Tracing the Career Paths of Female Superintendents in Canada

by

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ABSTRACT

The number of women in educational leadership positions has increasingly grown over the last few decades. However, there still are discrepancies between the number of women in education and the number of women represented in educational leadership, especially in the superintendency. The irony of this research is that professors in educational administration programs continually comment about a strong majority of their students being women. Furthermore, educational certification agencies report that the majority of those licensed for educational leadership positions are women.

The purposes of the study was to: (a) provide opportunities for female senior administrators to offer their understanding of the barriers and challenges they have encountered during their career; (b) provide insight into the mentorship experiences and support they have received during their career; and, (c) describe their preferred/espoused leadership styles.

Female superintendents identified a number of challenges over the course of their career: balancing career and home life, gender discrimination, various work conflicts and relocation. In contrast, the women in the study acknowledged the mentorship experiences and support that they received during their career from various professional colleagues or groups, educative institutions or programs, and family and friends. Their preferred leadership styles included a strong focus on relationships seconded by management and pedagogical issues. The study culminates by outlining various recommendations for practice, research and theory in chapter five.

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Tracing the Career Paths of Female Superintendents in Canada

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

The number of women in educational leadership positions has increasingly grown over the last few decades. However, there still are discrepancies between the number of women in education and the number of women represented in educational leadership. Shakeshaft, Tyack and Hansot (1982), Tallerico, Poole and Burstyn (1994), Young (1994), Wallin and Crippen (2007), and Young and Ansara (1999) all acknowledge the absence of women in educational administration in the United States and Canada and suggest that this absence is no coincidence. Women are overrepresented in teaching but underrepresented in administration. The irony of this research is that professors in educational administration programs continually comment about a strong majority of their students being women. Furthermore, educational certification agencies report that the majority of those licensed for educational leadership positions are women (Brunner, Grogan & Kim, 2005; Dana & Borisaw, 2006).

In the *Handbook of Educational Administration: The Struggle to Create a More Gender Inclusive Profession,* Charol Shakeshaft (1999), traces the path of women in educational administration. She focuses on the historical context of women's representation in educational administration, outlining the systemic and individual barriers to their career movement. Perhaps one of the most important barriers in this regard is that school boards and those individuals hired by boards to run educational organizations, consciously and unconsciously, hire individuals like themselves in educational leadership positions. Margret Grogan's (2000) article, *Laying the*

Groundwork for a Reconception of the Superintendency from Feminist Postmodern Perspectives acknowledges that women often still do not fit the 'criteria' for leadership positions deemed accountable by those in the positions to do the hiring. Dana and Bourisaw (2006), Blackmore and Sachs (2007), Tallerico, Poole and Burstyn (1994), Wallin and Crippen (2007), Young (1994), Young and Ansara (1999) and Reynolds, White, Brayman and Moore (2008) focus on other barriers that keep women from attaining leadership positions. This research suggests that women are often just token candidates in the final list of candidates who meet criteria. This research also identifies the strong role that cultural values, socio-political practices, and gender-structured policy play in determining the access that women have to the superintendency. Gender bias is not only perpetrated by men, as it has been noted that women often do not support other women in getting to and keeping a superintendency (Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000). And those within the position often do not support each other, which was a finding of Wallin's and Crippen's (2007) work with superintendents in Manitoba. Unfortunately, not only are there few female colleagues in the province who hold the same position as them, but the ones who do act in that capacity did not maintain more than cursory relationships with each other.

Women's leadership styles are often characterized as nurturing and collaborative which are not typically viewed as valuable as aggressive and directive leadership styles, though there is some evidence to suggest that this is changing (Wallin & Crippen, 2008). Women have also had a lack of mentorship and sponsorship into the position itself. It is because of these kinds of barriers in the system that women's transition into educational leadership has been a long process.

Women who do break into the world of educational leadership and administration often face discrimination in their job settings. For example, lower wages, more challenging work conditions, disrespectful treatment from board members, isolation, less prestige and so forth all make the job highly challenging and stressful for women (Bell, 1995; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000, 2003; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Grogan, 1996; Kamler & Shakeshaft, 1999; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Tallerico, Poole & Burstyn,1994; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000; Wallin & Crippen, 2007; Young, 1994). Additionally, many women still maintain the primary responsibility of managing their family and households. There is no shortage of work for these women.

As part of this discrimination in the workplace, the leadership styles of women are often quite heavily critiqued. If these leaders maintain a more relational leadership style they are perceived to be weak or not credible; yet they are condemned if they act too assertively (Bell, 1995; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Brunner, 2000; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Tallerico, Poole & Burstyn,1994; Wallin & Crippen, 2007; Young, 1994). Although some men and women believe that there has been a blending of traditional stereotypical styles (Wallin & Crippen, 2007), women are still not hired in the same quantity as males.

Women who aspire to enter into educational leadership positions need both mentorship and positive support to successfully achieve their goals. Margaret Grogan (1996) in her book *Voices of Women Aspiring to the Superintendency* focuses on the power of women mentoring other women. Wallin and Crippen (2008) in *Mentorship and Gendered Assumptions: Examining the Discourse of Manitoba Superintendents* conclude

that “men have more mentors overall and more personal and professional mentors. Women are more apt to have more female mentors than men, though both males and females have more male mentors” (p. 22). Mentorship is a strong and powerful way that women can bond and learn from one another, in effect working towards more gender inclusive professions, or it can be used to socialize people into very strict role definitions and/or leadership styles.

The superintendency is an area particularly difficult for women. Wallin and Crippen (2008) discuss the lack of mentorship or sponsorship into the position itself. Women who do benefit from mentorship experiences often have other female mentors. Once women break into the superintendency they are faced with numerous challenges as they hold the position. Bruner (2000), Brunner, Grogan and Kim (2005), Wallin and Crippen (2007, 2008) and Grogan (2000, 1996) address the issue that women in the superintendency are often uncomfortable with the word “power” when it is used in dominant context. They have been socialized to reject the masculine version of power in fear of being categorized as bitches. They are much more comfortable when power is used within the context of being shared with others or used by the collective. Thus, they value being part of a team and they consider collaboration as a powerful resource. However, some women do acknowledge that there are times when they feel the necessity and perhaps pressure to conform to a more “masculinised” style of leadership (Wallin & Crippen, 2007). Brunner (2000) takes the notion of power a step further by suggesting that women in the superintendency are often silenced. They are silenced by both comments and body language of board members, colleagues and community members.

Grogan (2000, 1996) uses the term “an ethic of care” to perpetuate the idea of student centered and people first philosophies that ground the leadership styles of superintendents. Bruner (2000), Wallin and Crippen (2007) and Grogan (2000, 1996) acknowledge that leadership styles that have been considered more “feminine” are actually becoming more sought after in present day leadership circles. In this way both men and women are in some ways being freed from gender-based leadership styles. However, there are implications of this as well. Leadership qualities that once may have given women an edge are becoming more commonplace in male leadership styles, at least in self reports. This blending of styles can foster women’s movement into leadership positions, yet at the same time now limit them again as more males who use these more “feminine” styles are still deemed by hiring committees to be more desirable as leaders.

Purpose

The purposes of the study was to: (a) provide opportunities for female senior administrators to offer their understanding of the barriers and challenges they have encountered during their career; (b) provide insight into the mentorship experiences and support they have received during their career; and (c) describe their preferred/espoused leadership styles.

The research questions for the study are:

1. How do females access the superintendency?
2. What are the barriers and challenges faced by female senior administrators?
3. What role, if any, does mentoring play in the career development of female senior administrators?
4. How do female senior administrators lead?

The interview questions that were used are found in Appendix A and include:

1. Please describe your career path in education. Consider:
   a. Positions you've held and length of time in those positions.
   b. Descriptions of experiences and roles you've undertaken in service to the profession.
   c. Your career breaks or leaves in service.
   d. What significant event/s led you to your current position?
2. Please describe any barriers or challenges you have had to face over the course of your career either personally or professionally.
3. What do you consider to be your primary support systems at present, either personally or professionally?
4. Please describe your career mentorship experiences during your career.
   a. What qualities do you admire most in your mentors?
   b. How would you describe their leadership styles?
   c. What lessons did you learn about leadership from your mentors?
   d. What process, model or strategies of mentorship did you benefit from.
5. Please describe your own personal leadership style.
   a. Can you provide an example of a time when you had to break from your usual style? Under what circumstances, and why?
   b. Explain how your leadership style has been influenced by others.

Significance

This research may provide strategies of action to help women in educational leadership successfully navigate their careers, as well as detail those supports and barriers

that tend to be systemic, over those that are individual and/or personal. The findings of this research are also important for women aspiring to leadership roles, as they will facilitate awareness of the issues facing those who move into senior administrative positions as well as the strategies they could use to foster movement into those positions.

People who teach in educational preparation programs could use this research to help with their curriculum implementation. Learning about the experiences of women who are in the leadership positions can help them better train those who are aspiring to those positions and sensitize students to understanding women's issues.

Those who wish to mentor women as they move into leadership positions will find this research valuable as it traces women leaders' career paths in education and their experiences along the way. It will help them understand and facilitate women's growth through the mentorship experience. It will raise awareness for both female and male mentors.

There may be individuals out there who are looking to change or re-evaluate their own leadership practices. Research on female leader's experiences in education will give more information for them to reflect upon their own personal journey and also note what kinds of leadership styles tend to be preferred in the position.

Finally, there are those who have an interest whether it is personal or professional in strategies for social action. This research will help contribute to the body of knowledge in the area of women in leadership.

Definition of Terms

Career Path – A path of key experiences in one's career (Brunner, Grogan & Kim, 2005). Leaves of service and movement into non-educational careers will be included.

Mentors – include any and all "teachers" in our lives with whom we socially interact to form and acquire the "truths" that shape whom it is we become (Wallin & Crippen, 2008).

Delimitations

A few delimitations helped frame the parameters of the study:

1. Eleven female Superintendents and one female in a leadership position from each province and territory in Canada, with the exception of the Yukon, were interviewed in this study. Yukon was not included as no one in a senior leadership position consented to the study.
2. The method for collecting the qualitative data from the superintendents occurred through one semi-structured interview per leader lasting approximately one to one and a half hours which was recorded and transcribed by the researcher.
3. Female superintendents were contacted via email based on information available on divisional websites.

Limitations

Some limitations of the study include:

1. The subjective nature of qualitative research includes fewer subjects in order to provide thick description and elaboration of experience rather than quantitative generalizable conclusions. I took the subject's responses to open ended questions and summarized the results to find strands or topics upon which to base my conclusions. Although the use of qualitative research is not directly a limitation in that it provides rich information that quantitative research cannot provide, never-the-less, the findings of this study will not be generalizable to other contexts or studies. Its intent is to provide themes

for discussion that may or may not resonate with the experiences of others, and add to the knowledge base already in existence.

2. My personal biases could have influenced my interpretation of the findings. We all have our own biases and viewpoints on how we see things work around us. Therefore, my own biases might have influenced my understanding of the subjects' responses, ultimately affecting the findings. For example, I am a women aspiring to a leadership position and therefore have a personal investment in the topic of study. Additionally, I know other women who have experienced barriers in their quest to obtain leadership positions and I have faced barriers on my journey to leadership. Furthermore, I feel that I am at present benefiting from some positive mentorship experiences and am learning about and observing some interesting leadership styles which influences my own sense of the kinds of interactions and preferred leadership styles when working with others.

The subjects might have been apprehensive about what they shared with me and concerned about how I might interpret and share the information. Given their high profile jobs, the subjects could have feared both political and personal repercussions which may possibly be linked to them despite all of my attempts to protect their identities.

3. The subjects' own self and environment awareness and ability to comprehend the significance of the questions or to be able to answer them fully could have impacted on results. Given that these women represented the senior leadership of the school division, it may have been difficult for them to separate or share their personal experiences while maintaining political loyalty to their divisions. The use of full confidentiality and anonymity attempted to address this issue, but it still may have been an issue for individual participants.

4. In order for the subjects to remain anonymous, there was some information that I wanted to share but wasn't able to share. Some information that the subjects shared with me could not be referred to without pointing to the source of the information, or would have bridged anonymity or confidentiality in some way. Given the political nature of this work, I was careful to ensure that the respondents were protected and that my findings remained masked according to themes. For this reason, the personal experiences of respondents are reported only in the general themes that they represented, and all respondents had the opportunity to complete member checks of the information that they provided.

5. I used one data source (interviews) only, which limited my ability to triangulate the findings with the literature.

6. I was the only person coding the data which allowed for my personal biases to shape the coding and analysis process and did not allow for others to be involved in refining the process.

Organization of the Report

The report is organized into five chapters. The first chapter consists of the introduction, purpose, significance, definition of terms, delimitations, limitations and organization of the report. The second chapter presents the literature review and the conceptual framework for the study. Chapter three includes a description of the study environment, participant selection, researcher positioning, data analysis, confidentiality, and ethics. Chapter four outlines the findings of the research and chapter five provides conclusions and recommendations for practice and future study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides an overview of the research conducted on women in leadership positions in education. It begins with a brief history of women in educational administration. The review then considers the barriers women face in the field and the leadership styles of women. Next comes a discussion on how women can be mentored and supported in attaining leadership positions in education. Finally, the chapter provides a conceptual framework for the study.

History of Women in Educational Administration

Charol Shakeshaft in the U. S. and Beth Young in Canada have focused research and writing on creating a more gender inclusive profession in educational administration. To illustrate this point, Charol Shakeshaft in the *Handbook of Educational Administration: The Struggle to Create a More Gender-Inclusive Profession* (1999) and Beth Young in *An Other Perspective on the Knowledge Base in Canadian Educational Administration* (1994) and Beth Young and Susan Ansara in *Women in Educational Administration: Statistics for a Decade (1999)* trace the path of women in educational administration. Shakeshaft examines "the representation of women in school administration and the struggle to expand the profession both through increasing numbers of women and through conceptualizing administration in ways that are inclusive of gendered experience and perception" (p.99). Young (1994) asks the questions "Where are the women in this world or these worlds of Canadian educational administration? What were and are their experiences? their realities? their voices" (p. 351). Shakeshaft starts the process by examining numerical representation of women administrators in administration. She points out that women have always been the minority holding formal

administrative positions in schools and that the United States lacks a reliable database which lets us know how many women are school administrators. Shakeshaft uses an excellent quotation from Tyack and Hansot (1982) which points out that that the absence of a reliable database is no coincidence:

> Amid proliferation of other kinds of statistical reporting in an age enamoured of numbers – reports so detailed that one can give the precise salary of staff in every community across the country and exact information on all sorts of variables – data by sex became strangely inaccessible. A conspiracy of silence could hardly have been unintentional. (p. 99)

Tallerico, Poole and Burstyn (1994) also make a similar acknowledgement:

> Even in the most comprehensive and recent research reports related to urban school leadership and governance data are seldom disaggregated or analyzed by sex, and only infrequently by race or ethnicity of superintendents or school board members. (p. 440)

Shakeshaft (1999) and Young (1994, 1999) purport that women are overrepresented in teaching and underrepresented in administration. They claim that the older the child and the higher the grade, the fewer women teachers and administrators. They also point out that more women and minority administrative candidates are certified in much larger numbers than they are chosen for administrative positions.

Shakeshaft believes that to understand the history of women in administration we must also understand the history of women in teaching. She outlines that in the eighteenth century all teaching was done by men. Gradually, women became “school dames” and could teach the younger children in their homes. From 1820-1830 growth in industry and

business generated more jobs for men. Immigration was also on the rise, thus more teachers were needed. Both of these facts gave women more opportunities to become involved in education. Additionally, at this time, there were more supporters of women in education as it was seen as an appropriate job to prepare women for motherhood and the work of marriage. Women were also a cheap and accessible form of labour and teaching became a way for single women to support themselves. The number of women teachers grew throughout the nineteenth century, however; administrative positions were given to men.

Shakeshaft refers to the period from 1900 to 1930 as “the golden age for women in administration” (p. 104). Women had an impact on society with their pro-active strategies to bring women into leadership positions. Chicago was the first city to hire a female superintendent. However, most women in leadership positions at this time were in the elementary schools and county superintendencies as these jobs had lower pay and lower status.

The 1930s saw the onset of the great depression. Women as teachers and leaders declined at this time as men would be hired before women. Also at this time came the movement for equal pay. The advent of World War II saw more women entering the field again as many men were off fighting the war. Shakeshaft acknowledges that during World War II communities reversed their hiring practices and even provided daycare for families. But, when the men came back from war, many were granted with training and jobs in administration as part of compensating them for their commitment to the country during the war.

The 1950s hurt both women and minority administrators. Schools were consolidated and white males prevailed when it came to the choice of leadership positions. Boards, composed of white males, hired males of European descent, leaving both women and minority leaders in the lurch.

The onset of the cold war created panic throughout North America. People were concerned with students' ability to learn and to prepare for a possible war. These factors spiralled into yet more males entering teaching and administration. Shakeshaft states that "it was widely believed that a man could take charge more quickly and efficiently than a woman, that he could establish better contact with the children – especially the boys – and that he could specifically be relied upon to maintain discipline" (p.111). Furthermore, teaching was a draft proof profession at the onset of the Vietnam War, enticing more men into the teaching profession in the 1960s and keeping it that way until the 1980s.

Activist approaches from the 1970s have encouraged women to enter school administration. Shakeshaft points out that "although women are still not represented in proportion to their number in teaching in the late 1990s, the majority of students gaining certification in school administration are women, a trend that some believe will ensure women's equitable representation" (p. 112). Parallel to this has been the movement to encourage high achieving women into other careers that high achieving men would also be groomed to pursue. There are however more females obtaining doctorates and teaching educational administration at the universities. Perhaps this is partially due to affirmative action policies to hire more minority groups.

Beth Young (1994) in her paper *An Other Perspective on the Knowledge Base in Canadian Educational Administration* also traces the history of women in educational

administration within a Canadian context. Young summarizes that teaching provided women with opportunities on the Canadian western frontiers, however, it included segregation and a lot of external control by local school trustees and male provincial inspectors who supervised them. This system continued status quo until 1960. During the 1960's and 1970's superintendents were conceived and men were the logical choice. Young (1994) states that "this logic was reinforced and supported by policies requiring married, and later pregnant teachers to resign their appointments" (p. 356).

An interesting Canadian indicator of change occured when women sought out the Ontario principalship certification course in increasing numbers. This was due to the elimination of mandatory summer residency and school district referrals. In 1989, women were being hired for administrative jobs in the same proportion as they graduated from the certification program. Young claims that "as yet, the statistics tend to support contentions that systematic discrimination, subtly reinforced and rationalized by traditional socialization, continues to be a major factor in the underrepresentation of women in Canadian school administration" (p. 357).

The issue of women in school administration received little attention from Canadian educational scholars who were mostly men. In the mid – 1980's women became more vocal and visible in Canadian departments of educational administration. There was an increase in women graduate students and an increase in women professors in educational administration. Additionally, at Canadian educational administration conferences the number of papers on women and gender increased substantially. Women began entering into educational administration positions, often only if they were free of domestic responsibilities. Young reflects that "women attributed their appointments to

working hard, being in the right place at the right time, and maintaining a sense of humour – succeeding in spite of, not because of, being women" (p. 359).

In the last decade women's presence has increased in educational leadership within the context of the principalship and the assistant superintendency. However, the superintendencies are still dominated by men (Bourisaw & Dana, 2006; Brunner, Grogan & Kim, 2005; Wallin & Crippen, 2008). For as far as women have come in the world of educational leadership, they still have a long way to go in order to experience equality in the superintendency. Gender is still a significant indicator of how far women go in their career advancement in education.

Barriers for Women Administrators

Women have been dealing for years with systematic barriers that keep them from attaining the leadership positions they desire. Unfortunately, this is all too true in educational leadership. Calas and Smircich (1996) in their article *From the Women's Point of View: Feminist Approaches to Organization Studies* state that:

> A substantial portion of the research has been devoted to documenting inequities in the work place in terms of segregated occupations, salary inequalities and short career ladders. Research shows that attitudes, traditions and cultural norms still represented barriers to women's success to higher status and higher paying positions in the workplace despite legal sanctions against sex discrimination. (p. 223)

Systematic barriers hinder women from attaining leadership positions in education. Boards hire individuals like themselves in educational leadership positions. Margret Grogan (2000) in her article *Laying the Groundwork for a Reconception of the*

Superintendency from Feminist Postmodern Perspectives says that "the most successful superintendent is male, Anglo-Saxon, middle-aged, Republican, intelligent and a good student, but not 'gifted'" (p. 122). Women are very much overlooked for superintendent positions. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) in their article *Overlooked Leaders* tell of a female administrator who revealed that at an interview she overheard two retired superintendents –turned search consultants say "most of these districts aren't ready for a woman superintendent, but we should probably put her in the finalist pool anyway" (p. 27).

Blackmore and Sachs (2007) explore the ways in which gender remains central as an issue in maintaining unequal relations of power within organizational settings. Tallerico, Poole and Burstyn (1994) focus on a structural explanation within which women superintendents work:

> Specifically male dominance in: (a) the formal positions on authority on organizational charts, including administration and school boards; (b) the city government structures with which urban school districts are so intimately connected; and (c) the extended informal networks of relationships which surround each of these official organizations. Without a critical mass of females in any of these contexts, women superintendents continue to be "outsiders" in the systems they are expected to navigate. (p. 445)

Women's transition into educational leadership positions is very conflicted and slow especially given the systematic barriers that have long nurtured their roots in the system. Moving away from systematic and cultural boundaries that have prevailed for years is not something that will happen overnight.

There exists a plethora of studies that support the lack of social justice for women in educational leadership. For example, *The 2000 Study of the American Superintendent*, published by the American Association of School Administrators, and written by Cryss Brunner and Margaret Grogan indicated that the percentage of women in the superintendency increased to approximately 12% in the late 1990s, between 13 and 14 percent by 2003, and to an estimated 18 % in 2005. The irony of this research is that professors in administrator preparation programs continually comment about a strong majority of their students being women. Furthermore, educational certification agencies report that the majority of those licensed for educational leadership positions are women (Brunner, Grogan & Kim, 2005; Wallin, Bryant, 2004; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Young, 1994), Obviously, there is no shortage of women who are formally preparing themselves for leadership positions. However, despite their hard work and preparation it is apparent that they are not getting the opportunities to develop their skills and training in leadership positions.

Women who do end up acquiring educational leadership positions usually have the odds stacked against them from the beginning. The leadership jobs they get often come with less prestige and less money. These jobs are usually in smaller, rural districts or urban districts where failure has permeated the culture (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Young, 1994), which can create difficulties for system leaders. For example, in smaller districts the job is often very diverse and the leader must function in very diverse roles. Furthermore, the work environment is more personal and conflict can become problematic for their relationships, which has an impact on whether or not these leaders will remain in their positions. In urban areas it is very difficult to promote change in areas

with significant problems and failures; being the primary change agent is not always welcome. Women are also less likely to negotiate for salaries and benefits. Women themselves will often feel "lucky" that they have secured the job and don't want to advocate for more benefits. Young (2005) in her article *Shifting Away from Women's Issues in Educational Leadership in the US: Evidence of a Backlash?* notes that "although women tend to have somewhat higher levels of professional preparation than their male counterparts and an average of ten more years of experience they are often paid less" (p. 34). Despite women's best efforts and intentions they are not treated competitively in educational leadership.

In the interest of furthering the research on gender barriers Skrla, Reyes and Pedro (2000) interviewed female superintendents and concluded that sex-role stereotypes come in three categories: perceptions of malleable personalities, assumptions about appropriate activities and expectations of feminine behaviour (p. 59). All three influence the work relations female superintendents have with their boards and community members. They go on to next discuss the use of intimidation as an example of sexism in the superintendency. Many women comment that "they never would have done that to a man" (p.59) when reflecting on their treatment at work. Lastly, point out Skrla, Reyes and Pedro (2000), is the silence in and around education when considering the barriers that women face in the superintendency. The women talked extensively around personal silence on issues related to gender. They acknowledged that gender had never been a topic of discussion when they were in their preparatory programs, thereby keeping women further isolated and vulnerable to discrimination. And finally the profession is silent on the issue of gender and discrimination extending from the legislature, to the

state and to professional organizations. As one respondent suggested, “We don’t want to talk about these things. We want them to go away. Pretty much the way we’ve done race in schools. We’ve done gender that way in schools” (p. 64). A conspiracy of silence is not coincidental.

Burke and Karambayya (2004) in their chapter *Women in Management in Canada* describe some of the hurdles women face in aspiring to general management positions. They state that:

> The hurdles include exclusion from informal organizational and professional networks, high visibility as a result of token status at senior levels, lack of sponsorship and support, and even gender discrimination. Outside the workplace women still have to contend with the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles, the challenges of a ‘second shift’ work, and the absence of viable role models. (p. 165)

Not only do women face challenges in their professional lives, but many often hold down a second job as primary care giver to their children and household manager. In many households women end up doing the majority of the work on the home front. Women’s exhaustive lifestyle pace contributes too many women not having the time and energy to pursue leadership positions.

Women wanting to enter into educational leadership positions are faced with backlashes to feminism. Young (2005) in her article *Shifting Away from Women’s Issues in Educational Leadership in the US: Evidence of a Backlash?* discusses the notion of a backlash to women’s issues. Young notes that most of the advancements in women’s issues took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Efforts were made to understand the gender gap

in educational leadership. However, towards the turn of the century interest in women's issues began to fade despite the fact that statistics tell us that after graduation women are still more likely than men to have lower status and lower paying jobs. Young points out that "backlashes occur when advances have been small, before changes are sufficient to help many people" (p. 35). The backlash is a barrier that women are currently facing when striving to attain leadership positions in educational administration.

Adding to the Complexities in Career Development: Women's Leadership Styles

Beth Young (1994), in her article *An other Perspective on the Knowledge Base in Educational Administration,* states that:

> Canadian studies tend to characterize "women's ways" as emphasizing communication and caring interpersonal relations focused on building a community whose central concern is for the welfare of students and their learning. Frequently, this approach involves high visibility in the school, shared power as a means of affirming teachers' expertise and improving the quality of decision making and an active desire to improve professional practice in the school, which may include structural supports for staff collaboration and development. (p.361)

Women who do aspire to leadership positions receive continual external critiques on their leadership style. They really do appear under the microscope from the community both within the educational system and the community external to the system. Wallin and Crippen (2008), in *Superintendent Leadership Style: A Gendered Discourse Analysis,* raise a very profound point when they summarize that:

> Women who do attain superintendencies and attempt to conform to its social constructions find themselves in a no-win situation. If they are perceived

> as caring and collaborative, they are deemed not tough enough for the job; if they "act tough," they are perceived to have betrayed their socially constructed gender roles, and are therefore, unheeded or labelled as bitches. (p. 4)

This fact makes it really difficult for aspiring women leaders to develop a leadership style with which they can be comfortably valued for their expertise, live up to their personal ideals, and still live up to systematic leadership expectations.

Effective leadership is an ever-changing and evolving work in progress. Research appears to indicate that there is a shift towards a "blending" of leadership style from what would once have been considered traditional male and female styles of leadership. Wallin and Crippen (2008) in *Superintendent Leadership Style: A Gendered Discourse Analysis* quote a respondent who suggested that "the old regime is changing, and that era was basically a time for the boys to get together and hear stories…they'd butter each other up for a couple of days and vent like hell and then go back to work. But there is a shift happening" (p. 20). It appears that women and men are both experiencing some liberation from their perceived traditional stereotypes. However, within this context Young (2005), in her article *Shifting Away from Women's Issues in Educational Leadership in the US: Evidence of a Backlash?* suggests that:

> Even when the leadership styles traditionally associated with women (e.g., facilitating, collaborating) are commonly listed among desirable candidate qualities on job descriptions. It appears that while the leadership qualities commonly associated with the female gender are becoming more accepted and valued, the actual gender is not. The fact is women are not finding it easy to obtain leadership positions. (p. 38)

Blended leadership styles or not, women are still not getting the acceptance into positions especially in the top position of the superintendency.

In educational leadership there is attention being given to transformational leadership (Grogan, 1996). Transformational leaders establish themselves as role models by gaining the trust and confidence of their followers. They contribute to their organization by mentoring and empowering followers to develop their full potential. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) in their article *The Leadership Styles of Men and Women* suggest the possibility that "transformational leadership may be somewhat more aligned with the female than the male gender role" (p. 787). However, with the "blending" that appears to be happening in leadership style, is this also a cause for concern? If more men are adapting leadership qualities that were possibly going to give women an "edge", is this, as Wallin and Crippen (2008) propose, yet another way to keep women out of the loop in educational leadership?

Mentoring and Women in Educational Administration

Women who aspire to enter into educational leadership positions benefit from mentorship and positive support as they work to successfully achieve their goals. Margaret Grogan (1996), in her book *Voices of Women Aspiring to the Superintendency*, focuses on the power of women mentoring other women. Unfortunately, women have not always been supportive of other women. This fact has provided a valuable lesson for women. Through mentorship women are bonding together and providing a powerful network of support and learning for each other. Mentorship can create environments where women can voice their concerns and successes with each other so that they can work towards a more gender inclusive environment in educational leadership.

In their work on the Manitoba superintendency, Wallin and Crippen (2008), conclude that "men have more mentors overall and more personal and professional mentors. Women are more apt to have more female mentors then men, though both males and females have more male mentors" (p. 22). Unfortunately, Wallin and Crippen (2008) also found in their work, *Superintendent Leadership Style: A Gendered Discourse Analysis* that the five female superintendents in public school divisions in Manitoba, did not have significant relationships or support systems with each other. In Manitoba at least, then, mentorship appears to still be a work in progress for women. However, with research emerging from different authors on the benefits of mentorship in leadership, hopefully more women will seek out positive mentorship experiences and leaders will take note of aspiring leaders, and support them in their career goals. It is also significant that the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents has initiated a formal mentorship program for all assistant superintendents and superintendents in the province, which adds to the systematic possibilities for leadership development in the province.

Doloz (1999) examines process as a critical tool to the development of mentoring relationships. He uses the metaphor of a transformational journey to describe how individuals create their career paths. Doloz's model for the mentoring process significantly identifies the balance mentors need to both support and challenge mentees. When the support is high and the challenge is high then the mentee benefits most from the mentoring relationship. When the support is low and the challenge is high then the mentee retreats from the relationship. When the support and the challenge are both low then the relationship becomes stagnant in and no growth is evident. Lastly, when the support is high and the challenge is low then the relationship moves into a confrontational

mode, which benefits neither person and has the potential to be destructive in nature. Mentors create developmental maps that they use to nudge their mentees by way of providing support, challenge and vision (p. 208).

Doloz (1986) identifies that mentors use the strategies of supporting, challenging and visioning to facilitate the mentee's transformation. Doloz (1999) suggests that to support, the mentors must provide support and safety so that there is a high degree of trust in the relationship. They must also actively listen to experience the mentee's world from the inside. A mentor must also provide support and structure based on the specific needs of the mentee. The mentee will also build on the relationship by self-disclosure to deepen the relationship for both partners. Lastly, by engaging in discussions where the mentee has an opportunity to express their concerns and discuss progress, a supportive relationship is born (p. 209-219).

Dolz (1999) suggests that to challenge, the mentor must provide cognitive dissonance to the mentoring experience. He says that "mentors toss little bits of disturbing information in their students' paths, little facts and observations, insights and perceptions, theories and interpretations – cow plops on the road to truth – that raise questions about their students' current worldviews and invite them to entertain alternatives to close the dissonance, accommodate their structures, think afresh (p. 216-217).

Dolz (1999) suggests that to create vision, a mentor and mentee must work together to map out a vision. This will provide a context for both challenge and support to create transformation. Mentors model and embody our aspirations to help us become more fully ourselves through them (p. 224-225). Additionally, mentors affirm their

mentee's capabilities by expressing positive expectations that they are competent (p. 211-212). Lastly, the mentor needs to assist the mentee in reflection so that he/she can become more self-aware (p. 228).

Supporting Women in Educational Administration

Supporting women in their careers and leadership advancement is essential in a competitive work environment. Burke and Karambayya (2004) in their chapter *Women in Management in Canada* go on to discuss some very interesting elements in companies that are supporting women's social justice. They recognize that several Canadian organizations have undertaken initiatives to support women's advancement in their careers. For example, they highlight the company Deloitte and Touche since 50 percent of their recruits are women. This company developed an advisory group on the Retention and Advancement of Women. This group suggested initiatives including communication, changing the firm's culture, alternate work arrangements and the coaching and mentoring of top talent.

Another organization spotlighted is the Royal Bank Financial Group with women comprising 75% of the total workforce. The initiatives developed by this organization include dependent care programmes, flexible work arrangements and training and support. The feedback is overwhelmingly positive from most in the organization.

The third group is the Bank of Montreal. Five elements contributed to the success of the task force and its impact:

Executive sponsorship – A senior executive lead the task force which went a long way in generating interest.

Getting the facts out – the task force examined the myths underlying many of the

> barriers to the advancement of women, and got this information out to all employees.
>
> Inclusive approach – while focusing on barriers faced by women, the task force had as its goal the removal of barriers and the creation of opportunities for all employees.
>
> Accountability and integration – Action plans ensured both managerial accountability and an integrated approach to implementation. Three of the 26 action plans were aimed solely at women: a gender awareness workshop, and two action plans mandating a 50 percent participation rate for women in two training programs that are feeder routes to senior positions. (Burke & Karambayya, 2004, p. 175)

The details above give an indication of some pro-active initiatives that some organizations in the private sector are implementing to facilitate the advancement of women into educational leadership positions. Perhaps some of these initiatives can be negotiated to fit into the context of educational administration.

The moral imperative in education of fostering social justice and equity is pursued further in Dana and Bourisaw's (2006) article, *Overlooked Leaders*. They feel that board members have a responsibility to recognize policies and practices that are gender biased. There are steps that boards can take to ensure social equity. These include initiatives such as establishing parameters with search firms to include full disclosure of information. If boards do their own search they need to include candidates with diversity to the pool. Once an offer is made and accepted boards need to actively sponsor leadership. Finally,

demonstrating positive support within the community is a professional attitude for boards to ensure a successful experience for all stakeholders.

Skrla, Reyes and Pedro (2000) in their article, *Women Superintendents Speak,* articulate their own conclusions on sexism surrounding the superintendency. They divide participant's solutions into six categories. First, they discuss the need for continuing and further in-depth research to help educate persons in education and potential women who are considering the superintendency as a career move. The research needs to expose the problems and issues facing women in the superintendency.

The second category is what is referred to as integrated discourse (p. 66). Facing isolation and their inhibitions, women are often alone in their leadership struggles. Conversations need to happen amongst educators that include the challenges facing women in education. This integrated discourse should include both men and women.

The third category is the obligation of University preparation programs (p. 67) to design their curriculum and delivery around the experiences of women. Both men and women need awareness on the challenges that women face as they aspire into leadership positions.

Professional organizations and state agencies are the fourth category identified (p. 68). The silence of these groups has contributed to sexism within their internal systems and within education for many years. Women need the profession and the professional groups to which they belong , to stand up and support them in their entirety.

As discussed earlier, Skryla et al. also emphasize the importance of the actions of members of school boards in women's issues (p. 69). School boards hire superintendents, and thus, school board members need education and awareness around gender issues.

Equipping boards with the skills to effectively hire superintendents is essential in order for boards to effectively do their jobs.

The last point that the authors conclude is the upbringing of women (p.70). The participants think that women need to be socialized to be tougher and to fight for what they want and deserve. Politeness is not always appropriate; being more assertive can help them reach and attain those goals that others try to keep away from them.

At a local level in Manitoba, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) has provided a mentorship program to mentor new members to the superintendency. This is a partnership between Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth on a cost-sharing basis. Additionally, a few individual school divisions have made provisions for their own in-house leadership and mentorship development programs. For example, Evergreen School Division facilitates a program for leadership candidates in their division (www.esd.ca). On a personal level, I was part of the Seine River School Division leadership program. As a leadership development program graduate I had the opportunity to learn about popular issues in educational leadership primarily through guest speakers. We did some job shadowing of administrators in the division and attended board meetings. Furthermore, we pursued and presented on a topic of our choice related to educational leadership

Conceptual Framework

Dorothy Smith (2007) in her journey to conceptualize the world around her worried about the gap between the world that sociology could know and the world that she lived in and experienced in her body. She couldn’t find how traditional sociology was

grounded in the actualities of experience. The women's movement transformed her concern into something quite different (p. 210). Smith (2007) states that:

> The disconnection between the theories and concepts organizing sociological discourse metamorphosed: It was not just something to think about; it was something I was living. It was not only that the discipline was thought and dominated by men and women who did or work on their ground. It was something else. When I looked for where I was in my disciple I discovered that I was not there. My world with my children and my work in the house was where I was as a woman. The embodied woman disappeared when I went to work in the text based world of sociology. (p. 210)

Smith believes that during the women's movement, women had no language to express themselves other than the one that already confined them. It was through the talking, reading and writing of their experiences that women could communicate and organize action. Women's communication of experiences laid the foundation for the politics of the women's movement.

Smith (2007) explains that feminist sociologists at the beginning of the women's movement were finding problems with sociology. They realized that women were not included in the stories. Since that time sociology has been transformed by feminist work. Smith (2007) states that:

> My own direction was determined by my rediscovery as a feminist of the gap between sociology and the actualities of our lives. I began to examine sociology from a standpoint in my experience as a woman, in my body, with my children, at work in my home, in the local particularities of my life. I began to be able to see

> sociology as my and other peoples local practices, in our bodies, our subjectivities coordinated by its texts, and I began to want to a sociology that could see what I was learning in the dialogic of women's experience. (p. 410)

Smith recognized that something more was needed and set out to transform sociology to include those whose experiences with which it began.

A conceptual and methodological practice emerged to start with the lives and experiences of the people. Smith (2007) summarizes that:

> I discovered in the women's movement how to experience myself as a woman, and along with that, I discovered that I experienced myself as a woman only in those aspects of my life in which the immediacies of my bodily being came into play. This, then, was the standpoint from which a different sociology must be written. This is where a sociology in which women could be subjects had to begin, in the local actualities of people's embodied being. (p. 211)

Thus feminist standpoint theory was born and is used today to study the world around us from our own personal experiences. It is the individual women in their own unique worlds that contribute to the body of knowledge through their own personal standpoint.

The female superintendents in my research all have their own standpoint. Their points of view are all uniquely embedded (and embodied) within their own experiential realities. These women responded to the questions from their own vantage point and shared their own viewpoints formulated from their personal experiences. As is indicated in the findings and conclusions in chapters four and five, many of their experiences, though in different locations across Canada, resonate similarly based upon their experiences from a particular social location—as women who have achieved the

superintendency. Yet, each viewpoint is also unique in the fact that these women have different experiences which have shaped how they have achieved, and enacted, their roles as superintendents. More discussion around the value of this conceptual framework to study women in the superintendency is included in chapter five.

Summary

The number of women in educational leadership positions has increasingly grown over the last few decades. However, there still are discrepancies between the number of women in education and the number of women represented in educational leadership. The most blatant discrepancy is the under representation of women in the superintendency. The brief history of women in educational administration put into context the experiences of women in educational careers over time. The systematic, social and political barriers women face in the field is a long, conflicted story well documented in research. Unfortunately, because barriers are so culturally ingrained, it is a tedious process to deconstruct them. Solutions are not simple and progress and change are slow. Although women still face discriminatory and conflictual responses to their leadership styles, leadership qualities that have historically been associated with women are finding their way into educational agendas, although there is more evidence to suggest a blending of leadership styles is occurring over time. Hopefully, this will give women an edge or advantage for breaking into leadership positions and not disqualify them from the running as more men adapt these qualities into their leadership styles. Finally, the mentoring and supporting of women into leadership positions may make leadership more accessible to women. Some organizations, both private and educational, are proactively and systematically supporting women in their career aspirations. These

initiatives provide hope that school boards, divisions and professional associations will continue to do more for their female employees. The following chapter outlines the methods used to capture the experiences of women in the Canadian superintendency. Chapter three discusses participant selection, researcher positioning, data analysis and confidentiality and ethics.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study is qualitative in nature as its intent was to provide subjects with an opportunity to share their career experiences. Subjects provided thick description of experiences from which rich conclusions about the nature of gender and leadership were drawn. The participants were provided the opportunity to dialogue about their experiences as educational leaders. The research questions for the study were:

1 How do females access the superintendency?

2. What are the barriers and challenges faced by female senior administrators?
3. What role, if any, does mentoring play in the career development of female senior administrators?
4. How do female senior administrators lead?

Qualitative research, broadly defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.17). Researchers look for data that is authentic to their subjects being interviewed. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Patton, 1990). Thus, the story that the subject tells, based on the questions of the researcher, is truly authentic to the subject and her environment.

Researchers choose qualitative research for several reasons. First, it allows the researcher to retrieve new ideas and perspectives on things already known. Researchers are able to acquire more information on the subject area which allows for broader and better understanding of the subject. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that "if you want

people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it" (p. 120).

Second, Strauss and Corbin (1990) acknowledge that qualitative methods can also be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is known. If the researcher is studying an area about which little is known, then qualitative research is a good way for people to share their stories so that the researcher can construct a context from which to understand. It is an important way for valuable information to be shared without any constraints or predetermined direction. The qualitative researcher can try to see and understand the world through the eyes of participants.

Lastly, qualitative research allows for an intimate relationship between the researcher and the participant. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) in their *Handbook of Qualitative Research* speak of qualitative researchers stressing the socially constructed nature of reality and emphasize the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied. It is through this intimate relationship that a researcher can acquire a wealth of information that may not come out in a quantitative survey. Ideas can be expanded upon and clarification and questions asked to further understand the experience of the subjects.

Even more specifically I incorporated a phenomenological qualitative research perspective so that I could examine the lived experiences of humans. Phenomenological researchers hope to gain understanding of the essential "truths" (ie. essences) of the lived experience (Byrne, 2001). It is within the context of these "truths" that I gained a broader and more in-depth understanding of the lives of these women from their own standpoints and experiences.

My intent was to allow the participants through the use of the above methods to share their embodied experiences. The questions I used probed and allowed for a more in-depth and detailed account of the participant's experience. By interviewing one-on-one I established rapport and allowed for a comfortable setting in which the participants could share their experiences. However, because all were telephone interviews I hope that there remained a degree of anonymity that allowed the participants to be candidly open and honest. I wanted to elaborate on the body of knowledge already out there with the authentic experiences of the participants.

Participant Selection and Description of Study Environment

I used purposeful and criterion selection to research my study. I selected people who I felt would best help me understand the phenomenon. I tried to develop a detailed understanding of respondents' work experiences. The information gathered from the interviews gave voice to female senior administrators across Canada. I chose 12 female leaders, one representing each province and territory in Canada, except the Yukon where I could not confirm representation. I consulted school division websites and randomly chose participants. I contacted potential participants by email to see if they were interested in being interviewed, and upon their notification of interest I sent them a consent form via email. After receiving the returned consent form I contacted participants by email or telephone to set up phone interviews. Each interview was approximately one hour in length. It was arranged for a convenient time for the interviewee. Participants were e-mailed the interview protocol before the interview so that they could prepare for the interview. Interviews were audio taped, both digitally and manually, and transcribed by me. All transcripts were emailed to the participants for member checks, at which point

they may have added, deleted or changed the transcripts until they were comfortable with the content. All participants received a copy of the final report. The data collection process began in March of 2010 and continued to June 2010.

The interview questions that were used can be found in Appendix A and included:

1. Please describe your career path in education. Consider:
   a. Positions you've held and length of time in those positions.
   b. Descriptions of experiences and roles you've undertaken in service to the profession.
   c. Your career breaks or leaves in service.
   d. What significant event/s led you to your current position?
2. Please describe any barriers or challenges you have had to face over the course of your career either personally or professionally.
3. What do you consider to be your primary support systems at present, either personally or professionally?
4. Please describe your career mentorship experiences during your career.
   a. What qualities do you admire most in your mentors?
   b. How would you describe their leadership styles?
   c. What lessons did you learn about leadership from your mentors?
   d. What process, model or strategies of mentorship did you benefit from?
5. Please describe your own personal leadership style.
   a. Can you provide an example of a time when you had to break from your usual style? Under what circumstances, and why?

b. Explain how your leadership style has been influenced by others.

Researcher Positioning

As I mentioned earlier, I am a women aspiring to a leadership position and therefore have a personal investment in the topic of study. Additionally, I know other women who have experienced barriers in their quest to obtain leadership positions and I have faced barriers on my journey to leadership. Furthermore, I feel that I am at present benefiting from some positive mentorship experiences and am learning about and observing some interesting leadership styles which influences my interactions and my own leadership style when working with others.

The participants may have had a difficult time honestly and openly responding to the questions without holding back any information that they may not have felt comfortable sharing. Further notes to this point are found in the limitations section in Chapter One. It may have also shaped the ways in which I analyzed the data that participants provided to me. The use of full confidentiality and anonymity attempted to address some of these issues, as did the use of member checks of transcripts, verifying preliminary findings with participants, and disclosing generalized themes only rather than particular incidents which may have had the potential to identify individuals.

Data Analysis

The interviews were taped and then transcribed by myself. Each participant had the opportunity to see the transcript of the interview after it had been transcribed and change anything with which she was not comfortable. After all the interviews were completed and transcribed I coded the information and looked for themes in the data and reported on my findings.

I relied on an approach called constant comparative analysis by Guba (cited in Patton, 1990) which involves taking one piece of data (one theme or one interview) and comparing it to all others. This way I could see the similarities and differences and began to understand the relationships between the data. Thus I could compare one women's experience to another's based on the probing of the questions.

I began to map the themes to show the interconnections between them. I used Thomas' (2009) theme mapping to do this. Once the themes were established I went through my working data files and looked for good quotations that illustrated the themes. In the order that they appeared in the interview, I put them into boxes on the page. The page became the 'map'. Next I labelled the boxes with the names of the themes and drew dotted lines in data that seemed to connect between themes and solid lines with arrows where one theme seemed in some way to account for or explain the theme at the other end of the arrow.

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

The following four criteria, proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1981) were used for establishing reliability and validity of the qualitative research.

Credibility. This criterion is an assessment of the credibility of the research findings from the participant's perspective. During the interview I researched, restated, summarized, or paraphrased the information received from each participant to ensure accuracy. Next member checks occurred, and I reported preliminary findings to participants and asked for critical feedback.

I also used a form of persistent observation as I interviewed 12 participants in an attempt to access ample data. I used triangulation to the extent that I used multiple interviews as one attempt at triangulation of data between sources. I also used theoretical triangulation in that I compared the literature with my data sources.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the degree that findings can be transferred or generalized to other settings or contexts, or populations (Denzin, 1978). As a qualitative researcher, I enhanced transferability by detailing the research methods, contexts, and assumptions underlying the study. I used thick description to provide a detailed description of the experiences of participants that included my interpretation in addition to the observed content and process. In this way, the methods and findings were documented as carefully as possible to provide for opportunities of transfer across settings, contexts or populations.

Dependability. Dependability pertains to the importance of the researcher accounting for or describing the changing contexts or circumstances that are fundamental to qualitative research. As the research process unfolds, I carefully documented any changes or circumstances that accrued and affected the original plan of research and that

therefore impacted the findings and analysis. In this study, I was unable to attain the views of a female senior administrative person in the Yukon because no one would commit to the study. In addition, I interviewed a woman in a senior administrative position but not the superintendency from Prince Edward Island because there are no female superintendents in this province.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent that the research findings can be confirmed or corroborated by others. I was looking for disconfirming evidence or searching for accounts that differed from the main accounts as well as looking for confirmatory evidence that demonstrated the socially constructed experiences of women leaders. The findings detailed in Chapter Four detail my work in this area. I also took subjects from all across Canada to see how their experiences compared.

Confidentiality and Ethics

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

Summary

This chapter outlined the research methods that were utilized for this study. The study was qualitative in nature to provide participants with an opportunity to share their experiences. Even more specifically I incorporated a phenomenological qualitative research perspective so that I could examine the lived experiences of humans. Once the research was complete I analyzed it by looking for themes to report on and identify. I selected people who I thought would best help me understand the phenomenon. Chapter four outlines the findings of the research, and chapter five reports on conclusions and implications for research, practice and theory.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter addresses the questions posed to each participant in the study. As a result of the participants' responses to each interview question, the data collected has been coded into themes and illustrated using direct quotations from the participants to portray their thoughts and feelings. Out of thirteen provinces and territories I was able to acquire an interview with twelve participants. Unfortunately, I was not able to access any one in the Yukon Territory. Out of twelve participants, eleven were superintendents and one in Prince Edward Island was in a senior administrative position as there are no female Superintendents in that province.

Lincloln and Guba (1985) summarize three ways that themes can be identified: (1) consensus themes – when the majority of superintendents state the same theme; (2) supported themes – when approximately half the superintendents say the same thing; (3) individual themes – when only one or two superintendents state a theme. In order to categorize the information Guba (cited in Patton, 1990) suggests the researcher begin looking at similarities and differences between the different categories. After the themes are developed, the researcher then employs quantitative measures to analyze and report the qualitative data. This is accomplished by marking each of the topics or themes with the number of participants who stipulated that theme. Finally, a descriptive summary connects ideas that emerge from the data to the literature.

The questions asked of the superintendents focused on their career paths, barriers and challenges, leadership styles, support systems and mentorship experiences. Each of these will be discussed below.

Career Paths

The first question asked superintendents to describe their career path in education. They were asked to consider; (a) positions they have held and length of time in those positions; (b) descriptions of experiences and roles they have undertaken in service to the profession; (c) career breaks or levels in service, and; (d) significant event/s that led them to their current position.

Positions

One consensus theme from the participants' responses to this question was that most of the participants had served in both school administration and assistant superintendent positions before accessing the superintendency. In particular, nine of the participants had been principals and one had been a vice principal. Ten of the participants had acted in the role of assistant superintendent prior to gaining access to the superintendency.

A supported theme that emerged was that about half of the participants had worked in one or both leadership capacities as either curriculum consultants/coordinators and/or student services/resource coordinators. Seven of the participants had worked as curriculum consultants/coordinators, two of the participants had worked as student service/resource coordinators, one had worked in both areas and two did not identify with either. Such a finding related to the article, *Shifting Away from Women's Issues in Educational Leadership in the US: Evidence of a Backlash?* in which Young (2005) notes that women tend to have more experience in various roles as they access formal leadership positions later in their career. As indicated in this study, these women have

had a vast amount of experience in a variety of formal leadership positions before accessing the superintendency.

Three individual themes emerged from this question. Three of the respondents suggested that being bilingual in English and French, allowed them to access opportunities during their career. Secondly, two participants had taught at the University level which they believed provided them with experiences helpful to their career advancement. Thirdly, three of the participants had worked for their respective provincial departments of education at some time during their career. Participants felt that each of these career opportunities had provided valuable experience and expertise that enabled success in their current leadership positions.

Roles/Experiences

Participants were asked to describe the various roles and/or experiences in which they engaged which fostered their career growth and shaped their educational vision. One consensus theme that emerged from the participant's responses was that all 12 participants have been actively involved with volunteer committees or roles within the school system, teachers associations or community groups. Some examples of these associations include: Canadian Council of English Teachers, College Board of Governors, Canadian Association of Second Language Learners, provincial Superintendent associations, Rotary Club, United Way and Religious Education Network. One participant said that "these experiences have shaped my commitment to service and social justice." Another participant commented that "I really believe that you should be involved in your community, and you're not just an educational leader you are teaching kids about what it means to be a good citizen." These volunteer experiences have

contributed to the wealth of knowledge and expertise that each of these participants contributes to her community.

Career Breaks

A supported theme that emerged when participants were asked to discuss any breaks in their career over time included the pursuit of further education. Ten of the participants cited that they had completed their master's degree in education. One participant stated that "I took a sabbatical and did a Masters in educational policy and administration." This finding supports the literature which suggests that women are highly credentialed and/or enrolled in administrator preparation programs (Young, 2005). Furthermore, educational certification agencies report that the majority of those licensed for educational leadership positions are women (Brunner, Grogan, & Kim, 2005; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Young, 1994).

Five of the participants of this study took a break to pursue their Masters degree. Three of the participants had taken a leave to complete their doctoral degree. However, two participants had worked extensively on their doctorates but didn't complete them in the end due to time constraints. For these women the "third shift" of doing the degree while balancing career and family became too time intensive and their degrees were put on hold. One participant stated "I was a full time principal, a full time mom and my doctorate program was full time. So you can imagine I felt guilty at a few places so I decided to put a stop to my doctorate for obvious reasons." The second participant stated that "I took the two years that I needed to do my residency, but decided that I did not want to teach at the University and I really missed being around kids and being around

teachers who were teaching kids." Education was very important to all of these participants who believed that its pursuit warranted a time commitment.

A supported career break theme that emerged included those taken for child bearing and rearing. Nine of the participants spent some time at home with their children. This ranged from a couple of weeks to a couple of years. I noticed that there were five participants who were already in either school or divisional leadership positions when they became pregnant and went on leave. One participant had a chuckle when she explained that "back in those days there were not too many of us principals that were pregnant, that I can tell you. All of my colleagues were males and they were looking at me like it was their own baby. Everybody was very careful and made sure that I didn't have to carry anything and that I had a good seat." A second participant cited "I took two weeks with the first child, at the time of the birth of my first child, I was the youngest and one of only two women on the leadership team – these were factors." A third participant said, "I had to resign as a vice-principal and reapply again on the competition three years down the road to be a vice principal again." Regardless of the length of the leave, all of these women's careers were influenced by their decision to have children and the responsibilities that go along with child rearing.

Significant Events

When asked what significant events shaped participants' achievement of their career ambitions, there existed a supported theme around the notion of readiness, timing and opportunities. One participant suggested "I think the determination I had to take courses and build my qualifications helped," while another indicated "it was just a natural progression, I guess the thinking that you were ready for a move and what can I do, I did

take my masters in Educational administration so I guess that's where my interests lie and kind of just following along. Lucky or good I got some positions that allowed me to do that." The notion of entering positions based on opportunity and timing was noted by a third participant who said "I think the rest of it is just taking opportunities, you're in the right place at the right time when positions become available and timing in my life." A fourth participant was vocal about the fact "that I was not the successful candidate in the board where I had worked for 25 years. I think it was a matter of timing." Lastly, two participants mentioned the early departure of their Superintendents which created an opportunity for them to apply for the position. Participants recognized that it was a matter of events aligning in a way that facilitated their emergence into their leadership positions. Both their professional and personal lives coalesced in ways that resulted in being at the right place at the right time in their lives.

Four women recognized the encouragement and support of family members and colleagues as they pursued their career ambitions. One participant shared that "my number one fan is my husband and he is always encouraging me to apply for these positions and saying that we will make it work and additionally my parents who have been so amazing in supporting me because they will always baby-sit when I have to travel for work." Another participant acknowledged the support and mentorship of her colleagues by saying "one male superintendent encouraged me to apply for vice principal jobs and I don't know if I would have, had he not talked to me about it." She also said that "I had a female superintendent that certainly helped a lot of the females in her district feel that we had a lot to contribute." Another participant stressed that "I didn't really have that great of confidence in myself, but other people did and they encouraged me to go

into leadership roles. I think that really in regards to what's made me get to where I am it's been a real strong support system of family friends and coworkers." Margaret Grogan (1996), in her book *Voices of Women Aspiring to the Superintendency*, focuses on the power of women mentoring other women. Through mentoring experiences women bond together and provide a powerful network of support and learning for each other. Mentorship can create environments where women can voice their concerns and successes with each other so that they can work towards a more gender inclusive environment in educational leadership. As participants pointed out, having strong, encouraging and supportive relationships was significant for their career development. It is important that all women aspiring to leadership positions feel supported in their endeavours, especially by other women around them.

Five participants highlighted individual themes in response to the question on significant events which tended to reflect how individual experiences and/or contexts helped to facilitate their entry into the superintendency. Another participant thought that her physical education and coaching background created transferable skills which accounted for a natural progression into administration. A third participant believed that she had a lot to contribute to the profession, had proven herself as an assistant superintendent and had a supportive board. Another participant felt that her special education experience, her "birds eye" view of the division from her various roles, growing up on the farm with a strong work ethic and values and her alignment with the organization were all significant factors in acquiring her position. One participant talked about her view that the superintendents were "the movers and shakers" as being significant in her decision to become superintendent. Finally, one of the superintendents

attributed some of her opportunities to following her husband on his career path and therefore exposing her to new experiences and opportunities. She also sensed when applying for her current position that the school division was looking for someone new and from outside. Overall participants recognized that many contributing factors converged as they progressed into their current leadership position.

An interesting theme that emerged with four of the participants was that they had at one point never saw themselves in the role of superintendent. One participant stated that, “I don’t think I had an intention to become superintendent, when I saw the changeover in leadership I think my feeling was that not only was it something that I could learn from but I also thought that I had something to contribute to the district.” Such findings align with the literature that suggests women often tend not to have a formalized career plan to access leadership (Wallin & Crippen, 2007).

Finally, two participants acknowledged the role their family played in promoting the value of working in the education field. One participant said that “she grew up knowing that teaching was an honoured profession.” Another participant said that “education was highly valued in my family and I think that that was instilled in me in an early age.” These comments also underpin the deep commitment to education held by these women as they proceed in their work as superintendents.

Barriers and Challenges

The second question superintendents to describe any barriers or challenges they have had to face over the course of their career either personally or professionally.

Personal Challenges

A supported theme that emerged from nine of the participants was the difficulties in balancing the time commitment to be successful in their work and personal lives. A significant concern for these women was that their children were well taken care of in their absence. One participant said "it was always a challenge to make sure that you have quality childcare so that you could spend the time that you needed to at your job, especially at certain times of the year." Another participant stated that, "It was always a challenge to reconcile the family and the professional. I've made sure that I've had very good help at home, someone that I could trust so that I wouldn't worry throughout the day." Burke and Karambayya (2004) in their chapter *Women in Management in Canada* describe some of the hurdles women face in aspiring to general management positions. They state that, "outside the workplace women still have to contend with the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles, the challenges of a 'second shift' work, and the absence of viable role models" (p. 165). These women not only have much professional responsibility, but they also carry much personal responsibility which makes it difficult for them to maintain the work/life balance. One participant acknowledged that it was her "personal interests that she had to drop, and if one thing has suffered it has been her health." The women in this study often put professional and family interests before their own well being, health and personal interests.

Professional Challenges

A supported theme openly cited by six of the participants dealt with gender bias in the workplace. One participant stated that "as a woman I have had to deal with sexist men and women, primarily board members. There is still a prevalent bias toward men in

leadership roles in certain areas." A third participant summarized her experience in the following way:

> One obvious one is the gender one whether it is recognized or not, it is subtle and sometimes it is not so subtle but it is always there. So I find that that gender barrier is still there even though the majority of our teachers are female you will find that the majority of our administrators especially at the senior level are male. I think that a lot of boards are nervous to hire females in the superintendency because if she is young they are scared that she might go off on maternity leave and if she is married that she might follow her husband as his job might supersede hers so there are a lot of concerns that they have about the longevity of females and they still keep thinking that they are taking a risk.

A fourth participant pointed out that "we have no female high school principals in our district, we have a couple of vice principals however, and in the past I told one superintendent that you have to be male and a jock to get into administration. He said that it looks that way doesn't it. I said it more than looks that way." Only one participant cited that "I've never felt that being a female is an advantage or a hindrance in any position that I've ever taken." The findings of this study align with research that suggests women who do access the world of educational leadership and administration often face discrimination in their job settings. For example, lower wages, more challenging work conditions, disrespectful treatment from board members, isolation, less prestige and so forth all make the job highly challenging and stressful for women (Bell, 1995; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000, 2003; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Grogan, 1996; Kamler & Shakeshaft, 1999; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Tallerico, Poole &

Burstyn,1994; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000; Wallin & Crippen, 2007; Young, 1994). It is significant that female participants in this study recognized that gender issues are still relevant and prevalent within these leadership positions. Sexist attitudes still exist in the workplace, and women's career aspirations remain affected by gender barriers.

Other barriers and challenges could be classified into those that arise as a consequence of work, and those that arise as a consequence of personal circumstance or identity. The challenges that occurred as a consequence of work included such barriers as having to deal with public relations, as one superintendent commented that she has to do much work with outside relations especially with the industry in her area. Another superintendent commented that "working with community is just so important for them to see that they get good value for their scarce tax dollars." The second barrier mentioned was the shortage of mentors. One participant pointed out that "there are very few people who understand the complexities of the work and so it is very hard to find a mentor if you will, or kindred spirit." In this example, the relationship between the superintendent and the formal mentor, who had been selected for her, had not worked well. A fourth challenge included having to deal with messy office politics. This participant told a story about working for a superintendent who was drinking on the job and all the fallout that went along with that situation.

Two participants mentioned the challenge of unions. For example, one stated "I have frustration as someone who was once deeply engaged in the teachers' union. It is frustrating sometimes to have such impact from outside of your school district interfere with the relationships and work in your school district." Two participants found that there

were challenges with travelling as their divisions were geographically spread out. One participant mentioned that “out of 195 school days we were out of town, away from home, in a hotel or accommodations a lot less inviting than that, 90 nights.” One participant described that implementing all of the changes that occur in education in a timely fashion is challenging and often overwhelms staff. Interestingly, two respondents felt that moving into the superintendency had actually hindered their sense of autonomy. One participant stated that “the most autonomy that I ever had was when I was in the classroom as a teacher. As I’ve moved in the educational system I have seen my autonomy diminish as I am accountable to so many stakeholders and it gets narrower and narrower.”

One participant noted that changing provinces was a challenge in her career; “the fact that I had to adapt to three different provinces, different legislations, different responsibilities and different requirements of the various roles.” Another participant talked about the merging of school boards and changing French and English streams as being a challenge. She said that “my shift from an English employer to French employer, the mentality is very different and I had to adjust to the French mentality.” In addition, “the cultural shock of the mergers from Catholic and Protestant to French and English boards” lead to challenges within the work environment. One participant talked about the cultural challenges in her jurisdiction. She stated that it could be difficult “being in a place where there is a different world view and trying to wrap your head around it and find out how you can be valuable to them.” She continuously tries to work hard to understand the people that she serves.

Of those challenges that fall into the category related to personal or identity factors, two of the participants mentioned their age as being a challenge at one point. One superintendent expressed frustration when she said that “almost everything I attended as a superintendent I was told you are so young, how did you become a Superintendent and be so young.” A participant who is a mother felt that pregnancy was a challenge. She stated that “there weren’t a lot of others I could connect to about implementing bills and dealing with morning sickness!” Another participant talked about the perceptions of nepotism when one’s spouse also works in the division. She stated that “my husband is also an employee and administrator in our division and me being the CEO there can be some perception challenges around that.” A fourth participant noted that her personal health had changed since taking on the Superintendent position. She summarized that “if anything has suffered out of all of this I would say it’s my health in that since I moved into the superintendency I have put on weight and have difficulty booking time to exercise regularly.” Those who had gone on to post-graduate work noted the challenges of furthering their education while working.

Earlier in the literature Burke and Karambayya (2004) in their chapter *Women in Management in Canada* describe some of the hurdles women face in aspiring to general management positions. They state that:

> The hurdles include exclusion from informal organizational and professional networks, high visibility as a result of token status at senior levels, lack of sponsorship and support, and even gender discrimination. Outside the workplace women still have to contend with the limitations imposed by traditional gender

> roles, the challenges of a 'second shift' work, and the absence of viable role models (p. 165).

As pointed out in this section, female superintendents from across Canada still face many of these same barriers.

In contrast to the barriers and challenges cited by the participants, there were three participants who felt that there existed opportunity in their areas because they are in northern areas of Canada or within their provinces. One participant exclaimed that "it is a small, rural, northern board and basically if you express an interest in an opportunity it is usually there for the taking because there seem to be more opportunities than people to complete them." This is consistent with some of the research on women in leadership positions. These jobs are usually in smaller, rural districts (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Young, 1994), which can create difficulties for system leaders. For example, in smaller districts the job is often very diverse and the leader must function in very diverse roles. Furthermore, the work environment is more personal and conflict can become problematic for their relationships, which has an impact on whether or not these leaders will remain in their positions. It is an interesting contrast for women, one that provides them opportunities, but yet marginalizes them as well.

Support Systems

The third question asked participants to describe their primary personal and professional support systems.

Professional Support Systems

A consensus theme emerged from the participants that a primary support system for them at work was the leadership team in their school division. One participant told me that:

> The people I work with are incredible. Our principals are like family and when we meet we do discuss issues that get pretty heated, but in the end we sit down, have a dinner and relate to one another as individuals. The board office staff is amazing, they step up to the plate, they celebrate together and they are so much fun to be with…coffee breaks are the best time of the day as we all pause and share what is happening in our lives.

Ten of the participants talked about this support and recognized the importance of a strong supportive team.

An individual theme that emerged was the support provided by a more formal provincial leadership program. A participant stated that, "I still keep in touch with the colleagues that were in my group so that is a very good support system professionally." Hopefully more women will seek out positive mentorship experiences and leaders will take note of aspiring leaders, to support them in their career goals. It is also significant that the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents has initiated a formal mentorship program for all assistant superintendents and superintendents in the province, which adds to the systematic possibilities for leadership development in the province.

Professional supports were often individuals or groups within the profession who had supported superintendents in their work. Such individuals and groups named were: administrative assistants, previous superintendents, supportive school boards, school

division parent advisory councils, career coaches, other superintendents, other leaders in province, colleagues, students and departments of education.

Personal Support Systems

Nine of the participants identified the importance of a supportive family. One participant shared that "I am in a 28 year marriage to a man who carries more than his share of the load. This has allowed me to invest enormous time and energy into my work. Both of our children are able, intelligent and independent. Again, this has allowed me to focus on my carrier as well as maintain a family." Women in this study who had supportive families that help to manage the 'second shift' of family workloads recognized the significance of this to the success they have achieved in their careers.

Two of the participants mentioned the support of friends as being important to them. One participant said "I have a lot of very good friends that I can rely on a lot or not but I know they're there." Having people available for support helps to alleviate the stresses involved in this leadership role.

Mentorship Experiences

The fourth question asked superintendents to describe their career mentorship experiences. Superintendents were asked to describe: the qualities they most admired in their mentors and their leadership styles; the lessons they learned from these mentors, and; any process, model or strategies of mentorship from which they benefited.

The participants' mentorship experiences included mentors such as former superintendents, former teachers, colleagues, former principals, current colleagues, a women teachers' organization, a husband, and former professors.

Qualities of Mentors

Three primary themes developed related to the qualities participants believed were embodied in the styles of good mentors: relational skills, pedagogical skills and management skills.

Relational skills. A consensus theme that developed when discussing the qualities that participants admired most in their mentors was their relational skills and general focus on others. Participants described their mentors using the following terms: "had integrity," "positive attitude," "people first," "you can do this," "approachable, open, honest, trustworthy, teamwork, collaborative and a good sense of humour," "receptive, coaches, and value all people," "relationships and treating people well, treating people with respect and dignity, safety and keeping myself grounded," "can't take ourselves too seriously," "ability to read people and pay attention to detail in situations to help resolve conflict situations," "whatever we do it's all about students and student achievement," and "ability to balance relationship with task". It appears that the most respected mentors have strong relational skills that present themselves in their work with others. It is interesting how this theme relates to the research on women's leadership style. Beth Young (1994), in her article "An Other Perspective on the Knowledge Base in Educational Administration," states that "Canadian studies tend to characterize 'women's ways' as emphasizing communication and caring interpersonal relations focused on building a community whose central concern is for the welfare of students and their learning" (p. 361). The participants' responses of the preference for the relational side of mentorship coincides with the research on women's styles of leadership. Women appear to favour mentors who demonstrate a strong relational component.

Pedagogical skills. Another theme that is supported is the qualities associated with the pedagogical or teaching aspects of the mentorship experience. Participants talked about their mentors' approach to the pedagogical aspects of their mentoring role as facilitating their learning and visionary in their world view.

Facilitator of learning. Four participants talked about their mentors as being a facilitator. One participant was very challenged by a mentor because she appreciated that "she was creative and showed me that you could teach in a way that I wanted to teach and would challenge me with articles that I could read and think about." Another participant said that "he taught me more about myself and what I needed to do and challenged me more than anybody else ever did as far as teaching was concerned." A mentee felt that her mentor "helped me improve my writing style." Another leader emphasized that her mentor was "absolutely focused on learning, deeply knowledgeable and committed in their knowledge of their practice and people who are educators first." Encouraging and facilitating the participant professional growth and learning was important for fostering their professional engagement.

Visionary. Participants made a connection to mentors who they felt were visionaries and who worked towards providing the best for the students in their care. A few descriptors made by participants in respect to their mentors were: "clear vision," "commitment to students and student achievement," "time commitment and long-term planning," and "people who are curious, people who have passion, energy and commitment, people who bring in other people who can bring real insight and shape and inform our opinions and our actions." Mentors with strong visions and convictions about their craft were noticed by participants.

Management skills. The theme of having good management skills also arose as a positive attribute for a mentor. Nine participants discussed management aspects, including finding balance between the management aspects and relationships with the people involved in the process. Some comments that were mentioned include: "common-sense and hard –working people," "managing time, people and initiatives, keeping my feet firmly planted in reality and process, process, process, develop, communicate and follow process!" and "people who have been very creative in the way they approach problem-solving."

In contrast, three of the participants commented on how they actually learned much about leadership by watching others do things that were not effective. For example: "I've had a couple principals that didn't handle people very well and I think that you learn as much or more from watching people make mistakes as you would from watching people be successful," and "the leaders who I don't admire are those that lead on the old paradigm of divide and conquer and control the information and information is power and people who are threatened by other peoples confidence." Another participant relayed that "I also worked with one superintendent in one of the board offices who was an absolute authoritarian, autocratic, inflexible, and people still called him Mr. and never by his first name, and I guess what he showed me was what never to be." Interestingly enough, some people learn much by watching others do things they deem to be ineffective, versus being a good mentor or role model.

Mentor Leadership Styles

Many of the qualities identified in the previous section that the participants appreciated in their mentors are also what they feel are part of their mentors' leadership

styles as well. For example, when participants were asked to describe their mentors' leadership styles, they described them in the following ways: "cognitive coaching and solution-focused," "collaborative, with a balance between management and leadership," "an enormous capacity to demonstrate confidence in the people that he worked with and to pull the best out of them and to maximize professionalism," and "mutual teaching and learning." One participant suggested that:

> I wouldn't say that he had a particular style but one of the things that he had me do is he gave me a lot of responsibilities and trusted me to follow through on them, he had me attend meetings that I didn't have to attend before, and he had me look at areas that I didn't have experience in and helped me find situations to get experience in those areas.

Another participant suggested that she learned from her mentor "to take time and make sure I pay attention to relationships." Evidently, the same qualities that are appreciated in mentors are those that are evident in more relational leadership styles that focus on teaching, learning, and the development of people, both adults and children. One participant summed up her belief in effective mentorship as being just in time conversations and advice. Being an educational leader can be a lonely position. Having an experienced mentor with whom a situation and options for action can be discussed is extremely important.

Doloz (1999) examines process as a critical tool to the development of mentoring relationships. He uses the metaphor of a transformational journey to describe how individuals create their career paths. The superintendents in this study all have a degree of understanding that mentoring is a critical piece to the mentorship experience both from

their own experiences and in the context of providing support for the employees in their school division. They have identified relational, pedagogical and management-focused mentorship experiences that contribute to the development of strong leaders in the educational system.

Leadership Styles

Question five asked participants to describe their own leadership style. Sub questions asked participants to provide an example of a time when they had to break from their usual style, and to describe how their leadership style has been influenced by others.

Participant Leadership Styles

The relational theme found in the section on mentorship comes through strongly again when the participants discussed their own leadership style. Almost all the participants directly commented on the importance of the relational aspects of the position. One participant told me that:

> I work with no ego, I don't find power struggles terribly helpful, if people are concerned or resisting or upset then it is because we haven't done a good enough job of asking the questions and one of the keys to leadership is asking the questions, approachable, accessible and good communication, working with people so that they realize that they have something to contribute, recognize leadership in others and encourage it.

Another participant cited:

> I lead by example, I never ask of others what I would not do myself, I lead people in working together, I want to create on my board a culture where people matter

> so I send cards for births, deaths etc. and I hand write the note myself. Ultimately my leadership style is to get people to want to be part of the group to want to contribute their best.

The relational aspect of the participant's leadership style comes out very significantly in my research. Participants recognize the importance of connecting with people and making them feel they are included as an important part of the organization. This relational style of leadership has long been associated with a woman's style of leadership. However, it has been noted that over the years there has been more of a blending in leadership styles where more men are adapting many of these techniques into their own leadership style (Wallin & Crippen, 2009). Interestingly, however, Young (2005) suggests that:

> Even when the leadership styles traditionally associated with women (e.g., facilitating, collaborating) are commonly listed among desirable candidate qualities on job descriptions. It appears that while the leadership qualities commonly associated with the female gender are becoming more accepted and valued, the actual gender is not. The fact is women are not finding it easy to obtain leadership positions. (p. 38)

The relational aspect of leadership styles comes out not only in the context of education but also in the context of community. Participants spoke about their involvement on community boards and organizations. For example, two participants mentioned working on committees such as college boards and the United Way. Another participant noted that setting an example of being a good citizen is part of being involved in one's community.

Leaders spoke of other factors that influenced their leadership styles. As in the case of the qualities believed to factor into effective mentors, these factors are divided into the categories of pedagogy and management.

Pedagogy. A supported theme was brought fourth by six participants who spoke about the importance of being supportive and keeping up with current information and research around pedagogy. A few participants described their styles as being oriented to: "facilitator," "coach," "expertise," "goal orientated," "task orientated," "social justice" and "I am the leader that is always looking for research to inform my practice and challenge my thinking." These leaders know that they need to keep informed on best practices in order to meet the needs of the students in their care.

Management. Participants recognize the importance of effectively managing an organization. Nine participants described management qualities such as: "participatory, democratic, delegate, transactional, detail, enthusiastic, " "contingent leadership – effective and appropriate leadership is contingent on the events, the situation, those involved and a variety of other factors, shared leadership," "leading from the heart," "solution-focused," "proactive and find solutions to problems," "collaborative," "process," and "teamwork." Participants realized that effective and fair management practices are essential to maintaining a credible and well run organization. Interestingly, most of these descriptors describe a process-oriented approach to leadership focus on inclusionary practice.

Six women commented and used phrases that suggest that they lead by example. As one superintendent suggested, "I lead by example and would never ask anyone to do something that I would not do myself." It is interesting that so many participants

described their leadership style by using this one simple, yet powerful phrase. Additionally, a similar number of participants commented on how they base their leadership and style around what they believe is in the best interests of the students in their care. One participant also mentioned how it is important to manage the task with the relationships.

A supported theme resided with the participants that they seem to break from their leadership style only in circumstances where time is of the essence when a decision needs to be made. For example, a participant stated that, “when there is a crisis, I know that dealing with the task can take over.” One participant suggested that “I had a break from my usual style and that is when I was looking for information from external sources and their perspective made sense, but it didn’t feel right.” These leaders tended to suggest that good leaders listen to those around them and take the time to make informed decisions.

Summary

The participants in this study have all contributed valuable information on their career paths, barriers and challenges, leadership styles, support systems and mentorship experiences. It is from the context of their sharing and experiences that I learned that women leaders in the Canadian superintendency tend to structure their beliefs about leadership in the areas of relationships, learning (and pedagogy), and management skills. Both exciting and challenging forces face and shape our educational leaders in this country. Chapter five will provide a final concluding chapter, and outline implications for practice, theory and research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Included in this final chapter are the summary of findings of the research, a discussion that situates the findings within the current research and literature, and the conclusions I reach about women's career paths in the superintendency as a consequence of this work. In addition, this chapter offers implications for practice, research and theory and presents questions for further study.

Summary of Findings

Various themes emerged as I analyzed the findings of this study. When discussing career paths of the participants I learned that the majority had served in both school administration and assistant superintendent positions before accessing the superintendency. Many of the participants had worked over the course of their career as either curriculum consultants/coordinators and/or student services/resource coordinators. All twelve participants have all been actively involved with volunteer committees or roles within the school system, teachers' associations or the community.

Along their career path a number of participants took a career break either to pursue further education and/or for child bearing and rearing. The participants commented on the amalgam of readiness, timing and opportunities before reaching their current position. All of them suggested that their personal experiences (i.e. supportive families/friends/colleagues) and professional backgrounds (i. e. positions of physical education, the assistant superintendency or special education) had provided them with experiences helpful in developing their expertise for their role as superintendents. In addition, ten of the twelve participants cited that they had completed their master's

degree in education which had positively impacted their professional growth and readiness for the position.

When discussing the barriers and challenges that the participants encountered during their career, nine of the participants commented on the time commitment and the challenge of balancing of both work and personal lives. Six of the participants talked about the barriers and challenges they faced as a consequence of gender discrimination perpetuated by both men and women. Other barriers and challenges that were mentioned fall under the categories of those experienced as a consequence of work and those experienced as a consequence of personal circumstance or identity. For example, some professional challenges included the challenge of unions and relocating to a new province working in a different educational system. A personal challenge for the participants was finding a healthy balance between responsibilities between work and home.

In contrast to the barriers and challenges cited by the participants, numerous supports were cited. Three participants felt there existed opportunity for leadership because they worked in northern areas of Canada or within their provinces. The participants also felt that a primary support system for them at work was the leadership team in their school division. Other professional supports included: administrative assistants, previous superintendents, supportive school boards, school division parent advisory councils, career coaches, other superintendents, other leaders in province, colleagues, students, leadership programs and departments of education. Personal supports included family and friends.

The participants were aware that there were many people and experiences in their lives who had shaped who they are today. Findings of this study suggest that the qualities

most admired in their mentors include those related to relational skills, pedagogical skills of facilitative leadership and vision, and management skills that tended to focus on a process orientation to leadership. Nine participants discussed the need to balance management skills with relationship building. In addition, three of the participants commented on how they actually learned a lot about leadership by watching others do things that were not effective. In the view of participants such individuals tended to be highly autocratic and unconcerned with the relational aspects of working with others.

Not surprisingly, participants self-identified their leadership styles in conjunction with the mentoring relational qualities they most appreciated, which included a strong focus on collaboration, coaching, professionalism, participatory leadership and teaching and learning. Six women commented that they lead by example and would never ask anyone to do something that they would not do themselves. The participants said that they break from their leadership style only in circumstances where a lack of time necessitates that a decision must be made without consultation or an appropriate level of information gathering.

Discussion

During the course of the research I found the representation of women in the superintendency to be quite varied, ranging from no female superintendents in one province to around half of the total superintendents in other places. However, considering that there are more women in education then men overall, it appears that women are still underrepresented in the superintendency (Wallin & Crippen, 2008).

The female participants in this study all had an extensive amount of experience and knowledge before accessing the superintendency. They had been involved in

divisional leadership positions, coordinator work, department of education work, University teaching and numerous committees. A number of women took time off for child bearing and rearing. Some took time off to pursue their masters. In fact, most of the participants had acquired their masters in education, part time while working. This is consistent with the research that suggests women tend to hold the credentials and certification necessary for holding leadership positions in education (Brunner, Grogan & Kim, 2005; Dana & Borisaw, 2006; Young, 2005).

It is not surprising that a number of women cited that they never thought that they would be in the position that they are today. Many women do not see them selves in formal leadership positions and there are so many barriers that get in the way of them accessing the superintendency. My research aligns with the work done by many others (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Tallerico, Poole & Burstyn, 1994; Wallin & Crippen, 2007; Young, 1994; Young & Ansara, 1999; Reynolds, White, Brayman & Moore, 2008), which suggests that multiple types of barriers, both professional and personal, continue to keep women from attaining leadership positions. Such research identifies the strong role that cultural values, socio-political practices, and gender-structured policy play in determining the access that women have to the superintendency.

I was touched by disappointment when the participants discussed gender barriers and challenges in the position. Because these women have been able to access the superintendency, it is not surprising in one aspect that a handful of participants would suggest they had not faced gender barriers. However, about half the participants, despite their success in their careers, acknowledged that there are significant barriers and

challenges for women aspiring to the superintendency because they are women. Their candid responses and feedback is invaluable for women and those interested in women's issues.

I expected the women to acknowledge the challenge of balancing career and their personal life. This is a challenge for most people, and would be especially so in such a vast and busy position. The participants talked about the struggle to maintain a work and home life balance. Despite their busy career schedules they still have responsibilities and duties at home to which to attend. Keeping up the "second shift" at home alluded to in the literature is a complex balancing act (Burke & Karambayya, 2004).

Some of the participants commented on the opportunities afforded to them because of their location in either northern Canada or the northern area of their provinces. They felt that in the north there are many opportunities and room for personal growth. However, working up north along with its benefits also has its limitations because of geography and possibly cultural differences. This is also consistent with the research in that women often end up in leadership positions in school divisions that are marginalized by either location, or economies of scale (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Young, 1994).

A large number of the participants cited their leadership teams as being a primary support for them in their positions. Feeling support and strength from all people on their teams is a huge asset for doing their jobs effectively. Additionally, the participants were vocal in recognizing the support of their family. Having a family that has the ability to manage at home is very important as all of these women put much time and energy into their careers.

The participants appeared to admire the relational qualities of their mentors the most. These are also the qualities that the respondents emulate and try to carry through in their own leadership style. However, it must also be acknowledged that these women were self-reporting, and therefore, it is not surprising that the qualities they admire the most are also those that they suggest they emulate in their own practice.

Having management skills and a focus on learning and pedagogy is also important but did not present as strongly as the need for relational skills in the position. Ironically, quite a few of the participants learned a significant amount about leadership by witnessing ineffective leaders. In the research Grogan (2000, 1996) uses the term "an ethic of care" to perpetuate the idea of student centered and people first philosophies that ground the leadership styles of superintendents. Bruner (2000), Wallin and Crippen (2007) and Grogan (2000, 1996) acknowledge that leadership styles that have been considered more "feminine" are actually becoming more sought after in present day leadership circles. In this way both men and women are in some ways being freed from gender-based leadership styles. However, there are implications of this as well. Leadership qualities that once may have given women an edge are becoming more commonplace in male leadership styles, at least in self reports. This blending of styles can foster women's movement into leadership positions, yet at the same time now limit them again as more males who use these more "feminine" styles are still deemed by hiring committees to be more desirable as leaders (Wallin & Crippen, 2007).

The participants all shared their mentorship experiences with me. They mentioned both female and male mentors who helped facilitate their growth and development into leadership positions. Their mentors were very significant people in their lives and many

still have strong relationships with each other. Margaret Grogan (1996), in her book *Voices of Women Aspiring to the Superintendency,* focuses on the power of women mentoring other women. Through mentorship women bond together and provide a powerful network of support and learning for each other. Mentorship can create environments where women can voice their concerns and successes with each other so that they can work towards a more gender inclusive environment in educational leadership.

Implications

The findings of this research suggest many implications for practice, research and theory. Implementing the stand point theory as a contextual framework to study the lives of female Superintendents in Canada provided a strong starting point for study. The participants were able to share their experiences from their own stand point and allowed me to compare the similarities and differences in their stories. It is from their perspective or their stand point that I was able to record and analyze their experiences and provide a framework of themes to shape the content of my thesis. Because I was able to access such a wealth of information from these women's experiences, I recognize more wholly the lack of research available on women in the superintendency in Canada. More research from different researchers and theoretical perspectives would be useful to broaden the perspectives and depth of analysis in this area of study.

Upon reflection of my research there are several avenues for further research. The first avenue for further exploration is the standpoint of the female assistant superintendents in Canada in comparison to the female superintendents in Canada who we consider as the women who have "made it!" The female assistant superintendents in

Canada are a larger pool of women from which we could draw valuable research information. These women are “close to the top,” and their representative numbers much higher than that for women superintendents. It would be interesting to hear their stories, whether they have aspired to the superintendency and what possible barriers are standing in their way. They would have a very interesting and valuable stand point as women who are close to the dynamics of the superintendency but as of yet are not in this leadership position.

A second avenue of further research would be both the female superintendents and female assistant superintendents who have retired in the last twenty years. They would have significant knowledge of any possible changes that have accrued over time. This stand point would allow for a more in-depth look at the historical context of women in educational leadership positions, especially since many current superintendents and assistant superintendents are relatively new to the position.

Based on my research, another interesting thread of research would look more closely at places considered to be “remote” geographically. There seems to be more opportunities for women in northern locations, or what we sometimes consider as marginalized locations. This could also then include participants from First Nations communities, both of Aboriginal and Inuit descent. This would allow us to consider both the geographical and perhaps cultural implications of women’s leadership opportunities, as well as those that exist outside of the public school system, which is the usual work context studied in current research. This could also include educational systems of French/bilingual communities or Hutterian colonies.

Researching the mentoring experiences of female educational leaders in Canada within a cross-section of school-based and senior administrative positions would be interesting. Comparing their mentorship experiences in depth would be influential in determining if their experiences attributed to their success as an educational leader. Further research into any of these or other related areas might address what policies or procedures are in place in school boards and/or universities to help women in their organization access senior management positions.

In terms of implications for practice, if school boards and Universities pushed harder for equal opportunity policies, as other organizations have adopted, then perhaps we would see even stronger and more significant change in our senior positions. For example, University programs may merit more work on gender issues in education. Educational leadership programs that more specifically targeted this awareness could significantly impact future generations of educational leaders.

Superintendent associations need to develop, educate and help school boards implement mentoring opportunities and equal opportunity policies to foster women's' access to the superintendency. These associations are critical to change and must organize working ad hoc committees to implement social action in Canada. These committees cannot be token committees but must be highly active and influential to create the change needed to ensure that women are equally represented in the superintendency.

School trustee associations must mandate the education of its members to increase sensitivity and awareness of the significance of gender barriers in educational leadership and hiring practices. School boards have the largest influence in determining

who can access the superintendency. The education of trustees and sensitivity to this is paramount in facilitating change in our country. Government by and large needs to influence and help facilitate equal opportunity hiring practices in our country. Often government does not necessitate change unless the public who it services pushes them to do so. Teacher organizations and superintendent organizations all have the voice in determining how we let our government leaders know what we expect.

At a local level divisions can provide opportunities for women to advance in leadership by facilitating meaningful mentoring programs. Again, they cannot be token programs, but need to be sensitive to gender issues, highly influential, respected and lead to candidate success in securing leadership positions. Most importantly, those who have "made it" need to advocate, mentor and support other women to create a climate of succession. These women probably have the strongest voice and must use their elevated status to help facilitate women in the superintendeny in Canada.

Conclusions

Women's access into the superintendency does appear to have progressed over the years. Is it equal considering the number of women in education? No. However, if school divisions adapted some more equal opportunity practices perhaps things could improve. Additionally, university and leadership preparation programs could be designed to help identify and address some of the gender barriers that remain for women. Change is slow but hopefully if we keep addressing the issues it will help affect practice in school divisions.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Please describe your career path in education. Consider:
   a. Positions you've held and length of time in those positions.
   b. Descriptions of experiences and roles you've undertaken in service to the profession.
   c. Your career breaks or leaves in service.
   d. What significant event/s led you to your current position?
2. Please describe any barriers or challenges you have had to face over the course of your career either personally or professionally.
3. What do you consider to be your primary support systems at present, either personally or professionally?
4. Please describe your career mentorship experiences during your career.
   a. What qualities do you admire most in your mentors?
   b. How would you describe their leadership styles?
   c. What lessons did you learn about leadership from your mentors?
   d. What process, model or strategies of mentorship did you benefit from.
5. Please describe your own personal leadership style.
   a. Can you provide an example of a time when you had to break from your usual style? Under what circumstances, and why?
   b. Explain how your leadership style has been influenced by others.

Appendix B

FORT GARRY CAMPUS RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD PROTOCOL SUBMISSION FORM

Psychology/Sociology REB ☐ **Education/Nursing REB** x☐ **Joint-Faculty REB** ☐

Check the appropriate REB for the Faculty or Department of the Principal Researcher. This form, attached research protocol, and all supporting documents, must be submitted **in quadruplicate** (original plus 3 copies), to the Office of Research Services, Human Ethics Coordinator, CTC Building, 208 - 194 Dafoe Road, 474-7122.

Principal Researcher(s): Colleen Kachur-Reico

Status of Principal Researcher(s): (please check): Faculty ☐ Post-Doc ☐ Student: Graduate **x** Undergraduate ☐ WRHA Affiliate ☐ Other ☐
Specify:_____

Address (to receive Approval Certificate): 827 Aldgate Road, Winnipeg, MB, R2N 4N1

Phone: 889-8279 Fax: _____ Email: gtr@shaw.ca

Project Title: Tracing the Career Paths of Female School Superintendents in Canada

Start date March 2010. Planned period of research (if less than one year): March-June 2010.

Type of research (Please check):

Faculty Research	**Administrative Research**	**Student Research**
Self-funded ☐ Sponsored ☐	Central ☐	Thesis **x**
(Agency) _____	Unit-based ☐	Course Number:

Signature(s) of Principal Researcher(s):
_____

For student research: This project is approved by department/thesis committee. The advisor has reviewed and approved the protocol.

Name of Thesis Advisor: Dawn C. Wallin **Signature**_____

(Required if thesis research)

Name of Course Instructor: **Signature**_____

(Required if class project)

Persons signing assure responsibility that all procedures performed under the protocol will be conducted by individuals responsibly entitled to do so, and that any deviation from the protocol will be submitted to the REB for its approval prior to implementation.

Signature of the thesis advisor/course instructor indicates that student researchers have been instructed on the principles of ethics policy, on the importance of adherence to the ethical conduct of the research according to the submitted protocol (and of the necessity to report any deviations from the protocol to their advisor/instructor).

Ethics Protocol Submission Form
(Basic Questions about the Project)

The questions on this form are of a general nature, designed to collect pertinent information about potential problems of an ethical nature that could arise with the proposed research project. In addition to answering the questions below, the researcher is expected to append pages (and any other necessary documents) to a submission detailing the required information about the research protocol (see page 4).

1. Will the subjects in your study be **UNAWARE** that they are subjects? ____ Yes x No

2. Will information about the subjects be obtained from sources other than the subjects themselves? ____ Yes x No

3. Are you and/or members of your research team in a position of power vis-a-vis the subjects? If yes, clarify the position of power and how it will be addressed. ____ Yes x No

4. Is any inducement or coercion used to obtain the subject's participation? ____ Yes x No

5. Do subjects identify themselves by name directly, or by other means that allows you or anyone else to identify data with specific subjects? If yes, indicate how confidentiality will be maintained. What precautions are to be undertaken in storing data and in its eventual destruction/disposition. __x__ Yes No

6. If subjects are identifiable by name, do you intend to recruit them for future studies? If yes, indicate why this is necessary and how you plan to recruit these subjects for future studies. ____ Yes x No

7. Could dissemination of findings compromise confidentiality? ____ Yes x No

8. Does the study involve physical or emotional stress, or the subject's expectation thereof, such as might result from conditions in the study design? ____ Yes x No

9. Is there any threat to the personal safety of subjects? ____ Yes x No

10. Does the study involve subjects who are not legally or practically able to give their valid consent to participate (e.g., children, or persons with mental health problems and/or cognitive impairment)? If yes, indicate how informed consent will be obtained from subjects and those authorized to speak for subjects. ____ Yes x No

11. Is deception involved (i.e., will subjects be intentionally misled about the purpose of the study, their own performance, or other features of the study)? ____ Yes x No

12. Is there a possibility that abuse of children or persons in care might be discovered in the course of the study? If yes, current laws require that certain offenses against children and persons in care be reported to legal authorities. Indicate the provisions that have been made for complying with the law. ____ Yes x No

13. Does the study include the use of personal health information? The Manitoba Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) outlines responsibilities of researchers to ensure safeguards that will protect personal health information. If yes, indicate provisions that will be made to comply with this Act (see document for guidance - http:/www.gov.mb.ca/health/phia/index.html). ____ Yes x No

<u>Provide additional details pertaining to any of the questions above for which you responded "yes.</u>"

#5 The subject pool will include one female superintendent from each province and territory. The subjects who are interviewed will be given pseudonyms to protect their identity. All information will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home and password protected on the computer. All subjects will have the opportunity to review all information which concerns them in order to ensure that anonymity is secure. The subjects will be reminded that the study is voluntary and subjects can withdraw at any time without consequence. Upon completion of my thesis I will shred all hard copy data and erase all electronic and audio-taped data.

In my judgment this project involves: x minimal risk

☐ more than minimal risk

(Policy #1406 defines "minimal risk" as follows: ". . . that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater nor more likely, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in life, including those encountered during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

06/02/2010 _____

dd mm yr **Signature of Principal Researcher**

Ethics Protocol Submission Form
(Required Information about the Research Protocol)

Each application for ethics approval should include the following information and be **presented in the following order**, using these headings:

1. **Summary of Project:** Attach a detailed but concise (one typed page) outline of the **purpose** and **methodology** of the study describing **precisely** the procedures in which subjects will be asked to participate.

2. **Research Instruments:** Attach copies of **all** materials (e.g., questionnaires, tests, interview schedules, etc.) to be given to subjects and/or third parties.

3. **Study Subjects:** Describe the number of subjects, and how they will be recruited for this study. Are there any special characteristics of the subjects that make them especially vulnerable or require extra measures?

4. **Informed Consent:** Will consent **in writing** be obtained? If so, attach a copy of the consent form. (see guidelines on informed consent). If written consent is not to be obtained, indicate why not and the manner by which subjects' consent (verbally) or assent to participate in the study will be obtained. How will the nature of the study and subjects' participation in the study be explained to them **before** they agree to participate. How will consent be obtained from guardians of subjects from vulnerable populations? If confidential records will be consulted, indicate the nature of the records, and how subjects' consent is to be obtained. If it is essential to the research, indicate why subjects are not to be made aware of their records being consulted.

5. **Deception:** Deception refers to the deliberate withholding of essential information or the provision of deliberately misleading information about the research or its purposes. If the research involves deception, the researcher must provide detailed information on the extent and nature of deception and why the research could not be conducted without it. This description must be sufficient to justify a waiver of informed consent.

6. **Feedback/Debriefing:** Describe the feedback that will be given to subjects about the research after they have completed their participation. How will the feedback be provided and by whom? If feedback will not be given, please explain why feedback is not planned. If deception is employed, debriefing is mandatory. Describe in detail the nature of the post-deception feedback, and when and how it will be given.

7. **Risks and Benefits:** Is there any risk to the subjects, or to a third party? If yes, provide a description of the risks and the counterbalancing benefits of the

proposed study. Indicate the precautions taken by the researcher under these circumstances.

8. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Describe the procedures for preserving anonymity and confidentiality. If confidentiality is not an issue in this research, please explain why. Will confidential records be consulted? If yes, indicate what precautions will be taken to ensure subjects' confidentiality. How will the data be stored to ensure confidentiality? Will the data be destroyed, if so, when?

9. **Compensation:** Will subjects be compensated for their participation? Compensation may reasonably provide subjects with assistance to defray the costs associated with study participation.

Page 5

Ethics Protocol Submission Form

Review your submission according to this:

Checklist

Principal Researcher: Colleen Kachur-Reico

T	Item from the Ethics Protocol Submission Form
X	All information requested on the first page completed in legible format (typed or printed).
	Signatures of the principal researcher (and faculty advisor, or course instructor if student research).
X	Answers to all 13 questions on pages 2-3 of Ethics Protocol Submission form.
X	Detailed information requested on page 4 of the Ethics Protocol Submission Form in the numbered order and with the headings indicated.
X	Ethics Protocol Submission Form in quadruplicate (Original plus 3 copies).
X	Research instruments: 4 copies of all instruments and other supplementary material to be given to subjects.
X	Copy of this checklist.

NOTE: For ease of reviewing it would be much appreciated if you could number the pages of your submission (handwriting the numbers is quite acceptable).

Summary of Project

The purposes of the study will be to: (a) provide opportunities for female senior administrators to offer their understanding of the barriers and challenges they have encountered during their career; (b) provide insight into the mentorship experiences and support they have received during their career; and (c) learn about their preferred/espoused leadership styles.

The number of women in educational leadership positions has increasingly grown over the last few decades. However, there still are discrepancies between the number of women in education and the number of women represented in educational leadership. The most blatant discrepancy is the under representation of women in the superintendency. To illustrate this point, Charol Shakeshaft, in the *Handbook of Educational Administration: the Struggle to Create a More Gender-Inclusive Profession* (1999), traces the path of women in educational administration. She states: “This chapter examines the representation of women in school administration and the struggle to expand the profession both through increases in the numbers of women and through

conceptualizing administration in ways that are inclusive of gendered experience and perception" (p.99).

Systematic barriers hinder women from attaining leadership positions in education. Boards and those individuals hired by boards to run educational organizations, consciously and unconsciously, hire individuals like themselves in educational leadership positions. Margret Grogan (2000) in her article *Laying the Groundwork for a Reconception of the Superintendency from Feminist Postmodern Perspectives* says that "the most successful superintendent is male, Anglo-Saxon, middle-aged, Republican, intelligent and a good student, but not 'gifted'" (p. 122). Women often still do not fit the 'criteria' for leadership positions deemed accountable by those in the positions to do the hiring. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) in their article *Overlooked Leaders* tell of a female administrator who revealed that at an interview she overheard two retired superintendents –turned search consultants say "most of these districts aren't ready for a woman superintendent, but we should probably put her in the finalist pool anyway" (p. 27). Women's transition into educational leadership positions is very conflicted and slow especially given the systematic barriers that have long nurtured their roots in the system.

Women who aspire to enter into educational leadership positions need both mentorship and positive support to successfully achieve their goals. Margaret Grogan (1996) in her book *Voices of Women Aspiring to the Superintendency* focuses on the power of women mentoring other women. Unfortunately, women have not always been supportive of other women. This fact has provided a valuable lesson for women. One of the biggest complaints of women is not feeling supported or having positive role models to look up to in leadership. Through mentorship women are bonding together and providing a powerful network of support and learning to each other. Mentorship will create environments where women can voice their concerns and successes with each other so that we can work towards a more gender inclusive environment in educational leadership. Wallin and Crippen (2008) in *Mentorship and Gendered Assumptions: Examining the Discourse of Manitoba Superintendents* conclude that "men have more mentors overall and more personal and professional mentors. Women are more apt to have more female mentors then men, though both males and females have more male mentors" (p. 22).

Methodology

In order to address the questions, all thirteen female superintendents will be invited for interviews to obtain data relating to their career paths. In choosing the thirteen superintendents, I will consult school division websites and randomly choose participants who represent each of the provinces and territories. I will contact potential participants by email to see if they are interested in being interviewed, and upon their notification of interest I will send them a consent form via email. After receiving the returned consent form I will contact participants by email or telephone to set up phone interviews. Each interview will be approximately one hour long. It will be arranged for a convenient time for the interviewee. Participants will be e-mailed the interview protocol before the interview so that they can prepare for the interview. Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. All transcripts will be emailed to the participants for member checks, at which point they may add, delete or change the transcripts until they

are comfortable with the content. All participants will receive a copy of the final report. It is anticipated that the research will begin in March of 2010 and continue to June 2010.

Research Instruments

All participants will be interviewed individually between March 2010 and June 2010. Each interview will last approximately one hour. Interview appointments will be set through a telephone call or an email message. All participants will respond to identical questions.

The interview questions that will be used are:

1. Please describe your career path in education. Consider:
   a. Positions you've held and length of time in those positions.
   b. Descriptions of experiences and roles you've undertaken in service to the profession.
   c. Your career breaks or leaves in service.
   d. What significant event/s led you to your current position?
2. Please describe any barriers or challenges you have had to face over the course of your career either personally or professionally.
3. What do you consider to be your primary support systems at present, either personally or professionally?
4. Please describe your career mentorship experiences during your career.
   a. What qualities do you admire most in your mentors?
   b. How would you describe their leadership styles?
   c. What lessons did you learn about leadership from your mentors?
   d. What process, model or strategies of mentorship did you benefit from.
5. Please describe your own personal leadership style.
   a. Can you provide an example of a time when you had to break from your usual style? Under what circumstances, and why?
   b. Explain how your leadership style has been influenced by others

Study Subjects

The study subjects will include 13 superintendents from across Canada. I will consult school division websites and randomly chose female participants who represent each province and territory. I will keep inviting women to participate in the study until I have accessed 13 participants who consent to be part of the study. None of the participants will have a direct supervisory relationship with me. There are no special characteristics that make them vulnerable.

Informed Consent

Informed consent to participate in the study itself will be obtained in writing from the individual female senior administrators. The printed letter of informed consent will outline the nature of the study and the nature of the subject participation. The participant's signature on the consent form that will be presented and explained prior to the interviews will indicate the decision to participate in the research process. No additional confidential records or additional information of any kind will be obtained at any time. The results will be used to complete my thesis and may be shared in journals or

presentations. Participants may withdraw at any time and their information will be stricken from the results.

Deception

No information will be deliberately withheld, nor will there be any deliberate misleading of information about the research or its purposes.

Feedback/Debriefing

All participants in the interviews will be provided with a transcript of the interview for verification purposes. As well a summary of the findings of the study will be mailed to each of the participants. No deceptive feedback will be provided.

Risks/Benefits

No risk will occur to any of the participants, or to a third party, since participation is voluntary. Results will be reported in a generalized format in the final report. In no way will individuals be identifiable in the reporting and dissemination of results. Pseudonyms will be used to mask any identifiers. Should any information be traceable to any of the three participants, it will not be used in the analysis or reporting.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

The project will include female superintendents in Canada. Each participant will be instructed that participation in the study is voluntary, and that the anonymity of those who chose to participate will be assured in the final document. Participants will be assured on the consent forms and at the beginning of each interview that they can withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Only aggregate data will be reported to further protect the confidentiality of participants. Participants will be assured that all responses are anonymous and that the names of participants will not appear anywhere in the results. The data will be securely stored on password protected computer file as it is required by the University of Manitoba guidelines. Printed date will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researchers home. Confidentiality will further be assured through the use of identification numbers and pseudonyms for the participants under study.

Compensation

Subjects will not be compensated for their participation in the study.

Reference List

Dana, J.A., & Bourisaw, D.M. (2006, June). Overlooked leaders. *American School Board Journal*, 27-30.

Grogan, M. (2000, February). Laying the groundwork for a reconception of the superintendency from feminist postmodern perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *36*(1), 117-142.

Grogan, M. (1996). *Voices of women aspiring to the superintendency.* Albany NY:

State University of New York Press.

Shakeshaft, C., Nowell, I., & Perry, A. (1991, Spring). Gender and supervision. *Theory into practice, 30*(2), 134-139.

Wallin, D., & Crippen, C. (2008, in press). Mentorship and gendered assumptions: Examining the discourse of Manitoba superintendents. *Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations.*

Cover Letter

(To be Copied On University of Manitoba Letterhead)

Colleen Kachur-Reico
827 Aldgate Road
Winnipeg, MB
R2N 4N1

Date

Participant Address

Dear Participant:

My name is Colleen Kachur-Reico and I am a Masters of Education student from the University of Manitoba. I am writing to invite you to participate in a study that traces the career paths of female superintendents in Canada, the barriers and challenges they face, their support and mentorship experiences and their preferred leadership styles as part of my master's thesis study.

The project is called Tracing the Career Paths of Female School Superintendents in Canada.

To help me in my quest, I am inviting you to be a participant in my research. I am randomly selecting participants from school division websites from across Canada. The research will include a phone interview, audio-taped and transcribed by me, which will be approximately one hour in length. We will set a time that is convenient for both of us. All responses are anonymous and that the names of participants will not appear anywhere in the results. The data will be securely stored on password protected computer file as it is required by the University of Manitoba guidelines. Printed data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. Confidentiality will further be assured through the use of identification numbers and pseudonyms for the participants under study. After the interview I will give you a copy of the transcript upon which you may add, delete or change anything you desire. You will have one week to make any revisions necessary. At any time you may withdraw as participation is voluntary and your data will be destroyed.

Enclosed with this cover letter is the informed consent form that you need to read and sign if you consent to participate in this study. If you require more information please contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration of my work. I look forward to your response.

The research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If there are any concerns or complaints about this project contact any of the above-named persons or the human ethics secretariat at (204) 474-7122, or email

Margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. You may also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Dawn C. Wallin at wallind@umanitoba.ca.

Sincerely,

Colleen Kachur-Reico
204-889-8279
gtr@shaw.ca

Informed Consent

Participant Consent Letter

Colleen Kachur-Reico
827 Aldgate Road
Winnipeg, MB
R2N 4N1

Date

Dear Participant:

My name is Colleen Kachur-Reico and I am a Masters of Education student from the University of Manitoba. I am writing to invite you to participate in my master's thesis study that traces the career paths of female superintendents in Canada, the barriers and challenges they my face, their support and mentorship experiences and their preferred leadership styles.

Research Project Title: Tracing the Career Paths of Female School Superintendents in Canada.

Researcher: Colleen Kachur-Reico

This letter will provide you the basic idea of what this research is about and what participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of my study is to trace the career paths of female superintendents in Canada. I am inviting you to participate in an individual phone interview with me. I will ask questions on your career path, barriers, mentorship experiences and leadership styles. I have chosen participants at random from school division websites.

We will arrange an interview time that is mutually agreeable, in order to ensure that you are comfortable and to protect the privacy of our conversation. You will receive a copy of the interview, via email, beforehand so that you can prepare for the interview. Of course, you have the right to answer only those questions you feel most comfortable answering, and you can withdraw from the study at any time; should you chose to do so, please indicate your withdraw in writing and your data comments will be destroyed. Paper copies of the data will be shredded, audio tapes and electronic copies will be erased. All of your comments will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Neither your name, nor your division's name will appear anywhere in the results. Pseudonyms will be used. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed by me. Your taped transcripts will be returned to you so that you can add, delete, or change any responses and to ensure that all

identifying information has been omitted. You will have one week to make any revisions necessary. This will occur before the analysis of the data begins. Only aggregate data will be reported to further protect the confidentiality of all participants. Should the data allow for the identifying of an individual, it will simply not be used in the results. All data will be kept on a password protected computer and locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home. My faculty advisor Dawn Wallin may also have access to the data. Upon completion of my thesis I will shred all hard copy data and erase all electronic and audio-taped data.

You will receive a copy of the final report once the study is complete. The final report will be used to fulfill the requirements of my thesis and may be shared in journals or presentations. Participants may withdraw at any time and their information will be stricken from the results. Please feel free to ask questions of me at any time during the interview and the process.

Once again your participation is voluntary. Should you wish to participate please sign the consent at the bottom of the page. Keep one copy for yourself, and mail the second copy to me for my records at the address listed at the top of the page. If you do not wish to participate, please discard this information. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions without prejudice or consequence.

Sincerely,

Colleen Kachur-Reico
204-889-8279
gtr@shaw.ca

Dawn Wallin
Faculty Advisor
wallind@umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If there are any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or email ZanaLutfiyya@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. You may also contact my faculty advisor wallind@umanitoba.ca.

If you would like a copy of the results please indicate under your signature the address to which you would like it sent.

_____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Researchers Signature Date

_____

(Address if you would like a copy