Some Commonalities Found in the Experiences, Perceptions and Characteristics of
Selected Female Administrators

A Thesis Submitted to the College of
Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Education
in the Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By
Shelly Lord

Copyright, Shelly Lord, January 2004. All rights reserved.
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master’s degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the profession of professors who supervised my thesis work, or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or in part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 0W0
Abstract

The focus of this research was to discover some commonalities in the experiences, perceptions, and characteristics of female administrators in an urban school system in Saskatchewan. Within the categories of experiences, perceptions, and characteristics, the study included gender socialization, barriers to promotion, mentors and networking, perceptions of power, personality qualities, leadership styles and masculine versus feminine qualities. These provided the structure for the surveys and the focus group sessions.

As only one system was being studied, the population sample was too small for random sampling. Instead, all female administrators with more than one year of experience in the system were invited to participate. Surveys were sent out and volunteers were asked to participate in a focus group session which aided to clarify the results of the surveys. The data from the surveys were presented together with the findings of the focus group sessions.

This study found that female administrators in elementary and secondary schools do share some common characteristics, perceptions, and experiences in their roles. Many women had been teaching for over 10 years before being promoted into administration. They had actively searched out other leadership opportunities before applying for administration. The women were divided evenly between those who had mentors (usually male) and those who did not. These mentor relationships were informal as the school system did not have a formal mentorship program in place. Many female administrators either already had and were working on their Master’s degree. The elementary and high school principals as well as the high school assistant principals were primarily located at
schools with smaller student populations, while the elementary vice principals were more evenly divided amongst schools of varying populations.

Most of the women had been encouraged to apply for administration by their colleagues and administrators. Their families supported their decisions for the most part, but did not actively encourage them to seek promotion. These women decided to become administrators because they wanted to bring about change, wanted a challenge, or saw it as a natural progression in their career. Some women encountered barriers to promotion, mostly in being able to network as well as being the primary childcare giver at home. However, an overwhelming majority of women were hired as administrators after their first application.

Most female administrators found it difficult to maintain a balance between their careers and their personal life, mostly due to family and career pressures. Yet, the married women acknowledged that their partners play a vital role in supporting them and helping make their career choices possible. The women felt marginalized from the staff, students and parents. They believed that people’s misperceptions of administrators in general were what led to this isolation. Many women challenged the traditions and policies of the school system, believing that change would bring positive outcomes.

Most female administrators saw themselves as collaborative leaders and team players. They felt that open and trusting relationship with the staff were necessary for building community. They used consensus as the main method of decision-making. The women saw themselves as organized, enjoying people, having a sense of humour, being good listeners and communicators, being committed to education and being collaborative.
This study has several implications. School systems should consider using formal mentorship programs. School boards need to be more sensitive to female administrators (or potential administrators) who become pregnant, rather than being more concerned with what is more convenient for the school board. School systems need to be more consistent and equitable with their job requirements and hiring practices. Selection committees need to be more aware of gender issues when conducting interviews for administration. Overall, school systems need to consider how their actions are affecting women in their system. Is the system fair for everyone? Most women are finding success as administrators but, as always, there is room for improvement in the system.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would never have been possible without the help and encouragement of several people. I would like to sincerely thank those who assisted me in this long process. The critical advice of my committee, Dianne Hallman, Randy Wimmer, Jack Billinton and Janet McVittie is gratefully acknowledged.

I would like to especially thank Sheila Carr-Stewart, my research advisor. If she had not pushed and encouraged me, I never would have followed the thesis route to begin with. She patiently answered my pestering questions and remained the calm place in the eye of the storm.

I would also like to thank Larry Sackney and Patrick Renihan for their encouragement. In fact, I recall Larry telling me, “You might as well do a thesis, because you know you’re going to end up doing the same amount of work on a project anyway!”

I extend my sincere appreciation to all the women who participated in this study. Their support and eagerness to help out made this journey so much the better. Their openness and frankness make this thesis what it is. I hope that this work represents their true voice.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband who quietly supported me throughout this journey. I found out we were expecting our first child when I started writing this thesis. Now I am finishing my work with less than two weeks to go until the due date. It has been like giving birth twice! In the course of all this, my husband always cheered me up when I was feeling frustrated (or hormonal!). He always knew the right thing to say so I would not give up. I dedicate this thesis to him.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table/Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter

1. Introduction
   - Background to the problem
   - Purpose of the study
   - Research questions
   - Significance of the study
   - Assumptions
   - Delimitations
   - Limitations
   - Definitions
   - About the researcher
   - Organization of thesis

2. Review of the Literature
   - History of women in education
   - Gender socialization
   - Mentors and role models
   - Barriers to promotion
   - Characteristics of female administrators and perceptions of power
   - Summary
3. Methodology ................................................................. 28
   Research design .......................................................... 28
   Selection of participants ............................................... 32
   Organization and Preparation of Data ............................ 32
   Summary ....................................................................... 34

4. Presentation of the Data .................................................. 35
   General demographics .................................................... 35
   Before administration ..................................................... 38
   Barriers to promotion ..................................................... 41
   Mentors and role models ............................................... 41
   Ambition ....................................................................... 42
   Balance and support ...................................................... 45
   Isolation/marginalization ............................................... 47
   Challenging rules and traditions .................................... 48
   Leadership style ............................................................ 49
   Decision-making ............................................................ 50
   Administrative qualities ............................................... 51
   Imposed expectations ..................................................... 53
   Being treated differently ............................................... 54
   Summary ....................................................................... 56

5. Overview, Discussion, and Implications ............................ 58
   Overview ....................................................................... 58
   Discussion ..................................................................... 64
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Factors Associated with the Common Experiences and Characteristics of Female Administrators</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Years of Experience in Total</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Years of Experience Before Administration</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level of Education Completed and Number of Women Furthering their Education</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Administrative Position According to School’s Student Population</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Number of Times Respondents Applied for Administrative Positions, Both VP/AP and Principal</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Number of Responses According to How Major Decisions Are Made</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Summary of Categories and Literature in Agreement or Not in Agreement</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Interest in gender research in educational administration is growing. However, research on women is limited due to a lack of female administrators to study (Koll, Robertson, Lampe, & Hegedus, 1996). Limerick and Anderson (1999) compared gender research in the past to a “wallflower at a party” (p. 401), that is, this issue has largely been overlooked. As the numbers of women entering school-based administration rise, however, so does the acknowledgement that gender needs to be discussed when looking at leadership style (Reay & Ball, 2000). Reynolds (1995) stated that sex and gender is an administrative issue with which we should be concerned. As the number of female administrators rises, the focus of theorists and feminists has changed, shifting away from questions of equality (do women administrators have as many opportunities as men?) to those of difference (what is a female administrative style?) (Acker, 1999a).

Research has shown that women have important contributions to make as administrators. Research states that women may make the most effective administrators (Sergiovanni, 1999) but the pendulum of late has begun to swing the other way. Some researchers have said that feminists have over generalized and over-idealized the qualities that women bring to administration (Reay & Ball). Many women, in order to be successful in a male-dominated environment, have adopted a style as administrators such as a top-down approach, usually associated with men. Other researchers have stated that there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the popular stereotypes of male and female administrators in general (Collard, 2001). While being a school-based administrator can be challenging for anyone, it is generally agreed that women do face
added tensions (Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, & Harris, 1994; Hicks, 1996; Joy, 1998; Limerick & Anderson, 1999; Reis, Young & Jury, 1999). An examination of the experiences of female administrators identifies and elaborates on the source of these tensions. In the future, this will help make hiring practices, socialization, and the continued success of effective administrators fair and equitable for everyone.

Background to the Problem

Burgess said, “Teaching is a good job for a woman but a career with prospects for men” (as cited in Reis et al., 1999). A popular belief has been that, because women wanted to work with children, they were less likely to want to leave the classroom for an administrator’s office (Diubaldo, 1994; Joy, 1998). In fact, Diubaldo noted the contrary, that study results indicated that there were no significant differences between males and females when asked about administration as a career goal. However, Diubaldo wrote that women who aspire to be administrators face conflicting role expectations as wives and mothers versus career persons. These obligations put women at a disadvantage to men who “do not experience the same demands on their time and thus are freer to pursue their promotion aspirations” (p. 9).

An added barrier to promotion for women is that they are competing in a male-dominated, male-focused bureaucratic structure. “Because management is described in masculine terms . . . its very formulation has inherent obstacles to women’s promotion” (Limerick & Anderson, 1999, p. 402). The impervious glass ceiling still exists for many women (Dardaine-Ragguet et al., 1994). According to Sergiovanni (1999), in the late 1980’s, women held half of the master’s and doctoral degrees in New York state, yet only 13% of high school principals and 28% of elementary school principals were women.
More recently, in Saskatchewan, in 2001-2002, 69% of the teaching force was female but only 38% of principals were female. Forty point eight percent of in-school administrators were women (Georges Georget, personal communication, September 16, 2003). Due to the number of Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools in rural Saskatchewan, a break down of female elementary school principals and vice principals and female secondary school principals and assistant principals is impossible. Statistics Canada 1998 data revealed that, by 1995-1996, nationally, 31% of principals and assistant/vice-principals were women, yet 65% of all teachers were females (Georges Georget, personal communication, September 16, 2003). According to the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (1993), across Canada, women held only one out of every five secondary school principalships and three out of ten assistant/vice-principalships (Young, 2002). Young worried that the failure of some school boards, at least in Alberta, to include sex as an important variable in their data collection is masking some disturbing trends. For example, she discovered from the data that was available that the number of female superintendents has declined and more and more women are opting for part-time teaching. Young believed that this was due to the impact of the conservative Klein government in Alberta, which had been restructuring the school systems.

Interestingly, Joy (1998) noted that men with master’s degrees in physical education are overrepresented in administration, which perpetuates the commonly-held belief that if one can coach, one can be an administrator. She also noted that men are promoted usually within six years of receiving their master’s, whereas women are generally promoted nine years after receiving their master’s degree. The probability of promotion for men was 10.8% but only 3.5% for women, that is, out of 100 men, around
11 will be promoted, whereas out of 100 women, only around four women will be promoted (Joy, 1998, p. 197).

Role models and mentors, or lack thereof, have also played a role for women desiring administration. Many school boards do not have formally instituted mentorship programs. As a result, teachers aspiring to become administrators must seek out mentors on their own. Unfortunately, research shows that the mostly male administrators usually become mentors to people that most resemble themselves, other men (Koll et al., 1996; Shermann, 2000).

Once women become administrators, they bring new qualities to the position. According to Collard (2001), there are fundamental differences in the leadership beliefs and practices of female and male leaders. Women tend to be more collaborative and relational, and hold higher expectations of student abilities (Collard, 2001; Shermann, 2000). Sergiovanni (1999) noted that women tended to be found, more often than not, in schools that are considered to be highly effective. He also stated that building community and being democratic and participatory are also common female characteristics. Clark (1995) wrote that women adopt a less hierarchical style of leadership, with a likelihood of implementing interdisciplinary teams and advisory programs. They recognize the importance of valuing people (Fennel, 1999a) and tend to use a more transformational style of leadership (Koll et al., 1996). Female administrators, demographically, tend to be older, more experienced as teachers, and usually have already raised their own children (Smulyan, 2000). Overall, women view themselves as instructional leaders, rather than managers, with teaching and learning as the major foci (Sergiovanni, 1999).
However, some recent studies have shown that female administrators tend to use more “masculine” qualities (Martin, 1993; Reay & Ball, 2000) or adopt a traditionally masculine “men in skirts” leadership style (Shermann, 2000). These might include a top-down approach, a more managerial style and being less inclined to build personal relationships with the staff. Collard (2001) wrote about how, in today’s society, there exist multiple masculinities and femininities. Rather the idea of “masculine” and “feminine” could be seen as a continuum. In light of this literature, one begins to wonder. Are there differences between male and female administrators? The majority of the literature argues that there are. If so, what are the experiences, the perceptions and characteristics of female administrators?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover whether commonalities exist in the experiences, perceptions, and characteristics of female administrators in an urban school system in Saskatchewan. This is not to be a comparative study with male administrators.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. Is there a commonality of experiences among female school administrators?
2. What kind of mentors or role models do female administrators have before and during their administrative experiences?
3. What qualities do female administrators share?
4. What are female administrators’ perceptions of power?
5. Do women administrators adopt the norms of a primarily male profession?
The Significance of the Study

For the women who do obtain an administrative position, there are tremendous pressures but very little leeway for making mistakes (Tallerico, 2000). In school systems that follow an equity policy, some women face the added challenge of being thought of as the “token” female, which can be damaging to their self-esteem (Vozzola & Higgins, 1994). By looking at the possible commonalities in the experiences, perceptions, and characteristics of female administrators in a particular school system, school boards can be more aware of gender issues when considering hiring practices and mentorship programs. A survey of all female administrators in an urban school system, as well as an in-depth look at the experiences of volunteer female administrators will give us a clearer “snapshot” of what life is really like for school based female vice and assistant principals and principals.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. Participants will be able to recall accurately and reflect upon particular incidents during their careers and, in particular, in relation to their achievement of an administrative position.

2. The experiences of female administrators of elementary and secondary schools will be treated the same.

Delimitations

1. The study was conducted on approximately 26 female administrators by survey and nine female administrators in a focus group.

2. The study took place in an urban school board in Saskatchewan.
3. Data collection took place in September to October of 2003.

Limitations

1. Findings from this study are not generalizable to the experiences of all female administrators but may demonstrate a need for further study in different contexts.

2. The participants may not be willing to openly share their views and experiences for fear of recognition in this study.

3. The sample size is limited to 26 women. The limitations of a small sample size do not go unrecognized. What may be revealed in this study may not be transferable to other groups of female administrators.

4. The sample is limited to one Saskatchewan urban school system.

5. The possible influences of a pre-established collegial and personal relationship with the participants may have an impact on the responses of certain participants.

Definitions

The terms central to this study are defined as follows:

1. Female administrator – A person of the female gender who has a school-based administrative position of vice-, assistant principal or principal in an elementary or secondary school.

2. Elementary – For the purpose of this study, an elementary school will consist of Kindergarten to Grade 8 inclusively.

3. Secondary – For the purpose of this study, a secondary school will consist of grades 9-12 inclusively.

4. Barriers – The obstacles that stop one from gaining what they desire, whether internal or external.
5. Experiences – The life and work events of female administrators in their careers as educators.

6. Perceptions – How women see themselves in light of their roles and authority.

7. Characteristics – Qualities or personality traits of a human being.

About the Researcher

Having grown up with a father who was a principal, I was a first-hand witness to what life was like for an administrator. I decided very early in my career as an educator that I wanted to be an administrator, no matter how hard my dad tried to convince me otherwise! I grew up with the rather naïve notion that no gender discrimination existed in this generation and so believed that it would be easy. I never really noticed that, going through 12 years of schooling, not once did I ever have a female administrator. It was not until a superintendent shoulder-tapped me to consider administration that I realized gender was an issue. “You should become an administrator,” he said. “We need more women.” My first thought was, “Wow! This is great!” My second thought was, “So did he ask me because I would be effective or because I’m female?”

The female ratio in administration has increased dramatically in the school system in which I teach. One reason is that the director has made it publicly known that they want more women in administrative positions. But recently there has been a backlash against the equity policy of the school board. Some people feel that women are being promoted when they do not necessarily have all the same qualifications that the male applicants have. This has led to a rising criticism of how women are doing their jobs as administrators.
Consequently, this has left me wondering. How do female administrators feel about their positions? Are they experiencing the same problems of gender socialization and barriers to promotion of which the literature speaks? Or are the women administrators just female versions of a traditional “male” administrator?

Organization of the Thesis

The first chapter outlined the rationale and basis for this study. Research questions, relevant definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations as well as the significance of the study were discussed.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the current literature, from 1984 to 2002, surrounding the experiences and qualities of female administrators. A diagram outlining these key factors is also presented.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology. The focus of the thesis is on the commonalities of the experiences and characteristics of women in administration, using both a survey method as well as focus group. Chapter 3 also describes the selection of participants, the research design as well as the treatment of data.

Chapter 4 is the presentation of data collected from the surveys and focus groups. Data is organized according to categories as found in the literature review of Chapter 2. Comparisons and contrasts among the participants are given.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings in relation to the five research questions outlined in Chapter 1. This is followed by a discussion of the data in reference to the literature as well as the implications of the results. Recommendations for the study conclude the chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the literature

The purpose of this study is to discover if there are some commonalities in the experiences, perceptions, and characteristics of female administrators, specifically in an urban school system in Saskatchewan. The related literature was reviewed, pertaining to the history of women in education, gender socialization, mentors and role models, barriers to promotion, perceptions of power and general characteristics of female administrators.

History of Women in Education

Before one can understand what female administrators face in today’s educational organizations, one must look at why women educators are where they are today. Prentice (1984) presented a glimpse into the lives of female educators in the late 19th century in Canada. In the 1840s, the majority of teachers were male. By the 1850s and 60s, school boards were rapidly expanding to make way for the rise in public schooling. As a result, there was a shortage of teachers, which led to the encouragement of women to enter the profession. By the end of the 19th century, the only elementary teachers available for hire were female. This was due to the grading of students which allowed the formation of larger schools, and a campaign to raise the status of teaching as a profession (Prentice).

Teachers of the higher grades were paid more and were required to have more qualifications, which attracted more men. Teachers of the lower grades were paid less, and so many women taught at these levels. “Relatively higher salaries could be made available for male superintendents, inspectors, principal teachers and headmasters, yet money could be saved at the same time by engaging women at low salaries to teach lower
grades” (Prentice, 1984, p. 51). Although some school boards were worried about the mental capacity of female teachers and their ability to control their classrooms, more and more women entered the profession, mostly due to money-conscious school trustees who wished to budget frugally. Eventually, women were viewed to be the best educators of young children, due to a belief in their caring and nurturing nature.

Women were underpaid compared to their male colleagues. In Toronto in 1858, male “assistants” who were not professional teachers, were paid $520 annually, yet female teachers were paid only $320 and female assistants, $280 (Prentice, 1984, p. 58). However, women continued to join the profession. This was due to a shortage of employment other than domestic help and women’s desire to work outside of the house in general. Women did face barriers to advancement. There was a common belief that women tended to quit after a few years anyway and were required to leave upon marriage. Moreover, men complained that women degraded the profession by accepting low salaries and driving away the competent male teachers. Eventually, Prentice noted, “The entry of large numbers of women into public school teaching was thus accepted because their position in the schools was generally a subordinate one” (p. 65). Thus began the long history of women teaching in the lower grades, while men taught the higher grades and advanced into administration.

Reynolds (2002) discovered that, after World War II, in the 1940s and 1950s, that men increasingly saw teaching as incompatible with the ideal “real man” in society by most men. “The principalship, however, offered a masculine script within schools where most men could feel comfortable and accepted. Men in this era admitted that being a male had been an advantage in terms of attaining a principalship” (p. 32). The
government also played a role in encouraging women to leave paid employment and return home after the war ended. According to a 1941 census, 75% of all teachers were women (down from 82% in 1921), yet in Toronto, most principals were male (Reynolds, 2002). The marriage ban of 1925, where women were forced to quit teaching once married, was eventually repealed in 1947, removing at least one barrier for women. “As political, economic, and social contexts changed in the 1940s and 1950s, a rhetoric of equality began to carry more weight within the wider culture and the culture of the school board” (Reynolds, 2002, p.33). In Quebec, the opposite was true: from 1958 to 1985, women in administrative positions dropped from 59% to 25% (Baudoux, 1995). This was due to the changing religious and educational culture as well as a decrease in the number of schools run by nuns.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the Human Rights Act of 1977 protected women from discrimination and promised equal pay for work of equal value. In 1961, 71% of teachers were women. In 1971, that number dropped to 66% and 90% of all principals in Toronto were male (Reynolds, 2002). By this time, however, gender equity was being actively pursued.

Gender Socialization

Gender socialization is important to consider. Regan and Brooks (1995) saw gender as a category of experience, which means that men and women will interpret and react differently to similar situations. A common theme that appeared in the literature is “Do female administrators act in a feminine way in their position, or do they adopt masculine qualities?” Before one can consider this question, however, one must back up to before these women became administrators. “There are powerful gender-based social
discourses which discourage women from envisaging themselves in positions of authority” (Limerick & Anderson, 1999, p. 402). Women were often taught at a young age that the men are in charge. There are sometimes internal or psychological barriers that need overcoming – women are socialized not to see themselves as leaders or are encouraged to put their familial responsibilities first (Smulyan, 2000). Acker (1999a) wrote that, at times, “professional” and “woman” have been seen as incompatible concepts. Another inherent belief put forward by Restine (1993) is that “women are unsuited for administrative work and that teaching is a distinctly separate career from administration rather than an extension of it” (p. 16). According to Joy (1998), women were less likely to even desire promotions than men. She went on to state that men may make better principals because they are granted more respect and authority from the students and teachers. Tabin and Coleman (1993) wrote,

And because the teaching profession does enable women to move in and out easily as their life circumstances change, and the decision to parent at home continues primarily to affect the careers of women, senior administrators have assumed that women are less committed to their careers than are men, and less concerned with upward mobility. (p. 382)

This lack of desire for promotion, as noted by Tabin and Coleman, is in contrast to the findings in a study by Diubaldo (1994). In a study involving 1151 male and female staff, he analyzed the responses in terms of the sex of the participants. Diubaldo found no significant difference in the career goals of men and women teachers. The women surveyed did not view their job as temporary or as secondary to their spouse’s job. Family responsibilities, however, did have a negative impact on the female teachers’ responses. The women responded that if they became involved with tasks that could help
them advance their careers, such as participating in after-hours work, they replied that they would not receive a high degree of family support, unlike their male counterparts.

When women did decide to become administrators, “they did not appear to have simply followed the accepted (male) model of school administration” (Limerick & Anderson, 1999, p. 404). Because of this, women do face difficulties working in “the context of male hegemony” (Reay & Ball, 2000, p. 145). As one woman principal stated in an interview with Limerick and Anderson (1999), “You go from a school which is primarily women . . . When I go to principals’ meetings, they’re male” (p. 411).

Therefore, management, for women becomes a paradoxical context. Are they able to succeed using their “feminine” qualities of nurturer, or do they need to become more “masculine” in their attitudes? Several researchers believe that women do adopt more male characteristics in order to succeed as administrators (Collard, 2001; Martin, 1993; Reay & Ball, 2000; Shermann, 2000). “The acquisition of power within organizations results in women playing out their gendered identity in significantly different ways to those realized in normative, socially subordinate femininities” (Reay & Ball, 2000, p. 146).

Martin (1993) did a psychological study which involved both male and female prospective administrators. According to Martin, individuals internalized cultured norms and expectations for their behaviour and were encouraged to behave in a culturally correct manner. Women who contemplate promotion are faced with a dilemma: do they adopt the norms of a profession which is culturally male? According to the results of Martin’s British Columbia study, which used the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI), female prospective administrators scored higher on the Masculinity Scores than women
who were not considering going into administration. Further, Martin noted that male and female prospective administrators had similar Masculinity Scores, while the women’s Femininity Scores were significantly higher than the men. Interestingly, in a case study by Reay & Ball (2000), one British female headteacher spoke about a group of female teachers who had complained about a competitive hiring practice: “. . . and my reply was that I thought that that was a very feminine way of thinking and really an unprofessional way . . I like to think [my management style] is not so much feminine or male, I think I would like to think I was the feminine end of the male spectrum. . .” (p. 154). In this statement, the headteacher equated femininity with unprofessionalism. Yet she also views gender as a continuum.

A third, and growing, view is that the “masculinity” and “femininity” of any administrator is fluid and dependent on the context (Collard, 2001; Smulyan, 2000). According to Collard, there are multiple masculinities and femininities and quite often researchers fail to recognize the individuals. Acker (1999b) also disliked contrasting men and women: “Case studies where women head teachers emphasize caring and collaboration and men display dominance and power. . . simply do not allow us to conclude once and for all that these are ‘natural’ preferences according to gender” (p. 85).

Acker (1999a) took this comparison a step further by cautioning that we are ignoring the diversity of women by lumping females into one general category:

Thus we are focusing on the sameness of women and by implication their difference from men. This route takes us into some difficult territory, as many feminist writers have come to understand; for there is inevitably much diversity among women, and by emphasizing sameness, we downplay diversity. (Acker, 1999a, p. 290)
Smulyan acknowledged gender as an influence but stated that it is only one among many influences: “While gender shapes the female administrator’s worldview, school and life experiences, and modes of interacting with others, it is one of several interesting factors that influence her behaviour and effectiveness” (p. 36). These other factors would certainly include mentors and role models.

Mentors and Role Models

Upon the decision to become an administrator, women often discover that they do not have many people to turn to for advice or sponsorship. According to Tabin and Coleman (1993), sponsorship, or mentorship, is crucial for aspirants to administrative positions yet women traditionally have had difficulty in finding sponsorship. Limerick and Anderson (1999) reported that one female principal in their case study complained that women were often forced to act in a more masculine way because they had no female role models. Women who want to advance in their career quite simply do not know what an effective female administrator might look like. Yet mentorship is an important career tool with positive implications for women. Fleming (1991) and Shermann (2000) believed that women need access to a mentor relationship in order to be successful in achieving an administrative position.

Two situations can occur for women who are looking for mentorship or the path to promotion: either they partner up with a male mentor, or they have no mentor at all. Each possibility poses its own disadvantages. Women who are sponsored by male mentors have role models for exercising power in a masculine way (Reay & Ball, 2000). Many women seek out mentors but face obstacles. “Administrators (predominantly male) tend to become mentors to other males. This perpetuates the promotion of men into
administration” (Koll et al., 1996, p. 105). The problem is that senior male administrators typically wish to develop a mentor relationship with a junior version of themselves (Shermann, 2000). This frustrates a woman’s search for a mentor, which can result in loneliness and alienation when she does become an administrator (Hicks, 1996). Consequently, some scholars suggest that school boards should put into place a formal mentorship program, for both men and women who show potential for administration (Fleming, 1991; Koll et al.).

Barriers to Promotion

There are many barriers that prevent women from advancing in their careers. Dardaine-Ragguet et al. (1994) spoke of the impervious glass ceiling. Women could only achieve a certain level and then seemed to be able to rise no further. In the 1970s and 80s, feminist writers in educational administration noted the severe under-representation of women in management and identified barriers that inhibited female promotion (Acker, 1999a). Some barriers began to disappear by the mid-1980s. While numbers for female administrators were low, it was certainly not due to lack of supply. As mentioned earlier, in 1988, in New York State, over half of the doctorate and master’s degrees in educational administration were held by women. Yet only 13% of high school principals and 28% of elementary school principals were female (Sergiovanni, 1999). Because management is quite often described in masculine terms, there are inherent obstacles to women’s promotions (Limerick & Anderson, 1999).

Interestingly, men with master’s degrees in physical education are overrepresented in administration (Joy, 1998). It appears that coaching is a condition of promotion. Other statistics indicate that men are typically promoted six years after
receiving their master’s degree whereas women are promoted nine years after. The probability of promotion was 10.8% for men but only 3.5% for women (Joy, 1998). Dardaine-Ragguet et al. (1994) also noted from their data “a clear pattern of discrimination” (p. 402) aimed at women with the proper qualifications. They suggested three possible reasons: employers’ negative attitudes toward females, sex-role stereotyping, and the absence of female administrator role models and mentors. “Also, some men perceive female administrators differently than their own male counterparts with women being thought of as good at detail but incapable of seeing the larger picture, as democratic but indecisive, and as dedicated but obsessively so” (Dardaine-Ragguet et al., 1994, p. 403).

There exists a pervasive culture that states that administration is not a job for women (Shermann, 2000). This view is especially particular to high school administration where the belief is that the principal must be tough, masculine and able to exert authority and maintain control (Shermann, 2000; Smulyan, 2000). Gill (1995) studied female administrators in New Brunswick and discovered a similar issue:

The most frequently mentioned [barrier] was the effect of the perception, particularly at the junior high and senior high school level, that women could not cope with all the demands of the position. They were hired because they were women and not because of their talents and therefore were bound to be ineffective. (p.57)

Shakeshaft (1987) pointed out that even though there is an overwhelming amount of research that shows that women are better at maintaining discipline than men, this has done nothing to dispel that misperception from hiring committees. It becomes more difficult when the board office superintendents (usually male) prefer to hire people with whom they are most comfortable and who most resemble themselves. Because of this
“Old Boys’ Club” mentality in administration, when women do become administrators, they quite often face segregation and isolation as well as the pressures of “tokenism” (Smulyan, 2000). Equity policies that encourage the hiring of women and minorities have done a lot to help women enter administration but they also create problems. As Blackmore (2002) wrote: “. . . gender equity policies, enforced through legislation, have focused more on changing individual women to better fit the demands of leadership rather than on changing men, changing notions of leadership, or changing organizations” (p. 54). Reynolds and Young (1995) noted that Shakeshaft also questioned whether women should ‘fit in’ the ‘man’s world’ of administration or whether that world should itself be transformed.

Yet, with the rise of equity policies in most school boards, women are starting to find it easier to be promoted. In a study by Reis et al. (1999), they discovered that, when employers were given a set of female and male applications, they tended to rate the female applicants higher than the males. According to the researchers, the gender of the employer did not appear to influence the rating. The researchers gave varying reasons for this outcome. First, because of an existing void in public school administration, women are actively being pursued to fill the positions. Second, there may be a conscious effort in many school boards to increase the number of women in administration to balance the numbers of male and female administrators. Third, school boards may also be becoming more aware of the laws and regulations that prevent discriminatory hiring practices. It should be noted, however, that the study only looked at the initial screening phase. There would still be many more steps that need to be successfully navigated before the women would actually be hired (Reis et al., 1999).
Looking at the social and familial side, administration, with its evening meetings and other after-hour duties becomes a deterrent to many women because of the time away from home and possible resulting criticism from family or society (Shermann, 2000). “Barriers to women achieving promotion to administrative positions in education systems occur not only because of internal organizational factors . . . but also because of external or social factors such as the discourses surrounding family, work, motherhood and interpersonal relationships” (Limerick & Anderson, 1999, p. 407). As a result, societal pressures quite often become barriers to women thinking of entering administration.

Characteristics of Female Administrators and Perceptions of Power

Having discussed how gender socialization, lack of mentors and barriers to promotion inhibit women from entering into administration, a questions arises. If they are eventually successful, what are the common characteristics of these women? What are their perceptions of the power of their position?

Female administrators tend to be older than their male counterparts, with more teaching experience, and have already raised their own children (Clark, 1995; Gill, 1995; Joy, 1998; Smulyan, 2000). Fennell found that female administrators also had long and varied leadership experiences before they became administrators (1999b). This included participating in grade teams, committees, and coaching. Women were more likely to occupy administrative positions in elementary schools as opposed to secondary schools (Dardaine-Raggue et al., 1994; Reynolds, 2002). Young (1994) argued that women are having an easier time of becoming principals because the job is becoming less desirable for men, due to the increasing complexity of the job. Women especially tend to be overrepresented in smaller schools, which are usually seen as less prestigious. Yet
women administrators are also more often found in schools that are considered to be highly effective (Sergiovanni, 1999).

Shakeshaft (1987) believed that women do share common characteristics, discussed in what she called “The Female World”:

1. Relationships with Others Are Central to All Actions of Women Administrators.
2. Teaching and Learning are the Major Foci of Women Administrators.
3. Building Community is an Essential Part of a Woman Administrator’s Style.
5. The Line Separating the Public World from the Private is Blurred. (p. 197)

Tabin and Coleman (1993) stated that women used special feminine skills such as empathy, intuition, emotion, nurturing, cooperation and understanding and a more democratic style. Young (1994) called these “women’s ways” of communication, interpersonal relations, building community, and concern for the welfare of students.

Researchers have shown that female administrators do conceptualize leadership differently than male administrators (Limerick & Anderson, 1999). Overall, women tend to adopt a more caring, less hierarchical style (Reay & Ball, 2000). Women are more collaborative and relational (Collard, 2001; Reay & Ball; Shantz, 1993). Female administrators tend to use a problem-solving process that is more flexible, informal and creative (Shantz; Shermann, 2000). Women also encourage teacher empowerment and invite input in decision-making. For some women, however, this style of leadership conflicts with the traditional sense of management:
As a result, women whose conceptions of leadership were more facilitative and supportive were inclined to see their priorities even further estranged from those of management. A Gordian knot was tightening: women could join management only by buying into values which tended to exclude women. (Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 1993, pp. 4-5)

Women administrators tend to view themselves as instructional leaders (Sergiovanni, 1999; Shermann, 2000). Collard (2001) found that female administrators have high expectations for student achievement, are strongly oriented toward personal developmental objectives and are committed to student self-esteem as an important curriculum goal. Women are more likely to have interdisciplinary teams and advisory programs, are less likely to track students (streaming them into modified, mainstream, or advanced levels in their grades) and more likely to support intramural programs (Clark, 1995).

Several researchers state that female administrators stress the importance of valuing people and communication is a top priority (Fennell, 1999b; Sergiovanni, 1999; Shermann, 2000). Shakeshaft (1987) noted that women tended to use language that encouraged community building. Female administrators see themselves more as servants, rather than leaders (Sergiovanni, 1999) and focus on building community in their schools (Shermann, 2000). Collard (2001) stated, “Another recurrent claim has been that women are more relational than men and operate from a morality based on communal responsibility. . . When it came to relationship with staff, women leaders were markedly more committed to collegiality and teamwork. . .” (p. 350). Women administrators are inclusive, positive, and enabling (Fennell, 1999b). According to Koll et al. (1996), they were more likely to try open, supportive leadership styles and more likely to act in a transformational leadership style. This means that they encourage others to take
leadership roles and to develop their own strengths for the good of the school. Female administrators often speak about how they challenge the traditional practices of their school boards and admit that they will not play by the rules (Limerick & Anderson, 1999; Fennell, 1999b). Reynolds (2002) discovered this even in interviews with female principals from the 1950s and 1960s where “[t]he women sometimes used their positions as lady principals to undertake things that were contrary to existing rules. Several commented that it was more effective to ask forgiveness than to ask for permission” (p.43).

Recently, there has been a move by researchers to demonstrate that women administrators sometimes have more in common with men than they do with women (Reay & Ball, 2000) or that how they lead is dependent on the context in which they find themselves, rather than internal personality traits (Collard, 2001). Reay and Ball (2000) criticized past feminist researchers: “They work instead with an idealized model of femininity in which the assumptions of power over others has little or no impact on female behaviour” (p. 146). Instead, Reay and Ball suggested that as women obtain power, their “feminine” qualities are modified. They believed that “The power of women to change structures is emphasized at the cost of failing to understand how structures change women” (p.156). When it comes to power, do women perceive it differently than men or do they experience power as men do?

The literature is varied in response to this question. Baudoux (1995) argued that women are not excluded from power because they are different, “but that women are established as different because they are excluded from power” (p.68). Restine (1993) wrote that “women’s early socialization and the exclusion of women from networks of
information and opportunity contribute to the discrepancy in comparing power between men and women” (p. 30). In a study done by Fennell (1999a), results indicated that most women use the traditional structural-functionalist perspective, although they tend to be more transformational than directive. Female administrators are forced to work within the perimeters in which they find themselves, that being one of hierarchical bureaucracy. However, Fennell argued that, because of the traditional bureaucratic structure of most school boards, women would be less successful when using a feminist or critical theory perspective. Women may want to bring about more change, but eventually end up running into resistance from more traditional quarters.

Other studies have shown that women view power as “nurturing” (Shermann, 2000) or as empowering others (Reay & Ball, 2000). Women also equate power with responsibility where responsibility means not hurting others or being sensitive to others’ needs (Fennell, 1999b). Many women view power as multi-dimensional and multi-directional, characterized as “power with” (Fennell, 1999a). Both Reay and Ball (2000) and Smulyan (2000) described a certain tension for women administrators holding power traditionally held by men. Female administrators tend to find it difficult to deal with the distance from other women that leadership brings: “They are expected to lead and still remain as equal; to be tough and simultaneously kind and nurturant” (Reay & Ball, p. 152).

Summary

Researchers argued that women face an uphill battle in advancing their careers. Because of gender socialization, many women see themselves as powerless and unable to lead others (Limerick & Anderson, 1999). They need to overcome the psychological
barriers ingrained in them at a young age. A common perception is that men are in charge and are more able to exert authority and command respect (Joy, 1998). Although Diubaldo (1994) noted that while there was a growing number of women who want promotion in administration, familial responsibilities and societal pressures often leave them at a disadvantage.

When women do contemplate administration, they quickly become aware that they are entering a male-dominated way of the doing things. Researchers are now wondering if this causes women to adopt traditional masculine qualities in order to be successful (Martin, 1993) There are yet other researchers who are exploring the concepts of multiple masculinities and femininities (Collard, 2001). Also, researchers believe that the context is often overlooked (Smulyan, 2000).

A major roadblock for potential female administrators is the lack of female role models and mentors. Mentors and networking are vital levers for getting into administration (Shermann, 2000) yet most male administrators tend to choose protégés who are most like themselves (Koll et al., 1996). This leaves women at a disadvantage. School boards need to put a female mentorship program in place. (Fleming, 1991; Koll et al., 1996)

Women face other barriers to promotion. They face negative employer attitudes, societal pressures as well as internal barriers. There is a cultural notion found in most school boards that women are incapable of effective leadership (Dardaine-Ragguet et al., 1994; Shermann, 2000). Yet, due to an increasing use of equity policies, the barriers to promotions are slowly being removed for women (Reis et al., 1999).
According to the literature, there are several common characteristics for female administrators. Women have been identified as being more democratic, collaborative, and transformational (Fennell, 1999a; Sergiovanni, 1999; Shantz, 1993; Shermann, 2000). There are also several commonalities in demographics with women being older, having more teaching experience, and grown children (Clark, 1995; Smulyan, 2000). Women are found more often in effective schools (Sergiovanni, 1999). Women administrators view themselves as instructional leaders and are very concerned with student well-being and achievement (Collard, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1999; Shermann, 2000). They believe in building community and see communication as a key to effective leadership (Fennell, 1999b; Sergiovanni, 1999; Shermann, 2000).

Researchers have also begun to move away from these generalized characteristics of women. They are now attempting to demonstrate that, rather than women bringing “feminine” qualities to their position, they actually adopt more “masculine” ways of doing things. There are also conflicting views on how women perceive power in administration. While some researchers see women using transformational leadership and the concept of empowerment (Fennell, 1999a), others believe that women are affected by power that is traditionally viewed as “male” (Reay & Ball, 2000). Most researchers agree that power causes a tension for women as power and women seem paradoxically opposed. It is a difficult balancing act.

As a summary, the categories relating to the topic of the experiences, perceptions, and characteristics of a female administrator can be diagrammed as illustrated in Figure 1. This diagram ultimately served as a conceptual framework for this study. All research questions in the study, including the survey and focus group questions, reflected
the factors found in Figure 1. This conceptual framework also aided in searching for new or contradicting information in the study.

*Figure 1.* Factors associated with the common experiences, perceptions and characteristics of female administrators.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter explores the methodology of the study and it summarizes the research design and instruments. The selection of participants is explained as well as the purpose of both the survey and the focus group. To conclude, how the organization and preparation of data was handled is discussed. The focus is on if there are commonalities found in the experiences, perceptions, and characteristics of female administrators.

Research Design

This study is a descriptive, qualitative study. The researcher depended heavily on the written and verbal communication of female administrators. As Seidman (1998) wrote, “At the very heart of what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolize their experience through language” (p. 2). Thus, to gain a rich picture of the characteristics and experiences of female administrators, a select sample of these women was provided an opportunity to share their experiences through a survey. A focus group further enriched the knowledge gained through the survey.

After obtaining approval from the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan (see Appendix E), as well as permission from the Superintendent of Education, Learning Services (see Appendix A), a survey was administered to female administrators in an urban school system. Fink and Kosecoff (1998) stated, “A survey is a method of collecting information directly from people about their feelings, motivations, plans, beliefs, and personal, educational, and financial background” (p. 1). A survey method was chosen in order to gather demographic data for the characteristics of female
administrators as well as obtaining a basic knowledge of some of the experiences and overall qualities of female administrators in this urban school system.

A survey can take many forms. Most often, a survey relies on multiple choice or closed-ended questions “because they have proven themselves to be the more efficient and ultimately more reliable” (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998, p.12). Other surveys may include open-ended questions which allow for learning about why people believe what they do. (Fink & Kosecoff). In order to obtain the demographics data, the survey included multiple choice questions. However, because of the large variety of possible responses regarding the work experiences and qualities of female administrators, the survey also included many open-ended questions.

The survey was organized into two main sections. The questions were formulated taking into account the findings in the literature review. The first section took a close look at the experiences of female administrators, such as barriers to promotions they may have encountered, whether or not they had access to a mentor, and what leadership opportunities they may have had before they became administrators. The section also dealt with the qualities of female administrators. They were asked how they make decisions, what characteristics they felt they brought to their administrative role and how they would define their leadership style. The second section included questions to obtain demographic data, such as length of teaching career and highest level of education achieved.

Because of the need to understand the experiences of female administrators as well as their internal beliefs about administration in general more fully, the researcher decided that focus groups would be employed to gather data. “A focus group is a form of
group interview that originated in the field of market research and is now frequently used to collect qualitative data . . .” (Crowl, 1996, p. 237). Focus groups have become an integral part of educational research. “Focus groups have an important role in educational policy analysis and development. They provide a systematic process to collect, analyze, and interpret information that is valid and trustworthy” (Noonan, 1997, p.2). Using a focus group allowed the researcher to add questions to further understand participant responses. Another benefit of a focus group is that, when one participant hears the response of another, it might remind her of a previous experience or observation that perhaps she had forgotten or might have thought irrelevant (Crowl, 1996). Focus groups also provide multiple points of view which can provide a more meaningful interpretation of the data found in the surveys (Noonan).

Strategies to enhance the validity of the survey and focus group design were used. First, the combination of the survey with the focus group sessions ensured that the researcher was finding mutual meanings with the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). While some survey respondents might have misinterpreted the questions, the focus group allowed the participants to have questions clarified for their own understanding. The survey was piloted in August, 2003 in an Educational Administration graduate class. The fifteen students, consisting of nine females and six males, were asked to check for clarity, any discrepancies or biases, validity, and reliability. There were four administrators in the class (two male and two female) who were invited to fill out the survey completely. They were asked if the questions were clear and were invited to make changes as they saw necessary. One way to enhance reliability was to administer the surveys at the same time in the same method. The survey responses gave the researcher a
view of what the female administrators were experiencing. Thus the researcher was able to improve the focus group questions and add questions to reflect any unanticipated data that emerged from the surveys. The focus groups were also set up and treated as identically as possible, always using the same questions. Only one researcher administered the surveys and the focus group sessions to provide continuity.

An added element of validity was to encourage the participants to use their own language which allowed the data to be less abstract than what might have occurred if only multiple choice questions had been used. McMillan and Schumacher believed that “[v]erbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts, and direct quotes from documents are highly valued as data” (p. 409). Direct quotations from the surveys and focus groups would greatly enhance the clarity of the participants’ meanings. Because the focus groups were electronically recorded as well as notes being taken, an accurate and complete record of the sessions is more likely, thus enhancing its validity. Moreover, member checking was made possible because of using focus groups. The researcher was able to ask for further elaboration and clarification on a participant’s response.

Due to a large response of volunteers, two focus group sessions were held. The first group had four female administrators while the second group had five female administrators. The focus groups were used to supplement the survey answers. The questions were the same or similar to those found in the survey but expanded upon the responses, trying to obtain examples that would help explain the overall responses. The survey was administered at the end of September 2003, once the busy time of the start of school had drawn to a close. The focus group then followed in mid-October, after the responses of the survey had been tabulated. The focus group participants were invited to
view and edit their comments to ensure confidentiality and to protect their privacy. Every focus group participant signed the transcript release form.

Selection of Participants

Because there were only approximately thirty female administrators in this particular urban school system, any random sampling for the survey would have been too small a sample. Instead, a survey was distributed to all those except first year administrators. First-year administrators were not invited to participate because their lack of experience would limit their capacity to answer the questions. Ninety percent of distributed surveys were returned. At the end of each survey, each respondent was asked if she would like to participate in the focus group. Their affirmative answer was sent separately from the survey. From twelve volunteers, nine women participated. The other three could not participate due to scheduling conflicts. In order to comply with ethics guidelines, the cover letter stated that consent was implied if they completed the survey. For the focus group, the same held true. If they came to the focus group meeting, it indicated that they consented to participate. A transcript release form signed by the participants was also required after the focus group recording had been transcribed (see Appendix C). Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and that their comments would be erased completely.

Organization and Preparation of Data

The questions of the survey and the focus group were organized to gain a better understanding if there are commonalities in the experiences, perceptions and qualities of female administrators. The implications of the findings are then presented.
Data from the survey was collected at the end of September 2003. “Tentative analysis begins as the researcher mentally processes many ideas and facts while collecting data” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 406). The results of the surveys were organized into chart form, according to category for easier reference, especially as the data contained so many open-ended questions. The data were analyzed by looking for the recurrences of words and information that might fit the categories found in the literature. After the tabulation of survey results, a focus group was held in mid-October. The purpose of the focus group was to clarify some responses on the survey and to further expand and discuss any of the issues presented. The focus group discussions were taped and notes were taken. “Interviewers must listen hard to assess the progress of the interview and to stay alert for cues about how to move the interview forward as necessary . . . In order to facilitate active listening, in addition to tape-recording the interview, interviewers can take notes” (Seidman, 1998, p. 64). Member checking during the focus groups were done with the participants by asking them to clarify or further expand on their response. Once a transcript of the focus group was completed, it was sent to each of the participants for verification and any final changes needed were made.

The transcripts were then broken down into categories according to the literature and interesting or telling examples were pulled to further clarify the results of the surveys. Again, the researcher looked for common word choices, experiences, and categories that would aid in supplementing the survey responses. The researcher attempted to construct meaningful ways of presenting the data, first by creating graphs and by pulling out direct quotations that might enhance understanding of the responses. Frequency lists were created, especially when analyzing the characteristics the female
administrators listed on the survey, and figures were processed when analyzing items such as how many women had their Master’s degrees or were working on them, and what school size the women were given in their postings. By doing so, the researcher was able to induce interpretations based on the results of the surveys and the focus groups.

Summary

Chapter Three explored the methods that were used for this thesis. The purpose of this thesis was to understand if there are commonalities in the experiences, perceptions and qualities of female administrators. Almost the entire population of female administrators of one school board was surveyed and focus group participants were selected from volunteers. In order to participate, the female administrator must have had at least one year of experience as an administrator.

The findings for this thesis were developed from a survey as well as two focus groups. The questions for both followed the main issues of female administration as outlined in Figure 1 at the end of Chapter Two. Data was tabulated from the survey in chart form and the focus group questions were improved and expanded. Focus group responses were taped with notes written by the researcher. The transcripts were given to participants to verify responses and to make any necessary changes. The transcripts were then analyzed by looking for common words, experiences, themes and categories which were used to supplement and clarify the survey responses.
CHAPTER FOUR

Presentation of data

The purpose of this thesis was to discover if there are some similar characteristics, perceptions and experiences shared by female administrators. The data were collected by means of a survey sent out to all in-school female administrators with a minimum of one year of experience in a particular school board. The survey had a high rate of return, that is, 90% were returned. Participants were invited at the end of the survey to a one-hour focus group session and twelve women volunteered. However, because of conflicting schedules, only nine women were able to participate. In this chapter, the data from the surveys and the focus groups are presented according to category. To identify the respondents in the survey, a number was assigned to each administrator. Pseudonyms were used for the focus group participants to ensure anonymity.

General Demographics

Ten elementary vice principals (VPs) responded to the survey, as did nine elementary principals. Two secondary assistant principals (APs) and two secondary principals also responded. All the administrators had similar levels of experience except for one who had been teaching for less than 10 years. Six women had been teaching for 11 to 15 years, five for 16 to 20, five had 21 to 25 years of experience and six had twenty-five or more years of experience. The majority of these women became administrators between 11 and 20 years of teaching. Five had become administrators before they had taught ten years while three did not become administrators until after 20 years of teaching (see Figures 2 and 3).
The completed levels of education for these women were varied. Both APs had Bachelors of Education (B.Ed) but were currently working on their Master’s degrees. Both high school principals had their Master’s degrees and were not planning on continuing in graduate work. Three VPs had their Master’s degrees in Education, while three more were planning to get their Master’s. Four other VPs were not considering any graduate work. According to the survey responses, seven elementary principals had their Master’s degrees and one indicated that she was currently furthering her education. Two principals did not have their Master’s degrees but one was currently working on it (see Figure 4).
The majority of principals were placed at schools with less than 400 students. The average population of elementary schools in this system is approximately 300 students. Four were at schools of 100+ students, three at schools of 200+ students and two at schools of 300+ students. One principal was posted at a school of 400+ students and one high school principal was at a school of 800-900 students.

The assistant/vice-principals were more equitably located than the principals: Two were at a school of 100+, two were at schools of 200+ students, two were at schools of 300+ students, while four were posted at schools of 400+ students. One VP was at a school of 500+ students and one AP was at a school of 800+ students (see Figure 5). The four high school administrators were all placed at smaller high schools.
Before Administration

Before becoming administrators, 78% of the women surveyed took advantage of other leadership opportunities. The most frequently mentioned opportunities were: participating on committees (7), coaching (6), being a Middle Years’ Team Leader (4) as well as being a Learning Assistance teacher (4) supervising teaching assistants.

Eighty-three percent of the respondents indicated that they had been encouraged to apply for administration. Their largest source of encouragement came from principals and other colleagues. Two respondents mentioned friends or family as encouraging. In the focus groups, participants clarified this. Although most family members did not directly state that these women should consider going into administration, once they heard that the women were thinking about it, the families were, for the most part, supportive. As Christine explained, “I think that my family supported my decision to go
in that direction but they’re not the ones that said, ‘Why don’t you apply for principalship?’”

Some women did mention that their families were not entirely supportive. Courtney stated, “My family was fearful . . . Fearful that the stress would take toll on me. Stressful because being [a minority], I would have a lot of barriers and they didn’t see me as being strong enough to handle those barriers and I proved them wrong and now they’re very, very proud.”

Daphne mentioned that her husband was “mortified”, worried about the time spent away from the family. Yet Daphne felt she had to do this for her children:

I did this a lot for their benefit too in that I thought, you know what, I’m their role model . . . so a lot of this was for them to sort of see that, you know, you never quit learning.

Thirteen percent of the women responded that they had felt discouraged to apply for administration. One respondent wrote that it was mostly self-doubt. Four women mentioned that their administration or superintendents actively discouraged them, stating that they were too young or that they needed to teach in middle years first: “A superintendent, many years ago, told me I needed to be a Grade 8 teacher so I could learn to handle the tough kids” (Respondent #16). Two women also stated that they were frustrated by the tradition of promoting mostly male teachers from middle years.

When asked why they wanted to become administrators in the first place, 44% of the women responded that they felt that they wanted to take on a leadership role. Respondent #7 wrote, “There came a time where I looked around and said, ‘Hey, I could do that!’” For Respondent #14, “It seemed like a natural progression. I love people, students, parents, staff and love to work with them.” Thirty-five percent responded that
they wanted to make a difference, to bring about change: “I thought I could help invoke change in what I believed to be an ‘old boys’ club” (Respondent #22).

I felt that some administrators were managers rather than leaders and I knew I could make a difference. I wanted to see changes occur in schools and at the system level. I have always believed one must be a part of that change rather than sitting by idly. (Respondent #4)

Other reasons mentioned for applying were working with people, the new challenges administration presented, and being a positive role model: “I wanted the challenge. . . I had a vision of how a school operated” (Respondent #3).

“I believe I have to offer a positive role model to students and staff (especially female staff who may be considering a career in administration” (Respondent #16).

In the focus group, the question was altered slightly to find out why the women decided to enter administration when they did. For Betty, she saw that things needed to be changed and wanted to be in a position to bring about those changes. She was also frustrated by what she believed to be incompetent administrators:

I’m passionate about this profession and I love kids and I love teachers and I just thought, ‘You have so much responsibility and you’re not getting it. You shouldn’t be doing this job and I can do your job way better.

For Jennifer, the window of opportunity presented itself and she was not sure if it would come along again. For Alyssa, she too saw the window of opportunity but worried about the timing:

I feel like a bad mom, but timing for me was a little bit difficult. . . I didn’t want to accept the fact that it would probably be better for me as a woman to not do it right away because we were going to start having children. . . I was looking around at the people who were applying at the same time as I was and many of them were young men with children that were very young. . . [It was] the refusal to accept that just because I’m a young mother that I wouldn’t be good.
Barriers to Promotion

Once the decision was made to apply, there were some barriers to overcome. In the survey, only 35% of the respondents mentioned that they had encountered obstacles. It should be noted that, while this was not a comparative study between men and women, the women quite often compared themselves to men. Three respondents mentioned that because they did not golf or play hockey, they had no opportunity to network, unlike many of their male counterparts: “I felt less known in the school division. . . I didn’t play hockey where there is a network created” (Respondent #14). Two women spoke about familial pressures, not wanting to take on an administrative role for fears of a negative impact on their children.

In the focus group, Alyssa spoke of how her pregnancy became an obstacle:

When I was shortlisted, waiting for a position, I was pregnant and a school came up and the superintendent came in and said – this is hundred percent the truth – he said, “To tell you the truth, Alyssa, we’re not giving you this position because it would be inconvenient for us to move you at this time” . . . but if I was a man with a wife that was pregnant – same situation – he’d have gotten that spot.

As for other barriers, one respondent complained in the survey that they saw their male counterparts getting more recognition for the work they did. Two other women wrote that they were thought to be too young and inexperienced: “Being told that I was not ready for a principalship because I had not been in a variety of school settings but when asking for a transfer, being told I was needed in my current school” (Respondent #17).

Mentors and Role Models

The female administrators surveyed were almost evenly divided when it came to having mentors. Eleven women responded that they had mentors, mostly male, although many of these were informal relationships.
In the focus group, Tammy spoke of her experiences: “I think I never really had a formal mentor but I’ve thought of certain teachers and administrators along my career and they haven’t been formally asked, so to speak.”

Betty talked about four female mentors she had:

They’re all basically strong women with very diverse. . . they’re very diverse in their professions and their lives and sometimes how they deal with things but the things that I think united probably all of these people. . . is that they have very strong faith, that they’re wise people and they’ve all made it through really difficult times. . .

When asked if the women found that they were taught a more “masculine” way of administrating by their male mentors, they quickly disagreed. “Maybe then he had female qualities like us,” was one comment. Christine explained, “I would say that he was my mentor because he represented for me the way that I would want to be a principal.” Sheena said that no gender aspect ever dawned on her. Alyssa stated that she was very much aware of stereotypical masculine and feminine leadership styles and actually enjoyed looking for those differences but felt she needed to act in a way that was true to her personality.

Ambition

Increasingly, obtaining a Master’s degree is a requirement for becoming an administrator in the school system. As mentioned earlier in the demographics section, many of the women surveyed either had their Master’s degree (52%) or were pursuing graduate work (30%). This left one elementary school principal and four VPs who stated that they were not planning on obtaining a Master’s degree. A question arose from these data for the focus group: is getting a Master’s degree an indicator of ambition? Sheena quickly disagreed:
I haven’t pursued a Master’s and I won’t pursue a Master’s and I don’t think that that’s an indicator of my ambition or lack of ambition. It’s just something that my professional development takes other avenues and at this stage in my life, that’s not my top priority.

The other participants agreed to a certain extent. Christine thought that it might be an indication of a desire to pursue some kind of new position, but not necessarily an administrative role. For Daphne, she entered graduate school for personal rejuvenation: “You get away from that academic world and I thought to myself, ‘You know, I don’t know if I can write anymore.’ It was almost as if I had lost my confidence.” Courtney obtained her Master’s degree so that she would have more options in her career. Nisha said that when she began her graduate work, people assumed that meant that she would be applying for administration. “So I don’t know if it’s necessarily the people themselves who are in the positions, it’s maybe the people who are on the outside that feel that.” Alyssa was told by her superiors that “the bar has been raised,” and that it was an expectation to have a Master’s. But she was frustrated that there seemed to be a double standard:

When I was starting the Master’s program, I spoke to a male vice principal who told me that he said to the people who were choosing [administrators] that he was never going to pursue [a Master’s]. It was never in the picture. And he went all the way up. . . that code of the bar having been raised, I should have asked more questions. . . because I felt like asking, “For who?” Christine added, “But then they hire people who play hockey perhaps.”

Tammy spoke of the history of the school board’s policy to shoulder tap men to become administrators. She saw that, although the school board’s requirement had changed, they seemed to continue old practices. She also noticed that, for men in particular, once they had their Master’s degree, they assumed that they would easily obtain an administrative position. She concluded by saying that she had never heard a
woman speak that way: “What I find very interesting now is more of an expectation that – and again not from women – more of an expectation, ‘I have my Master’s now, I should become an administrator, because that’s my right. I have the paper.’ I’ve never heard a woman speak that way. Ever.”

Once the women had decided to apply for administrative positions, it did not take many of them very long to be shortlisted. Seventy-seven percent were shortlisted when they applied for the first time (see Figure 6).

*Figure 6: Number of times respondents applied for administrative positions, both VP/AP and principal.*

Only two women noted that gender came up during their interviews. For Tammy, although she has been an administrator for many years, it still rankles. At the time when she applied, there were very few female administrators in the entire school system. At the interview, a male principal asked her how she would feel, as a female, working for a female administrator. She deflected the question by turning it back on the principal, all the while thinking, “Well, there’s my career.” She later approached another applicant to
see if he had been asked that question. “I can still remember the look of absolute horror on his face when I told him.”

Courtney was also asked if she would be able to balance her career with her family life. Betty, however, had a very positive experience. As her interview approached, she began debating whether or not she should bother as she and her husband were planning to start a family. She mentioned this to her superintendent when he was at the school.

I still remember this to this day – he grabbed me by the arm, pulled me into a classroom and he said, “Don’t think like that. Our system has for so many years asked good women to make a choice and we let go of people who would have been the best administrators”. . . he said, “If we are really who we are, then we need to bend to accommodate your needs instead of you bending to accommodate our needs.”

Jennifer said that, although gender was never discussed during her interview, she felt very conscious of being female; “You walk into a room and it’s like there are six, seven men around that table who are all over the age of fifty and you’re sitting there going, ‘Dammit.’ I had to consciously tell myself, ‘I’m not going to let you guys intimidate me.’”

Balance and Support

Once the women obtained their new positions, it became difficult to balance their professional and personal lives. One woman said that, although her children are grown, she still struggles with finding a balance. “I’ve been [ill] which is stress-related too. And I’ve been forced to find balance otherwise I’m making myself sick.”

For Betty:

My family comes first no matter what and so in my head I won’t sacrifice them to be all and to be everything to everybody at school because
the reality is I’m quite replaceable [at work]. . . Sometimes we kind of think we need to martyr ourselves at work and be self-sacrificing and I think women do that a little bit more than men do. . .

Jennifer agreed with Betty but added, “What I’m thinking versus what I’m doing doesn’t necessarily jive together some days. . . so part of it is taking that time to sit back and kind of look at things a little objectively. . .” Tammy took it a step further.

We don’t define ourselves as principal first which I think is – I’m going to make the giant leap – which I think is quite different for men. . . I admire young administrators with young families because. . . there’s always a tear between your kids and the kids at school but we don’t go home to a wife. We don’t go home to a wife!

Nisha summed it up:

So I think that’s a really critical thing, is not giving up everything and just when you get into administration and thinking that you have to just put your heart and soul and everything you have into it because I think there’s nothing left of you at the end of the day if you do that.

Obviously, in order to be able to balance their professional and personal lives, the women needed support. Most of the married women agreed that their partners were their main supporters. Alyssa said that she had a great husband who “tolerates a lot of the stuff. . . I think if I was married to somebody who was also doing what I was doing, we wouldn’t be able to be married. . . So that relationship to me is, well, pretty much keeping everything together.”

Sheena admitted, however, that she internalizes a lot and does not consciously or overtly seek support. Courtney, who is not married, spoke of her experience:

When I became a principal, I knew right away it was difficult to find support because as a teacher, you can go to your teacher peers, as a vice principal, you can go to your principal or other vice principals. As a principal, I seem to go to a couple of particular principals and I rely on my partnership with my assistant principal as well. . . I’ll share basic stories with no names that happened at school. . . to my children. . . but maybe that’s a venting thing. . . I
don’t have a special somebody to go to and I feel like I lack that sometimes. . . So I have to find alternatives and I find that in friends.

Christine mentioned that she also finds support from her colleagues, but admitted that it took a while before she felt comfortable asking them for help.

Isolation/Marginalization

Sixty-five percent of the female administrators surveyed indicated that they do, at times, feel isolated – from colleagues, parents and staff. Many spoke of being misperceived because of their position.

You don’t change but often some people’s perception of you does once you become an administrator. I have only felt this isolation from staff and students. But it is usually due to stereotypes held of administrators. It requires a lot of extra work to try to break down those perceptions. (Respondent #1)

Some staff members thought I had received the job because I was a minority. Others thought I was too young and did not have enough experience. Some thought a woman could not do as good a job as a man. (Respondent #20)

One administrator complained that her work caused her to become isolated from the staff. “My leadership role does not allow me the time I would like to spend with staff in the casual, informal setting of the staffroom” (Respondent #18).

Other women saw their gender as a cause of isolation:

Early in my principalship I felt ‘out of the loop’, a girl principal, not a real principal. . . A male Parent Council President was dismissive and rude. He seemed to try to control me by shouting and pounding his fist on the table when he disagreed with a school decision I had made, that is, I had changed the day the newsletter went home. (Respondent #3)

One administrator wrote that she felt isolated from other female administrators:

I have received tremendous support from other administrators. At the secondary level, the male administrators and I work well together. What is lacking is the opportunity to network with other female administrators. (Respondent #9)
Overall, most female administrators said that they felt isolated from their staff, and at times, the parents of the community.

**Challenging Rules and Traditions**

As female administrators become more comfortable and settled in their roles, they begin to take risks in challenging the traditions and rules of the school system. Sixty-one percent of the women surveyed said that they had challenged how things were being done. More often than not, when they saw that a method or policy was not working, they would question it. Respondent #1 said that she fought against hiring someone just because the applicant was a woman. Respondent #4 wrote about how she challenged a superintendent about an excellent teacher who was not hired on permanently. Two women (#2 and #10) were frustrated that golf was always the automatic recreational activity at the annual fall seminars. Respondent #19 wrote that, “simply being a female administrator” was challenge enough.

In the focus groups, some specific occurrences of challenging traditions and policies were discussed. Christine spoke of how she disagreed with the school board’s handling of banked time (time owed for overtime work) for teaching assistants.

> I think I can do it internally in a way that’s much more positive and team building and probably even cheaper if they would just let me do it internally. So I do. . . I’ve tried it their way and I just found it causes problems and rifts and people watching over other people’s shoulders. . . I’ve always had a very honest conversation with the teacher assistants. . .

Alyssa talked about trying to change her school’s tradition of taking the students skiing for the day. She had many concerns about the legalities in case there was an accident. She encountered a great deal of resistance from the staff who said that it was what they had always done.
I still tried to be a servant leader with it and I struggled with that, I really did... That whole servant leadership, I could have thrown it out the window that day... because they still wanted to and then I just felt sick that whole ski day... Some women said that it was often easier to go ahead and do something as they wanted to and ask for forgiveness after. Unfortunately, being tagged with a negative title was quite often the consequence. Courtney bluntly said,

> Maybe it is my personal experiences of being a female administrator, but it’s very hard to seek forgiveness from the staff when you want to change something or if you changed something from the top down because you need or you had to. And it’s very easy to be called a bitch and I don’t see male administrators being sworn at or being called names but yet, being a female administrator, it’s very easy to get names tagged to your position. In all my years of teaching... I have never encountered male bashing as much as I see female administrative bashing.

Both focus groups brought up this topic of “name-tagging”, without any prompting. Although this did not appear in the literature, it was important enough to be noted in the data. This serves as an indicator that women might not be acting differently from their male counterparts, but people’s interpretation of how they act certainly is different.

**Leadership Style**

In the survey, the female administrators were asked what leadership style they used. It should be noted that this is how they perceived themselves to be. A collaborative style was the most mentioned (11), as well as seeing themselves as being part of a team with the staff (8). Being a servant leader to staff, students and the community was also important to some women: “Though the term ‘servant leader’ may seem overused, that is what I strive for. Surrounding yourself with people who believe in what is important makes leadership easy!” (Respondent #9)

Many of the respondents felt that a positive, trusting, and open relationship was needed with the staff:
“My priority is to build a relationship with the people around me to establish a level of trust” (Respondent #17).

“It is very important to me to support and encourage others and being creative in ways to do so” (Respondent #18).

“I do not hide behind a desk because I believe it represents too much authority and my door is always open” (Respondent #21).

“I try to be encouraging. I very much believe that affirmation, not criticism, improves performance” (Respondent #3).

Other styles mentioned in the survey were having kindness and respect, being empowering, leading by example, and having a good sense of humour.

Decision-making

Overwhelmingly, 83% of the administrators surveyed replied that they used consensus and collaboration when making major decisions in the school. It should be noted that, because half of these women are VPs or APs, they must follow the example of their principals. Two respondents did mention that it depended on the situation and the type of decision being made. Five women stated that the administrative team made most decisions and two responded that the principal made all the decisions. A few women noted that they or the administrative team as a whole would indicate to the staff the direction they would like to take but ultimately used a democratic method for decision-making (see Figure 7).
Figure 7: Number of responses according to how major decisions are made.

Administrative Qualities

When asked what qualities they brought to their administrative role, the women used fifty-one adjectives in total to describe themselves. Their perceptions ranged from hardworking, being good with a budget and being organized to being caring, gentle, nurturing and compassionate. The top qualities mentioned were: being organized (11), enjoying people, especially children (11), having a sense of humour (9), being a good listener (8), being compassionate (7), life-long learning (5), being committed to education (4), being good communicators (4), and being collaborative (4).

In the focus group, the women were asked what qualities they felt female administrators brought to their position. Again, the administrators began comparing themselves to men. Courtney and Christine both thought that women tended to be better at multi-tasking. Sheena thought that women are more nurturing and more collaborative
in general. Courtney also added, “I’ve been told I have more patience. I’m willing to sit
and listen and talk things out.”

Alyssa responded to Courtney’s statement:

I’ve noticed that, from my experience, male administrators tend to really hate when they don’t have the answer right away and that the rule isn’t already set whereas females tend to not appear to mind so much that they don’t have the answers . . . so it’s kind of like a bit more of a bottom up style whereas the male . . . would like to have that rule set out right away because they’re in control . . .

Sheena jumped in: “You said an important word too: control. I think generally speaking,

women tend to be more relaxed in terms of not having a need for control.

They’re in control, but not controlling.”

Christine: And I don’t feel threatened by somebody knowing more than I do. At all.

Tammy spoke about being a good listener as well:

It’s not just with male or female staff but talking, working in different relationships with two men before, the things that would be told to you as a female administrator would not be told to them . . . the concerns that might be personal or family . . . maybe it’s because they see the role, I mean, there’s still the mother [image] . . . I don’t think in my life I would’ve gone up to a male administrator and told them something . . .

Betty: I’ve had a lot of tears shed in my office.

Tammy: I wouldn’t have cried in front of a male administrator if my life depended on it.

Daphne: They probably couldn’t have handled it.

Betty continued about the mothering, intuitive instinct:

I think we’re . . . it’s all generalizations but . . . stronger at being empathetic. That we pick up on subtleties if someone’s having a bad day . . . that’s our mother instinct.

Nisha: I think lots of times too when I’m dealing with students . . . I think about my own kids and how I would want them to be treated and yet, interestingly, talking to my husband, you know, he sees other people’s kids as other people’s kids and our kids are his . . . He doesn’t have the same
compassion that I do in that respect. . . . I do think that, very often, women look at it from a mother’s perspective.

Imposed Expectations

The participants of the focus group were also asked if they ever needed to use what are considered traditionally “masculine” qualities as an administrator. Courtney, Jennifer, and Daphne said, although they didn’t feel like they had to be more masculine, sometimes it was expected of them. Daphne said that one school in particular demonstrated what the community expected of men and women:

I think I was the first female vice principal in that school and so the community wasn’t quite ready. . . . And some of them were really upfront and said, “Well, you know, we think you shouldn’t be teaching at grade seven. You should be teaching a grade three room and he should be teaching in here and it must be very difficult for you to be the vice principal.” They sort of, like, project what they believe you should be like because they’re not ready for that.

Courtney also commented on community expectations:

I didn’t think that I had to use more masculine qualities but it’s the people that deal with. They expect those qualities from you and when I encounter some people, they are shocked that I am female, first of all because they think my assistant principal is the principal because they expect someone masculine and they also make a statement such as, “Oh, you’re so young to be a principal of a high school.” What, do I have to be 60 to be a female administrator at the high school level?

Nisha also spoke about the age versus gender issue:

. . . I don’t think it’s so much masculine or feminine qualities but what I found confusing last year . . . was an age thing. . . . There was the respect – [It] was slightly different because of someone who is, you know, 55 plus male versus someone who is 34, you know, female and [I] even have parents comment to me, “Well, you know, you’re younger than me so how would you know this?” I was taking that as a female thing, but really, it was an age thing and I think sometimes maybe we do confuse the two.”

Tammy was not convinced if men and women even had exclusive qualities:

[There are] some male administrators who could be termed as having more
female characteristics . . . but if what determines male or female is caring and compassion . . . then we have some difficulties. . . I would rather we just thought this is what we need to do in this situation, male or female.

Betty firmly believed that the qualities that make her a woman are also her greatest qualities as an administrator, but she too questioned the North American perception of what is “feminine” and what is “masculine”:

There’s a fellow who was kind of your stereotypical guy’s guy and his way of dealing with things – he’s got a huge heart – but his way of dealing with things is always through confrontation and the touchy-feely talking. . . wasn’t what he was comfortable initially dealing with, but watching him grow and learn and take more [graduate] classes. . . We had this really neat conversation this summer and he said, “I’m finally getting it. . . seeing how the feminine side of leadership. . . There’s something a lot more to it than what we guys have been doing all along. . .” I mean, even in our grad study classes, that’s what they are talking about, that feminine side that men and women all share and we all share those masculine traits, but in society, we’ve identified them as being gender issues but they’re not. . .

Alyssa said that it came down to being true to your own personality. “I don’t think I could adopt those [traits] if they weren’t me and pull it off as a together administrator. . . It wouldn’t work and I think the kids would see that. . .”

Being Treated Differently

Towards the end of the session, the women participating in the focus groups were asked if they felt they were ever treated differently because they were female. All participants agreed. However, their experiences ranged from the positive, where they felt people were a little more careful and nicer, as expressed by Daphne: “They don’t want to make you cry,” all the way to the negative where parents felt like they could be pushier, even bullying, with female administrators.

Christine, Alyssa and Courtney all had negative experiences dealing with contractors and the system’s building service workers, like painters, carpenters and
maintenance people. As Christine revealed, “I think when I give explicit directions, I’m more apt to get that title [of ‘bitch’]. I don’t think a man gets that title. I really don’t.” Alyssa agreed. She said that when a male administrator walks down a hallway with a male caretaker or repairman, they seem like buddies, pointing at different things that need fixing. She felt that when she worked with the service people, she felt awkward, like she was giving them orders. “I think the males expect the kind of buddy sort of way or maybe they respond to it a little bit more, but both caretakers that work where I was administrator did not respect me.”

Courtney had a similar story:

One time we were doing the library painting and they wanted one colour and I said, “No, you’re not putting that colour in the library. I want this colour.” Finally I got my way. . . The painters were in the library and I didn’t introduce myself. I just went in and I said, “Oh, how’s the painting going?” “Oh that damn Courtney finally made up her mind.” And I said, “And how do you feel about that?” Kind of leading them in conversation. All of a sudden, the intercom said, “Courtney, you’re wanted in the office.” And I said, “Oh, I’d better go. I have a phone call.” His face changed ten shades of red! . . . And I’ve heard that, exactly that on renovations, “finally made up her mind.” I never changed my mind.

Some female administrators said that they also encountered difficulties with some parents who were not prepared to accept them in that role. One respondent in the survey wrote about a meeting she had with an angry male parent and her male vice principal. The parent kept directing his conversation to the VP. Luckily, she wrote, her VP was sensitive to the situation: “While the parent spoke to him, my VP waited for me to respond until the parent began to understand” (Respondent #14).

Daphne, Courtney, and Christine also recognized that there are some cultural issues at play:
There was an immigrant family where women don’t have any authority in that country and [the father] demanded to speak to the principal. I introduced myself. He stated, “I want to speak to the principal.” I said, “I am the principal.” “No, I want to speak to the male principal.” “No, I am the principal. I am the only one.” And he just outright said, “Women can’t hold those positions,” and left with his kids. (Courtney)

Summary

This section represents an overview of the individual perceptions of the respondents and focus group participants in relation to the research questions. The data were collected during the fall of 2003 through surveys and focus groups. Comparisons and contrasts were drawn from the data.

In this school board, female administrators are in the minority when compared to men, almost three to one. Most of the administrators surveyed had their Master’s degrees or were currently working in graduate school. The majority of female principals worked in smaller schools, while the vice principals were found throughout schools of varying sizes.

Most of the women surveyed did gain leadership experience before applying for administration. The majority of women had been encouraged by their principals to apply for administration. Few women surveyed encountered any barriers in becoming administrators. The female administrators were evenly divided into those who had mentors and those who did not. When applying for administration, most women were shortlisted on the first try. A few women were questioned about gender issues in their interviews. Most of the women have had difficulty trying to maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives. The majority of the women surveyed indicated that they felt isolated in their role as administrator, mostly from staff and students. Many
women, as they gained experience and confidence, began to challenge the traditions and rules of the school system.

The collaborative style of leadership was the most preferred by the survey respondents. Keeping with their preferred leadership style, the majority of the women surveyed used consensus and collaboration in decision-making.

The most popular qualities that the women felt they brought to their role were being organized, enjoying people, having a sense of humour, being good listeners, good communicators, and compassionate. The women in the focus groups did not feel like they needed to use more traditional “masculine” qualities but said that it was sometimes expected of them. All the women agreed that they have been treated differently because they are female.
CHAPTER 5

Overview, discussion, and implications

The purpose of this thesis was to discover if there are some commonalities in the experiences, perceptions, and characteristics of in-school administrators. A survey was administered to 26 administrators in September of 2003 which included both multiple choice and open-ended questions. Two focus group sessions followed in October, involving nine women. The focus group questions were similar to and expanded upon the survey questions. This chapter reviews the research relating to the commonalities in characteristics, perceptions and experiences of in-school female administrators, presents an overview of the findings, and discusses the implications of these findings. Recommendations for research and practice conclude the chapter.

Overview

The purpose of this thesis was to gather information on whether or not there are commonalities in the experiences, perceptions, and characteristics of in-school female administrators. The research questions dealt with this topic with five specific areas. This section discusses the findings of both the surveys and the focus group sessions.

1. Is there a commonality of experiences among female school administrators?

There were many similarities among the respondents and focus group participants. Most female administrators in this particular school system had been teaching for over eleven years and had become administrators between 11 and 20 years into their careers. In this system, female administrators are definitely in the minority when compared to men, almost three to one. Most of the administrators surveyed had their Master’s degrees or were working towards that goal. The majority of female
principals worked in smaller schools, while the vice principals were located throughout schools of varying size.

Few women surveyed reported any barriers in becoming administrators. A major obstacle was being unable to network because of the school system’s tradition of hosting hockey and golf tournaments as recreational activities. Other barriers included family pressures, being pregnant, and seeing male counterparts being more recognized for their work.

When applying for administration, most women were shortlisted on the first try. Two women were questioned about gender issues in their interviews. This was not viewed as a positive experience.

These women admit that they have difficulty trying to maintain a balance between their personal lives and their professional ones. One has even become ill because of the stress of her position. But ultimately, they agreed that they need to learn to let go and understand that they are replaceable. One principal said that was harder for women to do because they do not go home to the traditional wife who has done all the cooking and cleaning.

Partners played a very important role in supporting these women in their careers. Many said that if it were not for their partners, they would not be able to do their jobs. The unmarried women found it harder to get support, turning instead to their mentors and friends. Some female administrators also went to their colleagues for help, but it took time to become comfortable enough to do so.

The majority of the women surveyed indicated that they felt isolated in their role as administrator, mostly from staff and students. This was due more to the stereotypical
view that people have of administrators in general. The workload of administrators was also another cause of isolation, preventing the women from interacting informally with the staff at lunch time or at breaks. Their female gender also became a factor for isolation for many women who felt that they needed more opportunities to network with other female administrators.

Many women, once comfortable in their administrative roles, began to challenge the traditions and policies of the school system. Some women felt that the system’s methods were too bureaucratic and formal. Some had tried to change the traditions of their school. Many of them do what they need to and ask for forgiveness later. One principal mentioned that when women do bring about change, they are often subject to name calling unlike their male colleagues.

All the women agreed that they have been treated differently because they are female. While some saw it as positive, other women had had negative experiences associated with this. People were more pushy and aggressive when dealing with female administrators. Some women had also encountered difficulties with contractors, caretakers and building service people, feeling like there was a lack of respect on the part of the service workers. Again, the issue of name calling was brought up. Women who give directions are not seen the same as men who give orders. Parents also treated them differently, but some of this could have been due to cultural issues for families that had moved to Canada from places where women do not have equal status.

Most of the women surveyed did take advantage of leadership opportunities before applying for administration. The most popular choices were sitting on committees, being Middle Years Team leaders and coaching. The majority of women had been
encouraged by their principals and colleagues to apply for administration, while the family quietly supported their decisions. Those women who were discouraged faced self-doubt, resistance from their superiors, and the traditions of the school board hiring male middle years teachers.

Most women applied for administration to take on a leadership role, to bring about change, and to be a role model for others. Some of the participants in the focus group said that timing was an issue for them, mostly due to family pressures. Some women felt that they needed to wait to apply so that they could raise their own children first. Other women were compelled to take on the challenge of raising a young family while being an administrator because they saw their male counterparts being able to do so.

2. What kind of mentors or role models do female administrators have before and during their administrative experience?

The female administrators were evenly divided into those that had mentors and those that did not. A majority of women had male mentors but did not think that this caused them to manage in a more traditionally masculine way. They also noted that most of these relationships were informal ones.

3. What qualities do female administrators share?

The collaborative style of leadership was by far the most preferred by the survey respondents. Women see themselves as being on a team with their staff as well as being servants to their staff, students and parents. They indicated that positive, trusting, and open relationships are necessary in order to be successful as well as having a good sense of humour.
In keeping with their leadership style, the overwhelming majority of the women surveyed believed that they used consensus and collaboration in decision-making. Though it depended on the type of decision as well as the type of situation, most administrative teams did include staff when making decisions. Only two women elementary vice principals wrote that the principal in their schools alone made the decisions. Other women noted that the administrative team usually gave the staff direction and guidance when making major decisions.

Out of 51 adjectives given by the respondents, the most popular qualities that the women felt they brought to their role were being organized, enjoying people, having a sense of humour, being good listeners, good communicators, and compassionate, being committed to life-long learning and education as well as being collaborative.

In the focus groups, the participants felt that women were better multi-taskers, more nurturing and compassionate. They tend to rely on a mothering instinct that most people tend to respond to. As a result, the women have been told things that, they believe, most male administrators would not hear about. The women also felt that women do not have the need for control that they saw men needing. The women compared themselves to men without prompting from the researcher.

4. What are female administrators’ perceptions of power?

This question ultimately proved difficult to answer as most women were unable to put words to what they felt about power. These are ambitious women and others might see this reflected in the desire to go to graduate school. The focus group participants did not see that getting their Master’s degrees might be an indicator of ambition, but they did recognize that others saw it as a step on the road to promotion. Some women thought that
pursuing graduate work might help in obtaining new positions, but not necessarily administrative ones. Other women said that they returned to school for personal rejuvenation. Because this system now has a policy of requiring administrators to have a Master’s degree, the women feel the pressure to go back to school. However, one wondered if there was a double standard as many men are being hired who do not have their Master’s degrees. The women also noted that men seemed to assume that getting a Master’s meant an automatic promotion, whereas they had not heard women speaking like that.

The top leadership style listed by the survey respondents was that of collaboration. The women used words like “empowerment”, and “team player” to describe themselves. Many said they did not like a top-down approach and preferred having an open and trusting relationship with their staff. The focus group participants mentioned that they did not feel the need to be controlling. They saw that men often had a need to know all the answers and to make sure the rules were laid down before proceeding in any situation. The participants did not feel threatened by someone else’s knowledge or apparent power. Instead, the women were content to know that they had some control, but were not controlling.

The women also preferred avoiding bureaucratic policies, preferring to do things as they saw fit. As Christine had mentioned, the top-down approach of the teacher assistant bank time policy of the school board served to make everyone tense. She used a more relational approach to the situation which she felt developed more trust and honesty.
5. Do women administrators adopt the norms of a primarily male profession?

The women in the focus groups did not feel they needed to use more traditional “masculine” qualities but said that it was sometimes expected of them, especially by the community. They also noted that age played a factor. They encountered perceptions that female administrators had to be older in order to be successful. Some of the women said that it was society that was defining their qualities as male or female, but most successful administrators shared similar qualities. Many believed that it all came down to being true to yourself.

Discussion

This study presented whether or not there are some commonalities in the characteristics, perceptions, and experiences shared by female in-school administrators. The survey and focus group sessions provided data that were used to respond to the five research questions as presented in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature pertaining to the area of the commonalities and shared experiences of female administrators. This section discusses the relationship between the collected data and the literature review.

According to the literature, gender socialization plays a powerful role in the career choices of women. Women are taught from an early age that only men can hold positions of authority (Limerick & Anderson, 1999). For women with children, there are familial pressures with which they must contend (Diubaldo, 1994; Smulyan, 2000). For the female administrators who participated in this study, they did not question that they could not hold a position of authority. More likely, the women worried that it was the superintendent and the school board trustees who believed that women could not hold these positions. Most women acknowledged, however, that they faced pressure to put
their career ambitions on hold until their children were older. Some women chose to wait until their own children were teenagers before applying for administration. Young administrators felt guilty for spending so much time away from their families. Diubolado (1994) found in his study that, although women had the same career ambitions as men, because they were the primary caregivers, they would not be willing to take part in certain activities that might help advance their careers. The participants of this study tried to do what was expected of them but also tried very hard to balance their work with their personal lives. Most married women relied heavily on the support of their partners to maintain this balance. Yet, at times, it was the school board that put pressure on the women about their families. Alyssa lost an administrative posting because her pregnancy was “inconvenient” for the school board, as she would be going on maternity leave in just a few months. Betty almost talked herself out of becoming an administrator, just before her interview, because she thought it would cause too many problems if she became pregnant. Luckily, a sensitive male superintendent encouraged her to continue.

A common belief found in the literature was that women faced a different male-dominated world when they entered administration. For certain respondents, they quite often felt out of the loop or not a real administrator because they were female. Another respondent bemoaned the fact that there was no opportunity to network with other female administrators. Yet, when asked if they needed to behave in a more masculine way, the focus group participants quickly and vehemently disagreed. But they admitted that other people, including the students, expected them to behave more “masculine”. The majority of these women were proud to be female, some going even as far as to say that being female made them better administrators. This is quite in contrast with the female
headteacher, in Reay and Ball’s (2000) case study, who equated feminine ways of thinking with unprofessionalism. Yet some of the women were more apt to agree with the belief that there is no specific female or male way of doing things (Collard, 2001; Smulyan, 2000). They believed that the way an administrator acted depended on the context of the situation. Instead, as Smulyan (2000) stated, gender was but one of the many influences on an administrator’s style.

Mentorship for women, according to Tabin and Coleman (1993), is important for advancement yet difficult to find. Most women do not have mentors. In this particular school system in the study, there is no formal mentorship program in place for aspiring administrators. Thus, women who did desire a mentor must do so informally. Surprisingly, the women were almost evenly divided into those who had mentors and those who did not. For women who did have mentors, they were informal relationships, usually with a male administrator. But again, these women disagreed that this caused the women to act in stereotypical ways as an administrator. Instead, the women believed that they chose mentors who reflected how the women wanted to be. Gender never really entered the equation. While research shows that mentorship is essential for advancement, these women were obviously successful with or without mentors.

Sergiovanni (1999) found that, although half of the Master’s degrees in New York State in 1988 were held by women, only a small number of high school principals and elementary school principals were women. Half of the women surveyed in this study had their Master’s and a quarter more women were working on their Master’s. A minority of four women did not plan to obtain their Master’s degree. The women believed that some
men, once achieving their Master’s, felt that they should automatically be promoted. The women felt that this was true of many males, but not necessarily females.

While the school system has promoted an equity policy to see more women in administrative positions, some of the women still face barriers. However, it should be noted that the majority of survey respondents did not feel that they had faced any barriers, nor were they actively discouraged from applying. This is similar to a study done by Gill (1995) who asked female administrators in New Brunswick if they had faced any barriers. Most said no. Yet, there are a few problem areas for some women. Many mentioned that because they did not play hockey or golf unlike many of their male counterparts, the women found it difficult to network before and after becoming administrators.

Dardaine-Ragguet et al (1994) stated that there seemed to be a distinct pattern of discrimination against women, even those who had all the proper qualifications. Although many women responded that they had not been discouraged, a few women were outright told by their principals and superintendents that they should not apply for administration. A few of the survey respondents mentioned that they were told they were too young and inexperienced, but when the women asked to be transferred in order to gain multiple school experience, they were denied.

Another barrier frequently mentioned in the literature is the belief that women are incapable of handling the authority of an administrative position (Shermann, 2000; Smulyan, 2000). Women are seen to be not tough enough to elicit the needed respect of students, staff and parents. Gill (1995) wrote that, while the female administrators she studied in New Brunswick thought themselves quite capable of handling discipline, there
was a belief from others that the women would not be able to handle the pressures of discipline. Ironically, Shakeshaft (1987) pointed out that women are better at maintaining discipline than men. The focus group participants brought this issue up. The elementary school VP’s and principals all mentioned that there was a perception that, in order to become an administrator, one needed to teach middle years. One principal spoke of her experience as a VP when parents questioned her ability to handle discipline. They outright told her that she should be teaching grade three. Another VP had questioned her superintendent about whether or not the school board preferred middle years’ teachers as administrators. While he said that was not true, he did say that a VP needed experience handling the “tough” kids. This implied that it was easy to teach in the primary levels, as the students are not yet “tough”. The focus group participants felt that many of the male administrators and superintendents were afraid of, or at least uncomfortable with, the younger students. Another expectation that frustrated the participants was the tradition that any VP, once promoted, had to teach at the middle years’ level. Again, the women felt that this was unfair, especially since many had been trained at the primary level.

Reis et al. (1999) discovered that gender equity programs seem to be aiding to increase the overall numbers of female administrators. In the case of this particular school system, the majority of women were shortlisted after their first application to administration. Yet gender continued to be an issue, even in the interviews. Two women were asked questions concerning their gender. Obviously, the members of the interview committee need to be re-educated about the legalities of their questioning. Another woman faced a panel of five or six men, all over the age of 50, in her interview and had to work at not being intimidated.
A drawback of gender equity policies is the perception that women are hired merely because of their gender and not necessarily for their talents (Gill, 1995). They face the pressures of “tokenism” (Smulyan, 2000). This was certainly true for the survey respondents. Sixty-five percent of the female administrators at times felt isolated from their colleagues, students, and parents. The women felt that they had not changed but that people’s perception of them had. Some women felt like outsiders in an Old Boys’ club. Others felt isolated from their staff, as if an invisible line had been drawn. Some women mentioned that they were quite often not included in after-school get-togethers. Jealousy in colleagues arose when women were promoted and beliefs persisted that they had received the position for reasons other than their qualifications and talents. Again, many of the women felt isolated from other women, especially at the secondary level. They wished to see some form of networking developed for female administrators.

Demographically, the female administrators who participated in this study are very similar to the findings in the literature. The majority of the women are white and had over 15 years of teaching experience. Many had grown children of their own. This is comparable to the women in Clark’s (1995), Gill’s (1995), Joy’s (1998), and Smulyan’s (2000) studies. According to Fennell (1999b), female administrators had taken advantage of various leadership opportunities before being promoted. The women of this study were no different. They had participated on several committees, had acted as Middle Years’ team leaders and had coached. Several researchers such as Dardaine-Ragguet et al. (1994) and Reynolds (2002) found that the majority of female administrators work at the elementary level. In this study, only four of the 23 respondents worked at the secondary level. Sergiovanni (1999) stated that most female administrators were located at smaller
schools. This was certainly true for the female principals in this study. The average size of elementary schools in this particular system is around 300 students. Most of the female principals who participated in the study were found in schools of 100-200. At the high school level, one principal and an assistant principal were located at schools of 800-900 students. One principal was at an alternate high school of less than 100 students and the other assistant principal was also located at an alternate high school of approximately 200 students. All of these high schools are the smallest in the system.

Using Shakeshaft’s (1987) “The Female World” as a basis for analysis, it is readily apparent that the female administrators in this study fit in very easily with her characterizations:

1. *Relationships with others are central to all actions of women administrators.*

Without a doubt, most of the respondents reflected this characteristic. When asked for their leadership style, nearly half the women responded that they preferred collaboration. They saw themselves as part of a team with the staff. Some women also indicated that servant leadership played a role in their style, that is, their primary role is to facilitate the teaching and learning process for teachers, students and parents. The women felt that a positive, trusting and open relationship with staff was a priority for them. In listing characteristics that the women believed they had, “enjoying people” was the most frequently mentioned characteristic. They also believed that they were good listeners, compassionate, and good communicators.

2. *Teaching and learning are the major foci of women administrators.*
When asked why they became administrators, many of the respondents wrote that they wanted to bring about change in order to improve education for children. They felt that many administrators were managers, not educational leaders and believed they could do better. When asked to list their qualities, many female administrators wrote that they believed in life-long learning and were committed to education. For the focus group participants, some had returned to their own education, not merely to get the required qualifications to become administrators, but for reasons like personal rejuvenation.

3. Building community is an essential part of a woman administrator’s style.

In the survey, most respondents perceived themselves as having a collaborative style or seeing themselves as team players or team leaders of their staff. They saw the relationship with their staff as a high priority. They believed in encouraging and affirming the work of their colleagues and that trust plays an important part in building community.

The female administrators in this study preferred consensus and collaboration in decision-making. Rarely was a decision made in a top-down style. The administrators admitted that some decisions depended on the situation but felt that, overall, the staff should have a say. Some women mentioned that their administrative team also worked together in decision-making. At times, they did feel compelled to indicate a certain direction that they would like to see the staff take in decision-making.

4. Marginality overlays the daily worklife of women administrators.

Sixty-five percent of the survey respondents agreed that, at times, they felt marginalized. Mostly, they felt isolated from their staff. The women knew that it was partially due to the stereotypes that people hold of administrators in general. Their
workload also kept them isolated, preventing them from socializing with the staff at lunch or after school. Finally, some women said that their gender caused marginalization. They felt isolated from the male administrators, as if they were not real administrators. They also felt isolated from one another and wished they had some kind of network.

The administrators in this study did believe that they were often treated differently because they were women. Some women felt that they were treated more gently by certain groups of people, while others saw a more negative impact. One administrator were treated differently by parents who perhaps thought that, by being more aggressive, they could intimidate the women into going along with parental desires. Other female administrators saw a lack of respect from service workers who seemed to have a friendlier relationship with male administrators. As a result of being treated differently, the women were feeling marginalized.

5. The line separating the public world from the private is blurred.

The focus group participants agreed that it was difficult to find a balance between their career and their private lives. One woman has become ill due to the stress of her work. Other women feel torn – do they sacrifice their family life for their career or vice versa? Ultimately, the women do come to an understanding with themselves. Nisha sets a certain amount of time aside to work and when that time is up, she lets it go until the next day. Betty believed that she is replaceable in her administrative position, but not as a mother. The women agreed that they are in a difficult position because, as Tammy put it, they do not go home to a wife. This means that they still consider themselves the primary caregiver to their children as well as maintaining the household. Partners do play an important role as an informal support system for these women, but they have had to
compromise. For example, Nisha, who is doing her graduate work, has promised her husband that, once she is done, he will go back to school, requiring some sacrifice on her part.

The focus group participants also felt that who they were as women caused them to treat their students differently. They said that they quite often think of how they would want their own children to be treated when dealing with students. The women believed that their husbands made a distinction between “their children” and “other people’s children”.

Tabin and Coleman (1993) wrote that women had special feminine skills such as intuition, nurturing, and compassion. Young (1994) referred to these as “women’s ways”. Without any prompting, the women in this study used those exact words. The focus group participant, Sheena, thought that women were nurturing and collaborative. Courtney stated that women were good communicators and listeners. When the women compared themselves to men, they felt that they did not need to know the answers right away and that they did not need to control the situation. Betty thought that intuition helped women sense a situation better than men and that their nurturing instinct allowed people to open up to them, something which might not happen with male administrators.

According to researchers, like Limerick and Anderson (1999), Reay and Ball (2000), Shantz (1993), and Shermann (2000), women tend to adopt a less top-down approach, are more relational and more flexible in the problem-solving process. Female administrators value people (Fennell, 1999b) and see themselves as servant leaders (Sergiovanni, 1999). They are committed to teamwork (Collard, 2001) and are open and supportive (Koll et al., 1996). Again, the women in this study seem to fit these descriptions, describing
themselves as collaborative, team players, and servant leaders. They wanted to develop an open, trusting relationship with their staff. They believed in staff input in decision-making. A specific example of flexibility in problem-solving was Christine’s desire to handle teacher assistant banked time on her own. She felt that, not only was her system better than the one proposed by the school board, but it allowed her a better, more honest relationship with the teacher assistants.

Limerick and Anderson (1999) and Fennell (1999b) also discovered that women administrators tried to challenge the traditions of their school boards. This was certainly true of many women in this study. Sixty-one percent of survey respondents indicated that they had challenged the practices of both their schools and their school board. One interesting point that emerged was that some women found it easier to ask for forgiveness after the fact rather than waiting for permission to do something. This is almost word for word what Reynolds (2002) found in her research involving female administrators from the 1950s and 1960s: “Several commented that it was more effective to ask forgiveness than to ask for permission” (p. 43).

Yet for all of these similarities that women administrators seem to share, the focus group participants felt that they did not have a monopoly on what are traditionally considered to be “feminine” characteristics. But nor did they see themselves as Reay and Ball (2000) suggested – that they have more in common with men than with other women. For example, when asked if, because they had male mentors, they acted in a more “masculine” way, the women strongly disagreed, saying that how their mentor administered was how they wanted to be. Gender did not seem to play a part in this. The women agreed that, instead, the way they acted in their position was dependent upon the
situation, reflecting the idea of Collard (2001) that how people lead depends on the context, rather than internal personality traits.

The research of this study revealed similarities between what is found in the literature and the beliefs of the women surveyed. Shermann (2000) and Reay and Ball (2000) both argued that women view power as nurturing or as empowering others. Again, the women involved with this study saw themselves as team players. They believed in empowering others. In the focus groups, it was mentioned that women are more “relaxed” in not having a need for control. They can be in control without being controlling. They also did not feel threatened by the perception of someone else having more power than themselves. For a comprehensive view of this discussion, please refer to Figure 8. This chart reveals what literature supports or does not support each category or school of thought. The New Contribution column indicates what new information came out of this study or what contradicted the literature in general.

*Figure 8: Summary of categories and literature in agreement or not in agreement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/School of Thought</th>
<th>Literature Supporting</th>
<th>Literature Not Supporting</th>
<th>New Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender Socialization: Female Ideals</td>
<td>Regan &amp; Brooks (1995)</td>
<td>Limerick &amp; Anderson (1999)</td>
<td>Women did not see themselves as different. It was others’ perceptions of them that made them feel different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Literature Supporting</td>
<td>Literature Not Supporting</td>
<td>New Contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Men In Skirts”</td>
<td>Joy (1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martin (1993)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reay &amp; Ball (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>Acker (1999a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Context</td>
<td>Collard (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smulyan (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors/Networking</td>
<td>Tabin &amp; Coleman (1993)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fleming (1991)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shermann (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hicks (1996)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Promotion</td>
<td>Dardaine-Ragguet et al (1994)</td>
<td>Reis et al (1999)</td>
<td>Women are not encountering the barriers as found in the literature with the exception of familial pressures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joy (1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sergiovanni (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shermann (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smulyan (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gill (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shakeshaft (1987)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limerick &amp; Anderson (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics Of Female</td>
<td>Clark (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators/Masculine vs.</td>
<td>Gill (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Joy (1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smulyan (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fennell (1999b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dardaine-Ragguet et al (1994)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reynolds (2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sergiovanni (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Figure 8: Summary of categories and literature in agreement or not in agreement (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Literature Supporting</th>
<th>Literature Not Supporting</th>
<th>New Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Styles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakeshaft (1987)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabin &amp; Colman (1993)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young (1994)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick &amp; Anderson (1993)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reay &amp; Ball (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collard (2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shantz (1993)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherman (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergiovanni (1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions Of Power</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doing graduate work as an indication of ambition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fennell (1999a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baudoux (1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherman (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reay &amp; Ball (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fennell (1999b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smulyan (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public/Persnal Perceptions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s perceptions of themselves did not usually coincide with public conceptions. Their actions were at times wrongly interpreted. “Name-tagging” often resulted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Implications

What does this all mean? It would appear, based on the results of this study that most female administrators do share some commonalities in their experiences, perceptions and characteristics. However, their situations might not be as dire in some circumstances as
some researchers might indicate. Overall, most of the participants had been encouraged to apply for administration and faced very few barriers. Half of the women, rather than none, were in informal mentor relationships, albeit with mostly male mentors. They had strong support from their families and seemed to be able to maintain a balance between their careers and their private lives.

What can school boards do to help aspiring female administrators and those already promoted?

- They should establish more formal mentorship programs in an attempt to encourage potential administrators.
- School boards should reconsider how they view a woman’s pregnancy. Rather than it being a hindrance or inconvenience for them, the boards should learn to be more sensitive to the needs of the woman.
- Although, according to the research, this rarely happens, selection committees who are preparing to interview candidates should be re-educated about the proper lines of questioning allowed. According to the Human Rights Commission and the Labour Standards Act of Saskatchewan, employers are not to ask candidates for information regarding their gender, marital status, or children.
- Schools boards need to reconsider their recreational activities for their employees, like having hockey tournaments as opportunities for networking. This excludes women from actively joining in and relegates them to passive observers. Instead, more consideration should be given to activities that include all people.
• School boards need to provide a networking system that either includes women with men or perhaps, if the women desire, a way to network amongst themselves. This will help to prevent isolation and marginalization.

• School boards need to assign positions more equitably between the genders. The female elementary principals were primarily located in smaller schools as were all the female high school administrators. Not only do smaller schools seem less prestigious, but because of the smaller staff size, women are being paid less than their male counterparts who are being placed at larger schools.

• Schools boards need to be more consistent in their job requirements and hiring practices. If they want administrators to have a Master’s degree, then they should be hiring people with Master’s degrees, or indicate in the requirements that an administrator has a set time period to get a graduate degree.

• School boards need to foster better relations between their service centre workers, caretakers, and female administrators. All administrators need to have a knowledge of building management and repair work, learned through inservices. Perhaps the service centre workers need to be more sensitive to the direction that female administrators are giving to them.

• Overall, school boards need to focus on equitable practices so that we do not need to make distinctions between male and female administrators. Perhaps there will come a day when, when the shortlist of administrators comes out, people will not gather to count how many women and how many men got hired. Instead, they would see who the best person for the job is.
In light of School Plus, which encourages a high involvement by parents in their children’s education, school boards need to educate parents that any administrator, male or female, is deserving of the respect due to their position.

Consideration for Future Research

Obviously, the research of this study is based on a small sampling of one school board. Future studies might include an extensive study of all female administrators in the province. Another interesting study would be to compare the female and male administrators of a system. Do they share common characteristics and experiences? If one were to branch out of the field of education, a study could include comparing female administrators to female leaders in other professions, like company CEO’s.

Conclusion

This study indicated that female in-school administrators do share some common experiences, perceptions and characteristics. Their responses quite often reflected the findings of the literature. The women did have issues with which to contend. For example, even though they had full-time jobs, they were still expected to be the primary caregivers. Demographically, the women were older in general, with grown children. They were found more often than not in smaller schools. Over half of the women had Master’s degrees and six more were completing their graduate work. They felt marginalized at times, yet confident enough to challenge the traditions and policies of the school board. They listed common characteristics, leadership styles and used similar methods for decision-making. And if the female administrators in this study did not completely fit the descriptions in the literature, they were very close to it. Some of the differences were positive ones – half the women had mentors instead of none and only a
minority of the surveyed women faced barriers or discouragement when they applied for administration.

One of the issues that the researcher had discovered in the literature was a growing trend negating the monopolization of “feminine” characteristics by women. The women in this study seemed to agree with the research that how one behaves as an administrator was dependent upon the situation. They saw themselves as sharing some common characteristics with many of their male counterparts, whether they were traditionally “feminine” or “masculine” qualities. As time progresses, and the idea of traditional female and male roles continues to blur, perhaps this trend will become the norm.

Women have come a long way, as the cliché goes. One might argue that they still have a long way to go. However, equity policies and an increased awareness of the needs of women have made advancement into administration more achievable. While there are many areas that need to be addressed to improve conditions for female administrators, the future looks optimistic. As the women who participated in this study believed, how you are as an administrator or in any position for that matter should be a result of being true to oneself. Being a female administrator gave these women a sense of pride and a chance to be a positive role model to other women. More importantly, it was the success they were experiencing in their position as an administrator in general that was the most satisfying to these.
References


APPENDIX A

FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS’ SURVEY
15 September, 2003

Superintendent of Education, Learning Services

Dear Sir,

Re: Permission to Survey Female Administrators

My name is Shelly Lord and I am currently a part-time Master’s student in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. I am in the final stages of my program, preparing to do the research necessary for my thesis. The title of my thesis is “The Commonalities in the Characteristics, Perceptions and Experiences of Female School Administrators”. The purpose is to discover whether or not female administrators do share similar inherent characteristics that enhance their abilities as administrators. The literature indicates that women share similar experiences leading up to their promotion as administrators.

In order to learn more about this topic, I am planning a two-part research method. The first part will consist of a survey that will be sent to all female administrators in one school system who have more than one year of experience in either elementary or secondary school. I would like to conduct the survey at the end of September. At the end of the survey, the administrators will be asked if they would like to participate in a focus group. I am hoping to do this by the end of October. Responses will be compiled and used in my thesis.

I am requesting permission to survey the female administrators of your system, as the population is small enough to be manageable and allows me to get a clear “snapshot” of the characteristics and experiences of female administrators in your system. My research may be of interest to your school system in and of itself, given the Board's goals to ensure the staffing ratios are reflective of the school population.

If you would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me at Bishop Mahoney High School (7200), at home (975-9664) or by email (shellyhl@hotmail.com). I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Shelly Lord
Dear Administrator,

I am a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan and I am asking for your help in a study that I am conducting on the commonalities found in the experiences and characteristics of female administrators. The purpose of this study is to see if female administrators share similar experiences in becoming administrators and if they share similar characteristics that can be defined as distinctly “feminine”. There has been a lot of discussion about this topic among the “experts” but there has been very little research done in our province.

There are many benefits from participating in this survey and the focus group. First, the survey will help school boards understand how female administrators are doing and will hopefully influence them into taking into consideration the special situation in which many women find themselves. The focus group will give female administrators in your system an opportunity to get together and share their experiences as administrators.

Information will be collected using the attached survey (which takes about 20-30 minutes) and will be followed by a focus group in which you are also invited to participate. To ensure anonymity, please do not put your name or the name of your school anywhere on this document.

Please mail the completed survey in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope. Please return this survey by October 1, 2003.

A summary of the results of the survey will be sent to you if requested. I would be very pleased to discuss these results with you, especially at the focus group. The results will ultimately end up in my thesis that I am currently working on. The data may be published in book form or presented at a conference. All data will be securely stored and retained by the graduate researcher for a minimum of five years with Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.

The survey and the focus group have been granted approval by the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan on September 19, 2003. If you have any questions regarding the approval, please phone 966-2084.

Thank you for your cooperation in advance! If you have any questions or comments, please don’t hesitate to contact me at 668-7200 or shellyhl@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Shelly Lord
Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to fill out this survey which is based on your experiences as a school-based administrator. To ensure anonymity, please DO NOT put your name or the name of your school on the survey! By completing the survey, it is understood that you do so voluntarily and that you consent to the use of your responses in the study. The survey consists of three parts:

**Part 1** Background information

**Part 2** Open-ended questions

**Part 3** Demographics

**Part 1** Instructions: In responding to the following questions, please circle the answer that most resembles you.

1. A) Before you became an administrator, did you gain any other leadership opportunities (such as department head, staff president, consultant, etc)?
   A. Yes
   B. No

B) Please describe those leadership opportunities below. Feel free to include any “off the job” experiences, such as volunteer work:

2. A. Before you became an administrator, did you have a mentor that helped you on your path to administration?
   A. Yes
   B. No

   B. Was your mentor male or female?
   A. Male
   B. Female

3. A) Were you ever encouraged to apply for an administrative position?
   A. Yes
   B. No
B) If you were encouraged, who or what encouraged you?

5. A) Were you ever discouraged from applying for an administrative position?
   A. Yes
   B. No

   B) If you were discouraged, who or what discouraged you?

6. How many times did you apply for an administrative position before you were shortlisted?
   A. 1 time
   B. 2 times
   C. 3 times
   D. 4 times
   E. 5 or more times

7. A) Do you belong to a visible minority?
   A. Yes
   B. No

   B) If you are a member of a visible minority, did you find that this affected your pursuit for an administrative position?
8. A) Did you ever encounter any obstacles when applying for administration?  
   A. Yes  
   B. No  

   B) If you answered “yes” please describe the obstacles that you encountered.

9. A) Have you ever felt isolated or marginalized as an administrator, be it from staff, school board, parents, colleagues, etc.?  
   A. Yes  
   B. No  

   B) If you answered “yes”, please describe when you have felt isolated or marginalized.

10. A) Have you ever challenged any of the rules or the “way things are done” in your school system?  
    A. Yes  
    B. No  

    B) If you answered yes, please describe your experience of challenging the rules or the way things are done in your school system.
Part 2 Instructions: This next section deals with the characteristics of female administrators, using open-ended questions. If you need more room, please feel free to write on the back of the page.

11. Why did you decide to become an administrator?

12. How are major decisions made in your school?

13. How would you describe your leadership style?
14. What are the qualities that you believe you bring to your administrative role?

Part 3 Instructions: This next section deals with demographics. Please choose the answer that most closely resembles you.

15. How long have you been an educator?
   A. 1-5 years
   B. 6-10 years
   C. 11-15 years
   D. 16-20 years
   E. 21-25 years
   F. 26-30+ years

16. Please indicate your highest completed level of education.
   A. Bachelor in Education
   B. Bachelor in Education and a second Bachelor degree
   C. Post-graduate Diploma
   D. Master’s degree
   E. Doctorate degree

17. Are you currently taking classes towards a Master’s or Doctorate degree?
   A. Yes
   B. No

18. At what point in your career did you become an administrator?
   A. 1-5 years
   B. 6-10 years
   C. 11-15 years
   D. 16-20 years
19. **What administrative position do you currently hold?**
   A. Elementary vice-principal
   B. Elementary principal
   C. Secondary assistant principal
   D. Secondary principal

20. **Approximately how many students attend your school?**
   A. 0-100 students
   B. 100+ students
   C. 200+ students
   D. 300+ students
   E. 400+ students
   F. 500-700+ students
   G. 800-900 + students
   H. 1000+ students

21. **Would you like to participate in a focus group on the subject of the common experiences and characteristics of female administrators?**
    If “Yes”, please fill out and detach the sheet found on the back of this survey and deliver it separately from the survey to me in the smaller self-addressed envelope included.

*Thank you very much for your time and sharing.*
Yes, I am interested in participating in the focus group on the commonalities of the experiences and characteristics of female administrators.

Name:

Position:

School:

School Number:
APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE
October 2003

Dear Administrator,

I am a graduate student in the College of Education at University of Saskatchewan. You recently indicated that you would be willing to participate in a focus group studying the commonalities found in the experiences and characteristics of female administrators. The purpose of this study is to gain further insight into whether or not female administrators share similar experiences in becoming administrators and if they share similar characteristics that can be defined as distinctly “feminine”. There has been a lot of discussion about this topic among the “experts” but there has been very little research done in our province. The benefit of participating in this focus group is the opportunity to get together to discuss what you, as a female administrator, are experiencing on a daily basis. The overall benefit of this focus group is to help school boards better understand the needs and situations of female administrators.

Information will be collected using the question schedule found on the next page. The focus group will be tape recorded and I will also take handwritten notes during this time. I will use your information under a pseudonym in my thesis. You may withdraw from this study at any time and your comments will be deleted.

I would like to hold the focus group before the end of October. To ensure your privacy, we would meet at the Education building after school at 4:30 on Tuesday, October 21. We will take approximately an hour. You might be asked back to further focus groups if we feel that not all subjects were covered. Please contact me at my home 975-9664 (you can leave a message), or via email, shellyhl@hotmail.com to let me know if this date works for you.

A transcript of your comments will be sent to you for your approval. If you wish to change anything, you may do so at this time. I would be very pleased to discuss these results with you. The results will ultimately be used in my thesis that I am currently working on. The data may be published in book form or presented at a conference. All data will be securely stored and retained by the graduate researcher for a minimum of five years with Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.

The focus group has been granted approval by the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan on September 19, 2003. If you have any questions regarding the approval, please phone 966-2084.

Thank you for your cooperation in advance! If you have any questions or comments, please don’t hesitate to contact me at 668-7200 or shellyhl@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Shelly Lord
The Commonalities in the Experiences and Characteristics of Female Administrators
Focus group questions

Part 1. Gender socialization

1. Why did you decide to become an administrator when you did?
2. How do you find a balance between your private life and career?
3. Where do you find your support?

Part 2. Mentors and Role Models/Barriers to Promotion

4. Who were your mentors?
5. Is getting a master’s degree an indication of further ambition?
6. In the surveys, many of you indicated that principals and colleagues encouraged you to apply for administration. Only two people mentioned their family as encouraging. Did you receive encouragement from your families?
7. In interviews for administration, did gender ever come up?
8. Would you apply for the superintendency?

Part 3. Characteristics of Female Administrators

9. Do you find that you need to use more traditionally “masculine” qualities as an admin?
10. What characteristics do you think female administrators bring to their positions?
11. Have you ever challenged any “traditions” of the school system?
12. Do you get treated differently because you are female? Is this discrimination?
13. Are there differences between second and elementary admin?
14. What makes an effective administrator?
APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM
Transcript Release Form

I, ______________________________________, have reviewed the complete transcript of my participation in the focus group in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in the focus group with Shelly Lord. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Shelly Lord to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_________________________________________  _________________________
Participant                                   Date

_________________________________________  _________________________
Researcher                                    Date
APPENDIX D

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROTOCOL
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROTOCOL

To

University of Saskatchewan

Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research

1. **Name of Researcher and Related Department**

1a. Graduate Supervisor: Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart

Name of Researcher: Shelly Lord

Department of Educational Administration

University of Saskatchewan

1b. Phase I: Anticipated start date of the research study September 2003.

Phase II: Expected completion date of study November 2003.

2. **Title of Study**

*The Commonalities Found in the Experiences and Characteristics of Female Administrators*

3. **Abstract**

There has been a recent rise in the interest of gender research in educational administration. As the numbers of women entering school-based administration rise, so does the acknowledgement that gender needs to be discussed when looking at leadership styles (Reay & Ball, 2000). Previous research has shown that most female administrators do share common characteristics and experiences (Sergiovanni, 1999). Yet recent research is now arguing that female characteristics in leadership have been idealized and that one must look at the individual context within which every administrator works.

The purpose of this study is to discover if there are commonalities in the experiences, perceptions and characteristics of female administrators in an urban school system in Saskatchewan. Through surveys and a focus group interview, the researcher will obtain insights and opinions from women about their experiences in achieving and working in an administrative position. This data will then be compared with recent research to see if women do share common characteristics and experiences.

4. **Funding**

The graduate researcher will fund the project.
5. **Participants**

The proposed target population will be approximately 25 female administrators in this particular urban school system. Women administrators who are in their first year in their position will not be involved as they would not have the required experience to fully answer some of the survey questions.

6. **Consent**

Participants will be provided with a cover letter included at the beginning of the survey that details the purpose of the study and explains the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time. It will include a statement that this particular study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The cover letter will also state that, by completing the survey, it is implied that they consent to participating in the survey.

For the focus group, a similar cover letter will be sent to a selected group of approximately six women administrators. The cover letter will state that by attending the focus group session, they are indicating their consent to participate in the focus group.

7. **Methods/Procedures**

Participants will receive surveys at their school and will be invited to complete them within a two week period. Then candidates indicating a willingness to participate in the focus group will be invited to do so after results from the survey have been tabulated. They will be informed ahead of the focus group that the semi-structured questions will be similar to the survey, but will delve deeper for some “real-life” examples to provide insight to they survey results. Interpretational analysis will be used and categories will be developed to adequately encompass and summarize the data. The researcher will head the focus group session and will collect data by tape recording and by handwritten notes.

8. **Storage of Data**

All data will be securely stored and retained by the graduate researcher for a minimum of five years with Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.

9. **Dissemination of Results**

The results of this study will be used to complete the requirements for the Degree of Master in Education in the area of Educational Administration and shared with the faculty of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. A transcript
of the focus group will be sent to participants for review and a summary would be provided to participants upon request. Furthermore, the results may be published, and/or presented at seminars and/or conferences.

10. **Risk of Deception**

At the beginning of the study, the purpose of the study will be communicated to the participants and no deception is involved at any point in the research process. Participation in the study is voluntary and anonymity of those who choose to participate in the study is assured through the use of pseudonyms in all writings. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

11. **Confidentiality**

The participants will be informed in both the survey and the focus group that their responses will be anonymous and pseudonyms will be used. *Participants will be informed of their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what other participants say during the focus group session. They will also be informed of the limitations I, as a researcher, have regarding their confidentiality during the focus group session. There are no other risks associated with this study.*

12. **Data/Transcript Release**

Each participant of the focus group will sign a data/transfer release form once they have had an opportunity to read the transcripts to clarify, add, or delete information to accurately reflect what they said or intended to say.

13. **Debriefing and Feedback**

All participants will be informed about the public access to the finished thesis at the University of Saskatchewan’s libraries.

14. **Signatures**

Applicant: Shelly H. Lord

_________________________________
M.Ed Candidate
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan

Advisor: Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart
Department Head: Dr. Patrick Renihan

15. **Approval**

The University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research has approved this research on ________________, 2003. *Any questions regarding one’s rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-4053).*
APPENDIX E

ETHICS APPROVAL FORM