

**WOMEN PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS:  
THE IMPACT OF ONE MANITOBA SCHOOL DIVISION'S AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION POLICY ON THEIR APPOINTMENTS TO ADMINISTRATION  
AND ON SELECTED ASPECTS OF THEIR PRACTICES**

**BY**

**GAYLE S. ALEX**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**Department of Educational Administration  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba**

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of women administrators appointed during the practice of affirmative action policy and procedures as adopted by The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 (January 1986). It was interested in their perspectives as they aspired to, applied for, were appointed to, and acted as administration as members of a group targeted by affirmative action measures.

The literature review first focused upon the experiences of female aspirants to educational leadership positions. It reviewed the factors considered by female aspirants, the encouragement they received, their level of preparation for administration, and how affirmative action initiatives related to the appointment process. Secondly, the literature review examined the experiences of female administrative appointees with the effects their gender had upon workplace relationships, their network of support, the effects of their gender in balancing home life and professional responsibilities, and the effects of affirmative action initiatives on their administrative practice.

The methodology consisted of selecting four women administrators who were appointed between 1986 and 1995 when the affirmative action policy of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 was in place. Of the women selected, two were vice-principals and two were principals. Two administer at senior high schools, one at a Nursery to Grade 8 school, and one at a Nursery to SR1 school.

The four women administrators took part in two interviews of from 1 to 1 1/2 hours in length each. The interviews were open ended and followed the interview protocol (Appendix A) which had been screened in a pilot interview session. Data from the interviews were recorded on tape and transcribed. The analysis of the data followed qualitative research methodology. The results were analyzed and conclusions presented.

The four women administrators recalled their experiences about factors affecting their decision to aspire, the encouragement they received to apply for administration, how

they prepared for an administration role, and the impact of affirmative action policy and practice upon their pre-appointment experiences. The four women spoke about their experiences once appointed to administration in regard to their work relationships, their network of support, balancing their professional life with home-life responsibilities, and the impact of affirmative action policy on their administrative practice.

Similarities and differences between the women interviewed and the literature regarding women aspirants to administration and the experiences of women appointed to administration are presented. The four women interviewed considered seven factors in making a decision to aspire. All four women were encouraged to consider administration by others prior to making a decision to aspire, were in home-life situations of shared responsibility and support and , once the decision to aspire was made, all four took purposeful steps to enhance the potential of their candidacy for administration. The four interviewees identified the affirmative action policy of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 as having provided a climate of support and encouragement toward application to administration by women, and all felt it was a benefit to them at the time.

All four women administrators networked with other female administrators, although there were no formal or regular contacts. The interviewees all worked at achieving a balance between home and professional life responsibilities. All four women viewed themselves strongly in the administrative role and believed they had benefited from the work of earlier appointed women and the presence of an affirmative action policy in achieving their appointment. All felt they had in turn a role to play in encouraging and being role models to other women aspiring to become administrators. All four women believe that perceptions about women and leadership are changing within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 as a result of women principals demonstrating their capability and being visible in ever increasing numbers.

Eight effects of the affirmative action policy upon women's administrative practice revealed in this study are presented. An assessment of the affirmative action policy in The

Winnipeg School Division No. 1 outlines the perceived gains for women. Threats to the success of the policy are identified. Recommendations to The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in regard to the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy are given, as are recommendations to women administrators and to aspiring administrators. In the final section of this thesis, recommendations for further study in areas relating to affirmative action issues are suggested.

### Acknowledgements

The work which has gone into this study has offered both challenge and reward. It has been time-consuming and has required much research and review of the literature. I have received support and encouragement from many people. Many women, in particular, have expressed a genuine interest in my study. I would like to express my appreciation to all of these individuals. I would especially like to extend my thanks to the four women administrators who were interviewed in this study. They are all very busy administrators who felt their participation in this study was important for all the women administrative aspirants who might come after them.

My advisor, Dr. John Stapleton, has offered guidance, encouragement, and the support I needed to keep going and to grow from the experience. I would like to thank him and also the members of my supervisory committee, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Joffre, whose dedication to women's issues has helped me grow, and Dr. Paul Madak, who was helpful in the process of selecting the research methodology.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The history of the educational system in Canada presents a picture of schools dominated by women at the instructional level and led by men administratively. Education has been slow to open its managerial ranks to women. It is a system prone to adapting slowly and with resistance to movements to redress social grievances that women face. Beth Young (1990) noted:

Canadian women educators tend to be involved in providing instruction, managing classrooms, and making decisions with respect to individual students; but they are not involved in the management and policy-making that affect the world of the classroom. That is, women most frequently deliver rather than administer public school education. (p. 86)

This historic under-representation of women in administrative practice may not have always been intentional, but it certainly existed. As of 1989-90, women held 20.6 percent of the principal and 29.2 percent of the vice-principal positions in Canada (Robertson, 1993). This situation was the result of many barriers that women faced: lack of training opportunities; lack of encouragement to apply; the difficulty of combining home and school responsibilities; and attitudes that women were not capable leaders. Systemic discrimination perpetuated patterns of job exclusion, job segregation, and under-employment for women. Spurred on by the global women's movement and by affirmative actions, however, education systems have begun to remove these barriers.

Edson (1988) noted that after years of women's rights movements and equal opportunity legislation in the 1960s and 1970s, the "implementation of affirmative action programs promised women and minorities new opportunities to gain leadership positions in education" (p. 161). In the United States, the Department of Labor, by requiring federally funded programs to initiate affirmative action plans, recognized that "procedures without effort to make them work are meaningless; and effort, undirected by



specific and meaningful procedures, is inadequate” (p. 161). As a result, school districts developed written guidelines to aid them in determining who was underutilized in their work force. “In such a promising context, many people throughout the nation expected affirmative action programs would permanently reverse discriminatory hiring practices and would ensure equal opportunity for women and minorities in school administration.” (Edson, 1988, p. 161)

Edson (1988) found, however, that Title IX legislation did not produce the anticipated surge in numbers of female and minority administrators during a 10-year period since this significant legislation was approved by Congress in the United States. In her study of 142 women administrators, Edson (1988) found “the record of affirmative action remained mixed and many unanswered questions remained” (p. 162). In her study, 74 percent of the 142 respondents believed affirmative action would prove helpful to “other” women’s careers; however, only 47 percent believed the same programs would aid their careers. Nearly 30 percent believed affirmative action would be of little or no help to them in furthering their administrative aspirations. Nevertheless, and despite Title IX’s modest successes, Edson (1988) found women in her study to have expressed a belief that without the force of law, the field of educational administration would never have begun to open up to female candidates. “Despite the desire to be recognized for their skills, many aspirants admit that equity legislation may be more important to their career success than their experience and ability.” (p. 164)

In Canada, provincial departments of education have implemented affirmative action or employment equity policies aimed at achieving and maintaining a fair and representative work force, and most provinces/territories now have affirmative action policies for women teachers. However, implementation of such policies is largely voluntary on the part of the employer and is centred upon consciousness raising activities (Robertson, 1993). In Progress Revisited, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation stated:

The phrases 'affirmative action' and 'employment equity' have become generic and they are used to describe a wide range of positions from those that rest primarily on educative strategies and good intentions to those few that are compliance and result-focused. (1993)

Manitoba Education and Training supports an equity in education policy and provides such programs as workshops on recruitment and selection of staff, as well as a career advancement program for women which encourages training opportunities, lateral job exchanges, tutorship arrangements, and job rotation. Affirmative action policy and programs are generally not prevalent within the public school divisions. Of the 49 public school divisions within Manitoba, only The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has implemented an Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy. This policy was developed on the initiative of the school board in cooperation with the division's Status of Women Committee and the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Adopted in January 1986, the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy stated in part:

The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 believes that all students and staff should have equal opportunity to develop their abilities and to achieve their aspirations to the greatest extent possible without discrimination on the basis of gender. While it remains the policy of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 to ensure that qualified, competent men and women have equal opportunity for promotion to positions of responsibility within the school system, the Division affirms that the leadership potential of the female staff shall be recognized, developed and utilized. (Winnipeg School Division No. 1, Policy GBAB 1.1 and 1.2)

In The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, the adoption of an Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy recognized that women have been historically underutilized in educational administration. The policy states that "The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 shall adopt an Affirmative Action Program to increase the representation

of women in all educational administrative positions in the Division to reflect the proportion of women on the professional staff." (Winnipeg School Division No. 1, Policy GBAB 2.1) In addition, the Chief Superintendent of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has developed written regulations governing procedures and operations for the implementation of affirmative action. This document states under "Promotion Practices":

All vacancies for educational administrative positions will be advertised throughout the Divisions with the exception of transfers of present administrators. The advertisements for applications for educational administrative positions will be written in non-sexist language and will include: a) preferred qualifications and experience for a particular position as determined by the superintendent; b) a statement that The Winnipeg School Division is an equal opportunity employer and has a policy on Affirmative Action for Women in Administration.

All interview committees will include women members. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, all members of the interview committee will be informed of the Affirmative Action policy. An assessment format will be developed and utilized to evaluate all applicants to determine those to be shortlisted and to evaluate the candidates who are interviewed. In all cases in which a male and a female candidate for an administrative position are deemed to be of equal merit, the female candidate will be appointed. Unsuccessful candidates for educational administrative positions, upon request, will be counselled by a superintendent as to how they can improve their potential as candidates for administration, using the assessment format completed by the selection committee. (Winnipeg School Division No. 1 Policy GBAB-R 6.1-6.7)

The interview and selection process format in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has undergone change over the years between 1986 and 1996. Initially, the candidates were interviewed for a specific position or one of a number of vacancies. There were large panels of interviewers in the early days of the process, but this was later

reduced to the principal of the school with a vacancy, representatives from the superintendent's department, human resources department, the W.T.A. (Winnipeg Teachers' Association), and a school trustee. In 1989, the interview teams were composed of the director or assistant director of human resources, and an elementary and a secondary principal (one of whom was to be a female). At this time, the interview itself comprised only a part of the selection procedure. Candidates were ranked in these areas: the application itself, including the philosophy statement and references; the interview performance; and finally, performance throughout the assessment centre process.

The assessment centre was a one-day event. Candidates were given a series of group and individual tasks and were graded throughout each. A written component, group problem solving, and individual responses to scenario situations were presented. The final phase in the selection process involved all assessment centre candidates' performance profiles in the three areas being reviewed by the superintendent's department. The final candidates selected (approximately 10-12) formed an administrative pool. All vice-principal vacancies are then filled by the candidates in the pool, and as it becomes depleted (after approximately two years), another administrative "call" is held and the process repeated.

The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has followed the policy and procedures set forth by the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy for ten years (1986-1996). It is important to examine the experiences of female aspirants to administration, as well as those of women appointed to administration during this time, to document their stories and compare them to what has been written in the educational administration literature.

The policy and its associated regulation seemingly has had an impact. In The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, women principals in 1996 comprised 31.8 percent of secondary positions, 53.39 percent of elementary positions, and 64.3 percent at Grade 8/9 year schools. The total percentage of female principals is 49.38 percent. Female vice-

principals at the secondary level comprised 56.5 percent, at the elementary level 71.4 percent, and at the Grade 8/9 year schools 58.3 percent. The total percentage of female vice-principals is 61.25 percent. Over the past seven years (1990-1996), 82 new administrators were appointed, of whom 73.17 percent were female (Affirmative Action Committee Report 1995-96, Winnipeg School Division No. 1). The overall percentage of female administration as of November 1996 is 53.845 percent. The statistics as of November 1996 indicate that of 130 principal and vice-principal positions in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, 70 (53.845 percent) are held by females.

Table 1

**Female Principals and Vice-Principals in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, as Percentages of the Total Number of School Administrators in 1985 and 1996**

		1985	1996	Percentage increase
Female Principals	Secondary	22	31.8	9.8
	Elementary	23	53.34	30.34
	Grade 8/9 Schools	25	64.3	39.3
Female Vice-principals	Secondary	28	56.5	28.5
	Elementary	67	71.4	4.4
	N to Grade 8/9 Schools	33	58.3	25.3

**Source:** Affirmative Action Committee Reports, 1985, 1996

In comparing the presence of female administrators within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in 1985 with those in 1996, it can be seen that these percentages have increased. The figures presented for 1985 (Table 1) represent the year prior to the adoption of the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. The figures presented for 1996 (Table 1) represent the percentages of female administrators ten years after the policy was implemented.

My study investigated the experiences of four female administrative appointees with the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, more particularly:

1. Concerning their initial appointments:
  - a) What factors did they consider as they were making a decision to apply for an administrative appointment?
  - b) What encouragement did they receive and from whom?
  - c) What did they do to prepare themselves for an administrative position?
  - d) What were their experiences as they went through the procedures mandated by the division's affirmative action policy?
2. Concerning their administrative practice:
  - a) In what ways, if any, has their gender affected their relationships with staff, students, parents, and divisional personnel?
  - b) What networks of support, if any, do they have?
  - c) In what ways, if any, has their gender been a factor in balancing the demands of their professional work and their personal life responsibilities?
  - d) In what ways, if any, has the division's affirmative action policy and procedures affected them in their performance as an administrator?

#### **Significance of the Study**

At a time when issues of fairness and justice in terms of the notion of "reverse discrimination" and feelings of "discomfort" from "targeted groups" threaten commitment to affirmative action or equity hiring policies and practices, it is significant that this study examines the experiences of women administrative appointees in an educational organization with such policies and practices. It is hoped that this study has contributed a valuable investigation of the realities of equity employment within the educational organization from the viewpoint and experiences of women. It is also hoped that this study has further contributed to an analysis of affirmative action policy and

practice by examining the “lived” experiences of women. Recommendations for policy and practice which result from this study will have implications for future directions of organizational policy and practice.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature which concerns selected gender issues related to women's experiences as they aspire to, are selected for, and act in positions of added responsibility. Has research in educational administration produced a knowledge base about the experiences of women throughout the administrative selection process? What factors lead women to aspire to positions of added responsibility? What do women experience as they act on these aspirations and go through the selection process for administrative positions? When they are appointed, what have been their experiences as women administrators? In what ways, if any, have affirmative action initiatives affected the level of women's participation in positions of added responsibility?

The review of the literature is divided into two major sections which follow the format of the research questions posed in this study. The first section focuses upon the experiences of women in the process of their initial appointment: what factors did they consider as they made the decision to aspire; what encouragement did they receive and from whom; what did they do to prepare themselves; and what were their experiences with affirmative action initiatives? The second section in the literature review centers upon the experiences of women appointed to administrative practice: the effects of their gender upon relationships in the workplace; the networks of support they experience as administrators; the effects of their gender in balancing the demands of professional and home life; and the effects of affirmative action initiatives upon women's administrative practice.

#### Experiences of Female Aspirants to Educational Leadership Positions

##### Factors Considered by Female Aspirants to Leadership Positions

"Aspiration is a most complex outcome, influenced by personal circumstances and characteristics, career stage, competency and opportunity or discouragement.



Aspiration is also related to gender.” (Robertson, 1993, p. 55) In Progress Revisited, Robertson (1993) found that interest in “vertical mobility” was expressed more often by men than by women, and more often by older, as opposed to younger, teachers. The exception noted was that when women taught at the senior-high school level, they tended to be younger than their male counterparts, yet appeared as interested as males in administration. The group least likely to express an administrative interest were women teaching at the K-3 level. Robertson speculated that entry-level vice-principalships, many of which are teaching vice-principal positions, may require a change of assignment to the senior grade levels, and may, in fact, deter primary teachers substantively from applying. In general, she found the differences between men and women with respect to “aspiration” were quite small and did not account for the gender differences between “successful” aspirants.

Epp, Sackney and Kustaski (1994) stated that:

The ratio of female to male administrators in the school system does not proportionally reflect the gender composition of the teaching force. This imbalance has been attributed to various personal, interpersonal, or institutional barriers that prevent women from assuming or maintaining administrative positions. (p. 451)

These authors cited Calas and Smircich (1992) in identifying the problem as the “male gendering” of organizational theory and the androcentric bias that is embedded in organizational theory and is reflected both in societal expectations and in educational administration literature. “Androcentric bias occurs when the world is viewed through a male lens; . . . when reality is defined from a male perspective and issues of gender are not addressed.” (p. 451) Androcentric bias has limited women because it serves to reinforce the acceptance of male leadership and makes it difficult for women to gain acceptance as administrators. “It contributes to the perception that women are not (or should not be) interested in administration, discourages those who may have interest from

attempting it, and supports the assumption that there is little difference between male and female leadership.” (Epp, Sackney, and Kustaski (1994) citing Calas and Smircich (1992), p. 451)

Padro, Rees and Scane (1995), in a paper presented to the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) Conference, reviewed the literature about barriers preventing women from taking their rightful place in school administration. They identified three inter-related barriers: psychological, sociological and systemic. Psychological and sociological barriers were closely intertwined and were identified as being largely responsible for the systemic barriers. They cited Shakeshaft (1989) who noted that barriers to women in administration have much to do about the kinds of jobs men have defined. “These senior positions make enormous time demands, which conflict with the demands of family and home. Feminist researchers have found that men and women have different characteristics, but women’s characteristics are not valued in the business world.” (p. 111)

Padro, Rees and Scane (1995) referred to selection and promotion procedures which have “informal” barriers which hinder women more than do formal, written procedures. The attitude prevails that women cannot exert authority which can command the respect that male authority can. These authors have found that men have defined and set the standards for administrative positions.

Young (1990) reviewed Swiderski (1988) in a publication which addressed concerns over the issues of the entry, survival, and advancement of Canadian women in educational administration. Three factors central to the “entry” issue are: sex-role stereotyping that continues to influence images of women, their capacities and behavior; continuing discrimination against women in administrative roles; and women’s own reluctance to apply for administrative positions.

The literature reviewed speaks about the factors considered by aspirants to leadership positions as being complex in nature. The factors identified include: the

aspirant's personal life circumstances and her obligations and responsibilities to those; her personal characteristics and career stage which influence her feelings of readiness for and preparation toward administration; her competency in terms of work experience and skills; and the climate of opportunity or discouragement she experiences from significant others and from the organization itself.

The psychological, sociological and systemic barriers referred to in the literature can be viewed as factors affecting women's participation in administration. Central to the issue of barriers preventing women from aspiring to leadership positions is "androcentric bias" which effects the psychological mind set of women regarding their own capabilities, the sociological milieu which affects how women believe they are viewed by others as "leaders," and finally the systemic view of women held by the organization, which affects the decision to aspire.

#### Encouragement Received by Female Aspirants to Leadership Positions

It has been noted by authors in the literature about women in administrative practice that the issue of support and encouragement plays a critical role in the decision to aspire. Myers and Hajnal (1995) studied women leaders in adult education and found that "Family, peer and superiors' encouragement were factors which influenced the participant's aspirations in becoming a leader." (p. 111) The nine women in the study described role models, both male and female, who had inspired them. As a result of the input from these mentors, each of the study's participants demonstrated a responsibility to, in turn, be a role model to others by being ethical, responsible, flexible, supportive, and interested in life-long learning.

Young (1994) has found that with the exception of some very recent administrative appointees (Tabin and Coleman, 1993), women assumed men would be the administrators. Women applied only after encouragement by superordinates for administrative appointments. They viewed it to be inappropriate to appear overly ambitious, and strategic career planning toward administrative appointments was not

characteristic. Instead, chance played a significant role in the appearance of unexpected job openings, unsought role re-definitions, or transfers which fostered a change in aspirations. Women were able to recognize and capitalize on the unexpected opportunities. They attributed their success to working hard, being in the "right place at the right time", and maintaining a sense of humor. They believed that they had succeeded despite, not because of, being women (Young, 1994).

In a study by Tabin and Coleman (1993), conducted in British Columbia, they found that half of the recent appointees stated that administration was not originally a career goal. They revealed they had become bored with teaching and needed a change.

The decision to try administration came gradually as they taught. Among these women there was no doubt about whether they could do the job, but rather a sense of determining ahead of time what they wanted to do in the job. . . . They did not need encouragement from or prodding by others. Mentorship, however--strong, supportive guidance, and active help in developing leadership skills and solidifying philosophy -was important for most recent appointees. This mentorship was usually provided by principals--all male. (p. 386)

Of the earlier appointees, about half reported that administration was not an original career goal. They were encouraged by others (husband, principals, district office personnel, colleagues) and were asked to consider applying for administrative postings. Although they, too, reported an interest in learning experiences, they were not openly aggressive in looking for and obtaining postings. These appointees had most often not had the experience of seeing a woman principal and were reluctant to be seen by others as ambitious. Few of the earlier appointees enjoyed the advantages of mentorship; in fact, many who sought it were refused. This, too, differs from the recent appointees' experience in their receiving mentorship which they did not claim to seek but was provided to them by their male principals. "This represents a substantial change in inter-gender social relations. Earlier appointees who were not explicit about their career goals

may not have received support for this reason.” (p. 381) It would seem that while encouragement from others has an important function in the aspiration to administration scenarios for women, that same function has undergone change over time. Earlier on, women did not acknowledge aspirations toward positions of added responsibility until they received such encouragement. Later appointees received encouragement after acknowledging their aspirations, and that encouragement seemed to be more concrete in terms of mentorship and directing them towards purposeful actions such as divisional committee membership, becoming more visible to superordinates, and developing their philosophical tenets about administrative practice.

#### **Preparation for and Readiness to Seek Positions of Leadership by Female Aspirants**

Many factors influence women’s “decision to aspire.” Central to this theme are women’s perceptions about their academic preparedness, their work experience and level of skill, and their self-confidence. All of these factors are related to feelings of “readiness” to aspire to positions of greater responsibility.

Of particular interest to the focus of “aspirant preparedness” are the findings of Tabin and Coleman (1993). Their study conducted in British Columbia addressed the changing experiences of women administrators (1980-1990). They found that while the more recent appointees acknowledged the influence of affirmative action to their appointment, they also demonstrated a purposefulness in career planning by seeking new assignments and experiences, upgrading academic credentials, accessing mentors, becoming known divisionally, and by taking initiative in the application process.

Tabin and Coleman (1993) found that most recent appointees had a broad range of teaching experience. Prior to being appointed to administration, they had taught for 12 to 22 years. In this study, recent appointees revealed themselves to have been highly motivated to prepare themselves for positions of added responsibility. They were found to have had “a personal focus on learning—from other teachers, from principals, from the variety of positions they held. These women also sought out new experience.” (p. 386)

Recent appointees were presented as actively seeking new challenges. They chose their professional development activities carefully with the motivation of learning more. "Almost all recent appointees reported becoming known in their districts because of their teaching, and their activities and leadership at the school and district levels. They were noticed by supervisors and their attention-getting was active and deliberate." (p. 386)

Tabin and Coleman (1993) found the earlier appointees to have been as interested in learning and growth as recent appointees are, but their responses to this interest were more passive. "Recent appointees definitely contemplated the activities they were to become involved in and chose this involvement carefully and deliberately. Earlier appointees were not as openly aggressive about looking for and obtaining positions." (p. 381) The earlier appointees were found to have felt pressure to be self-deprecating and were reluctant to be seen as ambitious. Tabin and Coleman (1993) suggested that most recent appointees appeared to have been much less influenced by stereotypical constraints on women's career behavior.

Rees (1991) believed the aspirant has a role to play in changing the perceptions of those in positions of hiring. "Her two responsibilities are that she must be qualified and she must be seen to be qualified." (p. 13) The aspirant should know the hiring criteria and prepare herself appropriately. She must be prepared academically and must demonstrate appropriate communication and human relations skills in working with adults as well as with children, and she must have leadership experience.

Just as the organization must make the effort to support, prepare, and hire women into positions of educational administration, the women aspirant must take a pro-active stance. Not only must she be prepared for the job, but she must prepare herself for getting there. (Rees, 1991, p. 15)

It appears that women currently aspiring to administration have recognized the need to prepare themselves for administration academically, through professional development activities, and through broadening their leadership and work skills. They also are

purposeful in championing for themselves and more aggressively seeking the attention of their superordinates.

### **Relationship of Affirmative Action Initiatives to the Initial Appointment Process**

Employment equity initiatives are practices within an organization which consist of procedures for an equitable hiring and selection process, affirmative action programs, and programs to reduce and eliminate discrimination. An affirmative action program consists of special measures and procedures designed to increase occupational opportunities for women. It involves setting flexible goals and timelines to ensure that qualified women are included on an equal and competitive basis in all employment opportunities (Taylor, 1995, p. 83). Historically, women have not applied for administrative positions due to a whole variety of psychological, interpersonal and institutional barriers (Rees 1990). Affirmative action initiatives promised women (and minorities) new opportunities to gain leadership positions in education (Edson, 1988, p. 16). Rees (1990) noted that in order to achieve an equal outcome, the two gender groups must be treated unequally on the one hand and equally on the other. Programs must be in place which assist women specifically and, secondly, the organization must assess itself to ensure norms and procedures are not prevalent within the organization which suppress the hiring, promotion, and attractiveness of the organization of and toward women.

Problems of women accessing positions of greater power have been attributed to: a lack of qualified female applicants; declining enrolments resulting in fewer openings; women not having the interest, professional credentials, or traditional experience; women not wanting the additional responsibility; women having family/child care concerns; women's lack of confidence; staff resistance; and old biases against women which take a long time to change (Rees, 1990). She concluded that such institutional impediments demonstrate the usefulness of employment equity initiatives; these programs are intended

to correct the institutional/systemic factors that prevent women from having greater participation in all levels of the workplace.

Rees (1990) stated that "It is also acknowledged that any permanent change must be made on three fronts: one at the level of society; two at the level of the organization, the workplace; and third at the level of the individual." (p. 93) The Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario, in Go For It: Barriers to Women's Promotion in Education (1991), stated "The concept, if not the practice of affirmative action is playing a role in changing the climate positively for promotion to top level positions." (p. 42) Bennison, Wilkinson, Fenneme, Maseman and Peterson (1984) stated that:

The answer to whether affirmative action programs can be justified seems to be in terms of their long-range goals. Different treatment may result in more women obtaining professional status, which may result in a reduction of the differences presently existing between female and male aspirants. In other words, different treatment at certain times can be justified if it leads towards a greater degree of equality in society. (p. 15)

Ortiz (1982) looked at role and socialization theories as central to successful organizational participation. Two critical elements which affect entry to administration are the individual's attributes and capacities and the organization's efforts. She identified two aspects to an individual's attributes and capacities: the actual presence and presentation of proof of the presence of attributes and capacities, and the perceived presence of attributes and capacities. Ortiz (1982) stated "These two aspects are critical in the examination of the manner by which women . . . gain access to organizational positions." (p. 85)

Tabin and Coleman (1993) found that almost all recent appointees cited the effects of affirmative action upon their appointments. They noted there was an uneasiness about hiring on this basis and reported that several recent appointees cited resistance to affirmative action. "Although affirmative action may initially raise awareness of



imbalances (based on race, gender, or other distinctions), it rapidly becomes insulting to those for whom it has been established and sometimes provokes negative responses.” (p. 390)

In her study titled Employment Equity for Women, Taylor (1995) found that “The often double-edged character of state policy (Ontario) may result in feelings of ambivalence among ‘target group’ members.” (p. 89) In addition, the enforcement of hiring targets and timelines “results in a backlash from males in the system, and that this has to be weighed against the benefit of having more women in the system.” (p. 90) She noted that equity policies as programs of special measures for women carry with them the implication that women need preferential treatment in order to compete with men for administrative positions. This implies that women’s differences are inferior and, therefore, cause women to view affirmative action policy as problematic. Taylor further noted “one of the problems with the concept of employment equity is that the inequity that women experience in employment is inseparable from wider social relations.” (p. 91) The study supported the view that there must be societal supports in place for women before the pool of administrative aspirants will increase. Employment equity policy in this light can be seen as being only one tool to be used to bring about equality for women.

Gill (1995) observed that women must be valued for the skills and talents they bring to administration, rather than compared to traditionally male-defined concepts of administration.

We need an overall commitment on the part of government to bring women into leadership positions. We also need to see those government policy statements translated into action at the school district level. Until school administration is seen as a woman’s rightful place, the sunroof will only slide back to admit a few and the glass ceiling will not be broken. (p. 61)

Gill (1995) is concerned that the gains made by women educators may be temporary and will disappear at a later date.

The strategies which exist to encourage women to enter administration are not uniformly available in all school districts. There is a danger that in tough economic times the strategies that help women become administrators will fall victim to budget cuts. . . . Barriers and obstacles to women becoming administrators do exist. They exist in the form of attitudes which claim that women cannot or should not do the job, particularly at the junior high school and senior high school levels. They exist in the form of the image of an effective school administrator as a "tough guy." They exist in the form of societal expectation that women will shoulder the major responsibility for homemaking and child rearing. (p. 60)

Taylor (1995) noted

By now, we realize that equality for women in the public sphere of the workplace requires material change in the private sphere of family life. She cites (MacKenna, 1987) This change requires women gaining access to positions of defining values, not just gaining access to positions within existing patriarchal structures. (p. 98)

Taylor (1995) concluded "it is necessary to begin to understand how women experience positions of added responsibility within the context of employment equity policy. Only then can we begin to understand the implications for women of equity policy in practice." (p. 84)

In their paper presented at the CSSE Conference, Padro, Rees and Scane (1995) reported the most serious problem impacting upon the effectiveness of employment equity programs (Ontario) is the perceived reluctance of younger women to seek positions of added responsibility.

The role models they see are women who work long hours (with shorter vacations than teachers) in a stressful job, who either have adult children or no children and extremely supportive husbands, and who appear to be, to all intents and purposes,

workaholics. To a woman with a young family that she would like to have time to enjoy, even the financial compensation is not adequate. Clearly if employment equity is to be accomplished, positions of added responsibility will have to be rationalized to accommodate the needs of this population. (p. 9)

To encourage women to apply for administrative positions, the organization needs to take steps, and affirmative action policies and procedures are helpful. There has not been any mention in the literature reviewed about organizations moving beyond affirmative action policy statements to establish personnel policies or acknowledge women's participation through a collective agreement process.

#### **Experiences of Female Administrators**

The previous section documents what has been written in the literature about the experiences of women as they aspire to positions of added responsibility, and it shows that these experiences differ historically from those of men. Once women have been successful in achieving administrative appointments, what have been their experiences as female principals and vice-principals?

#### **Effect of Gender upon Relationships with Staff, Students, and Parents**

Shakeshaft (1987) noted that research on women administrators uncovers differences between the ways men and women approach the task of administration.

The legacy of discrimination and exclusion has shaped a world in which women's experiences and behaviors are often unlike those of men. This women's world has important implications for theory and practice in educational administration. Useful theory and practice in a field needs to take into account the experience of all the players. (p. 404)

Shakeshaft (1987) further noted that the field of educational administration

has not seen the world from a female perspective and thus only presents a partial picture. . . . Women occupy a world, in addition to the one in which white males

live, that provides them with experiences and approaches to life that are different from those of men. (p. 404)

Shakeshaft (1987) stated "In trying to command or maintain authority women must take into account not only the people with whom they work but also how these people view women." (p. 410) Many women noted that ways of establishing authority that work for men do not necessarily work for women. "Contrary to the notion that being like a man will automatically signify authority, many women voice concern over the effectiveness of such strategies." (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 410) She found many women try to look less authoritarian, less in charge, and less threatening in an effort to be effective. "The more male dominated an organization, the more women are conscious of their own behavior and the more they calculate each move." (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 410) Women are viewed as always being "on stage", which adds stress to already stressful jobs.

Russell (1995) found isolation to be a barrier to career advancement for women. She noted ". . . being a principal is very lonely for a woman. Having fewer people with whom to discuss and work through problems limits one's ability to improve problem-solving and decision-making skills." (p. 130) Isolation contributed to a lack of opportunity to access socialization to organizational norms and values. Russell (1995) further noted that women tend to emphasize their credentials and demonstrate hard work, believing

superior qualifications and hard work will lead to advancement, while men interviewees tend to stress the importance of visibility and connections. Male careers appear to get a head start as a result of contacts with other males who have relevant experiences and information to share, and men tend to be proactive, seeking out such aids to advancement. Women appear eager to please and fit in and are careful not to be seen as aggressive in pursuing advancement. (p.130)

In their study, Tabin and Coleman (1993) reported evidence of a change over time in women's perceptions of their work in education. The two most senior principals

interviewed chose to continue to teach while in the principalship and measured their successes as teachers rather than as principals. Neither had expected to become a principal, nor had they any confidence that they could. In contrast to this, the women who appeared most comfortable in their roles viewed themselves to be principals and demonstrated strong priorities and vision. Tabin and Coleman (1993) speculated that the sense of oneself as a principal may be developing more quickly and strongly among current appointees.

Tabin and Coleman (1993) compared the experiences, as administrators, of earlier and recent appointees. They found almost all principals demonstrated a strong sense of personal priorities and had school goals which applied to teachers, students, and curriculum development. In reporting about appointees' relationships with staff, students, and parents, they found "A number of recent appointees mentioned a positive relationship with children . . . and described their relationship with staff as one of support and encouragement, facilitating rather than directing." (p. 389) Recent appointees were found to describe their approach as people oriented, open-door, warm, humanistic, caring, emotional, intuitive and reflective. Earlier appointees also focused on a positive relationship with children. "They too boasted of a supportive, encouraging relationship with staff. But only two spoke of the caring, personal aspect of being a principal." (p. 389)

In describing their administrative style, i.e., how they interact with staff, students and parents, recent appointees placed emphasis on what might traditionally be called feminine qualities. Tabin and Coleman (1993) found the new women administrators to be more democratic and more willing to collaborate in decision-making with staff. Of particular interest was the effect of gender upon relationships in the workplace. "Recent appointees did not report the effects of tokenism, exclusion or discrimination, or harassment and criticism from men." (p. 389) These women, however, did refer to sex-role stereotyping as being prevalent in the community among parents. Many women

principals had the experience of having parents surprised that a woman was the principal and had a position of authority. Recent appointees also reported having to work harder than men to prove to others they merit their positions. Interestingly, the earlier appointees revealed they had indeed experienced the effects of tokenism, exclusion, discrimination, chauvinism, and harassment from male colleagues. "These women encountered much sex-role stereotyping and fought a double standard regarding their conduct. Personal traits and actions that would have been accepted quite calmly in men were criticized in them." (p. 390)

Tabin and Coleman (1993) recognized a significant change over the last few years in the social context and work of women principals in elementary schools. Recent appointees were found to still have to prove themselves to outsiders and still face sex-role stereotyping from society; however, they are now accepted and supported by their male peers. "New women principals also demonstrate greater career initiative than their earlier counterparts and are more active in their planning and pursuit of career goals. They show much less false modesty about their attainments and prospects." (p. 395) Tabin and Coleman (1993) concluded that the differences between earlier and recent appointees' experiences as principals reflect growth and change in educational administration.

In recent studies, Baudoux (1995) examined the issue of gendered experiences in the workplace and has suggested that discrimination against women administrators does exist. Of particular interest to the effects of gender on relationships in the workplace is how women administrators choose to respond to discrimination, if indeed they are aware of it.

Baudoux (1995) found that

many studies have shown that, at the beginning of their careers, women do not perceive the obstacles set in their way. Such obstacles are in fact insidious and

only reveal themselves when women administrators compare the way they are treated (when they are aware of it) with the way men administrators are treated. (p. 76)

She found that negation of discrimination by women allowed them to avoid the traumatic experience of viewing themselves as oppressed. Baudoux (1995) cites Erickson (1984) who explained the negation of discrimination as a survival mechanism. "If women administrators were aware of the discrimination against them, they would have to face up to it and take steps against it, endangering their careers and their everyday relations in the organization." (p. 77)

Gender, then, does have an impact upon relationships in the workplace. While earlier appointed administrators acknowledge discrimination toward them, later appointees did not find this directed to them by staff. Interestingly, however, all administrators acknowledged feeling they had to work harder than males to prove they merited their position. The very fact that they felt "on stage" would seem to indicate a hyper-vigilance on their parts to the perceptions of their abilities as women administrators by others.

#### Networks of Support for Female Administrators

Young (1994) reviewed the issue of support structures for women appointed to administration. A common experience was that women found no support group as principals equivalent to the ones they had enjoyed as teachers. Women administrators tend to be isolated and lack access to the existing male networks which provide men the important opportunities to socialize, seek advice and information, observe and imitate acceptable conduct, become known to those with more power and influence, and participate in informal decision-making of the organization.

The Tabin and Coleman study (1993) sought to determine if and how the experiences of recently appointed women principals differ from those of earlier women appointees. It is of particular interest to note that many of the reflections of the earlier

appointees support the literature while the perceptions of the more recent appointees demonstrate what may well be evidence of significant change in how administrative practice is viewed from the incumbent female's perspective.

Upon becoming a principal, earlier appointees networked extensively, especially with other women principals. They met in formal group when their numbers were small, only gradually ceasing to do so when significantly more women were hired within the district (Tabin and Coleman, 1993). "In this case networking was clearly a function of numbers; formal gatherings provided an opportunity for underrepresented women to encourage and support one another and helped offset the negative feelings associated with being tokens." (p. 387)

The recent appointees interviewed in the study did not network specifically with other women. Because the number of women principals was greater, they did not report a need to make a special effort to develop support as did their earlier counterparts. They did not report being excluded from the "old boys' club." Tabin and Coleman (1993) speculated that entry into this group is now open to them, or perhaps recent appointees did not acknowledge exclusion. A third possibility given is that recent appointees may be choosing to chart their own course alone and develop their own style of leadership.

Russell (1995) noted that women face special challenges in trying to manage their careers.

While female managers in these studies have had some catching up to do, they are developing quickly in their understanding of the need for visibility, the value of stretch assignments, the need to be aware of "the big picture," the value of a variety of work experiences and the importance of finding mentors and other support systems. (p. 140)

Russell (1995) found women's support networks focused upon their particular needs; they used marginal status, ingenuity, and humor and were active in valuing and promoting the perspectives of women in the organization. She noted women used a



variety of techniques for dealing with obstacles. "Among those they describe most frequently are conflict resolution techniques, negotiated solutions to problems, putting a positive spin on marginality, and feminism as a commitment and investment in others." (p. 141) She noted that mentors, role models and various support systems can be helpful. In addition there is a recognition by women in management positions that they owe a debt to the women who have preceded them and to those who will follow. Networks of support continue to be important to women administrators. What has changed in recent times, however, is that these networks tend to be less formal. Women who administer in an environment where the number of other female administrators is greater find support more readily available.

#### Effects of Gender upon Balancing the Demands of Professional and Home Life

Young (1994) reported that women administrators experienced career and home (marriage/child care) responsibilities as being mutually exclusive. Far more were single and childless compared to men in similar positions. Except for the recent appointees (Tabin and Coleman, 1993), women with children at home experienced guilt over professional/family role conflicts. In addition, many women struggled with the competing urgencies of completing academic studies, usually on a part-time basis. Women's careers tended to be characterized by part-time paid work, fulfilling lateral moves, interruptions in paid work for child care, and a delayed or slower hierarchical progression. Women's career norms of achievement compared with men found them in the situation of being "late bloomers" (Young, 1994, p. 76).

In her study of "Women in School Administration in Rural Manitoba", Thibault (1995) presented a profile of women administrators. "They are hard-working individuals who have a real desire to make the climate of their schools conducive to learning." (pp. 115-116) These women face enormous pressure to be "superwomen", balancing work with the competing urgencies of child rearing/household responsibilities/care of aging parents/academic upgrading.

Edson (1988) studied the career goals and expectations of 142 women in administration across the United States. She noted they seemed highly motivated because they believed they must be in order to succeed in a male-dominated profession. They acknowledged that in order to gain access to top-level positions in school management, they must have superior determination as well as superior credentials, and they recognized that life circumstances such as child rearing, as well as organizational practices of bias in recruitment and hiring, impinged upon their dreams. Those who delayed careers due to child-rearing responsibilities experienced more conflict in their work lives than those women without such obligations; those who aspired longer without attaining a principalship were more discouraged and more often cited barriers to their career than those just beginning to seek management positions.

In the Tabin and Coleman (1993) study, it was the experience of those earlier appointed women to come to the principalship at a later age than men. Interestingly enough, recent appointees were found to enter the principalship even later. Many interrupted their careers for family/child care responsibilities. They have had, however, as long a career as the earlier appointees with perhaps fewer actual years of total teaching time as their counterparts without children. "Importantly, the careers of these women principals with children do not differ significantly from those of women principals without." (Tabin and Coleman, 1993, p. 388). While it was once thought that children would delay or limit women's career advancement opportunities, this study did not show this effect. Tabin and Coleman (1993) reported that most of the recent appointees they interviewed studied part-time to complete degrees, while they worked full-time or part-time, and had young children at home. "These women were determined to further their education, and exhibited much tenacity in doing so." (p. 385)

The literature reviewed presented a picture of somewhat tenacious women indeed. Recent appointees were purposeful in their planning, seeking, and achieving appointments. They were able to work full-time or part-time while upgrading their

academic credentials and having young children at home. The literature does not reveal what kinds of home-life supports successful appointees experienced in terms of handling household and child-care tasks which might have allowed these women the time and energy to pursue their career goals as well as take on the time-consuming, stressful, work-intensive principalship.

### **The Effect of Affirmative Action Initiatives upon Women's Administrative Practice**

A review of the literature pertaining to equity initiatives presents a conflicting picture of organizations and people in transition. Taylor (1995) found "there continue to be far fewer women than men in educational administration in Ontario, despite the existence of provincial employment equity policies for women for more than twenty years." (p. 83) She noted "gender relationships in the workplace indicate the historical and continuing imbalance in power relations between men and women." (p. 97) Taylor (1995) stated "existing practices in the workplace--which include male norms in administration and male-preferred career paths--work against employment equity policy" (p. 97). What is important, Taylor (1995) found, is that "women recognize that there are reasons for their feelings of ambivalence about such policy. It is also important for women to recognize that the implementation of such policy requires their active participation." (p. 97)

At the organizational level, Baudoux (1995) has found a final strategy which involves support for equal opportunity programs.

These actions lead to formal actions of a socio-political and legal nature that have a greater impact on women in general. . . . Thus, changing organizational realities may be possible through political struggles that concern all women. Feminist administration, through collaboration and solidarity with the other women administrators and with women teachers, and through collaboration with their male and female allies in the educational milieu, may be able to change the milieu. (p. 80)

She further noted that equal opportunity programs have begun "a revolution in the work place" (p. 80). Baudoux (1995) believed that equal opportunity programs have created a favorable environment for the hiring of women administrators. However, in spite of the increase in such programs, the proportion of women in administration is much less than that of women in teaching. "We must prevent this small amount of progress from being short-lived. . . . Henceforth people need to demand a right to career, regardless of their sex." (p. 80)

**Padro, Rees and Scane (1995) stated:**

Past research has shown that 'informal' barriers can hinder the promotion of women even more than formal written procedures. The attitude that women cannot exert authority in the same way as men still persists, but there is a growing sense that a male authority figure is not the only kind that can command respect from students. (p. 2)

Padro, Rees, and Scane (1995) report that while their review of the research has given a good picture of the reality of women in positions of responsibility in education (Ontario), they caution that "we must also take into account the views of Canadian society in general." (p. 2) According to the press in Toronto, which is heavily influenced by the business community, "the views of the general (i.e., white, majority) public are not in sympathy with the principles of employment equity, and these will undoubtedly have an influence on boards of education." (p. 5) These authors further note:

While we in the world of research may think that many of the problems associated with employment equity for women are on the brink of being solved, insofar as the world of education is intertwined with society in general, we have a double role to perform:

(1) we must continue our efforts to support employment equity and basic equality for women, and

(2) we must extend our efforts to educate society at large to the advantages for both men and women (and industry) of the fundamental principals of employment equity. (p. 3)

Padro, Rees, and Scane (1995) concluded in Ontario that few employment equity/human rights policy programs are provided to existing staff.

This deficiency has unfortunately contributed to the lack of understanding (and therefore the large amount of backlash) for the *raison d'être* of employment equity programs. It is not sufficient to say that women have an in-depth understanding of women's issues because they are women. Many do not recognize systemic discrimination and have been too strongly socialized as dependent and acquiescent. Others may become susceptible to the male 'excellence' for promotion argument that has totally ignored the history of meritorious women disregarded because they were not men. Some will renounce feminism, while blithely taking advantage of every opportunity their predecessors made possible. (p. 4)

In a further conclusion to their study, Padro, Rees and Scane reported that boards in Ontario do not ask their candidates for promotion to principalships and supervisory positions about their understanding of employment equity principles. In a number of large corporations, candidates for promotion are asked to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to the principles of employment equity, and to provide examples of what they have done to promote employment equity in their present positions. The authors state:

We believe that questions such as these would foster a proactive stance among administrators in school boards, and help bring the issue front and centre where it

belongs. an increasing awareness of the issues involved will also . . . cause administrators to increase their attention to related issues in the school curriculum. The principles involved are as important for the students as for the administrators. (p. 5)

The literature reviewed was largely concerned with entry-level administrative positions at the elementary school level but did not concern itself with subsequent promotion experiences of women administrators. What are the experiences and views of women administrators toward the effects of affirmative action policies upon their future career opportunities? How do affirmative action procedures support women's entry to higher level administrative positions? The literature surrounding these issues is alarmingly sparse. Perhaps it is too early in the process of seeing women in the principal's chair to know how they will fare in subsequent selection scenarios.

#### **Re-statement of the Problem**

This study has investigated the experiences of four women administrators with the affirmative action policy of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in particular:

1. Concerning their initial appointments:
  - a) What factors did they consider as they were making a decision to apply for an administrative appointment?
  - b) What encouragement did they receive and from whom?
  - c) What did they do to prepare themselves for an administrative position?
  - d) What were their experiences as they went through the procedures mandated by the division's affirmative action policy?
2. Concerning their administrative practice:
  - a) In what ways, if any, has their gender affected their relationships with staff, students, parents, and divisional personnel?
  - b) What networks of support, if any, do they have?

- c) In what ways, if any, has their gender been a factor in balancing the demands of their professional work and their personal life responsibilities?
- d) In what ways, if any, has the division's affirmative action policy and procedures affected them in their performance as an administrator?

The literature reviewed has explored a number of issues which relate to the experiences of female administrators from the decision to aspire to being an administrator. There is a need to expand the literature to include the study specifically of the impact of affirmative action policy and practice upon the continuum of the administrative experience of women.

This study examined the impact of the policy environment of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 which has implemented affirmative action procedures for a period of nine years. It examined the experiences of women in the context in which opportunities are available, as well as the differences between the experiences of those women appointed at the onset of policy to those appointed most recently.

### Chapter 3

## METHODOLOGY

### Theories in Educational Administration Research

#### The Theory Movement

Theories about educational administration and methodologies for generating knowledge in the field have expanded substantially over the past two decades. Educational administration as a science gained popularity in the 1950s in the United States (Evers, 1995). The Theory Movement, modelled upon an epistemology based on physics, purported to show the advantages to educational administrative practice of providing rigorous procedures to improve the profession's knowledge base. The Theory Movement believed the knowledge thus provided could be readily applied to organizations. Scientific theory is considered to be systematic, reliable over time and capable of providing true generalizations about schools, bureaucracies, teaching, leadership and organizational design.

This movement was characterized by the following six ideas:

1. Statements about what organizations and administrators ought to do cannot be encompassed in theory or science.
2. Science theories treat phenomena as they are. Theories describe, explain, and predict, but do not prescribe.
3. Effective research has its origin in theory and is guided by theory.
4. Hypothetico-deductive systems are the best exemplars of theory.
5. The social sciences are essential to theory development.
6. Administration is best conceived as a general phenomenon found in all organizations (Stapleton and Long, 1995, citing Culbertson, 1988).

It became clear to many scholars that research using methodologies inspired by this epistemology were not producing the kinds of findings that led to improvements in theory



or practice of educational administration. A major critique of the movement came with Thomas Greenfield's famous 1974 paper which ushered in subjectivism.

### The Subjectivist Theory

The Subjectivist Theory focuses on the importance of the human experience of organizational life. Greenfield (1974) viewed social science as being irreducibly subjective. "Human behavior can be re-described as partly a function of thought, intentions, meanings and understandings." (1974) The subjectivist approach sees people as engaging in meaningful action and is, therefore, a powerful methodological tool for accounting for organizational life. In this framework it is human action and intention which are real and which form the "entity" of the organization. Then, according to some, notably Evers and Lakomski (1991), Greenfield's attack led the way to other methodologies which were inspired by cultural theory, critical theory, and feminism.

Even those who agreed with Greenfield's (1974) criticism, but who found fault with his brand of subjectivism, have agreed that methodology in educational administration has to take into account the experiences, intentions, and dispositions of organizational participants. Consequently, a study of a select number of women who have had first-hand experiences of an important public policy is warranted.

Traditionally, knowledge, truth, and reality have been constructed as if men's experiences were normative, as if being human meant being male. Participants in recent movements for social change have asserted that this heritage has excluded their experiences. What was once accepted as an objective world view has been recognized as being the limited and limiting perspective of a particular gender, class and race. (Personal Narratives Group, 1987, p. 3)

### The Feminist Theory

The strongest challenge to educational administration within the humanities and social sciences came from feminist theory.

**The fact that human experience is gendered is central to the radical implications of feminist theory. That recognition of the impact of gender and an insistence on the importance of the female experience have provided the vital common ground for feminist research and thought. (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p. 4)**

**Feminist theory emerged from and responds to the lives of women. "The recovery and interpretation of women's lives have been central concerns of feminist scholarship. . . . Listening to women's voices, studying women's writings and learning from women's experiences have been crucial to the feminist reconstruction of our understanding of the world." (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p. 4)**

**"Research on women and gender in educational administration has progressed through six stages essential to a paradigmatic shift." (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 326) The first stage documents the lack of women in positions of administration, providing an informational base about where women are and are not in the school hierarchy. The second stage identifies exceptional women in the history of school administration, adding to the existing data in the conventional paradigm. Stage 3 investigates women's place in schools from the framework of women as disadvantaged. At Stage 4, women are studied on their own terms with female perspectives being identified and described. The data gathered from these perspectives lead to Stage 5 which challenges existing theories in educational administration. Finally, Stage 6 transforms theory so that we can understand women's and men's experiences together. At this level we can hope to produce an inclusive vision of human experience based on differences and diversity, rather than on sameness and generalizations (Shakeshaft, 1989).**

**The study of four women administrators with the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 falls into Shakeshaft's (1989) Stage 4 of research on women and gender. The female perspective of these administrators is identified and described as they interact with the policy and procedures of the affirmative action initiative implemented in this school division.**

### The Interview Method

McMahon and Rogers (1994) cited McMahon (1989, p. 5) in reporting "The oral history interview is a unique documentary form in which evidence originates in the act of oral face-to-face communication." Interviews involve the assigned roles of interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer is responsible to acquire information and the interviewee is responsible to provide that information. (Sypher, Hummert and Williams, 1994, p. 47)

Each interview contains within it a set of implicit guidelines or rules for response. . . . They include at a minimum that (a) the interviewee respond, (b) the interviewee's response address the content of the interviewer's questions, and (c) the response be characterized by appropriate elaboration (commentary expanding on the question asked or information associated with the commentary that would be helpful to the interviewer). Successful information acquisition is characterized by the extent to which these guidelines are fulfilled. (Sypher, Hummert and Williams, 1994, p. 49)

Sypher, Hummert and Williams (1994) delineated the points that the relevance of the information content is largely determined by the interviewer and that the elaboration of a response is appropriate to the extent that it provides relevant details that the interviewer needed in order to capture a more complete account of a set of events. Factors which influence the interview interaction include interviewee responsiveness, attention to the other, and personal and situational factors associated with accuracy.

Table 2

**Strengths and Limitations of the Interview Method**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
1. Interviews involve the structure of assigned roles of interviewer and interviewee.	1. Personal experiences at a particular point in time cannot be reconstructed precisely.
2. Following the implicit guidelines for interview can provide successful information acquisition.	2. No researcher conducts an investigation just like another; therefore, exact duplication is difficult.
3. Relevance of informational content is largely determined by interviewer to provide details relevant to the research.	3. Results derived from a select study sample represent the belief system of that particular group of respondents at that point in time.
4. Establishing a balance between the quality of relationship with respondents while maintaining proper distance avoids bias in data.	4. Participation is voluntary and may limit the number of respondents and omit giving voice to a particular view.
5. Interview method through personal contact is able to access data about "lived" experiences within the organizational context.	5. With the interview relationship, subtleties may occur which contribute to respondents being less open to self-explore in regard to research questions.
6. Interview method is able to make an accounting of organizational life from a personal perspective.	6. Interview settings are artificial.
7. Quality of data is enhanced by quality of relationship established.	

(table continues)

Strengths	Limitations
8. Additional data are obtained by providing respondents a written transcript with opportunity to comment or elaborate.	
9. High validity derives from data collection and analytic techniques used.	
10. Respondent interviews are less abstract than methods used in other research designs.	

My study is interested in the very subjective aspects of the personal experiences of women administrators toward selected issues of policy and practice within an educational organization. It is an oral interview study that fits into a subjectivist framework and has importance within the field of educational administrative inquiry as research at Shakeshaft's (1989) Stage 4 level. Interpretation of the experiences of women administrators toward the impact of selected issues of the policy and practice of affirmative action within an organizational context will add to our understanding of both the organization and the participants' experiences.

#### Data Collection - Cohort Selection

School-based administrative practice in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 occurs at the principal and vice-principal levels. School sites include elementary schools (Nursery to Grade 6), junior high schools (Grades 7-9), Grades 7-12 schools, senior high schools (Grades 10-12), and a number of Nursery to Grade 8/9 schools. This study is an exploratory and open-ended investigation which identified four respondents to be interviewed. The number of four respondents selected for this study was decided upon in order to keep the amount of data collected at a manageable level. Two in-depth

interviews with each respondent allowed them the opportunity to elaborate, expand upon, and add detail and description to their responses to the research questions posed. The first step in the selection process involved dividing the broad category of women administrators into those first appointed between the years 1986-1995.

Figures collected by the Affirmative Action Committee of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 (1986-1994) show the gender breakdown of first appointments to administration for the years 1986-1994 to be as follows:

**Table 3**

**First Appointments to Administration by Gender (1986-1994)**

Year	Female		Male		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1986	6	33	3	67	9	100
1987	3	60	2	40	5	100
1988	7	22	2	78	9	100
1989	2	100	0	0	2	100
1990	7	58.3	5	41.6	12	100
1991	6	100	0	0	6	100
1992	1	33.3	2	66.6	3	100
1993	9	75	3	25	12	100
1994	12	57	9	43	21	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Affirmative Action Committee Report, 1994

My study focused upon an in-depth interview of the four selected administrative appointees (two principals and two vice-principals) from the total of the 53 women appointed between 1986 and 1995. The candidates selected to participate in my study are from the annually published list of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 administrative appointments (1986-1995). The categories of elementary school, junior high school, Grades 7-12 school, Nursery to Grade 8 or 9 school, and high school were listed. Each female administrator was assigned to the list of the school-based site she presently occupies as a principal or vice-principal. One principal and one vice-principal and an alternate for each from each of the school-based site categories were selected. The list of prospective interviewees was carefully inspected. From this inspection, two principals and two vice-principals were selected. One principal and one vice-principal were appointed in 1989, one principal was appointed in 1993, and one vice-principal was appointed in 1995. The four administrators selected hold appointments representing Nursery to Grade 6 Elementary School, Nursery to Grade 8 school, and two senior high schools. The alternate administrator list would have been utilized only if any of those first selected candidates for inclusion chose not to participate in my study. I presented myself to the selected potential participants through a letter of introduction which briefly stated the purpose of my research and requested participation in the study (Appendix B). This was followed by an introductory phone call to request participation in the study, answer any questions or concerns, and select a mutually agreeable time for the first interview session. All four women agreed to participate in the study.

### Pilot Interview

Prior to interviewing the selected respondents, a pilot interview was conducted with a pre-selected principal. This pilot interview followed the interview protocol (Appendix A), which was developed after a review of the literature about women in administration. I addressed questions I wished to investigate and learn more about from women administrators. I grouped the interview questions into two sections. The first section concerned the aspirants' experiences and the second investigated the post-appointment experiences. The interview was tape recorded, and a transcription of the interview was prepared and analyzed. The interview protocol was examined and revised according to the areas of need which arose from the pilot study. Upon completion of the pilot study and analysis of the interview protocol, all tapes and transcripts were destroyed.

### Respondent Interview Format

The first interview focused on the respondent's experiences in aspiring to administration and her initial successful appointment experience. The second centred upon the post-appointment experiences of each respondent.

The four key respondents selected took part in two in-depth interviews of 1 to 1 1/2 hours each in duration. The interviews were prefaced by a statement of research purpose, assurances of confidentiality, and an outline of how the interaction was expected to proceed. Administration of the interviews was open ended. During each interview, the respondents were asked about the same topics and issues, using probes for elaboration, exploration, clarification and completion of detail. Cues were given for shifts in interview focus to allow respondents to adapt their thinking in new directions. Interview questions were designed to reveal how participants perceived their professional experiences, and how they explained these perceptions. Questions were formulated which included: background, education, and teaching experiences; the impact of affirmative action policy and practice on the following--the formulation of the decision to aspire to administration;



pre-appointment experiences; the appointment process; initial appointment; career preparation motivation; influence and supports; frustrations and satisfactions; and advice to aspiring administrators. Tape-recordings of the interviews were transcribed for analysis. Informants had an opportunity to review the transcripts and were able to make additional comments.

### Data Collection

The Affirmative Action Committee Reports for the years 1986-1996, published by The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, were examined and analyzed to provide a background and documentation for the status of women in administrative positions in this school division. Annually published names of school administrators in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 for the years 1986-1995 were examined. These names were cross-referenced with the appointment by gender documentation in the annual Affirmative Action Committee Reports (Winnipeg School Division No. 1) to produce a list of possible interviewees who were appointed to administration following the implementation of the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. From the list of all potential interviewees, four women administrators were selected for this study.

The four respondents in the study were interviewed on two occasions. Each interview lasted no more than 1 to 1 1/2 hours. All interviews were tape recorded with the consent of the respondent. The interviews followed the Interview Protocol (Appendix A). Tape recordings of each interview were transcribed. In accordance with the ethical procedures of the University of Manitoba, all interviewees' responses were anonymous; thereafter, each participant was given a pseudonym, and any potentially identifying information was eliminated from the transcriptions. Participants in the study had an opportunity to read and approve the transcripts of their interviews before being included in the study. They had the option to delete any portion of the transcription that they did not want mentioned in the study. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the

study at any time. Following the completion of my thesis, all tape recordings and transcriptions were destroyed.

### **Analysis of the Data**

The data collected from the selected sample of principal and vice-principal respondents were analyzed through the formal tasks of perceiving, comparing, contrasting, aggregating and ordering, establishing linkages and relationships and speculating (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). Transcribed tapes were studied to discover similarities and differences in participants' responses to the selected issues. Qualitative studies involve the combination of data collection with analysis. "Analysis and data collection occur in a pulsating fashion--first the interview, then the analysis and theory development, another interview and then more analysis, and so on--until the research is complete." (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 68) Bogdan and Biklen (1982) cited Glaser (1978, p. 70) when they identified steps in the constant comparative method.

1. Begin collecting data.
2. Look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus.
3. Collect data that provides many incidents of the category of focus with an eye to seeing the diversity of dimensions under the categories.
4. Write about the categories you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents.
5. Work with the data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and relationships.
6. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 156) noted that “as you read through your data, certain words, phrases, patterns of behaviour, subjects’ ways of thinking, and events repeat and stand out.” Developing a coding system involves searching through your data for regularities and patterns as well as topics your data cover, then writing down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. The topics and patterns revealed become coding categories which are used to sort collected data. “Particular research questions and concerns generate certain categories.” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 156)

Biographies of each respondent have been prepared. Further analysis determined the common characteristics among the cohort and developed the emergent themes about the impact of affirmative action policy and practice of the selected issues. The study included two administrators appointed in 1989 during the early stages of policy implementation, as well as two appointed as recently as 1994/95. Therefore, differences in the experiences of the appointees have been presented (Tabin and Coleman, 1993).

I scanned the categories within which the data are organized to discover relationships and emerging themes which formed a framework and generated coding categories, and a summary of the major findings was prepared. Integration of the findings within a broader area of interest has allowed me to look at comparisons to the Tabin and Coleman study (1993).

#### **Limitations**

This study was centered upon interviews of the “recalled” experiences of individuals at a particular period in time, rather than on a longitudinal study of respondents’ experiences of the selected issues. It was based upon the respondents’ perceptions about their experiences, and required reflection about and recall of events from 1986 through 1995. Thus it was limited by the selected recall and memory of those experiences.

### **Delimitations**

**This study was confined to an examination of women administrators within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, who were appointed in the years between January 1986 and September 1995.**

**This was an exploratory study and, as such, was limited to the examination of the impact of affirmative action policy and practice on two selected aspects of the professional lives of women administrators at a particular period of time.**

## Chapter 4

### FOUR WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 1

The four women administrators initially selected to be interviewees in this study agreed to participate. All were first appointed to administration between 1989 and 1995 when the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 was in operation. They took part in two interview sessions of between 1 and 1 1/2 hours each in length. Two were principals and two were vice-principals at that time. Their administrative placements were at the Nursery to Senior I level, the Nursery to Grade 8 level, and at the senior high school level.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a profile of each woman. In order to preserve their anonymity, some omissions have been made about their work situations, and they have been given pseudonyms. Every effort has been made to represent the women accurately without revealing their identities. It is intended that this chapter assist the reader in understanding the dynamics of their situations in order to better relate to the findings of this study which are presented in Chapter 5.

#### Profiles of Four Women Administrators

##### Anne

Anne is the full-time principal of a large elementary school with grades Nursery to 8. She was first appointed to administration in 1989 when in her early forties and is just completing her ninth year as an administrator in this division. Anne previously served as a vice-principal in an elementary school and a Kindergarten to Grade 8 school.

Anne taught for 15 years prior to her first application for administration. She joined the teaching profession later than most people as she took some time away to have two children and also to complete further university study. She had completed her Master's Degree in Education by the time she received her first appointment. By that time her two children were school-aged which she felt gave her a little more flexibility. Anne

enjoyed the full support of her husband in exploring an administrative career path. At this time Anne and her husband have one daughter living at home with them. In her leisure time Anne likes to walk and exercise. She and her husband go to movies and the theatre as often as their schedules permit.

Table 4

Profiles of the Four Selected Women Administrators

Name	Current position	Year of first appointment	Education	Certification	Home status
Anne	Principal (K-8)	1989	M.Ed.	School Administrators' Certificate - Level I School Principals' Certificate - Level II	Partner Spouse-retired 1 child
Susan	Principal (S1-S4)	1993	Pre-Master's Status in Ed. Psych.		Partner No children
Lina	Vice-Principal (S1-S4)	1989	B.Ed.	School Administrators' Certificate - Level I	Partner 1 child
Donna	Vice-Principal (N-S1)	1995	B.Ed.	—	Partner No children

Anne states her decision to go into administration was not made in a conscious way. She was approached by others--friends, colleagues, her female administrator--and encouraged to consider becoming an administrator. After some self-examination, she thought she should take this on seriously. Anne undertook and completed the provincial

Administrators' Certification Program for Levels I and II. At the time she began applying for administration, Anne saw herself as academically prepared and capable. She viewed herself as being highly organized with a leadership style that was very effective. Anne was successful in her application for administration on her third attempt.

Anne was aware of and had read the division's Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy adopted in 1986. Although she believes she had well prepared herself as an administrative candidate, there was a certain level of confidence in knowing that women were now being taken seriously. She feels that affirmative action gave women the opportunity to get into the entry-level positions in order to make it successfully later down the line.

Anne hopes that before she retires she will be principal of a larger school. She wishes to continue with her academic goals in a PhD program which she plans to complete before retirement. At this point in time she expresses no interest in a superintendency; however, she is not prepared to say never.

#### Susan

Susan is the full-time principal of a small high school. This is her second year in this position and her first principalship. Her first appointment to administration came in 1993 when she was in her late thirties, at which time she was appointed to a vice-principalship in a Nursery to Grade 8 school. Prior to her entry into administration, Susan had taught at the junior high school and senior high school levels. She became involved in division-wide committees and had an interest in being really engaged in what was happening, not only in her school but within the division.

Susan has completed her pre-master's status in Educational Psychology and has plans to continue academic study in the future. She has taken part in the professional development program offered by this school division where she was able to broaden her knowledge base and make important contacts beyond the local school level.

Susan's interest in administration developed gradually over time and through her own professional development activities. Her first encouragement towards administration came from a female principal. At that time Susan declined to make application for administration. Over the next two years she applied for one of a number of advertised vacancies but was not successful. When she applied next, she received an interview and went on to be successful through the assessment centre process and entered the vice-principal pool from which The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 selects appointees as vacancies arise. At the time of her applications to administration, Susan viewed herself as an outstanding candidate with much experience. She described herself as having good communication skills, being both a good listener and a hard worker. She felt she had good organizational skills and the ability to work with people and have them assume responsibility for some things--a team player.

In her personal life, her partner has been very positive about her career aspirations. She views her household as operating with real equity. Although some traditional roles do happen, there is generally a joint division of tasks. There are no children in the home, so child care concerns are not an issue. She views herself as quite able to put in the time and energy required in an administrative position.

Susan was aware of and had read the division's Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy, and believes it encouraged her in her aspirations towards administration. In an unconscious way it provided the knowledge that The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 was looking for women, was prepared to accept women and see them in a new light, and was open to women becoming administrators. She believes that the affirmative action policy has allowed women to become administrators before her and has assisted her in being successful in getting there.

In the future, Susan would like to take on one more principalship where there is a lot of work and challenge. Then she envisions a principalship where she can feel really comfortable and be able to relish her career. At the present time she would not look to an



administrative level which takes her away from students because it is very important to her to maintain a relationship with them. However, she remains open to opportunities as they come up and will seek those positions as goals for her own professional growth or because she believes she has something significant to contribute.

### Lina

Lina is a full-time vice-principal of a large high school in this school division and is in her seventh year as an administrator. She was first appointed to administration in 1989 when in her mid-thirties and had applied for five years in a row before being successful. She was first appointed to the vice-principalship of an elementary school (Nursery to Grade 6).

Prior to her initial appointment, Lina had taught for 14 years, and her experience included primary through to elementary classrooms. She became involved in special programs at elementary school level within this school division. While in her teaching positions, Lina received encouragement from administrators to consider leadership positions. She then became involved in the W.T.A. and on divisional committees to gain an understanding of how the division worked and to get to know a broader base of divisional personnel. She felt it was important to her career goals to have decision-makers know who she was and what she could do. Lina consciously spent four or five years networking and keeping actively involved divisionally to continually increase her knowledge, and she states that she had set up a five-year career plan in anticipation of applying for administration.

Lina has completed her B.A. and B.Ed. academic programs. She has also taken advantage of the Administrators' Certification program and has achieved the Level I certificate. At the time she began to make application for administration, she believed she had a good knowledge of teaching and effective people skills.

In Lina's personal life she has a partner and three children. Two are adults and no longer in the home, while the youngest child attends elementary school. Lina views her

husband as having been a wonderful support for her. There is more responsibility for child care with a young child, and Lina believes that her husband has assumed his fair share of that and other home-life responsibilities.

Lina was well aware of the division's Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy. She found it to be supportive to women in that there was now a recognition that women would be seriously considered. It gave her an awareness that there was someone out there championing for women because of that policy. Lina believes the affirmative action policy has made a difference for women.

Lina believes that there will be many opportunities to challenge her in the future. As vacancies arise, as a vice-principal she may be approached by the superintendent to consider another position, or she may apply for a particular position in which she has an interest. Lina expresses that her horizons are certainly wider than this particular school division. She has lived abroad and would consider relocating, or she may return to university for further academic study. She is not interested in aspiring to a superintendency as that particular job does not attract her.

#### Donna

Donna is the full-time vice-principal of a large Nursery to Senior I school in this school division, and this is her first appointment to administration. She was appointed in 1995 and is in her mid-forties. At the time of this interview, Donna had been an administrator for about one-half year.

Donna had taught for over 20 years prior to this appointment. Early on she was involved at the elementary level, after which she became a consultant in the school division. Through this position, Donna was able to network with other principals and divisional staff and become known beyond the local school level. She applied to administration on two occasions and was not successful in her first application.

Donna applied for administration at a later age than do many aspirants, either male or female. She had received encouragement to apply for administration ten or fifteen

years earlier; however, at that time she loved her teaching job and could not imagine wanting to become an administrator. Later on, a female principal also encouraged Donna toward administration. She feels that the idea to aspire then came from others, and it took her a while to feel she was ready. At this point in her career, Donna was looking for some new challenges.

Donna does not feel she was well prepared academically in terms of university education to become an administrator. She may, however, continue with further education in the future. Donna did develop herself through the myriad of professional development opportunities provided within the school division. She took part in the professional development program offered within this school division, and also attended numerous workshops.

In Donna's home life she has a partner, but no children in the home. She views her partner, now retired, as being very supportive to her and to the household responsibilities.

While Donna expressed an awareness of the division's Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy, she does not recall specifically sitting down to read it. She remembers seeing a statement on administrative vacancy bulletins, indicating that this division is an equal opportunity employer with an affirmative action policy and procedures; however, she only remembers thinking that this was a good thing and that now she would have an equal chance. Donna felt that now the hiring process wouldn't be favoring men who had had the inside track, but she also did not feel it meant that women would be favored either.

Donna believes that a lot of work was done through affirmative action initiatives before she became an administrator in 1995. She looks at the affirmative action policy as having been a means of re-educating people to an awareness that there are capable women who had not been getting these particular jobs, and recognized that it has played an instrumental role in the history which allowed her to get there. Donna, however, has a

perception that the younger aspirants have by now, after nine years, to an extent grown up with things in place that a lot of people fought very hard for.

Donna includes in her goals for the future further university studies. She anticipates being in her present position for another year or two and then looking to a new appointment. Donna is interested in the junior high and middle years school settings and would consider a position in a larger school where there is more of an administrative team. At the present time, however, administration is still so new that she feels she has much to learn.

### Summary

All four women administrators who participated in this study were successful in gaining administrative appointments between the years 1989-1995. None was appointed in her initial application process: Anne was successful on her third attempt; Susan was placed in the administrative pool after her second application; Lina continued to apply five times before being successful; and Donna was appointed following her second application. All four continued their applications for administrative positions within an environment of affirmative action policy and practice.

This environment of inclusion for women was referred to by all four women and may have encouraged them to continue to pursue administrative appointments. All four women were appointed to administration after being successful with the hiring and selection processes mandated by the Affirmative Action Policy implemented in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in 1986.

## **Chapter 5**

### **THEMES AND ISSUES OF FOUR WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 1**

#### **Introduction**

The four women interviewed in this study are all unique. Each came to administration along a different path, bringing different experiences, qualifications, goals, personalities and perspectives. They had in common only the fact that they were appointed to administration during the practice of the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration initiative in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. Their experiences as they aspired to and were successful in becoming administrators show both similarities and differences. Common themes and issues about their experiences as aspirants and as female administrators appear throughout their stories.

This chapter has been broken down into sections which address the research questions of the study.

#### **Initial Appointment Experiences**

a) What factors did they consider as they were making a decision to apply for an administrative appointment?

The first factor referred to by all four women in their deciding to aspire to administration was the influence of significant others. All four women, seemingly prior to their own decision to aspire to administration, were approached by others with the suggestion that they consider an administrative career path. For many, this was the first planting of the seed of interest in even looking at themselves in an administrative role. Susan said,

My administrator at that time came to me one morning and said "I want to talk to you, and I think you should consider applying for this administration call that

they're doing." It was a female principal and she went on and on and on about why she thought I would be an excellent candidate, why she thought I should be an administrator.

As for Anne,

It really wasn't a conscious decision in some ways. I was approached by friends of mine who thought that I had some background and the capability of becoming an administrator. My principal was instrumental in suggesting that I try this route.

One of the factors that Lina spoke of was this same kind of encouragement from others to consider leadership.

When I first started applying I was still a classroom teacher, and I had administrators who had said to me, "You know, you should really consider leadership." At that point in time I really wasn't sure what leadership looked like, beyond the fact that you chaired specific school committees and so on.

Donna taught for over 20 years prior to her appointment and had aspired at a much later age than either most females or males to administration.

A superintendent in the division encouraged me years and years ago, and I was horrified at the thought. I loved my job, and I couldn't imagine wanting to be an administrator. It wasn't my idea first, it was others saying, "Why don't you pursue this?" and I think it just took me time to feel that I was ready.

The theme of feeling personally "ready" runs throughout the stories all four women tell about their experiences. In each situation, the initial impetus they reported came from outside themselves. Other people--friends, colleagues, administrators, both male and female, and superintendents--all gave voice to the suggestion early on that each of these women aspire to administration. None of the interviewees acknowledged she had had ambitions to become an administrator prior to outside encouragement. Perhaps they deemed it inappropriate to appear overly ambitious, or else their own awareness of these ambitions coincided with others' recognition of their potential. In any case, this

recognition of the potential in each candidate seems to have played an important role in initiating a process of change, growth, and an increased acceptance of themselves as capable of becoming administrators.

The readiness of each woman to actually apply for an administrative position was not immediate. It took from several years to over a decade on the part of one interviewee to do so. However, once the seed of interest, or at least consideration, took root, each of the four women began to look with new eyes to the practice of administration around her.

A second factor viewed as important by the four women in the study was their particular state of academic preparation for an administrative career path. Interestingly enough, only one of the women had completed a Master's degree in Education prior to her initial application. While all of the women interviewed supported the ideal of higher education and espoused goals of pursuing further academic study, at the present time Susan has completed pre-master's qualifications for graduate degree work; Donna and Lina each hold B.A. and B.Ed. degrees. Three of the women, those not holding M.Ed. degrees, expressed different opinions about the weight this factor played in their decision to apply for administration. Lina expressed the belief that at the time of her application this was not an issue.

In our division, no. In other divisions, yes. And again, that might be a prerequisite for the initial job and so it might be important, but in terms of doing the job well, it's really important to be a learner, that you keep current with research, and you don't necessarily have to be involved with the university to be doing that. But you need some connection to learning.

Donna, on the other hand, stated "I don't feel particularly prepared in that way, and I know I've got to get back. I did enrol in university in administrative studies years ago, but I got distracted with other things." Anne, the most highly academically accredited of the four women, said:

I thought I was academically prepared and that I was capable in that area. I think that probably was my greatest strength because I was of the opinion, and still am of the opinion, that you've got to be the best at what you do, and I believe that I would like to be considered because I am capable.

In spite of the particular differences paid by these women to the issue of academic credentials, all of them put a great deal of effort into gaining knowledge to improve their administrative potential prior to their initial application. Two of the women, Anne and Lina, had achieved their School Administrator's Certificate - Level I, and Anne had also received a School Principal's Certificate - Level II.

A third factor considered by the four women studied was their work experiences. While each woman has a distinct teaching history, each had brought herself out of the classroom to positions which offered a wider scope from a classroom or even local school perspective. Donna had spent over 20 teaching years within the division. Her experiences included teaching successfully at the primary and intermediate levels, in special needs programs, and in a consultant position. The consultant role "removed me, I guess, one step from the classroom. I worked more with adults than with kids."

Lina enjoyed successful teaching for 14 years prior to her appointment. Her classroom experiences were at the elementary grade levels, after which she took on a position which was "really my first opportunity to work with teachers in a team and to work with adults."

Susan worked for six years outside of this school division, coming to the present division in 1984. She taught at the junior high school and at the high school level and took an interest in and became engaged and involved in what was happening, not only in the school but in the division. "What it did was really broaden my own base for myself, and I learned a phenomenal amount, and I think it was part of a process that the focus wasn't to become an administrator only."



Anne had taught outside the school division for six years and received her appointment after an additional nine teaching years within this division. When she went into the resource area, she felt “that position gave me a lot of opportunity to develop my leadership skills, and I took a lot of responsibility in that area.”

A fourth factor considered in the decision to apply for administration was a self-conscious assessment of the skills each felt she possessed. Susan said,

I would have described myself as having good communications skills, a good listener, hard working. I would have described myself as someone who wanted to support initiatives of teachers. Good organizational skills, the ability to work with people and have them assume responsibility. Team player.

Anne responded,

I thought I was highly organized, and I felt that I had a leadership style that worked very well for me. My people skills were quite good because I got along very well with people and learned very quickly to get people to work with me as a team, rather than be the person who is directing. I really thought I had what was necessary.

Lina contends that she had a belief in her skills and knowledge of teaching. She felt that as an administrator she could involve teachers in the best practices which meant learning, growth and development. “I think the people skills are really important, that you’re able to just make people feel relaxed, that people can trust you, that you’ll go to bat for them, that you’re supportive, that’s also a really important piece. So, it’s the knowledge piece and it’s the support piece, I guess.”

A fifth factor each of the four woman also considered was her particular life situation in terms of the roles and responsibilities she bore to her partner and family. Susan has a partner at home but there are no children, so for her, child care concerns were not an issue. Her partner has been very positive about her career aspirations. Susan views

the division of household tasks as being very equitable. She sees herself as able to commit to the time and energy required of an administrator.

Lina also enjoys the support of her partner toward her administrative career path. Two children no longer live in the home. The youngest child was of pre-school age at Lina's first appointment so she had to consider child care concerns and additional time requirements carefully. Her partner assumes his fair share of home responsibilities so that this support would allow Lina flexibility.

In Donna's home life she has a partner who has supported and encouraged her aspirations, but there are no children living at home. Because he is now retired, he would provide enormous support around home responsibilities which allows Donna more time and energy for her career.

When Anne initially came to administration she had two school-aged children at home. Her husband supported her aspirations toward administration. Anne, however, recalls a more traditional pattern of roles in her home. She took on a great deal of the responsibility for child care and household tasks and maintained a belief that she needed to be a perfect wife and mother.

A sixth factor considered by all four women interviewed was what they felt to be the negative qualities associated with administration. They knew that administration, while providing an opportunity and challenge to their own professional growth, had the negative quality of being very time-intensive. It would mean longer working days, after-school and evening meetings, divisional committee obligations, parent council and community activities, weekend commitments to support teams at the junior high and high school levels, time to keep current with professional reading, plus an enormous amount of paperwork, much of which would require evening and weekend attention. Each of the four women in the study gave consideration to the time factor which would be involved with administration. It would seem from the extra commitments they took on before their actual initial applications that they were each already showing a broader commitment to

education as a practice and to what they felt they had to contribute beyond the level of a classroom teacher.

The seventh factor which influenced the decision of all four women to apply for administration was the climate within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 toward women in administration. All of the women in the study were aware of the division's Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy which was adopted in 1986. Each had concluded that the implementation of the policy had created a climate of comfort and encouragement for women. All four women felt that this policy supported their belief that The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 was looking for women and was prepared to accept women and see them in a newer light and was open to women becoming administrators.

#### Summary

In this study there were seven factors which were considered by the four women in their decision to apply for administration. Each may have assigned different weight to the seven factors considered, depending upon her own unique situation, background, life circumstances, and personality.

All four women referred to the influence of significant others in recognizing their potential and suggesting administration as a goal. Whether they indeed held no prior personal ambitions toward administration or viewed it as inappropriate to appear overly ambitious is hard to speculate upon, as none voiced such ambitions. The early recognition from significant others, however, may have given each woman a sense of permission and support to aspire more openly. Secondly, all four women considered their academic qualifications in terms of degrees held and their knowledge base about administrative tasks and divisional issues to be an important factor in the selection process.

Thirdly, consideration was given to the work experience each brought to her application. Fourthly, each undertook a self-analysis in regard to the particular skills she possessed appropriate for administration.

A fifth factor considered by all four women was their particular life styles and what commitment they had to their home life responsibilities. Each felt that support from their partner was essential to her pursuit of an administrative career path, and fortunately for each, all four had this support.

The sixth factor considered by all four women was the realistic assessment of the difficulties associated with being an administrator. All recognized and accepted the fact that longer work days as well as evening and weekend commitments would be required.

The seventh factor identified by all four women was the positive, perhaps more inclusive to women, climate within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. Each felt that this factor was the direct result of the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy and its mandated procedures and practices. All four women, while acknowledging affirmative action initiatives as a factor, were also strong in expressing their own "merit" for their administrative appointments.

b) What encouragement toward administration did you receive and from whom?

In response to interview question 1a) about the factors considered by the four women before making a decision to "aspire", each mentioned "the support and encouragement of others." Encouragement and support came to each of the four women studied from friends, colleagues, family, administrators, and superintendents. Initially, encouragement toward an administrative career path seems to have been presented by others prior to the respondents viewing themselves as administrators in any truly concrete or "decision-made" sense. Anne recalls,

When I was approached and asked whether it's something I was looking at, at the time I really wasn't. But I guess the more people speak to you about it, it becomes part of your thinking, and in doing some self-examination, I came to the conclusion . . . maybe it is something I should take on seriously.

Susan did not know if that encouragement made her begin to think about herself in that role; however, "I really started to look around, and I talked to her (female

administrator) a fair bit in those two years that followed and assumed some different kind of roles and responsibilities that started to lead me towards the administrative role.”

Lina said

I had lots of good support and advice along the way . . . a lot of women who were very instrumental, a lot of men as well, but women telling me what their experiences were like because our experiences were different from men at that point in time and just saying to expect five no’s before you get your first yes. And that’s a very important message because when you receive those no’s you’re rather devastated and you begin to second-guess and you think, “Well, maybe I don’t have those skills.” as opposed to saying, “Well, what skills would I need to develop to do the job?” and to recognize as well that when administrative placements are made, there’s a whole list of factors that go into that and sometimes it’s not a personal reflection as to why you’re not receiving a specific promotion. . . . I had administrators who had mentored me and encouraged me, I had colleagues who have done likewise, and it was something I was interested in.

Donna was encouraged by a female superintendent and two female principals for over a decade before she chose to aspire to administration. “I think it just took me time to feel that I was ready.” Donna views the school division as having been extremely supportive in terms of professional development opportunities in her circumstance. She reported, “I have a wide network of people working in the schools. They weren’t necessarily teachers there, but principals in the school, and former principals of mine have been supportive.”

Each of the four participants in the study enjoyed a high degree of support and encouragement from their spouses to access an administrative career path. Anne perhaps expressed it best:

Most of all I would say I had the full support of my husband in exploring this and in encouraging me into it, and even at times when I would become discouraged he

was always there to say, "It's not that easy, you know. If you really want it, you really have to go after it."

### Summary

For each of the four women interviewed, encouragement to consider an administrative career path was not only an important factor in the decision to "aspire", but it also played a significant role along the way as the decision to aspire became the pursuit of an administrative appointment. This encouragement, especially by superordinates, prompted the four women to assess their credentials and take steps to gain knowledge, to assess their work experience and seek expanded roles outside the classroom, and to assess their skills and take steps to further develop these. Encouragement toward an administrative career path from home-life partners provided all four women the ability to take time from traditional home and family responsibilities and apply it to career goals.

Perhaps the seeds of aspiration were there, but not yet germinated, and would have propelled these women toward administration eventually without this encouragement. We cannot know that, however, because each of the four women did receive the voice of encouragement. It is interesting to note that none of the four women acknowledged hearing any negative sentiments about aspiring to administration from others. Perhaps they simply did not recall any since their applications to administration were ultimately successful.

#### c) What did you do to prepare yourself for an administrative position?

Once the decision to "aspire to administration" took root, each of the four women in the study began a process to prepare for her initial application. Individually, in her own way, each woman evolved a plan whereby conscious steps were taken to improve the potential of her candidacy. Choices were made by each woman to broaden her education, either academically or through professional development opportunities and committee membership; to broaden the scope of her work experience beyond the classroom level;

and to expand her contact base with divisional personnel capable of assisting her through advice or mentorship, and in guiding her to higher visibility throughout the division.

Lina expanded her teaching experiences beyond the classroom. "I didn't have the type of skills that you needed to work with adults because they're different and it takes a different honing." She got involved with the W.T.A. and in divisional committees, which gave her a sense of how The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 worked. Lina believed it was important to inform the decision makers about who you are and what you can do. She spent four or five years doing those kinds of things. When she applied in 1989 she felt she had more skills to offer as a potential administrator.

When I first started applying, I thought I had the skills, and realized that I didn't. I didn't have the skills that I needed. I really did need to broaden my knowledge and my repertoire and my basic skills. So each of the rejections sent me back to develop those skills.

Susan assumed some different roles and responsibilities that started to lead her toward the administrative role. Moving into the counselling area allowed her to be in a position to view the school as a whole and to see a larger picture, as opposed to the classroom, and it gave her a wider variety of experiences.

I think it was a very good move for me, but I hadn't made that move for the purpose of becoming an administrator. I made that move for my own professional growth, but that really had a positive affect when I think about it now in terms of being an administrator. I was also part of a leadership team which facilitated workshops for schools. I just learned an awful lot by facilitating workshops for different staffs and with working with people. I think it was pretty significant.

Donna, too, moved away from the classroom to a position which served to provide her a much wider scope of experiences. She viewed herself as gradually taking on larger challenges and gaining greater confidence in her capabilities.

Anne removed herself from the classroom through the resource role. She found "it gave me a lot of opportunity to develop my leadership skills." She found herself "doing a lot of organizing and the scheduling and the interviewing." Anne thought that she was very good at this, enjoyed it and got along well with the people she worked with. It was a turning point for her as she now began to think seriously of administration.

Anne had viewed herself as well prepared academically for an administrative position. She had completed a Master's of Education degree and had done some course work in administration. She had completed both the Level I and II certificate programs for administrators. She applied for the divisional professional development program but was told by division personnel: "You've done it all. You don't really need to do the Professional Development Program." Anne recalls attending some divisional Affirmative Action Committee workshops as well. Although she had completed her Master's degree, she said "I didn't expect to be in administration earlier because the division has a policy of being in the profession for at least five years . . . before you can think of administration."

Donna took advantage of professional development opportunities to broaden her knowledge base. She participated in the divisional professional development program and attended many workshops on a variety of topics. Of the four women, Donna expressed the most concern with her lack of a higher academic standing. She has completed a B.A and a B.Ed. program. She does hope to continue with her educational goals in the future.

Susan had completed her pre-master's status in Educational Psychology prior to her application for administration. This direction in her studies took her out of the classroom and allowed her to enter the counselling field. She had also participated in the divisional professional development program. "That was done several years before I had applied for administration." This experience served to give her a wider scope of understanding about how the division functioned organizationally and brought her into contact with divisional personnel beyond a particular school setting.



Lina had completed the B.A. and B.Ed. program prior to her initial application to administration and had a 5-year plan for herself. During that time she also accessed support from superordinates and colleagues. "I had lots of good support and advice along the way . . . a lot of women who were very instrumental, and a lot of men as well."

Donna took advantage of the opportunity to follow the advice and guidance of the Human Resources Department after her first unsuccessful application to administration.

I did, however, follow up on the opportunity to visit with personnel to find out what their opinion was of my application and my interview, and I got feedback from them. . . . They gave me feedback on everything from the look of my résumé to how I conducted myself in the interview. I was given the opportunity to see my file and I felt I was given very honest and open feedback, positive as well as negative.

Donna also recalls she was told that her references weren't as strong as they could have been and took this advice to improve her administrative references at her next application. She consciously sought out the advice and guidance of superordinates, although not in a regular mentoring role.

When I had a question or a problem or an idea and needed somebody's opinion, I phoned these people and asked them. Yes, I did seek them out. I called a former colleague, who is also an administrator, when I had specific things, like I wanted to hear her experiences about the assessment centre . . . so people were very open to helping me when I did ask.

Anne utilized the support of her principal and her superintendent to direct her toward the positions she should strive for. "Once I made up my mind, I did consciously go out and seek advice in terms of what I should be doing." She applied for administration three times. After each application there was an opportunity to meet with Human Resources staff to do a debriefing which she recalls as having been helpful.

I remember . . . asking what I can do, and she did give me some advice. Part of it was my visibility. I was not known at the school division level, except for my local superintendent. Half of the superintendents never heard about me. I was told that was part of my problem. I needed to get more involved in the division on committees and be a representative to whatever I could do in the school division.”

Anne then asked her principal and superintendent that her name be put forward to serve on committees. She did this purposefully “because I felt that if there were areas I had to develop in, then I had to go out and do it. Yes, I did it very consciously.”

### Summary

The four women in this study presented themselves as very highly motivated to increase the potential of their candidacy for administration. All four sought to increase their knowledge base, leadership skills, visibility to superordinates, and commitment to divisional issues and concerns through taking on special assignments or committee work. Two of the women did avail themselves of the opportunity to gain from and act upon the feedback from the Human Resources Department after being initially unsuccessful in their application process.

All four women removed themselves from the classroom to broaden their level of experience with adults through roles such as resource, counselling, consulting, and inter-school projects. They all were able to showcase their leadership abilities through these out-of-classroom roles, and through committee memberships at school and divisional levels.

d) What were your experiences as you went through the procedures mandated by the division’s affirmative action policy?

The Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy was adopted in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in January 1986. Some of the women in the study had initially made a first application prior to this date; however, all were appointed after the policy practices and procedures had been implemented. Anne and Lina received

appointments in 1989, Susan was appointed in 1993, and the most recent appointee, Donna, was successful in 1995. The four women studied each underwent different experiences in her pursuit of an administrative appointment. All were hired to administration after being successful with the procedures mandated by the Affirmative Action policy.

Anne was first appointed to administration in 1989 when she was over forty. She had applied three times and was successful at the last round. In her first application, prior to 1986, she applied for a specific position which was bulletined within the school division, as the administrative vacancy procedure called for at the time. "I knew that I wasn't going to be ready or get in," recalled Anne. She acted, however, upon the advice of colleagues who suggested she test the waters. "So the first one was more like a trial run. I made it to an interview, that was important, which I did." In her very first application, Anne was interviewed by a panel of 15 people in a boardroom setting. "I recall seeing all males in the boardroom, and I recall making fun of it, saying 'Well, this could be my lucky day.'"

At her second application, a year or two later, Anne felt that affirmative action procedures had "really kicked in." There was an open invitation to all individuals who possessed the basic requirements for and were interested in administration to apply. Anne applied, was shortlisted, and went through the interview process then in place. "At that time they had eliminated that entire boardroom of people who interviewed you." Anne does not recall that there was at this time a conscious effort to have male and female representatives on the interview teams. "I think the only conscious effort was that there was a superintendent, a trustee, a parent, a W.T.A. rep." In this process the interviews were conducted by smaller groups who then "made recommendations, and those people were interviewed again and were shortlisted, then interviewed for specific positions and placed." It was Anne's experience that she "made it right up to being interviewed for a specific position but never got it."

The third application was again an open call, and even though I got to the point where I was interviewed and would have been considered for what you call a “pool”, there was nothing like a pool in those days. You had to go back to square one and go through that process again, which I did.

At this time, the procedure in place called for those successful in the interview screening process to then apply for specific positions as they became vacant. “So that means you were interviewed upon interviewed upon interviewed. Every school that came up, you went to be interviewed. You were interviewed by the principal and whoever else showed up. So it was an exhausting experience.” Anne was interviewed on three occasions.

Although Anne did not receive an appointment to any of these schools, she was nonetheless successful.

It was at this time I was placed. Actually I was the last of that group that was placed, and I guess I was almost at the point where I thought, “I don’t think I will ever make it” because so many positions were filled.

She had been interviewed for several schools, which she didn’t get. The placement she did receive was one she had not been specifically interviewed for. “I was just called and told. If I’m interested, then here’s a position for you.” At the last application process, she felt far more relaxed.

I walked in and said, “Well, whatever is here, I’m willing to give it a try.” And it wasn’t as though my life depended on it or my career depended on it. At that point in time I said, “This was going to be my last year.”

She recalls feeling self-confident at this point and that she had a lot to offer administrative practice. “I was very confident. I felt that I knew the job, I felt I was capable, I felt I was deserving. I said to myself, ‘If you guys can’t see this . . . .’”

Anne was aware of and had read the division’s Affirmative Action for Women in Administration Policy. She stated,

I don't think that was the guiding force in my decision to enter. It did help me and it did support me a great deal, but it wasn't as a result of the policy that I made a decision to put an application in. It was something that I felt I wanted to do at the time.

Anne believed that the policy did provide a climate of comfort for women who were applying to administration at the time. "I think it really gave women at that time the encouragement that they will be looked at seriously. Yes, I think it was suitably beneficial to us at the time when we were aspiring to be administrators."

Lina was in her mid-thirties in 1989 when she received her first appointment to administration. She had applied for five years in a row before being successful and had a number of different experiences with the processes in place for application to administration over the years 1985-1989. Prior to January 1986 there was no Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy. The process for application for administration was that vacancies for vice-principalships at a particular school were advertised within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 through an administrative vacancy bulletin. Applicants meeting the basic requirements applied in writing using a standard divisional form and included three references and a statement of philosophy. Candidates were then notified if they were shortlisted for an interview. Approximately four or five candidates would be interviewed by a large committee and a selection would be made. Probably an administrative recommendation would be included here. That person's name would then be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval, and the successful candidate would be notified by the superintendent .

In her first four applications, Lina was shortlisted to be interviewed. She was not selected and received very little feedback from that process, so she did not know which were her weak areas or how she might improve her candidacy. She did not contact the superintendent to gain this information as she felt unsure of the proper protocol. "You've got to be cognizant of what that protocol is so you don't offend people. So I didn't seek

that out. It wasn't offered, and I didn't seek it out." At the fifth application, there was a new process in place to create from among all the applicants an administrative pool from which vice-principalships would be filled as they arose.

I was one of the first people to go through the assessment pool so they had obviously started that, I guess, in 1989. And that was coming in with a group of colleagues and going through a series of exercises in which you were observed, how you handled things, and from there I got on the shortlist of that group and we knew that we would receive appointments as they came available.

Lina was one of the 10 to 12 people chosen for the first administrative pool. She was notified of this in the spring of 1989 and was appointed to her first vice-principalship in the fall of 1989. After being selected for membership in the administrative pool, Lina recalls that they received support from the division to help prepare them for administrative roles through workshops. The division's Affirmative Action Committee offered

all kinds of workshops which they still continue to do for women, and that was really important because the tenor of those meetings changes when you have just a group of women as opposed to worrying about the different dynamics that are there when you've got men in the room whose experiences are different from what yours were. So those are really important supports to just being able to say "I really worry about this" or to have someone say "You know, I've had a similar experience."

She remembers that "the W.T.A. was very strong with the affirmative action and that there was a Status of Women in Education Committee."

Lina was well aware of the 1986 implementation of the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy. She had read it and, although her first application was prior to this policy, she viewed it as being supportive to women and an encouragement

for women to apply to administration. "You knew that you were going to be seriously considered."

Lina does not recall personally feeling there was a change in the climate toward women applicants between the first application she made in 1985, prior to the implementation of policy, to her successful application in 1989. "Personally, no, I didn't. Overall, definitely there was a change which resulted in women now representing a little over 50 percent of our administration. But personally, I didn't feel that at that point in time, no."

Susan was first appointed to administration in the spring of 1993. She was in her mid-thirties. Her first application for a vice-principalship occurred prior to the administrative pool process. She recalls "They interviewed a number of people. You were not being interviewed for a particular school, you were being interviewed for the four schools." At that time Susan informed the Human Resources Department of her interest in these vacancies through a telephone call. She received an interview with a small panel but was not selected for any of the positions.

The process for selecting new administrators at the period in which she experienced success was the general "all-call" for those interested in administration, followed by an interview with a representative from the Human Resources Department, as well as one elementary and one secondary school principal (one of whom was to be female). Those successful to this point then attended an assessment centre. Candidates performed a series of tasks in a screening process which resulted in the creation of an administrative pool of 10 to 15 individuals who would then be selected as particular vice-principalship vacancies arose. Susan explained that the assessment centre process

took two half-days. There were lots of different sessions. You just ran from one session to the other, totally ran. And you were observed, either by a group of people that consisted of superintendents, assistant superintendents, Human Resources people, or you were observed by one person.

She recalls feeling anxious through the process, but not trying to look for a purpose for the activity.

I never answered any of it that way. I was nervous for sure, and anxious, because I think there were about 50 of us who went through the olympics. The superintendents, the assistant superintendents, all the people that were doing the assessing did everything they could to make you laugh, or that was the impression that I had, that they were being helpful in all kinds of ways so that the best part of you would shine. It was nerve-wracking. I actually remember some people going into the washrooms and throwing up in between the sessions. So in that respect, that's real hard on people.

Susan believed the assessment centre format worked well for her. "I think what they were really looking for were process skills. People who had the ability to look at situations in a process kind of way as opposed to black and white or according to policy, common sense kinds of things." She felt this to be in line with the administrative direction within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 toward site-based, school-based decision-making. Susan felt you had to be on top of the division's priorities and initiatives, even though you were not expected to recite or quote anything or refer to any particular policy. Along with the candidate's performance at the assessment centre, Susan recalls that weight in the selection process was also given to the initial interview, the philosophy statement, and the quality of references submitted. Susan felt "I think it gave you a good shot."

Susan recalls that there were about 50 individuals attending the assessment centre. There appeared to be an equal balance of male and female candidates. There was also in her perception an ethnic component to the mix of participants. She feels this may have been the result of the division's affirmative action policy procedures. If there were any advantages in consideration given to these groups, she didn't view this as being so wrong.



I didn't come out of there thinking I was one up over the males. I didn't think that way. . . If I would have been applying for an administrative position twenty years ago, do I think I'd be a principal of high school? No, I don't. For sure. I don't think I would. I'm pretty confident. So I'm sure the affirmative action policy has made a great difference, so it must have made a difference in the assessment centre in terms of selecting.

After the assessment centre experience, Susan became part of the administrative pool from which candidates would be selected as vacancies arose. Candidates were informed about being selected to the pool following the last meeting of the Board of Trustees in June. At that time there were already a number of vice-principalships to be filled.

I don't know how many openings now, for moving right into, an administrative position for the upcoming September. It depended on who phoned you . . . if one of the superintendents called you, you actually got a position. If Human Resources calls you, you were in the pool.

Susan recalls one component of the administrative pool being that the individuals were all very different. "There are some of us that are very similar to each other, and yet there's some of us where there isn't a commonality in vision or focus." She recalls that there "were more females than males in my group. For sure." In the course of the usual administrative pool procedure, the individuals in the pool would all have been placed before another pool was selected; however, in this instance, Susan recalls,

Well, we were an interesting group because we had another assessment pool join us in the middle. We were a group unto ourselves for a year, and that would have been about 18 of us, I think, something like that, so we were together for a year and then people got appointments, and then that September there were fewer of us, there was maybe 12 or something, and then they did another pool that was focused on visible minorities and ethnic groups. Then those people joined into the

pool, so in the middle of the year we pulled together as one, and that would rise back up again to 26 or something like that, so that was kind of an interesting piece.

Susan was in the administrative pool when an opening arose for her to take on a vice-principalship. "I was called and offered it. And it's interesting. You're not necessarily offered it. I mean, you can turn it down I guess, but you wouldn't." She recalls that all of the members of her pool were appointed within the next two-year period. Susan had the impression that when vacancies for vice-principalships came up, principals would often have an awareness of who was in the pool and would often state a preference for a particular candidate for that position. At other times a principal was just told by the superintendent that this person would be his or her V.P.

Susan was aware of and had read the division's Affirmative Action for Women in Administrative policy following its implementation in January 1986.

I'm sure it encouraged me. I'm sure if not in a conscious way, definitely in an unconscious way, of knowing that the division was looking for women, or was prepared to accept women and see them in a newer light, and was open to women becoming administrators.

Donna received her first appointment to a vice-principalship in June 1995. She was in her mid-forties and had taught for over 20 years. At the time of her first application to administration, the division's procedure was also the general bulletin call to everyone interested in applying for entry level administrative positions to submit a written application. All applicants who submitted the proper documentation were guaranteed an interview. At Donna's first application she recalls

I wasn't successful past the interview. I had the interview, and then I got the letter saying I would not be going to the assessment centre from there. I did, however, follow up on the opportunity to visit with personnel to find out what their opinion was of my application and my interview, and I got feedback from them.

Donna felt that "that debriefing, after my unsuccessful attempt, was very helpful." Donna made a second application two years later and was chosen to attend the assessment centre.

The assessment centre was really interesting. I had no idea what to expect so I met a friend for breakfast and she had been through it and brought some things that she could remember that happened there. I don't know if you can really prepare for that. She told me some little hints, like she said there was a writing task and she said "Write like hell!"

. . . Mostly I think it's an opportunity for them to see how you'll react under pressure and how good you'd be at flying by the seat of your pants because so much of this job is like that. . . . I enjoyed the people there. I came away thinking that everybody there was a good candidate. I didn't come away feeling any more qualified or not qualified. I just remember thinking, "Gee, what a bunch of really talented people there are in this division." So I didn't feel that anybody was there to try to trip me up. I felt that the tasks were there for me to show or to demonstrate what I could do.

Donna does not recall finding the assessment centre as stressful as some of her colleagues did.

Yes, I think if you worried about what they wanted from you and what you were supposed to do, I could see it being very stressful. If you just sort of forgot about the end product and thought, well, what can you do with this—it was hard, but certainly no harder than what I have in a day here. So, I didn't see anybody really feeling particularly stressed in the group where I was, but then again sometimes it was individual, then a small group and then a big group. They kept changing the group and just running from place to place was a little bit stressful.

Following the assessment centre experience, Donna was not informed if she was or was not included in the administrative pool.

After the assessment centre, none of us were told anything, so I was never in the pool. Other people in the past have had a chance from the pool to have their new administrative group workshops and things like that. I didn't have that. We weren't told we were accepted into the pool or rejected. Nothing. None of us were told anything and I was just appointed to this position.

Donna received word that she was appointed following a Board of Trustees meeting from an assistant superintendent. "So to that point I didn't know. I didn't even know I was in the pool."

There was some confusion for the participants of the assessment centre as a result of not knowing whether they were in the pool and for those suddenly appointed. It was also confusing. Donna recalls,

Now for me it was a happy time because I was selected. I felt badly for the people who didn't know, who didn't receive appointments, because I didn't ever know what happened to them, what they eventually heard. I don't think they heard anything by the end of June, and then I think this fall they opened up the pool again and they said they were going to take some more people and combine them with people from the pool in the spring, so I really don't know how it ended for those people.

Although Donna was the most recently appointed administrator of the four women studied, she was the least aware of the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy. She stated that she had not read the policy itself, although she was aware of the affirmative action procedures of including in administrative vacancy advertisements a statement that the division was an equal opportunity employer with an affirmative action policy. Donna recalls thinking, "I guess the climate is conducive . . . I remember thinking, 'Well, that's nice. I'm glad that I've got an equal chance.'" She was not of the opinion that women would now be considered more seriously than perhaps they had been in the past.

No, I didn't think about that. I just thought that I guess it wouldn't be favoring men because they've always had the inside track, and I didn't expect that it would favor me. If I wasn't qualified, then I didn't expect to get the job if they didn't think I was the best person for the job. So, I don't remember thinking that. I just remember thinking, "Well, that's nice." I just see it as an equal thing, rather than favoring people.

Her awareness of an attitude that women were being favored came from contacts with other male teachers.

Before my first application, I was at a social function and sitting across the table from a man who had applied for administration several times and hadn't been chosen, and when he heard I was applying and he was really upset about that, saying that the problem with all these women applying for administration was it was diluting the pool to such a point he would never get his. Well, at best I think he's a mediocre person for administration, but I chuckled at the thought that he thought he was entitled to this role, rather than on merit. He truly feels that it's because of people like me that he hasn't got the opportunity.

### Summary

All four women acknowledged awareness of the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy, and all four recognized a resulting change in climate within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 which was more positive and encouraging toward women. All four referred to the progress for women made by those who had championed for women before them and influenced the adoption of the policy. Each of the women nonetheless insisted that she had achieved her appointment by merit rather than through differential hiring practices. It would seem that all four women believed the policy was important but not instrumental in their particular selection to administration. Since all four women were appointed through the hiring procedures in place as a result of the affirmative action policy, it is not possible to know how they would have fared under the

prior hiring practices. It may also be that it is difficult to view oneself as a “targeted” group for whom differential hiring practices have been deemed necessary.

### Post-Appointment Experiences

All four women who participated in this study were successfully appointed to administrative positions, and all were appointed during a time when procedures and practices had been implemented by the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy adopted by The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in January 1986. Two of the women, Lina and Donna, hold vice-principalships, while Susan and Anne have moved on to occupy a principal’s chair. The second set of questions investigated in this study are concerned with the experiences of the four women following their success in becoming administrators. Once again, the experience of each woman is different and unique. Nonetheless, each of the women was in the situation of being appointed to administration during a time of differential promotion practices for women in administration.

a) In what ways, if any, has your gender affected your relationship with staff, students, parents, and divisional personnel?

Anne was first appointed to administration in 1989. She served as a vice-principal for approximately five years and has just completed her third year as a principal. In her present position she works with a male vice-principal. Anne’s reflections of the perceptions others hold of her relate to her experiences as both a vice-principal and a principal. Having had administrative experience as a vice-principal, she feels she brought credibility to her role as a new principal. “I haven’t had too much of that feeling that I wasn’t accepted as a person who is capable.” She said of staff,

When I first went there as a principal, there were two of us, and we were two females so it was okay, and people never made the distinction between who was the principal and who wasn’t. I think staff have always been very accepting. I think I’ve had good support from the male sector of the staff in terms of recognizing my capabilities and recognizing me in the position of principal.

Anne believes that perceptions differ with parents and visitors who come into the school, and she can feel a stereotype still exists about women administrators. When there were two female administrators in the school, parents did not seem to need to make a distinction as to who was the principal.

But, I notice in the last year I had a male vice-principal, if a parent comes in or if anyone comes in off the street to see the administrator of the building, they automatically will go to the male. Even with the police department where police officers came in to see the administrator, the principal, they automatically will go to the male. I even made fun of it and said to the police officer, "What is it with you guys? You walk in here, you see a male and a female, and you automatically think the male is the principal. Why would you do that?" They apologized profusely for it, but it happens.

Anne has found with students that when the vice-principal is a male and the principal is female, students automatically assume that the male is in charge.

They would say to me, "You're the boss." and that's the way they get the reinforcement that I am the person in charge, but it's very, very common for the young kids to assume that the male is the principal and that I'm just the helper in the office.

Anne has found parents to be very much entrenched with the notion of male leadership.

They would rather speak to a male than speak with a female about discipline issues. . . . I had one parent who actually refused to talk with me about his child, he was going to talk to the vice-principal because he is a male and knows what he's doing, and I'm a female and I didn't know what I was doing. He eventually decided to move his child to a real school where there was a real principal because there was a man as a principal.

Anne considers that this kind of view may be more representative of community and parental views in her school location. "It's because of the cultural biases, and I don't

mean cultural in the sense of race, but in their belief system. In their belief system the male is the dominant person, the male is the person in charge.” Anne questions whether such views would be less automatically held in communities where the community standard is one of higher educational levels of parental achievement and where women are visible in higher level employment situations. “I would really like to think that this is the way it is, that in other areas they will not automatically jump to the assumption, but they would at least be more open-minded in terms of finding out who the principal is.”

Anne felt that as a new administrator there was positive support from divisional personnel. She had no negative experiences from divisional personnel toward her as a woman administrator. “I always felt very comfortable, even as a vice-principal . . . phoning and asking for advice.”

Anne has the impression that women administrators have to work much harder to be seen as being capable. There is an added pressure for women in that regard.

It was almost like you’ve got to be twice as good in order to be accepted as equal to. I felt that in my job, as well, especially in the early stages as a vice-principal, I felt I had to work twice as hard in order to prove that I am capable of the position. Right now in my present position it is still a guiding force that I feel I have to really be on top of everything, and that I should be able to be involved in everything that’s going on so I can be accountable for it, and the only way for me to be accountable for what’s happening is for me to be part of it. So, yes, there is that pressure.

Lina has been a vice-principal for seven years. She was first appointed in 1989. She felt that staff initially had questions about whether she could fulfil certain roles in terms of discipline, being seen as an authority figure in control. “I don’t think that’s gender related. I think when you come into a new setting, people want to know what you can do and where your strengths are, and they soon find out.” At her high school there were two previous female administrators. She believes that she has been very well



received by staff. "Staff bring discipline issues to me nine times out of ten because that is seen as a strength." Lina believes that when you have proven your capabilities, you are accepted in that role regardless of gender. When Lina was appointed to this position, she had had no high school experience.

This was a big leap for me in terms of my professional career. . . . I didn't come into the job with much credibility at all. I wasn't familiar with the curriculum. . . . So, yes, there would have been all sorts of assumptions and preconceived notions. All I can do is do the job that I know how to do, and it's really important to network with people, to connect with people, to show them who you are, where your line of support is, and to start making deposits in the emotional bank accounts of the people you are working with so they begin to see you as someone who is competent, knowledgeable, trustworthy, supportive. There are no gifts out there, people aren't going to give you that credibility simply because you've come into a position, and I don't think it matters if you're male or female. It may happen that people give it to you once you've established a reputation in the division, and they may go, "Oh, this person's coming to our school and here's what we know about them." But I haven't been in the division long enough to know if that's ever going to happen for me.

Lina has never felt she was looked upon as being successful in her appointment because of affirmative action initiatives. "I've never felt that--never. Now, not to say that people haven't ever thought that, but I never felt that in my dealings with people, and it's certainly never been a backlash or has never been a comment that's come to me." She is aware of a perception that women need to work harder or prove more in administrative roles than do men; however, this has not been her personal experience.

Certainly the male colleagues that I have had the opportunity to work with do every bit as much as I do. They do things differently, but certainly they do as much as I am doing. . . . You have things to prove, but not more. . . . You have to

prove that you are competent, you have to prove that you are able to handle discipline problems, you're able to access funding, you're able to deal with the myriad of issues that you deal with and do them well and do them properly. But that's not a male or a female thing, that's just the job.

Lina has felt very comfortable in her relationship with students. She has proven her capabilities in dealing with student issues in a fair and equitable manner to the point that staff will most often bring these matters to her. She makes herself available to students with an "open-door" policy.

I guess with some students, they're not always comfortable talking to a male, or confiding. At lunch time this door is open, and this room is always filled. So it makes a difference to some students, in terms of their comfort level, as to whom they want to talk, and with whom they will go.

Visitors to the school have commented on how impressed they were with how students are handled in the building, and that staff are really on top of things (relating to her as a female administrator).

Now I would assume that that's what you would see in any school, it doesn't matter if it's a male or female administrator, that kids would be respectful, you would be on top, and you would know who your kids are. I don't know why that surprises them. I don't probe that maybe they're thinking that this person who's not very big is talking to big kids and they're actually listening, but that shouldn't be surprising. And I don't even have time to worry about that. This is just the way we conduct ourselves in this building.

In terms of parental responses to a woman administrator, Lina feels that she conducts herself in a professional manner, and parents, depending on their particular background, address her in different ways. She does not take these as being derogatory but rather a cultural thing which she does not allow to interfere with the issue they bring. She had one parent who made comments about her appearance, but:

We get over those things really quickly and get down to business. I understand him, that's just the world he comes from, so I don't take offence. I would take offence in other contexts. If I had a colleague who was doing this, I would call him or her on that. But no, no, I haven't found that to be an issue.

Divisional personnel have been very positive in Lina's perception. Her superintendent, a woman, has been available for advice, to clarify any issues, or to discuss any matters that arise. The relationship does not seem to be based upon gender; none the less, there may be a deeper sense of accurate communication because of gender. There does not appear to be any question about her capability as a woman administrator at the high school level.

Susan has been an administrator for approximately four years. She was appointed to a vice-principalship in 1993 and became a principal of a high school in 1995. In her first appointment as vice-principal, she recalls feeling warmly received. She had replaced another female administrator.

I didn't see any kind of gender issues. There would be times where I would choose, or together with the male administrator choose, that perhaps it would be better if the female did this, perhaps it would be better if a male did this.

In terms of staff, she recalls "I do remember a couple of male staff who I felt were in a sense negating me, but they also did that with other women on staff." As an administrator, Susan was aware of some stereotypic viewpoints on the part of staff which included viewing women as not being able to make their minds up, being wishy-washy. Some people would deliberately look for statements to reinforce that.

Men reverting to little boys trying to address women in that little boy kind of way as opposed to person to person. And some of it, it's hard to say whether it's personality clash or whether it's gender stuff. I've chosen not to deal with it from

a gender perspective. I'm dealing with it from a personality difference perspective. It's a hard thing to pinpoint because there hasn't been anything up front, and men are too smart for that in lots of ways.

Susan has found many staff to be very open to her. "They would really share. I don't know if that's a female thing. Sometimes it is. Sometimes you can be perceived that way, and you can legitimately be that."

Of her workload as a woman administrator, Susan says,

I'm not one who believes I have to work harder to show that I deserve (a principalship), because I feel I deserve it to begin with. I know I'm good, and there's lots of other women out there that are good too, and I don't think I have to continue to prove to people that I'm good. What I need to do is to continue to work hard at what I do for reasons that are of benefit to students in the school and education.

Susan views her school to be running well. At this level she finds there are few discipline issues. Staff and students have a positive rapport, and there do not seem to be any issues around her as a woman administrator from the students' perspective. Susan feels that parents relate well to her also. "Actually I find that parents are very open, and I just hear their entire story, and I don't know whether that's because I'm female. It might be." In a situation where parents were opposed to her decision in regard to the consequences to their child, she did not have a sense that the disapproval would have been any different with a male administrator. When Susan was a vice-principal, the principal was male. Parents accepted her as the vice-principal, and she felt that perhaps because the senior position was held by a male, issues of her authority as a female did not arise. "There the principal was male and the vice-principal was a female. That scenario makes a difference in people's minds. Not only male-female, but the position." Susan has found the Superintendent and Human Resources personnel to have been very supportive

to her in her administrative positions. She believes her requests or concerns are addressed appropriately.

When Donna first received her appointment, she recalls being aware that gendered perceptions about her being chosen had surfaced. One male on staff indicated her success was based on gender and the affirmative action hiring practices in place within this division.

Most people were genuinely happy for me when I got my appointment and were congratulating me, but one male did make a point of telling me, "Well, after all, you know, you're a woman, so that's why you got it." But, you know, I can't worry about him. Lots of men did congratulate me so you can't take him as being representative. I think there are fewer, or they're smart enough to keep their mouths shut.

Donna was appointed to administration in 1995. The vice-principalship she presently holds is her first appointment, at which she has now completed her first year. She has found that there has been an assumption on the part of staff that in a Nursery to Senior 1 school she would be responsible for the younger grades. "Many people have said to me, 'Oh, so you look after the younger grades and the principal looks after the higher grades, right?'" She finds these assumptions to be gender related.

They definitely are, or else they associate with the position, that the V.P. being the lower position, that somehow or other lower grades are easier to administer or something, but several people have asked that, and I say, "No, whoever is around and available takes it." So I try to dispel that. I haven't worked much . . . in junior high, and I think I need more expertise there.

Donna finds that staff often go directly to the principal with their questions. She acknowledges it may not be because she is female, but because she is seen as being new and inexperienced.

I mean, he's been there for years so they're going to probably get an answer from him faster. However, if he's not there, there's no difference. They'll come to me. But it could be because they know him better, they know what to expect from him, and they know he'll probably know the answer where you know, I probably won't. On a day-to-day basis Donna does not sense gender biases toward her. Staff sometimes "kibitz" around, but there does not appear to be any maliciousness in it. There are still some "myths" about certain interests and activities being gender associated. "I know when I was trying to see if there were some people interested in going to International Women's Day, some of the guys made comments like, 'Ha, ha, is it going to be a tea party?'"

In terms of viewing the administrative role and responsibilities, more women have expressed to Donna the opinion that it is a job they would never want. They question her as to why she would ever want that job. In her experience, no men have expressed this particular view. Donna feels that maybe women feel more comfortable expressing comments that might seem more personal, that women see the dual roles of career and home responsibilities as being too demanding and therefore the job is unattractive, or that men may feel reluctant to express being uninterested in administration and be viewed as unambitious. Donna has not felt discrimination on the basis of gender from students.

With students, I can't say that I've felt anything like that. The odd time, I think, a couple of female students have come to me because I was female, with issues . . . where they didn't feel comfortable perhaps going to the male principal.

Donna recalls,

I was worried a little bit about parents, but I think my predecessors (two female vice-principals) have dispelled the notion that women don't have any authority. I know my principal told me that a couple of parents came to him because the women next door wouldn't be able to do it, or they didn't want to talk to her, or

whatever, and he's dispelled that, that she had every bit as much authority as he did around there, so that shouldn't be a problem.

Donna does not know whether parents see her role as a subordinate one because of the title or because she is a woman. "He's been there and probably dealt with them over their older child and things like that, they just go straight to him."

Donna does not feel she has to work harder as a woman administrator to prove her worth.

I don't think I work harder because I'm a woman. It was a value in my family. . . .

I mean, we were raised with a very strong work ethic. There are times when I feel overwhelmed and swamped, but so does everybody, male or female. So from my experience, I would say no.

Donna has found divisional personnel to have been supportive to her as a new administrator. She feels a real level of comfort in the guidance and advice she has received from her superintendent who is a female.

### Summary

The ways in which the four women in the study responded to the effects of gender on their work relationships showed both similarities and differences. All viewed gender to have had an impact on relationships, but none was prepared to acknowledge instances where it proved especially problematic for her. Perhaps few such incidents occurred, or it may be that as women they are accustomed to being treated in certain ways and that upon becoming administrators, they noted no escalation in gendered perceptions. It may also be the case that they do not acknowledge prejudicial treatment outright and thus are able to keep relationships in the workplace more workable.

All four women experienced a range of perceptions about female leadership from the parents and communities. It seems that there are cultural beliefs within communities which affect the mind sets of individuals about the authority that women can command.

All four of the women interviewed acknowledged an awareness of the sentiment that women generally have to work harder to prove they merit their positions. Only one woman in the study was driven by the need to do so, while the other three women expressed a confidence in their entitlement to leadership positions, stating they worked hard but not harder than their male counterparts. Nonetheless, all four reported a high sense of personal accountability in their role as administrators. All four women stated that their gender was less significant to staff in assessing their credibility as administrators than was the degree of relative experience they were perceived to have. As they moved from being newly appointed vice-principals to occupying the principal's chair, their credibility with staff seems to increase.

The perceptions of elementary students of a female principal appear to be more stereotypical than do those of senior high school students. It may be that older students have a broader world view and have experienced female leadership more than younger students whose views may represent family or community beliefs.

The perceptions of the four women in this study of the reception they receive from the superintendents' department have been particularly positive. It is of interest to note that all four women have a woman superintendent. All four women have stated they don't hesitate to call upon their superintendent for advice or clarification of policy issues. All four women referred to feeling supported by their superintendents in the process of developing their own particular leadership style. They all voiced "ease of communication" as representative of their encounters with their superintendents. Perhaps the high level of comfort in communication they enjoy with their superintendents has been impacted upon by the fact that they are of the same gender.

b) What networks of support do you have, if any?

Anne, appointed to her first vice-principalship in 1989, has noted that the networks of support for her have changed as she moved from entry level administration to a more senior position.



As a vice-principal I had the support of my immediate principal, but I always felt comfortable and people reached out to me as a vice-principal in terms of saying, "Please feel free to call." I always found--and this is probably a bit strange--but I found that the male principals were very, very supportive to me as a vice-principal, more so than the female administrators, and I can't fully understand it.

Anne recalls feeling isolated early on in her career as an administrator.

I felt the isolation quite a bit in the early stages because there was always the little groups, the females having formed their networking, and I wasn't part of that. . . . As a result, I think I sort of valued the support from the males . . . giving me advice, and helping me through budget times, those kinds of things. . . . As a principal I think I sort of levelled off a little where the females accepted me at the senior level, so that was much easier, and right now I have strong networking in terms of the female administrators, a group of us who remain in contact.

She still keeps in contact with these support people, either by phone or by meeting for coffee. "I still call people for advice, in terms of how they're handling things. I think it's important." Anne acknowledges an awareness of an old boys' club.

Yes, I felt excluded in some sense, but I don't think that I really felt the need to be involved or included because I believe they've got a right to associate with the people they feel comfortable with. I think people who were in administration earlier than I was felt the pressure a lot more. By the time I got in, I think it was opening up where the male administrators were very helpful to me, so I didn't feel they were excluding me. I know that there are situations where you feel pressure that it's being manipulated by a certain group of people in order to get certain actions going their way, but I think that's the way politics go anyway, whether it's male or female. I think earlier administrators before me there experienced

exclusion because I used to hear friends of mine who were there before me talk about that, that they were not accepted, it was very difficult for them and they felt very isolated.

Anne views that this situation had changed over time.

But I think by the time I came around there was a group of women who had established themselves already as networking for females and that certainly helped. Also there is a Winnipeg Women Administrators' group that was available and that invited us to come in at the very early stages which provided that support for people who would like to join the organization. Most of their active members in that group were older administration and people who were retired and so forth, but at least there was that movement that assisted.

In terms of divisional support to new administrators, Anne recalls being part of a new administrators' group for two years, but after that there was nothing formal. "My superintendents have always been very, very supportive." Today as a principal, Anne still feels the senior administrators in the division continue to offer solid support and are very approachable. She also acknowledges that her husband and family continue to be very supportive to her now that she has become an administrator.

Lina was also appointed to administration in 1989. She has served for seven years at the vice-principal level. Lina views her support networks to be on a number of different levels. "On the home level my husband is a wonderful support and you need that." She values the support of her administrative working partner.

We have different skills and different strengths so that complement is really important for the team and it's important for the school. I'm lucky because I'm in a partnership that I have a partner I can talk to who knows what I am talking about, the frustrations, the dilemmas, the problems, the celebrations. They can be shared with a partner. When you're in a school on your own, you've really got to go outside of that school and find somebody you can do that with. The support I

receive from staff is really important, just acknowledging the skills that they have and the effectiveness that they have in dealing with certain issues, they're going to be a whole lot better than I am. I also have a larger network outside the school that are really supportive people, just encouraging, they're people you can go and talk to.

Lina does not find the time to meet with these support people on a regular basis. "When we go to administrative conferences and so on, then we'll sit and talk. There's a group that I'll gravitate to and things like that." Many female administrators have been supportive in guiding her in her career to this point. Some are now retired, but acted as mentors to all the new women coming in. "They have made it a point to connect and tell their stories, and that's an important thing to listen to, so they really have been very supportive."

Lina believes that initially there was an old boys' club because there were a lot of older male administrators in the system. "That's what they knew and that was their style. It's taken some time to break down those barriers." She also believes that as women have taken on principalships over time at some of the largest schools in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, that has caused change.

I mean, you have three female superintendents out of five. So some of those skills that necessarily weren't there initially are now there with most of the male administrators. Their bosses are female superintendents, so they're having to learn how to relate, and most of them are working in a partnership, with probably a female administrator as well. So, yes, I think a lot of that has broken down. And the old guys aren't there. They're just not.

Lina is aware that quite a number of male administrators have retired, so the old boys' club has just disappeared as part of the process ("unless they're meeting and not inviting me, but that's okay").

Lina found the division to be supportive with the New Administrators' Group composed of those successful in reaching the administrative pool but not yet appointed, and vice-principals who had received appointments. The group met monthly for two years for workshops. Lina has expressed that "The support from our superintendent's department is really outstanding, it really is." There has been good support for budgeting and staffing issues which has made the job of administration easier in Lina's view.

Susan has been an administrator for approximately four years. She was appointed in 1993 and is now a principal. She refers to her network of support people as being a complement of both males and females.

One is the female that really pushed me to go into administration. I still relate to her a lot, and that's turned from professional to personal. . . . She continues to be my mentor right now. Another one that's pretty strong in my life is female but not here within the division, it's personal, she's a female administrator, too. . . . There are two males that I rely a lot on and bounce stuff off of.

Susan recalls that she learned a lot from and received support from two male administrators in her first appointment. "Now I know how much I learned from them, now that I'm away from them. So, in a sense, they were a form of a mentor, too."

Susan expressed that "The environment that I'm in, there are more female administrators now than in the previous environment." (prior to affirmative action hiring practices). She sees that

There is still the boys' network, but the boys' network is with the older boys. It's not so much the younger boys that have come in. The older boys--it's tough. They've got their little group, and they do things as their little group, and it's a small group, which is good. It's the older male administrators. There's a few within that category of older male administrators that don't fit into what I'm saying. I have to relate to them differently from the new boys.

Susan perceives that there is still exclusion from this group, but “it’s done very tactfully and very skillfully.” Her response to this exclusion has been to do things to annoy them, try to create opportunities where they need to see that at some level they have to reckon with her a little bit. Susan feels that “because I’m a female principal, I get slightly more acknowledgement than a female vice-principal.”

Susan views the support divisionally to be “outstanding.” Her superintendent is always available, but Susan is careful to indicate the particular level of urgency to her phone calls. “If I say ‘This is extremely important’, she’ll be back to me within an hour. Otherwise a day or two is okay, but rarely does it ever go two days. She is excellent, excellent support.” Susan does not know if the quality of the rapport is enhanced by the fact that the superintendent is also a woman. “I think at some level it is. But I don’t know whether you can do that with all females!”

Donna is the most newly appointed administrator in the interview study group. She was appointed to her first vice-principalship in 1995. Donna has male colleagues to whom she has turned for support.

When I’ve a question, you know, I pick up the phone. . . . I know sometimes I can walk away from my desk for 20 minutes and come back and there’s 8 messages. I mean, what do you do first? And just the speed with which they call me back, and the patience they had at my questions, and I guess my insecurities and how encouraging they were.

She has found that her male references to her application process who were administrators have been open to providing support and help.

I tend to phone the women more and ask them, I guess, I just feel more comfortable phoning the women and saying, “I’ve got this problem.” I really felt that the administrators when I was appointed in the meetings I had before the end

of school in the spring and the ones I'd run into in the street in the summer and in the fall, where you know I just felt like the circle was just expanding a teeny bit, making room for me.

Donna has found her principal to be supportive to her.

He generally likes to know what it is I plan to do and he's never said "No." He may have a suggestion. I'll say, "Well, I'm going to try this and I'm going to do that." . . . So, I feel the support there from him, too. I guess he's in charge of teaching me a certain number of things, but you know sometimes we just get so busy, there will be a day where you look around and sort of wave across the office because we just don't get a chance to huddle and discuss or debrief. But he's always there, certainly.

Donna did not express a particular awareness of an old boys' club in her experiences.

I haven't seen it so either I haven't been around long enough to see it. At our conference in the fall I didn't see it. We've got a bigger conference, a division one, coming up in April. I may see it there. I don't know. But I haven't seen it. So if it's there--I wouldn't say it's not there--it's just I haven't seen it.

Donna has found her area superintendent to have been very supportive. She would offer suggestions or alternative strategies from her expertise and be able to provide an outside perspective while supporting Donna's decisions and actions. Donna felt she was being given space to learn and grow and develop her own administrative style. She felt that her superintendent was there to help her interpret policies and provide coaching to help her learn.

Divisional support, in terms of assisting new administrators to learn, occurred after her appointment as she went from the assessment centre directly to a vice-principalship. She became part of the New Administrators' Group and attended meetings while already in the role of vice-principal. She felt she had to at times "muddle through" certain tasks which, had she been part of a pool, she could have learned about earlier.

From the support meetings, however, she is now looking at how she did certain tasks and is making plans for how she will do them the next time. There are also administrators' conferences held once or twice yearly on current key issues within the division. At these conferences new administrators have an opportunity to dialogue and make contact with more senior administrators who can offer expertise in certain areas and become mentors or important contacts for the present or the future. As a career move, getting to know administrators who are well known and respected can serve to build one's own status as an administrator.

### Summary

Support networks for the four women in the study, upon initial appointment to administration, included principals. This broadened to include administrative colleagues and superintendents within the division. All four women referred to support people they had outside the division, many of whom were also administrators. The network of support people included male as well as female individuals, although it does seem that women's support was sought on a more consistent basis. Three of the women referred to a disappearing old boys' club whose influence was diminishing with there being fewer older male administrators left in the division. One woman reported no awareness that there was an old boys' club. For all four women, seeking support from this source did not seem to be an issue. Marital partners were also consistently referred to by all four women as a necessary source of support.

c) In what ways, if any, has your gender been a factor in balancing the demands of your professional work and your personal life responsibilities?

Anne states:

I think it (gender) has been a factor in the general scheme of things. With me personally, it's been a bit different in the sense that I really started thinking about administration when my kids were a bit older, and that the day care issue was not as strong an issue. I also have been very fortunate in the sense that I have a

husband who has been very supportive through my education. In fact, he probably was the one that encouraged me to get into administration. I take on a great deal of the child care in the home, but that again is because of my personality. That's what I choose to do. It doesn't necessarily have to be that way. That part is cultural, and I'm not sure everyone would come with that issue as a problem, but I choose to do it that way because that's the way I was brought up. I feel that I had to be, and still feel I have to be, the perfect mom and the perfect wife, so I still maintain things like regular meals and cooking from scratch, and making chicken soup from scratch, and I don't believe in picking up things from the freezer and sticking it in the microwave or buying pre-cooked foods. I still spend my weekends cooking from scratch.

Anne does not, however, see these tasks as being an additional pressure to her. "For me that is relaxing, and that's part of the fulfilment of being a wife and mother." Anne believes her role as an administrator and her home-life responsibilities give her a rounded lifestyle. She does have a housecleaner come in twice monthly because she finds that work very tiring and not enjoyable. Anne believes that her husband helps a great deal, but "I don't think he takes on anymore than in any other family." They go shopping together as he wouldn't do that by himself. He will have supper half prepared and ready to go, and when she comes home they make dinner together. Anne's husband is not working now so he has time to do this; however, when he worked, Anne assumed full responsibility for going home and starting supper from scratch.

Anne finds that the demands of her administrative career and her home responsibilities make it difficult to find time for leisure activities.

I do my walking exercises, so there are things I do for personal fulfilment, and there are things we do together. We go to the theatre and the movies. Especially on the weekend you want to keep your Sundays casual because you don't want to be tired coming back to work the next day. You want to be alert the next day so



you don't go out mid-week and stay out late because you're in a position where you've got to be alert to make decisions the next day. You've got to watch those kind of steps, so, yes, it has certain limitations.

Anne does not view this as being particularly gender oriented but, rather, responsibility oriented.

Lina stated that her husband has been a wonderful support to her in terms of balancing her home and work responsibilities because he takes on his fair share of the responsibilities for home and child care. "Your partner has to assume his responsibility, not more. Let's not assume that men do less, but they have to assume their fair share. So at the home level that's important." There are many evening and weekend responsibilities for an administrator at the senior high school level which involve events which require her attendance, as well as numerous evening meetings. "My husband and I sit down every Sunday and look at what our week looks like and plan and work around it." When Lina was first appointed, their child was of pre-school age.

I'm not trying to even pretend that I balance things, you don't, but you do what you need to do in your life. If taking care of parents is something you need to do, then you do it. If taking care of your children is something you need to do, you do it.

Lina has observed that it had been quite common to see women administrators being in the situation of having older children or of being single. She comments that

I think the message is out there or, again, there's a norm within personal situations where women continue to over-function in their relationships, and they over-function at, I think, detriment to their partner, and detriment to themselves and even in terms of their personal fulfilment.

Lina has found it is difficult to plan for and include many leisure activities in her busy schedule.

It's hard, it really is, and I think anyone who's working full-time these days would say the same thing. I don't think it's a matter of whether or not you're doing administration. I think it's a full-time piece and the fact that the job that we're doing, whether it's in the classroom or administration, you're taking work home with you as well. . . . I'm not one who believes I have to work harder to show that I deserve, because I feel like I deserve it to begin with.

Susan and her husband do not have children in the home; therefore, the issue of child care has not affected them in terms of an additional responsibility. She views her husband as being very supportive of the time requirements of her administrative role.

There are some traditional roles that do happen in my household, but for the most part there's a real equity, so that's been tremendous. It's been really helpful in being able to do some of the things that I've wanted to do and have the energy to do.

Although at the present time Susan and her husband share household duties, she hopes to alleviate some of the workload in the future by hiring a housecleaner. Overall, in her situation, Susan does not feel particular stress with balancing the demands of her work and home responsibilities.

Donna feels it is important for her to try to make time for her personal needs and interests. "I work . . . hard at getting a balance! I exercise five times a week. I'm quite possessive of that time." Donna enjoys the encouragement of a very supportive partner at home. There are no children living at home so child care issues do not form a part of their responsibilities. Her husband is retired so he is prepared to take on the tasks of cooking, shopping and cleaning. Often dinner is prepared when Donna comes home and she has time to relax.

I can rejuvenate myself, go for a walk, have a bubble bath, and the demands on my time at home are very limited. So that is a big support. I couldn't imagine how people do it raising kids . . . . You know, I couldn't imagine being able to do that.

In making the decision to go into administration, Donna and her husband considered the advantages and disadvantages unique to their own personal situation in that he is now retired while she would be taking on a highly time-consuming and demanding administrative career. They were able to look at having a situation of relative role reversal from the traditional couple situation of a careered male and at-home female.

We are at two different places in our work careers, and that's the way it is. You know, you can either take advantage of something like that or turn it into a problem. So we chose to look at the advantages of that, and you know, it's hard for some men to reverse roles like that, to do that without feeling their masculinity challenged or something like that, but he likes to cook so I'm just as glad to turn over the kitchen to him.

Donna views the administrative workload as being heavy, especially for a new administrator with so many things to learn.

I guess I've always put a lot of hours into my job whether I was in the classroom or whether I was in a support position or now with this job. I think every professional needs to read and learn and grow and change, so I don't think I'm putting in more time.

### Summary

All four women acknowledged that their gender did impact upon the ability to balance the demands of their personal and professional lives. They generally related this to having full-time jobs outside the home, rather than it being a special factor related to administration.

All four women reported having extremely supportive partners so that their home life experiences were seen as rounding out their lives, rather than being an additional burden of after-work responsibilities. It is interesting to note that of the four women, only one had a young child in the home. None of the women reported any personal life conflict

over the division of home care tasks or even in one case a complete reversal of the traditional male and female roles of at-home wife and career husband.

The four women stated nonetheless that the daily demands of the administrative role required sacrifices in terms of the choice and frequency of leisure activities. Each reported the need to curtail late-night activities and conserve energy for the busy work week.

d) In what ways, if any, has the division's affirmative action policy and procedures affected you in your performance as an administrator?

Anne believes she has a role to play in encouraging others in the pursuit of an administrative career path.

I think I have encouraged several people to go that route. Among female colleagues, I have supported several people who were teachers on my staffs. I have gone through mock interviews to assist them in how they should approach certain things because I've had the experience to assist people who are going through the process. So, yes, I think I have been and will continue to be a mentor for people who are aspiring.

She was appointed to administration at a time when affirmative action initiatives were newly in place. Her advice to women aspiring to administration is:

To be perceived as being a capable individual rather than being perceived, or even for people to get the feeling, that you were appointed or you were accepted mainly because you were female. That is something that I have consciously gone out to disprove.

I think the best advice I would give to any young aspiring administrator is to make sure that you get the education first and the experience before you even attempt, and you can do that through university courses, but certainly there are a number of workshops and so on out there that you can take advantage of. Try and do some visitations and talk to people and seek mentorships. I think all those

things are the training grounds for new administrators and you've got to train yourself, and you've got to go out there thinking, "I can do the job" because deep down inside you know "I am qualified, I've got the experience, I've got the training, and therefore I am worth it."

Her advice to women is that they do need to be purposeful themselves, to take steps to prepare themselves and to make themselves known beyond the local school level to people who are decision makers and who can mentor them.

Anne believes that the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy and procedures have affected the process of getting more women into administrative positions over the nine years it has been implemented.

I think it has made women feel that they can apply, and this is why we're getting more and more women applying, and this is why you've got to be better than men are in order to be successful. It comes hand in hand.

Anne expressed her own future aspirations.

My hope is before I retire to be the principal of a larger school. To continue to pursue my education at the Ph.D. level, and I would like to have it accomplished before I retire. . . . At this point in time I have no aspirations to become a superintendent, and I'm saying at this point in time. I'm not saying it's never going to be something that I would want to do, but right now I don't think so.

Lina has been very clear to state that she feels her opportunity to administer at the high school level would not have been possible ten years ago. "At the present time our superintendents have told us they're looking for administrators to go where we need administrators to go, and they're looking at balancing where our females and males are." Lina believes that affirmative action policy and practice have played a role in opening up entry-level administrative positions to more women. She feels that the more often competent women are visible in principalships, the less peculiar it will be to find a

woman in any principal's chair in this division. Lina gives this advice to women aspiring to administration.

Well, I think you've really got to prepare yourself. You're not going to get there because you're a woman. You've got to have your skills and your knowledge, and you've got to be competent at what you do, so do whatever you need to do to develop the skills that you need to do the job, in terms of communication, interpersonal skills, knowledge of The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, knowledge of good teaching, knowledge of curriculum, those are all really important pieces. The other thing is not to take yourself out of the race. If you feel that is where you want to go, you throw your hat into the ring, and you allow them to say "no" to you. You don't take yourself out of the race. . . . And once you get there, just be who you are, because that's all you can be. Just be who you are and keep developing and keep learning.

Lina believes that she will be appointed to other administrative positions in the future. She is prepared to envision many possibilities.

I've lived overseas and I think I don't know what I have in mind, whether not. . . I want to go to school or whether I want to go and live overseas again, or do something completely different, so that's sort of my personal plan. . . . I'll see what opportunities present themselves. I'm certainly open to beyond the scope of our division. I thoroughly enjoyed working here, but life is much broader. . . . There could be career change in terms of consulting, or maybe working at the university, maybe going back to study, taking a principalship, working in a completely different kind of school. All kinds of possibilities, I'm open.

Lina does not, however, view herself in a superintendency.

I don't think so, and the reason I say that is that I think I could do the job, but I don't think I want to do that job. There's a quality of life issue there for me that I

don't think I want to do that and it's a political realm. . . . My job satisfaction is really important.

I think it's really important that there are the types of hiring practices we have and affirmative action is not just gender, at this point, to see all groups are represented, and that we look that our hiring practices are reflecting our population, and as long as there are some indicators and support that our hiring practices are reflecting our population, than I'm very happy with that. And by that I mean race, gender, all of those things need to be considered because those are role models for the children and that's important. And that also allows all groups to be representative at all levels.

Susan believes she now has a role to play as a woman administrator in encouraging others who might aspire.

I have a responsibility for that because in all kinds of ways I am where I am because of the people that came before me. They played a significant part in opening up those doors, so women definitely, in encouraging them, but I also see a role in supporting good men, too. But, yes, women for sure.

Susan spoke about possible concerns for women in terms of hiring practices in the future, and their direction in spite of affirmative action initiatives. These relate to the division's direction of involving more input from parent councils in the hiring process for administrators.

Well, someone once pointed out to me that the more and more community and parent councils are going to have a say in who the administrator is, the fewer and fewer female principals you will see in secondary. For sure. You may continue to see the same or more in elementary.

She feels that according to the direction the provincial government is taking in education in terms of providing for much more parent involvement in the selection process for administrators, this may prove problematic for aspiring women.

That's what the government's trying to bring about, that parent councils or parent advisory groups be established in all schools and that they have more say in what's going on, and there is a trend now that parents are more and more sitting on the selection committee for principals of the school. So, I think it'll be more difficult. They don't have to enforce an affirmative action policy; the division employees do. The superintendents are division employees, I also believe that they believe in it, but I think it changes the playground a little bit, and I don't think we're out of the deep end here at all. . . It's going to depend on the political climate out there in the bigger community, and what clout and what power they're given or have or take or whatever.

Susan advises aspiring administrators to "broaden your own experience base in whatever so that you start to build strengths." She feels that demonstrating those strengths is important, as well as the idea of seeking mentorship.

Yes, I think that would be important. Hooking up with a female administrator, if that's possible, and either doing formal mentorship or informal. One thing that started to happen to me, it just started to happen and I didn't really know what was going on, was I started almost socializing with administrators when I wasn't an administrator . . . and what was starting to happen is I started to learn more about who they were and what they were about. Kind of osmosis, you get a sense of what this beast is all about.

In addition, she advises "I think some of the things to do is try to move yourself in areas or opportunities so that you can continue to broaden your base of experience and refine and hone your strengths." Susan is not certain about the importance of an advanced university degree to accessing administration. "I've been told before that you have to have that in order to become a principal. Well, I've proven that's not true. There are lots of people that have proven that's not true."



In the future, Susan would like a new challenge:

I think I would want one more place where there was an awful lot of work that needed to be done. I think I would want one more like that because I've learned so much. I would want to try it again, based on what I've learned, where in my perception things needed to change. After that, I would want one that really felt comfortable so I could relish my career.

Susan did not say that she might aspire to a superintendency some day. At present she feels other levels of administration beyond the school remove you too much from students and are not where she sees herself in the next little while. She does have a goal to pursue her own educational goals by completing a Master's in Education program in the future.

Donna, the newest appointee to administration, feels that the affirmative action policy and procedures are going to assist women as they move through their career path beyond entry-level positions. "I think a lot of work was done before I got here and there are certainly women in those roles. I think it gets easier. It's just not an issue that much." She sees that the attitude within the profession of education has changed toward women.

Definitely, I mean, I can remember years ago when somebody said 'Oh, your principal is a woman. I'd never want to work for a woman principal.' And these were even women saying this to me. But I haven't heard that in a long, long, long time.

Now that affirmative action policy and procedures have been in place for nine years, more women are visible as administrators. It is not unusual anymore to see female vice-principals and principals. Donna feels that their success has made it easier for subsequent women, such as herself, to enter administration with more ease and assurance.

In spite of affirmative action initiatives, Donna expressed an aversion to thinking she got a position just because she is a woman. The policy statement which mentions that when two candidates are deemed to be equal, the female will be hired, is challenged by

her. She feels that in most situations there is going to be something in a candidate which will tip the scales in their favor. No one, she believes, has exactly equal qualifications in terms of expertise, fields of experience, references, or communication skills. Donna would prefer to think of affirmative action initiatives as being part of a process of re-education, rather than "advantage" toward women.

I guess I would hate to think that the advantage has ever really been there. I just think it had to be a re-education of people to look and say, "There are capable women for this and why aren't we getting these jobs?" So I feel the balances were tipped in favor of men, and I think affirmative action has tipped it to more equality rather than in favor of. Some of our younger women have grown up with things that a lot of people fought very hard for. But I still think the best person should get the job.

Donna does not believe there is a solid perception any longer that larger schools will be administered by a male. In the district in which she serves as vice-principal there are many women at more senior levels so she is not aware of an exclusion of women from senior levels in her experience. "I don't know if this district has levelled out a bit, better than some other districts. It could be, because most of the meetings and things I have are in this district and there's more than 50 percent women."

Donna advises aspiring women to "go for it." She believes women should do many different things to be more prepared for administration and cautions "just to be sure it's something you really want to do." She feels it is important to have good academic qualifications and to keep current by reading and learning. "There are certainly lots of new journals and articles and things like that." Donna would like to return to university for further academic study in the future. She views her situation to be one where she will look for a new appointment in a year or two. "I don't know. I just seem to have so much to learn right now I haven't really thought much about where I'll be in two or three years from now. I am definitely interested in junior high and middle years."

**Summary**

As women who were successful in becoming administrators through the procedures initiated by affirmative action policy, it is interesting to note that all four women reported feeling responsibility toward affirming others, most particularly women. Although all four women clearly believe they have achieved appointments through merit, they nonetheless recognize the efforts made by earlier women administrators and supporters of affirmative action initiatives.

Their advice to aspiring women is to “go for it” but to ensure that they are well prepared academically, have a variety of work experiences, hone their leadership skills, and become divisionally known. Their advice seems to very much parallel their own purposeful climb to administrative practice. What of the future? All four women continue to exhibit positive self-concepts and a belief that all doors are open for future administrative appointments, advanced study, or the pursuit of personal life goals. Interestingly enough, none of the four women acknowledged a particular interest in a superintendency. All four women reported feeling that particular job to be extremely demanding and a threat to achieving a balance between career and a quality personal life.

## **Chapter 6**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The purposes of this chapter are to summarize the findings of the study and to compare them to what has been written by other authors about the experiences of female aspirants to educational leadership positions and the experiences of female administrators. It explores the implications suggested by the participants about affirmative action policy and practice and raises future research questions. The summary briefly recaps the research questions in the study and the methodology used, and it also discusses the limitations of the study. The conclusion section focuses on the themes emerging from the data. The conclusions also suggest areas for further enquiry about equity issues which were beyond the scope of this particular study.

In the search to examine the experiences of women administrators appointed to their positions during the implementation of an Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, two sets of research questions were generated. The research questions were designed to elicit responses about the “recalled” experiences of women administrators in regard to their aspirations, decision to apply, selection process, and having been successful, their experiences as women administrators. The research questions were:

1. Concerning their initial appointments:
  - a) What factors did they consider as they were making a decision to apply for an administrative appointment?
  - b) What encouragement did they receive and from whom?
  - c) What did they do to prepare themselves for an administrative position?
  - d) What were their experiences as they went through the procedures mandated by the division’s affirmative action policy?

**2. Concerning their administrative practice:**

- a) In what ways, if any, has their gender affected their relationships with staff, students, parents, and divisional personnel?**
- b) What networks of support, if any, do they have?**
- c) In what ways, if any, has their gender been a factor in balancing the demands of their professional work and their personal life responsibilities?**
- d) In what ways, if any, has the division's affirmative action policy and procedures affected them in their performance as an administrator?**

The methodology used to investigate the research questions was two 1 to 1 1/2-hour-long interviews with four women administrators appointed in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. The four women administrators were selected from the Human Resources Department's list of all female administrators appointed between 1986-1995. Two vice-principals and two principals were chosen, representing administrative practice at the elementary through senior high school levels within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. The four women were contacted by telephone, and all four administrators agreed to participate in the study. The prepared list of possible alternative administrators was, therefore, not required. An interview protocol was prepared for the purpose of focusing the two interview sections (Appendix A). The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and analyzed using the subjective research methodology of qualitative analysis. In accordance with the ethics protocol of the University of Manitoba, the interview responses were treated as confidential. Each woman was given a pseudonym, and as much identifying information as possible about each was omitted from the data.

The limitations of this study reflect both the sample size and the methodology used. The sample size (four) is a small number and was arrived at partially to ensure the manageability of the data and partially to acquire more depth in the recalled experiences of the participants. Longer interview sessions served the purpose of fostering better rapport between the interviewer and interviewees. Since none of the four women

administers at a particularly senior appointment in a larger school within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, and the two vice-principalships represent relatively entry-level appointments, the views expressed by this group of women must be considered within this particular context.

The methodology used was an open-ended interview focusing upon the participants' recalled pre-appointment and post-appointment experiences as they were influenced by the affirmative action policy and practices established within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. Each participant took part in two interview sessions. It is possible that a further interview may have given the participants more time to reflect upon certain topics, therefore providing further insights into their experiences. What each participant recalled at the time of the interview and what she chose to reveal are also considerations for this data. Given the intent and limitations of this research, the next section will be a presentation of the conclusions drawn from this study. The conclusions are divided into two sections which follow the sequence of the research questions in the study. The first section relates to the experiences of the aspirants to administration, while the second relates to those of the women administrators, once appointed.

### Conclusions

#### Experiences of Female Aspirants to Administration

##### Factors considered by female aspirants to leadership positions.

The four women administrators who participated in this study identified seven factors they considered when making their decision to aspire to positions of added responsibility. Each woman assigned different weight to the seven factors she considered, depending upon her own personal circumstances, characteristics, career stage and competency, and her environment of opportunity or discouragement (Robertson, 1993).

The first factor reported by all four women in their decision to "aspire" was the influence of significant others (home partners, colleagues, principals and superintendents) who recognized their potential for administration and encouraged them towards an

administrative career path. All four stated that this “outside recognition” played a key role in their beginning to look at themselves as future administrators (Myers and Hajnal, 1995). Until they were encouraged, each related to her “love for teaching” as being a focus which rooted her in the instructional role. These responses support what has been found by other authors in regard to women’s entry into administration. Young (1994) reported that women applied only after encouragement by superordinates, viewing it to be inappropriate to appear overly ambitious.

Interestingly, none of the four study participants voiced a prior interest in becoming an administrator. As was the case in the Tabin and Coleman (1993) study, the four participants in this study revealed that administration was not originally a career goal, but developed gradually throughout the teaching process. More significantly, for these women it developed subsequent to encouragement from superordinates. Each referred to the process of aspiring to have come from the suggestions and encouragement of others, and in particular from superordinates. Following this “outside encouragement,” each of the women began a journey of self-analysis in terms of her own feelings of “readiness” to aspire to and apply for positions of added responsibility. This analysis led each of them to give consideration to the six other factors identified in this study.

The second factor referred to by the four interviewees was their state of academic preparedness for administration. It is of interest to note that while all four women viewed graduate degrees highly, only one woman, Donna, held a Master’s in Education degree. The other three women succeeded in becoming administrators without this degree. In fact, one woman, Lina, stated it was not that important “in this division.” Susan had completed a B.Ed. degree and her pre-Master’s program in graduate studies. Both Donna and Lina held B.A. and B.Ed. degrees. Two of the women, Anne and Susan, hold the Administrators’ Certificate - Level I. Anne also has completed the Principals’ Certificate - Level II. All four women espoused the view that high academic qualifications were an ideal and reported having a goal to return to university study in the future. It is important

to note that all four women reported taking steps to increase their knowledge base through professional development activities.

Thirdly, consideration was given to the factor of kinds of work experience each woman brought to the application process. All four women consciously set out to broaden their work experience base by moving outside of the classroom to positions which brought them greater visibility within the school and the division and which led to fostering skills in working with adults within the system. One woman became active in the Winnipeg Teachers Association and one with a Manitoba Teachers Society leadership program. All four women recognized a need to improve their capabilities with working with adults and took steps to do so.

A fourth factor considered by all four women had to do with the skills they possessed appropriate to administrative practice. Each considered the level of leadership abilities she had to offer in the area of organizational, management and communication skills and knowledge about The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. All four women, following a self-analysis of their skills, purposefully began a process to increase, develop and expand on the skills required in positions of added responsibility. Three of the women in the study participated in the Professional Development Program offered by The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. This program was presented as a vehicle for personal growth and development and a means to learn more about the division operationally. It was not specifically designed for aspirants to administration; however, it did provide a means of interacting with superordinates in human resources and at the superintendent level. Many participants of the program were subsequently successfully appointed to administration, as were three of the women in the study.

Fifthly, all four women considered their home-life responsibilities and life-style commitments to determine if they would be able to commit to the time requirements of being an administrator. All four women strongly stated the need for a supportive home partner to enable them to give that time and energy commitment and still manage their



personal life responsibilities. Shakeshaft (1989) had noted that barriers to women in administration have much to do with the kinds of jobs men have defined. Women in this study had concerns with the demands of family and home conflicting with the demands of an administrative career path. All four women interviewees had home partners who were able to take on more home-life responsibilities in terms of child care and household maintenance tasks as they became more engaged in their administrative pursuits. This situation of a highly supportive partner may be unique to these particular women and may differ from the larger population of women who aspire to positions of added responsibility, thus warranting further investigation.

The sixth factor considered by all four women was the kind of job they perceived administration to be. All acknowledged the view that the role required intensive energy and time commitments. Long hours, as well as additional evening and weekend responsibilities, were identified as a negative quality. However, all four women also reported that, as teachers, they were driven by the standard of a strong work ethic and considered the administration workload a manageable requirement.

The seventh factor identified by the four participants was the organization's (Winnipeg School Division No. 1) attitude towards women applicants to administration. All four women believed The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, through the implementation of its Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy, showed encouragement and was supportive towards women. All four women were influenced by this inclusive-to-women environment in their decision to aspire.

The four women, in giving weight to these seven factors while making their decision to aspire to administration, gave consideration to what were barriers to women and saw ways to overcome them.

#### Encouragement from others to aspire to positions of added responsibility.

All four women in this study were encouraged by others to consider administration as a career path. This process appears to have set in motion a series of

events on the part of each woman that, once begun, led each to improve her candidacy for administration in terms of becoming more knowledgeable and more experienced with educational perspectives outside the classroom and even the local school arena. After initial encouragement by, in particular, a principal, each woman continued to access the support of that individual as a mentor and in taking on more leadership positions within the school and the division (Tabin and Coleman, 1993). The challenges of these new roles and responsibilities led all four women closer to the goal of becoming an administrator. Each of the four women reported benefiting from hearing the experiences of women who had become administrators earlier on and referred to their stories as "different from men at that point in time." All four of the women in this study took advantage of a mentoring process from more experienced administrators, both male and female, although they do not recall having sought these mentors out. The results of this study support the findings of Tabin and Coleman (1993) in which the recent appointees received mentorship they did not claim to seek. The four women in this study also reported receiving strong, supportive guidance and active help in developing their leadership skills and in solidifying their philosophy from these superordinates. It was the case for each of the women interviewed that the encouragement and support which came from family, peers, and superiors was influential to the participant's aspirations in becoming a leader (Myers and Hajnal, 1995).

It is of particular interest that each of the four women was not successful in her first attempt to become an administrator. Two women made two applications, one made three attempts, and the other applied for administration five times before being successful. Two women spoke of taking advantage of the review for an unsuccessful application process offered by the Human Resources Department. Both found that process to be positive and directed at assisting her in identifying areas where her application had been deemed weak. It also provided suggestions to overcome these defects. Both women took action toward improving their potential for administration and

were ultimately successful. The two women viewed this process as one of encouragement. Of the other two women, both had been encouraged by others to keep “throwing their hat in the ring” and not to give up. Thus, encouragement continued to play a role for all four women, even though they faced setbacks to their aspirations by being initially unsuccessful with the selection process.

#### Preparation for administration.

Myers and Hajnal (1995) noted that leadership aspirations were restricted by lack of self-confidence as well as by lack of formal credentials. In contrast, all four of the women in this study were active in seeking to prepare themselves appropriately for leadership positions. All four women demonstrated having superior determination and high levels of motivation in their desire to succeed (Edson, 1988).

Once the decision to “aspire” to administration took root, each of the four women in the study began a process of preparation toward her initial application. Each woman evolved a plan of conscious steps to enhance the potential of her candidacy. Choices were made by each woman to broaden her education and knowledge base, either academically or through professional development opportunities and committee membership; to broaden the scope of her work experience beyond the classroom level; and to expand her contact base with divisional personnel capable of assisting her through advice or mentorship and guiding her to higher visibility throughout the division.

Tabin and Coleman (1993) noted that recent appointees in their study demonstrated a purposefulness in career planning by seeking new assignments and experiences, upgrading academic credentials, accessing mentors, becoming known divisionally, and taking initiative in the application process. Each of the women in this study took on new educational challenges outside the classroom which put her into a position of working with more adults in the system. They also took on leadership roles and responsibilities which allowed them to practice and demonstrate those skills. Each of the four women in the study made reference to the fact that she did indeed take very

purposeful steps to become as qualified as possible prior to her initial application to administration. Even after the rejection of that initial application, each continued to learn from this disappointment and took further steps to enhance her candidacy.

Rees (1991) spoke of the aspirant's responsibilities to the application process in terms of knowing the hiring criteria and preparing herself appropriately. She noted that the aspirant must be prepared academically; must demonstrate her communication and human relations skills in working with adults, as well as children; and must have leadership experience. The purposeful career planning of the four women in this study reflects that of the recent appointees in the study of Tabin and Coleman (1993) and differs from the situation of the earlier appointees who attributed their appointments to working hard and being in the "right place at the right time." For these earlier appointees in the Tabin and Coleman (1993) study, chance played a significant role in their success. It does not appear to be so for the four women in this study.

#### Experiences with the affirmative action policy in relation to the application process.

Unlike the women in Edson's study (1988) who reported that organizational practices of biases in recruitment and hiring impinged upon their dreams, the women in this study were all in the position of aspiring to administration at a time when the organization (The Winnipeg School Division No. 1) had initiated affirmative action for women in administration practices and procedures to alleviate organizational biases towards women. The effect of the affirmative action program on the four aspirants was apparent in that by its very existence it assisted all four women and was of itself proof that The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 had undergone a process of assessment to ensure that norms and procedures would no longer be prevalent which suppressed the hiring of, promotion of, and attractiveness of the organization toward women (Rees, 1990).

The four women each underwent different experiences in the initial application and selection process as a result of the changing recruitment processes that this school division had put in place over the nine years from 1986-1995. Each woman experienced eventual success in the process which was in place as mandated by affirmative action policy practice and procedures. It is important to note that while the specifics of the application and selection process varied from 1989-1995 when her appointment was made, each woman was aware of the implementation of an Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy and was influenced by it in her application and selection process.

All four women recalled being aware of the affirmative action policy. Each felt that the policy offered a climate of comfort to her application in that she felt that, indeed, women would be viewed as serious candidates. Each stated that the presence of the policy was not the guiding force behind her decision to apply. All four women stated, however, that it really gave women at that time the encouragement that they would be looked at seriously. They viewed it as being suitably beneficial to those women who were aspiring to be administrators at that time. Although all four of the women found the policy to offer support, each of them was adamant in stating that she felt she had earned her appointment on merit, and that the policy tended to provide a more level playing field, not favoritism toward women. The results of this study agree with those found by Tabin and Coleman (1993) whereby the recent appointees acknowledged the influence of affirmation action to their appointments; however, they also demonstrated a purposefulness in career planning and believed that they did merit their administrative appointments.

While all four women in this study revealed that they felt they had benefited from and been successful due to affirmative action initiatives, they all demonstrated that they were indeed qualified, were aware of the hiring criteria, and were appropriately prepared to become administrators. As aspirants, all four women played a role in working to

change the perceptions of those in positions of hiring by being qualified and in being seen to be qualified (Rees, 1991).

### Experiences of Female Administrators

All four women administrators who participated in this study were appointed to their positions during the time when the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy was in effect in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. The earliest were appointed in 1989, three years after the 1986 adoption of this policy, while the most recent were appointed in 1993 and 1995. At the time this study was undertaken, two of the women held vice-principalships, while the other two women were principals. It was important to interview both principals and vice-principals in order to learn if there seemed to be differences between how entry-level administrators and more senior female administrators perceived their roles. It was also significant to interview administrators from a variety of school sites which represent the scope of elementary to senior high school practice within The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in order to understand how female administrative experiences might differ.

### The effects of gender on professional relationships.

The administrative experiences of each of the four women appointees differ from the others. Each administer in different school settings with varying populations, personnel, and community components. However, because each was appointed during the implementation of affirmative action policy and practice, some common experiences and perceptions about the female administrative experience emerge.

Shakeshaft (1987) noted that women in leadership positions need to take into account the people with whom they work and how women are viewed by them. The four women in this study all revealed what was, in their view, an overall positive regard toward them as administrators by staff members. All four women believed themselves to have been well received by their staffs as new administrators. Each expressed the view that the "experience" she brought to her appointment was more important in establishing

her credibility with school staff than was her gender. Each felt the need to prove her capability in the administrative role by doing a good job, showing leadership skills, developing trust and rapport, and demonstrating her student management abilities.

Each woman felt she had to prove her capabilities most in her initial appointment, but that as time passed and she had established a performance record with staff, each was accorded more confidence in her leadership by staff. All four women related to this “proving” experience as being natural for any person, male or female, new to any position. This researcher cannot know if the “warm welcome” from staff was truly genuine, or if perhaps staff felt it to be inappropriate to comment on gender. It was also true that as new administrators, each appointee was in the position of being a superordinate, thereby establishing certain power positions in the school hierarchy. There may have been gender comments that staff were sharing among themselves which were not voiced to the interviewees.

None of the four women in this study acknowledged facing particularly blatant gender issues in her initial and subsequent appointments from staff. They alluded, however, to more subtle areas where gender suppositions and myths occurred on the part of staff. All four women believed they were being judged on their ability to discipline students and command “authority,” skills women generally are perceived to be lacking (Shakeshaft, 1987). Each was aware that a belief existed that females were indecisive or “wishy-washy” decision makers. Staff were also reported to have the expectation that where there was a male and a female administrator, the female would automatically administer at the lower grade levels while the male took charge of the higher ones.

All four women related at least one experience where staff bypassed them to go to the male administrator with questions and concerns. Since this tended to occur within their initial vice-principal appointments, they felt that it may have been more “experience” than “gender” related. The male administrators did indeed have more experience and had been at the school for a longer time, and staff were comfortable with

this route. Another myth alluded to was in terms of what staff may consider female and male interest areas; in one instance, a women's gathering was referred to as a "tea party."

The four study participants all demonstrated a strong work ethic, held themselves highly accountable for all areas within their schools, were always conscious of their own behavior, and calculated each move (Shakeshaft, 1987). All four women in the study reported working very hard to show they merited their appointments (Russell, 1995). Only one woman, Anne, reported the feeling that she had to work harder, as a woman, to be seen as capable. Lina, Susan, and Donna all were of the opinion that any administrator has to work very hard, whether male or female. All three were aware of the perception that females had to work harder, but felt it did not relate to their own experience. These three women felt the male administrators they knew worked as hard as they themselves did. They did, however, note that the ways in which men worked hard were often different from the ways women worked hard (Shakeshaft, 1987).

It is interesting to note that the four women in the study reported gender to be an issue most often when they were partnered with a male administrator. For Anne, who has a male vice-principal, casual visitors to the school, as well as new parents, automatically assumed the male to be the senior administrator. She believes parents are very much entrenched with the idea of male leadership but views this as a cultural perspective, perhaps more prevalent in her school community than in others. Lina has referred to the fact that parental response to her can vary with the cultural background of the parents. Susan feels parents have been very open to her. When she was a vice-principal partnered with a male principal, parents accepted her as vice-principal; however, because the senior position was held by a male, issues of her female authority did not arise. Donna, as the vice-principal in a school where the principal is male, does not know if parents see her role as subordinate because of the title or because she is a female.

Of the four women studied, two administer at the senior high school level. Their perception of students' responses to female leadership have been very positive. Students



are concerned with issues of fairness and of being treated in an equitable manner, and do not seem to be uncomfortable with a female administrator. At the elementary grade levels, where there is also a male administrator in the school, young students were found to assume he is in charge, regardless of the titles held. Once they have become accustomed to the female being "the boss," they have shown quite an easy acceptance of her authority.

In their initial vice-principal appointments when partnered with a male principal, all four women reported a positive acceptance of a female vice-principal by the male principal. All four women reported the male superordinates to have acted as mentors, and they believed the administrative workload was divided with a view to each of their interest areas and to ways of complementing each other as an administrative team, with no gender avoidances being apparent.

All four women expressed a high degree of positive rapport and support from divisional personnel in the Human Resources Department and with their superintendents. It is important to note that in this particular division, three of the five superintendents are women. All four women interviewed referred to the fact that the gender of their superintendent may be a factor in the ease of rapport and communication they have experienced. Gender may play a part in the fact that these four women are able to seek help or advice without feeling their capabilities are in question. Perhaps female superintendents offer positive role models for other women administrators who then feel encouraged to question and learn to express their interest and ambition which might have been viewed as a negative quality for females to possess in the past.

As was the case in the Tabin and Coleman (1993) study, the women participants in this study did not report the affects of tokenism, exclusion, discrimination or harassment and criticism from men. Sex-role stereotyping was identified as evident within communities in response to a woman being in authority (Tabin and Coleman, 1993).

It may well be that the four women in this study did not perceive that obstacles which were set in their way were related to their gender. Baudoux (1995) referred to such obstacles as being “insidious”, coming to light only when women administrators compare the way they are treated with the male administrators are treated. In this study, two of the women (Susan and Lina) preferred to view incidents about their authority as personality rather than gender oriented, and chose to respond in that way. The two other interviewees (Donna and Anne) did not acknowledge obstacles related to gender. The “reframing” or being “unaware” of the situation of discrimination toward them may reflect the use of a survival mechanism which supports the study by Baudoux (1995) who cites Erickson (1984) in reporting that negation of discrimination would endanger women’s careers and everyday staff relations by forcing them to face up to it and take steps against it.

#### Networks of support.

The four women in this study presented themselves as being very self-confident. Each was prepared to be quite independent and work hard to prove she achieved her appointment by merit. Each reported the support in her initial vice-principalship of her immediate superordinate, the principal, whether that person was male or female. Anne, one of the two earliest appointees in 1989, felt very isolated in her first appointment. She recalls that in her case, male administrators offered her support and encouragement and invited her to seek their advice and guidance when she felt the need to do so. She felt that the existing female principals had a networking group, but did not feel included in that early in her administrative career. When Anne became a principal, she felt more support and inclusion from other administrators. At present she views herself as enjoying the support of a strong network of female administrators with whom she remains in regular, though not formal, contact.

Lina, also appointed in 1989, views networks of support to be available on different levels. She, too, enjoyed active support from her administrative partner, a male

principal. Lina considers the support of her staff to be important to her, and she spoke of networks for her of women administrators outside the school.

Susan reported her network of support to include both males and females. She makes reference to the fact that for her, appointed in 1993, her environment has been that of more female administrators now than in the past, i.e., prior to affirmative action initiatives.

Donna, newly appointed in 1995 and in her first vice-principalship, refers to male and female colleagues to whom she has turned for support. She voices her own feelings of newness and insecurity about administration and is grateful for her network of supportive administrators. When she was appointed, she felt a warm welcome from women administrators already appointed and believed they were consciously enlarging their circle to include her. She, too, has received wonderful support from her male principal.

All four women network with both male and female support people. They acknowledge seeking other women out as a matter of comfort, but do not have formal women administrators support networks who meet formally or regularly. This supports the findings of Tabin and Coleman (1993) where recent appointees did not network specifically with other women. As was true in that study, the four women interviewed in this study also did not report a need to make a special effort to develop this kind of support because the number of women principals was greater.

Young (1994) found a common experience for women was that they found no support group as principals equivalent to the ones they had enjoyed as teachers. Women administrators tended to be isolated and lacked access to male networks which provide men the important opportunities to socialize, seek advice and information, observe and imitate acceptable conduct, become known to those of power and influence, and participate in the informal decision making of the organization (Russell, 1995). In this study, all four women reported that administrative practice at the elementary level, where

only one administrator was present, was difficult and an isolating experience regardless of gender. Without another administrator to discuss issues and concerns with in the building, it became necessary at times to access another administrative support person outside the building. Three of the women in this study reported they would find this isolation difficult were they to be appointed to a principalship in a small school.

All four women in this study reported an awareness of an old boys' club. Their experiences with this exclusively male network were varied. Anne felt excluded in some sense; however, she stated she didn't feel the need to be involved or included because she felt those individuals had the right to associate with the people with whom they felt the most comfortable. Anne acknowledged that she had the support of male administrators for advice and guidance which was helpful to her, and that was all she required. She believes that earlier women administrators suffered much more from feelings of exclusion, especially when there were so few female administrators. She believes this situation has changed over time and that power groups are a political reality, whether they are male or female gendered.

Lina is of the view that there was an old boys' club because there were, indeed, a lot of older male administrators in the system at an earlier time. She feels these barriers have broken down by the fact that there are now over 50 percent female administrators in this school division. Women have been principals in some of the largest schools in the division, and three out of five superintendents in this division are women. Lina believes that men have had to gain new and different skills and learn how to relate to women administrative partners and superordinates. As an administrator, she sees that the "guys" are just not there anymore. One other possibility she mentioned is that if the old boys' club has not just disappeared, it may meet in secret which is not a threat to her.

Susan acknowledges the existence of an old boys' club, but states that it is with the older boys, not so much the younger boys that come into the system. The group is small, and they do things as a group; there is still exclusion from this group, but it is a

very tactful exclusion, done very skilfully. She believes female principals get more recognition from this group than do vice-principals.

Donna, appointed to a vice-principalship in 1995, is not aware of the operation of the old boys' club, although she had heard it existed. She feels that perhaps she hasn't been around long enough to have seen it. In her brief experience with large groups of administrators in this division, there have been more female than male administrators at the meetings and conferences she has attended.

The awareness and responses of the four women in this study support the findings of Tabin and Coleman (1993) where they did not report being especially excluded from the old boys' club, did not acknowledge such exclusion, or chose instead to chart their own course alone and develop their own style of leadership.

Another network of support reported by all four women was that of the school division support networks. These took the form of support groups for new administrators which were set up following the appointment process for selecting vice-principals. New administrators, and those in the current administration pool, attended a series of formal meetings for a period of up to two years. Meetings were held monthly and focused upon communication skills, budget operation, student assessment, and other current and key divisional issues as they arose.

The superintendent's department was cited as a major source of support for all four women who felt they had access to the immediate attention of their superintendent for any advice they might need or concerns they had. They each felt invited to learn and question how policies worked and were encouraged to seek guidance and support. In all four cases, the area superintendents have also been women. This may have indeed impacted upon the level of comfort all four women in this study felt toward accessing support at this administrative level. Each woman in this study referred to the fact that communication with another woman had been a very comfortable experience.

Each of the four women interviewed made specific mention of the fact that she considered her home partner and family to be an enormous support to her and a necessary component.

**Balancing professional work and personal life responsibilities.**

In the study by Tabin and Coleman (1993), the recent appointees to administration came to their principalships at an even later age than did the earlier appointees. Many had interrupted their careers for family/child care responsibilities. In this study, the youngest appointee was in her mid-thirties, and the eldest was in her mid-forties. Three of the women were in the position of having either children who were grown and out of the home, young adult-aged children living independently within the home, or were without children. Only one of the four women had a pre-school child while pursuing an administrative career path. Anne reported she did not actively consider administration until her children were in school, and so delayed her aspirations. Of the women in this study who had children, none felt that this limited her career advancement opportunities. This concurs with the study by Tabin and Coleman (1993).

All four women responded that they believed their gender was a factor in trying to balance their professional work and personal life responsibilities. Anne admitted that she was responsible for the majority of the home-life tasks. She saw this as being cultural in that this was how she was raised. In her view, Anne did not consider this to be an additional responsibility for her, but instead was how she expected herself to be as a wife and mother. She referred to it as another side of her lifestyle which she had the need to fulfil. Anne finds the biggest challenge to balancing a professional and personal life to be in terms of energy management. She is always careful to limit her leisure and social activities in terms of not having late nights during the week and keeping her Sundays casual and relaxing because she knows she will need her energy to face all the demands of being a principal. She feels a high level of responsibility in being alert and ready to

make decisions and be accountable for everything that goes on in her school. Anne believe this pressure is typical of women in her position.

Lina relates to her partner as taking on his fair share of the home-care responsibilities. She feels there is a good balance here, and that each does what is fair. Lina believes this support is necessary as administration is highly demanding and often involves after school, evening, and weekend time. Lina has observed that many women are in a position of overfunctioning in the area of home responsibilities and states that as women we need to examine this. She believes that women need to begin to delegate responsibility for some of these tasks so they do not burn out. She has found that many women administrators have older children or are single (Young, 1994) and sees this as giving a message that administration is not for women with young children, that you can't have both, that you must delay your aspirations. She feels it is important to change this notion by beginning to examine why women take on 80 percent of the home responsibilities. Lina also finds it difficult to make time for leisure activities and finds that energy management is a critical consideration. The need to be alert and responsible places certain limits on leisure activities. She believes this to be true for everyone working full-time, not just administrators.

Susan reports that her husband is very supportive of her around the time requirements of being an administrator. While she admits there are some traditional roles that exist in her household, in general she feels there is a real equity in the quantity of tasks performed. There are no children in the home. Susan stated she does not feel particular stress with balancing her professional work and personal life.

Donna, the most recent appointee, states she makes a concerted effort to make time for her personal life interests. She, too, enjoys a high level of support from her husband. He is retired and is able to take care of most of the home responsibilities. Donna was also concerned with the issue of energy management. She believes that she needs to take care of herself in terms of relaxing, eating properly, and exercising so that she has

the energy to give back to her job. She, too, mentions the need to be alert and at her peak on a daily basis as an administrator in order to be able to handle the myriad of things which just pop up. She feels that her situation of being so new to administration is an additional stress to her.

In many ways, the women in this study supported the work by Young (1994) in experiencing career and home responsibilities as being mutually exclusive spheres. The interesting difference is that all four women in this study referred to the need to create a balance in terms of energy management so that they could enjoy both spheres and achieve a sense of personal and professional fulfilment. This supports the study by Tabin and Coleman (1993) in that these four women did not express feelings of guilt over professional/family role conflict. They may be a unique group of women, in terms of the high level of spousal support, encouragement and household task sharing they enjoyed. The area of lifestyle and its affect upon the decision to aspire may be one that bears investigation.

### Summary

The administrative "role" historically defined by men, as one which requires an inordinate amount of time to the detriment of a home/family life, the notion of authority by gender, and assumptions that males shall lead have all contributed to limiting women's interest in and access to administration. The message that administrative practice is open to women once their home-life responsibilities are lessened is one which must concern feminist scholars. It compels us to be wary of complacency about women's progress simply by viewing more women in administrative roles. We need to look more closely at who these women are and what message they create about administration and the organization. All four women in this study were approached by female teachers who stated they would never want to be an administrator. This researcher can only wonder how beliefs about female leadership have changed from the viewpoint of "followers." It would be interesting to evaluate if indeed the presence of many more women



administrators in this division has made administration as a career more attractive to women, or if instead we are seeing a flash-in-the-pan effect initiated by affirmative action practices but that overall the administrative role remains just as unattractive to most women.

**Effects of affirmative action policy upon administrative practice.**

The four women in this study all viewed themselves strongly in the administrative role (Tabin and Coleman, 1993) and saw themselves as having the experience and capabilities to be in leadership positions. They expressed a solid sense of self-confidence in being vice-principals or principals who had paid their dues through the time and effort they had put into purposeful career moves. All four women believed that women could be administrators at all levels and that perceptions of female administrators were undergoing change. They viewed this to be partly due to the influence of the affirmative action procedures which have resulted in many more women in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 demonstrating, through being in administration, that women are capable leaders. All of the women in this study believed that the picture of "authority" was changing as women brought different kinds of skills to administrative positions than those perhaps described 10, 15, and 20 years ago. It may be that the climate created with an affirmative action environment has allowed for change in terms of valuing the "feminine" kinds of leadership skills. What is certain is that the four women in this study feel confident as administrators within an environment where women principals are visible in greater numbers. At administrative meetings these women find comfort, encouragement, and support from being able to gravitate to female colleagues with whom they have established networks. Collectively their voices, opinions, and visions about administrative practice is shaping a new picture of the principalship.

The increased numbers of women administrators, accompanied by the myth of "favored hiring" with "questionable capability" which has in some circles gone with it as a result of misunderstandings about affirmative action policy and practices, has provided

additional stress to women administrators. All four women in this study continue to work very hard to show they are capable administrators. As Shakeshaft (1994) reported in her study, they do perceive themselves to “always be on stage.” This may differ from the experiences of male administrators who may still believe that society holds a view that male authority is more authentic so that they do not have a need to constantly prove themselves. It is a question that would be of benefit to investigate.

Affirmative action policy and practices have played a role in opening up entry-level administration positions to more women. All four women in this study believe that as more competent women are “visible” in principalships, it will become less and less peculiar to see women in the “principal’s chair” at all levels. It is the opinion of the women in this study that in this division, affirmative action practices have moved beyond the goal of increasing women’s participation at entry-level positions to now include them in subsequent promotion procedures. Superintendents have given them the message that they are looking for administrators to go where the division needs administrators to go, and are looking at balancing where male and female administrators are.

The theme of increasing “visibility” of female administrators is one that has been expressed by all four women participants in this study. They have witnessed the presence of more female administrators, particularly, at this point, in entry-level positions and in elementary school settings. They have each expressed a feeling of comfort at administrative meetings in being surrounded by their cohorts. Each has referred to a lessening of the presence and power of an old boys’ network from which they felt excluded. The issue of the visibility of women in administration at increasingly more senior positions, up to and including, in this division, the superintendency, has made all four women hopeful of a more equitable playing field. Affirmative action policy and procedures played a key role in gaining this visibility for women. Demonstrations of competence in practice by these women administrators may serve to justify the notions of advantaged hiring for a “targeted group” for a particular period of time.

All four women in this study related to the women administrators who had come before them and the role they played. The women in this study benefited from hearing the "voices and stories" of these women and recognized that these experiences were different from those of men. Their sharing of their women's stories served to validate women's experiences and helped to challenge historically androcentric perceptions about leadership in our schools. In turn, all four women in this study expressed a need to be supportive of, show encouragement for, and suggest administration to candidates, both female and male, who show potential. They do, however, express that they are more vigilant in regard to opportunities to support women in the system. This vigilance not only takes the form of offering mentorship to women, but extends to other areas of administrative practice involving sexism or discrimination in curriculum areas, personnel relations, community involvement, student relations and discipline issues.

The four women in this study have had a range of experience in administration of from just one year to seven years. Two women were at the vice-principalship level and two women served in the principalship. None was the senior administrator at a particularly large school. They are, at this time, fairly typical of most female administered schools in this division. There are and have been some exceptions where women administered at several of the division's largest senior high schools. However, several of these women achieved their positions before the affirmative action initiatives and have since retired.

The future aspirations of the four women in this study vary, as do each of their experiences and backgrounds. The common thread for all four is that each has not voiced a specific long-range ambition or goal. Each of the four women believes she will achieve another appointment to a higher level position, and expects that this future appointment will provide a new challenge to her, add to her responsibilities, provide professional growth opportunities, and enable her to demonstrate enhanced capabilities. All four women were open to their future including further academic study, but none of the

women referred to an aspiration to a superintendency (Tabin and Coleman, 1993). They voiced that it was not that they had ruled out the possibility; however, at this time this was not a goal.

Three of the women viewed the superintendency as very energy intensive which would require limiting the personal life experiences they enjoyed and felt necessary for their own fulfilment. The fourth woman expressed that her experience as an administrator was too new to even give consideration to anything beyond establishing her capabilities in the present. All four women believed that there may well be many opportunities that occur in the future, perhaps in other countries, in other locations or work settings, and that the future was quite open.

The effects of affirmative action policy upon women's administrative practice revealed in this study are as follows.

1. Women vice-principals and principals in the school division tend to work very hard to prove they are capable administrators.
2. Women administrators have confidence that they will earn promotions to more senior level positions.
3. Women administrators view the administrative environment to be one of comfort, support, and encouragement of women.
4. Women administrators believe the perception of what qualities comprise administrative skills is changing to include and value "women's" skills.
5. Women administrators believe the effects and influence of the old boys' club have been diminished.
6. Entry-level women administrators have female role models at more senior administrative positions and at the superintendent level.
7. Women administrators believe they, in turn, have a role to play in supporting affirmative action initiatives and in the education of others concerning gender issues.

8. Women administrators are vigilant regarding gender discrimination in areas of curriculum, personnel relations, community relations, student relations, and discipline.

### Implications

The investigation of the experiences of women administrators appointed over a period of time when affirmative action policy and procedures have been implemented adds much to what we understand about equity initiatives and their impact upon those targeted by these measures. A feminist critique of such experiences plays an important role in allowing us to examine our beliefs about administrative practice and leadership from a new vantage point. The opportunity to study how women's participation in administration changes its description from one in which the male experience is normative is important. The view of male authority dominates much of the early literature about organizational leadership. Educational theory and practice have been based upon such assumptions. The form, function, and identities of schools themselves have been created from these androcentric views. It is apparent that schools reflect and reproduce the world views held by society. Feminist scholarship, therefore, has a pivotal role to play in altering the long-held paternalistic "reality" to one which includes the feminine "reality" as well.

In recent times, much attention has been directed to the existence of, necessity for, and justice in equity measures in the workplace. Research has shown that women have been historically underrepresented in educational administration. The documentation of the lack of women in administrative positions represents in Shakeshaft's (1980) publication the first of six stages in research on women and gender in educational administration which she viewed as essential to a paradigmatic shift.

The organizational barriers to women have been studied and well documented. These barriers include the notion that females are not interested in administration, do not command the required authority, are bound by home-life responsibilities, do not have the academic qualifications or leadership experiences, and do not have access to the networks

of support which are necessary to becoming administrators. There have been concerns that affirmative action initiatives would allow women to bypass these perceived shortcomings and permit them to access administrative positions by virtue of their gender alone. I have discovered that nothing could be further from the truth. As were the recent appointees in the study by Tabin and Coleman (1993), the women in this study were well prepared and "qualified" for administration. Although this study sample is small (four women), I believe they are representative of many women who have applied for and been accepted to administrative positions over the years 1986-1995 in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. Throughout the stories of their journeys to administrative practice lie common threads of purposeful action, conscious preparation, determined seeking for and acquiring of leadership experiences, accessing networks of support, and academic and professional development.

Prior to the 1986 implementation of an Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, women in leadership positions were the exception. Identifying such women adds to the existing data in the body of research about women in administration and falls into Shakeshaft's (1989) Stage 2 in the hierarchy of research about women and gender in administration. Stage 3 is represented by the review in the literature in which women's place in schools is seen to predominate at the teaching level. Women are seen to be the victims of organizational barriers which put them in disadvantaged positions.

Affirmative action policy and initiatives adopted in January 1986 in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 have allowed women an opportunity to enter administrative practice and to demonstrate their capabilities. Therefore, the implementation of an affirmative action policy and the practice of mandated procedures are of value in terms of altering the landscape, both in concrete terms and in those of our mindsets about women administrators. It puts qualified women into full public view as

administrators. It allows women to be seen in action in greater numbers so that the historic myths about the women in the principalship can be dispelled.

This study falls into Stage 4 in Shakeshaft's hierarchy of research investigation in that the four women administrators whom I interviewed were studied to identify and describe their own "recalled" female perspectives about their experiences in aspiring to and achieving positions of added responsibility. The data gathered in this study and the implications from it can serve to challenge the existing theories in educational administration which represent Shakeshaft's (1989) Stage 5 in the continuum toward a paradigmatic shift.

I have found that while the goal and intent of affirmative action policy and practice initially in this division were to open the door to all women, perhaps the life circumstances of the four women who participated in this study may be viewed as being somewhat "favored" in nature. Each was able to commit her time and energy to purposeful career moves, child care/ home responsibilities were in varying degrees shared, and partner support and encouragement were extremely high. This situation may not be the norm for other women aspiring to administration.

If, indeed, the four women in this study are representative of women who have achieved appointments over the nine years of affirmative action policy and practice, it raises some new questions to this researcher. Are women of favored circumstances more successful in achieving administrative appointments? If so, what message are they giving to others about women administrators? The women in this study work very hard, keep long hours, feel accountable for every aspect of school life, and are in the position of being always "on stage" demonstrating their skill as leaders and disciplinarians. Often they must work in isolation.

All four women in this study made a conscious effort to prepare for administration and overcame the systemic barriers which historically have prevented women from being successful. Affirmative action initiatives have been successful in beginning to change

perceptions about the capabilities of women for leadership by placing many more women in the principal's chair. However, has the new picture of the female administrator created a role to which other females in education will aspire? Or have we succeeded in creating new barriers for women in terms of leadership positions requiring "superwomen"?

Perhaps the emerging role of the female-inclusive principalship is in the process of evolving. In this transition period, where women administrators are no longer marginal in this division, this new "visibility" carries at least a temporary price. That price may be that the entry level and new cohort of women principals appointed in these first nine years of affirmative action policy and practice have a distinct role to play as demonstrators of female "capabilities" in administrative practice within the public view. Perhaps they feel a responsibility to be the gate keepers of the changing vistas about gender and leadership. It may be that their appointment under affirmative action initiatives has made these women hyper-vigilant of criticism which could jeopardize the gains of all women. I speculate that in five years, when women such as the four women in this study advance to more senior positions, a more "reasonable" expectation of women and men administrators may evolve.

#### Assessment of the Affirmative Action Policy

Affirmative action, through the implementation of the written procedures and guidelines, has enforced within this division a policy which attacks organizational discrimination and biases toward women by using a concrete action plan. By increasing the participation of women in administration, it has removed women from the position of being invisible or marginal within this organization. The procedures mandated by the policy demand the use of inclusive language, gender-equal selection committees, and assessment criteria which evaluate candidates in a number of ways with the intent of reducing the possibilities of judging male and female candidates differently.

For the most part, the gains for women by affirmative action policy and practice over the nine years examined in this study have been in the nature of offering a climate of



opportunity for capable women to gain entry to administration; to provide these entry-level women administrators the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities, becoming “visible” to staff, parents and students, and thus making it less unusual for a woman to occupy the principal’s chair; to provide role models for women aspiring to administration; to provide role models for girls in the educational system; and to provide further opportunities for women administrators to achieve more senior administrative positions.

The future for the gains made in this division, of having increased the participation of women in administrative practice, is at best uncertain. Policies come into existence due to expressed power and pressure, and can change as other initiatives gain prominence. They are ever subject to the whims of harsh economic times where budget cutbacks can eliminate any policy strategies and initiatives. Lowering school enrolments may reduce the need for many administrative positions.

In Manitoba, the government’s New Directions policy for education, which include the involvement of parent boards and councils with decision-making power in matters of administrative appointments, can vastly change conditions for women. In particular, in this division, affirmative action policy and practice is mandated for all administrative vacancies. As employees of this division, superintendents and Human Resources personnel must adhere to policy and operate within its procedures. For the most part, these players in the scenario appear to hold a true belief in the intent and goals of affirming women’s participation in administration. It is a different story when others without a commitment to affirmative action policy and practice cast their vote for administrative appointments. In my perception, the biggest threat will occur at the senior high school levels where parent participants involved in principal hiring may hold much more historically androcentric views of who is able to command authority.

The Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy would not have come into being of its “own accord.” It was the culmination of many years of advocacy

actions on the part of many women, in particular those whose vigilance toward women's issues in education raised consciousness levels, invited participation, and eventually formed groups and committees to champion for women's right to administration. Other school divisions in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and indeed across Canada, without the benefit of an affirmative action policy, have not experienced marked gains in the level of participation of women in leadership positions (Rees, 1993).

The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, after nine years of affirmative action initiatives, makes the claim that just over 50 percent of its administrators are female (Affirmative Action Annual Report 1995). On the surface, this may appear to have achieved equality with 50 percent female and 50 percent male administrators; however, such is not the case. Eighty percent of the teaching staff is female, so the proportion of female teachers is not reflected proportionally at the administrative level. It is also true that the majority of women administrators occupy vice-principalships or principalships at the elementary school levels. To be effective, affirmative action hiring practices must evolve beyond entry-level participation by women to include promotion practices which provide that women will be proportionally represented at all levels of the administrative hierarchy.

Threats to affirmative action policy and practice include:

1. women's ambivalence about the affirmative action policy and procedures;
2. pressure from men who feel "disadvantaged" to abandon the policy;
3. "superwoman" role model created by favored women in administration being unattractive to aspirants;
4. belief that now that women comprise 50 percent, policy can be abandoned;
5. economic situations and political climates calling for cutbacks which include affirmative support practices;
6. community stereotypes (particularly at junior and senior high school levels) which impact upon hiring committees;

7. increase in perception that youth violence is causing a demand for more male authority;
8. women acknowledging prejudicial treatment and becoming discouraged;
9. women being uncomfortable being identified as a “targeted group”, thereby not supporting affirmative action policy and procedures; and
10. the discourse of “merit” hiring favoring abandonment of policy.

Recommendations to The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in regard to the Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy arising from this study are that the division:

1. continue the policy;
2. continue to monitor the levels of women’s participation in the organization;
3. continue to be vigilant that organizational conditions are positive toward women;
4. encourage women to aspire to higher levels of administrative participation;
5. continue to educate all staff about the fundamental principles of employment equity; and
6. review the status of its collective agreement with the Winnipeg Teachers’ Association as an avenue to address employment equity issues.

Recommendations to women administrators arising from this study are that they should:

1. actively support the policy by sharing their understanding of and commitment to the principles of employment equity;
2. act as role models and offer mentorship to administrative aspirants;
3. provide opportunities to educate staff, students, and parents about employment equity principles; and
4. be vigilant regarding gender discrimination in the workplace.

Recommendations to aspiring administrators arising from this study are that they should:

1. increase their knowledge base, academically through such avenues as graduate degree course work, professional development activities, provincial certification;
2. develop leadership skills through taking on “stretch assignments”; committee membership (locally and divisionally), community work, and professional organizations (such as the Winnipeg Teachers’ Association and the Manitoba Teachers’ Society);
3. expand their work skills by taking on new assignments at different grade levels and in professional support areas;
4. get mentorship from an administrator;
5. achieve higher visibility through excellence in teaching, divisional project/activities which bring them to the notice of superintendents;
6. develop an awareness of divisional priorities and issues;
7. develop communication and organizational skills (written and oral) with adults as well as with children; and
8. not give up, should know the hiring criteria, and should prepare appropriately.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

This study was undertaken with four women in a school division with an Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy which has been in place for nine years. One recommendation I have is that a similar study be repeated in five years to update the progress of these four women and document their perceptions of how affirmative action initiatives have affected their subsequent appointments.

A second recommendation is that a study be done with a larger sample group of women to see whether or not the women I interviewed were representative of the perspective of the larger population of women administrators appointed under the affirmative action initiatives.

A third recommendation is that a similar study be undertaken with women administrators appointed during the years 1986-1995 in other divisions without affirmative policy and procedures in place to see how the experiences of these women differ from those of the women in this study.

A fourth recommendation is that a study be done of male administrators who were also appointed during affirmative action initiatives to see what their experiences were.

A fifth recommendation is to have a study investigate the school staff's or subordinates' views of the changing role of administration as impacted on by affirmative action initiatives.

A sixth recommendation is to interview women who chose not to aspire in spite of affirmative action policy and practice to learn how their perspective of administration differed from those who did aspire.

A seventh recommendation is to conduct a study of how and in what ways the description of the roles and responsibilities of administration change when women occupy the principal's chair and in what ways, if any, this impacts upon the organization itself.

In light of the fact that the four women in this study had somewhat favored circumstances in terms of the level of support they received from their spouses for home-life responsibilities, I would recommend a study be conducted to examine men's changing family and work role responsibilities and how this may affect women's decisions to aspire to and pursue administrative practice.

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## Appendix A

## Interview Protocol

**Women Principals and Vice-Principals:**  
**The Impact of One Manitoba School Division's Affirmative Action Policy**  
**on their Appointments to Administration and on Selected Aspects of their Practices**

**Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The focus of my research for my Master's thesis is to investigate the experiences of women administrators with the affirmative action policy in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, in particular:

1. Concerning your initial appointment:
  - a) What factors did you consider as you were making a decision to apply for an administrative appointment?
  - b) What encouragement did you receive and from whom?
  - c) What did you do to prepare yourself for an administrative position?
  - d) What were your experiences as you went through the procedures mandated by the division's affirmative action policy?
2. Considering your administrative practice:
  - a) In what ways, if any, has your gender affected your relationship with staff, students, parents, and divisional personnel?
  - b) What networks of support, if any, do you have?
  - c) In what ways, if any, has your gender been a factor in balancing the demands of your professional work and your personal life responsibilities?
  - d) In what ways, if any, has the division's affirmative action policy and procedures affected you in your performance as an administrator?

I would like to tape record the interviews, with your permission. Only I will have access to the tape and it will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. I will transcribe the tape and send you a copy for clarification and approval.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, in which case I will destroy all information collected from you.

**First Interview: Pre-Appointment Experiences**

Question 1: I am interested in hearing about how you became an administrator. Can you tell me about this experience?

- Probes:
- What factors did you consider as you were making a decision to apply for an administrative appointment?
  - What encouragement did you receive and from whom?
  - What did you do to prepare yourself for an administrative position?

**Question 2:** An Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy was implemented in this school division in 1986. Are you aware of this policy? Have you read it?

- Probes:
- Did policy encourage your aspiration toward administration?
  - How did implementation of affirmative action assist/constrain the application/selection process?
  - Did you participate in any divisional Affirmative Action Committee programs?  
(workshops, counselling, PD)

**Question 3:** Since 1986, when affirmative action policy and practice was implemented in this division, there have been various application processes for administration. Can you describe your experience with the process in place during your initial application to administration?

- Probes:
- application process
  - interview process
  - assessment centre
  - short-listing/selection to vice-principal pool
  - first appointment to vice-principalship

**Question 4:** In concluding this first interview, I would like to have a brief demographic profile.

1. How many years did you teach (and in what positions) prior to your initial appointment?
2. How long have you been in your current position?
3. How many years have you been an administrator?
4. How many students are there in your school?

### **Second Interview: Post-Appointment Experiences**

#### **Introduction.**

Thank you for the time you are giving me for this second interview. During our first interview we explored your experiences concerning your initial appointment with the affirmative action policy in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1. At this time I would like to shift the focus to those experiences with the affirmative action policy in The

Winnipeg School Division No. 1 which concern your administrative practice, in particular:

- a) In what ways, if any, has your gender affected your relationships with staff, students, parents, and divisional personnel?
- b) What networks of support, if any, do you have?
- c) In what ways, if any, has your gender been a factor in balancing the demands of your professional work and your personal life responsibilities?
- d) In what ways, if any, has the division's affirmative action policy and procedures affected you in your performance as an administrator?

I would like to record this second interview, with your permission. Only I will have access to the tape, and it will be destroyed upon completion of this thesis. I will transcribe and tape and send you a copy for clarification and approval.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, in which case I will destroy all information collected from you.

Question 1: I would like to focus upon your post-appointment experiences.

1.1 What was your first administrative position?

- Probes:
- school level
  - number of pupils
  - presence of other administrators
  - number of staff

1.2 In what ways, if any, has your gender affected your relationships with staff, students, parents, and divisional personnel?

- Probes:
- perceptions toward you (staff, students, parents)
  - gender biases/sexism
  - workload

1.3 What networks of support, if any, do you have?

- Probes:
- composition (male/female)
  - formal/informal
  - access to "old boys' club"
  - isolation

1.4 In what ways, if any, has your gender been a factor in balancing the demands of your professional work and your personal life responsibilities?

- Probes:
- child care responsibilities/household tasks
  - care of ageing parents
  - leisure time

**1.5 In what ways, if any, have the division's affirmative action policy and procedures affected you in your performance as an administrator?**

- Probes:
- opportunity to access administrative positions
  - overcoming stereotypes/sexism

**1.6 What advice would you give to women aspiring to administrative positions?**

- Probes:
- career planning/preparation
  - mentorship

**In concluding this interview, I would like to hear about your future plans and/or aspirations.**

**1.7 Can you tell me about your future goals?**

- Probes:
- promotions/opportunities
  - academic study

**1.8 Are there any additional comments that you would like to make?**

**Thank you very much for giving me this time. I will provide you transcripts of both interview sessions as soon as possible.**

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction

56 Hathway Road  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R2G 2P5  
September 1995

Dear Ms. :

My name is Gayle Alex. I am presently working on a thesis entitled "Women Principals and Vice-Principals: An Investigation of the Impact of One Division's Affirmative Action Policy and Practice on their Appointment and on Selected Aspects of their Practices." I am working to complete this thesis to earn my Master's Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Manitoba. My thesis supervisor is Dr. John Stapleton, telephone 474-8581.

During the past year I have read extensively on the subject of women in administration. I have not found any literature which deals with women's experiences within a School Division which has implemented an Affirmative Action for Women in Administration policy. The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 adopted an Affirmative Action policy for Women in Administration in 1986. My study will focus on the experience of women who aspired to and were successful in achieving an administrative appointment during the years 1986 through 1994.

I would like to interview two female principals and two female vice-principals who were appointed to administration between 1986 and 1994. I will choose one woman from each of the school settings of Elementary, Junior High School, K-Grades 8/9, and Senior High School.

I would like to interview the four female administrators on two occasions (initial and follow-up) for approximately one hour each to talk about what they experienced as they aspired to, then succeeded in receiving, their initial appointment, and their experiences as female administrators. All information will be treated in confidence and will be reported in the thesis in a manner that assures anonymity for all the respondents. In addition, all participants would read and give approval of the transcripts of their interviews before I would include them in my study. They would all have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

I believe a study which gives voice to women administrators' experiences within an environment of affirmative action policy and practice is timely. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to have you participate in this study. If you have any

questions, please feel free to phone me at home and leave a message at 669-9803 or at work at 783-7792. My fax number at work is 783-9078.

I will phone you in approximately one week to arrange a date for an initial interview, should you agree to participate.

Yours truly,

Gayle Alex

Appendix C

Letter of Consent

I hereby give my consent to be interviewed by Gayle Alex for her thesis entitled "Women Principals and Vice-Principals: An Investigation of the Impact of One Division's Affirmative Action Policy and Practice on the Appointment and on Selected Aspects of their Practices". I understand that what I have to say will be treated as confidential and that only Ms. Alex will have access to the tapes.

When Ms. Alex has transcribed the taped interviews, she will send me a copy. At that time, I will inform her whether or not the transcription is what I have said. I will also have the option to direct her to delete any portion of the transcription which I do not want mentioned in her thesis.

I understand that I will be assured anonymity, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. If I so choose, all information collected from me during the interview will be destroyed.

I hereby give my consent, based upon the above stipulations.

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_