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M.Ed. RESEARCH REPORT

26 FEBRUARY 1999

SUPERVISOR : DR. L. CHISHOLM

THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK AND WHITE FEMALE HEADTEACHERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS.

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Management).

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Management) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Gauteng. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Selma Nagan

26.02.99

Selma Nagan

Date

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The research reported here is the product of many hands. I acknowledge my indebtedness to those who assisted me.

Firstly I wish to express my thanks to Dr. S. Sebakwane and Ms. Carol - Anne Spreen for their initial guidance; and to Dr. L. Chisholm for her expert supervision of this study.

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Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to my husband, Leslie, and my two sons, Abner and Reuel, for the sacrifices they made in bringing this research report to fruition.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents and my late sister for their love and encouragement during my initial years of study and for instilling in me a desire to learn ; and to my husband, Leslie, and my sons, Abner and Reuel.

ABSTRACT

This study is a contribution to an understanding of gender inequality which still exists within the education system of South Africa, despite laws to the contrary. It provides an understanding of the impact of not only gender, but race and class oppression on the lives and careers of Black and White female headteachers. Using the life history method it explores the links between feminine management styles and women's role in society and the family. This study sought out the female headteachers professional and personal views and gave them opportunities to reveal the intersections of their home and work. Underpinning this study was the conviction that women tend - and try - to avoid fragmenting their lives.

Footnote:

1. In this paper "Black" is used to refer to people classified as Africans, Coloureds and Indians.

Keywords: headteachers gender inequality race class oppression feminine management styles women's role society

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although South African research, in recent years, has told us about women teachers' lives and careers, the lives and careers of women headteachers are understood not nearly so well. The objective of this study is to understand the life experiences of female headteachers and to discover and uncover some of the links between women's private and professional lives. It explores how race, class and gender have found expression in individual lives and social relationships. The study examines the different ways in which gender and headship are experienced; as well as the perceptions of headteachers themselves in their headship role. It focuses on factors which influenced the career paths of female headteachers. The purpose of research should be to raise questions that have not been asked before. It is hoped that this study will complement existing literature on gender issues in educational leadership, and generate information that will be of relevance to policymaking in South Africa.

1.2 Rationale

Gender inequality in South Africa and the need to address issues of discrimination of women has only recently become the subject of interest for policymakers. Gender issues have to be systematically and scientifically explored so that gender bias could be addressed in the new education system. Although research in Western countries show that teachers' work and lives are inextricably linked to gender, gender issues have still to receive the kind of attention they deserve in the South African context.

Recent studies on women teachers in South Africa, however, have begun to provide insight into the relationship between race, class, and gender (Morrell, 1992; Sebakwane, 1993; Truscott, 1994; Kotecha, 1994; Pandor, 1994) . But the views of Black South African women headteachers have rarely been considered in the literature, and few studies are written from the perspective of the 'oppressed'. Very little is known about what happens to the minority of women who do achieve promotion to headship posts. A question that arises is whether gender is a significant factor in differentiating careers in teaching and experiences of headship. It is the contention of this study that women headteachers voices should be heard and their views be central to providing an alternate understanding of the impact of not only gender, but race and class oppression on their lives and careers.

In South Africa, the proportion of female headteachers bear no relation to their proportions in the teaching force as a whole. Despite the changes that have taken place in the country over recent years, administration is still a masculinist enterprise. Truscott (1994 : 45), in alluding to the South African situation contends that "in all schools gender bias operates through the fact that whilst most of the teachers are women, most principals, senior teachers and inspectors are men."

Davies, a British researcher, in her study on gender and educational management in Southern Africa, states that "the teaching profession tends to

be female dominated numerically based on data from the early 1980's, with 66%, 69% and 63% women respectively for Black, White and Coloured sectors. In Indian schools the proportion drops to 45% female teachers. Percentages for principals range from 3.5% in secondary schools for Indians to 22% female in primary schools for Coloureds, with female heads in White schools occupying an intermediate position (Davies, 1984)." One had to look at the cultural and political contexts around teaching and to "seek out universal features to do with women's apparent oppression, suppression or even depression" (Davies, 1990 : 54).

The 1994 figures regarding the rank of educators reveal that men hold a disproportionate share of management positions. While men make up 36 percent of all teachers in South Africa, they hold 58 percent of principal posts, 69 percent of deputy principal posts and 50 percent of head of department posts. While women make up 64 percent of all teachers in South Africa, they hold 42 percent of principal posts, 31 percent of deputy principal posts and 5 percent of head of department posts (*Edusource Data News* 1995b : 18). "Historically, women have been awarded very few promotion posts compared to men. The data from the years 1987 to 1991 for the African departments show that eight percent of all female teachers held the position of principal . In 1994, statistics for teachers of all race groups showed only four percent of female teachers held the position of principal compared to 11 percent of male teachers" *(The Gender Equity Task Team Report, Department of Education 1997 : 198).*

In an age when female education and female opportunities have apparently expanded, it forces us to investigate why male domination of headships still persist. According to researchers this phenomenon can be explained in terms of institutionalised social patterns and cultural dispositions. Educational changes in the country requires that we redefine the concept of career and management to include women's experience and to retain the richness and diversity of women's definitions of career without constantly having to face hurdles and

discrimination (Ozga 1993). In this study, I want to go beyond the numbers of women in headship posts, to explore the links between women headteachers' lives and the meaning of gender in their life experiences.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Feminist Research

Feminist theory and methodology was adopted for this study. A female-defined paradigm is an essential component for research on women in educational administration. The study will, however, take into account that educational administration as a discipline borrows from the social sciences and from organisational theory and research.

Feminist researchers according to Weiler (1990 : 58) "begin their investigation of the social world from a grounded position in their own subjective oppression." It takes as its central tenet women's subjective experiences and the significance of everyday life - both private and public. Weiler (1990 : 62) believes that "focusing on the everyday world reveals the ways in which larger forces, both ideological and material, place limits and conditions on our actions." Dueli - Klein (1983 : 94) calls this method "conscious subjectivity in which both observer and observed are acknowledged and validated," whilst Mies (1983 : 122) refers to "conscious partiality" in which the researcher identifies her own experience with the women who are objects of the research. This type of research is characterized by its political commitment to changing the position of women and thus to changing society.

Feminist research puts women at the centre of the discourse, not as 'the other' in relation to men. Stanley and Wise (1983) believe that emotion and involvement is a central factor in locating and describing women's experiences, whilst Scott (1985 : 71) maintains that valid feminist research has caused researchers to cut across the usual methodological boundaries between

personal experiences, feelings and needs of the researchers. "It must explore the situation in order to legitimize it as seen from the eyes of woman. Such research is a way of seeing the world without using a yardstick that has been the measure of men in the world" (Shakeshaft, 1989 : 26).

The aim of this study is to use the life history method to explore the specifically gendered experiences of women headteachers and the way it is compounded by race and class. Life histories have been adopted by feminists as a strategy for women to articulate their views and speak about their experiences. Life histories are embedded in the social relations of race, class and gender which dominate women's perceptions of the course of their lives. Mbilinyi (1992 : 66) states that this is a type of data often ignored in conventional histories as too individual, too specific and atypical. It is a challenge to longstanding generalizations. Dollard believed that the life history is a study of one of the strands of a complicated collective life which has historical continuity. Reflecting on one's past and present, making sense of this experience and presenting it to another is particularly significant for women who, according to Nias (1989b) often live unrecorded, invisible and interrupted lives. Writing their histories and reading other people's enables them to gain a perspective on their own lives and to become increasingly empowered.

1.3.2 Interviews

Bearing all of this in mind, I have had to develop a suitable interview schedule. I, too, like Middleton (1993 : 65) can say that the genesis of my research questions lay deep in the tensions and conflicts of my everyday life. In studying the lives of other women, I am also trying to understand myself. The interview schedule has been structured into five categories covering: Background Information, Lifestyle and Family, Education and Career Pattern, Professional Lives and Domestic Situation. From the accounts it will be possible to identify themes that recur across life histories and the themes within a particular individual's life. By focusing on the tensions between a cultural

a particular individual's life. By focusing on the tensions between a cultural legacy, the social structure and individual lives it will become apparent that race, class and gender were powerful forces in defining reality and in limiting choices. They will be looked at in relationships within families, in early experiences of being a girl, in relationships with teachers and other adults, in career choices and study and in the experiences of headship. In addition to the sense imposed from outside by researchers, the tellers will be making their own meaning of their lives to change in some measure inherited realities.

The last three sections roughly fit with the areas associated with gender imbalances in school management. The questions on career appraisals are designed to see how far teachers map their careers, or conversely how far they simply await events, and to ask them to identify barriers to their progress. The section on professional lives ferrets out information on school management. It is important to know at what point gender identity starts to become significant in determining perceptions of work and at what point other social divisions take precedence. Rearing children and running a home is also "work" and "experience" and should be viewed as an advantage. This section asks about changes or improvements they would like to see in social or family life; about any conflicts between home and work and how these could be reduced; about planning time; and about possibilities for the integration of work and personal life. The schedule concludes with a feedback question on whether the interview helped respondents to think about ways to improve working and home life.

Typically life history studies offer a rich source of data. Interviews or conversations provide insight into other people's lives and these data can be used to make connections and draw conclusions of various kinds. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are compatible with feminist ideals in that they provide opportunities for and legitimate womens' voices. The interview schedule with open-ended questions was flexible enough to allow for dialogue as well as responses to questions. The face-to-face interview brings in a personalised element to research. All interviews were recorded and transcribed

so that interviewees had the opportunity to verify their responses i.e. a process of collaborative theorizing. Some felt, however, that tape-recording is more intrusive than note-taking. The collection of data took place in a setting convenient for the interviewee - in their homes or schools. Life histories deal with intimate material and carries an ethical load. "It involves developing relationships and trust to enable the researcher to penetrate several layers of access" (Goodson, 1983 : 213). Ethical and political issues in data collection was considered which included confidentiality of respondents; documents reviewed or reporting on sensitive or controversial issues as well as ownership of the data generated through research.

The purpose of the pilot exercise was to enable the researcher to carry out a preliminary analysis to check whether the wording and format of questions presented any difficulties to subjects in the main study or when main data was analysed. Responses enabled the researcher to revise the interview guidelines. The research project itself and the methods used reflect a subjective approach.

1.3.3 Sample

Ten schools in two school districts in Gauteng with female headteachers was studied. A proportionate number of headteachers from ex-apartheid schools was chosen i.e. Department of Education and Training; House of Representatives; Transvaal Education Department and House of Delegates schools. The sample was drawn up to reflect different sizes and locations of schools i.e. suburban. Primary and secondary school principals were included to enable the researcher to draw informed conclusions on gender issues. The sample is not representative in any way nor does it try to generalize about women's experience from the data to be obtained .

Nias (1989b:p.209) in quoting Polyani (1969) notes that:

> Research is an intensely dynamic enquiry while knowledge is a more

quiet research . Both are ever on the move , according to similar principles towards a more deeper understanding of what is already known.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gender Inequality

A number of recent empirical studies on the role of gender within the South African education system describes how female teachers experience formal and informal discrimination and oppression. (Morrell, 1992; Sebakwane, 1993; Truscott, 1994; Kotecha, 1994; Pandor, 1994). According to research, legislative discrimination operated via the structures of apartheid and with reference to salary, housing subsidy, medical aid, retirement benefits and other conditions of service. Informal discrimination was through gendered labour division. Sebakwane (1993) and Kotecha (1994) suggest that discriminatory practices against and oppression of women teachers can be traced to the patriarchal character of society. Kotecha (1994) notes that socio-economic factors also play a role.

Educational administration in South Africa has traditionally been and remains male dominated. A viewpoint held by both Kotecha (1994) and Truscott (1994) is that women are absent from educational management : they are the exception when they might be expected to be the rule. Kotecha (1994 : 75) reveals that an analysis of data on the rank in former Department of Education and Training primary schools shows that although men made up 24% of all teachers, they occupied 40% of principalships, 38% of deputy principalships and 35% of head of department positions. 1998 Statistics reveal that of 18 primary schools in Lenasia only two females hold headship posts and there is a marked absence of female principals at secondary level. *The Gender Equity Task Team Report* (1997) confirmed previous findings that discrimination that excluded Black women from certain positions was institutionalised through apartheid and was either direct or indirect. The former was based on personal characteristics not related to the work situation. The latter excluded certain persons or groups from been considered e.g. for promotion. Seniority, for instance which is one of the factors in promotion, disadvantaged women in that they had career breaks

to rear children. Indirect discriminatory practices is still very evident and needs to be addressed.

It is interesting to note that gender has not figured prominently in discussions of headship, apart from discussions of gender differences in the numbers and distributions of headship posts. It is fair to say that existing literature on women in educational administration in the country could profit from increased empirical research. The traditional literature in the USA and Europe on school administration largely ignores women. It tells us little about their past or present lives nor do we hear of their struggles. Only recently has there been an interest in examining current theory and practice for the impact of gender by female researchers (Acker, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Evetts, 1990; Ozga, 1993; Schmuck, 1981). Research literature reveals that issues of gender, race and power relations in educational administration has neglected to explore the difficulties facing female managers. At the same time there has been little analysis of the different perspectives and values which female leaders may bring to their task (Ozga , 1993). It has been concluded that valid and important documentation of the experiences of female headteachers, demonstrating their strengths, achievements and struggles is needed.

The present study tries to discover how female headteachers view their worlds. These voices would help to understand more clearly the world of women, as well as to ask questions of the theories and myths surrounding educational management that would not otherwise present themselves.

2.2 Research and Gender Differences in Headship

Research literature on this issue has been published in the USA and Europe. There are few published research texts on gender leadership styles in the South African education context. Research findings on gender differences in headship have been complex and at times contradictory. No significant differences have been found in terms of the definition of objectives, perceptions of the

organisation or task completion in school management. However, as regards the manner in which tasks are carried out and style of leadership, gender has been shown to be a differentiating variable.

Most of the research on gender differences in leadership styles has been American, fairly small-scale and relatively inconclusive (Evetts 1994). Cochran (1980) noted that female principals were more effective at resolving conflicts; motivating teachers and acting as representatives rather than directors of a group. Adkinson (1981) suggested that females as compared with male principals were likely to be involved in instructional supervision, to demonstrate a more democratic leadership style and concern themselves with students. Such differences were confirmed by Shakeshaft's analysis (1987) of the woman principal as educational leader and master teacher compared with the principal as manager and administrator. In Britain, few researchers in describing the leadership styles of headteachers (Lyons 1974; Peters 1976; Earley and Weindling 1987; Evetts 1994; Davies 1994; Grace 1995) confirmed gender differences.

According to Evetts (1994) significant gender differences have usually been denied. Although Ball's (1987) study made a close examination of women's careers in teaching and the politics of gender, there was no reference to gender differences. Ball (1987) recognises that not all women experience discrimination nor is there a sense "of combined sisterhood among women teachers. Yet he sees women's groups in schools as becoming a potent source of agitation for change in the organisational arena of school micro-politics as the claims of women receive greater publicity and external legitimation" (Davies, 1994 : 77).

Research literature suggests that it is the complex, varied and rich experience of women's lives which contributes to their particular management styles and capacities. The emphasis is on the positive and the possibility of success without emulating the male norm of management (Shakeshaft, 1989; Nias, 1987; Ozga 1993; Grace, 1995; Davies, 1994). Women in management are subject to

pressures and experiences not experienced by men although, as argued in the literature, they may share the same work pressures. Walker (1993) contends that whilst Black women in management share the same experiences as other women managers, they are subject to other experiences unique to them alone. Black women are perceived in a stereotypical way by society and have to contend with the whole experience of pressure from an institutional culture. Besides they experience an heightened awareness of feelings of isolation, sex stereotyping and discrimination from colleagues.

2.3 Promotion in Career

It is important, as one comes to look at women's lives, to question the concept of career as the literature of the field presents the notion that career paths are hierarchical (Lyons , 1981). It is argued that women do not have access to the unilinear career progression open to men and sometimes women themselves choose not to pursue limited career paths as men (Shakeshaft , 1989). In the absence of research work on gender differentiated promotion paths in the South African context, research studies conducted in the USA and Europe have been consulted.

Research studies have shown that there were gender differences regarding earlier career promotions in the experiences of men and women headteachers. Generally men headteachers assume responsibilities early in their careers and achieved promotions whilst in their twenties and thirties. In contrast women's promotion to headship took much longer (Gross and Trask, 1976).

Evetts (1994 : 38) in her study noted differences between men and women in the patterns of their career development. The typical female headteacher was both older, had more teaching experience and was more skilled in pastoral responsibilities than their male colleagues. The question remains - why then are women teachers not better placed than men to achieve promotion to headships? Gender differences in the distribution of promotion posts also reflect differences

in career identity, socialization and expectation (i.e. women teachers don't apply) and differences in gender discrimination (i.e. women candidates for headship posts are more of a risk) (Evetts, 1994).

So, despite changes in the law and the social context that might indicate that sex discrimination no longer exists its presence is still being documented. The same factors apply in the South African education system.

2.4 Public and Private Lives

Researchers feel that the importance of the personal dimension in women headteachers' experiences of career has been neglected for a long time. (Shakeshaft, 1989; Evetts, 1994; Ozga, 1993). The significance of personal relationships, partnerships, marriage and families is now being recognised by researchers. Careers are sometimes renounced because of domestic obligations. Yet others can find satisfactory career paths. Trying to achieve balance is a challenge.

Women headteachers have to contend with the conflict between the traditional role of wife and mother and her career role. Sex-role stereotyping compounds this conflict. Where teaching has been traditionally viewed as being complementary to women's role of wife and mother, management is contradictory to this role. This situation and the pressures of society backed by a deeply rooted patriarchal outlook in South Africa creates even greater tension, personal sanctions and guilt feelings. Conflicting role demands and expectations is a given factor and to say it does not exist would be dishonest and unscientific. It would be interesting to see how women headteachers in this study cope with and negotiate constraints and balance both public and private lives.

This study attempts to fill a gap in our understanding of how female headteachers in schools in two school districts in Gauteng experience their lives.

CHAPTER 3 : ON BEING A NOVICE FEMINIST RESEARCHER MY EXPERIENCE

This chapter has been separated from the rest of the text on methodology to explain the steps and procedures taken for obtaining information and to record some of my own experiences in this research project.

I was quite daunted by the prospect of conducting this research project although I experienced a keen sense of responsibility and connection to the topic. Establishing friendly relations with the participants in my initial contact with them was important. Negotiating respondents was in some measure both disappointing and difficult. Participants were suspicious about being involved in a research study; others indicated time and work constraints; one female head suggested I contact someone else because she was already researched; a few asked me to call back later and one head agreed to participate only if it was a "one off thing." My initial enthusiasm began to wane . Nevertheless after much persevering I tracked down the 10 female headteachers from 2 Districts in Gauteng needed for my study. The second district in Gauteng had to be included since there were no female heads from ex-House of Representatives and ex-Transvaal Education Department schools in the one district. Female headteachers' reticence was understandable. After some discussion of the appointments to do the interviews there was often preamble and informal talk. I needed to dispel their fears and concerns about the involvement in the research study. The topic generated a sense of excitement and curiosity which I found heartening. My anxiety also diminished with this sudden wave of co-operation. The thought of telling their stories and re-composing their lives was compelling.

3.1 The Politics of Doing Research

One of the aims of my study was to explore how forms of oppression i.e. gender, class and race found expression in the individual lives of female headteachers. Feminism provides the theoretical framework for this study as it

concerns itself with gender divisions, women's oppression or patriarchal control which informs our understanding of the social world.

Taken into consideration in this study was the significance of encouraging a non-exploitative relationship and the dynamics of a power hierarchy in research i.e. researchers are in a position of power because of access to knowledge. Of relevance is the "conscious raising" (Stanley and Wise 1983) so often described by feminists and which is true of my experience. I was intensely aware that by asking certain questions of the respondents a process similar to that described by Duncan (1987 : 3) may be evoked i.e. "a process of bringing into awareness deep . levels of female experience by naming and affirming individual feelings and experiences and finding out how far they are in common to women in general. It is a means of challenging and transforming our constructed sense of femininity..." (As quoted by Mahlase 1997 : 23). Questions addressing issues of gender inequality in the teaching community aroused much interest and debate.

Regarding interviewing as a process of collaboration I sought to minimise the gap between the respondents and myself. Common ground was our gender and the teaching profession and in some instances social class and race. A sense of trust seemed to be established. Being a woman of colour myself it became easier for respondents to articulate their stories. This research process thus became a vehicle for sharing information and as has been argued in the literature rather than being seen as a source of bias the personal involvement of the interviewer is an important element in establishing trust (Maynard 1990). When researching women's lives, their experiences have to be taken seriously.
Merely repeating and describing what they have said whilst important will lead to "individuation and fragmentation rather than analysis" (Maynard 1990 : 23). Smith (1986 : 6) has written that:

> A sociology for women must be able to disclose for women how their own social situation, their everyday world is organised and determined

by social processes which are not knowable through the ordinary means through which we find our everyday world.

One has to recognise differences and commonalities between people who are socially constructed as belonging to the same groups as well as across groups. In interpreting women's experiences therefore one has to make use of theory to make sense of the experiences. I, at the same time, did not want to turn into abstracted data the rich emotionality of their narratives. It had to be enriching for the women who were participating. Such involvement in their lives raises questions of ethics and objectivity. Jayaratne (1980) as quoted by Mahlase (1997 : 23) maintains that "there can be no such thing as purely objective research from the point of view that the product of research is not subject to our value judgements." Further to this point Stanley and Wise (1993) criticize the manner in which social research dichotimizes objectivity and subjectivity. They argue that the researcher is also a subject in her research and that her personal history is part of the process through which understandings and conclusions are reached (Maynard 1990 : 16). The subjectivity of the researcher and the researched especially in studies concerning women cannot thus be denied.

Mahlase (1997 : 23) states that the research method she employed in studying the careers of women teachers under apartheid "acknowledged and emphasized the womens' subjective experiences with a view to being instrumental in helping to change the lives of other women not only in secondary schools but in the South African society." A tenet of feminist research is the potential to bring about change in women's lives. Studying women's lives, as a feminist, means that male dominance, masculinity and men and the strategies women find to "resist challenge and subvert" such oppression is also a focus. The probes in my study encourage different ways of thinking - it not only created knowledge but questioned oppressive attitudes and behaviour.

To be able to analyse the interrelationship between class, race and gender the

focus of research cannot remain with experience alone. Class issues are not only significant to the working class and race is important for all ethnic groups, for these things structure all our lives. Our theoretical knowledge can help us gain insight into the interrelatedness of these issues. I believe the study had the possibility of empowering not only the research participants but the researcher too. According to feminism, "the desire to do research is to create useful knowledge which can be used by ourselves and others to make a difference" (Kelly 1990 : 28). Feminism as a praxis is not based on the simple fact of women sharing a gender in common but on a common agenda - the liberation of women (Kelly 1990). In believing that conducting and participating in research is an interactive process, then how and in what ways participants benefit from it should concern us. The end product of the research is to contribute to policy or legislation thereby enhancing the experience of others.

3.2 The Interview Process

It has been well documented that many women enjoy being interviewed by women interviewers. Most women headteachers who participated in this study mentioned aspects of their lives which hitherto remained unspoken. On reflection, a question I've asked myself is whether they would have preferred to remain silent or whether on being given the opportunity of telling their stories it became for them a cathartic experience.

The women themselves, however, confessed that they had welcomed the opportunity to be listened to with interest and without interruptions, even deriving some therapeutic benefit from this experience. Feminist research literature abounds with such revelations. The challenging and wide ranging nature of the discussion which developed evoked a deep awareness of realities previously suppressed. It seemed that in a few cases reticence and anxiety stemmed from insecurity regarding the correctness of their responses and they sought reassurance in this regard.

Some interviews took place in the respondents home and some at school. It was a humbling experience to be welcomed the way I was on my first meeting with the women headteachers. I reassured interviewees that the research process was guided by a code of ethics and confidentiality and that I would use pseudonyms in the writing up of the report to protect their identities. I also had to explain that, "from a political perspective all quality social research ought to be used in policy decisions" (Mahlase, 1997 : 18).

I was quite overwhelmed by the hospitality and consideration afforded me - telephone calls were suspended; secretaries were informed to take care of queries unless otherwise urgent; doors were closed and interviews proceeded without major interruptions. I dreaded interviewing the female headteacher who turned me away on our first appointment because of pressing matters from the school district office. She surprised me with her grace, her spontaneity and wealth of information. It was my longest interview. Interviews were limited to a maximum of 90 minutes. Some went on for longer and had to be tactfully cut short. Being a novice, the transcription of the tape recordings was really time consuming.

I identified certain themes and certain slices of data (Mahlase 1997 : 22) which emerged from the interviews and these will unfold in ensuing chapters. My interviewing the women headteachers seemed to have left some impression on them. Some participants felt inspired to either complete or embark on further studies. I have learnt that doing research entails some form of reciprocity. In quoting Gurney (1985) Mahlase (1997 : 24) points out that this reciprocity is "by way of offering services, information or materials in exchange for the privilege of studying and intruding into people's lives." This give and take has already taken some form of assistance with assignments in the way of providing materials; regarding matter concerning gender issues even using my interview guidelines in an adapted form for use in their own work situations. Women headteachers in the study were at ease talking to a tape recorder. At times they found it difficult to stem the tide of emotion which engulfed them

when talking about issues which were deeply disturbing. I had strange misgivings about using certain kinds of interview data to further my own ends. It was also rather disconcerting for me that certain stereotypes of women have become deeply entrenched. Mahlase (1997 : 26) states that "reporting such views, however, is danger of confirming that the impression is true. Many respondents expressed the wish to read the final report and to keep them informed of my progress. They weren't too concerned about anonymity anymore and even wanted their names mentioned. I left the field - a friend, not an intruder.

This chapter has addressed issues dealing with the process of conducting research with female headteachers. I have since learnt that interviewing people involves time, negotiating access, negotiating participants and the question of research methodology. Also that the collection of data could be influenced by factors such as the political environment in which the research takes place, one's gender, age, race and class background. Underpinning this study, of the experiences of female headteachers in two school Districts in Gauteng, is feminist debate and methodology. In the following chapter I look at home background and early socialization patterns. Relationships and roles in the home are mechanisms through which socialization of the young takes place and which lead to values and expectations of self and others about what are appropriate activities for men and women both inside and outside the home.

CHAPTER 4: THE EARLY LIVES OF FEMALE HEADTEACHERS

Boys will be boys
It's a fact of human nature,
and girls will grow up to be mothers.

Leon Rosselson
(In Riley 1994)

In the last chapter I located this study within the tradition of feminist methodology. As stated elsewhere one of the aims of this study was to explore how the interrelationship between gender, race and class impacted on individual lives. My work on female headteachers focuses on these dynamics and the way in which it is socially and culturally constructed, reproduced and resisted. In so doing one can unravel the interplay of power and powerlessness. Weiler (1990 : 64) states that it is clear from studies of working class life that class position is experienced not just in terms of control of material resources but is expressed within people's lived experiences and personal relationships. Class interests shift according to one's work and access to different forms of power. Inherited class position is also of significance and either limits or provides access to education and work. Our attitude towards individual achievement reflects our class culture. According to Weiler (1990 : 63) class intersects with gender and race expectations and ideology. It has been argued in the literature that women of colour experience not only race, but gender and class oppression as well. White women therefore have to confront their own dominant positions as whites in relation to people of colour. What started off as a study focusing on female headteachers lives and the meaning of gender in their life experiences turned out to include to a greater degree than anticipated the recognition of the power and reality of race and class as revealed in discussions of female heads life histories.

4.1 Family Background

A woman headteacher of colour on recalling her girlhood says :

> Growing up, I was caught in this hang up of not knowing who I really was but little realising, it was shaping me into what I am today. As a child it affected me because I didn't know where I came in with this Coloured / Indian background.

The class position of the parents of the women heads clearly influenced their choices in terms of education and work. The parents of female heads held jobs which could be classified as working class or lower middle class. One father was a businessman; one a printer; one a driver; one a postman; two were carpenters and another worked for a mining company. One woman headteacher had no recollection of her father. He died while she was still a very young child. Seven of the female headteachers mothers did not work and were homemakers; one was secretary; another a shop assistant and one a professional who educated herself part time after her husband deserted her. She moved up from being a chemist assistant to a qualified nurse to a qualified theologian. Only in the case of the businessman was university for his daughter an automatic assumption on the part of parents.

4.2 Career Choices

In some cases, both Black and White girls were encouraged by their mothers or significant others or achieved academic success at high school and internalised the desire to make something of themselves. In some instances cultural expectations meant that girls could not reach high school and if they did the natural order of things was for them to stay home after matriculating and await a suitor. The female headteachers in this study, however, contested such taken - for - granted assumptions, viewing education as a liberating force. The material restraints of class were clear in the discussion about college and

career choices. Five of the ten female heads stated that teaching was a first choice of career. Being able to leave at the end of standard eight and go into teacher training was a strong incentive because of financial constraints and family expectations. One Indian female head revealed that she "couldn't afford to study medicine. and teaching was the only option." Another Indian woman headteacher said that she "wanted to enter the nursing profession but decided that teaching was the next best option."

A White respondent wanted to become an accountant but being the eldest in the family she needed to assist her parents financially. One Coloured female head felt her choice was made for her by her parents. Women of colour felt that becau e of their race, teaching was one of the few jobs for which they would be considered. Access was limited not only in terms of financial constraints but by racism and sexism as well. One White headteacher pointed out that she came from a poor background; that "even whites have their own racism as far as language groups are c ncerned...so you can gather we've been educated from very little money...so we weren't privileged I can assure you."

To imply therefore that matters of class are significant to the experience of the working class alone and that race is important for some ethnic groups is to miss the point. We are not excused from confronting them because we are not members of a particular oppressed group (Maynard 1990 : 24).

One of the African female heads as a student was directly involved with the education revolt of 1976. Truscott (1994) points out that the education debate in South Africa has been dominated by issues of race and class in response to the 1976 Soweto revolt but a gender analysis with that of race and class has been lacking. She develops her argument by stating that gender concerns are emerging in education. The reason for the emergence of a more feminist consciousness in education stems from the education struggle itself (Truscott 1994). During the uprisings girls appeared in large numbers which gave them important experiences aside of traditional expectations and female teachers were

also 'mobilised' and 'radicalised' in the same way. She believes that it is the subordinated role of women in the labour market and in the family that will help us make sense of women's subordination in education - as students, teachers and administrators.

4.3 Societal and Family Expectations

The interviews I conducted dealt primarily with education and education choices but underlying themes of women's identities in society came to the foreground. The female heads in talking about their teaching mentioned the value of nurturing and caring for themselves and in their work - values regarded as positive aspects of women's experience in society (Hochschild 1995; Gilligan 1980; Dueli-Klein 1983). Some respondents had difficulty in recalling specific incidents that shaped them as girls. The theme of nurturance and being good surfaced in their stories. Here is one White female head who spoke about the past :

> Tolerance and respect is part of my family background. I remember being walloped for being disrespectful to my child minder, for not saying sorry to her. Those things have stuck. I learnt early in life that stubbornness would not be tolerated.

An Indian female head recalled :

> I am the eldest of ten children. The responsibility of looking after the siblings lay on my shoulders especially after my brother's death. I developed a strong sense of duty towards them.

This respondent even at a very tender age was aware of her role and responsibilities in the family. Her parents expected her to look after her siblings and she understood and met their expectations. It is clear that social and familial forces help create a woman's subjectivity. Other women headteachers

were more critical of family and social expectations. Another Indian female head said :

> I grew up in a very poor, very conservative home where women must be seen and not heard. I didn't speak up. I couldn't speak up. I was not allowed a life outside of home or even watch an English movie or have a boyfriend for that matter. My father envisaged that I would remain a spinster forever in the hope that I would remain at home. We had to look after the rest of them to go to college...and there were 11 of us.

This same person went on to say that her father believed that a girl should not be overeducated. If she marries, her husband would be the one to benefit. No such expectations were communicated of her brothers. She recognised this, became resentful and rebellious and on completing college left home, much to her fathers chagrin. She felt that by doing so she escaped female bondage.

For some of the headteachers, parental expectations were remembered as general or in terms of personality characteristics (be good ; caring etc). For these women, expectations were experienced as limitations eg. some women were expected to help with household chores while their brothers could stay out late and did not have such obligations. The effects of social and family expectations is clearer on looking at college and career choice. All headteachers interviewed had some support for continuing with teacher training college. In some cases the support was from family and school but in many cases it came from mothers who were concerned that daughters should be self supporting. This theme of mothers who encouraged their girls to go out to teacher training was echoed in several accounts. One African woman headteacher said :

> My mother had this vision for us and she would say that she wanted to see her girls well settled and all of them should have their professions. All my sisters (3) are teachers.

Another White female head recalls :

> My mother was the motivating factor in our educational lives. I went to college ; my brothers to varsity. I have the least education. Not for any other reason but being my choice. I started off with a teaching diploma. Because I had elderly parents I didn't want to be a burden to them. I had to help financially with my 2 brothers' studies.

In other cases parents saw college as a kind of inheritance for both boys and girls. An Indian headteacher remembers :

> All 11 of us boys and girls went to college - we qualified for the bursaries. My parents used to say you can be stripped of everything but not your education.

This Indian female head upon reflecting on her situation said :

> I was fortunate in that the choice was mine - it was expected I would go on to university and be what I chose. Teaching was my choice.

This White woman head decided to be a teacher when in high school :

> When it came to my matriculation year I'm not sure what I wanted to be. Basically I looked at my interests and that was sport I thought... well... this is a way to continue with my sport - teach children how to play sport.

Women headteachers' decisions to go into teaching was influenced by social forces and expectations of them as women and the realities of race, class and gender. Several female heads mentioned that they had other ambitions but went into teaching because it was affordable and it was an appropriate profession for women according to their mothers and fathers. One White female head said :

> I wanted to teach high school. I changed my mind and decided to teach senior primary children - it was possible to develop relationships with children.

An African female head who still feels cheated said :

> That's the blunder I regret up to now. Because intellectually I'm okay. I would have been a doctor had my school offered Maths and Science at senior secondary level. But... I saw the value of teaching, hence I started to teach. It's not something I regret because I'm doing something for the community.

Here is a White headteacher who said :

> It was either being an accountant or a teacher when I matriculated in 1959. I don't think there were women doing the CA. My brother said to me there's no women in accounting. So it was teaching. Teaching was helping someone - again something from my past.

One African woman headteacher spoke of her need to get a job and the difficulties she faced :

> I took the route of the college. I didn't have funds - it is why I went into teaching.

It was found that most of the female heads majored in the Languages, Humanities or Social Sciences - areas considered suitable for women. When considering the choices women headteachers made in going to college and becoming teachers the power of sexism, racism and class are highlighted. In many of these cases choices were limited because they did not have the resources to pay for graduate work. In other cases the realities of gender and race limited access to other jobs. We detect in these stories how female

nurturance, sacrifice and submission is valued; that girls and women have to support the men; the expectations of parents of their daughters and how assumptions were made that their destinies lay in raising a family. Thus even when choices were made they were made within existing social structures and ideology. These women headteachers found themselves teaching - doing work accepted as appropriate for women. Teaching was a career that was compatible with traditional female sex-roles and thus becoming a teacher, for a woman, does not challenge her femininity. Through individual choices another generation of women headteachers was reproduced. In the interviews, however, they described themselves as agents of social change. Some of them using the teacher unions or other professional organisations as a platform organised around discriminatory practices. For these women headteachers their age and the historical events they have experienced help them to understand the ways they have changed thereby having the possibility of bringing about change in the lives of others. The female headteachers have all been influenced by political and social movements which challenge ideology and have acted collectively in some instances, to create social change. For some women of colour the anti-racist and class struggles and the education revolt of 1976 were a stark reality. Their oppression as women and their awareness of it allows them to be in control.

It is clear from the interview data that female headteachers have been affected by ideology and material restraints. In career choices and in personal lives social and emotional expectations played a role. Women headteachers of working class background had to endure limitations of resources. Women of colour had the additional oppression of racism . Weiler (1990 : 100) points out that "while these women are critical and conscious actors in history, the institutions in which they work are subject to material and ideological forces that may act counter to their goals or values."

The profiles and career paths of these female headteachers would be traced in the next chapter to show how career orientation and career success developed over time in the sample of Black and White female headteachers.

CHAPTER 5 : PROFILES AND CAREER PATHS OF FEMALE HEADTEACHERS

There are few biographies of women administrators let alone South African women administrators. It is one reason why little is known of the individual lives of women who hold such posts. This chapter presents a profile of the women headteachers and a description of their career paths, illustrating that the literature on men is insufficient for understanding women in educational leadership.

5.1 Profiles of Female Headteachers

The research participants are aged from 35 to 57. The average age of the women in the sample is 47. Research literature indicates that women in educational administration tend to be in the mid to late 40s. Almost 1% of the sample had been in the post for one year; 3% for two years or less; 3% for three years; 2% for four years and only 1% had held the current position for five years. A study by Picker (1980 : 146) indicated that in some places women may be moving into administration earlier in their careers. It is also relevant for this study. She found that younger women who enter administration are not waiting as long for administrative appointments as did their older female colleagues. The 2 African females and 1 Coloured female were younger than their counterparts when appointed. The one African secondary headteacher who was also the longest in the post was appointed at age 43 ; the other two headteachers were appointed at age 32 and 34. Their appointments came at a time when there were major social, political and educational changes - in a climate conducive to affirmative action; gender equality and equal opportunities.

The majority of female headteachers were raised in a two parent family. The level of education of fathers of female headteachers ranged from an elementary

school education to less than a high school diploma. Their jobs ranged from artisan to businessman. Women headteachers across race and class achieved a higher level of education than their fathers. Regarding the area of educational attainment African and White women headteachers lean more towards their mothers. Mothers were found to have more formal education than their husbands. Whereas African mothers had a secondary or college education, other mothers had primary education and were homemakers. Not only African mothers worked outside the home in unskilled labour situations despite their education, one White mother was a secretary.

Of the ten women headteachers studied, four are married (one Coloured ; one Indian ; two African women) two female headteachers are widowed (one White female - no children, and one Indian female). Three female headteachers are single (one White; one Coloured; one African) and one Indian female headteacher is divorced. Six women headteachers out of the ten do not have husbands. Seven of the female headteachers are parents - a higher mean than are married. This is accounted for through divorce, death of a husband and a single parent. Married women, according to the literature, are more committed to their families and pose little threat to men who wanted to become administrators. Divorced women are now more acceptable - they can give themselves totally to their job.

Five headteachers have been brought up in homes with five or more siblings. The maximum was ten siblings. Only one participant was an only daughter. Seven headteachers were the eldest daughter. Women headteachers belong to different religious groups - Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Many are actively involved in religious work in the community. Most of the women belong to professional organisations that deal with and are supportive of women's issues, especially groups dealing with discrimination faced by women in society.

5.1.1 Qualifications

The group may be considered as very well qualified. Within the sample all had

undergone secondary schooling. Those who had completed their standard 8 and gone into teacher training completed their matriculation part time. The female headteachers in the sample were still upgrading their qualifications part time. One participant took a year off to complete her teaching diploma. Qualifications ranged from a Primary School Teaching Diploma to a part time M.Ed. It was found that headteachers had begun their careers as untrained teachers and sought to improve their status and pay by undergoing the teacher training at a later stage.

This was quite a normal pattern as in many developing countries where there was a shortage of qualified teachers. According to Thompson (1990) there is a danger that individuals will divert their energies from their professional responsibilities and the most able and qualified teachers will seek promotion into administration roles. Since promotion was largely determined by qualifications there were strong incentives for ambitious individuals to engage in further study. As this research shows the more aspiring headteachers report working for advanced degrees B Ed and the M Ed. In addition to graduate and post graduate degrees others have additional diplomas in education eg. the Diploma in Remedial Education; the Diploma in Educational Leadership; Diploma in Computer Skills /Wordprocessing.

In the study it has been found in the main that women in administration are older, are less likely to be married; come from both rural and urban backgrounds; are deeply religious and have been teaching for a long period of time before moving into administration. Literature reveals that women have entered administration later in their lives for a number of reasons. Besides sex discrimination literature indicates that career becomes a focal point in mid life. Barrett and Baruch (1979) found that in mid life self esteem increased and women discovered self worth. Besides the demands as mother decreased for women with children, mid-life brings with it a new focus regarding career commitments. Paddock (1978) found that being homemaker and mother were high on the list of difficulties for women wanting to move from teacher to

headteacher. Only as these responsibilities lessened as children grew up were women able to cope with the demands of administrative tasks.

Studies in the USA and UK have shown that the profile of a typical woman headteacher differs from that of a typical male headteacher. Specifically women headteachers are older than their male counterparts; are less likely to be married; have been teaching for a longer period of time and are politically and religiously active. Women have moved into headship later in their lives for several reasons many of which will be examined in depth in the next chapter. Although women headteachers are older than men because of sex discrimination other factors have contributed to them remaining as teachers longer than men. It has been suggested earlier that career becomes a focus of mid-life. At mid-life self esteem increased and women discovered self worth. Mid-life was the time of renewed career commitment and focus..

Women headteachers enter teaching earlier than do men but attain the principalship later. Shakeshaft (1987 : 63) makes reference to the fact that in the USA men seek the headship in their mid to late 20s and research on women finds them pursuing such jobs in their 30s and later. The typical woman headteacher is more likely to be older, of a different race, religion, political party and to be unmarried. She is likely to be more supportive of women's rights and be more empathetic towards the issues of divorce and single parents. Although it has been found that most administrative duties need to be taken care of outside the home many female headteachers reported taking work home. This profile of women administrators is different to male administrators. It questions studies that have used the male model to study women in administration.

5.2 The Career Paths of Female Headteachers

5.2.1 Concepts of Career

Concepts of career and of what makes a successful teacher are often male orientated and may operate to exclude or disadvantage female educators. (Adler et al, 1993; de Lyon and Migniuolo, 1989 and Evetts, 1994). Biklen (1985 : 2) notes that :

> In spite of changes in the work force, of the opening of fields that were previously more resistant to women, of the addition of women in professional and upper management positions, the structure of career is based on the ways in which men have been able to live their lives, free from primary responsibility for the family.

Shakeshaft (1987 : 64) points out that:

> Upward movement through the hierarchy and commitment to career, demonstrated by lack of interruption are essential components in traditional definitions of career.

As we know most teachers do not move through such a hierarchy and many women teachers interrupt their careers depending on their life circumstances. In the USA some sociologists have argued that teaching is relatively careerless compared with other kinds of non-manual work. However, in the UK, men and women teachers do expect some kind of promotion. Biklen's (1985) research asks us to reconceptualize the definition of career taking into account women's experience. We have to question the concept of career especially when we look at the working lives of women in schools. Related literature points to the notion that careers move along a bureaucratic structure. Many women, however, make clear choices regarding their careers. They clearly do not want to follow the same career paths as men or have reasons for making other

choices. There is a reluctance to take on a great responsibility, with frustrations and little financial recognition.

5.2.2 Female Headteachers Career Paths

The women headteachers in this study began their careers committed to education; nearly all majored in education or the humanities or languages (Paddock, 1980). From the sample we can dispel the idea that women headteachers have lower qualifications. We should bear this in mind when we talk about aspirations for promotion. An interesting feature, was that no women headteacher had received formal management training. It has been stated, however, that qualifications are not always a good predictor of long term futures and may be gained after someone has been selected for leadership. When listening to the interviewees (i.e. women headteachers who have successfully ascended the career ladder within schools) it seemed that the term career was being used in its conventional, male oriented sense whether reviewing the past or working to the future. Specifically they were very conscious of the difficulties they experienced by demographic, economic and political changes, something which many did not envisage when first entering the teaching profession (Nias 1989).

The women headteachers voiced several concerns when reviewing their career paths. Some commented on the difficulty of others or they themselves experienced in returning to teaching after child rearing, (full time study) or marriage.

One White headteacher explained :

> I got married in the good old days of the Transvaal Education Department. I was forced to resign and then get my husband's permission to come back onto the permanent staff 2 years later. I was a senior assistant when I left. When I got back there was no

post available. They had head of departments. It didn't worry me one bit - I was still doing the senior work.

These difficulties are confirmed by Biklen (1985) in the USA; Acker (1987) and Evetts (1990) in the UK, and Morrell (1992) in South Africa. When women headteachers in South Africa did return to teaching they came back disadvantaged in terms of a break in service thus reducing seniority. Consideration of seniority, according to Morrell (1992) meaning years of service, and as a factor in promotion is an example of indirect discrimination. The implementation of the seniority rule often disadvantages women. Women are more likely than men to have a break in service to rear children. Their seniority is less, so they are not considered for promotion. Lower seniority, he argues further, rather than the ability to do the job determines eligibility for promotion. There were relatively few women headteachers in this study who had taken time off for child rearing besides the maternity leave granted them. Evetts (1990) in her study of women primary and infant headteachers i.e. women who have successfully climbed the career ladder within schools describes five strategies which she differentiated according to individual priorities regarding career and personal goals. These priorities, she argues, are influenced by attitudes to promotion, by self esteem and by sources of motivation, though these can change over time. When examining the women headteachers career in my study for evidence of vertical mobility there were a few interesting findings. The same White interviewee nearing retirement and who was in the post for almost five years told her story :

I was teaching for six years when I became a senior assistant. Then these posts fell away and there wasn't a head of department post available. In my eleventh year the head of department guidance post became available. I had not thought of even applying. I'm not ambitious in that I must get ahead. It was more important to do the job. Job satisfaction had a lot more motivation than the salary, otherwise I wouldn't have started teaching.

She continues with her story some 14 years down the line :

> Mr. X was one of the most open minded males I've worked with - he wasn't threatened by women. When the promotion post for principal came up he said that he expected my application in. I came from head of department to principal. I wasn't a deputy principal and that was in the days when you went step by step. A male said to me : "You're one of the exceptions - you're a woman and you got it (the principal post); you were head of department and you got it; you're 50 and you got it.

So many things come from this brief extract. The position of guidance counsellor was one that was very useful for not only this interviewee but others to move into administration. We see the need to be persuaded into management positions for different reasons, not ambition. It has been said that women seemingly contribute to their own subordination and create self-barriers unconsciously by not applying for senior posts for which they qualify. Expectations of the self and self-evaluation of abilities can affect aspiration level. Weiler (1990 : 89) argues that "it is the internalisation of a male hegemony that leads women to devalue their own worth." This interviewee regarded the career path as hierarchical. She mentions vertical mobility, gender discrimination and age - what may be perceived to be the exception to the male eye may be more the rule, or is it male blindness to the oppression of women in general. To be perceived as ambitious was particularly problematic for most women headteachers in my study as could be seen by this African headteacher's response:

> I am not ambitious, things just happened on the way. I went from teaching for ten years to become a deputy principal when they were still restructuring the hierarchy. There were no head of departments in

> schools at the time and 13 years later I was appointed principal. I took 2 years off for full time study. I was acting principal at the girls secondary school and then I got the post at this co-educational secondary institution. My ex-principal was my mentor so I just emulated him.

This African woman headteacher longest in post did not deliberately seek headship and therefore did not set herself up for disappointment or failure. The phrase "things just happened on the way" is an indication of the absence of career planning. She expressed complete satisfaction with her career climb. She was the only headteacher of a secondary school. It is significant that she was acting principal of a girls secondary school before taking up her promotion post. According to research literature women predominate in such institutions. Again there is reference to someone else encouraging her into management. One of the youngest African woman headteachers who had 8 years teaching experience and had bypassed the route of head of department and deputy principal to become principal said :

> I don't have that much history in employment. I was given a principal's post at a school. I didn't really want to be a principal especially at that school and given that time. I didn't even know if I was capable of leading people... A few days later I was called by the department and given a post at another school. I took the post - all that I wanted to do was get away from here...

This woman headteacher is self-critical. There was extreme self doubt about her professional abilities in leading people. To self doubt was the added concern of unresolved conflicts at her school and the desire to move elsewhere. For instance, Shmuck (1976) among others lists lack of confidence and low self image as internal barriers to women's advancement in administration. In this case the problem was lack of experience rather than low self-confidence. Again, the absence of career planning is evident in the way the promotion was

achieved. The other youngest Coloured woman headteacher and shortest in post had mixed feelings despite her success :

> I moved fairly rapidly up the hierarchy but it was not without its problems. I went from teaching for almost ten years to head of department to deputy principal for a year and then to principal. Maybe I've moved too fast... I don't know. I am very shy and unsure of myself. I wonder about my ideas... Maybe I've been a principal for too short a time yet others recognise me as a young dynamic lady.

There were similar rejections of the notion of promotion for its own sake among other headteachers. Evetts (1990 : 80) also reports that many of the interviewees showed a marked reluctance to apply the term ambitious to themselves and that they relied on 'gatekeepers' such as [illegible]ctors / principals / advisors to push them into appropriate courses of actions. To be accused of being 'ambitious', as a woman, is to be accused of behaving in 'unfeminine' ways, to be transgressing unspoken codes of how women are expected to behave. It's a powerful social means of keeping women down. Fearful of being accused of being 'ambitious', they keep their expectations of themselves low, as such contributing to the reproduction of the inequality. Gilligan (1982) suggests that many women perceive ambition to be incompatible with their preferred abilities such as sensitivity and compassion and finds this attitude to career planning consistent with their value systems (Nias 1989). Her analysis seems to suggest this is natural and innate to women rather than something socially produced . Researchers have tried to understand why women more than men lack self-confidence and how self-esteem and self-confidence are nurtured (Shakeshaft 1987 : 85). Research studies have shown that what might be lack of self-confidence may be a consequence of a sex structured society that generates a belief in females that they lack ability. Women, therefore, cannot develop confidence in public sphere activities through lack of opportunities and positive reinforcement.

5.2.3 Career Strategies

Although relatively few women appear to have used the promotion - oriented career strategy i.e. women who are career ambitious from the beginning, by mid-career those whom I interviewed sought to climb the career ladder. They fell into Evetts (1990) second promotion - oriented category (the 2 stage career) or the third the subsequent career. It was found that individuals who adopted the second stage career leave teaching for marriage or parenthood and re-enter the profession when ready to give priority to work goals. Those who adopted the subsequent career strategy embarked upon a quest for promotion after they had accomplished their family aims (Nias 1989). Not all individuals and there were very few, expressed resentment on having their previous experience discounted on re-entry after taking a career break. For the women to express resentment would mean questioning the discrimination and their subordination - again leading to transgression of expected female behaviour.

Interviewees who had adopted the subsequent career expressed frustration about the difficulties which gender and especially their perceived responsibility for child care placed in their way (Acker 1989). Like Nias (1989) I realised in voicing anxieties about the obstacles they encountered, they attached meanings too, to the lack of promotion opportunities which they came up against. They were far less concerned about the financial benefits than the lowering of self esteem and limits on the development of their potential as (Connel, 1985; Sikes, 1986; Riseborough, 1980) also remarked of Australian and English secondary teachers in mid-career (Nias 1989). Many respondents took on added responsibilities in mid-career but these efforts were not recognised or rewarded. Their most common frustrations were that the males almost always were considered over and above them for promotion posts - albeit less qualified, less experienced, younger and had lesser involvement with children. Interview data illustrate this graphically. A Coloured headteacher claimed :

> I didn't get promotion posts. I was a woman against men. Even our

> school governing body, even teachers, would never really give a woman a chance, I got the principal's post because I made a difference at this school as acting principal. If they did not give me this post they were going to open themselves up for a lot of questions...

A White headteacher says :

> In the past males would definitely have the advantage over me - my advantage was I was here; the governing body knew my strengths and my weaknesses. I've been at this school for 30 years.

An Indian headteacher points out :

> Women have always being marginalised. Our race, the caste system... There are more males on the school governing body than females, so where is the hope for females. You are disadvantaged immediately.

Some women headteachers experienced an acute sense of injustice and a measure of resistance. A very interesting finding was that six of the ten women headteachers did retaliate. Two were from the ex-House of Delegates; two from the ex-House of Representatives; one from the ex-Department of Education and Training and one from the ex-Transvaal Education Department. These women headteachers finally came to fill their positions after instituting a grievance procedure, followed by hearings and interventions by teacher unions, the district office and the school governing body. Some of the information given was confidential and therefore cannot be repeated. Suffice to say that in two of the ten cases women headteachers got the post under unusual circumstances. Their principals were dismissed from the posts pending misconduct hearings. The one White female headteacher stated that when the post came up she applied and was the only applicant shortlisted by the school governing body. The other Indian female head went through the normal interview process.

To be able to vocalise their discontent and challenge assumptions about their abilities was significant; that attention was paid to their specific problems and needs was encouraging; that justice was meted out was important - it meant a victory for gender power and those women aspiring to headships in the future. Women take a qualitative leap when they move from expressing their awareness of the issues and frustrations with them, to doing something about it. An attempt to portray the situation of headteachers careers must inevitably begin by recognising the changing context in which this was undertaken and careers constructed. Women headteachers in my study had taken up posts in 1994 and thereafter. There were immense political, educational and economic changes sweeping the country from 1994 onwards. That educational change was put decisively on the political agenda is undeniable. Women took advantage of the new context with its promise of social change for all, regardless of race and gender. Although some of the women headteachers in this study felt bitter about their experiences they believe that the stance they took would augur well for women teachers climbing up the promotion ladder.

Not all interviewees saw careers in negative terms. Disadvantaged in terms of vertical mobility; by multiple roles; by prejudices emanating from race and gender against promotion to senior posts; y husband's jobs, "they redefined the concept of career to mean progressive opportunities for personal learning and extension." Two female headteachers spoke of personal and professional development offered by horizontal moves as part of the support and advisory teams for primary schools. Some worked part time teaching disadvantaged children before being promoted. This trend was noted by (Lyons and McCleary, 1980; Acker, 1987) in the UK. In the USA researchers found that there existed other options for teachers and that women found and created some of these (Nias 1989). Evetts also noted that in the UK in the 1980s there was a growth of school based and in-service education and support / advisory teams were needed for primary schools. Options were available within a network of short-term opportunities. The potential of these alternative career structures were recognised and exploited by some women headteachers who, before their

promotions, felt they were stagnating. Several studies have suggested that, besides the vertical or horizontal progression through posts mentioned earlier individuals may pursue parallel careers. This happens when some feel that teaching does not hold gains for them anymore, but have to work because of domestic responsibilities.

The stories of teachers in the UK, (Woods, 1984; Sikes et al, 1985) note a tendency for individuals to offset boredom or frustration in mid-career with the development of other interests eg. social community work (paid / unpaid) pottery, gardening etc. In particular these women were less concerned about a low income than about the probable effects of non - advancement upon their self esteem and the constraints upon the development of their potential. They were ready to take on added responsibilities, to extend their spheres of influence and were afraid that lack of reward and recognition in the form of promotion prospects would lead to professional stagnation. In my study I found that most women headteachers were very actively involved in voluntary social and religious work - such as burial committees; being an elder in the temple, church work - before their promotions, but maintained the parallel career even after. It must be mentioned that it is not related to promotion. Evetts (1990) identified a very small group of women headteachers who switched between family and work goals in response to their needs. Some interviewees reacting to pressures in their personal lives found refuge in school and study. As one headteacher said, recalling her relationship with her husband :

> Everything that I went through and there were lots of it... I said.. no.. I can't keep thinking of this terrible marriage... so I channelled my energies into studying... I did very well...

To sum up then, the stories which women headteachers tell of their careers show that different meanings are attached to them. Some see it in a vertical sense, having their careers broken or interrupted for child rearing or marriage. For such women headteachers, career was seen in a negative way. Some saw

'career' in horizontal terms making use of other options; a minority treated their jobs as one of several careers i.e. the parallel career. For the women heads teaching was an appropriate occupation; it was convenient; it was part of traditional gender expectation. Teaching as a career however entailed other sorts of expectations as the teacher would seek promotion into managerial positions within schools.

In general the women heads were slower to start promotion developments into the career, while male heads as shown by research assumed responsibilities early in their careers and had been promoted while in their twenties and thirties. Trends of lack of career - planning is evident and can be linked to internalised fears of 'being ambitious'; and thereby transgressing expected gender roles. Women are expected to be in the family, and when at work, in gender - specific jobs. They are expected to use this as 'supplement' to family : not to seek a career which would immediately define them as that social undesirable - 'the career woman.' One wonders how many women are prepared to live with that label? Career - planning is associated with assumptions of masculinity i.e hardness, purposiveness, sense of self and direction, and confidence. Women are not expected to be any of these.

Female headteachers had career breaks, they moved in support of husbands jobs, their teaching experience was wider than male heads. Women heads had more pastoral and guidance skills than male heads. Women were therefore not only differently equipped but better equipped to meet the challenges of headship. As this study illustrates some female heads had been able to make use of external conditions in order to further their own careers. It would not be appropriate, however, to explain career changes as determined by trade union and district negotiators, although these representatives clearly had a part to play in 'promoting and legitimating policy changes'. Some women heads made rational and strategic decisions to capitalise on social changes in school and education systems. That careers developed in the changing educational context cannot be overlooked.

It has also been well documented that women headteachers advancement into leadership posts have been impeded. The following chapter will explore the reasons for female marginality in administration.

CHAPTER 6 : BARRIERS TO FEMALE HEADTEACHERS ADVANCEMENT

Issues of gender are currently high among the priorities of policymakers and is a particular focus of this study on female headteachers. It is for this reason that gender inequities have been highlighted in this chapter to explore factors responsible for female marginality in management. Women headteachers in telling their stories identified barriers which they have encountered in career advancement in the form of community and family expectations, domestic responsibilities, husbands and colleagues who either stand in the way of their promotion or simply fail to support them as well as institutional constraints. In this way we see how tradition and ideology continue to influence the participation of women in administration and why even now there is a declining curve in the number of women in particular posts as seniority of these posts increase.

Gender is one of the fundamental organising principles in society, as important a category for analysis as class or race. Of relevance is the point made by Schmuck (1981 : 131)

> The structuring of society by gender is so pervasive cutting across divisions of class, race, age that its effects have often been taken for granted or deliberately slighted by those who stood to benefit from existing arrangements.

This chapter will describe how widespread the issues are when gender inequalities in the education system are put under the microscope. Morrell (1994 : 22) believes that any changes, recommendations or policy initiatives regarding gender inequalities have to confront deeply held beliefs and social practices many of which are difficult to challenge and a potential source of conflict and contradiction. One has to have an understanding of the conditions that gave rise to gender inequities which permeated virtually every facet of

women's lives.

In order to identify the processes through which the selection of potential educational administrators takes place we should examine the economic, political and cultural context of teaching. The following sections will outline the historical background of women teachers lives in schools in an effort to explain women's lack of advancement into administration. The reality that women had never dominated school administration will be documented followed by a brief history of women's place in education employment between 1948 and 1994. Particular reference will be made to traditional and cultural factors and institutional constraints as obstacles to women's advancement into administration.

6.1 Education and the Labour Market

The history of the teaching profession in South Africa, let alone the changing position and fortunes of women teachers, has not yet been written. This means that any overview has to rely on one or two texts which do not always provide a fully comprehensive and differentiated picture. From 1948 onwards the education departments in South Africa were divided according to race. The introduction of Bantu education in the 1950s demonstrates class bound, racist and gendered ideology behind the historical positioning of women in the teaching profession. Women teachers carried the burden of Bantu education at the expense of salaries and working conditions. Since then in both Black and White schools women have formed the majority of teachers. *The Gender Equity Task Team Report* (1997 : 197) claimed that :

> The large numbers of women in the teaching profession have a history of domination and exploitation based on essentialist notions of womanhood rather than of encouraging career development.

In the 1970s and 1980s there was great resistance against the inequities in apartheid education and government reforms attempted redress. Up until the

1990s priority was given to race and class. What has been far less documented and understood is the gender bias within apartheid education itself as well as within organisations and struggles which have sought to remove it (Truscott 1994 : 41). That the education system treated females differently from males will be explored in the following sections.

6.1.1 Salaries

During the apartheid era discrimination took the form of unequal salary structures for men and women. Regulations of the Education and Training Act No. 90 of 1979 ensured that the conditions of service of African teachers were identical to those of teachers of other population groups - women of all groups and persuasions were being paid less than the men. Pay discrimination was removed in 1984 but not for African women teachers. There was no parity in salary scales for African women teachers until 1992 when pressure from teacher unions forced a change. Kotecha (1992) points out that full parity has not been achieved because women teachers in categories below 1E continue to receive unequal salaries. There were rules about women having to resign from teaching upon marriage or being re-employed at a lower rank; fringe benefits were higher for men than for women. The legalised discrimination in remuneration cast women as being less suitable for posts where they had to manage men.

Equally important is where women teachers are located in a country's political history. Even in the teaching profession apartheid education has played a role in reinforcing the oppressive gender and race characteristics of South African society (Pandor 1994).

6.1.2 Qualifications

The policy shift of replacing African males with cheaper African female teachers in primary schools in the 1930s and in the mid 1940s was not without its

consequences. Differential qualifications may be important in that it can be traced back to segregation at the training level. There was a state restriction of junior primary teaching to African women which placed males in an advantaged position of access to better paid senior primary and secondary teaching posts. Black women, and as indicated in women headteachers conversations, were able to go into training on completion of standard 8. What was for them at the time an incentive turned out to be unfavourable because it limited access to qualifications and promotion posts. In the Transvaal by the late 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s there were female Indian teachers whose qualifications were standard 8 plus two years teacher training. They taught mainly in the primary schools. In 1962 there were two female Indian teachers in secondary school with standard 10 plus three years teacher training. In many primary school across departments of education women predominated in junior primary classes. Black women did not gain access to tertiary institutions because they did not have a matriculation requirement. Black women, therefore, tended to hold junior positions and did not qualify for promotion posts because of inadequate qualifications. It is clear that women were further subordinated by state policy which reproduced gender inequities faced by women in all spheres of South African life. Some of the women headteachers in this study mention that they completed their matric on full time or part time study many years after they started teaching. One African woman headteacher recalled :

> It was around the 80s when the Nationalist government announced that teachers were given about 10 years to upgrade their qualifications. I felt a need to improve. I started with my standard 10 - I did that part time. Being a housewife you're supposed to get babies along the way, I had to take a break. In 1987 I completed my Senior Primary Teachers Diploma.

Pandor (1994) states that when women teachers apply for senior positions they have to face male prejudices that question women's ability to function effectively given the possibility of pregnancy and other complications. Women

were further disadvantaged on grounds of seniority as discussed elsewhere. Resonant with the above account is the following excerpt from a Coloured woman headteacher :

> After completing my standard 8 I went into training and came out with a Junior Primary Diploma. In the meantime, prior to my promotion, I completed my standard 10 and did my Senior Primary Teachers Diploma in the late 1980s. After qualifying I was offered a teaching post at another school by the department. I was prepared to take the post but only as head of department. I was the only needlework specialist. My dream was to become a needlework inspectress.

Again the choices that were made were because women were denied the opportunity of training in prestige subjects such as Maths, Science and Economics (Pandor 1994). Women are made to feel unequal through being trained in the soft options. Because they have not coped with Maths and Science regarded as tough subjects they are made to feel inadequate and unequal. Having Domestic Science and Typing as specialisations confirm the role expectation of nurturing (Pandor 1994).

6.1.3 Temporary and Permanent Appointments

Regarding permanency after marriage for White women teachers in the mid 1950s, it was regulated that a teacher should be appointed to a permanent post only if the Administrator was convinced that it was necessary for that teacher to contribute financial support to her husband and her children. This article was rescinded in August 1972. Prior to that, women could not occupy posts in a permanent capacity (Van der Linde 1994). Statistics in August 1983 revealed that 60% out of 70% of female teachers in the ex-Transvaal Education Department, nearly 12,000 females were employed in a temporary capacity. A similar situation existed in all other education departments. Historically, White married women suffered formal discrimination and chances for promotion were

extremely low. They were not considered for permanent positions as principal, deputy principal or vice principal. Preference was always given to males, single women and marri ' women who may compete on an equal footing with other married teachers because of the husband's ill health or other reasons but only on permission from the deputy director. Qualified married Indian female teachers could apply to be placed on the permanent staff if the husband gave his consent for the wife to teach. Permanent status was granted to Black women teachers in 1980, ten years after white women gained such status. African women teachers as with all women teachers lost benefits such as housing subsidies and medical aid if they married. These conditions have since changed and married women teachers qualify for housing subsidies and medical aid.

It is evider that apar.heid education was racist and sexist in striking and significant ways. Gender bias operated through the fact that women teachers especially Black women teachers were less qualified; all women were lower paid, had poor conditions of service, and occupied lower ranks of the teaching profession than the men. Needless to say the pattern of gender differentiation within the education system was humiliating. Finally, no discussion of discrimination against women can ignore the place of cultural and traditional factors in creating barriers for advancement.

6.2 Cultural and Traditional Factors

Many cultures believe that leadership is vested in the male. It is therefore against tradition to be led by a female. This point was very clearly illustrated in the previous chapter. If men comprise interview panels, patriarchal definitions of the rightful place of men and women would inevitably determine their decisions on who is promotable. Ideologies relating to traditional roles, although they may vary from culture to culture - are embedded in cultural practices. Structural relations in the labour market ensure women's subordinate positions. Men occupy strategic positions in various structures eg. policy making

structures, structures that create posts in the education department (Manamela 1996). The total staff of the Department of Education is currently more than 600 people. On 30 May 1997 a majority of women were employed in the Department. They were however, positioned in the lower ranks with increased representation at middle management levels but with the "glass ceiling" applying at higher levels. At chief director levels there were six males and one female; there were nineteen male and seven female directors; eleven male and three female deputy directors and ten male and twelve female assistant directors. There were no females at director - general and deputy director - general levels. It is apparent that as one moves up the ladder women diminish in number. One need go no further than scrutinise women's representivity in administration.

6.3 Institutional Constraints

The bureaucratic system within schools has clear career ladders although there are few in number at the lower levels where women predominate disadvantaging them further. Women work in organisations whose hierarchical structures create resistance to their advancement. Male dominance is perpetuated in institutional arrangements and everyday decisions and interactions. One of the factors that prevent women from achieving purposeful career directions are institutional constraints on female advancement and gender - linked interpretations of natural leaders and administrators. Sex-role stereotypes are fed by a number of organisational factors. In schools men assume greater responsibility for curriculum, examinations and timetabling; women for counselling, hospitality and support services. Strong evidence of discriminatory practices can be detected in the sexual division of labour and unequal distribution of organisational tasks. Women are not given the chance to demonstrate administrative competence. That there are blockages to advancement at various levels of education decision making can be seen in the posts in which women are situated i.e. primary headships (Davies 1996). Much has been written on women's dual role and the tensions and guilt associated with balancing work and home demands. There are problems in the integration of home and school and in coping with

demands on women teachers time. School structures should acknowledge the roles teachers play. According to Davies (1996) the education workplace should be made a more conducive site for equity in staff development and there should be increments for child rearing, role time flexibility and job sharing. Institutional biases and discrimination against women in this sphere can be identified as another career blockage. It is easy to assume that women who are attempting to pursue careers are "helpless victims of a male conspiracy" (Ball 1987 : 202).

Firstly, women headteachers in this study became increasingly aware of their position of disadvantage and opposed patriarchal attitudes regarding their promotion and male dominance of the school. Consider the grievance procedures that were instituted and their contestations over appointments. Secondly, there are women headteachers especially those who are successful in their careers who perceive no evidence of discrimination against themselves or their colleagues. One African woman headteacher responded thus to the question - have you experienced forms of discrimination in a professional context? :

> I didn't experience discrimination as a teacher. I wouldn't say there was discrimination but when I compare myself with a man I realise that I was out to outclass them most of the times. That was my policy - to do the best so that men should not say : "After all she's a woman that is why she is doing her work that way." I wanted the best so I must be able to say as a woman I've got to look after my family, I've got to do this and this and this - I'm able to do all of it.

Teaching has been viewed as the sacred enclave of women. Literature points out that if women outperform men they risk being unpopular and of being seen as unfeminine. If we underachieve we merely fulfil stereotypes about incompetence or being unable to deal with pressure or to cope with the demands of a family and a job. For women, as Marshall (1994 : 104) states

"organisational life can thus be seen as a continuing sequence of acceptability tests."

Another African woman headteacher said :

> I personally did not experience discrimination. But if you look at the number of females who were inspectors when I started teaching there was only one female who was at one time a good primary school teacher. She became principal and then inspectress. So I think there was that kind of discrimination. And in the secondary schools we did not have female principals - perhaps a few now - still very few. Female principals you will find in primary schools. Offices were controlled by men. I think males never thought we were able to do what we do. I never get that right. My inspector had confidence in me and he said, "I know you could do it. I've seen you working." So that boosted my ego coming from a male.

This female head claimed she personally did not experience any discrimination. She was the longest in post at a co-educational secondary school and had a successful career climb. She was acting principal at a girls secondary school and as Davies (1996) points out, girls schools are a breeding ground for female leadership. She believed that it was her demonstrated competence that enabled her to move rapidly up the career path. Studies have indicated that the continuation of discrimination against women teachers is to be found in the attitudes of some female managers who felt that the main obstacles to other women's advancement to management positions were their lack of qualifications and lack of ambition. The headteacher ascribed female marginality in management to the hierarchical ordering of the education system. Davies (1996) states that women teachers are made to feel undervalued and deskilled. This female headteacher valued the support and career encouragement from an influential male. As quoted in Boulton (1998) studies of senior women

teachers' careers have also revealed the importance of sponsorship (Evetts 1987) and the need for a supportive ambience and networking as necessary strategies for change (Burton and Weiner 1993). Career encouragement at critical times was a recurring theme in my interviews. A further aspect was the lack of support which is worth exploring.

6.4 Mentorship

This lack of support could be interpreted as lack of sponsorship or mentorship which literature has shown to be so influential in furthering women's careers. Lack of such networks hampers women's efforts in gaining access to positions in administrative ranks and certain positions in particular. The absence of women in powerful positions in schools to provide such mentorship was also significant for women headteachers in this study. In a previous chapter reference was made to a Coloured headteacher who was quoted as saying :

> nobody... would give you a chance. But I got all the support from the district.

She acknowledges the support from the district officials. In the light of this, her use of the word 'nobody' is not so much misleading as conveying her perception that support had to come from her colleagues - those with whom she was working and would continue to work. The feeling of lack of support from colleagues in her acting capacity as principal was important. As Boulton (1998 : 155) asks : "Does it represent a female trait, a 'wanting to be liked,' which has no place in management."

This head's concern could be linked to her commitment to a management style which was essentially consultative and collaborative. Marshall (1984) says that managers whose values are defined as more typically female are likely to base management styles on concern for people. Schmuck (1981) showed that female-managed schools had more participatory decision-making. In this context

'support' from staff assumes greater importance. Respect and authority are bestowed by colleagues and not automatically afforded to status, (Boulton 1998). Another female head recounting her experiences as acting principal was bothered with the fact that hostility came from women and could not be dismissed as sexist-originated opposition from men. Male opposition is illegitimate and can be handled more easily. She says:

> You get much more opposition from the same gender... It is going to be just individuals not the entire staff but I think women are more unkind to women. I thought it would be the other way around - men unkind to women. It's like they do not want or expect you to do a wonderful job as a leader - making comments like - 'it is better to work for a male boss' and yet not aspiring to a job like that.

She holds strongly to the view that the problem lies in a lack of commitment among female colleagues. When analysing these events subtle yet powerful gender dimensions reveal themselves. Buchan in Ball (1987 : 208) in her account of teaching in Australian schools faced this dilemma:

> Efficient and competent females are constantly diminished. Seen as threatening, they are the target for denigrating comments about their femininity. There are numerous overt and covert pressures designed to encourage women to step gracefully aside and let men move up the ladder.

Boulton (1998 : 149) in her study of a woman teacher who chose not to apply for internal promotion to a management position concludes that:

> It is complex individual behaviour patterns and external constraints which influence events within an apparently equal opportunities climate and why women teachers say 'stuff it to promotion.'

The emphasis on individual choice has given way to an examination of constraints (Shakeshaft, 1989; Ozga, 1993; Adler et al, 1993).

An analysis of the women headteachers experiences illuminates these issues and shows how micro-processes work against women's attainment of management positions. This chapter has highlighted how historical, economic, political and traditional and cultural factors have contributed to the shaping of women headteachers identities and the contradictions and conflicts which they experience in establishing working cultures in which their personal and professional identities co-exist and which act as barriers to career advancement. It reveals how gender inequalities are perpetuated by structural hierarchies and their sustaining ideologies. There is also evidence to suggest that the continuation of discrimination against women teachers is to be found in the attitudes of some female managers who are successful in their careers and saw no evidence of discrimination against themselves. Lack of support in terms of mentoring and sponsorship were identified by women as being barriers to advancement. The next chapter looks at the public and private divide and the perceived impact of family responsibilities on career development.

CHAPTER 7 : THE CAREER AND THE FAMILY - PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIVES

The personal lives of women headteachers which is to some extent sanctioned and regulated by public opinion has an inextricable effect on their work. In many communities it is expected of them to be good homemakers and model teachers. This chapter looks at the effects of change in schools on the lives of women headteachers who work there; how they regard their competitive role in the working environment and how they find balance between their family duties and professional ambitions. It would help us gain an understanding of their roles as working wives and mothers, single parents and unmarried women and ways they developed of coping realistically with the complexities of their roles. The public self and the private self of the woman administrator are often interconnected. The connection between an individual's life inside and outside of school influences behaviour, attitudes and the level of commitment and energy that is directed to the one or the other.

7.1 Balancing Time

Evetts (1987) in researching the career strategies of married women who became primary school headteachers in England in the 1960s and 1970s found that their family responsibilities were always of fundamental importance to them and determine to a great extent their career decisions. The analysis of the accounts of married women headteachers participating in this study largely confirmed these findings. Even when they became headteachers they had to continue to meet family and work commitments balancing one against the other for most of their working lives. It is difficult to imagine unless one has lived it - the endless improvising and creative and intellectual holding back that for some women accompany the attempt to combine the emotional and physical demands of parenthood and the challenges of work. To assume that one can naturally combine these has been a male privilege. Seven of the heads in the sample were parents and only four women had husbands. For a few women

headteachers the energy expended in both the conflict and the improvisation has been a heavy liability to careers. The one Coloured and two Indian women headteachers with children resumed their studies when their children started primary or secondary education.

References to school changes and the intensification of work pressures and the effects of this upon the personal lives of headteachers could be found in their accounts. Some were keenly aware that personal space and time were eroded. If a woman has young children the hours a headteacher works now makes balancing home and school responsibilities difficult. One Coloured head stated :

> I attend a number of scheduled and unscheduled meetings. At times I only get home by 9pm. My family have come to accept the limited time spent with them - which is quality time. I have always been as busy and have a hectic schedule. I have to replan my schedule. I have to spend more time with the children. I have to spend time on myself - me is also important.

Another account from an Indian head illustrates this further :

> My personal life is very important I would give up my profession if needs be. I am not keen on studying because of my family, although I am not sorry that I am doing it. Being a principal impacts on my family. Having a family impacts on my work here. You can't work it out anymore. I take lots of work home for the evening. After supper I sit and work, and so my family is also taken care of.

The increased demands of contemporary school leadership eroded the time available to be with their families. Guilt was a common emotion expressed by some women with families. In particular they expressed feelings of guilt in response to the pressures of balancing home and school life. Having a supportive partner who assisted with home responsibilities eased but did not

diminish such feelings of guilt. For the women headteachers who commented on this issue there was a "sharper sense of the conflict between the personal and professional and a sense that a double or cumulative set of responsibilities existed which was becoming impossible to sustain" (Grace 1995 : 185).

One Coloured headteacher commented on the continuous struggle between school and family and the need for stress management :

> I bring work problems home. Sometimes a day starts with a crisis and ends with a crisis. I wonder if the other headteachers battle as much as we do here. There are times when you feel you have not achieved anything. Then I brood and become moody. It causes conflict at home. I like closure and things settled. I need to unwind.

The early days in the new post were characterised by frequent bouts of guilt and feelings of inadequacy.

> There was the assumption that it was somehow possible to achieve successful work performance, successful academic career, successful marriage and motherhood, and yet the reality was that each from time to time was tested. Each was demanding (Ozga, 1993 : 77).

Not all women in the study experienced such role conflicts as the following accounts illustrate. One Indian head felt that:

> Conflicts between home and work would have come earlier when children were younger. It's much easier now. Because I worked all the years, my children were trained in doing things for themselves. Besides, my mother-in-law lived with me all these years.

An African headteacher said :

> I'm a single parent, I have a child of my own. I have an extended family. My family demands do not have a significant impact on my role as headteacher. You learn to cope.

Another African participant stated :

> I have two young children. I am fortunate my aunt lives with me. I am frequently away from home attending school and union meetings, conferences and so forth.

As indicated some women heads did not claim to experience many tensions between the demands of home and work. According to Davies (1996) there are at least two explanations for this apparent lack of complaint about women's additional domestic or caring duties. One is that Black cultures in the study lean more towards the extended family and the availability of cheap domestic help. Thus women do not feel they are shouldering the burden of child care alone and can rely on both physical and psychological support from other women in the household. Certainly the interview data in this study supports this view, with women headteachers often citing having helpers or relatives in the home as a reason why they felt little stress from their work role. Another explanation is that women take for granted their various commitments and do not themselves prioritize them as a problem. It would seem that the organisation of family life does not necessarily act as a 'barrier' to female careers but presumably entails greater skill at time management.

7.2 Marriage

Some headteachers who were either single, widowed or divorced said that they were better able to cope with school pressures because family responsibilities did not place heavy demands on them.

Their accounts follow. One White female responded thus:

I was widowed in 1988. I don't have children of my own. This situation makes life a lot easier being headteacher.

Another response from a White headteacher:

I decided not to marry. I've grown accustomed to that kind of independence. It must be pretty rough for women with children. The females on my staff are happy just teaching. It seems they don't have career aspirations anymore.

A Coloured female said:

It was my choice to be a spinster. Being a spinster does not mean I don't have other priorities in my life - that is a misconception. Having a husband and children does place extra responsibilities on you but I also have to balance my personal and public life. School takes up a lot of time - all these meetings and disciplinary hearings get too long winded... too time consuming. It is also dangerous to travel alone late at night from these meetings.

An Indian female stated:

I've expected too little of love maybe. All that was important for me was to love somebody and for that somebody to love me. I used to meditate after my husband died - it helped me overcome a very difficult period in my life. When I started coming to terms with my grief and loss I got lazy and stopped. When nature is at its most balanced - the breaking of dawn and ending of night - so too comes balance of the mind. It is then when I have found solutions to problems that seemed so perplexing. I served on the African National Congress Youth and Education Forum and Civic Association.

I had to attend all the meetings and balance my time between all the

> I had to attend all the meetings and balance my time between all the extra duties and my home and children. Being a widow isn't easy either. In India women had to throw themselves on their husbands burning pyre. But that's a bit drastic I would think. I'm very self-sufficient. I don't experience that great a sense of loneliness - I do not seek out the males - I'm grateful for that be it for sexual or whatever other reason. I'm honest and sincere about this but people don't believe me. I'm stronger than my female friends in this regard - besides there are very few eligible males in this Indian community in my age category. I have excellent male friends - they are very supportive; my female friends are very loyal...

Balancing home and school was problematic for this single parent. For many women leaders the emotions and feelings which are central to human interaction are left unacknowledged and in some cases even denied. The complexity of life in schools and the competing demands of their professional and personal lives gave rise to a variety of emotions. For some women leaders their private agony and pain could not be seen within the school grounds. This private dimension was not something that was talked about or even acknowledged publicly. It was a case of never showing that you couldn't cope. Meditation was a way of managing the inner self and as argued by Sachs (1998) it is the basis for managing others and the environment. For these women the loneliness they experienced was both emotional and professional. Reflective of a stereotypic view of women was the belief that they were less self sufficient and less independent. Conversely, the Indian female head in this study describes herself as being self sufficient. Throwing oneself on one's husband's pyre is an act of total devotion and submission and ultimate self-sacrifice.

Another Indian female responded thus:

> I caused the biggest shock in the Indian community here when I

> I devoted my life completely to the temple. I sing at ceremonies, for instance if there's a death in any family. I must say you need somebody of your age group - a companion if you like. It is very very lonely.

Divorce was taboo amongst the Indian community many years ago and even today is still frowned upon. Some participants believed that the position of headteacher could become less appealing to women headteachers because of the changing nature of school leadership and consequent demands. Although it might seem that unmarried headteachers lives are unconstrained by family and personal responsibilities and they could devote themselves single-mindedly to developing their careers, it does not mean the total absence of family responsibilities or difficulties. One of the female heads described the loneliness she experiences after her divorce. The loneliness was often offset by becoming involved in social, religious or political activities. The accounts demonstrate the strategic management of career and personal dimensions. There were different patterns of response and different ways of managing the conflict and contradictions. In one household both husband and wife have sought and gained significant promotions in their career.

It can be particularly difficult when both partners are in the same career since direct comparisons can be made.

> My husband who is also principal has to listen to trivial details which are important to me. We both bring our problems and frustrations home and I need to work on it. When my husband talks of how he handled a certain problem I sit back and think that I would have handled it differently.

When women are heavily involved in their careers then strains in the partnership can result, unless realisation of the discrepancy and an acknowledgement of the double standard as it relates to career dedication enables couples to resolve such conflicts (Evetts, 1994 : 66). A balancing

enables couples to resolve such conflicts (Evetts, 1994 : 66). A balancing strategy was developed by this couple which enabled dual career development, climbing ladders and gaining promotions. Balancing might also require important elements of career postponement and modification by one or both of the partners if such a strategy is to succeed. It is more often the female who postpones or modifies rather than the male. A balancing strategy might be easier where partners are in different careers. Although it is common for wives to support their husbands careers it is rare for husbands to support their wives careers. Married heads described their husbands in such a way :

> We've had mutual respect. He's never disrespected me even when I didn't get anywhere. He was upset that I was not pushing forward and not doing something. But he was always supportive and respects that we have equal jobs.

One Coloured woman head said of her husband :

> He plays a pivotal role in my job. He's moulding me, gearing me up and telling me to apply for promotion. I'm saying 'no'. He supports me in every possible way.

Experiences of marital breakdown could in part reflect the failure of partnership strategies. In the case of one Indian headteacher's career, the constraints arising from career and personal responsibilities were real and gender differences in career and family roles were established and supported by ideologies and beliefs. She said :

> Ours is a male society. We have our own peculiar apartheid system. We don't have that support. You know the typical Indian concept. The men are treated as God's gift to earth and they expect to be treated that way - the husband's role is challenged... My parents-in-law were very resentful that I was studying... late into the evening. I used to put

> the children to sleep and then study. I couldn't complete my masters because of the conditions in which I lived.

Another Indian female head stated :

> There is often that role stereotyping in our society - the wife stays at home and ministers to her husband's and children needs.

For one of the Indian widows in my study recognition came from a different source :

> My daughter says I'm her role model because I'm kind to people, I listen to people and I fight for people. Coming from a child of ten it was a wonderful accolade.

Men have ideological support and confirmation for career dedication and development whereas women developing careers are path-finders in an, as yet, relatively unsympathetic and underresourced world. Thus whereas men are expected to combine career achievements with marriage and fatherhood in particular ways, women have still to develop the strategies that might eventually come to be regarded as the normal and appropriate ways of doing such things. (Evetts, 1994)

Grace (1995) in quoting Pascall states :

> Pascall (1986 : 103) has argued that :
> Educational institutions stand at the junction of public and private worlds mediating between the family and paid employment. There is thus an ambiguity at the heart of girls' education.

Such ambiguity characterizes some women headteachers' experiences of professional and working life. It seems likely that contemporary education

ambiguities for women headteachers. It may be the case, therefore, that "only those women who have been able to resolve these ambiguities (by whatever means) are ready to take on the demanding challenges of school leadership." (Grace, 1995 : 186)

Some of the accounts illustrate that women headteachers found satisfactory career paths by balancing the various demands made on them, "even in a society which, at best, provides no practical assistance and at worst actively discriminates against them" (Ozga, 1993 : 1).

The accounts also deal with the problems of meeting domestic obligations and how women found ways of self-development within the constraints imposed on them. Being in control of one's feelings was important if one was to be taken seriously in the workplace. It was the basis for managing others and the environment. A few women headteachers in the study had taken minimum maternity leave in order not to jeopardise their career prospects. Davies (1996) states that we should look carefully at the old concepts of the 'dual role' for women. While not denying the tensions and guilt associated with simultaneously managing a home and a paid job, the dual role for women has become a form of 'victim analysis.' "The solution to family commitments is not to see them as 'interference', but to begin to view them as a positive attribute in terms of learning management skills." (Davies, 1996 : 69).

The different ways in which gender and headship are experienced will be explored in a preliminary way in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8 : GENDER AND HEADSHIP : MANAGERIAL EXPERIENCES

This chapter builds upon and extends the discussion outlined in chapter 3 in which a literature generated by women academics, in the main, has raised fundamental questions about the gender relations of educational leadership.

In that literature Shakeshaft (1987) has suggested that there exists a distinctive female culture of education management. Blackmore (1993) calls for a feminist reconstruction of an educational leader which will eventually move away from patriarchal concepts of power and control over others. Grundy in Blackmore (1993) contends that educational leadership informed by feminism can be a form of 'emancipatory praxis' providing an alternative to traditional male hierarchical and bureaucratic approaches to leadership and management. Yates in Blackmore (1993) believes that theoretical analysis and educational practice on gender and leadership issues must be brought into a closer relation and more research linking the two should be undertaken.

In developing such research Ozga (1993) documents the accounts of women's careers and their particular management styles, (Grace, 1995 : 180). I believed then like Mishra (1995) as quoted in Schulz (1998 : 172) that certain truths can only be discovered if one changes the angle of perception. Women who have succeeded in achieving career promotions into headship positions are an interesting group in terms of their co-ordinating career and gender identities. Using the interview data I tried to establish whether there are gender differences in headship styles and management strategies as well as the experiences of women headteachers.

8.1 The Experiences of Headteachers

Nearly all the women managers interviewed felt that their experiences were different from those of male managers. The female experience in education as

elsewhere, is different from the male experience - the assumption of the manager as male is still dominant. Some women managers reported that women had negative things to say about them : "it's better to have a male boss," was a frequently heard statement at one of the institutions. This could have repercussions when women operate in a man's world. It may force women to adopt more masculine styles of managing. Most of the women headteachers experienced opposition from the female members on the staff and made allusions to gossip and envy. One White woman head described it as such : "It was never an overt thing, it was a sort of covert feeling. Sometimes, I'd come up with a suggestion and they would feel it was another one of my ideas, until they got to the point where they realised the idea will fly."

Another Indian respondent pointed out :

> I feel far more comfortable with the males than the females, probably because I had 8 brothers, I developed a rapport with the males and it continued throughout my life. With the females I find that it gets misconstrued, you are wary of saying anything to females that can become unpleasant.

One Coloured participant described her experience thus :

> Some males are stubborn and give me a hard time. You see, males are dominant figures at home and cannot get to accepting a female as authority. I learn't how to handle the males. I had a problem with a senior male member of staff. He walked out of a staff meeting. The next day I wrote out a notice of warning. There was one female who didn't follow instructions. I had to give her a warning. I'm not too autocratic but you have to be firm.

In trying to command and maintain authority women headteachers report using

strategies that signal authority. Research studies indicate that women administrators often downplay their power, intellect and skill to appear less authoritarian, less in charge and less threatening in an effort to be more effective. Research studies confirm that women with male subordinates were more influential when a consideration style rather than a dominant one was used, whereas with women both styles worked. The problem was how do women become identified as "in charge" without also being identified in negative and "unfeminine" ways. Some of the strategies used confound the theory that women are by nature more democratic.

I heard from some women the pain that their appointments and management practices had caused them. This created additional stress, illness and in one instance a headteacher was receiving therapy. I was disturbed by the stories told and moved by the intensity of their emotions. Carrying out a sensitive policy directive was described by one participant as the worst experience of her life. One Indian head responded thus :

> I came into this school amidst great controversy. I won the battle but at personal cost. No worse there is none. I owed it to the women to stay.

The youngest woman in the study, an African headteacher recalled :

> The teachers did not accept me. They said the inspector must take me back. They know that Mr. so - and - so had to be there - but not me. Teachers incited and organised parents against me and the following morning as I suspected there was a toyi-toyi outside the gates. It was traumatic. But I understood that when you're new in a school not everyone would welcome you especially at my age and being a female.

One Indian female head shared this with me :

> We have what we call a 'pull-her-down' syndrome. When a female gets the post there is talk about nepotism, affirmative action or some other reason. I'm more readily accepted by the males. Maybe they see me as a mother figure. I cannot keep making an apology for attaining a leadership position because I'm female.

An unmarried White female head commented :

> Children like being touched and hugged and you hear - 'Keep away from the child - you are going to be classified as the molester type.' So I always keep my door open and have a 3rd person as witness when pupils come into the office.

A younger Coloured female head shared her concern with me :

> There is one male that from time to time disturbs me a little bit. He sends me home thinking.....

In describing her experience a White participant pointed out :

> Being in the same school there are disadvantages from being a colleague to a boss. I did find forms of resentment initially. People said 'Hang on, we can take it, we've been taking it all this time she was head of department' but there was still somebody to appeal to. There is now an acceptance - it came but it came gradually. It is very difficult for someone in the school to be advanced."

An African respondent expressed a variation on this theme when discussing her appointment :

> It was not an easy thing to be promoted from within the school. There is that tendency for people to feel that 'you have been a colleague of mine, we used to do things together.' If a thing was wrong I used to point it out clearly to them. It was a problem for colleagues to take instruction from me but not for long.

For some women headteachers gender did intrude in their experiences of headship. These experiences were not confined to school but also intruded at heads meetings and conferences. One Indian woman head cited the following :

> Men can be patronising, I push myself forward. I'm not intimidated by the men. Whenever we go to meetings at the District I tell the males what I think. I have such a firm background in my field that the people who are now coming into this field are actually learning from us. In terms of that I am not threatened by anybody. I feel we know which way we are going.

Regarding the intersection of race and gender Pollard (1997 : 356) states that:

> the limited amount of research on African American school principals seems to fall into two categories. The first category focuses on the kinds of problems these administrators face. These include isolation, marginalisation and the need to handle conflicting pressures from their school districts; the parents of the children they serve and their community. The second category focuses on African American school administrators as successful school and community leaders who are particularly committed to the education of African American children."

It must be said that African heads are by far in the majority in comparison to other women in educational management positions in one school district in Gauteng. If we look at isolation as a factor which can cause stress it was found that women heads in this study felt isolated either in race or by gender.

Given that the headteachers role creates isolation anyway, one can appreciate the additional anxiety. Because of this isolation it was felt that a democratic approach to management would help to break down some of the barriers. Because of their own oppression, they understood what it was to be on the receiving end. Most headteachers depend to a great extent on the support and loyalty of staff. As one White woman head said :

> The best quality of anybody is their loyalty. Loyalty does not mean that it's because you're the boss. It means they'll say, 'You stepped out of line there - you should not have done this, I felt upset.' That to me is loyalty, and you should fix it.

Walker in Ozga (1993 : 19) argued that Black women felt that they often experienced more difficulty in being accepted this way. The problem may be understood if one recognises that loyalty comes out of shared values and/ or cultural links. The hidden values of the institution do not apply in the same way for Black women in management. This in turn leads to isolation which is experienced to a greater degree than in the case for other women. It must be acknowledged that the three African Principals in the study were in schools with a population of African pupils and staff in very low socio-economic areas whilst the other females were heads of multicultural institutions also in low socio-economic areas. Many children were from the informal settlement.. The African headteachers in this study did not experience that additional sense of separateness since all staff members and pupils were African. They were isolated in the sense that they felt they were constantly on trial and as representatives of their gender they were afraid to put a foot wrong since their mistakes would be used to condemn all women headteachers.

The governing body and parent community was also very supportive of their efforts and because of their shared values and histories as an oppressed race, co-operated with the headteachers. Because of this shared understanding and value system, parental participation in those schools was greater than at

others. A hard line was taken with reluctant parents in the community to ensure that they became involved in their child's education. Even though such tactics were used there was little parent resistance or aggression. Assertion of the authority dimension of the principals role in interactions with staff, pupils and parents was not perceived as being problematic. Describing her experience an African headteacher said :

> Obstacles are just minor things that you get in a work situation, in any work situation. Because you're working with people, remember that each person is an individual - these are normal things.

Another African woman principal sounded a similar theme in her discussions of her interactions with staff members at her school :

> I wouldn't say there were obstacles. I was working with people who were prepared to work. I had to open the door to everybody. I say to them - 'If my petticoat is protruding somehow , please come to me and say - 'Mind' and I will do likewise with you.' I believe I am like a family to them - like my brothers and sisters.

Another interesting observation was made by an African headteacher :

> I always say to people that the teachers at the school take turns in dusting my shoes and not knowing that they are doing it.

Interesting, because this female principal experienced major problems with both staff and parents. But she took on the challenge and succeeded in moving the school in a more positive direction. She believed that her persistence and willingness were of utmost importance, saying :

> The teachers were very tense and thought I was going to react to their toyi-toying, but I didn't, I told myself - it happened, but I must not let

it put me down. I continued to work. I wouldn't want to lower the standards at the school.

In summary one could say that for some headteachers gender was intrusive in their experiences of headship. Some of the complexities of the intersection of gender and race was examined. Headteachers perceived themselves as having the skills and abilities necessary to confront and overcome obstacles without being "distracted from their primary mission : facilitating the education of the children under their charge" (Pollard, 1997 : 357).

All the women heads in this study had to cope with the 'contemporary realities' of educating large numbers of children who continue to be oppressed and affected by major economic and social upheavals.

8.2 Management Styles

When looking at the different ways men and women conceptualise their work, Shakeshaft states:

> Not only are women's day-to-day interactions different from men's, women's style of administration offer contrast - sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically - to the ways men manage schools" (Shakeshaft, 1989 : 166).

Some women asserted that while there were differentiating features in leadership styles 'gender was not a predictor of these.' Their view was that some men and women headteacher's operated relatively democratic and participatory decision making institutions, some men and women did not.

8.2.1 Differences in Management Styles

In trying to answer the question on differences in management styles, one can see how women are negotiating their relationship to the social construction of

gender. An Indian female stated:

> I believe there is a difference in our management styles. Men delegate more. In delegation men would perform more administrative tasks. After a function, for instance, I would help with the washing up... I'm not afraid of getting my hands dirty. There's a bit of intolerance in me though. If something is not done properly I take over and complete the duty that's being delegated. I know it's a weakness. I take my duties very seriously and all the changes and responsibilities adds more pressure and stress. Women are more adaptable and are good organisers. I see myself as one. Even when it comes to planning I plan down to the smallest detail. I'm more focused when I work in my office after hours. A male head said I should create some professional distance between my staff and myself because staff address me as Ms. Doris. The fact that they call me Ms. is a sign of respect in itself. I'm not too formal...

Care for pupils and teachers and care about social relationships was strongly evident in the accounts of headteachers. This response was from a single White female:

> I'm always there. I do class visits - it's more nurturing and giving guidance.

A Coloured principal said:

> I bring a caring, nurturing quality into management, unlike men who don't want to understand female problems. I need to listen more...

A White principal stated:

> Our philosophy at this school is caring which is a more female

philosophy. There's always been a feeling of community involvement at our school. We try to inculcate in children that we are our brothers keepers. Children need to learn that there will always be other people that you need to help. Our focus is more on the child. I see growth in children. Women are more focused on growth potential than the actual results. A pupil with a memory problem won a bronze medal at the recent eistedfodd. That for me is an achievement. Men are very much results orientated and are more concerned with winning the rugby or the cricket. That is not to say I'm not pleased when our school does well.

A Coloured principal said:

I show more empathy, more consideration and am more encouraging. We are a team and team building is essential.

An Indian female responded thus:

Women have an innate compassion and empathy for others. The conference we've just had built such great team spirit - a feeling that we are together. Men are afraid of team building and think more in terms of hierarchies...

A Coloured headteacher stated:

I have a wonderful relationship going with my staff. I do think about them and I stress for them. They send me cards. I don't think a male understands it when a lady teacher comes to school after a sleepless night because baby was ill. I can empathise with that. I grant them early leave to rest while the helper is still at home. That is what makes them feel good about working with me.

An Indian principal said:

> I remember how disgusted I was when pupils at a school where I was teaching were sent home to change their takkies on insistence by the principal and deputies. They came back wearing wet school shoes. It stormed the day before. The women would not have done that.

Shakeshaft's (1987) conceptualisations of the female world of administration and education with the focus on relationships with others, on teaching and learning and community building is evident in these accounts. In the discourse with some women heads teamwork was frequently mentioned. "Their aspirations were expressed largely devoid of market values not to say that they were not concerned about the relative achievements of their school or about the creation of a good image" (Grace, 1995 : 183). Grace points out that the competitive market situation for schooling would bring new pressures to bear upon female headteachers in particular.

Evidence suggests that there is a tendency to see women's decision making styles to be more democratic and participatory than those of men. Shakeshaft (1987) makes the point that women often use coalition building to achieve their goals. Pitner (1981) as quoted in Shakeshaft (1989) describes women who don't "dominate the discussion (in a meeting) thus increasing the participation of subordinates. In addition women seemed to use meetings as a forum for considering possibilities."

Heads in the study confirmed this finding. The following response was from an Indian principal.

> We make a decision together. There isn't a thing I do in the school without the teachers being with me. When I first came here I did not do this. The teachers pointed out that I did not consult with them. It was a learning experience for me. I explained and I apologised for the

mistake. We don't push decisions down their throats. We chop and change all the time...

Another Indian principal said:

> We have a number of committees going. Their responsibility is to consult with the rest of the staff and report back to me. I give my input on a decision that has been made. I may reverse a decision. Not because of the person making it but because of the philosophy and morale of the school. You must have a sound footing of why you're reversing a decision. Nine times out of ten they agree with you... there may be some resistance...

An African headteacher had this to say:

> I come up with suggestions and we brainstorm the whole thing and then they decide but in their decisions I will always act above them and point out that this is acceptable or unacceptable by the department. You give them liberty to decide but there are times where you will find that the decision is not in the line with department policies. Because they are young I make them aware of policies and legislated acts. I once made a mistake of instructing them to do something... I've learnt it's the wrong way of doing things. Its best to reach consensus...

Some women were clear about their priorities - benefits to the children in the school over democratic process. Neuse (1978) in Shakeshaft (1989) suggests that women are less committed to formal hierarchy and more willing to submerge displays of personal power to encourage participation in the decision - making process. According to Schmuck (1981) more participatory decision making appears in female managed schools. They reported also that women are more likely than men to withdraw from confrontation and to use collaborative

strategies. This point was illustrated in the research. Many women stressed the importance of letting people talk about their problems and of listening intently. Some women are, however, prone to avoiding conflict. This account is from an Indian principal:

> I'm always reconciling. I always feel it's best to keep the peace. We don't have a harmonious staff but we're working towards it. I feel strongly that if teachers come to school they must be happy. I mustn't upset them. Because of that they'll deliver the goods. If there's a problem they come to me. I wouldn't want to hurt their feelings.

Another Indian principal said:

> I play a mediating role and try to resolve conflicts by allowing people to air their views. I do acknowledge that I may be wrong and stand to correction.

A White principal felt that:

> They can say a lot of things about me but they must not say I was unfair. If you are seen to be even handed people will be able to take criticism. They will resent it but they'll say 'it was fair'. We have big pow-wows and we talk about what is happening.

Some studies argue that males handle discipline better than females. This depends on how discipline is enforced. Men have physical force at their disposal, women don't and as a result may use a wider range of strategies. In a context where physical force is valorised, females lack of resort to it may count against their ability to extract obedience.

> The overwhelming amount of research that women are better than men at maintaining discipline has done nothing to dispel the misconception

> that women are constitutionally incapable of discipline and order primarily because of their size and supposed lack of strength (Shakeshaft, 1987 : 39).

Some heads in the study pointed out they handled discipline differently as is evident in the following excerpts. An African head's response was:

> My pupils respect me very much. If I say one word they stand to attention. Even the older boys toe the line. One firm word, one firm look is enough.

A White respondent had this to say;

> I don't think we have a discipline problem. Perhaps men are far better at maintaining discipline. I'm very strict about things...

A Coloured headteacher said:

> We need to work on discipline issues to a point where it's going to become corrective not punitive.

This White principal said:

> I think we get away with discipline better than the men. I can get away with raising my voice but if a male raises his voice he will be classified as a bully. I can also get away with a smack on the bottom. When corporal punishment was declared unconstitutional I felt we will never discipline the boys. But we have. Other methods work just as well. I'm pleased we don't apply corporal punishment anymore. You've got to realise that things change and attitudes have to change. We have good discipline here. We have a majority of Afrikaner females who are strict disciplinarians.

The abolition of corporal punishment obviously had a very interesting gender dimension - in the long term favouring more varied styles of discipline - enforcement by women. An African headteacher who was longest in the post had a relatively smooth running school. Pupils were impeccably dressed in school uniforms and were courteous on meeting me. During school time pupils and teachers were in their classes. There was a buzz of activity. A choir was practising for a funeral service to be held at the school for one of their late classmates who committed suicide. She pointed out :

> I am very productive. I don't mix work with pleasure. I take my school work very seriously people think I'm hard. It's because I always want things to go smoothly. I have no room for mishaps - mishaps which are created purposely. If a teacher is supposed to be in class he is supposed to be there. If school starts at 8h00, he must be here at 7h50. I can't condone behaviour to the contrary -
>
> I talk about such mishaps. Regarding pupils who are undisciplined I tell them 'If your mother is not prepared to come to school, you come back when she is prepared to come see us - this is serious. We are destroying our discipline.' I know all the excuses they make. We have all types of children here. It was then we started with our own discipline program. It was tough. With good discipline we can lay the foundation to create an environment of teaching and learning. Children are afraid of me. We thrash them when they come late. Just one lash. Just a smack. We agreed with our parents when this situation was implemented. Parents said they also thrash their children at home as long as we don't kill them. We do use corporal punishment.

This African woman head attributed her success at school to the manner in which she maintained discipline, although realising that corporal punishment is presently a legal issue and cannot be administered albeit with parental approval. Her position was protected through control of the use of corporal punishment. Having said that, it would be fair to add that this same school attained an

85% matriculation pass rate in 1998 with their very first batch of matriculants - an achievement which has not gone unrecognised by school district officials. Some women heads attributed their self confidence from union involvement and being in the school situation. One Indian headteacher said :

> My confidence has been developed here in this school as principal. The males will make their input whether it was wrong or not. They were not embarrassed if they were wrong. I was always too afraid to speak up for fear of making a mistake.

A young Coloured woman headteacher said :

> I was very very unsure of myself. I had no self confidence at all. I gained confidence when I started teaching more so now being actively involved in the union.

An African head stated :

> I have to give recognition to the union. I learnt how to manage people democratically. I'm in the negotiating chamber. I learnt how to be assertive. I speak at meetings...

The socialization process of women results not only in role conflict for them but in behaviours that are traditionally feminine and which are not considered the behaviours of good administrators. Assertiveness, for instance, is a skill that women, by and large, have not been socialized to call their own. These women heads had to also negotiate the new power relations of school leadership arising from the empowerment of school governing bodies (Grace, 1995 : 186). It was found that some encountered difficulties with both male and female members of governing bodies regarding policy issues and the general running of the school. Heads described it as 'trespassing,' 'undue interference' and a 'power struggle.' It seemed that in some cases male dominated governing

bodies held traditional views about strong dominative leadership. Most reported that they had good relationships with the governing bodies. In these instances members were not well informed about current educational policies and relied on the heads discretion regarding such matters. One of the African heads said :

> A school governing body member said to me 'You're an iron lady.' Another member challenges me to see how much I know. And then he says 'Ah! you're a stunning woman.'

While women principals may seem to have considerable power they are both vulnerable and strong. Emotions such as caring, concern and empathy are 'prescribed' and appropriate for women to display in their administrative and leadership positions. There were some heads who managed their emotions in ways that are socially acceptable and appropriate. They spoke of a preference for 'professional distance' and 'being professional' expressed in their dress and general demeanour. There were others who were not afraid of a show of emotion like this Coloured headteacher :

> I'm like a stand-up comedian. I'm sure the men are taken aback by this very forward woman. When I have to reprimand I really go wild and gesture; they hear it in my tone and body language.

Another White respondent described her emotional responses thus :

> They know all my weaknesses - that I would jump up and down and make lots of noises and get very dramatic.

Sachs (1998 : 272) points out that to display their emotions even in justifiable contexts is their downfall - both in terms of their survival and in terms of being seen to be weak. Blackmore (1996) points out that emotionality has been cast in opposition to and lesser than rationality in highly gendered ways."

An African headteacher concluded her interview simply :

> I love the Zulu concept of the spirit of 'ubuntu' - in our schools, our families - it will make such a difference.

Ubuntu is the African emphasis on community, the social collective, the party, the side, the team as opposed to individualism and a strong competitive spirit. One could maybe draw parallels with Sergiovanni's (1994) leadership model. He holds the view that although initially organisations are created by people they tend over time to become separate from people. The theory of gemeinschaft (binding) and gesellschaft (bonding) was applied to schools by Sergiovanni (1994). In the former - individuals relate to each other in order to reach some goal or to gain some benefit.

> In redefining power, feminists seek to counter the emphasis on individualism, hierarchical relationships, bureaucratic rationality and abstract moral principles (Adler et al, 1989 : 112).

In conclusion, this chapter reveals how women speak of the experience of differences and the common themes that emerge. The accounts reveal strengths and the development of ways of doing things which are more likely to be characteristic of women than of men. Elsewhere in this study it was mentioned that "it is the complex, varied and rich experience of women's lives which develops their management styles and capacities." (Ozga, 1993 : 2) Men who are excluded from such experience or view it as low status and valueless do not develop such skills and exclude them from conventional management practice. When women do become managers they take on definitions of management which exclude their experience and their understanding or they may face difficulties of having their ways of working accepted.

CHAPTER 9 : RECAPTURING THE LIVES OF FEMALE HEADTEACHERS

My intention in this report was to go beyond the question of numerical representation in headship posts and to explore instead in a preliminary way the links between women headteachers lives and the meaning of gender, race and class on their life experiences. This chapter in no way proposes answers or solutions. That remains the domain of policy makers and educational authorities. The object is to facilitate dialogue leading to improvements in the areas in which gender inequality is prevalent. Some of the main findings are extracted in this conclusion. The implications are that we will need very different emphases in management if we are to achieve equitable, humane and effective institutions. More than the previous upbringing of the sexes need to be investigated to understand the declining numbers of women in headship posts. Ball (1987) believed that institutional micro-politics tend to be viewed as a challenge or block to effectiveness rather than the dynamics upon which educational institutions work. The importance of teachers lives and how they influence practice is thus rendered invisible. Experience has taught us that it is people and events and not only systems that shape institutions and ensure their success.

9.1 Findings

It was shown in Chapter 4 that individual identity is likely to be influenced by some interaction among the statuses of gender, race and class. In career choices and personal lives they have been affected by ideology and material restraints. Regarding their perceptions of some ways in which race and gender and to a lesser extent class, impact on their administrative roles it was concluded in chapter 8 that in some instances it was integral to their mission as educational leaders. The respondents brought a unique perspective to their

jobs in part because of their gender and race status.

It was shown in chapter 4 that the socialization process of women results not only in role conflict for women but in behaviours that are traditionally feminine. In looking at the early lives of women headteachers the power of race, class and gender in defining reality and in limiting choices is evident. Black women in the study were doubly oppressed. Racism was experienced as far more painful than sexism. Black women felt that because of their race, teaching was one of the few jobs for which they would be considered. Coming from a middle and lower class background they lacked resources to fight racist practices and beliefs through material privileges. White women faced the limitation of resources and choice of career. Some women had to give up other options to become teachers. These themes of being acted upon by social structures and ideology are revealed in relationships within families, in early experiences of girlhood and in relationships with teachers and other adults. The possibilities open to the Black women were limited not only by lack of money, sexism on the part of society, their own internalised expectations of themselves but by racist practices and discrimination in training and hiring as well. Indian and Coloured women described themselves as "better off" than their African counterparts when it came to racism.

It was shown in chapter 5 that in some cases the profiles and career paths of female headteachers with the exception of the one Coloured and two African heads, differed from the profile of the typical male administrator in a number of ways and that women heads viewed careers as being vertical, horizontal and parallel. It was found that the changing educational and political context provided a catalyst for promotions in careers against the weight of tradition. It is noteworthy that the women headteachers had taken up posts in 1994 and thereafter. The African female head was appointed to a secondary headship at age 43 in 1994. She was acting principal at a girls secondary school before taking up her post. The other African head was appointed at age 34. The other heads were in their late 40s and early 50s and two were nearing retirement.

Eight had primary principalships, one African female had a secondary headship and one Indian female was head of a special school. Two Indian, two Coloured, one African and one White female had instituted grievance procedures regarding their promotions. The five women in the study (two African, one Coloured and two White) had teaching or future diplomas in education. The other five (one African, one Coloured and three Indians) had completed their B.Ed. and two were studying towards their masters. Trends of lack of career planning were evident which can be linked to internalised fears of "being ambitious" and thereby transgressing expected gender roles.

Chapter 6 revealed how aspiring women administrators encountered a number of barriers as they penetrated a world where the manager is presented as 'he.' The capacity of patriarchal culture and structures to endure and to be recontextualised in changing conditions was evident. It explains why women are not well represented as one moves higher up the promotion ladder. Although new policy initiatives have focused on addressing gender inequalities in education there are significant contradictions between the policy discourse and actual interventions" (Chisholm and Napo, 1999 : 2).

The impact of marriage varied across the sample. The individual career paths revealed that marriage did not have a uniform effect on their careers. Some viewed it as a hurdle, for others it facilitated career development. Women heads were conscious of the responsibilities of having children irrespective of marital status and whether they had children or not. Having children was viewed as a hurdle to advancement into administration.

Almost every woman in the sample mentioned a mentor who inspired her. For some women there had been negative experiences with other women who kept undermining them. It dispels the notion that women make better mentors for women simply on the basis of common gender. Most mentors were males given the overall dominance of men in administration and they belonged to the same racial group as the ones being mentored.

A large proportion of women in the sample irrespective of race mentioned institutional constraints eg. sex role stereotyping, attitudes of male and female colleagues; expectations of others; childcare and other family responsibilities as a blockage to career advancement. One African head reported that she did not experience any discrimination in the workplace. It has been suggested that the continuation of discrimination against female teachers is to be found in the attitude of successful female managers who saw no evidence of discrimination against themselves. Biklen (1980) points out the difficulties of women attempting to succeed in traditionally male fields. Either they are judged competent and unfeminine or incompetent and feminine.

In chapter 7 it was discovered how women balance their family and career responsibilities. Irrespective of race a large proportion of women felt that coping with the demands of career, wife and mother demanded a great deal of energy as these demands were often in conflict or potential tension. (de la Rey 1998: 34) Those women learnt time management. Most of the black mothers coped with the help of family members or domestic help. Although husbands shared responsibilities the women carried the major burden. An unmarried Coloured headteacher stated that there were heavy demands on her time although she was a spinster. She mentioned that she won the community "Woman of the year" award. Four women across race who were either widowed, divorced or single felt that they could cope with work pressures because family responsibilities did not place heavy demands on them. The one African unmarried mother had a very successful career path showing that an unplanned pregnancy does not have to stand in the way of one's career.

The husbands were seen as supportive. In these relationships as long as the status quo is not upset the husbands do encourage their wives. In this sample the patterns of support did not conform to any racialised pattern. The lack of support was experienced by one Indian head who eventually divorced her husband. Black men were reported as supportive. This is in conflict with the stereotype that Black men are more conservative concerning gender relations.

That there were differentiating features in the experiences of female managers and in leadership styles was consistent with research findings. Participatory and collaborative strategies were favoured by female heads. A disturbing finding was that an African secondary school principal protected her position through control of the use of corporal punishment. I also reported that her school attained a remarkable 85% matriculation pass rate in 1998. The abolition of corporal punishment had a very interesting gender dimension, in the long term favouring more varied styles of discipline-enforcement by women. In attempting to maintain and establish authority a Coloured female head issued warning notices to staff members, both male and female. These findings confound and disprove the essentialist argument about women by nature being more democratic. It also points to the difficulty both men and women have of accepting female leadership and authority, thus creating environments in which women must try harder to stay equal. It reflects early socialization patterns and gender relations at home. Men are authority figures at home and in the workplace roles may be reversed.

The research findings led me to conclude that delegation has to combine responsibility with information and support. The seemingly genuine wish to empower teachers by delegating and then withdrawing tasks mitigated against such empowerment. In the quest to maintain standards and effectiveness, empowerment was unwittingly placed on the 'back burner' when the drafting of an entire schools examination question papers and the typing thereof on old stencils became the proud responsibility of the headteacher by choice. What was regarded as empowerment was actually disempowering.

That additional pressures were experienced by female heads who are highly visible because of their minority position was evident. There were very few female administrators and as such they were in the spotlight. This attention produced feelings of isolation and anxiety notwithstanding the fact that the role of headteacher is stressful enough. Such feelings were experienced by a large proportion of Black and White women in the study. Most Black women felt

that the demands of a transforming society was a challenge to them and they had to prove themselves as leaders because of their previous social positioning. This inevitably led to greater anxiety and isolation. The changed nature of heads interactions with former colleagues often gave rise to feelings of loneliness. Loneliness also stemmed from divorce and death. The presence of Black women in leadership positions in itself challenges "cultural stereotypes about the appropriate role of women."

An interesting finding was that some heads operating within constrained behaviour rules believed this to be a weakness. Sachs (1998 : 271) states that "while all principals are positioned ambiguously and in contradictory ways by recent reforms, the issue is still highly gendered." Women can be trapped because it is expected of them to provide emotions of care, warmth, patience and calm. To display emotions of passion is unacceptable. Most female heads both Black and White worked within emotional rules that is part of the complexity of professional life. More work needs to be undertaken in the area of emotional management within schools during periods of restructuring and change. Within education there is a price to pay for moving up which involves making some unpleasant decisions and taking unpleasant actions according to policy implementation - such as having to make staff redundant.

Some women acknowledge that a stronger sense of self worth was developed from involvement in the union and being in a headship position. For some female heads negotiating the new power relations of school leadership arising from the empowerment of governing bodies and the market ethos of schooling was problematic. For others relative ignorance of policy issues and school administration by governing bodies ensured acquiescent relationships.
In short, then in attempting to address gender inequalities, gendered institutional power relations have to be placed under the microscope. It is clear that further research to understand the various dimensions affecting female headteachers lives is required.

9.3 Recommendations

By using a feminist paradigm this study aimed to tell the story behind the statistics on gender inequalities in two school districts in Gauteng, by investigating the subjective experiences of Black and White female headteachers. To achieve better outcomes for women the main points for consideration are identified in the sections below :

- Policymakers should take cognisance of the call made by (Chisholm and Napo 1999 : 20) for a renewed debate about institutional gender relations which include but go beyond access and a more thorough - going assessment of and attention to how educational institutions and their overt and hidden curricula and social orders need to change.

- A powerful focus for change is the self in context. There is a need for capacity building programmes aimed at developing the self. Interpersonal skills and competencies which enhance career development can be learned. Women can learn ways to negotiate the system and resilience and self sustaining techniques can be developed through suitable interventions.

- There is a need for women to have access to a network that provides one with information and administrative strategies as well as visibility and a support group. Women have traditionally been excluded from these networks. The implementation of mentoring programmes have to be monitored.

This list is by no means exhaustive and no one strategy will solve the problem.

To conclude then, despite evidence that women as a group are disadvantaged there are some women who achieve greater success than others. This study explored how these women reconstructed their experiences. There are certain factors which mitigate against women's advancement into administration. The

gender structuring of organisations should make us reconsider our own workplaces, the ways in which they operate, and the future agendas for change which we draw up. The solution to this requires proper analysis and monitoring.

Tom Peters (1990) as quoted by Adler et al (1993 : 117) an American business 'guru' told an audience of predominantly male managers:

> By the year 2000, management, as we know it, will not exist. In its place will be networks of relationships, partnerships and alliances... the future will be essentially female in character... A future where the characteristics and skills displayed by men are not only worthless but may even be harmful...

This study reveals that even on the threshold of the millennium there is no fear of a feminized management.

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