An Application of Feminist Thought To High School Administration

K. Leonard

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ABSTRACT

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K. Leonard

The hierarchal structure of our patriarchal society is reflected in current educational policies. As such, this study seeks to explore the agency of the public high school principal, and illustrate ways in which feminist pedagogy and feminist thought can be used as a source of empowerment. In this study I interview three public, high school principals to explore their perceptions of their agency in stimulating social change, as compared to what is documented about their roles and responsibilities. I then analyze and critique this space from a postfeminist perspective, using postfeminist concepts to explore the power relations that principals are implicated in and how they might be challenged through feminist pedagogy. The study poses the following question: How can feminist pedagogy be used by public high school principals to stimulate social change?

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Contents

Chapter One:

An Overview of 'An Application of Feminist Thought to High School Administration'

Introduction:

I was prompted to undertake this study due to my own desire to become a high school principal and because of my strong commitment to feminist research. Four years ago, I became a high school teacher with the hope of challenging the status quo, but have felt (and continue to feel) that I would be able to effect more of a change if I was in an educational leadership position. However, I was concerned that principals would be just as confined in their jobs by policy, ministerial legislation, and their affiliated school board, as I was by working under a principal who did not share my feminist vision. As such, I chose to conduct this study with the intent of exploring the agency of high school principals, and to illustrate ways in which feminist pedagogy and feminist thought can be used to effect social change. More specifically, this study poses the following primary question: How can feminist pedagogy be used by public high school principals to stimulate social change? In order to answer my primary question effectively, I asked myself the following four secondary questions: 1.) What is feminist pedagogy and how is it relevant in contemporary society?, 2.) What responsibilities does principalship entail and what legalities surround it?, 3.) Does a high school principal possess agency in his/her job? and 4.) How can feminist pedagogy be used by high school principals to create a feminist model of educational administration?

Each chapter of my thesis corresponds to the secondary questions as detailed above, thus the study is divided into 5 chapters where the first chapter presents an overview of the study. The findings make up chapters two through four; in particular

illustrating how postfeminist thought explains the construction of 'woman' and 'principal' and how these terms can be deconstructed and challenged through an application of postfeminist thought to high school administration. I then present a summary of the important findings and provide suggestions for future research in the fifth chapter. Secondary questions #2 and # 3 are dealt with simultaneously in the third chapter of this study.

I chose to use a postfeminist framework for this study because I identify strongly with this perspective, and conduct my own practices as a teacher accordingly. Furthermore, in the face of what Blum (2001) terms 'cultural machoism', a feminist framework (in particular a postmodernist one) is needed to create a more equal educational system. Blum warns that that, "macho behavior continues to damage staff teamwork, teacher pupil relations and pupil-pupil relationships" (p. 45), as well as building feelings of resentment among school staff, and socializing young women to believe in their own inferiority (Bartky, 1996). In the interest of creating an effective learning environment for the students, a new perspective is much needed.

I believe that postmodernism is an appropriate framework, as it is current and deeply critical of power structures and the ways in which they are developed through discourse. Given that this study seeks to challenge the status-quo, a deconstruction of existing societal structures and the messages that they send was necessary. Postmodernism provides a salient method of identifying and deconstructing and is often used by feminists to deconstruct societal power imbalances. Finally, I also choose to employ postmodernism as a framework for this study due to its fluid nature, so that this

study can have future use and could be adaptable to the situations that will be faced by my future colleagues.

I conducted this study according to Preece's (2002) and Weedon's (1987) concept of postfeminist analysis. Preece (2002) explains that postmodernist feminism carefully examines power relations, the roles of institutions in maintaining the status quo, women's experiences, and the ways in which society constructs images of women. This study looks at the power relations that exist surrounding the role of principal, both within the context of provincial laws, the teacher's collective agreement, the school board and the staff and students of his/her school. It also looks at the ways in which the school functions as an institution to maintain the status quo through exploring the history of principalship and the associated norms and expectations that have arisen as a result. According to Weedon (1987) subjective experience and the ways people make sense of their lives is a starting point to understanding power structures. Accordingly, and in keeping with a feminist methodology, I interview individual principals to learn from their experiences. As discussed above, I then use postmodernism concepts to analyze the agency that a principal possesses in using a feminist model of administration to stimulate social change.

Definition of Key Concepts

Weedon (as cited in Gore, 2003) explains that terms are constantly evolving alongside society. She maintains that there are no fixed meanings, but rather ascribed meaning in specific contexts. Therefore, the meaning and/or context of the key terms in relation to this body of work are introduced below:

1. **Agency:** This study employs the conceptualization of agency as described by

Sewell (1992), Ortner (1996) and Gore (2003). Their conceptualization of agency implies an inherent sense of the self as a social being with varying capacities to transform social practices. Sewell stresses the interplay of agency and structures. He explains that agency implies an understanding of social structures, and the ability to apply this knowledge within new contexts. Gore argues that agency must be expanded to go beyond mere resistance, to a more critical and politicized work in the form of collective oppositional actions.

2. **Empowerment:** This study employs a critical feminist pedagogical use of the term empowerment, which is concerned with societal relations of power. Drawing upon the work of Gore (2003), empowerment is defined as presupposing "1.) an agent of empowerment, 2.) a notion of power as property, and 3.) some kind of vision or desirable end state" (p. 333). Under this definition, empowerment is an exercise of power, in an attempt to help others exercise power as well. Contrary to other definitions, Gore's conceptualization of empowerment is more reflective about the role of agency, which must occur in sites of practice.

3. **Feminism: An overview of the three waves.**

   The first wave of feminism started in the mid 17th century and lasted until the 19th century. The focus of the first wave of feminism was on education, employment, marriage-laws and the rights of White, middle class, single women (Richards, 2003 & Bohn Gmelch, 2003). This wave has been charged with being individualistic and exclusive of issues of difference, in that it was

White middle-class women who were concerned with changing their own living conditions.

The second wave of feminism, describes the feminist activities that occurred in North America, Europe and Britain in the 1960s and 1970s (Bohn Gmelch, 2003 & Roth, 2004). The slogan that 'the personal is political' exemplifies the second wave of feminism, in that these feminists not only broadened the range of activities and professions that women could do, but changed their domestic and public lives through intervention in the realms of sexuality and reproduction (Bohn Gmelch, 2003). Furthermore, other goals of second wave feminism focused on the need to establish theories of social causation, the question and establishment of feminist epistemology, the relationship between theory and practice, and the relationship between experience, subjectivity and theory (Brooks, 1997 & Weiler, 1991). Feminism's second wave movement emerged out of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, as female participants came to demand the same equality and justice in their situation as women as it espoused for racial minorities (Weiler, 1991). In an effort to organize for this political change, small groups of women came together across North America and participated in what they termed 'consciousness-raising'. This provided a means of sharing their experiences as women of sexuality, work, family, and participation in a male-dominated left political movement (Weiler, 1991) and raising levels of consciousness at the ways in which women's participation had been devalued or ignored. As such, these groups of women were

increasingly suspicious of truth-claims and forms of knowledge that society

subscribed to. Rather, they relied on their experiences and feelings as a form

of knowledge and employed non-hierarchal models of organization to run

their groups.

The current state of feminism and feminist pedagogy has been called the

third wave; however its nature and focus is the source of much debate among

scholars . One scholar proposes that third wave feminism "…resists closure of

definition" (Alice, cited in Brooks, 1997, p.5). Rather, third wave feminism is

characterized by fluidity and multi-layered perspectives and practices. Brooks

(1997) explains that third wave feminism is informed by three challenges.

The first criticism comes from women of colour who rejected the universal

definitions and claims of what it means to be a woman, as it does not reflect

and/or incorporate their experiences. Additionally, second wave feminism was

critiqued along sexual lines, given that second wave feminists did not consider

the experience of lesbian, bisexual or transgendered women. Furthermore,

second wave feminist concepts were challenged by postmodernism,

poststructuralism, and postcolonialism to explore the ways in which power

relations were created through discoursive practices (Brooks, 1997) (this

concept and other postmodern concepts are elaborated in detail further in the

paper).

Mahler (1996) and Preece (2002) explain that postmodernism was the

second major transformation to feminist thought, challenging the fixities of

previous feminist thought. Post-modernist feminism carefully examines power

relations, the roles of institutions in maintaining the status quo, women's experiences, and the ways in which society constructs images of women and of female sexuality (Preece, 2002). As such, postmodern feminists advocates a feminist pedagogy of positionality (Mahler, 1996; Brooks, 1997), whereby feminist postmodernism replaces the wholistic and unitary worldview of any group, with its emphasis on shifting language, discourse, and histories of all "identities". My use of the term positionality posits that identities are multiple, and that each person is somehow implicated in oppressive relations, and must deconstruct their role. Thus, feminism and feminist pedagogies have shifted from an exclusively White, middle class approach, to one that deconstructs power relationships and emphasizes the agency of all women. For the purposes of this study the term feminism will be used as described above, however, there are many other ways understanding and using the term.

4. **Feminist Pedagogy**: For the purpose of this study, feminist pedagogy is defined as under the same umbrella as critical pedagogy (Gore, 1993). Feminist pedagogy looks critically at the ways in which education is patriarchal. Although there are many strands of feminism, all feminist pedagogy is united in its desire to eradicate patriarchy and sexist oppression (Warren, 1998). Feminist pedagogy then, is a way of teaching and selecting classroom materials for instruction that challenges patriarchal structures and promotes what has been constructed as women's ways of knowing and doing (Warren, 1998). It also connotes a social vision of equality among genders, races, classes, sexual orientations, etc. (Gore, 1993).

5. **Postfeminism:** I use this term in the context of the third wave, and in keeping with Brooks' (1997) understanding of postfeminism as a conceptual framework that encompasses the intersection of feminism and number of other anti-foundational groups, such as poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism. Contrary to the media's use of the term in the 1980s and early 1990s (as a backlash against feminism), postfeminism critically engages with earlier feminist political and theoretical concepts, as they are now seen as hegemonic. Brooks maintains that postfeminism facilitates a more pluralistic conception of feminism and addresses the demands of marginalized cultures for a non-hegemonic feminism.

6. **Power:** For the purpose of this study, to have power means to possess the agency to resist oppressive power structures. From a Foucauldian perspective, power is "..not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods...deployed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus" (Foucault, 1990, p. 89). Futhermore, Foucault explains that 'the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power' (Foucault, 1980, p. 52).

7. **Principal:** For this study, I am limiting the definition of principal to either a man or a woman who was hired by one school board in Montreal, to serve as the principal of a public high school. I have chosen to interview principals exclusively (as opposed to vice-principals or other administrative staff) since they are responsible for the hiring of all other staff members.

Research Procedures

The research tools used in this study were informal, in-depth interviews and primary and secondary textual analysis. In order to answer my research questions, I realized that I would have to interview principals and analyze both primary and secondary sources of legislation regarding the role of the principal. I thought it necessary to interview principals so that I could explore their perceptions of agency in stimulating social change, and explore their understanding of their job, as compared with what is written in the literature on the topic. Devries (1977) discusses Hymen's (1954) recommendation that interviewing is a means to study feelings, attitudes & values, and as such it constitutes an important tool to help me evaluate the sense of agency that each principal feels. My intent was to then analyze and critique this space from a feminist perspective. I also had to explore the literature on feminist pedagogy and the differing models of educational administration in order to be able to answer my primary research question. Additionally, as I discussed earlier, this methodology is in keeping with Preece's (2002) and Weedon's (1987) postfeminist undertaking of deconstructing power structures.

Several methodological decisions then followed. I decided to select a sample of principals to interview from a school board in the Montreal area. Montreal is an urban city that is representative of most of Canada's major urban cities. As Canada continues to accept immigrants the population break-down of urban society and school changes, and therefore it is important to conduct this study in a city that represents this diversity.

Although I chose to identify the city of Montreal as the site for my study, all other information including both the principals and the schools they work at have been kept

confidential. I chose to keep this information anonymous as I believe that it makes respondents less inhibited and more free in describing their lived experiences. I have provided pseudonyms for each participating principal and for each of their schools.

I chose to conduct my interviews after the research on postfeminism and feminist pedagogy was already complete, so that my interview questions could be informed from a feminist perspective and be relevant to the issues surrounding postfeminism. Although my sample size is relatively small, it was a mistake to wait until I had finished my research to begin the interviews. In my proposal design, I had planned to interview four principals, rather than the three that resulted. However, given that I started establishing contact with principals in the final three weeks of the school year, I found it extremely difficult to get in touch with any principals and tried to contact them, but was still unable to find four principals to interview. Furthermore, much to my surprise, my research was often met with scepticism and hostility to feminist ideas, resulting in many principal's refusal to participate.

Textual Analysis

Again in keeping with Preece's (2002) postfeminist model for analyzing power relations, both primary and secondary sources of literature were analyzed to overview the role and responsibility of the public high school principal. Furthermore, Gore (1993c) suggests that power relations should be analyzed in terms of the functions and objectives of the relations of power, and the institutions that integrate the practices among others (which I discuss in greater detail at a later point). It was important to review actual MEQ documentation about the role of the principal and the powers and responsibilities which it ascribes to this role. It is also important to see how these guidelines have been perceived

and recorded throughout history by secondary sources, as the actual laws surrounding the job seem to imply normative codes of behavior and procedure which principals style themselves around. I use a Foucauldian deconstruction technique to illustrate how certain ideas/themes of principalship have become normalized and how they rob principals of their agency through both sovereign and disciplinary powers.

Analyzing feminist literature was also very important for my study, in that it gave me a solid foundation to understand feminist pedagogy, and to use this knowledge in combination with the legal guidelines for principals to create a feminist model of educational administration.

Summary:

The objective of this chapter was to introduce the study and my research problem; how feminist pedagogy can be used by public high school principals to stimulate social change. As discussed, I situated my study in the context of third wave, postfeminist thought. In this chapter I clarified the contexts of the concepts that I use throughout this study and then applied them to the research problem. I then overviewed the study as a whole and detailed what can be expected in each chapter of the study, corresponding to each secondary research question.

I overviewed the research procedures that I used in my study and I discussed how this study moves from examining the principles of postmodernism as they apply to the construction/understanding of 'woman' to the construction of 'principal'. I then use the final chapter to challenge these constructions through postfeminism and in particular through the creation of a feminist model of educational administration.

Chapter Two:

A Postmodern Approach to Feminism and Feminist Pedagogy

Introduction

Women have been, and continue to be, socialized to believe that they are the inferior sex (Bartky, 1997; Gilligan, 1982). Attributes and characteristics that are recognized as female have been devalued and discouraged from professions of affluence. Under this stream of androcentric thought, men have held positions of power over women, both in society at large and in the academic world. In the context of this thesis, I problematize this sexist tradition and use postmodernism as a framework. As stated previously, postmodernism offers a method of deconstructing such societal power systems. In particular, Foucault's concepts of the connection of power and knowledge, discursive practices, and the deconstruction of regimes of truth to illustrate how present power systems came to be and how they can be deconstructed are most useful in this analysis. Given this framework, I specifically explore 3rd wave feminism's application of postmodern thought to their own cause, resulting in a more reflective, praxis oriented tradition than previous waves (as noted in chapter 1). As such, postfeminist thought provides the framework from which I will analyze the agency that high school principals possess in stimulating social change with the hopes of creating a more egalitarian society.

The Link between Postmodernism and Foucault:

Postmodernism has been defined as "a loose alliance of intellectual perspectives which collectively pose a challenging critique of the most basic assumptions of the modern educational enterprise" (Lemke, 1994). The use of the term 'post' is used to signify a break from modernism, and a process of ongoing transformation and change

within the movement (Brooks, 1997). In particular, postmodernism problematizes modernism's view of objective knowledge and its "assumption that such knowledge refers directly to an objective reality which would appear in the same way to any observer" (Lemke, 1994). Postmodernism argues that what we call knowledge is actually 'discourse' (a story/setting that is meaningful to a particular culture at a particular time). Thus, postmodernism denies the possibility of having objective and universal knowledge, since all knowledge is a product of discourses.

As a historian, Foucault focused on the ways that these discourses have been constructed throughout history, and given their use, that is, how power came to be distributed throughout society (Lemke, 1994; Mayo, 1997). Moreover, he illustrated how power operates and how concepts are created through discourse, and created differently in different historical periods (Convaleskie, 1993). While modernists would argue that power is held exclusively by dominant groups in society, Foucault as a postmodernist, conceives of power as something which can be "…used and deployed by particular people in specific situations, which itself will produce other reactions and resistances; and isn't tied to specific groups or identities" (Gauntlett, 1998). Foucault's major contributions to postmodernist thought include his views on knowledge, discourse, truth, subjectification and the ways in which they are linked with power in modern society (Brooks, 1997; Lemke, 1994; Gauntlett, 1998; Mayo, 1997).

Foucault's use of 'knowledge'.

Ball (1991) explains that Foucault has identified knowledge as central to the normalization of social principles and institutions. According to Ball, Foucault uses the term normalization to refer to the establishment of measurements, hierarchy, and rules

around the idea of the statistical "norm". Knowledge then, is the knowledge of what is 'normal', and is infused with value judgments, as to be normal implies the abnormality of all else. For Foucault, power and knowledge are connected and inseparable (Ball, 1991; Gore, 1993c). Foucault holds that it is the exercising of power that creates knowledge, while knowledge itself produces the effects of power. Thus, "power is exercised or practiced rather than possessed, and so circulates, passing through every related force" (Gore, 1993c, p. 52). As this knowledge circulates, it is normalized and accepted as 'true', and creates what Foucault terms 'regimes of truth' (which are in turn maintained through discourse) (Brooks, 1997).

Foucault's ideas have given our new era an "epistemological rupture" (Hekman, 1990), which suggests that it may be possible for us to construct a new truth/power model that is less repressive than the present one. According to Brooks (1997), the key for Foucault is in understanding that knowledge is produced discursively.

Foucault's use of 'discourse'.

Ball (1991) also discusses Foucault's concept of the role of discourse in maintaining power relationships. According to him, Foucault conceptualized discourse as what can be said and thought, who can speak, and when and with what authority. He explains that,

> the possibilities for meaning and for definition are preempted through the social and institutional position held by those who use them. Meanings thus arise not from language but from institutional practices, from power relations. Words and concepts change their meaning and their effects as they are deployed from different discourses (p. 2).

Ball's reading of Foucault is that it is discourses that are powerful (and that power is constituted in these discourses). Moreover, Foucault believes that there is no single truth, but many truths situated in different discourses (Brooks, 1991). He feels that some discourses are more powerful than others, and thus maintain the power of the dominant group (Ball, 1991; Gauntlett, 1998). Moreover, Foucault argues that individuals do not possess power implicitly; rather, power is an action which individuals can engage in (Gauntlett, 1998). Given this conceptualization of power as an activity, rather than a product, Gauntlett (1998) and Brooks (1997) suggest that individuals can choose to be empowered, creating an element of agency and resistance.

Foucault's use of subjectification.

Gore (1993a) explains that contrary to the Bernstein's social-linguistic model and to other theoretical models proposed by Bourdieu and Passeron, Foucault's construction of discourses operates at the micro level and provides a means of self-criticism and self understanding. Foucault believes that individuals have more freedom than they know, but are caught up in the discourses that have been built in certain moments in history (Adams St-Pierre, 1996; Convaleskie, 1993; Mayo, 1997). Foucault argues that identity has come to be central to the formation of the subject. According to Mayo's (1997) reading, Foucault's argument stipulates that the subject is two-fold, both the source of agency and also subjected to power structures that restrict and disable him/her. In particular, Foucault contrasts the restrictive effect of sovereign power of past days, to the disabling disciplinary power that effects individuals in current times. Sovereign power was enforced by Kings or figureheads through the creation of laws and penalties for violations of their laws (Covaleskie, 1993). As such, it was quite easy to determine the source of the

power and to rebel against it. In direct contrast to sovereign power, the invisibility of disciplinary power makes resistance and/or revolt against it much more difficult. Convaleskie (1993) explains that,

> for disciplinary power to be effective, it is the subject, not the power, which must be seen. This relationship of visibility and invisibility is reciprocal; for the subject to be disciplined, it must be visible, at least potentially, to the disciplinary gaze, and know itself to be; at the same time, the gaze must actually be invisible so that it is effective even when it is not actually turned on an individual (p. 2).

For Foucault, disciplinary power operates through the creation of regimes of truth and through discourse. More specifically, discourses are created through the process of normalization, whereby an idea is idealized and defines the way individuals are supposed to be, confusing the idea of 'normal' with 'natural' (Convaleskie, 1993). Thus, much of our identities which are "taken for granted as natural substances are actually highly infused with power" (Mayo, 1997). Power operates through the normalization and reification of ideas that are then used as a measure or assessment of worth and adequacy. As such, individuals feel constantly under a disciplinary gaze and begin to self style or self police, to guarantee their conformity with what has become normalized (O'Grady, 2004). O'Grady explains that for Foucault, self-policing is one of the key mechanisms for social control. She proposes that, "...self policing ties individuals to given norms and practices, and is therefore likely to play a key role in maintaining aspects of women's subordination" (p. 94). Furthermore, O'Grady argues that women are trained to self-police, to the extent that they compare themselves against what is 'normal' and against 'others' without considering their individual experiences, and the ways in which

structures are made by/for white males. This type of thinking is disempowering, but it is a

choice, albeit a subconscious one. From a Foucauldian perspective, these so-called norms

can be criticized and destroyed through deconstruction (Adams St-Pierre, 1996). Thus,

one's task is to get free of oneself and to reinscribe one's own subjective themes.

However, according to Foucault and in keeping with Gore's (2003) working definition of

agency, agency implies more than self-conscientiousness on the part of the subject, but

rather resistance to the systems of power that ensnare the subject (Mayo, 1997).

Foucault's concept of the technologies of the self and self-care offers a means

through which individuals are able to challenge and resist these structures of domination

in modern society (O'Grady, 2004; Pritsch, 2004). O'Grady (2004) argues that

"...the creation of space that problematizes privileged knowledges opens up possibilities

for agency that are precluded when identity categories are seen as fixed or foundational"

(p. 100). Thus, Pritsch (2004) notes that through employing strategies that focus on the

role of the individual and the individual's interactions with others, the potential for

agency and freedom occurs.

Foucault wrote about how one might create oneself as an ethical subject, and in

doing so became interested in the ancient Greek notion of "care of the self" (Pritsch,

2004; Adams St-Pierre, 1996). Adams St-Pierre explains that care of the self had four

major components including the part of the self that is to be worked on by ethics (desire,

intentions, feelings...), the way one is invited to become ethical (through divine law,

etc.), self-forming activities, and the goal of exercise. She also stresses that for Foucault,

care of the self is constituted by practice. This type of practice is quite demanding and

requires reviews of progress towards the goal of becoming an ethical subject. The

principle of the ethic operates as choice and as resistance to self-forming practices.

Adams St-Pierre (1996) states that Foucault discusses the fact that care of self

guarantees an 'ethic of control' whereby mastery of the self means not dominating others.

He explains how one's relationship with the self effects one's relationships with others, in

that an understanding of the self and the responsibilities it entails means that one cannot

abuse power over others. The author maintains that Foucault conceived of care of the self

as having something to offer contemporary times, as it is through the use of outside

sources that the subject invents itself. O'Grady (2004) argues that

> conceived thus, care of the self becomes an integral aspect of the general notion of
>
> care. Moreover, within such a notion, caring for others becomes an activity for which
>
> we are all responsible. This cuts across the sexual division of caring and creates a
>
> space for the acknowledgement of care as a crucial and desirable aspect of human
>
> existence (p. 109).

For Foucault then, care of the self and for others becomes an important part of each

individual's responsibilities, which is very much in keeping with a postfeminist

perspective.

Revisiting Foucault from a Feminist Perspective

As I have just discussed, postmodernism has provided feminism with a range of

critical frameworks including "deconstruction," "discourse," "difference" and differing

notions of power and agency, which have been used to challenge traditional assumptions

of identity and subjectivity. Brooks (1997) explains that some postmodernist feminists

have labelled themselves 'postfeminists', which is understood as critically engaging with

patriarchy, rather than as implying that patriarchal discourses have been replaced or superseded. Postmodernism allows for a more pluralistic conception of feminism and addresses the demands of marginalized cultures for a non-hegemonic feminism "capable of giving voice to local, indigenous and postcolonial feminisms" (Brooks, 1997, p. 4).

Postfeminism explores the role of subjectivity and deconstructs texts in order to emphasize power relations (Brooks, 1997, Lather, 1991). Adams St. Pierre (1996) suggests that postmodern theories offer a way to redefine the self, and can be used as a tool for personal understanding. Postmodernism is in keeping with Weedon's (1987) criteria which states that,

> for a theoretical perspective to be politically useful to feminism, it should be able to recognize the importance of the subjective in constituting the meaning of women's lived reality. It should not deny subjective experience, since the ways in which people make sense of their lives is a necessary starting point for understanding how power relations structure society. Theory must be able to address women's experience by showing where it comes from and how it relates to material social practices and the power relations that structure them...In this process subjectivity becomes available, offering the individual both a perspective and a choice, and opening up the possibility of political change (Weedon, 1987, cited in Brooks, 1997, p. 22).

Postmodernism then, with its emphasis on subjective experience and local resistance has much to offer feminism (Adams St. Pierre, 1996; Hekman, 1990; Lather, 1991). While Foucault does not explain how his program of local resistance might be applied to a feminist politics, Hekman (1990) claims it is directly relevant to several issues in contemporary feminist theory. In fact, she points out that Foucault's idea of local

resistance is akin to feminist political practice in that both these concepts seek to understand, analyze, and oppose the forms of dominance that characterize society. In particular, postmodernism offers feminism a framework with which to deconstruct gender identities and oppressive societal regimes of truth. Moreover, in accordance with the goals of feminist pedagogy, feminist postmodernism can be used to inform emancipatory practices and strives to deconstruct prevailing power structures to explore and critique the positionality and agency of each subject.

A Postfeminist Reading of 'Woman'

Similarly to Preece's description of postfeminism as emphasizing an analysis of power as constructed, I use postmodernism as a lens to deconstruct how 'women' have come to be considered the weaker and/or inferior sex. One such example can be found in the work of Adams St. Pierre (1996), in which she describes how she comes to realize that feminism and postmodernism could provide relief from the ill-fitting regimes of truth into which she was born. Postmodernism offers theories of language that helped Adams St. Pierre and other women to see how their own gender identities were constructed. In keeping with this, Walkerdine (1994) explains that a Foucauldian framework offers an example of the ways in which femininity is read. Through turning away from empiricism to postmodernism, Walkerdine looks at how fact, fiction and fantasy are interrelated with reference to gender difference. She states that gender difference is produced in fictional ways that form the basis of "truths" about women. Through implementing Foucault's ideas of power/knowledge, Walkerdine has a framework to deconstruct the constitution of this "truth," and the effects it has. She discusses the historical view of men as rational and concerned with the 'cogito', in direct contrast with women who hold a strictly

reproductive role. This idea is complemented by later (Freudian) discourse, that declared women as highly emotional, providing a "factual basis" as to the repression of women from professions and/or higher education.

This belief system, much like the current pedagogical practices, according to Walkerdine (1994), invest "man" with the omnipotent powers of the universe, which at the same time covers their fears and desires of the other ("woman"). These fantasies, fears and desires become central forces that produce the construction of the fact, or current discursive practices. This framework is useful in understanding how discourses are formed, and how they are maintained through educational practices.

The pedagogy of shame.

Feminists argue that current educational practices are failing at educating women (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Bartky (1997) proposes that schools and schooling practices teach women that we are "other" or "lesser" than males in a number of ways. Feminist studies have indicated that teachers remember the names of males and call on them more often than female students (Bartky, 1996) as well as paying more attention to boys during the class (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Debold, Wilson & Malave, 1993). Teachers also tend to ask female students different types of questions than those that they ask male students. Where women are asked factual questions, men are asked to think critically about an answer, thus sending the message that they are the thinkers and women should passively remember facts (Bartky, 1996). Additionally, instructors make "helpful" comments to women that imply their ignorance, and women receive less praise (both verbal or nonverbal cues). Finally, females receive feedback about their appearance that men do not, showing that they are there to be decorative, not to learn. Furthering this problem,

teachers tend to look the other way during incidents of sexual harassment and when boys comment on female students' looks (Debold et al., 1993).

Another way in which schools fail girls is through the direct exclusion of women from the curriculum. Sadker and Sadker (1994) argue that the school systems use male dominated textbooks that record male moments, and totally exclude the contribution of females from the curriculum. They write, "when girls do not see themselves in the pages of textbooks, when teachers do not point out or confront omissions, our daughters learn that to be female is to be an absent partner in the development of our nation" (p. 12). Consequently, the schools do not feel safe for girls, and they are made to feel shame at what is construed as their 'weaknesses'.

This type of socialization has direct effects on the lives of women. Bartky (1996) uses her own experiences as a teacher of adults to detail the pedagogy of shame that continues to exist within the classroom. Bartky explains that 40-50 year old women in her classroom were less sure of their ability to master material than men, despite being stronger and more experienced students. She provides the example of how her women students were much quieter even though they formed a majority in the class. Additionally, when they did speak, woman's language was full of false starts, hesitations, self denigrating expressions, questioning intonations, and tag questions. Bartky also describes how her female students were more apt to hand in papers, while expressing apologies for the poor quality of their work. This phenomenon has come to be labelled 'self shaming' in that students denigrate their work before the teacher does, in an attempt to regain power and/or to lessen the anticipated blow to their egos. Such schooling experiences have lasting effects on an individual and come to be a way of conceiving of

the self, and for society to conceive of women. A Foucauldian analysis illustrates that such institutional structures create regimes of truth about women that become legitimized through their reproduction in discourse.

Schooling as a site for gender reproduction.

In keeping with what has been emphasized above, Taylor (1995) explains that schooling has been viewed as a site for the reproduction of gender relations. In particular, Walkerdine (1994) discusses the findings from her research data on gender and schooling, which illustrates that given the contradictions and mixed messages that women receive, women are afraid to acknowledge their own power. As previously mentioned, Foucault emphasizes that each individual has more power than he/she is aware of. Women are not only unaware, but have been socialized to be fearful of power. As a result, women self-police (O'Grady, 2004) to avoid any behaviours that are deemed unfeminine or 'abnormal' in women. Walkerdine (1994) draws on Holloway (1989) to overview one such example, where women and men's roles in heterosexual relationships were. Holloway found that men and women split off aspects of their personalities in accordance with the discursive "truths" that they have been taught both in school and through the media (Walkerdine, 1994). For this reason, society maintains that it is women who are to hold the emotionality for both members of the relationship, whereas men hold rationality. Walkerdine states that it is these type of discursive truths that define and regulate the evaluation of a woman's performance.

Similarly to Weedon's (1987) criteria that subjective experience must be analyzed at a personal level in order to understand existing power structures, Taylor (1995) believes that prevailing notions of femininity at a personal level must first be changed in

order to create a new societal understanding / regimes of truth about women. She argues

for change to the cultural practices and the role of discourses and ideologies in the

reproduction of gender relations (Taylor, 1995). Thus, schools and classrooms are

important sites for intervention in the construction of femininity. Taylor maintains that

the challenge for feminist educators is to work with girls to help them reflect on their

lives and futures, rather than simply incorporating outside examples into the classroom.

Unfortunately, studies show that even teachers and administrators with the best

intentions unknowingly contribute to the stereotypical construction of femininity, through

literature selection and other discourse (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). As cultural processes

are linked with power relations and are important in maintaining gender-based

inequalities, Taylor (1995) draws on the work of Weiler (1988) to advocate that teachers

and students should take account of agency and shifting from 'reproduction theories' to

'theories of production'.

A Postfeminist Response to Women's ways Of Knowing Theories: The missing voices
from malestream thought

Warren (1989) states that despite the varying strands of feminism to which

feminists subscribe, all feminists agree that the virtual exclusion of women from the

malestream canon (where exclusively male contributions to knowledge and literature are

prioritized) has resulted in a male-biased curriculum. She continues with an explication

that these patriarchal frameworks are "up-down" models, equating moral superiority with

the upper register, and inferiority with the lower. Warren explains that these patriarchal

frameworks elevate the role of men and their associated rationalism, while casting

women and emotions into an inferior and lesser position. Men are frequently cast into

prestigious educational administrative roles, while women are socialized to accept teaching positions (De Vries, 1977). The feminist challenge is to make the curriculum and the school structure itself inclusive of women, and in doing so, to challenge the up-down approach and to illustrate that difference should not breed domination or subordination.

One of the first examples of challenging these assumptions and giving voice to women's differences came through the realm of moral development in Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice.* In this study, Gilligan (1982) discusses how female development has been either overlooked in favour of male "norms" or considered as inferior. While describing her study, Gilligan (1994) starts with Freud to outline how various theorists have omitted female experiences and focused almost exclusively on males. Freud's theory of psychosexual development centers exclusively on the experiences of male children to create a norm. Freud did try to fit women into his male model, and noticed developmental differences. However, Gilligan (1994) asserts that instead of exploring these differences further, he attributed these differences to women's developmental failure and inferiority (in doing so contributing to the discourse of feminine inferiority). In particular, Freud said that the female superego was inferior to the male superego, as it was never devoid of emotional attachments (Gilligan, 1994). Thus, he concluded that women have less of a sense of justice than men do and are morally inferior to them as a result.

Gilligan (1994) also overviews Erikson's eight stages of moral development (based upon Freud's theories), which are also all based on men. Rather than make a positive contribution to the growing discourse of women in society, Erikson notes that

women are different from men, in that they gain their identity through attracting and then

marrying the man who provides them with their identities (both through marital name and

status). This method of thinking contributes to the discourse of women that lacks agency

and power, and overlooks the way that women are socialized differently than men.

Gilligan (1994) draws on the work of McClelland (1975) and explores the fact

that although sex differences have been noticed, the single scale of development has been

based upon male models, whereby difference is considered inferiority. Challenging this

discourse, Gilligan explains that what has been considered female weakness can also be

seen as a strength. She explains that women not only define themselves in relation to

others but in terms of their ability to care, and explains that when categories of women's

thinking are examined in detail, a different conception is evident, whereby conflicting

responsibilities are measured rather than competing rights. Gilligan notes that in contrast

to Kohlberg's highest stage of moral development (individual justice and rights), the

highest female stage of moral development is characterized by attachment and care for

and with others. This responsibility conception focuses on the limitations of a resolution

and discusses remaining conflicts, rather than the Kohlbergian notion of objective

fairness (Gilligan, 1994). Thus, contrary to the previous male models of morality, which

prioritized justice and individual rights, Gilligan (1982) found that women subscribe to

what she termed "the ethics of care." In contrast to the male model, the ethic of care

focuses on care, compassion, and the interconnectedness of lives (Gilligan, 1982).

Following Gilligan's work in psychology Goldberger (1996) discusses her study

with Belentky and Tarule (1986), where they decided to study women's ways of knowing

and learning. They showed that women's thought patterns were more contextual and

embedded in relational concerns than those of men (Mahler & Tetreault, 1996). Thus, the *Women's Ways of Knowing* (WWK) study was undertaken to bring attention to the missing voices of women in academia, how women are socialized to know and how they respond to socializing forces. They interviewed one-hundred and thirty-five women from varying ethnicities, ages, class backgrounds, in urban and rural settings and different educational levels in the United States, to explore what kinds of common grounds women share when learning or thinking about learning, regardless of their background. This study was founded on the major presupposition that "...gender is a major social, historical, and political category that affects the life choices of all women in all communities and cultures" (Goldberger, 1996, p. 4).

Goldberger (1996) notes that the study zeroed in on two socializing factors common to all women's experiences: the school and the family. These two factors communicated to growing girls how womanhood is to be defined, how and what they are to know, and how they are to make choices in their lives. Their study parallels the work of other feminists, in that it addressed the fact that the ways of knowing historically identified as feminine (the intuitive or feeling-based knowing that WWK associates with subjective knowing and connected knowing) have been devalued and discouraged in institutions of higher learning in favour of prepositional knowledge and abstract, separate knowing.

This type of feminist thought was then elaborated by Noddings (1988) who applies the ethic of care to both teaching and school administration, with the hopes of challenging patriarchal practices. A relational approach, an ethic of caring, differs dramatically from traditional ethics. Nodding (1994) explains that, "whereas Kant

insisted that only those acts performed out of duty (in conformity to principle) should be labelled moral, an ethic of caring prefers acts done out of love and natural inclination" (p.174). Rather, Noddings explains that an ethic of care is concerned with relationships that exist between individuals. Noddings explains that,

> the first member of the relational dyad (the carer or one caring) responds to the needs, wants, and initiations of the second. Her mode of response is characterized by engrossment (nonselective attention or total presence to him, the other, for the duration of the caring interval) and displacement of motivation (her motive energy flows in the direction of the other's needs and projects). She feels with the other and acts on his behalf. The second member (the one cared for) contributes to the relation by recognizing and responding to the caring (p.174).

As is evident, the one-caring is conceived of in feminine terms, as a product of the feminist emphasis on caring, relation, and response. As previously discussed, this way of thinking corresponds with Foucault's concept of 'self caring' both in its ethical application to others and through its self informing practices.

Criticisms of 'women's ways of knowing' and the ethic of care.

It is important to note that both the research conducted by Gilligan, Goldberger et al., and that conducted by Noddings has been problematized by other feminists, in particular women of colour. Although Noddings work is being used in the context of 3rd wave feminist thought, she is a product of the second wave, where WWK theories and the ethic of care were charged with false universalism and with silencing the experiences of women of colour, lesbians, and third world women (Mahler & Tetreault, 1996). While Golderberger et al.'s study (1986) did not focus exclusively on gender barriers (in that

they included factors such as ethnicity, and social economic status), it (like Gilligan and Noddings' studies) ignored the effects of race and positionality. Factors such as historical period, geographical location, societal structural barriers, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and social class make a difference in the experiences of women and therefore in the results of the studies (Mahler & Tetreault, 1996). Mahler and Tetreault explain that as a result of these limitations, new areas of scholarship emerged, including issues raised by women of colour, lesbians, "and other groups uncomfortable with being under the umbrella label of 'all women'"(Mahler & Tetreault, 1996, p.151). Regardless of the space that criticisms of these theories created for further study, one must be remain critical of their limitations and address them when drawing upon them in any capacity.

As mentioned above, this study makes use of these theories from a postfeminist perspective. Postmodern thought posits that all learning is socially constructed (Lemke, 1994). It holds that our perspectives depend on past experiences and meaning schemes. Bencze (2005) explains that

> ...because we share common languages and conduct much of our thought through language and other communal symbols, many agree that knowledge is socially constructed, even while an individual is thinking. In a sense, an individual's thought is never his or her own.

Rather, the individual interacts with his/her meaning schemes and with perspectives that have been culturally shaped. New meanings and understandings are constructed based on lived experiences within the context of society.

Postfeminism rejects the concept of an essential, unified female nature (Brooks, 1997). The theories of WWK and the ethic of care are still usable to third wave

feminists, provided that they are viewed in terms of positionality, or as situated in specific contexts (Brooks, 1997). As such, the role of experience and how experience contributes to knowledge is emphasized. Brooks explains that, "the intersection of feminism with postmodernism can be seen to provide feminism with a useful analytical and critical device in the establishment of the relationship between experience and knowledge" (Brooks, 1997, p.38). Therefore, the importance of feminist epistemology and WWK prevails, provided it is considered as a discourse and critiqued in order to not become static and oppressive (Lather, 1991). Given this context, it becomes apparent that the work of Gilligan, Goldberger et al., and Noddings can be aligned with constructionism, which recognizes the centrality of the social construction of gender. Gilligan (1994) illustrates this point through an overview of Chodorow's work, which addressed this difference in a 1974/78 study. Chodorow, like Freud, comes from a psychoanalytic perspective, yet unlike Freud, she attributes differences in men and women to the fact that women are largely responsible for early childcare and female socialization, rather than to anatomy (Gilligan, 1994). She concluded that women are less individuated than men as a product of their upbringing. Chodorow further develops this idea by saying that because of these different treatments in early childhood, girls emerge with a basis for empathy built into the definition of self which boys don't develop (Gilligan, 1994). For boys and men, issues of separation and individuation are critically tied to gender identity, whereas the female identity is tied to relationships with others (Gilligan, 1994). Thus, Goldberger (1996) asserts that studies such as WWK and the ethics of care must be seen as corrective to psychology's historical neglect (and disdain) of women's experience.

A feminist deconstruction of regimes of truth

As described above, feminism could be seen as counter-hegemonic (against oppressive forces of the dominant culture) if it does not allow for the fact that it might have a power-knowledge nexus that could repress others (for example women of colour have felt oppressed by liberal, white, middle class feminism). Keeping in mind the ever fluid nature of the Foucauldian framework, Gore (1993c) proposes using both his and Feher's (in Gore, 1993c) work together to analyze such power relations. According to this model, power relations should be analyzed in terms of: 1.) the system of differentiations that characterizes a regime, permitting one to act upon the actions of another or to exercise power, 2.) the functions and objectives of the relations of power, 3.) the specific techniques and practices that actualize the relations of power, 4.) the institutions which integrate the practices, and 5.) the formation of knowledge that describes the reality produced by a given regime of power and that raises problems immanent to that reality (Gore, 1993c). Also in keeping with this model, ethical aspects (the Foucauldian relation of the self and how that relation shifts) must be identified with attention to 1.) aspects of the self considered problematic by any given regime (which need disciplining or styling), 2.) in the name of what the self is groomed, 3.) the specific techniques that are used to groom/style, 4.) the goals of the practices of self-styling (in the name of making a career or being politically correct). Lather (1991) reminds her readers that no discourse (feminist or otherwise) is innocent, and as such we must learn to use such models to evaluate the tensions and contradictions that exist between discourses to inform our practices.

Post-Critical Feminist Pedagogy

According to Lather (1991), any critical pedagogy (be it feminist or otherwise) is that which attends to practices of teaching/learning intended to interrupt historical systems of oppression. Lather then explains that postmodernism is being inscribed in discourses of emancipation education as presented in Britzman's (1991) exploration of teacher identity and the issues of subjectivity, language and power. As such, post-critical feminist Elizabeth Ellsworth (1994) sets an objective of clearing a space (within a field of competing pedagogical discourses) from which to articulate her ideas using self-reflexive experiences as a frame of reference (Lather, 1991). Lather (1991) asserts that Ellsworth's work moves towards self-critique and through decentering the 'transformative teacher', to reconceptualizing agency within the context of a fluid social setting in motion via interaction with agents. Thus, Ellsworth asks hard questions about how interventionary movements (such as liberatory and/or critical pedagogy) have rendered people passive, rather than as agents involved in interpreting their own needs and shaping their own lives.

Feminist pedagogy: a distinct strand of liberatory pedagogy.

Weiler (1991) explains that that while feminist pedagogy is situated in the liberatory pedagogy of the 1960s and 1970s, it distinguishes itself from critical pedagogy in a number of ways. While both discourses "outline theories and strategies for the enactment of democratic and emancipatory schooling"(Gore, 1993b, p. 15), feminist pedagogy holds quite different views with regards to the role of praxis, the role and authority of the teacher, the concept of the role of experience as a source of knowledge and truth, and in the ways that they engage with postmodern discourse (Lather, 1991).

Like feminist pedagogy, critical pedagogy is divided into two streams of thought. Gore (1993a) separates critical pedagogy into the Freire/Shor (as a grassroot type movement) stream and the Giroux/McLaren (the more academic) stream. Contrary to the concept of positionality of third wave feminism, the Freirian stream of pedagogy is criticized for not addressing the specificity of people's lives and the ways in which people can be oppressed in some ways and privileged in others (Weiler, 1991). Weiler (1991) explains that Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* assumes that through struggling against oppression, the oppressed move towards true humanity. Thus Freire uses rationalistic and positivistic language, as he considers humanity a universal phenomenon, and generalises both what it means to be a human (Ellsworth, 1994).

Critical pedagogy casts both the role and responsibilities of the teacher quite differently than feminist pedagogy. Gore (1993a) explains that two types of authority are recognized, the good (empowering) kind and bad (repressive) kind. For Giroux and McLaren, authority is construed of as emancipatory (in direct contrast with authoritarianism), while for Freire and Shor, authority is seen as liberating and domesticating. Giroux pushes beyond popular notions of authoritarianism and freedom to "a mediating referent for the ideal of democracy and its expression as a set of educational practices designed to empower students to be active and critical citizens" (Giroux as cited in Gore, 1993a, p. 94). For Giroux then, the concepts of freedom, equality and democracy must be stressed when discussing the authority of the teacher. Along those same lines, Gore (1993a) explains that McLaren holds that teachers must choose emancipatory authority over authoritarianism.

The Shor/Freire stream also advocate that the teachers use his/her own authority to empower students. While Shor suggests teachers giving as much of their authority to the students as possible (although he doesn't explain how) (Gore, 1993a), Freire maintains that the role of the teacher is always directive. Whether or not the teacher uses his/her authority for positive or negative ends, depends on their end objective (Gore, 1993a). For Freire then, the teacher's authority must be grounded in the freedom of his/her students.

For both strands of critical pedagogy, the individual agency of the teacher is emphasized. This elevates the position of the theorist, who under critical pedagogy is relied upon as provider of emancipatory theory that the teacher "ought" to adopt. Thus the theorist shifts their thinking from something the teacher can do, to what others can do, and the teacher carries the burden of failure with regards to emancipation of his/her students (Gore, 1993a). Gore argues that critical pedagogy's discourse conceives of power as property, located in the hands of the dominant classes, to be given to those who are disempowered. It can be argued that this mindset robs students of their own agency, and abilities to mobilize for their own ends.

Feminist pedagogy echoes the Freirian image of the teacher as joint learner who holds authority by virtue of greater knowledge and experience (Weiler, 1991), however differs significantly in its treatment of difference & positionality. Continuing in the tradition of its consciousness-raising groups roots, feminist pedagogy maintains a suspicion of authority and hierarchy and looks at the ways in which the teacher is implicated in oppressive relations, why at the same time being oppressed his/herself (by the bureaucratic structure of academia, as a product of his/her gender, race, sexual

orientation, etc.) (Weiler, 1991). A key difference between the role of the teacher as emphasized by critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy is that feminist pedagogues accept their authority as intellectuals & theorists, but "consciously attempt to construct their pedagogy to recognise and encourage the capacity of their students to theorize and to recognize their own power" (Weiler, 1991, p. 462). Thus, under feminist pedagogy, the teacher's role is not to 'give' power to the students, but to help them find it within their own experiences.

As is indicated above then, feminist pedagogy looks to experience as the source of knowledge. Feminist pedagogy criticises the universal claims made by critical pedagogy about the nature of oppression, the rationalistic and positivistic language to discuss humanity, empowerment, and disempowerment as universal phenomena (Weiler, 1991; Ellsworth, 1994). Ellsworth argues that as critical pedagogy was founded on critical theory, it has been created from a white, European, Christian, middle-class, heterosexual male perspective, and excludes all else. Thus, under critical pedagogy, minorities do not have a discourse with which to express themselves, and teachers are limited to enforcing rationalism. Critical pedagogues have acknowledged this imbalance in power, yet fail to reformulate their practises. Feminists critique this framework, and believe it to be a patriarchal mode of gaining and maintaining power. Rather, feminist pedagogy "...validates difference, challenges universal claims to truth, and seeks to create social transformation in a world of shifting and uncertain meanings" (Weiler, 1991, p. 445-450).

Most importantly in the context of this study, Gore (1993a) criticizes critical pedagogy in its selective use of Foucauldian/postmodern discourse. She explains that while Giroux draws on Foucault to discuss the 'ethics' needed for his social vision, he

makes no mention of self-disciplining or relationships to the self that have direct implications for education, nor does he critically examine discourses (and his own implications in them!) that perpetuate oppressive relations (Gore, 1993a). Once again feminist pedagogy is quite the opposite of critical pedagogy. As has been demonstrated in the description of third wave feminism, feminism has been informed and challenged by postmodern discourse and has evolved as a result.

Repeatedly throughout this chapter, the school system has been identified as a site of power. Also identity has been positioned as an effect of subjectification, rather than as a natural right or an essence that the discourses of emancipation uncover (Lather, 1991). Feminist pedagogy suggests a movement away from dialogue to working together across differences, from a concept of eventually unified dialogue to the construction of strategies in context, as all voices cannot carry equal legitimacy, power, safety given current power structures (Ellsworth, 1994). As such, Ellsworth advocates a shift of emphasis from a dialogical community to an effort towards "sustained encounters with currently oppressive formations and power relations" *(Ellsworth, cited in Lather, 1991, p. 107)*. For Lather (1991) this encounter implies owning up to one's own implications in the formation of the oppressive relations, and engages with these discourses. This understanding of positionality in the context of education is directly in keeping with Foucault's concept that

> it is not a question of the reordering of education, its reconstruction, but, ultimately, a philosophical education that permitted the individual to change at will. This requires a knowledge and understanding of the self that divorces itself from the accounts of a human being given by the human sciences (Lemke, 1994).

As such, postmodernism has much to offer feminist pedagogy (and vice versa) and feminist pedagogy uses it to both inform and critique its practices.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the history of feminism and feminist pedagogy's inception. I have highlighted the ways in which the educational system constructs regimes of truth to maintain oppressive relations for women through discourse, and how society has come to either ignore women or consider them inferior to men as a result. In response to this problem, the ethic of care and women's ways of knowing were introduced to emphasize the importance of acknowledging gender differences. I have argued that through the use of postmodern concepts, these theories are important in considering different perspectives and the ways we are all implicated in oppressive relations. Moreover, I have explored the ways in which feminism and feminist pedagogy have been informed by postmodernism, and overviewed the ways in which these local, self critical practices shift the conceptualization of agency to all players, providing the potential for a societal change. It appears that feminist pedagogy has much to offer the world of education and educational administration.

In the following chapter I address how the concept of 'principal' has been constructed similarly to the concept of 'woman'. In keeping with postfeminist thought, I analyze the discoursive practices surrounding the concept, as well as the lived experiences of my sample.

Chapter Three:

Reading 'The High School Principal'

Introduction

In keeping with Preece (2002), Gore (1993c) and Weedon's (1987) postfeminist

model for analyzing power relations, this chapter deconstructs and analyzes the concept

of 'principal'. Using the same methodology with which I have deconstructed the socially

constructed image of 'woman' and the ways in which discourse perpetuates it, I analyze

the ways in which discourses have created the concept of 'principal' and contrast that

with both provincial legalities pertaining to the job description and to the lived

experiences of my respondents. Thus, this chapter answers both my second and third

secondary research questions. The second question addresses the responsibilities that

principalship entails and the legalities that surround it; while the third question addresses

the agency principals possess in their jobs.

Through referring to the Foucauldian concepts as identified in the previous

chapter, I illustrate ways in which principals self style according to the socially

constructed image of principalship. In doings so, I provide an overview how principalship

has been understood and constructed historically as well as how principals are both

selected and trained. I then analyze the positionality of principalship, in terms of what

powers principals can hold/exercise and what constraints they are faced with by the larger

structure that they are a part of. I then overview the agency that exists within the context

of this job.

Throughout each section, I use the responses from my interviews to both contrast

and at times support the discourses on principalship. I have deliberately intertwined these information sources, so that an analysis of how these discourses operate to normalize and legitimize concepts could be illustrated at a personal level.

The Principal as Subject: The construction of principalship

As a starting point, it is important to look at the principal as a subject, and see how he/she has come to be understood, as well as where he/she falls in educational hierarchal lines.

Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) explain that it is only in the last sixty years that educational administration has established itself as an emerging profession. While principalship is based upon advanced academic and professional requirements, as well as preliminary teaching experience (which is considered by society as a "woman's job" (Devries, 1977)), statistical descriptions "strongly imply that since 1928 school principalship has moved from a role open to all who could qualify, to one dominated by men" (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980, p.33). The four most mentioned functions of principalship have been identified as planning, organizing, budgeting and controlling staff, students and parental involvement with the school (Macmillan, Meyer & Sherman, 2001; Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). Hanson (2003) describes these functions as being derived from Katz's model of administration which highlights three basic skill areas for all administrators, which including technical, human, and conceptual understanding. Educational administrators are increasingly portrayed as business managers (Duffie, 1991; Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980), and draw upon the corporate model as means of running the schools. In particular, he emphasizes the fiscal and managerial aspect of educational administration.

The 1998 Ministere De L'Education du Quebec (MEQ) reform describes the tasks of the principal in these same terms. In keeping with Katz's model, and with four most identified functions of principalship (as identified above), the 1997 MEQ Curricular Reform emphasizes the principal's role of developing and implementing educational programs, overseeing staff development, maintaining school/community relations and creating support programs and services for both teachers and students. Despite this job description, Hanson (2003) refers to Cuban's (1975) study that concludes that principals spend most of their time on administrative tasks and a mere 17% of their time on the human component of their jobs. Hanson also refers to Boyd and Crawson's (1981) study which finds that most of a principal's time is spent in both managing and controlling staff and students. Given the findings that "..mostly, administrative models are implicit and unknowingly articulated by educational administrators..." (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980, p. 9), it is important then to overview the administrative paradigms that exist, upon which this self-styling is based.

Exploring the paradigms of principalship.

The philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1996) describes how the social sciences operate via a series of paradigms through which scientists interpret the world around them. The paradigm then becomes the framework through which a task is conducted, establishing clear norms, and patterns of behaviour. These paradigms shift in time, and influence each other's development.

Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) explain that like the sciences, professional practice also shifts in time, according to contemporary thinking and the corresponding paradigm

in a particular field at particular times. However, like the scientific paradigm, the administrative paradigm is also informed and developed in conjunction with one another.

Given my Foucauldian frame of analysis, and in particular my use of his concepts of self-policing and self-styling, it is important to describe the models of administration that exist in the corporate world, which serve as paradigms of understanding upon which principals and the world of educational administration has modelled itself (Avant & Miller, 1992). These models can be labelled the traditional efficiency or scientific model, relations model, and the contingency model (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980; Hanson, 2003; Murphy & Hallinger, 1993).

Hanson (2003) dates the efficiency period from the early 1900s until the mid 1930s, and explains that it was characterized by the era's concern for scientific analysis of subjects, in this case the scientific study of administration. In keeping with Sergiovanni and Carver's (1980) view that these educational paradigms inform each other's practices and premises, Hanson (2003) adds that much of what is conceived of as good educational management style today is derived from this early scientific model. Sergiovanni and Carver explain that the scientific model "..did not offer a theory of administration and organization as such, but a set of principles and simple injunctions for administrators to follow" (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980, p.45). These principles included replacing intuitive methods with scientific methods that would produce the most cost efficient result. Accordingly, there was a 'best way' to do everything. Additionally, this system advocates the scientific selection of individuals for each task (although it does not specify as to how). Furthermore, this paradigm suggests dividing tasks into work for labourers and managers, who in turn are to supervise that the work is completed to a pre-

set series of standards. The emphasis of this method is both on the efficiency of the process (and the supervision and discipline of those producing it) and on the final product itself, rather than on either individual or group efforts and/or feelings (Hanson, 2003). This translates into educational administrative terms as,

> ...it is assumed for example that if visible standards of performance, objectives and competencies can be identified and measured, then the work of teachers and that of students can be better controlled by holding them accountable to these standards, thus insuring greater reliability, effectiveness, and efficiency in performance (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980, p. 48).

It is quite easy to see how this paradigm has informed practices throughout educational history (in terms of report cards for students, mandatory teacher evaluation practices, etc.), and continues to do so to this day.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the relations model for administration paradigm is concerned primarily with the people involved in the production. The relations model remains popular even to this day, but enjoyed particular popularity during the 1930s through the 1960s (Hanson, 2003; Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). The premise of this paradigm suggests that people suffered acute alienation and a loss of identification under such efficient paradigms which ignore the human aspect of the task. As such, Mayo (1945) suggested that people are motivated by their social needs (Hanson, 2003; Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). Thus the underlying principle for this newer paradigm is to motivate the individual through both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, such as salaries and/or promotions to create a sense of pride in the individual worker's contributions to production. However rewards remain controlled by the organization under this paradigm,

which dampened enthusiasm for it. Hanson explains that, "...after the 1950s many worker organizations came to view it the human relations model as only another management tactic designed to pacify, and thereby control, the workers' actions" (Hanson, 2003, p. 7).

Further study of these phenomena found that these organizations consist of a collection of groups that work together to achieve system goals, in order to meet their own ends (Hanson, 2003). As such, the paradigm shifted again to what is known as the contingency model, which operates under the principle that no one model has all the answers for operating an organization (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). Rather, the contingency model is contingent upon a number of variables that assess individual situations on a case to case basis. The contingency model views the organization as a series of events and parts that are interrelated and which operate within their environment in a cycle (Hanson, 2003). This system recognizes that management has no control over external factors (such as values, expectations, and vested interests, etc.), and so focuses on the relationship of the organization and surrounding environment and surrounding events. The contingency model values both the efficiency and individual motivation of past models, but combines these two models together to study the interaction between individuals and the organization. The motivation of workers becomes intrinsic, in that the model offers a sense of shared decision making (Hanson, 2003).

These three models of administration are represented in contemporary management style of both public and private organizations, including today's pubic high schools (Hanson, 2003). Hanson explains that unfortunately, "...most educators have been taught to believe that only one model can apply to the schools – a model derived from classical organizational theory the efficiency model" (2003, p. 3-4). The

implications of this model on educational decision making illustrate how the school board is part of the larger organization of the MEQ, and as part of this hierarchy will choose principals according to their model and its associated values and expectations, whom have already served a minimum of five years as a teacher under said system (MEQ, 1998). This system casts principals into a complex hierarchy, which authorizes certain powers and also creates numerous constraints.

The educational hierarchy.

The Quebec Curricular Reform of 1997 that is currently being implemented in Quebec high schools, entitled "Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools: A New Direction for Success," has made changes to the power relations, and the authority of school boards and principals alike, with a general emphasis on interdependence between the school (including the principal and the staff), the school board, and the school's community (Ministère de L' Éducation de Quebec [MEQ], 2003). As such, individual schools and their governing boards are being given decision making powers, which have been traditionally held by the provincial government. Basic school regulations, budgetary rules, and working condition decisions are now to be made between the governing board, the principal and the school personnel (as represented through their elected staff council) (Pellicer, 1988). The new provisions to the original Education Act of 1964 stress the importance of being accountable to the public and publicizing educational success plans. The public in this case is represented by the governing board that contains a maximum of 20 members and is composed of "(1) at least four parents of students attending the school who are not members of the school staff, elected by their peers; (2) at least four members of the school staff, including at least two teachers elected by their peers" (MEQ, 1998), as

well as the principal of the school and (although this is not legally required) the vice principal(s) of the school. In keeping with the public accountability mandate, these five yearly meetings are open to the public. It is the responsibility of the governing board to fix the date, time and place of the meetings and to inform both the parents and members of the school staff of their occurrences.

It can be said then, that the governing board holds limited power over the ways in which the principal runs the school, as it is they who approve (or not) internal management proposals as submited by the principal (MEQ, 1998). The governing board assumes an advisory function regarding proposals made by the principal, in particular they advise on all financial aspects of school management. Further amendments to the Education Act states that, "the principal shall prepare the annual budget of the school, submit it to the governing board for adoption, administer the budget and render an account thereof to the governing board" (MEQ, 1998, section 96.22). Moreover, should the governing board not approve any proposal made by the principal, they have the authority to ask the principal to modify said proposal with a fifteen day interval, or they may act alone to modify the proposal to their expectations and standards (MEQ, 1998). In the case of a school budget, after the governing board has approved it, it is then sent to the school board for ultimate approval. Other advisory functions of the governing board include, (1) any matter the school board is required to submit to the governing board; (2) any matter likely to facilitate the operation of the school; (3) any matter likely to improve the organization of the services provided by the school board" (MEQ, 1998, section 78). This includes such aspects as approving the time allocation proposed by the principal, the approach proposed by the principal for the implementation of basic school regulation,

and the approach proposed by the principal for the implementation of student services and special education services programs (MEQ, 1998, section 88). However, principals have the responsibility of deciding on the resource materials needed and proposal variables to keep the governing boards fully informed about their available options. As such, it can be said that while the governing board does have power over the principal, it is still the principal who has the power to propose modifications to the management of the school and to inform the governing board about these options.

Working in accordance with the school board's policy of seniority, the principal is exclusively responsible for the staffing of the school and also for their professional development needs (however, in the recent amendment, it is stipulated that the principal should do so in consultation with his/her staff). It is also the principal's responsibility to manage "...the staff of the school and shall determine the duties and responsibilities of each staff member in accordance with the provisions of the applicable collective agreements or regulations of the Minister..." (MEQ, 1998, section 96.21). It also falls upon the principal to decide the ways in which curricular reforms will be implemented (MEQ, 2003). However, in the current reform there exist some management changes that directly effect the principal's school management. The reforms states that,

> the way in which the school time is organized should allow for greater cooperation between teachers since it must promote better integration of learning and the integration of certain forms of learning into school life in general, according to the methods determined by the school team and the school principal (MEQ, 1997, section 4.3).

As such, the principal must change his/her time-tabling and as well as staffing, in that the reform proposes to cut such courses as personal and social development, ecology, home economics, introduction to technology, human biology, economics and career choice education (MEQ, 1997). Rather, the reform suggest that these topics be integrated into other existing courses. Thus, the principal has to change staff roles and assign new course loads to teachers who have taught these subjects. Finally, the reform stresses the necessity of the principal promoting professional development and making sure that his/her staff engage in such activities.

Furthering Preece's (2002) model, Gore (1993c) suggests that power relations should be analyzed in terms of: 1) the system of differentiations that characterize a regime, permitting one to act upon the actions of another or to exercise power, 2) the functions and objectives of the relations of power, 3) the specific techniques and practices that actualize the relations of power, 4) the institutions which integrate the practices, 5) the formation of knowledge that describes the reality produced by a given regime of power and that raises problems immanent to that reality. The principal exercises power over the staff and students in the name of running his/her school, provides options to the governing board (on some managerial aspects) that they can choose to either accept or reject in the name of the community, and is directly accountable to the school board and indirectly to the public. The school board is accountable to the MEQ, who is informed by the Superior Council who reviews curriculum and suggests modifications when needed (MEQ, 1998).

The Lived Reality of Principalship: The Study

Methodology:

In order to access the lived reality of the high school principal, I needed to interview a sample of respondents who could describe their working conditions and their perceptions of their job. As a starting point, I copied a list of principals from the school board's website on May 27th, 2005 and started calling principals on Mon. June 20th, 2005. As mentioned, I was unable to reach most of them. I felt extremely anxious on this count, but did manage to make one appointment (with Mr. Fontana) on my first day of calling and was somewhat reassured. Altogether, I left messages with secretaries at eight schools. I found that it is not easy to simply speak with the principal, as I was redirected through at least two secretaries before even being able to leave a message for the principal.

On June 21st, I spoke with a female principal who gave me her cell phone number and instructed me to call her on Mon. July 4th to schedule an interview. I made the mistake of believing that she would keep her agreement with me, and unfortunately counted on her as an interview, rather than pursuing more than one other female principal. However, when I did call on July 4th (at which point schools were already closed, making it therefore impossible for me to contact any other principals), she no longer wanted to be interviewed and refused.

On Thurs. June 23rd, Mr. Cutbill returned my call and agreed to be interviewed on July 5th at 10:00 am. I continued to call the other seven principals from my list and to leave messages with their secretaries. Again, this process was making me feel very nervous about getting the four required interviews. Additionally, several principals left word with their secretaries that they did not have time for such studies. As touched upon

in the introduction, my study was met with hostility by several principals. One principal

actually told that it was "…ridiculous to combine feminism with administration, and not

feasible as an administrative option."

This frustrating process continued all week, to no avail. Ms. MacDonald returned

my call on July 30th and said to call on July 4th to schedule a meeting. I did so, and after

much telephone tag, we scheduled an interview for the 5th of July at 11:30 am.

In retrospect, I realize that I should have established my initial contact by mail, as

suggested by Delamont (2002). That way, I could have included a stamped letter that they

·could return with their preferred time for an interview included on it. However, given

time limitations, this medium was not available to me.

The interviews were conducted in the offices of each participant. There was no

deception whatsoever about the nature of my study. After each interview was completed,

I transcribed each conversation and analyzed them for the similarities and differences of

principals' perceptions about their jobs. I then included these findings in my ongoing

'findings' section and set aside the interviews for further analysis after more research had

answered the second secondary research question.

My research on the second secondary research question took me to several

different libraries in search of provincial documents that detail the job description of the

public high school principal. I also explored the current MEQ reform and other such

provincial legislation and recommendations from the *Conseil Supérieure* to find the

newest additions to the principal's ever-expanding job description. Additionally, I read

many books about high school principals and their associated tasks from a variety of

sources.

The Sample

For the interview section of my study, I interviewed three principals who worked for the same school board. Each principal was at a different stage of his/her career and held different perceptions about the nature and objective(s) of his/her job description. While each principal holds a different administrative style, it is important to specify that each was open to participating in a study on the creation of a feminist model of high school administration. This fact connotes a certain open-mindedness of perspective that was not shared by all of the principals that I contacted. As mentioned, many were turned off by the nature of my study and refused to participate.

Mr. Fontana works at Gartner High School and is in his mid forties. As his name suggests, he is of Italian descent. Like the other principals that I interviewed, Mr. Fontana does not live in his school's community, but did grow up in the greater Montreal area. His office is full of pictures of school plays, student art and school awards. It is an open concept office and is visible to anyone who stands in the hall if his door is kept open. Mr. Fontana told me from the start that his door is almost always left open and that students and staff visit him frequently throughout the day.

Mr. Cutbill is a Caucasian, anglophone man, in his late 50s, and quite close to retiring. Although he is currently the principal of Shrewsbury High School, he has also worked as a teacher in various schools across the board at various levels. His office is around the corner and not viewable unless you have been given access into the reception/office area. His office is scarcely decorated and somewhat cluttered with MEQ documents and student records that are waiting to be analyzed.

Ms. MacDonald works at St. Serafino high school and is a Caucasian woman in her early 40s. She is a new principal, with only 3 years experience. Prior to being a principal, she has worked as a teacher across various grades, as an English language arts consultant for the school board and as a vice principal. Ms. MacDonald identifies herself as a feminist, having been informed by the second wave movement of the 1970s. Prior to our interview, we spent several minutes discussing our feminist commitments and their implications for our practices. While she expressed some frustration in dealing with the close-mindedness of some parents, she was also optimistic about tying her feminist ideals with her position as principal. Ms. MacDonald's office is also out of the main view, but she holds an open door policy and is welcoming of student and staff visits throughout the day.

The Interviews

On average each interview lasted 1 hour and was conducted in each respondents' office. The interviews were carried out over a two-week period, given that each of the principals were anxious to be off on vacation. Upon arrival, each principal greeted me happily and was excited about my study, with the exception of Mr. Fontana. Mr. Fontana forgot about our appointment and was just leaving the building as I arrived. Although I offered to come back at another time, Mr. Fontana was eager to get it done with and ushered me into his office. Despite its reluctant start, the interview went smoothly and lasted approximately the same amount of time as the others.

The interviews were conducted by myself, and consisted of seven questions that prompted further discussion (please refer to Appendix A for the list of questions). For the purposes of this study, this type of informal, semi-structured interview worked well, as

each participant was able to elaborate and initiate conversation that he/she thought was important to discuss. Prior to initiating the interview, participants were given a consent form that detailed the scope of the study and the fact that their answers would remain confidential.

In each interview, questions were read /asked orally and recorded by a tape recorder. The tape recorder was not inhibiting and in fact participants seemed to forget its very existence. None of the principals expressed any concerns about confiding in me. In fact, Mr. Fontana spoke quite openly about his reprimands from the school board and his reactions to them.

After each interview, the discussions were transcribed and the tapes were destroyed. These interviews served as a tool to explore the actual practices of principals and an exploration of their agency within their jobs, as compared to the literature and legal requirements of a public high school principal.

The Lived Reality of Principalship: The findings

According to the MEQ mandate, each of the three principals has taught for a minimum of five years, as well as taken educational administrative courses with the school board and/or McGill University's Faculty of Education. However, they each describe the process of how they learned to be a principal in quite different terms.

As touched upon in the methodology section in this chapter, Mr. Cutbill worked as a teacher for 16 years prior to becoming an administrator. Rather than gaining his understanding of principalship through his experiences as a teacher, or through courses, he believes that he learned during his experiences as a vice principal. He also describes working with a principal of an adult education centre who taught him the most, and the

mantra by which he now works; to take a look at each situation and analyse the pros and cons before making a decision and to never make a decision without getting all the facts. Mr.Cutbill describes principalship as being bombarded with 300 decisions a day. In his opinion making those decisions, and getting at least half of them right, is what being a principal is all about.

Ms. MacDonald views principalship in quite different terms. She became a principal after serving as a vice principal for a year and a half. She reports that the principal that she was serving under did not teach her anything, and she came into the position with little, to no knowledge of what principals actually do. She describes how she learned as she went along, and took administrative courses with the school board, which she found very unhelpful in the face of the practical problems presented to her along the way. Rather, she divvied up the work that she was presented with according to the strengths of her administrative staff, and stays in close contact with what they are doing. She spoke with other principals to gain an understanding of how staffing and budgeting works, and tries her best. Ms. Macdonald explains the necessity of having mentors, but describes the present situation where due to retirement demographics, she is a senior principal despite having only three years under her belt.

Mr.Fontana also has a background as a teacher, and reports missing this daily interaction with the students. Although he does not answer the question directly, Mr.Fontana reports learning how to be a principal through meeting the responsibilities placed upon him by the school board and bringing his personality and values into this task as much as possible.

All three principals describe their daily responsibilities as comprising of meeting the requests put upon them by the school board as they understand them. In particular, each principal describes staffing needs that take place from June to September, reporting numbers of student enrolment at the beginning of the year, governing board meetings to organize and attend, parent nights to coordinate, quarterly report cards to oversee, ministerial and local examinations to schedule, forecasting numbers of student enrolment for the next year, creating student success plans and educational projects, devising and scheduling teachers' workloads and supervision times in accordance with the collective agreement and budgeting finances for the school. How these responsibilities translate into daily jobs vary, dependent upon each principal's philosophy of administration. For example, Mr. Fontana describes an 'open door' policy, where his administrative role is based on availability and accountability to his school community. He describes dividing his day into sections where he greets students in the morning and/or receives parents, work on the school boards mandates, supervise students during lunch hour, and even teaches a little bit himself when he has the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, he overviews what is being taught in the school and coordinates meetings with teachers, guidance, and maintenance staff in order to stay abreast with school news. Mr. Fontana also explains that his evenings are constantly occupied with meetings and even with acting in the school play! For Mr. Fontana, school unity and happiness come first, and so he organizes his day according to that perspective.

For Mr. Cutbill, academic excellence and consequently getting into a good CEGEP are of utmost importance for the students. He prioritizes meeting with students, and views these meetings as an integral part of his day. While Mr. Cutbill starts his day

by organizing replacement teachers for any teacher that might be absent that day, he spends his afternoons monitoring student results, and calling individual students into his office to motivate them to improve. Mr.Cutbill also spends his days both meeting with the vice principal and supervising the hallways, ensuring that students are in class, and that teachers are teaching. Mr. Cutbill makes special mention of the fact that he is available for teachers who are experiencing problems in their classes, and will often sit in to make sure no problem occurs. Mr. Cutbill also mentions that he tries his best to attend at least part of every student activity that takes place after school, and also attending meetings at the board. Like Mr. Fontana, Mr. Cutbill tries to have an open-door policy, and although does schedule meetings with staff and students, he spends a large portion of his day handling problems as they arise.

Ms. MacDonald also describes being pulled in many directions throughout her day. Differing from the other principals, Ms. MacDonald describes staying in close contact with the school board, in particular with her superintendent and with pedagogical services. As she was a pedagogical consultant prior to becoming a vice principal and consequently a principal, she firmly believes that pedagogical services should be in constant contact with the teaching staff and as such uses them as a resource for professional development for her staff. Ms. MacDonald describes being part of a strong administrative team and as such is liberated to attend to public relations, contacting parents, work with the governing board and oversee the pedagogical orientation of the school. Rather than handling the day-to-day work herself, Ms. MacDonald delegates it to her vice principal, and to her secretary who is in contact with the board's financial services department and who then presents reports to her to oversee and approve. Ms.

MacDonald emphasizes the heart, or people's feelings, and so spends much of her time in contact with families within the school's community.

In practise then, it can be said that the principals who were interviewed in this study describe possessing the autonomy to analyze and create individualized methods of bettering their school. While they each face the same yearly tasks, and all operate under the school board's mission statement, their management styles reflect their experiences, commitments and visions for their respective schools. In particular, Mr. Cutbill describes how his background in management allows him the insight to analyze the structure of the school. He states,

> I think the MBA has helped me a lot… the best thing that it can teach you is to analyze what's in the school and therefore decide how you want to make it better. The best thing I obtained from my MBA is how to do an analysis on what makes the school work and what the problems are, and then trying to minimize the problems and maximize the potential (E. Cutbill, personal communication, 2005).

That said, Mr.Cutbill also describes his sense of disappointment regarding the constraints and limitations of his job. Above all, he describes the limitations of achieving his pedagogical vision for the school because of time constraints due to the financial and accounting component of principalship.

Ms. MacDonald shared similar experiences in terms of facing frustrations that impede her vision of both staff and student management. She describes the fast paced cycle of the year that excludes the potential of relationships with staff and students. However, she believes that it is in her capacity as principal to reprioritize how her time is spent and is committed to changing her practices for the forthcoming year. She states,

I think we need to prioritize what our lives are as principals, and I think that the

kids come first. So next year, I am going to try in the first month of school to

have kids come down [to her office]…so they know that my door is open and that

I'm here, and so I get a sense of who the kids are in my school (L. MacDonald,

personal communication, 2005).

Furthering this quotation, Ms. MacDonald later describes her overall vision of

principalship. Again, drawing upon her past experiences, and commitment to her

feminist values, her vision emphasises an open door policy for the community, and a

commitment to considering a multitude of voices and perspectives from the community

that she serves. She explains that she is there to listen, to interpret ideas, and to be sure

that she has the right people in place to oversee these ideas. She is committed to staff

development, and to the reorganization of the school structure to meet as many of the

staff and students' needs as possible. Ms. MacDonald describes her procedure of

discussing changes with her staff and voting on mandates before taking them to

governing board. For Ms. MacDonald being a principal means having a give/take

relationship with staff and parents. She states,

…they [the teachers and parent community] know that I go to bat for them. You

give, you get. I just have to say 'I need you' and they're there. So, give and get,

that's the way I run this school (L. MacDonald, personal communication, 2005).

Furthermore, she explains that both teachers and parents alike have commented on the

difference her management style has made to the school, however she cautions that these

incidents are rare and are only apparent over time.

Like Mr. Cutbill and Ms. MacDonald, Mr. Fontana's personality, background education and values are present in his administrative style. He stresses recognition and team effort as a key element for success for staff and students alike. As such, he believes that treating teachers as professionals results in the teachers incurring those behaviours and in turn passing these behaviours on to the students.

Rather than viewing himself as the 'boss', Mr. Fontana speaks about himself as a member of the team. He explains,

> ...evolution, modification and maintenance has to be done collectively....It's not my school, it's our school, and when we talk, the emphasis has to be on how we can better service the students. That's when I get integrated... Finding a solution is a little bit harder when you come and see me and assign fault, and start talking about 'the administration'. The administration what? What's administration? I mean administration is a part of it, yes I have a role, but don't use that stupidity blind phrase, 'the administration' (F. Fontana, personal communication, 2005).

He clarifies this perspective by offering that only through operating as a team, and recognizing all of the players, can there be school success. He stresses the importance of recognition by the school board for its principals. In particular he describes his conflicts with the school board regarding his role within the school. Like Mr. Cutbill and Ms. MacDonald, Mr. Fontana expresses frustrations at the multitude and sometimes conflicting nature of his roles, which varies from pedagogical leader, to administrator, to accountant. He describes the importance of taking initiatives to put the people inside the school structure at the forefront, and how these same initiatives have gotten him reprimanded three times from the school board. Although he shared this account

laughingly, a formal reprimand is quite serious; however, not so serious that Mr. Fontana would change his vision of administration or serious enough to stop him from putting people first, in some cases beyond the constraints placed upon him by the school board.

Each principal also describes a period of reflection on their practices that occurs both daily and at the end of the year. In particular Ms. MacDonald describes how she reflects on ways in which to cope with the huge responsibility of principalship. She explains that,

> ...I'm reflective and I think that principals need to be reflective. I reflect on how I can abdicate responsibility to members of my staff, but yet be responsible for everything. I really don't know...See you've always got to keep your hands in every possible pot and its difficult. So that reflection, how you do that, and how you manage it, is incredibly necessary (L. MacDonald, personal communication, 2005).

Similarly Mr. Cutbill also describes being somewhat overwhelmed with the sheer quantity of his daily tasks. He explains that often he tries to remember what he has done throughout the day, and is unable to, as he has been pulled in so many directions. However, like Ms. Macdonald, he also reports spending time at the end of each year reflecting on his practices and looking for ways to improve upon what has occurred that day. Mr. Cutbill is in an interesting position for the purposes of this study, as he is extremely close to retirement. Upon reflection on his career as a principal he says that, "other principals speak of legacies, but I know that I am not leaving a legacy. When I do look back on what I've done, I realize that I steered the ship straight, and that's the best anyone can do" (E. Cutbill, personal communication, 2005).

It should be noted that Mr. Cutbill also expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with the constraints and limitations placed upon him by the school board.

Like the others, Mr. Fontana also reflects upon his practices. He explains his sentiments that if he directs the school the same way for two years in a row, then he feels he should retire. Rather, Mr. Fontana reflects upon how he can improve and change his practices in response to an ever-changing world and student population.

Summary of lived experiences.

As is evident from the above description, the task of the principal is quite complex. Guidelines do not exist (although plenty of suggestions from the MEQ and its associated training literature are available) as to how the job ought to be done, and it is up to the individual principal to create his/her own style/philosophy for fulfilling these goals. As the school board is a part of the larger institution of the MEQ, so too is the principal a part of the school board, and expected to share its same values and management style. This is in keeping with the postfeminist view that the subject is two-fold (Mayo, 1997), the work of principals has been demonstrated as being subject to power structures that restrict and disable him/her, while at the same time is their source of agency. While Mr. Fontana, Mr. Cutbill, and Ms. MacDonald each have different visions of administrative styles, they all conform to the school board's mission statement and expectations, while using their own experiences and communities to inform and shape it in individual directions. Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) explain that "...the challenge for school administrators is to adapt externally in a fashion that preserves some sense of internal identity, continuity, and balance" (p. 11). More specifically, the challenge becomes

recognizing one's positionality within the structure and focusing on the agency that comes within the context of this multiple identity.`

The Post-Principal: An Analysis of the Agency of a High School Principal

As I discussed in Chapter 2, postmodernism and in particular postfeminist theories offer a means of understanding how power structures came to be, and in doing so, make deconstructing and redefining the self a possibility (Adams St. Pierre, 1996). In keeping with Weedon's (1987) belief that subjective experience and the ways people make sense of their lives is a starting point to understanding power structures and given the postmodern pretext that knowledge is a discourse that is meaningful in the context of a particular culture and at a particular time (Lemke, 1994), it is interesting to disseminate how each principal acquired their knowledge of how to become a principal and/or what it means to be a principal. There exists a correlation between the method of acquisition of knowledge and the individual principal's understanding of the power that he/she holds and his/her place in the hierarchy of the school board (and thus the M.E.Q. itself). While Ms. Macdonald views her role as a part of the whole structure and more or less in tune with the system (i.e. in that she used to work for Pedagogical services in the school board and relies on the help and advice of her superintendent), Mr. Fontana butts heads regularly with the school board and resents the limitations he believes are imposed upon him, and his practices as a principal. Mr. Cutbill also expresses a sense of powerlessness in terms of making changes within the school and community (as previously discussed) and feels that the best he can do is "steer the ship straight" rather than leave a legacy upon his retirement.

Although all three principals clearly express humanist type concerns about their

staff and students, each follow an administrative paradigm according to their use of what it means to be a principal (or knowledge). Mr. Cutbill's MBA background and resulting emphasis on academic excellence for his students links directly to the scientific and analytic characteristics of the efficiency paradigm of administration. Like the scientific model, Mr. Cutbill's practices as a principal follow simple principles of measurable standards, objectives and competencies which staff and students are held accountable to. This philosophy of administration creates the tasks that run his days and years. As such, it is not difficult to see why Mr. Cutbill would feel a sense of limitations in his autonomy as a principal. Given that this system is dependent on a strongly established hierarchy (where he, as principal, would feel inferior to the school board), it is no wonder that Mr. Cutbill has styled himself accordingly and not challenged the limitations of his position by reaching out to his community. That said, I maintain a tremendous amount of respect for this man, as he has met Sergiovanni and Carver's (1980) challenge and preserved a sense of self and balance in a job that can be overwhelming.

In keeping with his background as a very involved teacher (and with the fact that he still can't keep himself both out of the classrooms and even out of the school play!), it is no surprise that Mr. Fontana emphasizes recognition and availability for staff and students as a guiding philosophy of principalship. As with Mr. Cutbill, Mr. Fontana's philosophy also translates into how he organizes his days and ultimately years, even though they are both meeting the same requirements of the school board. With such an emphasis, it is not surprising that Mr. Fontana follows the relations paradigm of educational administration. In keeping with this paradigm, Mr. Fontana is primarily concerned with the people involved in his school and operates as a team player, however

views his team as in opposition to the school board. Operating under the administrative paradigm of the school board, Mr. Fontana reports continual frustrations and conflict, yet does not alter his philosophy of recognition which (like the relations paradigm) stresses the importance of recognition as a key role for worker success and a sense of pride in both the staff and students' contributions to the school community.

As previously mentioned, Ms. MacDonald emphasizes the 'heart' or the community element of her job. She views her role as part of the larger team, including both the school board and with equal accountability to staff, community, and to the students. In keeping with her practices of divvying up tasks according to the strengths of her administrative team, it is easy to see that Ms. MacDonald operates according to the contingency paradigm of educational administration. As with the contingency paradigm, Ms. Macdonald deals with situations that her days present her with on a case by case basis and looks at ways in which events and parts are interrelated within the school's environment. Her concern and emphasis on meeting with families and working according to the feedback of her school's community parallel the practices of the contingency model (which studies the interaction between individuals and the organization).

It is interesting to note that the ever 'open to interpretation' nature of the 1998 Curriculum Reform describes the tasks of the principal in keeping with Hanson's (2003) description of the efficiency paradigm of educational administration (as developing and implanting educational programs, overseeing staff development, maintaining school/community relations and creating support programs and services for both teachers and students). However, it also tries to emphasis a democratic component of relocating power back to the community. It appears as if the Reform is also attempting to operate

according to a contingency paradigm of educational administration, as there is a space for principals to operate according to their own experiences and value systems.

As is evident from the above contrasting descriptions of three principals who do the same job and work for the same school board, principals do possess agency and power, but are limited according to their own values and beliefs that they conform to. While the school board prescribes a set of tasks that the principal must complete, it is up to the individual principal to determine how these tasks will be completed, provided they respect the legalities of the MEQ and the teachers' collective agreement (as previously outlined). Thus, in answer to the third question of this study (Does a high school principal possess agency in his/her job?), I would argue that principals do possess the power to effect social change, but can only possess the agency to do so once they have recognized their positionality and deconstructed the value system to which they belong. Once they have recognized the dual nature of their job, and the ways in which they have limited themselves through their own practices of normalization and self styling will they be able to empower themselves to prepare to be agents of social change.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have deconstructed and analyzed the concept of what it means to be a high school principal through a postmodern lens. In doing so, I have overviewed how various forms of discourse have created this concept, in particular how provincial legalities, paradigms of educational administration and lived experiences have shaped the understanding of how three principals view and practise their job.

I started this chapter by examining the legal obligations of high school principals and then explored how they are changing in the face of the 1998 MEQ Reform. I also

looked at the implications of this reform on the positions principals play in the complex hierarchy of the MEQ.

I then overviewed three paradigms of administration and illustrated how they have been implemented in educational practices. In doing so, I examined the lived experiences of three high school principals, and analyzed how each principal has been influenced by these paradigms.

Finally, I analyzed the agency of high school principals and have argued that through deconstruction and recognition of their dual nature, principals do possess the agency to become agents of social change. As such, and in conjunction with the potential of feminist pedagogy to prompt social change, high school principals must look to a new paradigm to fulfill their potential.

In the following chapter I address how feminist pedagogy can be used by high school principals to create a feminist model of educational administration. In doing so, I use the postfeminist concepts as discussed in Chapter One and Chapter two.

Chapter 4:

A Feminist Model of Educational Administration

Introduction

In this chapter I attempt to answer my final secondary research question; How can feminist pedagogy be used by high school principals to create a feminist model of educational administration? In doing so, I use several tenets of feminist pedagogy to suggest a new paradigm of educational administration, resulting in answering my primary research question, that is, How can feminist pedagogy be used by high school principals to stimulate social change?

In keeping with Gore's (1993a) criticism that liberation pedagogy places the onus on the teacher and away from the theorist in stimulating social change, this resulting paradigm is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather provides alternatives to the existing paradigms that are both practical and usable to principals. Drawing on the tenets of feminist pedagogy as outlined in Chapter Two, and using them in the context of the agency that high school principals possess, these suggestions offer a means for high school principals to use their agency to challenge the status quo and the deeply rooted patriarchy of the school system. Also, through the application of feminist thought to high school administration, it is my hope that women's ways of knowing and feminist epistemology will take on new value, advocating a society that recognizes and welcomes the contributions of both sexes in professions of affluence.

Reflecting On the Multiple Identities of Principals

In keeping with third wave feminism's assertion that identity is characterized by fluidity and multilayered perspectives and practices (Brooks, 1997), so too is the role of

the high school principal. Aside from the roles that they play in their personal lives, the role of principal has been illustrated as being vast. Based on the implications of the tasks of the job alone, principals must be expert pedagogues, accountants, managers, human resource personnel and public relation managers (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). As described in literature review from Chapter Three, the role of the high school principal is largely administrative. However, according to the day-to-day practices of the sample, we see how principalship entails caring, supporting, and motivating both staff ands students alike, as well as dealing with conflicts and healing wounds. Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) refer to Hemphill (1958) and Lipham (1964), who would consider these to be leadership rather than administrative type activities. Sergiovanni and Carver state that,

> Educational leadership is a more expansive concept which includes concern for
>
> the worth of objectives and their impact on school and society. Whereas
>
> professional administration suggests a utilitarian quality (what are the best means
>
> to achieve given ends), educational leadership suggests a normative quality (how
>
> adequate are the ends themselves) (p.17).

Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) then clarify this position by explaining that "the choice is not either leadership or administration, but a better balance between the two and a more realistic view of the possibilities of each" (p. 7). Thus, the principal is both administrator and leader. Blumberg (1998) agrees with this statement and explains that while administration and leadership are necessary in the school system, the impact they have on stimulating social change is "dependent on the perch from which one chooses to view it" (p. 41). According to educational theorist Blumberg, educational administration is neither a science nor an art, rather he stresses that it should be viewed as practising a

craft. The craftsperson metaphor is useful in deconstructing one's vision of principalship, but again offers no practical guidelines or applications. Blumberg asserts that the craftsperson metaphor is a useful starting point for examining one's understanding and orientation of principalship, as they either agree or disagree with the description and can use it as a springboard to examine the implied values and/or how these values compare with their own. He states that the craftsperson model principal "wishes to make something, has an end production in mind, and the skills to produce it" (p. 63).

As has been shown in Chapter Three and again in the above statements, how a principal self identifies and develops a particular style has direct implications on their social vision and how this translates into daily practices, and in particular with his/her role in the complex hierarchy of the MEQ, and whether or not his/her leadership style is a top-down or bottom-up model (Burlingame, 1987). In keeping with postfeminist thought, it is up to the principal to examine their identities and the implications of these identities on the school and on the community. Burlingame warns principals of what he terms as 'leadership schizophrenia' whereby principals try to follow legal and task oriented prescriptions and directives, but come into conflict both with their own personal values and/or those of the community. He proposes that these factors lead to one of two possible routes of disempowerment, either to "speaking in a public vocabulary of aggressive leadership while privately behaving on the basis of learned timidity…or becoming pointlessly busy" (p. 10).

As indicated above then, the community does and (according to feminist directives) should play a role in the orientation of the school. Hanson (2003) explains that,

...complex organizational bureaucracies, although obviously not living creatures, can and do take on a life of their own – even in schools and school districts. Emotional commitments to projects, fear of what others may think, loyalty to friends, guarding scarce resources, hidden agendas, protecting one's own rear extremity, attacks by ideological warners and the badly informed, and many other organizational characteristics can capture the moment and shake a system out of its sensibilities (p. 2).

It is up to the principal to further his/her examinations of multiple positionings, to analyze the role played within the context of the community, and in turn, the role the community plays in determining certain practises.

What is clear though, is that these questions cannot be answered through texts or ministerial guidelines. Again, in keeping with postfeminist thought, the individual principal must start with lived experiences and those of the community as a means of knowledge and as a tool for self-critical understanding.

The Principal's Role in the Community (Praxis)

Macmillan, Meyer and Sherman (2001) conclude that principals are struggling to find salient methods of parental involvement while redefining how this involvement will change their own roles, in the face of a changing society. Rather than maintaining the traditional authoritarian role, principals are now being cast into a facilitating or team-building role by current reform initiatives (Korir, 2000). As discussed in Chapter Three, the 1997 MEQ reform shifts previous power balances by giving parents and members of the community new powers to inform certain school practices. With its emphasis on interdependence between the school, the school board and the school's community

(MEQ, 2003), the provincial government seems to be inline with feminist pedagogy's emphasis on decentralization of power and non-hierarchical structures. However, as has been described through the context of the interviews, in practice things are not as ideal as they sound on paper. Decisions that are made rest in large part on the principal's understanding of their and role, and the ability to preserve a sense of self in the face of the community they work for. As such, this section overviews methods of applying feminist thought to the in-school community, the educational community (made up educational theorists and theories that are in vogue in the moment), and the actual physical community where the school is located.

According to the tenets of feminist pedagogy then, the principal's role in the community plays a crucial role. In the context of the in-school community itself, feminist pedagogy encourages creating a network of support for each of the staff members and the students alike. In particular Gilbert, Holdt and Christopherson (1999) recommend the creation of mentorship programs and collaborative learning groups. In the context of the mentorship program, principals could team up with other principals from the school board and work out theoretically problematic issues. It would also provide a sounding board for self-examination to determine one's own positionality as discussed above. The mentorship program could potentially be extended to staff and students alike, to allow an outlet for sharing and communicating both frustrations and triumphs, in effect creating a unified team of people who are no longer in competition and/or afraid to admit their weaknesses. Rather this, and the collaborative learning groups, potentially detract from the cultural machoism of competitive, corporate paradigms of administration (Blum, 2001). Duffie's (1991) work illustrates that principals play a pivotal role in either

stimulating social change or maintaining the status quo. In keeping with the principal's role of facilitator and team-builder then, it is up to them to initiate staff development procedures that helps teachers to reflect upon the hidden patriarchy in their own teaching practices, and to examine the ways in which they contribute to misogyny.

Furthermore, the paradigm of administrative style that exists in the educational community (the school board, MEQ, popular educational theorists) will no doubt also influence the role of the administrator. Hanson (2003) illustrates this concept with his statement that, "almost immediately after the nation became acquainted with the principals of scientific management, pressures came from all sectors and forced this management style into the schools" (p. 21). It is important to note that this style of administration mirrors stereotypical ideas of masculinity (for example: rational, analytical, achievement-oriented, self-reliant, etc.) (Hargreaves, 1996). This fact highlights the patriarchal organizational structures of education that must be revealed, challenged and deconstructed through feminist thought. The importance of understanding one's positionality and values and how they are reflected and/or challenged by the community become doubly important.

Within the greater context of the community or actual physical area where the school is located, feminist pedagogy also recommends creating a network of support systems that provide mutually beneficial relationships (Korir, 2000). Gilbert, Holdt and Christopherson (1999) suggest that through forming cooperative relationships in the community, people move beyond negative attention to difference and begin to develop a collective identity; in this case, the identity would be as citizens (working across age, culture, motivation, etc) of a given community. This is essential given the impact of the

school's community on the types of principals that are hired and/or the identity that the school takes on. Sergiovanni and carver (1980) overview Peskin's (1977) study that found that although the board has established public selection criteria around the theme of goal attainment, it has actually based its hiring decisions around cultural-pattern themes. Furthermore, Korir (2000) argues that the values and attitudes of the business community also have a tendency to trickle down into the schools. It is important to directly include these businesses in the decisions of the school, so that attitudes can be revealed and alternatives suggested in a diplomatic fashion that creates a feeling or belonging, rather than being under attack. This method of inclusion provides the potential for self reflection and creates possibilities for change (Hargreaves, 1996). Furthermore, Korir (2000) adds simply that,

> the establishment of partnerships between schools and their communities form the basis for school reform and increased student achievement by increasing the number of people involved in the education of youth (p. 9).

The principal must understand the community with which he/she works and maintain cultural patterns (such as disciplinary interventions, public-relations programs, dress codes, school objectives, etc.), while at the same time adapting to the changing needs of society and how these needs work themselves into curricular reform. In particular, the principal must be aware of the ways in which the school contributes to patriarchy and the silencing of women's contributions. According to Greenfield (1982), "principals who seek to lead must do so in ways that maintain the community's understandings of what constitutes proper leadership behaviour and proper school goals" (p. 5). Through the development of creating a network of support across the community, the principal is able

to maintain a sense of connection with the cultural expectations of the community, while at the same time introducing new ideas, and being informed by the insights of, the community.

However, removing the onus of responsibility from the principal, Murphy and Hallinger (1993) argue that the effectiveness of a school is contextual, contingent upon more forces than just the principal. Rather, they argue that the community/district plays a large role in supporting educational objectives. They state that

> social class has a significant effect on the educational expectations and
> preferences of parents. Parents in lower class communities often prefer an
> emphasis on social and vocational goals, while those in wealthier communities
> prefer schools to concentrate on the development of intellectual skills...These
> differences have implications for the principal's role in developing a mission
> suitable to the school's social context (p. 191).

While it is up to the principal to create a vision of the school and/or a school mission, the principal must develop it in collaboration with the teachers, parents and whole school community. According to Korir (2000), this means that principals must share in his/her power so that the community can participate in decision-making procedures. According to Hanson (2003), there are three methods available to a principal to decentralize power. He describes deconcentration (whereby a principal transfers specific tasks to others, as is the case with Ms. Macdonald, when she divvies up tasks among her administrative team and then has the final say over their work); delegation (whereby a principal transfers the decision-making authority to others), such as a staff council that has the authority to decide upon curricular changes based on teachers' suggestions); and finally devolution

(whereby authority is shifted to an autonomous unity that can act independently; for example the formation of teacher's unions). Which route the principal chooses is dependent upon their own managerial style and his/her own sense of agency,

Challenging Dominant Knowledge Codes

Middleton (1993) characterizes the goal of feminist pedagogy as challenging the hierarchal structuring of academic knowledge. As has been previously overviewed, feminist pedagogy is student centered and emphasizes the use of students' personal experiences as a basis for learning, in direct contrast to a top-down mode that 'imparts' knowledge through lecturing and testing. As also discussed, much of our work as both teachers and administrators is finding a balance of challenging, yet operating in the patriarchal organizational structure of the education system. This concept again relies heavily on our own awareness of the multiple positions that we hold as teachers and as administrators. In keeping with the above description of feminist pedagogy, this type of self-reflection is in fact an alternative form of knowledge.

Feminist epistemology.

Feminist epistemology is created upon the premise

...that the basis of 'masculinist theory' is partial, incomplete and assumes a knowledge base which is neutral; that direct experience is a necessary precondition for knowledge, and what counts as knowledge must be grounded in women's experience; that women's experience is systematically different than men's experience; and that knowledge and theory are incorrect or biased to the extent that they exclude women's experience. (Brooks, 1997, p. 33)

A return to woman's ways of constructed knowing is needed. In keeping with

postfeminist thought, Harding (cited in Brooks, 1991) has also illustrated the social

constructedness and social locatedness of experience. She states that

> it is not experience itself, but thinking from a contradictory position that produces
>
> feminist knowledge. As such, it can be generated from men, women, women of
>
> colour, etc. ...the point is to develop strategies that encourage men as well as
>
> women, whites a well as people of colour, straights as well as gays and lesbians,
>
> the economically over-advantaged as well as the working-class and the poor to
>
> become agents of historical understanding (p. 20).

Weiler (1991) concurs with the theory that knowledge is socially constructed, and

explains that while society shapes our senses of who we are and what we feel, there is

also an oppositional quality to our thoughts which suggests a guide to deeper truth than

that of abstract rationality.

An application of WWK and feminist epistemology to high school administration.

Mahler and Tetreault (1996) explain that the traditional educational systems do

not begin with an exploration of women's life experiences, rather it begins with the

teacher's knowledge and pose the dominant culture's questions. Moving away from this

idea of teacher as expert, or teacher as representative of the dominant culture, Mahler and

Tetreault (1996) propose the idea of teacher as "nurturer" and "facilitator" whereby

students answer their own questions and manage their own intellectual growth. This and

other such feminist pedagogies are adapted from the principles and techniques of the

consciousness-raising groups of the women's liberation movement (Mahler & Tetreault,

1996). In direct opposition to the patriarchal framework, Warren (1989) explains that

feminist pedagogy encourages cooperative learning, class interactions that are free of

gender bias, the use of critical thinking to deconstruct power relations, the use of

examples that grow out of students' experiences, the recognition of different learning

styles and thinking styles, and the legitimization of human emotion and experience.

Noddings (1994) also uses such principles and suggests that,

if we were to explore seriously the ideas suggested by an ethic of caring for

education, we might suggest changes in almost every aspect of schooling: the

current hierarchal structure of management, the rigid mode of allocating time, the

kind of relationships encouraged, the size of schools and classes, the goals of

instruction, modes of evaluation, patterns of interaction, selection of content (p.

175).

From her perspective of the ethic of care, relationship building is critical in education and

involves modelling by the administration, teachers, dialogue, practice (providing students

with the opportunities to practice in caring) and confirmation (whereby Noddings

emphasises assisting in the construction of the other's ethical ideal through praise). While

Noddings (1994) asserts that teaching is full of caring opportunities, the imposed

hierarchal structures and impersonal, quantitative systems do not facilitate relationships.

Nor are these hierarchal structures conducive to using women's experiences to

understand their position within the educational system. This type of understanding

results from connecting lived experiences with theoretical models, which requires the

guidance of an administrator and teachers who are both caring and have a good

understanding of postmodern discourse.

In answer to these structural problems, Noddings (1988) proposes an alternative

method of high school administration for principals to consider. She explains,

there may be some organizations that really do their best work organized

bureaucratically and hierarchally, but these may be organizations in which caring

is not crucial to the enterprise by its very nature (p. 200).

Under this model, principals would engage teachers who are experts in their discipline, so

that teachers could concentrate their efforts on students, rather than creating a relevant

curriculum. Furthermore, under this administrative model, teachers would teach the same

students for a period of 3-4 years, so as to develop meaningful relationships.

Furthermore, contrary to the existing hierarchal organizational structures in schools,

Nodding proposes a system of cycles. She explains that, " ...teachers might teach for

three years and then spend a year in administrative work study" (p. 199). However,

Noddings is well aware that her model is an ideal, as she believes that those who support

the masculine model are unlikely to graciously give up their power. However, in the face

of the 1997 MEQ curricular reform trends, those in power are forced to share power with

local schools, and their communities. This affords principals the opportunity they need to

re-examine their practices to see who they are excluding and whose 'truths' they are

perpetuating. While Noddings' model may not be the solution for every principal, it at

least demonstrates the possibility of restructuring organized patriarchy and illustrates how

caring (and women's ways of knowing) challenge the misogynist system that has silenced

our daughters (and others) for far too long.

Being Ethical yet Living the Contradictions

Hargreaves (1996) argues that while women have been added to the

organizational strata of the school system, the discourse of the high school principal is

still linked to gender relations, and so the women or oppositionally-thinking men, must

follow the patriarchal model or be seen as subordinate and/or inferior. She argues that "patriarchy remains unnamed most of the time, and that keeps it pervasive, and powerful" (p. 18). Rather, it is the oppositionally thinking people that are visible and treated as an undesirable anomaly, and/or who self-style according to the 'norm' in order to conform to the reified notion of what it means to be a principal (O'Grady, 2004). As discussed in Chapter Two, it is through Foucault's understanding of 'care of the self' that this structure can be challenged. Through a direct application of Adams St-Pierre's (1996) suggested break-down of this concept, high school principals are given an alternative means to resisting being marginalized into the status-quo. Adams St-Pierre (1996) starts her analysis off by describing the ways in which one is invited to become ethical. A principal may go through identifying their intentions, objectives and motivations for becoming a principal. When they are illustrated as making a change for the good of society, or even changing the school system for increased student success, it becomes apparent that the principal will not be able to work well within the current oppressive system. The next component of the concept of 'care of the self' involves the ways in which one is invited to become an ethical being. In the case of the principal, it is through courses, literature (discourses), community involvement and expectations and life experiences that shape the ethical being. As has been described throughout this thesis, through introspection and challenging prescribed rules and regulations with lived experiences, the principal has the opportunity to shape him/herself in a fashion that is in keeping with his/her objectives and mission. Adams St-Pierre (1996) then describes the final two components of Foucault's concept of 'self caring' as self-forming activities and the goals of exercise. The principal must be aware of their own practises, and as

described above, be aware of the dual nature of their identities and what messages these practices send. As Foucault (1990) specifies, it is in the exercising of power (in this case being a principal) that creates knowledge. Through daily experiences, the principal is generating self-knowledge, building to the existing concept of what it means to be a principal, and also to the knowledge base of the staff and students as to what is 'normal', including expectations for how female staff and students should be treated. In keeping with this model, it is easy to see how postfeminism has much to offer the world of academia and can be used as a model to restructure the patriarchal organization of schools.

Given these possibilities, it is discouraging that institutionalized sexism still perpetuates a society where women's contributions are undervalued. Carpenter (1998) addresses the frustrations of feminist administrators and the compromises that must be made in order to remain sane while working in a system that opposes their belief system. She states that

> ...feminist administrators...remain an embattled minority functioning within an essentially patriarchal system. Therefore, they are asked to compromise their feminist principles every day. To adhere unswervingly to those principles is to announce one's imminent departure from the administrative 'team'. So what's a feminist to do? Those who last out the week are the ones who learn to pick their battles, to concede defeat and move on, to weigh their defeats against their victories and assess whether the price they have paid is too dear (p. 180).

It is important to address the fact that real change is not easy to achieve, and that administrators must live under conditions of compromise in order to initiate even the smallest changes.

Chapter Summary

Given the agency that I have found a high school principal to possess, I have used tenets of postfeminism to create an alternative paradigm of high school administration. As I have stressed throughout this chapter, these guidelines are suggestions which can be used in part or in their entirety, to offer high school principals an alternative paradigm that challenges the status quo and in particular sexism. Rather than be prescriptive, I hope that these ideas will equip principals with a series of alternatives so that they are able to sustain encounters with currently oppressive power relations, and in doing so be able to work together across difference.

I started off by offering principals a means to analyse their multiple positions in the educational power structure. As has been demonstrated, through the use of metaphor and analysis of the community, a principal is able to determine their values and whether or not these are in keeping with those of the community. I then overviewed the role of the principal within the communities that they operate in, and illustrate the advantages of working together to work across difference, while maintaining respectful, healthy relationships.

Furthermore, I challenge existing dominant knowledge codes through feminist epistemology and illustrated ways in which women's ways of knowing can be used to develop alternative administrative models and school systems. Finally I use Foucault's concept of 'care of the self' to describe ways in which one can be ethical and true to a

feminist commitment, while at the same time living the contradictions of institutionalized sexism. In this way, I propose that high school principals can use feminist pedagogy to stimulate social change, by exercising their powers to generate new knowledge which equally values the contributions of men and of women.

Chapter Five:

Conclusions

I began this study with the intention of determining whether or not a public, high school principal had the agency to work according to his/her own philosophies of education, and if so, how they could use feminist pedagogy to stimulate social change. I then overviewed the necessity of doing so, in view of the ways in which discourse perpetuates patriarchal norms, which put women at a large disadvantage in both the school system and in society. In doing so, I combined the work of Michel Foucault, with that of contemporary postfeminists to illustrate the ways in which school discourse is "constructing" women. I then challenge this occurrence through explorating feminist pedagogy and women's ways of knowing theories, which allow for the importance of subjective experiences and provide alternative pedagogies.

Subsequently, I draw on this framework to explore the ways in which the high school principal's ways of fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities have come to be constructed. In keeping with postfeminist methodology, I then interviewed three principals to see if their lived experiences conformed with the ways in which discourse specifies that principals should be and to explore if these principals had any feeling of agency in their jobs.

Finally, I draw on the tenets of feminist pedagogy to create an alternative paradigm of educational administration. I overview ways in which principals could examine their multiple positionings, and the ways in which these positionings are empowering and disempowering. I specify that this paradigm is not meant to be prescriptive, but could be used in part or in its entirety to equip principals with the tools

to work across difference and to exist in a patriarchal system, while at the same time remaining true to their philosophies of education.

Summary of Important Findings

I started with four questions as a framework for this study, as a means of answering my research question ("How can feminist pedagogy be used by public high school principals to stimulate social change?"). The results of each question are briefly summarized separately below.

1.) *What is feminist pedagogy and how is it relevant in this day and age?*

As discussed at length in Chapter Two, feminist pedagogy is a means of teaching that challenges malestream thought and patriarchal academia. It is particularly relevant in this day and age, since young women continue to be socialized to believe in their own inferiority. Furthermore the discourse of academia suggests that women's contributions are inferior to those of men, and is resulting in the exclusion of women from professions of affluence.

2.) *What responsibilities does principalship entail and what legalities surround it?*

The tasks of the principal are vast and vary from administrator to team leader. Specifically, principals are responsible for staffing needs that take place from June to September, reporting numbers of student enrolment at the beginning of the year, governing board meetings to organize and attend, parents nights to coordinate, quarterly report cards to oversee, ministerial and local examinations to schedule, forecasting numbers of student enrolment for the next year, creating student success plans and educational projects, devising and scheduling teachers' workloads and supervision times in accordance with the collective agreement and budgeting finances for the school.

Furthermore the MEQ has structured the educational hierarchy so that the principal is both accountable to the school board for which they work, and the school's governing board. Legally speaking, a principal must submit proposals to the governing board regarding basic school regulations, budgetary rules, and working condition decisions. Additionally amendments to the Education Act stress accountability to the public as a primary responsibility if the principal.

3.) *Does a high school principal possess agency in his/her job?*

Through analysis of the lived experiences of my respondents, I have determined that principals do in fact possess agency in their roles as administrators. Each principal has the agency to conduct their jobs according to the paradigm that they believe in (and as such conduct their daily practices accordingly) but are also limited in their powers according to the paradigm to which they conform. In order to truly possess the agency to perpetuate social change, he/she must deconstruct and redefine how they came to hold such ideas, and see how knowledge is implicated in such power structures. As I argue in Chapter Three, principals do possess the power to effect social change, but can only possess the agency to do so once they have deconstructed the value system to which they belong, and the ways in which they self-style to conform to these values.

4.) *How can feminist pedagogy be used by high school principals to create a feminist model of educational administration?*

Given the space that principals possess in determining how they will carry out their responsibilities (and the varying practices of the respondents), I have used tenets of postfeminism and feminist pedagogy to create an alternative paradigm of educational administration. It was not my intention to have principals adhere to each of these

suggestions, but to use them as an alternative paradigm to work across differences and to challenge the status-quo. Through adoption of at least, some of these suggestions, a principal will be able to deconstruct their role in power imbalances and hopefully work with his/her staff to create a non-hierarchical community of respectful, healthy relationships for both staff and students.

Final word

Thus in summary, and in answering my final research question, I would argue that feminist pedagogy can be used by public high school principals to stimulate social change through the deconstruction of their own position in the complex power structure of the educational system. It can also be used as a guide to oppose the forms of dominance that characterize society through the creation of an alternative paradigm of educational administration that uses subjective experience to generate a new kind of knowledge, a knowledge that is inclusive and geared towards working across difference rather than competition and exclusion.

Implications for Future Research

As this thesis has demonstrated the fact that principals do possess agency, it would be interesting to see how the 1997 MEQ Curricular Reform is actually practiced upon its full implementation. In particular, it would be of interest to determine whether or not principals do in fact share their powers with staff councils and/or governing boards or whether they are unwilling to do so in practice (or whether or not the public is resistant to such a change).

Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyze the psychological effects that loosing what has long been perceived as 'their authority' that power-sharing will have on

principals, and contrasting the differences along gender lines. Additionally, as the principal's role evolves from manager to facilitator, it would be interesting to see which types of people are attracted to the position, and whether or not it becomes a position of less affluence. What is certain, however is that my research has direct implications on teacher and principal training programs. Given the discovery of agency that prinicpals possess, training courses must be tailored to teach introspective and self critical skills, as well as courses which offer methods of working with the community.

In the face of a school system with frightful discipline problems, violence and the socialization of young women to believe in their own inferiority, clearly a change is needed. Will that change further empower principals and advocate caring relationships, or cast them further back into an authoritarian role? As someone who aspires to become a principal, I can only hope that work such as this contributes to the deconstruction of organizational patriarchy and to the practices of self-reflection and caring relationships. Although education is a helping profession, before we will be able to help our students, we must first help ourselves to claim the agency needed to oppose patriarchy.

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Appendices

Appendage A: List Of Interview Questions

The following is a list of guiding questions that were used during my interviews with each principal. The questions served to prompt differing questions/elaborations from each principal.

1. What are the daily/yearly responsibilities of a high school principal?

2. Is your philosophy of education/mission statement shared by your school board? How so and/or how not?

3. To what extent does your own philosophy of education/mission statement inform your daily/yearly practices?

4. Do you feel that you have the ability to change the way responsibilities are distributed in your school (with regards to teacher assignments, schedules, etc)?

5. To what extent does your school's staff council guide your decision making processes?

6. If you were to change your responsibilities to the school, what would you change?

7. How much time do you spend reflecting on your decisions at the end of every day/year?

Appendix B: Consent Form

<div align="center">

Interview

An Application of Feminist Thought To High School Administration

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

</div>

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Karen Leonard of the department of Educational Studies at Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE
I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows:

In light of the growing concerns with the silencing of young women, the threat of violence that results from oppression of both our male and female students, and the continuing marketization of schools, this study seeks to understand how public high school principals have the agency to challenge the hegemonic status-quo. Through understanding how schools operate both in theory and in actuality, and through the application of feminist pedagogies and feminist thought, this study will contribute to feminist literature about resistance and empowerment.

B. PROCEDURES

The research will be conducted in a location of convenience and comfort for the participant. In most cases, this will mean the participant's office at his/her respective high school.

The participant will be required to answer semi-structured questions on the theme of their roles and responsibilities as high school principals, in an interview format.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is:
CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity.)
- I understand that the data from this study may be published and that verbatim passages from my interview may be included in the publication.
- In order to respect confidentiality, I understand that the researcher will use pseudonyms when identifying both myself and the high school that I am affiliated with.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.
NAME (please print)

_____

SIGNATURE

WITNESS SIGNATURE

DATE

_____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at 514.848.2424,
_x.7481_
or by email at Adela.Reid@Concordia.ca.

Please feel free to contact me, with any questions or concerns that you might have.

Karen Leonard
Phone number: 514-880-1679
Email address: karina_Leonard@hotmail.com

Thank you for your collaboration.

Appendage C: Transcript of the Interviews

> *Principal: Mr. Fontana*
> *School: Gartner High School*
> *Date: Thurs. July 30ᵗʰ, 2005*

Me: I appreciate you taking the time to meet.

Mr. Fontana: It's okay.

Me: I just wanted to give you the EMSB mission statement because I am going to refer to it in a second and I didn't want to put you on the spot.

Mr. Fontana: Okay.

Me: My first question was, if you could quickly describe to me your daily responsibilities as a principal.

Mr. Fontana: Laughs

Me: Just an overview. I've done the research, so it doesn't need to be a detailed account.

Mr. Fontana: Well, its ah, You divide it into daily, and also its your perception on what the principal does. My perception is always availability, so my door is always open. SO its always a question of how many people arrive in the morning, parents, students, teachers, so I'm there. In other words, if they have questions, little worries, they have a chance to come and see me. So my day always starts with reception, and supervision. I want to be present, I'm not the type of person that closes the door and lets everybody else do it. On the third floor, the second floor, we all have a space, and I have my space, and I stay there and I supervise and its also a time to see the kids and say hi or to discuss their worries. It's a priviledged time. After that, we come back, and we deal with those other issues. We have meetings, or reports to look at or maintenance (I mean with my caretakers). By that time, its recess and we go out again and supervise and then, it depends on the days, either I have a scheduled project that is due, or I will go see the kids or talk to teachers, or do some teaching myself a little bit, I miss it so much. After that its lunch and I'm on supervision again and then I have more reports, more meetings that were scheduled or just looking over what the school is doing pedagogically or meet with the guidance counselor and the teachers. We're a big team, 70 or 80 teachers, 10 professionals, 8 caretakers, 7 secretaries, all that. So basically, you're present in the daily ongoing in the school and your perception of how you see things, in other words you can do it behind doors, and everything has got to be scheduled, or you can do it on availability and as a result everything is always open. My perception is that everything is always open.

Me: That's great.

Mr. Fontana: Sometimes you close your door because you really need to think, to do certain things, but basically in the daily running you have your scheduled reports that are due in so many weeks. For example, at the beginning of the school year you have your registration, your September 30th enrollment report, how many teachers and you have to see who does what, your timetables, your supervision schedule, your opening day activities, it depends where you are. Schools now don't close anymore, schools are in transition and we put the brakes on a little bit, but closing the schools doesn't work anymore.

Me: Okay, thank you. So the next question deals with the mission statement. I wanted to know, does your philosophy of education, or mission statement shared by the school board. I've just given you this statement to see if its somewhere along the same lines as your own statement?

Mr. Fontana: Yeah, see here "..provide all students the opportunity to develop and achieve their personal best.." yeah…

Me: Of course.

Mr. Fontana: So if you look here "encourage" , without even reading, there is the word "encourage", there is the word "support", "have opportunities" and "recognize", okay here we go.

Me: So you are right in accordance with it?

Mr. Fontana: Yes, because my philosophy is very simple. Unless you recognize people, whether it be adults or students, because recognition cannot come from within. You could be the best, but if other people don't tell you, other people don't recognize your efforts, and facilitate your work and encourage and support your work, then there is no learning. So, when you look at that mission statement, the key words are exactly those, I mean recognize, support, facilitate, and not control. Our job is not to control.

Me: So do you think that…

Mr. Fontana: The only thing that I wanted to add was that if your teachers are not treated that way, then they cannot treat the students that way.

Me: Okay.

Mr. Fontana: There is no way that someone can encourage when they are not being recognized. We are all paid for this job, but beyond that, I mean even a King has to be recognized.

Me: Yes I agree. Would you be able to work for a school board that did not share your philosophy. If for example the school board wanted all the principals to treat students and staff like a marketplace or a business?

Mr. Fontana: No, I wouldn't, I'd vote against that.

Me: You wouldn't be able to work for them then?

Mr. Fontana: No, because my raison-d'etre is for the students.

Me: Okay, so the next question then. Do you feel that you have the ability to change the way that responsibilities are distributed in your school? In terms of teacher assignment or schedules? I know that the principal makes the block, of who is teaching what and at what times, but how much agency do you have in changing that. For example, if I was an English teacher, do you have the ability to give me another subject?

Mr. Fontana: Well I have, you know, we sit down at the school level and at council and decide in groups what we are teaching, for how long, and that is done collectively. Then there is another sheet/report where the teachers ask for subjects that they would like to teach. When you make your timetables you see if you can answer all those wishes, but the main responsibility when you do the timetables is to have the right person in the right place. You have to recognize potential and see what is better for them. The way I decide is not what is best for me, I put in the person who is going to be best for the students. So, their needs come secondary. In other words, like a surgeon. It's the surgeons responsibility to make sure that when he does the intervention he doesn't kill the patient. So if he says that he likes to do all his surgical procedures at midnight, well, no because you take a risk. So with the teachers, I mean, I try to recognize the teacher with the best potential for the students, and sometimes student needs decide rather than individual needs. If a teacher says to me, I have to leave at 2:oo because of this, well, maybe one day out of the five, but students come first. I recognize my teachers as professionals and I am not going to interfere with their practice or the way that they dispense their practice, but I try to organize that practice and encourage it. If the teacher sees herself as a professional, then they will incur those behaviors. If we treat them as little children or to be controlled ever day of their lives, then they will not behave as professionals.

Me: I agree. I'm a teacher by the way, I don't know if I told you or not on the phone. I'm only allowed to interview principals that I don't know, as part of the ethics requirements.

Mr. Fontana: Where do you teach?

Me: Bakersfield High School.

Mr. Fontana: Oh !

Me : It's going to be my fourth year this September.

Mr. Fontana: Oh well, you have such a nice accent, and a nice presence, I'm sure the kids love it.

Me: Oh thank you. Actually I'm an opera singer too, so they like it when I sing.

Mr. Fontana: You should be here.

Me: Oh, thanks. When I hear you speak about your principal practices I think how great they sound, and I think that they sound really supportive of your teachers. Along that same vein, I wanted to ask you to what extent does your school staff council guide your decision making processes?

Mr. Fontana: I don't see it as 'me and them', its more like 'us'. I mean if there is a problem then, well evolution and modification and maintenance has to be done collectively. They have a say, and I have a say. It's not my school, its our school. And if we have problems to solve then we do it together. I'm always asking how any solution that we find will better the students experiences here? If you come and see me with something that has nothing to do with student needs, then the answer is no. If the consultation is always on the base of how we're going to improve student performances and student needs, well, that's my emphasis. When we talk, the emphasis has to be on how we can better service them. That's when I get integrated. If you come and see me and it has nothing to do with students, then the answer is no. That's when I have to take a leadership type position. It happens very rarely (laughs), I just don't like it when people assign fault, there is no fault. Finding a solution is a little bit harder when you come and see me and say "You're wrong". And start talking about the "administration", the administration what? What's administration. I mean administration is a part of, yes I have a role, but don't use that stupidity blind phrase 'the administration'.

Me: Let me see if I understand, you kind of come at it from a different perspective, a reframing type of perspective, where you believe that administration is just another part of school functioning.

Mr. Fontana: Absolutely. And if we have a success, its because everybody believes in it, and puts a little extra. Everybody gets the kids to do something that is not typical, because when you become typical, then you're dying. You have to be, I don't know about Laurier Macdonald, but I do know that if this school is not what it is, then you can't succeed. It's not a neighbourhood school, the students come by bus. This school has a service, and every school must distinguish itself from the next one. If all schools raise at the same time and offer the same things it becomes a deadlock, and I mean that it becomes boring for the students.

Me: I have only heard good things about this school. Okay, lets move onto another question then. It's a little more personal. I was wondering if you were to change your responsibilities to the school, what would you change. Is there a specific part of your job that you don't like?

Mr. Fontana: Personally, I really don't like when its all reports and everything has got to be on time, never mind what is going on with the students and what it interferes with.

Certain activities that we do have absolutely nothing to do with student success, well that's not for me.

Me: So, its sort of the more bureaucratic things that you don't care so much for.

Mr. Fontana: Well, bureaucratic if they leave you alone is alright, but they have to trust me. If the school board doesn't trust its principals then there is a problem. I mean we're all going to make mistakes, but we have to try anyways. They thing that I will never accept is that I will never quell my initiative. Either I'm a pedagogical leader or I'm an administrator, or I'm an accountant. Don't tell me that I have initiatives to take to make the school a little bit different and then I get stormed when certain parameters have not been respected a hundred percent. You cannot behave in a school without going beyond. It's the same thing with a teacher. If a teacher goes beyond, well they should at least let me know where they are going, but I wouldn't say "don't you ever dare do that again", I mean please. Of course there all constrains, but the structure should not overtake the people. I hate when the people inside the structure are less meaningful than the structure. Then you have a dead society.

Me: That's wonderful that you are saying that, especially since my thesis is about the agency that a principal has in stimulating social change.

Mr. Fontana: What makes the school is the people, not the walls. It doesn't matter what school board you belong to, it's the people who come here and say "Wow, I really had a good day and I really felt well about my school." You should speak proudly about your school. I've been to schools where teachers are counting the days until June, and this was September the first. We're going to stay ¾ of our lives in this, and we have to make the best out of it, and make connections with other people and share with and develop with. Some teachers are very possessive, that's one drawback about teachers. They don't share as much as they should and there is so much knowledge to be shared. That's part of the job too.

Me: The last question is, do you spend time reflecting on your decisions at the end of every year?

Mr. Fontana: Yes, because I do an evaluation and I say to myself, "Will I be directing the school the same way next year and every other year?" and when the answer is yes then its time to retire. Its got to be what will be different next year and in three years, and how can I improve and continue to meets students changing needs. (His cell phone rings). Is that it?

Me: Yes, thanks so much.

Mr. Fontana: No problem.

Principal: Mr.Cutbill
School: Shewsbury High School
Date: Tues. July^{5th}, 2005

Me: The first question that I want to start you off with is a little bit easy. I'd like you to start off by just describing your regular day for me (as a principal).

Mr. Cutbill: A regular day starts off, I usually get in between 7:30 and 8:oo am, and what I normally do is talk to the secretary and see if there are any teachers that are absent and if there is I obviously arrange for their replacements. At 8:30 I do announcements of the P.A., which takes about 10 minutes. Then I usually talk to the vice-principal from 8:40 until 9 am to see what he has got going on. Then, the rest of the day involves supervising, going around the hallways and making sure that students are in class and that teachers are teaching. Occasionally I go into the classroom, not very often, but if there are any problems I'll hang around those classrooms. I then talk to students. I do a lot of monitoring of students results. If students don't have a 70% average, I'll call them down and see if I can get them to work a little harder to improve their marks. We have an academic standard, so they have to keep a certain mark or they are out. This usually takes me to somewhere around 3:00 and then at 3:00. students are dismissed. If there is an activity in the school, basketball game or something like that, I usually try to go in and see at least part of it, and that's usually to 4:30 or so.

Me: So, basically your day to day is sort of more impromptu, in that students and staff come to see you when they need to, rather than you sitting in your office and waiting for scheduled visits.

Mr. Cutbill: Yes. There are always meetings scheduled and I have to set time aside for that, but the rest is more of handling problems as they come up. Usually I go home at the end of the day and if I ask myself what did I do today I can't remember. It's nothing that is tangible, that you can put your finger on; it's a matter of dealing with problems as they arise.

Me: Okay, and in terms of yearly responsibilities. I know that there is a September report, but are there other reports etc that you must do throughout the year?

Mr. Cutbill: Yes. The busiest times for principals are in Sept and at the end of June, because everyone wants something at those times. A lot of our year is spent meeting the requests that the school board puts on us. So for example, in Sept we're staffing, so we're still trying to get classes filled up and teachers into classes. Also at the beginning of the year there are pictures, the first governing board meeting, parents nights, and we also try to have the secondary I night in September. And then we'll have report cards in November, and that's always a busy time, because we are looking at results and try to have students look at their results as well. January there are exams, so we have a week in January that's quite busy. And starting after January, we start planning for the next year which involves forecasting. The other thing I do, which is different form most principals

as we are a special status school, is visit 21 to 25 elementary schools in a period of the middle of Sept to the middle of October. And then there is our open house, which is Oct.13th, and then we have entrance exams in November and graduation at the end of October, so that tends to take up al to of time. I always think of Sept, Oct and Nov in terms of getting kids in and getting things organized. Then Dec is sort of a down month. In Jan we start planning for the following year and do reports and so on. In between that you have things like educational success plans and educational projects and things like that.

Me: Now I'm going to ask you to just look over the mission statement and I just wanted to know if your personal philosophy of education or your personal mission statement is shared by the board and how so or how not?

Mr.Cutbill: Yeah, sure, I mean my personal philosophy of education is that teachers are professional and if you treat them that way then we will be able to get good results. So, it doesn't matter who the students are, in terms of diversity (Although we have a very diverse community). Everyone has the opportunity. The one thing that is good about this school, because of the nature of this school, we have a lot of students who really excel. And a classic example is the car out front, which was build by a group of students in secondary three, who started out with an idea and then decided to do it. There is the talent here to do it, just not in a student centered way. We have, the employees have a tremendous amount of skills, but I would say that our staff could do anything. You could find someone on staff to do it. As far as encouraging collaboration with diverse education partners, well its all a team effort. I mean the school board, the parents, the teachers, the students; we all work together to get the students to accomplish whatever they can. In terms of using resources effectively, we don't have a great building, we have a lousy building, but we make due with what we have and I think we use our resources very well. In terms of lifelong learning, that's the key that everyone has to model. We all continue to learn. SO, yeah, this is a good mission statement, it summarizes what I believe in.

Me: Would you be able to work for a school board that has a totally different mission statement than your own? For example, if the school board said that it wanted to run the schools like a business, would you be able to ...

Mr. Cutbill: No, I'd have a tough time doing that. The thing that I have always said to people is that if I wanted to become a banker I would have gone into banking. I wanted to be an educator, so I went into education. As far as doing the accounting part and the financial part that we have to do, I see it as a necessary evil. They can't hire someone to come in and do it, but I see that as being only part of my job and fortunately its' 20-30% and the 20-30% that I do at 4:30 or 5:00.

Me: Okay, in keeping with that line of thought, I'll skip down to one of the last questions. If you were to change any of your responsibilities in the school, or any aspect of your job, what would you change?

Mr. Cutbill: I mean, I thin if you asked any principal, all of us enjoy the educational part and we all enjoy trying to get students to do their best. The thing that nags us is the financial; side of things. I mean, take away the financial and accounting stuff and let me be a pedagogue, because that's why we went into this job. But we all understand that its necessary and that we have to do it. I don't see any solution to it. I mean if you were asking me n a perfect world what I would do, and then I'd like to see more resources to have the students doing better. Now, how would I, or where would those resources come from, well that's a tough question. But I think that if I had, well actually I don't know if more money is the answer and I tend to think that its not, but if I could somehow be able to force the students to work. When I was in the other school, I always said that if I could get rid of five students it would make a big difference in motivating the other students. Here I have that opportunity but I don't know if it make s a difference, when you have an academic standard and students don't meet it then we have to ask them to leave. I hate it, I hate having to ask students to leave, but that's my job. Any student that I have had to ask to leave, I have tried from September to try to get them to work harder, but they just don't want to. So, the frustration I feel is that sometimes students don't put in the efforts they need in order to stay in, and I don't know what the resources are that I could ever get to help with that. Probably nothing, its probably juts a factual thing that I can't change.

Me: You were a teacher before you were a principal?

Mr. Cutbill: Correct.

Me: And how many years did you teach for?

Mr. Cutbill: I taught for 16 years.

Me: Would you say that your understanding of how to be a principal came from watching the principals that you worked with, or do you think results more from your own vision of education from your teaching practices?

Mr. Cutbill: I don't think you, I think you gain something from watching principals but as a teacher you don't see the principal very often. You very rarely see him doing what he does. I probably got my best idea of what a principal does when I was a vice-principal. I was a pedagogical consultant at a business center and I used to work with Horace Greensly who was the principal and I consider him to be a real mentor because he taught me more about being a principal than anyone else. I used to sit in his office and be amazed that he would make 300 decisions a day. People used to come into his office and ask for things and he would say 'yeah that's okay' or "No you can't do that" and I asked him once, how do you do that? He said that you learn that you have to make a decision, and you're not going to be right all the time, but you have to have a logical reason for doing it. And that is probably the best advice that he gave me, to take a look at what the situation is and look at all the pluses and minuses and make a decisions. His pother great philosophy was to never make a decision before its time. Make sure you wait for all the information. What happens a lot of time sin education is that you get a but from someone and a bit from someone else, but all of a sudden the real information

comes in from somewhere else. If you just wait, you get the whole story. I think as a teacher, you don't really get to see what a principal does, you get to see what a vice principal does and you always thin that a vice-principal has this tremendous power, that he walks into a class and gets the students to do what he wants them to do, but you realize afterwards that you only develop that after a while. It's like being a teacher where once the students respect you, and then you feel very comfortable. I don't know how much you get from watching a principal the principal doesn't do a lot of day-to-day stuff, and you can't really see a decision, which is what he is really there to do.

Me: Did you take educational administration courses to become a principal?

Mr. Cutbill: What happened to me is that I didn't know how long I would last as a teacher because I heard about availability, so I thought it would be a good idea to get an MBA. SO I started studying towards an MBA, and it actually paid off very well for me, in 1978 I went on availability, but because of my business background I taught four years in business and then I switched into computer science. I ended up doing courses at night and I ended up getting my MBA, a certificate in accounting, and a certificate in computer based information systems, and all of those helped me because it allowed me to stay one step ahead of availability, because I really wanted to teach and wasn't interested in subbing from school to school. I don't know whether, I think the MBA has helped me a lot, I was asked to go into a graduate class and talk to them about being a principal, and I was there with a guy whose quite famous from the Lester B Pearson school board. They were talking about different schools they'd been at, I guess the best thing that it can teach you is to analyze what's in the school and therefore decide how you want to make it better. And I guess that's probably the best thing that I obtained from my MBA, is how to do a pretty good analysis on what makes the school work and what the problems are and trying to minimize the problems and maximize the potential.

Me: I wanted to ask you in what ways the new reform has changed your practices as a principal, or has it?

Mr. Cutbill: Right now its too early in the game to see how it's changed. The teachers seem to be quite concerned about it, and think that it will make a big difference. I was just reading an editorial today on the new report card for secondary 1 and 2, where they are not going to have marks anymore, but indicate whether students are meeting or not meeting potentials. The editor in the Gazette basically said that CGEPS and universities want marks, and I told my staff all along that reform will come; reform has been in the schools. So many teachers are already doing cross-curricular projects and things like it. I told them to go slow, to take the best of the reform and add on to their own practices, because until I can see the big picture, I'm not going to change the things we're doing in 1 and 2 if it will damage the results in 4 and 5. So I said to the science teachers, if you want to do projects then fine, but it better not take away from the mark that they are going to get in physical science. That's right now, what we are being judged on. I hate to say it, but no one really cares about what goes on in secondary 1 science. They really care about physical science 436, so until I see the connection and how it lines up, we're going to go slow and only do projects that enhance teaching practices. Originally, way

back when, I had sort of planned on retirement around the reform. I was sort of saying 'okay, the reform will hit but I don't have to worry about it because I'm retiring', but in hindsight, there's nothing really there. There are a lot of things that I think can be radical, and enhance education, but I don't think it is going to change what is already there.

Me: I read a book about the way the reform relocates power from the school boards to the individual schools. Have you felt that yet?

Mr. Cutbill: No. Its interesting, our history is that the old CECM which used to have an English system, just before we merged a lot of the power became decentralized, a lot of the powers went into the schools so for example, just before we got into the EMSB, we were making decisions about money. For example, do we want a pastoral animator, or do we want a pedagogical consultant. I can remember at the time and I think if it had of continued that way, then most of the decision making would have been made in the schools and not at the school board. I remember at times where the school board would have to ask us for money to run certain events, because they had decentralized all the money. Now once we became the EMSB it changed, because they were very much a centralized board, and we have gone to that system. If as you say, we go to the other trend, then it would remind me of the CECM where things were starting to be decentralized. It gives the school a lot more power to allocate money but one of the problems is that you have to have the board to do some things. And I think about purchasing, we all hate getting bids. When we want to buy a photocopier or something like that, we have to get three different bids. OR if we want to buy anything over $1500 and its really frustrating. In that way I can see some of the pluses of having a centralized system where one person deals with all these bids, rather than each one of us having to do so much work to try and get bids. I think it has pluses and minuses and I hope that if they do decentralize some of these things then they'll give us the resources to go along with it.

Me: In keeping with that, if they do decentralize power, and you can sort of choose where your money goes, do you think that you would run community type programs out of the school?

Mr. Cutbill: This school is a unique school in that we're not really a part of the community. If you were to take a look at our students, we may have 3-5 % of our students from this area. 95% are coming form everywhere else. One of the problems that we face is trying to get our students to respect the community and not throw garbage on people's lawns. It doesn't make sense in this neighborhood. It's clear-cut that we are a special status school plumped in the middle of Rosemont. If I was at a school say Kennedy, where the students come from that area, then I would do community stuff.

Me: But in terms of the actual school's community, your students, do you have a lot of that reflected on your governing board and parent groups?

Mr. Cutbill: These types of groups tend to be focused on what the students are doing academically. We have a lot of activities here, which the students are more interested in

and I think the parents are too, but it is always aimed at how its going to help their students be successful academically. There is not a lot more than that. Most of them, the ones who will join activities, do so in their own communities. Okay so, they'll be in skating club or soccer club or whatever. They see the activities here as helping the students be happy and doing better academically.

Me: Okay thanks. I just wanted to ask you to what extend does your staff council inform your practices?

Mr. Cutbill: The staff council here is very effective, they bring issues to the staff council and if they are concerned with something they bring those issues. They tend to ask for things like refrigerators and those are the easier things. Generally speaking, in a high school, you have enough money from different funds to be able to take care of most of these things. Teachers tend to be very undemanding as far as having things to work with. They really feel guilty about having a TV. They'll have a student teacher so that they can have student teacher money so that they can get TV and stuff like that. Staff council is an excellent sounding board and it allows us to keep a pulse on the rest of the school. A lot of times as a principal you're working with the people who are doing activities and they tend to be happy anyways. They are always some people who are not, and they will bring stuff to staff council and its usually pretty easy to resolve. In my last 3 or 4 years here, I don't remember anything that they brought that we haven't done. They tend to be things that we should have, I mean they ask for another phone and stuff and sure, if I can.

Me: I wanted to ask also, with regards to your timetable, if there is a process regarding how you allocate which teacher teaches what class at what time?

Mr.Cutbill: That usually starts in Jan or Feb where teachers what subjects they want to teach. Contractually that has to be done before the March break. Now, any staff that I have ever been involved with talk to each other and they pretty well know what its going to be, and they put down what they want, knowing what they other teachers want. For example, if they know that there are going to be five physical sciences then they'll say to one teacher 'well, do you want to teach 3 of them, then I'll teach 2". My basic philosophy is make sure everything is covered but make teachers happy as much as possible. If they are happy it will make for a better environment. As far as timetabling is concerned, we're sort of stuck by the number of sections that we have and have to get it covered. WE let the teachers here choose what they want and anything left over, we post. So people know, when you come into a school for the first time, you're getting what's left over. Every once and awhile you get tricked. Last year I had a guy and I said, "I'm really sorry but I had to give you 5 dramas" and that's actually what he wanted so I got lucky. But generally speaking, once the staff is here and they build up seniority, they generally get pretty well what they want to teach, as long as you can work it out.

Me: Okay and my final question for you is whether or not you spend time at the end of every year reflecting upon the decisions that you have made.

Mr. Cutbill: Yeah, I had a really, I was really upset I guess it was about 2 weeks ago because I thought I had made a mistake, and I wanted to reflect on it. I had put someone in a course, not that it didn't work out, but the failure was higher than what I expected it to be. It's not really the person's fault, but they just didn't have the content to do it. I said to myself, you can't do that again. What really gets hard for us is that, well the open posts are pretty easy when you have the numbers to warrant an open post. What you do is you say okay, I've got this science or whatever post is available and so you get someone from outside to do it. What gets hard is if you have a maternity leave or something like that and someone goes out, especially at the beginning of the year and you can't get someone to do what you want them to do. It's really hard and the most frustrating thing to do is to think that if you had just given that course to someone else then maybe it would have made a difference. But, what's done is done and you can't change it. You just have to think that next time you can be really careful about how you arrange things. It's really difficult because its happening in Sept, and I can still remember one of the teachers who was really quite furious with me, because I couldn't get a physical science and a math teacher, and up to the first week in October I finally got somebody who could do it, but he couldn't do one of the subjects. SO I had to change a teacher's workload. I had to take away a science from his workload and give him a math. He understood but he was still really upset. On pone hand you've got to weigh a teacher's happiness and then you say to yourself that what's important is the kids, and the teacher has to be happy doing it. SO, is it better taking it away and giving it to another teacher? It's a dilemma that we all face.

Me: So, for you it's important that teachers are experts in their fields? Would you give someone a course that they knew nothing about?

Mr. Cutbill: Not unless, well we all have to give teachers material that they haven't taught before, but they have to have a background to do it. A lot of them will say no problem I can do, but actually they can't. If it's an easy subject. You'd never give someone a secondary 4 or 5. The situation I was talking about was a secondary 3, and the person said they could do it, but in retrospect they probably couldn't.

Me: Well those are actually all my questions, so I'll stop the tape. Thanks a lot again.

After the interview we chatted for about 20 more minutes about my career and my aspirations of becoming a principal. Mr. Cutbill said I could quote him as saying, "Other principals speak of legacies, but I know that I am not leaving a legacy. When I do look back on what I've done, I realize that I steered the ship straight, and that's the best anyone can do." He also expressed a sense of disappointment with the constraints and limitations of his job.

Principal: Ms. MacDonald
School: John Paul II Junior High School
Date: Tues. July⁵ᵗʰ, 2005

Me: I think I'd like to become principal one day, so it's good for me to hear these different perceptions.

Ms. MacDonald: It's very different than teaching, very different from vice-principalship, but I love it. I wouldn't change it. What I like the most is the fact that I have the budget, that I know where the money is and I know where I can filter it so that we can choose such and such. I think its very important that the teachers know that you are supporting them in the classroom, and that you support their professional development and you try never to say know when they ask for something, that is my goal. And if you do that, then you're an incredible person.

Me: I'm just going to give you the mission statement for the EMSB because I wouldn't have it memorized off the top of my head, and I am going to be referring to it momentarily. But before we get to that, I just wanted to start off with a description of your typical day in your life as a principal.

Ms. MacDonald: Well you have different ones, sometimes the kids come in wound up, and I think it also depends on whether or not you have a V-P. A little bit of a context for this situation might give you an understanding of how we work. We have 650 middle school children, grades 7 and 8. I have an incredibly wonderful vice principal who is very much involved with the kids and very young and energetic, and very much hands on with the kids. So because of the fact that I have a vice principal and the kind of vice principal that he is, I really am liberated to do more of the administration aspect, especially the PR, contact the parents who are very disgruntled and working with the governing board, working with the board, so I'm able to do that and basically oversee the pedagogical orientation of this school. That's one of the things I like best. And the vice principal handles the day to day, if the kids are having fights or you know a kid is thrown out of class. So, my typical day, if things are working as they should, is I pretty much can keep care of administering the school and making sure people are where they are supposed to be. However, some days we'll have a certain disciplinary measure that needs attending to. Last year there was a rash of stealing the hood ornaments off of cars and that became a problem. Marco (the vice-principal) will do as much as he can, but there comes a point where he comes to my office and we discuss what to do. It's theft, so should we call the police? How will we deal with the parents? So that day can take on a whole different meaning where you are dealing with the police, the parents, the students, and the vice principal... The whole day can just be shot dealing with that one aspect. Everyday is different and you hope that you have those days that are calm, where you get through your stuff and keep up.

Me: Okay, thanks. Referring now to the mission statement, I wanted to ask you if your personal philosophy of education or mission statement as a principal shared by the board. And if it isn't, how does it differ?

Ms. MacDonald: Well I think that all of us base our own school missions on the school board's. We are all going to have, well, mission statements are all warm and apple pie. It's how you deal with them and how they actually affect students. The root to all principalship is the fact that you have, what you have available you use to fulfill students. We're an international baccalaureate school and have a third of our students in the middle years program so we try to develop using our own mission statement and the same ideas to try to respect ourselves, respect for others, respect for the environment and our position in the global community, and being aware of worse things and your own weaknesses and how they impact on others. So I think that overall we all have the same mission statement but it gets fulfilled in different ways. You know we, acknowledge the fact that, teachers have professional development and that's a big part of my vision for the school. And I think it should be of any school, whether it's elementary or CGEP. The teacher will just be more interested. In terms of using resources effectively, well everyone wants to use resources effectively. As a principal we have to be very, very careful with our resources and pass them in the right direction.

Me: IF the EMSB was something completely contrary to your statement, something about running the school as a business, or something that was completely contrary to your idea of how education should be, would you still be able to work for them?

Ms. MacDonald: Personally I think that there would be a point where I would say that I couldn't work with that mission, because children are not little soldiers, a little army, and schools can't run like businesses because teachers are sympathetic and care. There are certain things, limitations, and I think it would depend on what extent the board would go to, if they were to say something like, 'no we don't care about professional development for our teachers' which I feel is so important, then I would find it difficult and I would have to speak to the regional director of the board. AS much as that's important for the board, I have to respect the board and remember that I'm a team member, but at the same time within our community it would be a problem. So currently we are very lucky that we haven't hit that wall where we are not getting pedagogical fairness.

Me: I know that you have to do reports throughout the year for the board, but other than those reports, how closely are you in contact with the board?

Ms. MacDonald: Again it depends. I stay very closely in contact with pedagogical services. One, because I used to be a pedagogical consultant, so that I came to know what that department hopefully they will do for me. We have to stay close to that department and to student services because we have special needs students. I wish we got more support from student services, we cry out a lot, but they just don't have the manpower to help us. I think that's probably one of the hardest things, but its one of the areas that we really, really need support in. So I think if you want, teachers don't have time to, and even with the best of intentions, there are only so many hours in a day. You're not an

expert in and of yourself, you need exterior help. And you may have a family of your own, and children of your own. You're trying to deal with their education, so I think that there's a point that you need to get extra help. So you get to do the class work and then let someone else do the data analysis... Financial services, well I don't deal with them that much, I have a great secretary and she deals with that sort of stuff. So, I may go over the budgets and make sure that everything is where it should be, that the money that needs to be allocated is allocated and not be charged with _____. I'll check that, and the day-to-day finances and bills got o my secretary.

Me: In terms of how you learned to become a principal, did you take educational administration courses or was it more of a mentoring thing?

Ms. MacDonald: I was very unhappy about the way it happened. I never wanted to be a principal because I hate discipline and that was the one part of the job I just didn't want. What happened was, while I was a consultant, I saw that I wouldn't make the difference that I wanted to make if I stayed as a consultant and I decided that I should do my time as a VP, although I hated the discipline aspect, and I didn't want to go to high school at all (because of the discipline aspect) but that's what was offered to me. My regional director recommended me to this school, because it was a junior high and she thought it would be a good idea. She said that I would be able to do it, she had a lot more faith in me than I did. I came in and I did discipline, discipline, discipline. My idea of discipline is more remediation and trying to get kids to see what they did wrong and trying to get teachers to realize that you get what you give, and if you respect the kids, you will get respect back. It was hard on me, and the principal at the time was a very knowledgeable man who ran the school very well, but he did not teach me staffing, he did not teach me scheduling, he did not teach me anything. I knew nothing. And a year and a half after being vice principal, he retired and I became the new principal. I really don't feel like I have the background, like I said, its really sort of two different entities. I never scheduled, I had never even done the supervision schedule. I had never done a staff schedule. I had only done discipline and student life, that was it. That kept me busy until when my VP came in, and I had a hard time letting go of it. I don't think I made his first year very good. Live and learn. I mean I tried, Tony would go to financial service type things, and he has access to all accounts. No, he can't sign, but he can certainly ask questions. I try to give what I never got, but there is so much more. When I became a vice principal, I did start the educational administration courses. I took a K on the course because I was afraid. I have taken more course, many have not helped me at all, especially the ones that were offered through the board because I think they were watered down too much. I did my masters already and I was used to a certain caliber and I found it was really watered down. This year I was able to finish the second set of courses at McGill, and the law course was amazing. At first I thought "whew" but then she allowed us to do, well at the time I was dealing with a legal issue here at the school, so that was amazing. Ask me anything about he education act; I know it like the back of my hand. She was great. Those types of courses will help you, but you do need hands on. In fact my last course I did look at professional development in principals and the fact is that you need mentors, but they are retiring left, right and center. They're busy trying to mentor their own vice principals and so it's kind of like 'get your feet wet'. My regional director was

phenomenal; I couldn't have asked for a more supportive regional director, she was always supportive. She was 100% reliable. There is so much that, we really need cohorts. The idea of the cohort is so important but now, there are none. As things go, I'm going to be one of the senior principals with three years under my belt. That's kind of scary. We really need, as principals, to meet on a professional basis and talk about what we are going to do. I've invested a lot of my time in professional development to help me with my school, and I have had to learn all about the international baccalaureate because I am an international school, there's a lot of stuff that was heaped on me. And now I feel, a sense that I've done my two years, I took one year to learn budgets, I took one year to learn managing the staff (and I feel they have taken a little bit of advantage of my inexperience at times). I just hope to hell that I haven't made mistakes there.

Me: Okay, one of the last questions then. I wanted to ask you if you were to change any aspect of your job, what would you change?

Ms. MacDonald: I would change, I don't know. The principal becomes responsible for everything. I can make the VP responsible for things, but ultimately it's the principal who is responsible, so you kind of have to watch everything. I don't know, because I don't work in a small school, I work in a large school. Maybe smaller schools would be able to do more things? I don't know. If I could change anything, other than the staffing, for example I find it sad that I don't get to know all the kids names. Because the good kids you don't know. The bad ones, oh yeah, Him, him. But you look at the report cards and I try to personalize them by writing things like 'good luck' and you're looking at kids with 95% averages and you don't even know them. And that really bothers me. So, I think we need to try to prioritize what our lives are as principals and I think that the kids come first. So next year I am going to try in the first month of school to have a couple of kids come down. I probably won't remember their names, I was one of those who didn't until about Christmas, but at least for them to know that my door is open and that I'm hear and that I get a sense of who the kids are in my school. I'm going to try that because you've got to walk about. If I've learned anything form being in these classes and being at the board it's that not being in my school is what is the problem.

Me: That ties into one of my questions actually, in that I was going to ask you if you reflect on your practices, but it sounds like you do so a lot.

Ms. MacDonald: Yeah, I' m a very reflective person. I was a reflective teacher and I always did post-activities, now I'm a reflective principal and I think about how I get in the schools or how I get certain teachers to do things in other ways. I think you have to get into that perspective and ask how do I get these teachers into it. There are teachers who couldn't give a damn and are out the door at 3 pm. You have to reflect to grow and I think that every year I become a better principal because I learn and I ask myself if I handled things properly and reflect on what I did. So yeah, I'm reflective and I think that principals need to be reflective. I reflect on how to do my job, and abdicate responsibility but yet be responsible for everything. I really don't know. I really rely on my VP and I guess I'm lucky there. I f I didn't have someone like Tony, I don't know what I would do. Its like our IBO coordinator, she's just wonderful. I really don't have to do anything.

She'll come to me and say, "Okay, these are the kids that have to be thrown out of this program», however when the parents call, its me they talk to. See you've always got to keep your hands in every possible pot and its difficult. So that reflection, how you do that, and how you manage it is incredibly. It takes dedication, and dedication from the students and the staff as well. You want to be there for the parents, and they're there after school hours, but you want to be there for the kids and they are there during school hours, so it's quite the challenge.

Me: I know that the IBO program has a lot to do with the community, but do you feel that the school as a whole, do you feel that you are part of the community?

Ms. MacDonald: It's funny, I don't live in this community. There is a very different mentality when I look at the high school my daughter went to, and I see that they interact in a different way, a totally different mentality. I think overall, whether we're here or in Lasalle or Vincent Massey or Royal West, parents want their children to succeed and kids are kids, and that's universal. So, the community aspect, I think at this level, is to get kids to realize that they do have responsibilities to themselves but also to their community, which doesn't have to mean the city around them, this is their community right now. At this age, they don't go out to do community service, their community service means babysitting or dog sitting or dealing with the school, but part of it is trying to get kids to learn. We have a responsibility to our fellow man and I think for the most part some of them have got it, and on the large level, like raising funds for tsunami victims, and they'll do it, but if the classroom is a microcosm for the community and you have kids who are in the back acting up, and then when they come to your office, all of a sudden they're not talking and you realize the fact that maybe the guy beside you needs to listen? They don't yet understand that that their talking in the back is stopping another's learning. They can't get that yet, and that's something we're really working on here. We try to get them to understand the repercussions of their actions. So, they'll go to the large community, and we're working on the rest.

Me: Okay, do you feel that your practices as a principal can make a difference to society at large?

Ms. MacDonald: I'd like to think so. As a principal you're less involved with the kids unfortunately. You're there for the ideas and to oversee how people implement these ideas but as a principal you can sit back and say "My ideas are like this and I've got the right people in place to carry them out." But I like to think that when I was a teacher that that there was a kid who I made a difference to. I feel that as a vice principal, some of them I helped too. I love going to Laurier and seeing them now. My group is graduating now; the first group that I saw when I switched to John Paul is graduating now. There were a couple there that always came to my office, and I like to think that whatever I said to them, that I believed in them and told them that they can be right, that it made a difference. I like to think that the way I've made a difference, and some of the teachers tell me that I have made a difference, although I don't know it. They tell me that although I don't notice it, the school is cleaner, I find the money for them, and I come up with good ideas and change the schedules, that's there's more international stuff going on. So

they say that I have made a difference, but people don't come up to you everyday and say that. I always hear the parents complaining. I usually have 6 parents waiting in line, but then you also have the other parents who tell me that I'm always there and that they say I say 'hello and how can I help you' and that wasn't there before. So you're hoping to make a difference, and sometimes you do and sometimes you don't. It's like teaching, especially if you're doing journaling, you can see how a kid has learned to write over time. But it doesn't happen right away, you see it over time.

Me: So, you spoke a little bit about changing teachers blocking or scheduling. What is your approach to making a change like that?

Ms. MacDonald: I won't do anything without my staff. I don't have to, I run this organization but I don't know the collective agreement like the back of my hand (I refer to Tony for that, my VP knows more about that than I do) and if it means pulling back, then I do. Like this year, we were trying to make a change but if didn't suit everyone so it was modified.

Me: That would be through staff council?

Ms. MacDonald: My staff council really don't like to, I mean I'll mention it to staff council but if they feel that they're not comfortable in advising me on it, I go to full staff and we do a silent vote. If the vote is not the way I want it to go, then I'll take their answers, usually we have a little discussion before hand because sometimes teachers do have very good ideas, so I take their ideas and say 'okay, I've done this, lets vote again.' I've been very lucky, they went to a 9-day schedule with me. They know that I go to bat for them. You give, you get. I just have to say, 'I need you' and they're there, so give and get, that's the way I run this school.

Me: If you wanted to do something, like start the school day at 9 instead of 8 am, and you went to he staff and they were supportive of this change, what would be the course of action at that point?

Ms. MacDonald: In the case where the teachers think it's a great idea, we'd discuss it on our Wed mornings (which is not the purpose of our Wed mornings but if I have to meet with the teachers anyway, why get them in a bad mood by having them stay after school?). So, the person who suggested it, can present it to the staff and if they are supportive, then I look at the budget. If its something like your example that would require the governing board then it would go to the governing board. It depends what it is. You always have to look at the global picture. Our governing board would have to okay it and so would pedagogical services. Actually I'd probably go to my regional director first and then you have to fill out a validation form and send it in to student services. You try, everyone thinks that their idea is good, and you try to listen to them, but if you don't follow up on it, you still have to make them feel validated.

Me: I just want to make sure that I covered all the questions. I think I have indirectly. I just wanted to thank you again.

Ms. MacDonald: That's okay, it gave me a nice break from all this.

Extra: Conversation not a part of the interview

Ms. MacDonald: I taught about ten years and then I was a pedagogical consultant. The board says 5 years to become a principal, but knowing the teachers, I think the longer you're in the classroom and the more exposure you have to these types of problems the more credibility you get. I think the longer you're in a classroom and the exposure gives you a lot of knowledge for when you're a principal. I know that my experiences working with the board help me as a principal. I bring that, my understanding of how the board works, to the school, so that I know how they can help. I'm not as skeptical about asking them for help as some are, because I did it. So, when you've done the job, you get the credibility. It's also really important for the parents too.

From a feminist perspective, that's the hardest. Women are trying to do what men or nuns did 20 years ago, and yet we're still maintaining our responsibility to be homemakers and primary caregivers at home. It becomes a conflict. You'll reach a time when you have your own children and you say that you can't work late tonight, because I have to be with my children. We're busy telling parents that they have to be there for their kids, but where are you? You're at school., and I think that is hard for a single mom, or even a double income family. The ones with adult children or the ones without any kids at all tend to be here. I took a week off the last week of school, and I thought my regional director was going to have a fit. My son was playing in a baseball tournament and was the only team from Canada. I was not going to miss that. That pull is strong. I have an 18 year old; thank god she's at home. She had a hard time finding a summer job and so I said "Don't kill yourself, I'll pay you to stay at home and watch out for your brother, so that I can be here." For women it is a very tough job, to find that time for family and for work. And now, young fathers, they have to go home too. It's not only women. That's the hardest thing.

Me: Has it been hard for you as a women principal? Do you find that the parents/teachers accept your authority?

Ms. MacDonald: There has been a lot of times where they assume it's the man. The parents say, "I was speaking with the principal.." and I say "No, I'm the principal." They assume that Tony is the principal. I think that that sometimes, I guess its my bias and I think people would argue with me, but being a parent and having what I call a kinesthetic child, who comes home with a lot of notes in his agenda, I think that's given me an insight into kids and what parents feel at home. My daughter is an IBO graduate so I've seen the work from the parent's perspective. I think that adds the heart into your community, trying to see it from the parents' perspective. What does that mean? Well, it's easy with someone you don't know, but when you see the community side of the job, I think that if there is anything that they can't teach you, it's to see the parents, because

they love these kids. Somebody loves these little human beings and that part you always have to remember. You've got to understand that.

Me: Its been interesting for me to interview these principals and see how each one of them can be categorized as for example "putting the students' happiness first", or "Academic excellence first" or, "the teachers' happiness first", but what I am understanding from you, is that you are putting "people first' by saying remember the heart, remember the families.

Ms. MacDonald: I think that is a female response, if you look at Nevio. He's black and white, whereas, while I admire that, I still see grey. I'll see a kid come in and I've only cried twice in this office. There's this little boy and Tony gets him to do pushups, because he's got too much energy. NO matter what, he's here everyday. And I have called student services because I just don't know what to do with him. And we've had him tested, and there's nothing there. Intellectually he's fine and he's not codable, but we just don't know what to do with him. I called student services and there is no answer. I thought that this boy needs help, and that's when I cried. And I think that that is the women side of me, that I care about their marks, I want them to succeed. Also I care about how they feel. I want them to succeed, but they're not going to succeed it they don't feel good about themselves and I think that's the real feminist contribution. To see beyond, to see that you have a failing kid, but to see the situation around why he is failing. Maybe the grandmother passed away and she was the maternal figure. Somehow you have to know these things. It's not black and white. We're all human and we all need care. The guidance counselor, the caretakers, the teachers, we're all humans first and that needs to be dealt with first.