

Women in Educational Leadership Needs Assessment Survey





The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Preface

A significant body of literature shows that, for women, the ability to advance within their chosen careers is fraught with challenges, resulting in what is commonly referred to as the “glass ceiling” effect. The “glass ceiling” refers to a situation in which women cannot, in spite of aspiring to, attain leadership positions in their careers. The “glass ceiling” is explained in the research by factors such as gender bias, gender discrimination and structural/cultural impediments that are present in most workplaces. In addition, the “glass ceiling” effect is compounded by the acceptance and promotion of a model of leadership based on an ideal that excludes the traits and attributes we associate with women. Bierema (2016) explained that the “leadership literature has long been dominated by representations of the ideal leader as an individual who operates within a culture- and value-free space, possesses masculine traits, and is, ideally, male.” (p 121).

The Women in Educational Leadership Needs Assessment report explores what Alberta teachers think about gender discrimination in the teaching profession and how it manifests within both school jurisdictions and the Alberta Teachers’ Association (the “Association”).

At the present time, 74 per cent of Association membership is female. However, a significant gap exists between the number of women in the teaching profession and the number of women who hold positions of leadership in the teaching profession. In response, the Association, through the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) committee, struck a subcommittee in 2018 to develop a research plan relating to the experiences and obstacles women face when considering or entering into leadership positions. The subcommittee decided first to conduct a needs assessment to help inform the development of a research plan. This report is the result of that work and, with the formation of a standing Women in Leadership Committee in the 2019 school year, will inform the continuing research agenda for that committee.

This research report represents a collaborative and collective effort on the part of field members, Provincial Executive Council, Association staff and a university researcher. The Women in Leadership DEHR subcommittee (namely Kathy Hoehn [chair], Andrea Berg, Sonja Dykslag, Konni deGoeij, Crystal Atkinson, Michelle Glavine and Heather Quinn) was responsible for helping Lisa Everitt, an executive staff officer with the Association, to define the survey instrument. Jason Daniels, PhD, of the University of Alberta, analyzed the qualitative data collected via the survey instrument while Everitt synthesized the evidence collected and authored this report. Finally, Judith Plumb, Joan Steinbrenner and the document production team at the Association edited and produced the report in its final form.

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Critical to the success of the project were the 714 teachers, both male and female, who took the time to complete the Women in Educational Leadership Needs Assessment Survey. Their responses and comments to the questions posed provided important information about life in schools and the Association. This Association research document paints a compelling picture of how gender actualizes within both schools and the Association and points the way to a more gender-competent teaching profession.

Dennis Theobald
Executive Secretary

Executive Summary

The Women in Educational Leadership Needs Assessment Survey was designed to answer three primary research questions related to the experience of gender and leadership in education. The first area of exploration was how Alberta teachers perceived gender discrimination in school divisions and the Alberta Teachers Association (the “Association”), as well as how gender discrimination was experienced. Second, teachers were asked to identify barriers to leadership for women in education; and third, an examination of supports for women in leadership was conducted.

The Women in Educational Leadership Needs Assessment Survey was an open online survey; local presidents and local DEHR chairs were encouraged to circulate the link to the survey to teachers. The survey ran from April 9 until April 30, 2019, and was completed by 714 teachers. As this survey was an open survey and was a convenience sample, the sample size, while large, is not representative of the population of teachers in Alberta. Nevertheless, the results of this survey, which is much like a pilot study, are helpful to better understanding of the issues women face with respect to career advancement.

The findings and analysis of the data provided helpful insight into the three research questions posed by the Association. First, the data suggests that gender discrimination is a factor affecting both men and women in schools and the Association, though men and women have different perspectives on the way that gender discrimination impacts career progression and advancement. Jason Daniels, PhD, from the University of Alberta, analyzed the qualitative data on how teachers experienced gender discrimination and career progression. Three main categories were distilled from Daniels’s thematic analysis and a survey of the literature: normative gatekeeping, gender stereotyping and work/family balance. The findings paint a compelling picture; they challenge us to consider the gendered nature of workplaces in education and encourage us to become more gender competent as individuals and organizations.

The survey also helps to identify barriers women face when considering Association involvement and/or school leadership. The top barriers for women with respect to Association involvement were family commitments, a lack of encouragement to run for elected positions and, finally, a perception that women candidates would not be taken as seriously as male candidates. The top three barriers to school leadership for women were family commitments, not wanting to leave classroom teaching and concerns about the time it takes to be a school leader.

The top supports for women in educational leadership were also identified; these included the establishment of networks of support for aspiring leaders across the province, training opportunities at Association-sponsored events, and support and publication of the work of teachers studying

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women in leadership in Alberta. The Women in Educational Needs Assessment Survey also provides inspiration and hope: when respondents were asked about the gender composition their leadership teams should have, the majority preferred a gender-balanced leadership team. This study is an important first step in helping the teaching profession understand how to become gender competent so that more women can be promoted to positions of leadership within school jurisdictions and the Association.

Introduction and Research Questions

It is well established that teaching is a feminized profession. In Canada and elsewhere, “teaching, once a predominantly male occupation, almost entirely comprised women as a result of the rapid expansion of public education during the early part of the 20th century” (Jull 2002, 51). In modern times and internationally, Drudy (2008) wrote, “policy documents emanating from the OECD, and from the EU, acknowledge the fact that in most member countries the teaching profession is characterised by gender imbalances” (p 309) where the number of women is greater than the number of men.

Alberta’s teaching population mirrors the feminization seen in most other parts of the world. In addition, the number of women in the teaching profession in Alberta increased over the past few decades. To illustrate, the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s 1976 *Report of the Committee on the Role and Status of Women* indicated that Association membership was 54 per cent female and 46 per cent male; in 2017, the Alberta Teachers’ Retirement Fund’s annual report (p 4) reported that 26 per cent of active teachers were male and 74 per cent of active teachers were female.

Even though the teaching profession is largely female, the proportion of women in positions of leadership is much lower, particularly at the highest levels of leadership (Grogan and Shakeshaft 2011). “Women are overrepresented in teaching and in the elementary principalship in relation to their proportions in the population as a whole ... and underrepresented in the secondary principalship and the superintendency” (Shakeshaft 1998, 11). In Alberta, Magnusson (2017) pointed out, “While 74 per cent of Alberta teachers are female, the same can be said of only 41 per cent of principals, 44 per cent of assistant and/or deputy superintendents and only 11 per cent of superintendents” (para 9). The Association’s senior levels of leadership do not fare much better; for example, the 2019 Provincial Executive Council, comprising 19 elected representatives and the executive secretary, reflects 65 per cent men and 35 per cent women. Over the course of its history, the Association has had 8 out of 55, or 15 per cent, provincial presidents who were female (www.teachers.ab.ca/About%20the%20ATA/WhoWeAre/Pages/ProvincialExecutiveCouncil.aspx). The persistent gap in representation of women in positions of leadership both abroad and here in Alberta leads to the question, why is this so? We cannot move forward in resolving the issues facing women in educational leadership until we fully understand the challenges they face.

To consider the question of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership and the associated status of women within the Alberta teaching profession, during the 2018/19 school year, the Diversity, Equity, and Human Rights (DEHR) Committee of the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) struck a Women in Leadership subcommittee. The mandate of the subcommittee included the development of a research plan to investigate the experiences and obstacles affecting women in

educational leadership. The research plan focused on women in educational leadership in both the Association and public school jurisdictions.

The Women in Leadership subcommittee began the development of a research agenda by reviewing the work already conducted by the Association. The Association has been involved with surveys since the 1970s, and the Women in Leadership subcommittee was able to refer to a 1976 opinionnaire that examined the “situation of women both in education and in the Association” (ATA 1976, 2). Given that several decades had elapsed since the 1976 opinionnaire, the Women in Leadership subcommittee felt that it was important to better understand the perspective of Alberta teachers in the present day prior to launching more formally into any specific research agenda. Therefore, the subcommittee determined that it would be appropriate to administer a needs assessment survey to answer the following three research questions:

1. Do teachers perceive that discrimination based on gender exists in school divisions and in the Association?
2. What barriers do women face in terms of leadership positions in school divisions and / or the Association?
3. What supports might the Association provide to assist women who aspire to positions of leadership in school divisions and / or the Association?

A *needs assessment* is a “a diagnostic process that relies on data collection and analysis, collaboration, and negotiation to identify and understand gaps in learning and performance and to determine future actions” (Sleezer, Rus-Eft and Gupta 2014, 17–18), and a *need* is defined to be the discrepancy between what is and what should be (Witkin and Altschuld 1995). The committee engaged in a three-part process to conduct its needs assessment (Witkin and Altschuld 1995). The first phase of the project was to consider and explore the current landscape in terms of women in the Alberta teaching profession. It was during this first phase that the Women in Educational Leadership (WIEL) needs survey was developed and administered. The second phase is represented by this report, which presents and analyzes the data from the needs survey. The third phase of the WIEL needs assessment survey will be to consider the compelling questions arising from the WIEL survey to inform and develop a research agenda for the Association moving into the future.

While the WIEL survey is not formal academic research per se, the survey results revealed strong connections to the existing literature about gender and leadership in the workplace generally and in the K–12 education system specifically. This report will provide an overview of the literature of gender and work, a description of the methodology for the survey, a summary of the findings combined with an analysis of the literature, and concluding thoughts.

Gender, the Workplace and Leadership

McMullin and Dryburgh (2011) argue that workplaces are not gender neutral and that “many workplaces resist accommodations for women and instead require that women fit into the structure of organizational rules and expectations developed around the ‘worker’ who, until recently, has probably been a man” (p 7). Scholars have studied the rise of a masculine ideal for what a worker should be, linking it back to the early part of the 20th century “when the predominance of paid work transitioned from familial centered into the public sphere” (McClintock-Comeaux 2013, 403). At that time, men engaged in paid work outside of the home while women worked at home in an unpaid role. This arrangement gave rise to the conceptualization of what constituted an ideal worker in which “the man was afforded the opportunity to demonstrate his complete commitment to work, in whatever avenue was required, including arriving early, leaving late, not taking time off, and staying focused on the paid work all day” (McClintock-Comeaux 2013, 403). The complete and utter devotion of a worker to their job was made possible by having someone at home who took care of what was perceived as the domestic work.

However, in the 21st century, there are more women in the workforce than ever. In a report for Statistics Canada, Moyser (2017) reported that 82 per cent of women aged 25 to 54 participated in the workforce in 2015, representing an increase of 60.4 per cent from 1950, when only 21.6 per cent of women aged 25 to 54 participated in the workforce. The greater number of women in the workforce has not, however, translated into a more equitable or diverse leadership profile across many occupations. In fact, “several types of research have confirmed the hypothesis that women have less access to leadership roles than men” (Eagly 2003, 159). The lack of opportunity for women to progress into leadership positions in the workplace is attributable to biases and gender stereotypes and the surprisingly durable adoption of the ideal worker model for leadership as the standard for hiring decisions (Chisholm-Burns et al 2017; Criado-Perez 2019; Eagly 2003). Research points to expectations and traditional gender roles having an impact on the ability of women to succeed in leadership (Alpern 2016). Although women continue to take on more responsibility outside the home, the amount of responsibility in the home for women has not decreased.

The inability of women to reach the highest levels of leadership is often referred to as a “glass ceiling,” defined as an “invisible barrier that many women face as they advance through the ranks of their chosen professions but are able to progress only so far before being stymied in their efforts to reach the upper echelons” (Chisholm-Burns et al 2017, 312). Even when women adopt traditionally male strategies to advance their careers, it does not appear to help. For example, Catalyst, a global nonprofit dedicated to advancing women in the workplace, reported that in a study of 3,345 high-potential workers who were graduates of a full-time MBA program, “the findings are clear: even

when women stay on a traditional career path and ‘do all the right things,’ that they’re unlikely to advance as far or earn as much as their male counterparts” (Carter and Silva 2011, 13). The result of the adoption of male norms characterizing the ideal worker have caused detrimental effects on women because “gender relations structure paid work and unpaid work in such a way that there remains a wage gap, a glass ceiling, and an imbalance in the domestic labour performed by men and women” (McMullin and Dryburg 2011, 11). However, an optimistic but pragmatic perspective is warranted: it is possible for organizations to address imbalances in the representation of women in leadership because “inequality regimes are not static; rather, they transform over time, and in response to interactions among individuals, shifting social and economic circumstance, and as a result of human agency and interaction” (McMullin and Dryburg 2011, 12).

SCHOOL DIVISIONS AND SCHOOLS ARE GENDERED WORKPLACES

School divisions and schools reflect patterns of society, and the leadership gap between men and women exists in education as well. Within the context of the K–12 education system, Bascia and Young (2001) explained that “the gendered patterns and assumptions related to elementary and secondary teaching are longstanding and pervasive, and they have been constructed into differential career opportunities” for women in teaching (p 275). The gendered nature of the workforce and schools has implications for both men and women working within those environments; Jull (2002) pointed out that “gender is a powerful and often unaccounted factor affecting schools, teachers, students, and whole communities” (p 48). The literature in educational studies still has gaps in understanding the role that gender plays in terms of educational leadership. Shakeshaft (1989) wrote that “research in educational administration has largely looked at the male experience” (p 324); more recently, Sperandio (2015) noted that “the ongoing research (in the U.S. and elsewhere) in the slow progress made by women in educational leadership has done little more than clarify and confirm the nature of the existing barriers that aspiring women leaders face” (p 416). This suggests that there is much work to be done in terms of understanding how women in education experience their career progression and how barriers to advancement might be deconstructed to allow for a more inclusive and representative profession at all levels of the teaching profession. This research report aims to contribute to a better understanding of the experience of women in leadership in Alberta, it raises many more questions for a prospective research agenda, and it points to practical solutions that might help female teachers engage with educational leadership opportunities in both the Association and school jurisdictions.

Methods

The WIEL needs assessment survey was developed with the aim to better understand the perceptions of Alberta teachers and school leaders with respect to women in leadership. The project was focused on understanding three research questions:

1. Do teachers perceive that discrimination based on gender exists in school divisions and in the Association?
2. What barriers do women face in terms of leadership positions in school divisions and / or the Association?
3. What supports might the Association provide to assist women who aspire to positions of leadership in school divisions and / or the Association?

The Women in Leadership subcommittee chose to use a web-based survey using the platform Survey Gizmo because it was felt that “survey research has the advantage of allowing the researcher to collect information from a large number of people” (Mertens and McLaughlin 2004, 83) and the goal was to attract as many participants from the Association membership as possible. In addition, a simple descriptive approach was adopted as appropriate because the survey was administered only once during a limited time period (Mertens and McLaughlin 2004).

The WIEL needs assessment survey was developed during the winter of 2019; the questions used incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data responses. The nature of the questions posed on the WIEL needs assessment survey was influenced by the literature as well as prior research conducted by the Association, most notably the 1976 *Report of the Committee on the Role and Status of Women*. The WIEL needs assessment survey was provided in its draft form to both the Women in Leadership subcommittee and the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights committee for their comments and feedback prior to being launched. The final version of the WIEL needs assessment survey can be found in Appendix A.

The WIEL needs assessment survey was an open survey, and memos were sent to local presidents and local DEHR chairs with the survey link. Local presidents and DEHR chairs were encouraged to circulate the link to the survey to all Association members. The survey ran from April 9 to April 30, 2019, and was accessed by 940 respondents and fully completed by 714 participants.

In this report, the analysis of the quantitative data is reported using descriptive statistics as well as cross-tabulation of significant relationships between participants' gender identity and concepts captured by the WIEL needs assessment survey. In addition, the quantitative data is supplemented with thematic qualitative data analysis provided by Jason Daniels, PhD, and is included in Appendix B. Finally, the data results from the WIEL needs assessment survey are connected to the literature on women in leadership to help develop more fulsome responses to the research questions.

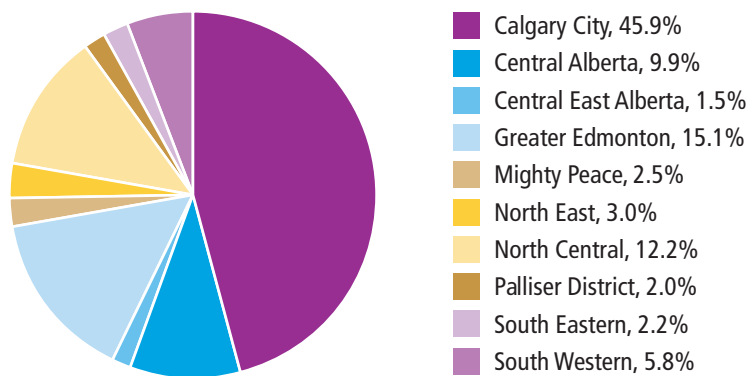
Limitations of the WIEL Needs Assessment Survey

The WIEL needs assessment survey was an open survey that relied on participants to self-select in terms of completing the survey. As such, the sample for the WIEL needs assessment survey was a convenience sample, not randomized. In addition, there is an overweighting of respondents from the Calgary City Teachers' Convention area. Finally, the sample is not representative of the gender composition of Association members: a higher percentage of women responded to the WIEL survey than are present in the general teaching population. Consequently, the results of this survey should be read with caution, and it should be noted that it is not possible to generalize the findings of the WIEL needs assessment survey to the general population of Alberta teachers (Creswell 2014). However, because the WIEL needs assessment survey was intended to act similarly to an environmental scan of the Alberta landscape in terms of discrimination, barriers and supports for women in leadership, the findings of this report are helpful because they paint a picture that helps illustrate the issues Alberta teachers who are women face with respect to their career advancement. Further, when the findings of the WIEL needs assessment survey are considered alongside other studies from the literature, the results of this study are compelling.

Demographics of Respondents to the WIEL Needs Assessment Survey

The geographic participant breakdown is shown below.

Figure 1.



The majority of participants indicated that they worked in an urban setting (64.3 per cent), followed by 16.3 per cent who worked in a small town, 10.4 per cent who worked in a rural setting and 9.0 per cent who worked in a suburban setting.

The majority of participants identified as female (87.8 per cent) while 9 per cent identified as male, 0.1 per cent identified as transgender, 0.3 per cent identified as other and 2.8 per cent preferred not to answer. The teaching experience of the participants is shown in the frequency distribution below

Table 1

Teaching Experience	Percentage
0–5 years	10.7%
6–10 years	21.1%
11–15 years	21.2%
16–20 years	20.5%
21+ years	26.4%

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In addition, approximately 31.2 per cent of respondents held leadership positions; either school based or jurisdiction based. Within this group, 33.8 per cent were vice, associate or assistant principals; 25.7 per cent were principals; 12.2 per cent were school jurisdiction leaders; and the remainder, 28.4 per cent, held a variety of positions, most prominently learning coaches or department heads. The majority of participants were relatively new to their leadership role, with just over half in the first five years of their leadership experience. Table 2 shows the participation frequency distribution by leadership experience.

Table 2

Leadership Experience	
0–5 years	54.0%
6–10 years	26.6%
11–15 years	10.4%
16–20 years	6.3%
21+ years	2.7%

Findings and Data Analysis

DISCRIMINATION

When asked about whether discrimination based on gender exists in schools and in the Association, most participants replied that there was discrimination evident in schools. However, the majority of respondents indicated that they were unsure about discrimination in the Association. The lack of clarity with respect to gender-based discrimination in the Association is unsurprising because a majority of participants (52.8 per cent) indicated that they did not participate in their locals or provincial Association. Given the complex structure of the Association and its locals, it may not have been easy for participants to discern if discrimination exists. The results of the perception of discrimination on the basis of gender in schools and the Association is shown below.

Table 3. Discrimination based on gender in schools and the Association 2019

Discrimination in	Yes	No	Unsure
Schools	60.5%	24.2%	15.2%
The Association	24.7%	32.8%	42.5%

When cross-tabulations were run comparing the perceptions of males and females with respect to discrimination in schools and the Association, the results were statistically significant for schools. These results showed divergence of opinion between men and women surveyed. The results of this cross-tabulation are shown below.

Table 4

Discrimination in Schools	Yes	No	Unsure
Men	45.0%	42.2%	12.5%
Women	63.4%	22.5%	14.0%

Interestingly, a 2019 article in *Canadian HR Reporter* stated, “When asked why there aren’t more women in leadership roles, almost two-thirds of women (62 per cent) identify gender discrimination as a factor, while only 41 per cent of men held the same view, found the survey of 2,000 workers by Randstad Canada” (para 4). The cross-tabulated results from the WIEL needs assessment survey are very similar to what was reported by Randstad Canada. The similarity between the studies suggests that from the perspective of women, gender-based discrimination is an issue more strongly perceived by women than men. It is also interesting that the proportion of women who

perceived discrimination to be a factor in the workplace and in schools is nearly the same on both the WIEL needs assessment survey and the Randstad survey. The results from both studies are well summarized by Shakeshaft (1989), who suggested that “one’s gender identification has a tremendous influence on behaviour, perceptions, and effectiveness” (p 326).

The WIEL needs assessment survey also tested participants’ perceptions of the ability of both males and females to advance to a leadership position in the school system. Three dimensions of the ability to advance into leadership roles were considered: do males have a greater opportunity, do females have a greater opportunity, and is the opportunity for males and females to advance the same?

Table 5

Do you believe	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Not Sure	Agree/Strongly Agree
Men have a greater chance of advancement	33.9%	11.7%	54.4%
Women have a greater chance of advancement	67.6%	18.9%	13.5%
Men and women have an equal chance of advancement	49.6%	14.7%	35.6%

The results of this question indicate that, overall, women and men do not experience the same chance to advance into leadership positions. In another Association-sponsored study, *Alberta School Leadership Within the Teaching Profession 2019* (ATA 2019), school leaders were asked whether “securing a leadership position is easier for men” (p 61). Overall, 16 per cent of respondents agreed it was easier for men to secure a leadership position; however, when the results were disaggregated by males and females, 30 per cent of females agreed that securing leadership positions was easier for men while 0.4 per cent of men agreed this was the case. For the WIEL needs assessment survey, the cross-tabulation of how males and females viewed the chances of advancement by gender reveals similarities to the ATA’s 2019 study. In fact, cross-tabulation for each dimension seems to suggest that males and females perceive opportunity for advancement differently. The results are shown below.

Table 6

Do you believe men have a greater chance of advancement?	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Not Sure	Agree/Strongly Agree
Males	64.6%	9.7%	25.8%
Females	30.2%	10.7%	59.1%

Table 7

Do you believe women have a greater chance of advancement?	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Not Sure	Agree/Strongly Agree
Males	54.9%	14.5%	30.7%
Females	60.2%	18.2%	11.5%

Table 8

Do you believe men and women have an equal chance of advancement?	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Not Sure	Agree/Strongly Agree
Males	32.2%	11.3%	56.4%
Females	52.3%	15.0%	32.7%

These cross-tabulation results showing the differences between men and women and their perception of gender, discrimination and career advancement advance the argument that a gendered lens should be adopted for organizations such as school divisions and the Association. The data illustrates that men and women do not perceive discrimination and opportunity for advancement in the same way. This data pushes organizations to “become more gender competent – that is, understand and talk about how gendered power relations impact interpersonal dynamics, decisions, and development” (Bierema 2016, 132).

To supplement the quantitative data on the perception of discrimination in schools and the Association, two open-ended questions were included in the WIEL needs assessment survey. The first asked participants to explain how gender discrimination in schools is experienced, and the second asked participants to explain how gender discrimination in the Association is experienced. The qualitative responses were thematically analyzed by Jason Daniels, PhD, and shown in Appendix B. The qualitative results help shed light on how teacher participants described gender-based discrimination in schools and the Association. The table below combines the results to illustrate how discrimination manifests itself in both schools and the Association.

Table 9. Discrimination in Schools and the Association: Key Themes

Theme	Frequency ¹	Frequency ²
Males overrepresented in leadership positions	156	46
Men treated with more respect than women	114	24
Balancing family with work	0	19
Negative attitudes towards women	91	12
“Old Boy’s Club”	64	13
Maternity/pregnancy concerns	58	0
Bullying/misogyny/harassment	16	0
Lack of males in elementary leads to preferential hiring	15	0
Cultural bias	14	11
Different expectations for females	11	0
Males treated unfairly	10	0
Women not encouraged to run for positions	0	9

1. Frequency—Discrimination in Schools (n=416)

2. Frequency—Discrimination in Association (n= 132)

In the discussion that follows, the themes identified by Daniels will be distilled and assembled into three main categories: normative gatekeeping, gender stereotyping and work/family balance.

Normative Gatekeeping

Normative gatekeeping refers to the acceptance of a normalized model of leadership and the processes put in place to ensure that the accepted standard for leadership is maintained and replicated (Newton 2006; Sperandio 2015; Tallericco 2000). Bierema (2016) explained that “leadership literature has long been dominated by representation of the *ideal* leader as an individual who operates within a culture- and value-free space, possesses masculine traits, and is, ideally, male” (p 121). Normative gatekeeping and the reliance on an ideal leader model are evident in the data for this study. The participants identified three ways that they experienced normative gate keeping practices: overrepresentation of men in leadership positions, preferential hiring practices and mentorship opportunities. Participants also revealed how these practices affected them and shed light on why the majority of participants agreed that gender-based discrimination exists in the Association and in school jurisdictions.

Overrepresentation of Men in Leadership

For many of the respondents to the WIEL needs assessment survey, discrimination based on gender was evident because of the imbalance of the numbers of men and women in positions of leadership in relation to the overall population of teachers. For example, one participant noted,

My school district is notorious for their superintendents, supervisors, principals and others in leadership positions to hire their “buddies” for positions when they are not necessarily the best-qualified candidate. The reputation of the “Old Boys Club” is very apparent. A majority of those in leadership positions are male and they are white. That is not an appropriate representation of the teachers, staff and students in our school district.

Another participant wrote that it was clear that discrimination existed in the Association when one “look[ed] at the long list of privileged white men who have held positions of power in the ATA.” These illustrative comments identify several specific characteristics of those in leadership that might help explain whether the ideal leader model is replicated within the Alberta school system. Participants identified first that the leaders are male, second that the men in positions of leadership form tight-knit groups among themselves to encourage and perpetuate the advancement of men into positions of leadership, and third that leaders are predominately white.

The question of how status quo is maintained in organizations is explained by Chase and Bell (1990), who, after reviewing the literature, argued that “gatekeepers contribute to the persistence of these barriers is a central argument of these studies: men in positions of power control the formal and informal sites of hiring, decision making, power-brokering, and sponsorship” (p 164). The data from the WIEL needs assessment survey is consistent with the conclusions reached by Chase and Bell (1990). The increase of women in academia and in leadership has allowed for a greater exploration into the role of gender and leadership (Grogan and Shakeshaft 2011); however, much of this current research is defined as androcentric: “The practice of viewing the world and shaping reality through a male lens” (Shakeshaft 1989, 325).

In the next section, participants identified that in addition to the replication of the ideal (male) leader in school jurisdictions and the Association, they were aware of preferential hiring practices as well as the establishment of informal mentoring networks to encourage new recruits into positions of educational leadership.

Preferential Hiring Practices

Blackmore, Thomson and Barty (2006) conducted a study in which they examined the perception of merit-based hiring processes and procedures for principal selection in Australia; they wrote that “it is evident that something has gone wrong with merit selection to produce such widespread disenchantment with the system” (p 298). The disillusionment referenced was due, in part, to their own finding that there was a clear preference on the part of hiring committees to select candidates who possessed known quantities despite stated goals to increase diversity within the principal leadership group. Blackmore, Thomson and Barty suggest that “the vexed technologies of selection have a tendency to become a ‘reproduction’ model, in which those who do not fit a ‘normalized principal identity’ are excluded. That which is known or familiar can be called homosociability” (p 309). The notion of meritocracy is challenged by homosociability and “the implication is that

behind the façade of a meritocratic system based on excellence, there are inequities and irrationalities that require strategic action (agency) in order for the players to survive and prosper” (Acker 2010, 144).

The qualitative comments of the participant group revealed a perception that unfair practices were implemented in hiring for leadership positions in both school jurisdictions and the Association. For example, one participant wrote that

Priority appears to be given to male leaders to become promoted at the school level and at the central office level. Men without a master’s degree, which is apparently “mandatory” to move to certain levels, frequently climb the ranks of administration before women who have already earned a master’s degree.

There were several comments that talked about differential educational qualifications with respect to hiring males compared to hiring females. In addition, participants noted discriminatory practices in leadership selection with respect to experience levels. One participant shared that “women have to prove themselves more to achieve status or recognition. I have seen several men move up the ladder quickly with less years of experience or being less qualified than the female counterpart.” Finally, the quality of applicants’ skill sets was raised within the qualitative data. This is exemplified by the participant comment that “women who have clearly demonstrated strong leadership skills, such as integrity, flexibility, communication, organization, [and] team and community building, are consistently overlooked.” At minimum, the comments in the qualitative data indicate that there may be differing expectations for men and women who aspire to leadership positions within school jurisdictions or the Association, and this gives rise to the potential for a critical examination of school jurisdiction and Association hiring processes. Whether the perception of unfair hiring practices is attributable to homosociability is not clear, but when combined with the data concerning formal and informal mentoring opportunities for men and women in education, it appears that homosociability holds potential to explain why there is an imbalance in the numbers of men and women in educational leadership positions in Alberta.

Mentorship Opportunities

Mentoring is “a highly recognized and accepted strategy for attracting, developing, and sustaining leaders across the education sector and beyond” (Robinson, Horan and Nanavati 2009, 35). The qualitative data from this survey revealed that respondents identified differential opportunities for mentorship in their own career paths primarily on the basis of gender. The following quotes demonstrate how participants experienced accessing mentorship opportunities on an informal basis.

Women can be excluded from team bonding or social opportunities with their colleagues, particularly with conversations around sports. Many times, even if a woman does know or is interested in sports, she is excluded from conversations with male colleagues. Women can also be excluded during meetings if there are more men than women. (Participant comment)

I've seen male leaders develop friendship and be "bros" with male colleagues, who then rise to their own leadership positions—women are not invited to their golf outings and drinks. (Participant comment)

Female teachers are not encouraged to learn about the running of the school. I never found a mentor even though I looked. (Participant comment)

Elected positions regularly go to men and there is no encouragement for women to apply. This is especially applicable to women with families. (Participant comment)

The exclusion of women from social opportunities such as events, activities and conversations described by participants helps illustrate that there may be lack of access to important networking opportunities for women. Many of the participants responding to this survey remarked on the "old boys club," and the data here suggests that the gendered nature of schools reflects a social milieu in which men and women operate in a segregated fashion. In addition, the data reveals that finding mentorship supports is not necessarily clear for female teachers. Eagly and Carli (2007) noted that "breaking into those male networks can be hard, especially when men center their networks on masculine activities" (p 69), and it is particularly confounding when access to those networks of support is informal and not obviously visible. The lack of access to social opportunities and mentors and its connection to career progression of women in education is not fully understood, but when combined with evidence that men occupy positions of leadership and power, the WIEL needs assessment study suggests that the establishment of gender-segregated social networks may help male teachers to raise their profiles within educational organizations more readily than women can.

Gender Stereotyping

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (2014) explained that "a *gender stereotype* is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that are or should be performed by men and women" (para 1). The Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe, in its *Gender Equality Glossary* (2016), explained how "stereotypes about women both result from, and are the cause of, deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices against women. They are used to justify and maintain the historical relations of power of men over women as well as sexist attitudes that hold back the advancement of women." Participants in this study identified that gender stereotypes are present and operating in Alberta school jurisdictions and the Association. The following comment from a male participant illustrates how gender stereotypes affect both men and women in education; it raises important points about the discriminatory impact of gender stereotypes for both men and women in education.

Discrimination can go both ways. As a male teacher in early elementary school, I faced some early discrimination in the form of suspicion, needing to take extra care in terms of how I arranged my classroom and how I interacted with students, etc. On the other hand, I honestly

felt that I was given more credit for my teaching ability than female teachers of the same grades in the same school. I absolutely believe that female teachers face barriers in their movement towards administration, and once they reach those roles. What is considered “assertive” for a male may be viewed as “pushy” or “bossy” in a female leader.

This comment illustrates how men and women experience being teachers differently. Further, the analysis of the qualitative comments addresses gender stereotypes in two main ways: the division of labour between men and women in educational settings and the treatment of men and women in educational settings.

Division of Labour

Participants stated that within their contexts, there was a division of labour based on gender, and pointed out that gender stereotyping started with the locations where teachers work. One participant noted, “I think there is an underlying gender bias when looking at the grade level male and females teach at. This bias is that female teachers are elementary teachers, and male teachers are middle school/ high school teachers.” In other words, female teachers tended to work with younger students whereas male teachers work with older students. Drudy (2008) asked students and preservice teachers why males did not enter primary school teaching and found “the perception that primary teaching is a women’s job, or that it relates to a mother’s role, was the most frequently offered explanation by both school students and school teachers for the low proportion of male entrants to primary teaching” (pp 311–12). In Alberta, most elementary teachers are female, and the data from this study suggests that this has an impact on both men and women within those contexts. For example, the data from the WIEL needs assessment survey suggests that for leadership potential, males in elementary are advantaged but that women working elementary school may be looked as being caregivers and nurturers rather than administrators or disciplinarians. This has a differential impact on the career progression of female elementary school teachers (Bascia and Young 2001).

Participants also noted that gender stereotyping in terms of division of labour also emerges in education in terms of what type of jobs male and females are expected, explicitly or implicitly, to take on in schools and the Association. For example, one participant stated that in terms of Association involvement, “There are very few women in executive roles and when they do get these roles they are for the more stereotypical ‘female’ jobs like secretary.” Another participant indicated

When tasks are not assigned, women are silently expected to do the “traditionally female” jobs like cleaning the fridge in the staff room, cooking the food for the staff potluck, etc. Women are not invited to participate in “traditionally male” work like managing technology or building/ designing school features.

The gendered nature of where teachers work and what tasks they perform has implications in terms of career progression. Riehl and Byrd (1997) argue that “career mobility is a socially constructed process marked by individual agency within the context of organizational/institutional constraints and

opportunities” (p 46), and this includes “a person’s own identity and immediate personal situation, particularly personal values, ambitions, abilities, work history, and concurrent responsibilities that might either facilitate or interfere with career mobility” (p 46). If we accept that the construct of what makes a leader effective is a normative one, built on valuing work that men traditionally do as opposed to the work that women traditionally do, then it is possible that the gendered nature of teachers’ work, either through the location of the work or the type of tasks they perform, has implications for who will advance through to leadership positions in both school jurisdictions and the Association.

Differential Treatment

Rooted in gender stereotypes are expectations for male and female behaviour. This can create gender bias in both schools and the Association; “gender bias is behaviour that shows favoritism toward one gender over another” (Rothchild 2014, para 1). The qualitative analysis for this study captured the following themes: men are treated with more respect than women, negative attitudes towards women, and different expectations for men and women. How then did participants describe differential treatment of men and women in the educational context?

Participants noted that they experienced differential treatment in terms of respectful behaviour from colleagues, parents and students. An exemplar comment from one participant was “Women are not taken as seriously as men—especially dealing with parents and disruptive students.” Participants also perceived that of lack of respect for women translated into a perception that opportunities for leadership positions were not as available for women. An example of how gender stereotypes lead to the expectation of a male norm in terms of leadership is demonstrated by the following comments.

Female leaders need to be “like men” or appear harder than male leaders. Female leaders with “softer” demeanours are validated less. (Participant comment)

Female leaders who have a strong leadership style are often classified using derogatory terms. Female teachers in culturally defined “male” roles are not always trusted to do as good a job by colleagues, students and families. Some male students treat female teachers differently, as do some parents. (Participant comment)

These comments illustrate the no-win situation many women find themselves in with respect to leadership. If women adopt a “masculine” approach to leadership, they are subject to differential treatment; the same applies if women adopt a “feminine” approach. Bierema (2016) calls this a double-bind dilemma, where there are “extreme perceptions that women are never just right. They are considered too soft if they go against feminine expectations for women and too hard if they adopt masculine characteristics. Women also face a threshold of high competence for lower rewards” (p 127).

Participants also noted that in the realm of public meetings such as staff meetings or committee meetings, the voices of men were more highly valued and listened to. For example, one participant wrote

Often a woman's idea or opinion is not supported. I have witnessed women asking for something or suggesting an idea to have it turned down. But when a man suggests the same thing, it is accepted without question. Sometimes within the same meeting.

Another participant noted

On one of the committees that I sit on the male members are given preferential treatment over the females when we meet provincially. Their voice is often heard and valued more, and they are acknowledged for their efforts more.

The lack of platform for women in the educational public commons also raises the question of what the privileging of the male voice in education means for the career development of women in education. Bascia and Young (2001) argued that career progression for women is complex and comprises several factors. One of the factors they identify is the “good girl”–“bad girl” dichotomy that plays out in terms of women’s career progression. “We see the good-girl theme played out in the Good Mother syndrome, by both teachers and administrators. This is the nurturing, feminine, collaborative, and selfless woman educator, which is one interpretation of exemplary professionalism” (Bascia and Young 2001, 276). The qualitative data from this study supports the notion that women are expected to uphold the expectation of exemplary professionalism, but that this is not necessarily true for men. For example, one participant noted “men generally have more leeway in standards. Women are expected to be good all the time. Men don’t. People take it as that they are just joking.” Women who do not meet this expectation or who are on the “bad girl” end of the continuum are, as another participant noted, “referred to as ‘bitchy,’ where their male counterparts are called ‘assertive.’” This double standard for women gives rise to the question of how living within a gendered construct with unequal expectations impacts the career progression for women in leadership.

Finally, a minority of participants raised the issues of sexism in education. Sexism is defined to be the differential treatment of people, usually women, based on belief that women are inferior to men (Rothchild 2014). Sexism can give rise to serious consequences, including harassment and bullying within the workplace. While the comments with respect to the issue of sexism are not widespread in this study, they reflect a serious workplace issue and are therefore worthy of attention. For example, one participant said that in their context,

Many senior leaders who are male seem to believe and act in a way that undermines their younger female colleagues—whether they’re mansplaining something in an extremely condescending way in regards to the program of studies topics or trying to tell us what to do in the classroom.

In addition, participants stated that women are also subjected to comments about their physical appearance as well as derogatory comments about their gender. Participants also noted that in some cases the sexism they experienced was subtle, but in others, it was obvious. Finally, a few participants shared frustration at the apparent lack of ability of the Association and school jurisdictions to deal effectively with issues of sexism. The finding of sexism, bullying and harassment has implications for both school jurisdictions and the Association in terms of creating safe work places and adherence to legislative requirements.

Work/Family Balance

The following participant comment illustrates the dilemma female teachers experience in terms of work / family balance.

Women with children are expected to work like we don't have kids and raise children like we don't work. Look at the statistics. How many teachers are female—how many are in leadership positions?

The tension between work life, career progression and family is one that is well established in the educational literature and beyond (Bascia and Young 2001; Eagly and Carli 2007; Grogan and Shakeshaft 2011; Oplatka and Tamir 2009). As women continue to take on more responsibility outside the home, the amount of responsibility in the home for women has not decreased (Loder and Spillane 2006; Oplatka and Tamir 2009). Participants raised several interesting aspects with respect to childbearing, family obligations and career progression in relation to discriminatory treatment. While scholars point to work/family balance as internal barriers to a woman's career advancement, given that many women still take on primary responsibility for domestic work at home (Bascia and Young, 2011; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009), participants also pointed out that there were aspects to their experiences that were external in nature. For example, one participant shared the view that "Women are often not put in roles of leadership if in child-bearing years. Commitment is questioned," and another wrote "I believe that women are consistently passed over for leadership roles when they are in their 'child-bearing' years and also when they have young children at home." Finally, another participant speculated that "young female teachers may be passed over for a position (contract) on the basis that she may become pregnant and request a leave." These comments illustrate how a masculine version of the ideal worker may be inhibiting the career advancement of women in schools and in the Association. While it may not be explicit in nature within school jurisdictions or the Association, the perception that women in their childbearing years are not potential candidates for leadership positions may have a caustic effect on female teachers who have aspirations for educational leadership.

Other participants also shared how being pregnant and/or having young children acted explicitly as a deterrent to progression in leadership positions and the detrimental impact on their careers of taking maternity leaves. For example, one participant said that when she was pregnant, she was "asked not to

be part of the negotiating subcommittee because I was pregnant (they feared I would bring my child to bargaining).” Other comments illustrate the cost that child-bearing imposes on female teachers. One participant stated, “You lose a lot when you take mat leave—your room, your materials unless you take them all home, your grade level, your position on various committees”; another wrote that “Women lose time employed toward their years of experience when they go off on maternity leave even though they are still employed by their division. Men can have children and not lose any time.” Interesting, and perhaps concerning, a study conducted by Duxbury and Higgens (2013) that focused on work, life and caregiving found that female teachers are less likely to have children than their counterparts in the broader workforce. Duxbury and Higgens (2013) pointed out that within the ATA sample of their study, 41 per cent of respondents did not have children, but that most of these teachers were married or lived with a partner and, given that the majority of these “are in their middle to late thirties, [this] suggests either many are planning to have children in the near future or that they elected not to have children” (p 14), but in relation to the general population, 70 per cent of workers had children at home. This finding suggests that teachers may be forgoing the opportunity to have a family, but it does not provide understanding of why this may be the case. Further, the Duxbury and Higgens 2013 study challenged the stereotype that all women teachers of child-bearing age will become mothers, and it also raises important questions about the connection between teacher work, career progression and having children.

Conclusion

The qualitative and quantitative data from the WIEL needs assessment survey confirms that gender-based discrimination, both explicit and implicit, is experienced in both school jurisdictions and the Association. Paradoxically, the WIEL needs assessment survey also shows that participants prefer leadership teams at school level and system level comprising males and females. To have school leadership teams both male and female was preferred by 70.3 per cent of respondents, and 26 per cent had no preference in terms of gender composition. School jurisdiction leadership was preferred by 79.4 per cent of respondents to be male and female, while 18.8 per cent had no preference in terms of gender composition. There appears to be an aspirational view that gender be balanced in terms of leadership in schools and school jurisdictions.

In addition, participants were also asked to consider whether they held a preference in terms of gender for the positions of local president or Association president. In both instances, most respondents expressed no preference for the gender of their local president (92.2 per cent) or for the gender of the provincial president (91.3 per cent). These results suggest that participants desire leadership teams that are equitable in terms of gender, and that there is no preference for a female or a male for the top elected positions in the Association. A part of resolving this paradoxical result may lie in being able to identify clearly the barriers to leadership and supports that can be implemented to begin to address issues of gender-based discrimination and its inhibiting effect on women’s career progression in school jurisdictions as well as the Association.

Barriers and Supports for Women in Leadership

BARRIERS

“The ongoing research (in the US and elsewhere) in the slow progress made by women in educational leadership has done little more than clarify and confirm the nature of the existing barriers that aspiring leaders face” (Sperandio 2015, 416). Sperandio (2015) explained that the barriers women experience can be distilled into two main groupings: internal and external. Included in internal barriers are one’s perception of their ability to advance, family/work balance and individual agency; external barriers include a lack of access to mentorship, hiring practices, power structures and gender-based stereotyping (Bascia and Young 2001; Chase and Bell 1990; Eagly and Carli 2007; Riehl and Byrd 1997; Sperandio 2015).

The WIEL needs assessment survey, in addition to asking about gender-based discrimination, also asked participants to identify barriers to participation in the Association and barriers to advancement in leadership positions in school jurisdictions. The questions with respect to barriers for Association leadership and school jurisdiction leadership were not the same because most leadership positions in the Association are attained by way of elections, whereas school jurisdiction leadership positions are attained through hiring processes. The results for each are shared below.

Barriers to Association Involvement

Participants were asked to select from a list of six barriers that might inhibit women from participating in the Association. The participants could select more than one response, so the percentages presented do not add up to 100 per cent. Quantitatively, the top three barriers to involvement in the Association were as shown below.

Table 10

Barrier	
Women candidates would not be taken seriously	31.0%
Women prioritize family commitments over participating in the local	60.2%
Women have not been encouraged to seek positions	52.2%

The qualitative data also provided insight into why women do not participate in the Association. Respondents noted that the times for local meetings were not compatible with having child care obligations, nor did the Association make provisions for child care when meetings were held. In addition, respondents shared their concern that the Association was not necessarily viewed as an organization that welcomes concerns specific to women. The participants expressed concern about how they were treated when they called the Association for support on issues such as maternity leaves or harassment, and participants noted that often they did not have access to female executive staff officers for advice.

Barriers to School Jurisdiction Leadership Positions

Participants were asked to select from a list of ten barriers that might inhibit women from advancing to school leadership positions. The participants could select more than one response, so the percentages presented do not add up to 100 percent. Quantitatively, the top six barriers to career advancement in school jurisdictions were as follows.

Table 11

Barrier	
I had too many responsibilities at home	44.8%
I was concerned being a leader takes too much time	37.9%
I believed women had to work harder to attain leadership positions	29.7%
I did not feel prepared to take on the multiple responsibilities to be a successful leader	24.1%
I did not want to leave classroom teaching	40.2%
I was concerned I might lose good relationships with colleagues	23.8%

When the quantitative data was disaggregated into male and female responses to the question of barriers to leadership positions in school jurisdictions, differences by gender emerged. The chart below shows the disaggregated data.

Table 12

Barrier	Male	Female
I had too many responsibilities at home	38.0%	45.5%
I was concerned being a leader takes too much time	48.0%	37.0%
I believed women had to work harder to attain leadership positions	0%	32.5%
I did not feel prepared to take on the multiple responsibilities to be a successful leader	14.0%	35.1%

I did not want to leave classroom teaching	42.0%	40.0%
I was concerned I might lose good relationships with colleagues	24.0%	23.8%

There was also qualitative data that added further insight into the barriers that impact female teachers aspiring to leadership positions in their school jurisdictions. These included the requirement to attain a master's degree prior to attaining a leadership position, the cost of attaining a master's degree, a lack of access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, the application process for leadership positions, the existence of an "old boys" club, workload challenges, and the perception of bias in the hiring process.

SUPPORTS

Participants were asked about what supports they experienced to become involved either with the Association or in school leadership. As the participants could select more than one response, the percentages presented do not add up to 100 per cent. Quantitatively, the top supports to career advancement in school jurisdictions are shown below.

Table 13

Supports	Association Involvement	School Leadership
I received encouragement from family and friends	44.4%	85.5%
I received encouragement from colleagues	71.0%	76.5%
I had access to financial supports to further my postsecondary education	10.4%	35.8%
I had access to cohort groups and training for leadership	12.7%	42.5%
I had access to mentorship opportunities	18.3%	32.5%

Participants had the opportunity to provide qualitative comments to the question of what supports they had experienced. In both sets of responses, there were several who responded, "no support" or "I am not interested in leadership or Association roles." Other responses included more specific information about who helped to support their involvement in leadership. For school leadership, participants reported that they received supports from their principal and senior leaders; in some cases, they specified that the leader supporting them was female. For Association involvement, encouragement from other local members was identified as an important support. These comments clarify the quantitative data above to help explain where the sources of encouragement from colleagues were situated. Other responses from participants identified their desire to see increased access to training opportunities and more flexible postsecondary course arrangements.

Participants were asked to identify what formal supports the Association could adopt to support women in developing their leadership skills. The results are shown below.

Table 14

Supports	
A standing committee on the status of women	29.7%
A summer conference training session for women in leadership	53.1%
The development of a corps of teacher volunteers who would work with locals to support women in leadership	27.3%
Sessions at uLead that focus on gender and leadership	36.9%
Establishment of mentoring networks connecting female school leaders and / or female Association leaders across the province	66.0%
Supporting and publishing the work of teachers studying women in leadership in Alberta	36.1%

As was the case with previous questions, participants were invited to provide comments to the question of what supports might the Association provide to advance the cause of women in leadership. The comments revealed tensions about whether supports for women should be put in place. Two conflicting themes emerged in the data. In one theme, participants opined that supports for training and career progression should be the same for everyone; another theme was that there ought to be programming and educational opportunities for women specifically. For example, in opposing additional supports specifically for women, one participant wrote, “NOTHING! Quit making gender an exclusive topic! Have these different programs, but make them available to ALL people. It feels demeaning to have a group specifically to train females, as if they couldn’t keep up in a regular program,” while another, who supported additional supports for women, wrote “Courses and/or summer institutes for women aspiring to leadership positions.” The conflicted nature of the responses from participants helps show the dilemmatic space where gender issues are played out and debated by Alberta teachers.

Final Thoughts

Richards and Acker (2006) noted that in Ontario in 1990, “the province set a goal of 50 per cent women in ‘positions of added responsibility’ in schools by 2000” (p 59). This legislated requirement was later repealed by the Conservative government under Mike Harris in 1994 (Wallace 2002, 85). However, when a longer view is taken, it becomes clear that while the goal of 50 per cent women in positions of leadership was not met, progress has been made in Ontario in terms of women in educational leadership.

In 1976-1977, women held only 6.9 per cent of public school principalships in elementary schools. By 1991-1992, women’s proportion among elementary school principals rose to 23 per cent and in 2000-2001, women held 58.4 per cent of elementary and 43.8 per cent of secondary school principalships and vice-principalships in Ontario. (Richards and Acker 2006, 59–60)

Women continue to make progress in occupying traditionally male roles, meaning that the current situation in Alberta and elsewhere is not static and improvement is possible. The WIEL needs assessment study helps illuminate the current perceptions of Alberta teachers with respect to the experience of gender-based discrimination in schools and the Association. In addition, the findings help to begin to articulate the barriers that women encounter in their pathways to leadership as well as to identify supports that might help create more equitable opportunities for women in educational leadership. This study also raises compelling questions for further research; the following questions are examples of areas that could be explored more thoroughly in Alberta.

1. How do child-bearing and child rearing influence the career progression of female teachers?
2. How does gender intersect with race, age or gender minorities? What is the impact of intersectionality on a teacher’s career progression?
3. What is the impact of legislative requirements to create safe workspaces in schools?
4. How do unconscious biases impact the career progression of female teachers and male teachers?
5. What is the impact of establishing networks of support across Alberta for aspiring female leaders?
6. How might school and Association leadership be re-visioned so that it encompasses a more inclusive model for leadership?

This report marks the continuation of an exploration that began in 1976 and continued into the early 1990s. For those who wonder if the work is complete, one need only to consider the continuing imbalance in the gender composition of teachers compared to Association leaders and school leaders, particularly in the highest positions of authority.

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Appendix A: Women in Educational Leadership Needs Survey Instrument

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

1. Do you believe people face discrimination in schools on the basis of gender

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

2. Please explain how you believe discrimination in schools on the basis of gender is experienced.

3. Do you believe:

Expansive Workplace Learning	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly agree
Men have a greater chance of advancing to a leadership position in your school system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women have a greater chance of advancing to a leadership position in your school system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Men and women have an equal chance of advancing to a leadership position in your school jurisdiction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Have you ever applied for a leadership position in a school?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

5. Have you ever applied for a leadership position in central office?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

6. Have you ever been encouraged to apply for a leadership position in a school?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

7. Have you ever been encouraged to apply for a leadership position central office?

- Yes No Prefer not to answer

8. Do you believe that women apply regularly for leadership positions in your school district?

- Yes No

9. If women are NOT applying for leadership positions in your school system, do you believe it is because (check all that apply):

- Applications from women would not be considered seriously
 Women prioritize commitments to their family over work aspirations
 Women are not interested in leadership positions
 Women are not encouraged to apply
 Women are not as well qualified as men
 Women are not suited for leadership positions
 Other - Please explain:

10. As a teacher, would you prefer to work in a school where the leadership is:

- All male All female Both male and female No preference

11. As a teacher would you prefer to work in a school jurisdiction where the leadership team is:

- All male All female Both male and female No preference

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

12. Do you believe people face discrimination in the Association on the basis of gender?

- Yes No Not sure

13. Please explain how you believe discrimination in the Association on the basis of gender is experienced

14. Female to male participation in your local Association is?

- Equal More Less Unsure

15. If women are not taking as active a part as men in your local Association, do you think it is because (please check all that apply):

- Women candidates would not be taken seriously
 Women prioritize family commitments over participating in the local
 Women are not interested leadership positions
 Women have not been encouraged to seek positions
 Women are not as well qualified as men
 Women are unsuited for leadership roles
 Other - Please explain:

16. Do you take an active part in your ATA local?

- Yes No

17. If you do take or have taken an active part in the Association, in what kinds of activities have you participated? (please check all activities in which you participate)

- Attend general meetings
 Member of professional development committee
 Member of negotiating committee
 Member of local executive

- School representative to local council
- Member of other standing of ad hoc committees
- Member of convention committee
- Member of a specialist council executive
- Annual Representative Assembly delegate
- Other - Please explain:

18. If a woman and a man with equal capabilities ran for the office of president of your local, would you show preference in who you vote for?

- The man The woman No preference

19. Do you prefer a local president who is

- Male Female No preference

20. Do you prefer a provincial president who is

- Male Female No preference

WOMEN AND SUPPORTS/BARRIERS FOR LEADERSHIP

21. If you are a school leader, or if you aspire to be a school leader, what kind of support have you received to pursue your goals (select all that apply)?

- I received encouragement from my family and friends
- I received encouragement from my colleagues
- I had access to financial support to further my post secondary education
- I had access to cohort groups and training for leadership positions

I had access to mentorship opportunities through my school or school board

Other - Please name:

22. What kind of support have you received to become involved with the either your local or provincial Association (select all that apply)?

I received encouragement from my family and friends

I received encouragement from my colleagues

I had access to financial support to further my post secondary education (i.e. Ed Trust)

I had access to cohort groups and training for leadership

I had access to mentorship opportunities through my local or provincial Association

Other - Please name:

23. What sorts of barriers have you experienced in becoming a school leader or school jurisdiction leader (check all that apply)?

I did not have support from colleagues to be a leader

I did not have support from my family or friends

I had too many responsibilities at home

I was concerned being a leader takes too much time

I believed women had to work harder to attain leadership positions

I did not feel prepared to take on the multiple responsibilities required to be a successful leader

I was uncomfortable with having to supervise adults

I have been discouraged from applying to become a leader

- I did not want to leave classroom teaching
- I was concerned I might lose good relationships with colleagues
- Other - Please explain:

24. What kinds of programs could the Association sponsor and support that might help women to develop their leadership skills (check all that apply)?

- A standing committee on the status of women
- A summer conference training session for women in leadership
- The development of a corps of teacher volunteers who would work with locals to support women in leadership
- Sessions at uLead that focus on gender and leadership
- Establishment of mentoring networks connecting female school leaders and /or female Association leaders across the province
- Supporting and publishing the work of teachers studying women in leadership in Alberta
- Other - Please explain:

DEMOGRAPHICS

25. I identify as

- Male Female Transgender Other Prefer not to answer

26. Age

- 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

27. I have taught for

- 0-5 year 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21+ years

28. I am a school leader / a school jurisdiction leader

- Yes No Prefer not to say

29. Please indicate what your title is

- Vice Principal, Associate Principal, Assistant Principal (School Based)
 Principal (School Based)
 School Jurisdiction Leader (Central Office Based)
 Other - Please explain:

30. I have been in a leadership role for:

- 0-5 year 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21+ years

31. I work in a(n) setting

- Urban Suburban Small town Rural

32. This year, I attended the

- Calgary City Teachers' Convention
 Central Alberta Teachers' Convention
 Central East Alberta Teacher's Convention
 Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention
 Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention
 Northeast Teachers' Convention

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- North Central Teachers' Convention
- Palliser District Teachers' Convention
- Southeastern Alberta Teachers' Convention
- South Western Alberta Teachers' Convention
- Other - Please explain:

Thank You!

Appendix B: The Role of Women—Qualitative Analysis—2019

Jason S Daniels, PhD

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INTRODUCTION

The following analyses are based on a survey that was sent to members of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Four open-ended questions were selected for additional analysis. This thematic analysis was conducted by Jason S Daniels, PhD, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, in August of 2019.

QUESTION 2

Please explain how you believe discrimination in schools on the basis of gender is experienced.

Participants described several different ways in which they have seen or experienced discrimination in the school. The most frequent to be described was that participants feel that leaders are most likely to be male and that these males in leadership positions are also most likely to hire males as well; many talked about the existence of an “Old Boys Club.” In addition, many participants felt that this was especially egregious considering that the number of females in the profession far outweighed the number of males. Additionally, many participants indicated that males tend to be treated with more respect by administration, other colleagues and even by parents. Another key example of discrimination, according to participants, is based on a women’s role as a mother—whether this is related to hiring decisions based on whether a woman is or is likely to become pregnant, or more implicit discrimination based on scheduling meetings or social events at times that force a mother to have to choose between her family and work—which then has implications for promotion and/or opportunities for women to take on leadership roles. See Table 1 for a complete listing of themes with corresponding exemplary comments.

Table 1. Discrimination in Schools: Key Themes (n= 419)

Theme	Frequency	Exemplary Comments
Males overrepresented in leadership positions	156	<p>Women are not equally considered for leadership roles. Men predominant in high-level leadership positions, in school divisions and at the ATA.</p> <p>In two situations where a leadership role was available in the department I was working in, these positions were automatically assigned to men without consideration of anyone in our department, including myself who had been there longer than all others, even those given the job.</p>
Men treated with more respect than women	114	<p>In my experience some parents and students respond differently to males than females, as though males hold more experience and authority based on their gender.</p> <p>Male teachers seem to be more appreciated and respected by parents than female teachers. I have also been led to believe that male teachers get continuous contracts sooner as they make the school look good.</p>
Negative attitudes toward women	91	<p>I believe when a man and a woman have the same strong reaction, a man’s is considered acceptable while a woman can be called emotional, overreactive or mean.</p> <p>I believe that some men believe that women cannot make decisions based on objective views—that they can be too emotional in their reasoning. I also believe that leadership training programs in districts are outdated and require updated research on women and men who have shown exceptional leadership in a variety of leadership positions across school contexts.</p>

Theme	Frequency	Exemplary Comments
"Old Boys Club"	64	Boys club mentality is still prevalent Some males have "failed up" to department heads or administrative roles. I feel like some male teachers get positions quickly simply because they are male.
Maternity/pregnancy concerns	58	I think there is a tendency to avoid hiring younger women of reproductive age to positions of leadership because of fears they may need to go on mat leaves. A principal has refused to be my reference for a position because "(I am) pregnant and will be on mat leave, this is not what the organization needs."
Bullying/misogyny/harassment	16	I believe that it is more difficult for women to lead in a strong, confident capacity because they have to more carefully walk a line between not having a clear vision and being perceived as a "bitch." I have heard comments like "You should teach foods because you are a woman and know how to cook"; "She only got the admin job because she's a woman and we can't have all males running the place or people will complain"; "Have her grab her own shoulders ... if her tits stick out farther than her elbows, you hire her."
Lack of males in elementary leads to preferential hiring	15	Males are few and far between at the elementary level and are hired, at times, over a more qualified, or a better fit female. In elementary, there are so few men, they are chosen first.
Cultural bias	14	In my experience, this has occurred with parents with cultural backgrounds that do not have women leaders and therefore do not respect women in leadership positions in schools the same way they would a male. In many cultures, women are seen as inferior. Parents and students treat women badly. (Unfortunately, this is true to varying degrees in all cultures.)
Different expectations for females	11	I believe that women are scrutinized more. Men are given more support, moved up because there are few men in elementary school settings. Often men are seen as the idea people and the women do the organization piece on teams. The expectations are different. Women are often not put in roles of leadership if in child-bearing years. Commitment is questioned. Side comments inappropriate from leadership in the schools—very gender-specific comments.
Males treated unfairly	10	As a veteran male teacher, I have personally been on the receiving end of discrimination as has been a male colleague of mine in a school where we were the only two men. Today, we are both gone. Clearly, we were dealt with much differently than our female colleagues by a female principal. As men, especially in elementary education settings, we are exposed frequently to gender-related mistreatment. I believe males may be discriminated against since the role is seen as mainly female. There are few male EAs and admin, except in the role of principal.

QUESTION 13

Please explain how you believe discrimination in the Association on the basis of gender is experienced.

Participants indicated that there were several ways in which they have observed or experienced discrimination in the Association. The most frequently reported is that men, disproportionately, have leadership roles within the Association and that men are treated with more respect than women. In addition, participants indicated that they felt that pregnancy and/or motherhood had a negative impact on their ability to progress toward leadership positions within the Association. See Table 2 for a complete listing of themes with corresponding exemplary comments.

Table 2. *Discrimination in the Association: Key Themes (n= 132)*

Theme	Frequency	Exemplary Comments
Males overrepresented in leadership positions	46	Most staff officers are men. The president and past president are men. Most of the DRs are men. Staff and PEC are disproportionately male.
Men treated with more respect than women	24	I believe more respect is given to men than to women. Culturally, although improving in areas, men are still listened to more, allowed to talk more and have assertive voices, and women not so much.
Balancing family with work	19	Asked not to be part of the NSC because I was pregnant (they feared I would bring my child to bargaining). Told to resign my position of chair of EPC because I was pregnant. I told them I was taking mat leave. They told me to resign. Couldn't attend TWAC this year because no coverage for child care. Women with mat leaves have a harder time advancing in their careers.
"Old boys club"	13	I believe the Association is based on who you know and remains an "old boys club." Just look at our presidents and vice-presidents—is it one past president that is female? I also believe the Association discriminated based on race. The leadership in the ATA is predominantly male. Many of these people are ex school administrators. It is an old boys club.
Negative attitudes toward women	12	Women are not always perceived as leaders or having qualities to advance in any area of the Association. Women are expected to be more emotional and maternal; men are usually expected to have a career path that leads to administration or sports.

Theme	Frequency	Exemplary Comments
Cultural bias	11	The Association, as a product of a gender-biased society, is not immune to gender-based discrimination As I mentioned, the society is sexist; so too are the institutions.
Women not encouraged to run for positions	9	Elected positions regularly go to men and there is no encouragement for women to apply. This is especially applicable to women with families. Often men are more often encouraged to apply for positions and often are in positions of authority.

QUESTION 23

What sorts of barriers have you experienced in becoming a school leader or school jurisdiction leader (other)?

Participants were asked to indicate (from a list of options) the barriers they have experienced in becoming a school or school jurisdiction leader. Those who selected the “other” options were given an opportunity to add barriers that were not included in the list. Responses were varied; however, the most frequently cited barrier was the challenge of balancing home/family life and career. Additionally, participants felt that biased hiring practices was a barrier. Participants also indicated educational qualifications, a lack of encouragement from administration and not knowing the “right people” as barriers. See Table 3 for a complete listing of themes with corresponding exemplary comments.

Table 3. Barriers to Becoming a Leader: Key Themes (n=148)

Theme	Frequency	Exemplary Comments
Balancing home life and career	19	I was concerned I would lose my leadership position when I took maternity leave, as it is a one-year contract and would be renewed (or not) while I was at home. I was actually told by an ATA rep that I had to “decide which priority was more important to me” (ie, parenthood or leadership). Because I have a family, people assume I have no career aspirations or that I must be so upset that I can’t be home with my kids. It prevents me from seeking more because I don’t like the guilt that is placed on me.
Educational qualifications	17	Being overlooked because of not holding a master’s degree. It is based on having a master’s degree rather than being an actual master in leading.
Biased hiring practices	15	I feel that the process in my board is too difficult and biased. I’m not a good choice to coach school sports teams, which is often a determining factor in hiring decisions at the high school level.

Theme	Frequency	Exemplary Comments
Administration not encouraging	12	I received support and encouragement from my female leaders and colleagues, but none from male leaders and colleagues. I was never encouraged by anyone at the school board or on the executive team. Your principal has to want you to become a leader, and if you don't have the best relationship your attempts will be sabotaged.
Based on who you know	12	Preference given to students graduating from a master's of leadership program associated with "the university/board of education." Preference given to "who you know." Knowing that the principal was hiring his male friends, or males that had been recommended by others, and was only giving appearance of interviews/competition process.
Financial challenges	10	Financial costs of master's. Financial barriers to achieving a master's degree.
Process is intimidating	8	The application process is the barrier—it has blocked my pursuit of leadership. Feel intimidated by the application process implemented in recent years in my school jurisdiction.
Workload challenges	7	My workload currently is too much. I cannot find time to balance work, additional schooling and my family life, which is most important to me. Too many classroom responsibilities (as a junior administrator) to further pursue advancement.
"Old boys club"	5	As an assistant principal, I was repeatedly mocked and criticized by my male principal in front of staff. As well, I have noticed that men often choose other males to mentor and encourage, even when these men are not equally qualified. When interviewed by a man, I did not get the position. When interviewed by a woman, I did get the position.

QUESTION 24

What kinds of programs could the Association sponsor and support that might help women to develop their leadership skills (other)?

Participants were asked to indicate (from a list of options) the programs that could be sponsored or supported to help women develop leadership skills. Those who selected the "other" options were given an opportunity to add programs that were not included in the list. The most frequent response was that programs and supports should be provided regardless of gender. Additionally, participants indicated that courses or training for women that are interested in leadership should be provided.

Participants also felt that creating a cohort or support network of women who are interested in leadership would be helpful, as would financial assistance or help to support balancing home life and career development. See Table 4 for a complete listing of themes with corresponding exemplary comments.

Table 4. Programs to Support the Development of Leadership Skills: Key Themes (n=87)

Theme	Frequency	Exemplary Comments
Support for everyone regardless of gender	23	I don't believe there need to be specific supports for women in leadership based on my experiences. My challenges as an administrator have nothing to be with being a woman. Men should be just [as] supported as women; hence, why make it about gender?
Courses or training for women aspiring to leadership positions	12	Training session for women aspiring to be leaders but who are not yet in a leadership role. Courses and/or summer institutes for women aspiring to leadership positions.
Cohort of women aspiring to leadership positions	8	The development of a corps of leader volunteers to work with locals to support women wanting to pursue leadership. Women's leadership conferences—not necessarily having to be during the summer when I am looking after my children.
Financial assistance	7	Financial aid, or contracts that include time off work to support postgraduate education. Provide a PIF to full-time teaching moms. Set aside some funding specific for working moms to be able to do the schooling required to take on a leadership role. Honestly, being a working mom is incredibly challenging and providing support with time and/or money would help women pursue their goals.
Support for balancing home life and career development	5	Making it known that it's OK to take a leadership position prior to having a family—you're not letting people down if you take a maternity leave. More honest discussion around work-life balance. Being a parent (either male or female) is a challenge when in a leadership role.



The Alberta
Teachers' Association