexes as the basic definition of an egalitarian is “one who believes in the equality of all people.” (Kassian, 2005, p. 249) I believe that some women still held a complementarian perspective that sees ministry roles differentiated by sex and would be willing to give up their job if there was a man who was also qualified to fill the role.

Implications

The findings of this research provide several implications for practice, research and theory development. Using feminist interviewing techniques, participants were able to share their experiences from their own view point which allowed me to compare the similarities and differences in their responses. It is from these women’s perspective that I was able to record and analyze their experiences and provide a framework of themes to shape the content of my thesis. Because I was able to access such a wealth of information from these

women's experiences, I recognize more wholly the lack of research available on women in administration in faith-based schools. More research would be useful to broaden the theoretical perspectives and depth of analysis in this area of study to opening the doors and breaking down barriers to women in leadership roles within Christian faith-based schools. I believe I am the first to embark on this area of study.

Upon reflection of the results of this study there are several potential and interesting avenues for further research. The first avenue for further exploration is a comparison of female administrators in faith-based schools with female administrators in non-faith-based schools. It would be interesting to look at secular independent schools first as most faith-based schools are independent and then look at the research on administrators in public schools. It would be interesting to compare the stories of women who work in government-funded independent schools and compare them to non-funded independent schools. All of the schools in this research project were government-funded schools. It would also be interesting to explore the viewpoints of women in leadership in various faith-based schools, such as Muslim or Jewish schools, not just Christian schools.

A second avenue of further research would be a discussion with church leaders of Christian faith-based schools and to explore their point of view of women in leadership within their schools and church. They would have significant knowledge of any possible changes that have accrued over time. This

standpoint would allow for a more in-depth look at the historical context of women in church and educational leadership positions and change over time.

A third area of study would be to compare the role of a female faith-based administrator to that of a male faith-based administrator. It would be relevant to study the male administrators' perspectives on how their roles differ from their female counterparts because of their gender within the education system and within the church.

Another research opportunity would be the influence of faith on women in administration in secular schools compared to those without a personal faith. It would be interesting to explore how one's faith influences the way one leads.

Exploring the supports needed by female administrators in faith-based schools is another avenue of research. Mentorship plays a large role in leadership success however my research shows that women in faith-based schools feel isolated and alone. Researching the mentoring experiences of female educational leaders in Canada within a cross-section of school-based and senior administrative positions would be interesting. Comparing their mentorship experiences in depth would be influential in determining if their experiences attributed to their success as an educational leader.

Further research into any of these related areas have potential to inform and address what policies or human resource procedures are in place in schools and/or universities to help women develop as a leader within their organization.

In terms of implications for practice, if faith-based organizations pushed harder for equal opportunity policies, as other organizations have adopted, then

perhaps we would see even stronger and more significant change in the leadership of our faith-based schools. If women were acknowledged for the gifts they possess instead of limited (perceived or real) because of their gender more women might be in leadership in faith-based organizations as is written in the scriptures in 1 Corinthians 12 (*The Holy Bible*) the “Holy Spirit distributes the gifts as he desired” and that being female does not limit these gifts (Beach, 2010, p. 26). Like public schools, the majority of the teaching force in faith-based schools is female but males continue to dominate the administrative field. This aligns with Wallin’s research that states that there was no lack of qualified females in the profession as “(a) since 2001 at the University of Manitoba alone, 66 percent of the graduates with a Masters in Educational Administration were women; (b) 65 percent of the teaching staff in Manitoba are women and (c) 45 percent of in-school administrators are women” (p. 21). This information clearly shows that looking at the pools from which administrators are selected; women are underrepresented in school administration.

Christian university programs may merit more work on gender issues in education. Church and educational leadership programs have a potential to reach out and more specifically target awareness of this gap in female leadership which could significantly impact future generations of church and educational leaders. Perhaps, the secular universities could benefit from the experiences of these faith-based leaders and be more aware of the number of faith-based schools and provide course work that would align with the religious component of a faith-based school.

Summary

Women's access into administration in faith-based schools does appear to have progressed over the years, though it is still limited. Is it equal considering the number of women in education and serving in the church? Not at all. As in the secular school system women are under-represented in the field of administration.

It would be helpful for faith-based schools and churches to work together to develop the God-given leadership talents and spiritual gifts in women. While there are opportunities for leadership development, it is limited in its specificity for women. If males in churches and faith-based schools would value women for their talents and spiritual gifts and not expect them to fit into a man-made mold more women would have opportunities to be mentored and succeed in leadership within faith-based organizations. There needs to be a shift in church leaders' mindsets as this mindset influences the faith-based school. The reality of the literature and these women's stories is that more people, male and female, need to change their minds about women in leadership. Women would succeed if given more equal opportunities to lead. Change is slow and there is resistance but hopefully, if we keep addressing the issues, it will help affect practice in faith-based schools.

It is my hope this research supports and adds to the academic literature already available and gives further insight into the role of women in administration. Since this research examined the experiences of women administrators in faith-based schools, I hope this research provides an additional

perspective to the research available and inform practice for both women and men leading in faith-based schools.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

- a) What led you to enter administration?
- b) Describe the nature of your work and role as an administrator?
- c) What challenges have you faced as you have moved into administration?
Do you believe that any of these challenges are faced more so by females rather than males, or that some of them relate directly to the fact that you are female? Please explain.
- d) What benefits or joys have you experienced from being an administrator?
- e) What supports have you accessed, either personal or professional, that have helped you develop as a leader in your school?
- f) What supports do you have in place or strategies do you use that help you be successful in your professional and personnel roles?
- g) In what ways do you believe that working in a faith-based school influences the challenges and supports you have found in your work as a female administrator?
- h) Has anything or anyone ever held you back from accomplishing your goals? Explain.
- i) How do you balance life beyond school?
- j) What advice would you give aspiring female administrators in faith-based schools?
- k) Would you consider yourself to be a feminist? Explain.
- l) How does your faith intersect with your role as a female administrator?