

**TALL POPPIES:
AN INVESTIGATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S
FEMALE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS**

by

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B.Ed., University of Victoria, 1985

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
in the Faculty
of
EDUCATION**

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

December 1993

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Tall Poppies: An Investigation of British Columbia's Female School Superintendents

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Abstract

This study examines British Columbia's fourteen female school superintendents' career paths, the barriers they experienced and the enablers that contributed to their successes. It furthers understandings of, and gives insights to, women's experiences in the superintendency.

A review of the literature revealed numerous articles pertaining to women in administration. Very few articles, however, went beyond women in the principalship and there appeared to be no comprehensive study of the experiences and voices of British Columbia's current female superintendents.

To document this specific group, a qualitative research method was used to describe their experiences. The researcher used focussed interviews as the major source of data collection pertaining to the fourteen women. Interviews were taped, transcribed and the transcript was sent back to each interviewee. The transcript was then triangulated with a questionnaire and field notes, and a profile of each superintendent was created. The profile was also sent back to each superintendent, again allowing the interviewee to add, delete or change any of the information. Data analysis began with the first interview and continued throughout the study.

A predominant theme throughout the findings indicated that some women perceived sexual discrimination was not a deterrent to their careers. In general, there was a lack of connection between their experiences and gender, once they gained their first administrative position.

Results suggest that the interviewees' backgrounds and family's support influenced their ability to combine family and career. The women mentioned the importance of a mentor or sponsor in their careers, while the impetus for the women to enter administration often came from a colleague.

The women had varied educational and professional experiences previous to entering the superintendency. Career paths to the superintendency differed and in most cases diverged from the typical pattern of high school administrator to superintendent.

The profiles and findings present images and impressions of fourteen individual women who persevered and have achieved non-traditional positions in diverse ways.

Dedication

For my parents, Ron and Hilda Pearce,
and for my husband, J.R. (Doc) Nielsen, with love.

Acknowledgements

This study could not have been completed without the support and assistance of a number of people. Among those to whom I wish to express my appreciation and thanks are Dr. Celia Haig-Brown, my senior supervisor, for her advice and guidance throughout the study, and to the fourteen women who agreed to participate in this study. I am deeply grateful for their patience, time, encouragement and interest and I offer heartfelt thanks.

I would also like to thank my husband, J.R. (Doc) Nielsen for his steady support and understanding, and my mom, Hilda Pearce, for her continuing love and belief in me.

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement and Rationale

A recent publication of supervisory personnel by school districts indicates that women hold 8.13% of the top supervisory positions in British Columbia school districts (Ministry of Education Gender Equity Report, 1991). At the time of this study women could be found in four superintendent positions and ten assistant superintendent positions. Women hold fewer than nine percent of the top C.E.O. positions in educational administration in British Columbia. Although teaching is a female dominated profession, educational leadership positions are predominantly occupied by men.

As a woman in educational administration (in the position of vice-principal) and as a graduate student in the administrative leadership program, I have been interested in women in educational leadership positions, and in particular, the superintendency. I became interested in this topic through the development of a smaller paper in a graduate course, in which I interviewed two female superintendents. The apparent imbalance of women and men in the superintendency in British Columbia made me curious as to why, and curious about the women who occupy these few positions.

I chose to pursue this interest as a research topic for my thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate the fourteen female superintendents' career paths, the barriers they experienced and the enablers that contributed to their success; and to further our understanding of women's experiences in the superintendency.

To achieve this goal, I decided to use the approach of educational ethnography. Agar (1980), in his book The Professional Stranger, defines ethnography as the more general process of understanding another human group. To understand this specific group of women, I used a qualitative research method to describe the experiences of women in the superintendency. The experiences of these women have been documented in the profiles which can be found in the appendices. Because the profiles are central to the understanding of this research they should be read in their entirety. Shakeshaft (1981) encourages the use of qualitative methods because "they are built on direct experiences and produce data that are descriptive of events, people, places and conversations" (p. 26). Bell, Chase and Livingston (1987) note that in the past literature on the superintendency has predominantly focussed on the career and lives of men, or has compared women's experiences to men's. What has been lacking is a description of women's experiences, from a woman's point of view, written by a woman. My research with the fourteen

women in this study will extend our knowledge of how women in the superintendency think about their career and work lives.

I used focussed interviews to gather the data I required, which lasted anywhere from one to two hours. Interviews were taped, transcribed and the transcript was sent back to the interviewee. Shakeshaft (1981) recommends this method for it checks "the authority for truth" (p. 26). The transcript was then triangulated with a questionnaire and field notes, and a profile of each superintendent was created. The profile was also sent to each superintendent, again allowing the interviewee to add, delete or change any of the information. Written data analysis began once the transcripts were checked by each interviewee and continued throughout the study.

Although the study's limitations and my biases will be explored in-depth in Chapter Three - Methods, I must acknowledge my personal partiality. Shakeshaft (1981) states that research must grow out of personal experiences, feelings and the needs of the researcher. I was interested in the experiences of other women in educational administration, especially those few who were in the superintendency. One of my female mentors is in the superintendency, and I am aspiring to a variety of educational leadership positions. I cannot exclude these personal aspirations from my research, for I have a personal stake and commitment to the study.

The title of this study, Tall Poppies, came from one of the women I interviewed. She was informally speaking of women in leadership positions and mentioned that in her country of origin these women were often called tall poppies. When I asked her why she said that, "They are waving on a very thin stem up there." Albeit the stem may be thin, but by all accounts it is strong for the fourteen women involved in this study have rich, interesting and inspiring experiences to be shared with all aspiring educators.

The thesis, Tall Poppies: An Investigation of British Columbia's Female School Superintendents, is divided into four other chapters. Chapter Two reviews some of the current literature pertaining to the study of women in educational administration; Chapter Three is an in-depth elaboration of the methods used in the study; Chapter Four introduces the profiles, explores and investigates the findings of the research and links the findings with some of the current literature; and Chapter Five draws conclusions, offers advice for women aspiring to the superintendency, and derives implications for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

A review of relevant literature indicates that there are numerous articles dealing with women in administration. Very few articles go beyond women in the principalship position and except for Tom Fleming's (1990) historical research on the first women in the superintendency in B.C., I have been unable to discover any literature on the experiences of British Columbia's female superintendents and assistant superintendents.

Shakeshaft (1989) states that traditional literature in school administration largely ignores women, and that although there has been a recent rise in the number of women appointed to leadership positions, there never has been a "golden age" for women administrators. Barriers have been identified and can be divided into internal, those that women have control over, and external, those which require social and institutional change (Shakeshaft, 1989).

The discussion of internal barriers can be found in a number of articles. Women's access to leadership positions has been restricted to proof of competence (Bell, 1987; Dopp & Sloan, 1986). Women have not had the opportunity or exposure to informal leadership positions (Edson, 1988; Tibbetts, 1979). There is a lack of networks, both formal and informal for

women (Adkison, 1981; Gabler, 1987; Marshall, 1986; Shapiro, 1987; Stockard, 1980; Whitaker & Lane, 1990). Women are often not prepared for the mobility of positions - they are unwilling to move to where the position is (Capps, 1976; Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Marshall, 1986; McShea, 1979; Paddock, 1981; Pounder, 1989; Shapiro, 1987; Whitaker & Lane, 1990). Another internal barrier suggested is that women have not been trained to support each other and therefore become closed to other women who they feel are competing with them (Edson, 1988; Gabler, 1987; Gotwalt & Town, 1986; Marshall, 1986; McShea, 1979). Women's lack of aspirations and inability to do it all - career, home and family, have also been cited as internal barriers (Gross & Task, 1976; Marshall, 1986; McShea, 1979; Paddock, 1981; Shapiro, 1987; Stockard, 1980; Tabin, 1990; Tibbetts, 1979; Yeakley, 1986). Gabler (1987) and Yeakley (1986) found that men have more links to community groups. Paddock (1981) states that women often experience the "marriage double-bind", for school boards and others may see an unmarried woman as a threat, but on the other hand, feel that a married woman should be at home with her family. Lack of career plans (Costa, 1981; Paddock, 1977), and the lack of encouragement from peers and significant others (Pounder, 1989; Tabin, 1990; Tibbetts, 1979; Stockard, 1980), have also been identified as some of the internal barriers facing women interested in educational administration.

Shakeshaft (1989) points out that many internal barriers have been defined using a male lens and male's experiences, therefore they lack substance and are inadequate to use as excuses. Women currently in positions of educational leadership have risen above these internal variables and not only are they unsatisfactory for explaining the absence of women in administration, they are no longer viable.

Of more importance are external barriers, for they reveal the need for a social and institutional change and call for a closer look at the theoretical framework of educational administration.

Sex discrimination and sex role stereotyping have been identified as two external barriers for women seeking administrative positions. School boards and other bodies responsible for hiring women to leadership positions have cited such concerns as: the physical size of women, the competition of a woman's home life with her work, doubts as to whether a woman can control her emotions, and doubts regarding a woman's ability to handle discipline problems (Adkison, 1981; Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Miller, 1986; Pounder, 1989). Bell (1987) and Clement (1977) found that some school boards had fears of being dominated by a woman, but on the other hand, questioned the ability of a woman's dealings with male subordinates. The position of superintendent is often perceived to be one of a man's role (Clements, 1977; Marshall, 1986; Whitaker & Lane, 1990), and the socialization patterns of

men and women have allowed for what Estler (1975) identifies as a "woman's place model." A number of authors cite the lack of role models as a barrier (Adkison, 1981; Marshall, 1986; Shapiro, 1987; Sloan & Dopp, 1986; Tabin, 1990; Whitaker & Lane, 1990; Yeakley, 1986) and therefore for the few women who have reached the top, there is an enormous pressure to do well, for they are one of a token few and are extremely visible (Bell, 1987; Fraker, 1984; Tabin, 1990; Yeakley, 1986). Maienza (1986) notes the lack of doctoral programs in educational administration and the limited access afforded women interested in the programs, prior to 1968. Other researchers have explored the structural arrangements of organizations and their settings and have found that the male dominated hierarchical arrangement of educational administration has deprived women from leadership positions (Clement, 1977; Gabler, 1987; Schuster & Foote, 1990; Tibbetts, 1979; Yeakley, 1986). Clement (1977), Tabin (1990), Whitaker and Lane (1990), and Yeakley (1986) further state that sex role stereotyping and socialization diminishes the probability that women will actively seek managerial positions. Shakeshaft (1989), in her book Women in Educational Administration, demonstrates how in an androcentric society, that is one which views the world from a male perspective, a vast array of discriminatory practises converge to keep women from educational leadership roles.

Researchers have identified some factors which have enabled women to gain access to administrative positions. Willis and Dodgson (1986) have defined a mentor as a trusted and experienced counsellor who influences the career development of an associate in a warm, caring and helping manner. The importance and value of mentors for women in educational administration has been cited by a number of authors (Dodgson, 1986; Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Gabler, 1987; Maienza, 1986). Johnsrud (1991) differentiates between mentorship and sponsorship, stating that what most women experience is sponsorship from men, thereby perpetuating the characteristics of those making the promotion decisions. Support and encouragement from families and spouses is also very important (Dopp, 1985; Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Frasher & Hardwick, 1982; Gotwalt & Towns, 1986; Jackson, 1980; Tabin, 1990). Dopp (1985), Gabler (1987) and Tabin (1990) noted that demonstrated competence enabled the women of their studies to reach their respective positions. In a variety of studies, women administrators have identified skills that they feel enabled them to reach their present position. Dopp and Sloan (1986) found that the ability to work and communicate with people effectively and personal energy and enthusiasm were perceived as important. Marshall (1986) found that women administrators were risk takers and Shakeshaft (1986) and Pitner (1981) noted that they were good community builders.

Although a comprehensive list of enablers is unavailable for women interested in the superintendency, the documentation of female superintendents' career patterns has been attempted by a number of researchers. Career patterning has been defined by Yeakley (1986) as a sequencing of positions so that each provides a necessary experience to ensure success in subsequent positions. Stockard (1984) found that female superintendents spent more years as a principal, fewer as a teacher; were encouraged to seek leadership roles; had shorter career paths than men; and were career oriented. A number of studies have compared women's career paths to men's and a variety of demographic data has been published (Collinson, 1989; Frasher & Hardwick, 1982; Gotwalt & Town, 1986; Jackson, 1980; Maienza, 1986; Paddock, 1981; Pitner, 1981; Richardson, 1979; Wiggins & Coggins, 1986; Young, 1984). Other articles offer advice from those that have made it, to aspiring women (Abrams, 1978; Cato, 1989; Costa, 1985; Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Gotwalt & Towns, 1986; Marshall, 1986; McDrade & Drake, 1981).

In summarizing the literature to date the focus has been on barriers, women's career paths as compared to men's, and advice to aspirants. What is lacking is the exploration of the opportunities, the barriers, the career paths and the experiences of British Columbian female superintendents and assistant superintendents. Bell (1987) states that past studies do not explore in depth how women themselves think and come to terms with both the barriers and

enablers they face. Shakeshaft (1987) calls for the need of the researcher to learn the world of women in schools, for they experience this world differently than men.

At this stage it is important to identify some problems and puzzles found through the review of literature. The literature reviewed is predominantly American. Canadian research on this topic seems to be almost non-existent. Some of the studies cited had a poor return rate on surveys or were limited to one state. There was an overall lack of qualitative research and conflicting demographic data has been noted. Most researchers did not define who the women in the superintendency were. Race, class or ethnicity were seldom referred to or acknowledged. Gender became a non-issue for those women who had succeeded to a leadership position. In several studies women commented on how they did not focus on gender or think about the difference being a woman made, even though they knew their situations were affected (Bell, 1987; Coatney, 1982; Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Gotwalt & Towns, 1986; Richardson, 1979). The literature then failed to explore this issue.

A further problem is that the theoretical framework of educational administration has been built around male behavior. Shakeshaft (1987) is one of the few researchers to challenge this existing theory. Rarely did researchers identify their biases and the issue of feminist ethnography. Stacey (1988)

noted the need for partial feminist ethnography, for it gives "accounts of culture enhanced by the application of feminist perspectives" (p. 26).

My study of British Columbia's female superintendents and assistant superintendents will add to the literature on superintendents and women in educational administration. It is my hope that the experiences and impressions of these fourteen women is documented in such a way as to give future aspirants an understanding of females in the superintendency. I have also attempted to weave and connect the literature reviewed to the methods that I choose to use and to the findings of my research.

Chapter 3

Methods

As part of the elaboration of my methods, it is necessary that I clarify my beliefs and biases about the chosen research method. Agar (1981) states that "the problem is not whether the ethnographer is biased; the problem is what kind of biases exist" (p. 41). With this comment in mind, I will explore my biases and preferences, review some of the research on women in educational administration and then elaborate on my method, including research design, data sources, accommodation to the research, data collection techniques and data analysis.

Biases and Limitations

My research can be considered ethnography in both process and product (Agar, 1981). I have chosen a small, yet inclusive group of women to study and through this have gained knowledge about them. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) note that "ethnographies recreate for the reader the shared beliefs, practises, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people" (p. 2). Albeit I may not have recreated artifacts or folk knowledge per se, however, the beliefs, practises and experiences of these fourteen women has been documented and reconstructed for the reader.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) state that ethnographic research strategies are both empirical and naturalistic. Although my study is empirical in nature, that is it is based on my experience and observation, I cannot wholeheartedly say that it is completely naturalistic. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that "neither positivism or naturalism provide an adequate framework for social research - both neglect its fundamental reflexivity (the fact that we are part of the social world we study)" (p. 25). To this end I have not been able to distance myself from the research - I am personally and professionally involved for I am a woman in educational administration, and therefore a minority in a male-dominated profession. I have put my values on this research, for as Howe (1985) stated, "No researcher, whatever the field, can avoid value commitments." I am not detached.

Shakeshaft (1981) notes that a feminist perspective is an essential component for research on women in educational administration. Gaskell (1989) states that feminism is giving a voice to women, for it allows them to examine their own experiences. My research is about women, by a woman, and predominantly for women. I am a feminist, for not only do I believe that all peoples should have equal social and political opportunities, I am committed to ending all forms of inequity, regardless of gender, race or social standing. My research methods have involved me with the participants: in fact I have a strong sense of commitment to the fourteen women and I have

valued our time together. Stacey (1988) notes that both feminism and ethnography emphasize the experiential. In her words, ethnography's "approach to knowledge is contextual and interpersonal, attentive like most women, therefore, to the concrete realm of everyday reality and human agency" (p. 22). The question must then be asked - is my research feminist ethnography?

As my research evolved, I came to realize that what I had learned would be valuable not only to aspiring female educators, but also to males, for it would allow all a greater understanding of the superintendency, and give insight into how the women involved in the study perceive themselves as leaders. I also was aware that I did not wish my investigation to become a type of "us (females) against them (males)" research. I, like many of the women I interviewed, believe that a balance of opportunities in educational administration is necessary and am working towards that end. I also believe, however, that inequities and assumptions must be pursued and kept in "view", in order for change to be possible. Therefore, my research is partially feminist ethnography and can be explained in Stacey's (1988) conclusion to her paper on the topic of female ethnography.

. . . there can be (indeed there are) ethnographies that are partially feminist, accounts of culture enhanced by the application of feminist perspectives. There also can and should be feminist research that is rigorously self-aware and therefore humble about the partiality of its ethnographic vision and its capacity to represent self and other. (p. 26)

Other limitations and preferences should be made at this time. I was drawn to and have used qualitative research methods and will expand on this under "Research Design." I am aware, however, that a two hour interview is hardly a "lived experience" and therefore my research is limited in its scope. Also there is a question of trust that should be pursued. Did the fourteen women trust me enough to give honest and frank reflections? Did power relationships (they are in the superintendency, I am a vice-principal) distort the interview? Obviously the women I interviewed were in a position of power "above me" in the hierarchy, which suggests there could be more likelihood of them controlling the interview to some degree. My belief is that the interviewees were sincere and that the return of both the transcript and profile gave the women an opportunity to check for truth and authenticity. However, this along with my subjective choice of codes, themes and analysis, leaves me open to criticism, inspection and challenge by the reader.

Another limitation is the insular nature of the study. I have only interviewed women who have succeeded in the superintendency, who live in B.C. and who are of white, middle class, Anglo-Saxon background. I have made no distinction between assistant superintendents and superintendents, although the roles and job descriptions of these two positions are quite different and vary among school districts. When reading this study it is important to realize the specificity of the group and not essentialize the

women. These women are only fourteen of many educational leaders and are all individuals with their own unique story. They do not speak for all women, as I do not.

Despite the above mentioned limitations and biases, I feel the outcome of the study contributes to our knowledge and points out new directions for future research.

Research and Women in Educational Administration

In the past, research and traditional literature in school administration has largely ignored women. Shakeshaft, in her book Women in Educational Administration (1989), notes that what is missing from the literature "is a comprehensive synthesis of current research on women in positions of formal educational leadership. Further, no book addresses the inadequacy of organizational theory, lore, and advice for woman" (p. 10).

The school system has always had a greater number of female educators, however, women have never been equally represented in school administration. In a 1991 B.C. Ministry of Education Gender Equity Report, women are reported as holding 66.22% of all teaching positions in both elementary and secondary schools. They are, however, under-represented in administrative positions, where only 19.08% of principals and 26.85% of vice-principals are women. The break down of female administrators in elementary

and secondary schools was unavailable; my guess, however, is that there are far more female administrators in elementary schools than secondary. The same study reported that women hold 8.13% of assistant superintendent and superintendent positions.

Shakeshaft and Nowell (1984) use the term androcentrism to describe the viewing of the world through a male lens and the unfortunate belief that this is the only lens. Because of this, educational research, concepts and theories have emerged primarily from the male consciousness and are largely irrelevant to most female experiences. The research and literature has mainly been about men, by men and measured against male standards and experiences. Shakeshaft (1989) further states that even when researchers look at both male and female administrators, they base their investigation on theory formulated by males. In addition to this, Shakeshaft and Nowell (1984) found four methodological weaknesses in the theory and research in educational administration. They state: (a) that if female behavior ran counter to the theory, it was the female, not the theory, which was inadequate, (b) the methods used to test the questions emerged from an androcentric perspective, (c) many of the theories relied heavily upon all male samples, and (d) male defined measures of the concept were used.

There is a need for a more balanced approach to educational administration research, in order to address the inequitable treatment of women

in this area. Women's thoughts, beliefs and experiences must be included and theories must be transformed in order for there to be a better understanding of women in educational administration. Shakeshaft (1981) makes six recommendations for future research on women in educational administration:

1. There should be an expansion of qualitative methods, which would include descriptive data, a "slice of life";

2. A feminist perspective is an essential component to the research;

3. The research should grow out of the personal experience, feelings and needs of the researcher;

4. An "authority for truth" is needed - the conclusions from the work on women in educational administration needs to be taken back to the participants to see if they ring true;

5. There should be a move towards oral tradition of gathering data;
and

6. Research should be used as an instrument for social change.

Gilligan (1982) also notes that "among the most pressing items on the agenda for research on adult development is the need to delineate in women's own terms the experience of their adult life" (p. 173).

I believe that my research on women in the superintendency follows Shakeshaft's suggestions for research and will expand the literature on women in educational administration - especially at a local level. There is a need for

women's voices and experiences to be recorded, their relationship to the organizational structures of educational institutes investigated and their practises to be examined from a feminist viewpoint, for it is only then that we will move towards an all-inclusive and equitable situation in educational administration.

Study Methods

Research Design

In order to close some of the gaps in our knowledge of British Columbian women in the superintendency, I choose to use an approach identified by Goetz and LeCompte (1984) as educational ethnography. The authors define educational ethnography's purpose as providing "descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in educational settings" (p. 17).

To provide this data I used a qualitative approach - that is the use of words rather than numbers - to describe the experiences of women in the superintendency in B.C. The qualitative method of research was attractive to me because I was interested in each of the women's stories and felt that it was the stories that were going to focus and bound my collection of data. Miles and Huberman (1984) state reasons for choosing qualitative research:

Qualitative data are attractive. They are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local

contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanations. Then, too, qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new theoretical integrations; they help researchers go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks. Finally, the findings from qualitative studies have a quality of 'undeniability', as Smith (1978) has put it. Words, especially when they are organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader - another researcher, a policy-maker, a practitioner - than pages of numbers. (p. 15)

I expected that the fourteen women interviewed would hold enlightened perspectives and offer unique insights to aspiring female educators, for they are working in an organization which is male-dominated. Ferguson (1984) summarizes my expectations:

Those who are marginal in the dominant society, who experience life in more than one 'world', have access to more than one point of view. Thus those who stand on the fringes of established roles can offer insights less available to individuals more thoroughly and consistently integrated into the established categories. (p. 178)

I could find no evidence of a current descriptive study on B.C. women in the superintendency; therefore I interviewed the fourteen female superintendents and assistant superintendents during the spring of 1992. Focused interviews were determined to be the most effective method of eliciting information from the fourteen participants.

Miles and Huberman (1984) note that qualitative research is essentially an investigative process and the data is "a source of well grounded, rich description and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts" (p. 15). Shakeshaft (1981) encourages the use of qualitative methods because "they are

built on direct experience and produce data that is descriptive of events, people, places and conversations" (p. 26). The qualitative approach to research was determined to be the most effective way of eliciting information about the women's career paths, the barriers they may have faced, the enablers they could identify, their advice to aspirants, and their understanding of the superintendency. The qualitative design of the research allowed the women to have a voice in the research.

Data Sources

Agar (1980) would describe the fourteen women involved in my study as a "judgemental sample" for I have sought out particular people who are specialists in an area that I wish to know more about. My sample is specific and limited - at the time of the interviews there were fourteen women in the superintendency in B.C. and their participation was voluntary. Because there were so few women in the role of superintendent, I also included assistant superintendents to further ensure anonymity. Philosophically, I was well prepared to interview the fourteen women, employing two of the skills Miles and Huberman (1984), noted were necessary for researchers: (a) I had familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study, and (b) I had a strong interest in women in senior administration.

I sent each of the women a letter of introduction, which included a brief description of my proposed study (Appendix A). Agar (1980) states that

an ethnographer must let an informant know what she intends to do with the material collected. I clearly stated in my letter of introduction that I wished to investigate the fourteen women's perceptions of the opportunities and barriers they had encountered, their career paths and their experiences in the superintendency. All fourteen women agreed to be interviewed.

Agar (1980) also notes the importance of a network in the culture in which one is interviewing. Previous to my research, I had established an informal network with two women in the superintendency and these women in turn had spoken to several of their colleagues about my proposed study, therefore some of the women receiving my letter had heard of my planned study.

After receiving the letter of introduction, the women were contacted by phone, at which time interview dates were arranged and a follow-up letter confirming the date, time and place of the interview was sent to each interviewee (Appendix B).

Accommodation to the Research

It is at this point that I wish to digress from the more formal explanation of data sources and share some of the fourteen participant's reactions to being contacted and to the study in general.

It was with some trepidation that I contacted each of the fourteen superintendents (after the initial letter of introduction). Would they assist me

in my study? Would they question my motives? My credentials? Would they be able to find time for me? How would they react?

My worries and concerns were unfounded. The women were most accommodating in a variety of ways. June Decker, who lives outside the lower mainland, contacted me after receiving my letter and we set up an appointment for a time that she was in Vancouver. Several other superintendents who live outside the city, told me it was not necessary that I travel to interview them, as they would be in Vancouver on other business and would be able to meet with me then.

Peggy Franker suggested a Saturday morning for the interview and Beth Daniels came to my home for her interview, as it was on her way home.

On many occasions I was offered coffee and greeted warmly. The majority of the women appeared to be eager to speak with me, interested in the study and interested in what their colleagues had to say.

The women all read the transcripts and profile papers and sent them back with suggestions and words of encouragement. Alison Larsen, after reading her profile, wrote: "You must be almost finished. Congratulations - I hope you too have gained confidence and are well on your way in your career. Career, schooling and personal life takes a great balancing act. I wish you all the best." Carolyn Parker wrote: "I am pleased that I could be of assistance to you in the preparation of your thesis. I look forward to seeing the results

of your research. Best wishes in your future endeavors." And Beth Daniels added her support with: "Good luck with continuing the project and I look forward to seeing the completed work." These women's words of encouragement and support often gave me the impetus to continue with the study.

A question remains in my mind - would men have been so accommodating, so encouraging, so kind? Perhaps their apparent interest in each other and the fact that there are so few female superintendents, made these women eager to speak with me. Or perhaps the fact that some of the fourteen interviewees are women who speak of a woman's way of leading as nurturing and cooperative and were only responding in a manner in which they have always done.

Data Collection Techniques

Agar (1980) states that during the informal ethnographic interview everything is negotiable for "the informants can criticize a question, correct it, point out that it is sensitive, or answer in any way they want" (p. 90). Kemp and Ellen (1984) write that the "whole point of not fixing an interview structure with pre-determined questions is that it permits freedom to introduce materials and ask questions previously unanticipated" (p. 230). Becker and Geer (1960) in their discussion of interview techniques, state: "the more structured a technique, the less likely the researcher is to find facts whose

existence he had not previously considered or to develop hypotheses he had not formulated when he began his study" (p. 267).

Ultimately, and for a clear example of ethnography, the unstructured, informal interview, using such techniques as described above, was preferable for my study. However, because I interviewed the respondents only once and I wished to investigate specific aspects of women in the superintendency, I used Merton and Kendall's (1946) method of focussed interviews. My interviews began with unstructured questions, and then became more focussed, depending on the interviewee's response. Kemp and Ellen (1984) identify this as a move from passive to a more active investigation, for the researcher becomes more directed. Agar (1980) recommends a strategy for focussing the interviews: begin with a general question of interest, express interest, reflect back, begin to use a more structured framework, then use specific questions. Agar (1980) and Kemp and Ellen (1984) both note that the use of questions depends on where your informant leads you.

I developed a repertoire of open-ended questions and probes keeping the above information in mind. The questions were formulated in order to gain information from the female superintendents and assistant superintendents in the following areas:

1. background leading up to administration
2. administrative experiences

3. major components of career development, including barriers and enablers
4. feelings regarding appointment to the superintendency
5. the significance of gender on their career
6. perception of the role and leadership styles
7. advice to aspirants

An example of the interview guidelines can be found in Appendix C.

During the interview process, both questions and probes varied in delivery depending on the interviewee's response; the main ideas found in the interview guidelines were, however, covered. Interviews lasted from one to two hours and took place in a variety of locations, from the respondent's office, to hotel rooms, to my home. (One of the fourteen subjects was unable to meet with me (due to both our busy schedules), however she was given the interview guidelines and wrote lengthy notes which were then forwarded to me.) The interview guidelines were not sent to the other interviewees before the interview as I felt "prepared answers" would not be acceptable for this study (with the exception of one woman). My hope was that the interview be an informal, yet sincere experience and I certainly did not want to burden the participants with the task of preparing for an interview. However, questions were repeated when necessary and all interviewees were given the opportunity to clarify and elaborate on their experiences and reflections. Often there was a

natural progression from the first guideline to the second and so on, resulting in minimal response and interruption from myself.

Interviews were taped allowing for transcribing at a later date, and for the original flow of information to continue uninterrupted. The taping of interviews allowed me to be more comfortable in collecting my data, rather than hurriedly note-taking throughout the interview. I took some notes during the interview, but only as a reminder to myself to re-visit a certain point or statement which required elaboration.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1993) have noted the importance of field notes in ethnography. They define field notes as those which "consist of relatively concrete descriptions of social process and their contexts" (p. 145). I wrote field notes after each interview, in order to record my impressions and feelings about the interview and the individual. The type of information recorded tended to be my impressions of the interviewee, the physical surroundings and my general feelings and reflections on how each interview had gone. Although the notes were highly subjective they served as a reminder of the experience and the person being interviewed - they gave me a sense of the moment. The field notes were later incorporated into the profiles.

At the conclusion of each interview, a short demographic questionnaire was filled in by each respondent (Appendix D). The questionnaire's design was multiple choice and elicited information on the women's personal

background (age, marital status and number of children), and educational background (degrees, years of teaching, years of administration, number of school districts worked in). The purpose of the questionnaire was to access any similarities among the participants and to provide material for a demographic table as suggested by Goetz and LeCompte (1984). However, the questionnaire was only used to develop the profiles, and is explored further in the "Data Analysis" section.

Personal cards of appreciation were mailed out to all participants shortly after the interview.

Interviews were transcribed and checked carefully against the audio tape. A copied manuscript of the interview was then sent to each interviewee for their comments, additions, deletions and approval. Kemp and Ellen (1984) state that by returning the transcript to the informant for further clarification and development, "one reveals one's interest in the subject and informant, and might thereby gain access to the informant's own doubts and uncertainties, which would never be revealed in a single 'hit and run' interview" (p. 236). Agar (1980) describes this process as "giving an account" (p. 79) and Shakeshaft (1981) as checking "the authority for truth" (p. 26).

Once all transcripts were returned by the fourteen interviewees and necessary changes were made, as requested, data analysis began.

Data Analysis

Transcripts were returned at a slower than expected rate, which is understandable. Throughout the research process, I was always cognizant of the fact that the women I had interviewed were very busy people and often my request would be left for more important matters. However, by late summer of 1992 all of the transcripts had been returned and revisions were made where necessary. The changes made by the interviewees were extensive in some cases, and very small in others.

Although Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest that in-depth coding should begin as soon as the tapes have been transcribed, I waited until all transcripts were complete in order to begin coding and analysis. There were two reasons for this - I wanted to have the opportunity to read all of the transcripts closely and form a series of codes based on the transcripts, and I was working full time as an administrator of a large elementary school. Therefore (and not unlike the women in the superintendency), I had to wait for a school break to devote the necessary time to the analysis.

Over the course of the summer I developed twenty-two codes, based both on the interview guidelines and the general themes that had emerged from the transcripts. Tabin's (1990) thesis also provided me with some guidelines for the establishment of codes. There were some patterns in coding due to the sequential nature of the respondent's career history, however data belonging to

individual codes was found in various places throughout the transcript. What I perceived to be the most comprehensive transcript was coded first, allowing me to make adjustments to the codes as necessary. The codes came from the transcripts and I made no changes to them during my first attempt at coding. They were collapsed later in the analysis process.

The twenty-two codes were as follows:

1. administrative experience
2. teaching experience
3. career impacts and events
4. academic history
5. career development
6. administrative orientation
7. career management
8. appointment
9. collegial support
10. district support
11. mentor relationships
12. networking
13. spouse, family or friend's support
14. barriers
15. gender

16. leadership style
17. problems
18. job satisfaction
19. advice
20. perception of self
21. balance
22. role of the superintendent

A more thorough and detailed list of the codes is in Appendix E.

Using these codes, transcripts were read carefully, information corresponding to the codes was underlined and the number of the code, with a short note on the content of the information, was made in the left hand margin.

It was at this point that I became frustrated with my data - I had too much information. Everything was coded but I was unsure of where to go next. Miles and Huberman (1984) discuss the problem I was facing - "the problem a qualitative researcher faces is how to map the social context of individual actions economically and reasonably accurately, without getting overwhelmed with detail" (p. 92).

I was also under some personal pressure for I had agreed to present my early findings at the British Columbia School Superintendents' Association Conference in September (1992). The conference had been organized by a

number of the women I had interviewed and was titled "Exposing the Invisible Ceiling," with my presentation being "Women in District Administration: What the Looking Glass Reveals."

After a great deal of agonizing, I was able to come up with a plan for organizing the information. Each coded transcript was analyzed according to the codes. For example, Code 1, Administrative Experience was listed, then the transcript was read for all code ones, and these were listed under the title, either in note form or as quotes. All twenty-two codes were listed with the corresponding information under each title. I used this method for all fourteen interviews.

I then turned to Agar (1980) and followed his advice for the analysis of informal interviews. Agar (1980) notes that

once the material is categorized, you apply the next analytical device - scissors - and cut up a copy of the transcripts (in this case it was the code sheet from each interview), according to the new topic-oriented code. Each group of talk can then be read for consistency within each informant and variations across informants. You can also see what was talked about and, more importantly, what was not talked about. (p. 104)

Coded transcript notes were cut up and placed together on large pieces of paper. For example, the heading on the first piece of paper was Administrative Experience and all fourteen women's experiences were listed below the code heading. This method allowed me to see both patterns and anomalies. It also became clear that I would have to reduce my codes, for

they were overwhelming in their present form and I needed to get a handle on the information in order to prepare for my presentation.

The coded information was then collapsed into larger sections which I chose according to patterns and similarities. They were as follows:

1. Career History and Demographics (administrative experience, teaching experience, academic history, personal demographics which were gleaned from the questionnaire)
2. Career Development (career impacts and events, career development, career management and administrative orientation, appointment, perception of self)
3. Support and Mentoring (collegial support, district support, spouse, family and friends' support, networking, mentor relationships)
4. Barriers and Impact of Gender (internal barriers, external barriers, gender)
5. Leadership Style and Role Perception (leadership style, role of the superintendent)
6. Reflections and Advice (advice, problems, job satisfaction, balance)

This organization allowed me to prepare a very general report on my findings to date, for the conference. The large sheets of paper were organized according to the newly formed sections, patterns were noted, non-essential

information was eliminated (ie: talk of people that the interviewees and myself knew in common, politics, etc.) and anomalies were discovered.

I felt that I was now at the point to begin writing my thesis. Using the section headings noted above, I began to flesh out and elaborate on the information I had collected. I wrote sixteen pages of Chapter 4 - The Findings and then went to discuss my writing to date with my senior supervisor. Through discussion with her, we agreed that something was lacking in my study and in retrospect I feel that it was the voices of the fourteen women in the superintendency. My writing was very clinical, with broad generalizations and tedious in the fact that everything was prefaced with "one assistant superintendent or one superintendent said." Quotes were uninspiring in this context and the sections that I had earlier designated forced me to write about each and every category, even if it was of little interest to me. I had also neglected to use the field notes in my writings and was feeling some confusion as to how to incorporate them.

It was at this point that I made the decision to write profiles for each superintendent. Using Goetz and LeCompte's (1984) suggestion that "ethnographers use many types of data collection techniques, so that data collected in one way can be used to cross-check the accuracy of data gathered in another" (p. 11), I triangulated my four sources of data, the transcripts, coded information sheets, questionnaires and field notes, to create a profile for

each of the fourteen women I had interviewed. In an attempt to protect the women's identities, I gave each of them a pseudonym and referred to all of the interviewees as superintendents. The profiles provided me with a history of each respondent's career path, the barriers and enablers they had encountered, and their experiences and reflections on being a woman in the superintendency, in British Columbia. The profiles were then sent back to each of the fourteen women for further clarification, along with a covering letter which indicated the purpose of the profiles (Appendix F). The profiles and accompanying letter were sent to the superintendents on February 1, 1993, almost a year to the day from when I had begun the original interviewing.

Miles and Huberman (1984) note that the feedback from informants "can lay out the findings clearly and systematically, and present them to the reader for careful scrutiny and comment" (p. 242), which I believe each profile did. However, there was a danger in sending the profiles to the interviewees - the first two women to contact me did not wish their profile to be published in the pending thesis.

Time was marching on and once again I was becoming very frustrated with the process of data analysis that I had chosen. In a panic I telephoned my senior supervisor, for I had drafted a letter in which I proposed to pull all the profiles from the study and apologize for any anxiety and concern they had caused. I was advised to wait another month and see what the response of the

other twelve superintendents was. It was one of the highlights of my research process because over the course of the next three months, the twelve profiles were returned to me with words of encouragement and best wishes. Albeit there were some deletions, additions, grammatical changes and chronological corrections, but they were accepted on the whole and could be incorporated into my study.

I respected the decision of the two individuals not wishing their profiles to be published. A compromise was suggested and I created a composite for the two profiles, choosing distinct elements of each profile and blending together commonalities where possible. The composite was returned to the two superintendents with a covering letter, further changes were made and it has been included with the other profiles.

It was the summer of 1993 and I was ready to begin writing. I was again overwhelmed. Where did I start? What do I include? What don't I include? It was with a great deal of anxiety that I again contacted my supervisor. Once more I was encouraged to let the women's voices speak to me. What was it that I learned? What was of interest? What were the patterns? The anomalies? What was missing? It was time to move into the next step of ethnography and become the "expert."

I began to analyze the profiles and relate the information to my original purpose. I once again made notes in the side margins, however this time I

began to theorize, which Goetz and LeCompte (1984) define as the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories. I looked for data that did not fit and attempted to analyze the reasons why. I also searched for patterns and common themes and made note of these. And most of all, I believe I let the interviews speak to me. The choices I made about which data chunks to code, which to ignore, which to pull together, and what to write in the evolving profiles were all analytic choices (Miles & Huberman, 1984), and they are personal for they are based on my knowledge and interest in the research, and through my careful listening and reading, they are at times the direct quotations of the female superintendents who also have a voice in this research.

Chapter 4

Results

When I began this study, I was looking for common threads and generalities among the fourteen women in the superintendency. My hope was to find something that would guide those women who may be aspiring to the superintendency - a "what you need to do in order to get there" guide.

I was slightly disappointed as the interviews progressed, for although I left all the interviews elated, I wondered where the illusive patterns could be . . . for there weren't many. Yes, the interviewees were all women - white, Anglo-saxon women, articulate, supportive, interesting, dynamic and well-educated, yet their career paths were diverse and varied. Their lives are rich and they shared rich details, advice and intimacies with me, yet in many ways they were all very different from one another.

Chapter Four has been organized into two parts: (a) an explanation of the presentation of the data, in the form of profiles, and (b) an interpretation of the data, including a link of the literature to the data.

The Profiles

The thirteen profiles presented in Appendix G are a representation of the interviews held with all B.C. women in the superintendency, during the

spring of 1992. Each woman has been given a pseudonym and is referred to as a superintendent, in order to protect her identity. One of the profiles is a composite, which is a blend of two or more interviews, however a distinction has not been made between the regular profiles and the composite. Because they are lengthy, they are included in the appendices, however the reader should be aware of the pseudonyms used, which are: June Decker, Alison Larsen, Carolyn Parker, Irene Olsen, Marilyn Ward, Peggy Franker, Leslie Adams, Dawn Smith, Margaret Jones, Doreen Nielsen, Beth Daniels, Diana Fox and Lori Harris.

The Findings

The data presented under this section relates to the findings from the profiles, the researcher's analysis of those findings and the triangulation of the data to some of the literature cited in Chapter 2 - Literature Review. I relied first on what the women had to say, then returned to the literature and noted any commonalities.

The topics in this section have been arranged to show their relationship to one another and as the researcher I have made an arbitrary decision to move from the most central issue in my analysis to what I felt were important, yet not so pressing issues for analysis.

The first topic, Gender Issues, has become central to my study of B.C. women in the superintendency. This would appear to be natural for my

original interest in the topic was piqued by the fact that there are so few women in the superintendency and my study only centers around those few women. However, in addition to my interest in B.C. women in the superintendency, after reading and re-reading the transcripts and profiles, gender and issues related to gender emerged as a focus of the interviews. The theme of gender issues represents the problems women face in a male-dominated profession, and they also enlighten us as to how these women experience and think about these problems. The complexities of being a woman in the superintendency in B.C. are many, including the differences between individual women's experiences and thoughts on the following issues. The topic, Gender Issues, has been divided into the four sections: (a) External Barriers and Gender Consciousness, (b) Internal Barriers, (c) Balance and Women in Leadership, and (d) Feminism and Women in the Superintendency.

The second topic examined looks at the area of support as it pertains to the interviewees' professional and personal lives. The section on Support includes (a) Mentors and Sponsors, (b) Role Models, (c) Family and Friends' Support, and (d) Lack of Support - From Women.

The third section of Chapter Four investigates the fourteen women's Career Paths and Reflections on Appointment, and includes (a) Teaching Experience, (b) School-Based Administration Experience, and (c) Appointment to the Superintendency.

Gender Issues and Women in the Superintendency in British Columbia

External barriers and gender consciousness. Carol Shakeshaft (1989) identifies two types of barriers - internal and external. "Internal barriers are those that can be overcome by individual change whereas external barriers require social and institutional change" (p. 82). Using Shakeshaft's definitions, the identification and discussion of external barriers by some of the women in this study will be discussed first.

Two superintendents noted that sex role stereotyping, socialization and the organization of school systems are external barriers facing women. Clement (1977), Edson (1988), Tabin (1990), Whitaker and Lane (1990), and Yeakley, Johnston and Adkison (1986) also found that sex role stereotyping and socialization diminishes the probability that women will actively seek management positions. Although these barriers are not new, the two women made several points of interest.

Superintendent Peggy Franker felt that the major external barrier facing women is the uncertainty that people have over women in the role of superintendent.

I think the major barrier is the uncertainty people have of how women will do because we have quite a bit of backlash from the late sixties, early seventies, where women were appointed just because they were women. We have taken a long time to get over that and I think it's something we are still going to have to work with. It seems a lot of it is tradition, that people, and when I say people I mean the public, teachers, school based administrators, boards, and most importantly,

C.E.O.'s if we are talking about the superintendency, do not have a mental image of a woman in that role.

Doreen Nielsen also spoke of androcentrism and the need for society to change the way it views women.

There are very real barriers to women entering administration in North America. I think they're barriers that are probably not acknowledged - that are not talked about, but they do exist. I think androcentrism really does exist - that public, elected officials and sometimes people in the profession themselves see administrative roles as male roles because they've been so used to seeing men in those positions. . . . The qualities that are needed for administration are usually considered male qualities. I think one barrier we encounter as women are that people cannot see women as 50 percent of the population. I think some of the barriers to women and certainly the ones that I encounter everyday are in the organizations that we live with.

These two comments identify an important external barrier and they reveal the need for a social and institutional change. They also call for a closer look at the theoretical framework of educational administration. However, only two women out of the fourteen interviewed articulated the evidence of subtle sex discrimination.

What was more common was several women's denial of sex discrimination and barriers. Shakeshaft (1989) found that women often experience sex discrimination, yet deny its existence. Bell (1987), Frasher and Hardwick (1982), and Tabin (1990) also found that the women in their studies emphasized the importance of not dwelling on sex discrimination.

Similar to these studies, several women in my study could not identify any barriers to their career path. When pressed to identify barriers, June

Decker said: "I know I should say yes, there were barriers along the road, but maybe I ignored them. Maybe I just trampled over them. I don't know."

When asked about barriers to her career development, Irene Olsen said she had never experienced any barriers, however through discussions with her colleagues she was aware that they existed.

I know of other colleagues that have come up against different kinds of barriers, some of them being a lack of secondary school experience, . . . or we suspect that there have been male oriented, male-dominated kinds of things that happen and they do happen and there's just no two ways about it. But I haven't actually faced that. I seem to have moved along and done the kinds of things I've done, and I don't know if I look at it too simplistically, but I can't honestly say I ran across barriers . . . And I haven't come across any of the male world block, but I know it's there. I think I've just been lucky in the situations that I've been in because I have friends that just run smack into the barriers and blocks.

Dawn Smith indicated that she had experienced no visible barriers to promotion. She said she always took on leadership roles and early career visibility occurred as a female in the male-dominated mathematics area.

Diana Fox said that she now has an interest in barriers in terms of women's careers, because it is not an issue for her - it's more a matter of social responsibility. She is interested in the sense that

there's obviously some stuff happening out there which I haven't cognitively dealt with because I haven't had to deal with it in my own particular frame of reference, because I'm a bit of a bulldozer. I mean if I want something I go for it and it doesn't matter if I'm male or female. I go for it.

Although these women were aware of the existence of barriers, they indicated that their careers were not affected by sex discrimination or external barriers. The denial of barriers by some of the women in the study appears to go hand-in-hand with their thoughts on gender.

The fourteen women were asked if gender played a role in their careers, at some point during the interview process. Some of the participants denied that gender influenced their career, yet their profiles and transcripts demonstrate seemingly contradictory claims. These women state that they were treated differently than men and lead differently than men, yet disconnect their experiences from gender. Some examples follow.

When I asked June Decker if gender was an issue for her, she said she wasn't big on the "gender thing." She had not thought about it until recently when she attended a superintendents' conference and noticed the lack of women present. However, in her school district June felt she was treated as an equal and her experience and expertise in the budget area enabled her to tie in with the finance people who did not treat her differently because she was a woman.

Later in the interview, June noted the need for a balance between men and women at the district level, as they each bring a different perspective to the job. She went on to say that women in leadership positions "look at it in terms of how much good can you do, how much influence you have to

improve things. So it's more a matter of influence than authority. There's quite a difference between us."

Although June indicated that gender was really a non-issue for her, she felt that women and men lead quite differently. She feels she is treated as an equal in her district, yet as a female leader perceives that she does things differently.

When I asked Peggy Franker what it meant to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession, Peggy stated that she hadn't found it to be much of a problem. Peggy noted that she had always had as many male friends as female and she is comfortable with being the only woman at a variety of meetings.

Earlier in the interview Peggy had indicated that the reason she did not receive a position in the superintendency the first time she applied was because she did not have a "navy pinstripe suit" on. There may be other reasons for Peggy not attaining this position such as the length of her school-based experience and the fact that she was seconded to a board position. She also felt that when she was hired to the superintendency, that the superintendent and the board were specifically "looking for a woman in the position."

Gender - the fact that Peggy is female, was both a barrier and an enabler to the superintendency, yet Peggy stated that gender had not been much of a problem for her.

Dawn Smith felt that being a female in the male-dominated superintendency was not that significant for she had always been one of the few female Math educators and therefore it was a comfortable shift. Gender and barriers were not an issue for Dawn. However, Dawn made a decision early on in her career not to have a family. She said, "A lot of women were taking time out to have a family and I don't have a family so that was a decision which influenced my career."

Dawn made a choice not to have a family, which consequently influenced her career path. Women are often faced with this decision - the interruption of career for family and the problems associated with taking "time out."

Margaret Jones felt that the issue of gender had not been significant in her career, although she did admit that for women the initial superintendency position may be difficult to attain. She said, "I think the initial selection may be difficult and the districts who are willing to take a chance on a woman are perhaps few and far between"

Later in the interview, Margaret spoke of managing both a career and a family.

I think we are living in a generation with a lot of cultural baggage and when I say guilt, I don't mean men feel guilty if they miss their daughter's performance at the music festival or the art day, but I think that culturally women have been brought up with that guilt. You're the caregiver. The other thing I believe is that there's a higher expectation for men that they will follow a career path and that they should be

constantly striving to go beyond being a teacher, to being a vice-principal, to being a principal and so on. And I don't think those same expectations are on women. I think we're moving away from this and I certainly expect that my daughters will have careers.

Although Margaret felt that gender was not significant, her school district has obviously "taken a chance" on hiring a female superintendent. The other contradiction Margaret makes is her struggle between family and career. Despite her generalizations regarding men, Margaret does recognize that often women have been burdened with different societal expectations than men - both as caregivers and in their career paths.

Diana Fox stated that she did not think she had experienced any barriers. Early in her career she had been given the advice: "Don't ever assume because you're a woman you can't do things or don't assume that men have that attitude towards you because if you come across that you should have the job because you're a woman, it will create an issue for you."

Diana later shared that her career had become an issue in her marriage, resulting in a divorce. She said,

. . . In fact, my career broke us up in actual fact because when he met me I was a classroom teacher and then I moved up the ladder . . . it had some really interesting repercussions in my marriage, so I suppose it wasn't a barrier for me because I wasn't stopping but it created the problem. His whole ego was wrapped up in it.

When I asked Diana what it meant to be one of the few women in the male-dominated superintendency, she said:

I must admit I use it to an advantage. . . . I use my feminine wiles to achieve my goals. Not to be deceptive but I just know the strategies that work and so I think it makes me smarter because we have to cope differently.

Diana's gender has also been an issue during her career. Diana's husband had difficulty accepting her promotions, yet very few women appear to have difficulty accepting their husband's promotions. Diana also uses her gender or in her words, "feminine wiles" to her advantage.

Why is it that these women appear to have a lack of connection between their experiences and the whole issue of gender? They state that gender has not influenced their careers, yet as the examples above demonstrate, being a woman has made a difference in each of their lives. Perhaps once some women reach a top C.E.O. position, gender no longer becomes a focus even though they know their situations are affected daily. They are the fringe of a male-dominated profession - they no longer are part of the female-dominated teaching profession, yet are a minority and therefore experience some alienation in the male-dominated superintendency. Maybe they feel a need to assume a gender neutral stance and to believe that gender is irrelevant, professional performance is relevant. Diana Fox sums up this attitude with her final comment on gender:

. . . . I set my goals but I've never considered being a woman an issue. It's like a play. I've seen it kind of enter the stage here but it's never been the main drama in terms of my job. I guess that would be the best analogy. Being a woman just has not been an obstacle in terms of

what I wanted to do, but I think it's part of my own drive. You know, I refuse to let it be an issue

This disconnection and general ambivalence regarding gender requires a closer look. Perhaps the word "gender" and the denial of its influence on their career is as Shakeshaft (1989) says, a "survival mechanism" (p. 106) for some of the women interviewed. They have stated that gender has not influenced their careers, yet they state that in some cases they were and are treated differently than men. Bell, Chase and Livingston (1987) in their study of women in the superintendency, best sum up these women's thoughts on gender. Women

do not focus on gender issues and do not spend much time thinking about how being a woman makes a difference in their profession. . . . While the women know that their situations are affected by gender issues, they experience the need to deal with these issues as an extra burden for which they don't have the time or energy. They are anxious to get on with the work of the superintendency. (p. 76)

McGrath (1992) also found that successful women don't get hung up on gender, in spite of evidence documenting sexual discrimination. The unfortunate consequence of women in the superintendency denying that gender was influential and denying sexual discrimination and external barriers, is that discrimination is likely to continue. We must be able to see and acknowledge discrimination in order to combat it.

Other interviewees in the study indicated that gender had made a difference in their careers and were both aware and accepting of the differences. Their comments follow.

Alison Larsen noted that gender became an issue for her when she was appointed to the secondary principalship. She speaks of that experience:

. . . you would walk into the room and there were 95 men and you were the only woman and that's when it hit me. In the first year I was quite intimidated until I got to know some of them. Until you see what's going on and then you realize - by this time things were going well in my own school and I knew I had the skills. I knew I had what it took to be a principal at a secondary school.

Carolyn Parker advised women to be prepared to accept an androcentric world.

Be prepared to accept the fact that you're in a male-dominated world, you're in a world that's androcentric. It's been created by men, men are the power brokers and you can't try and beat them at their game. Because if you become more manly than men, they will simply ignore you. If you become overly feminine or cutesy, they will ignore you. And so one has to be really clear around who one is and the persona that you want to project and I have met women who have either not sorted that one out yet, or not figured out that you can't change androcentricity in organizations such as education.

Carolyn did not appear to be negative or bitter about this androcentric world.

She said, "You've got to work to ameliorate it, you've got to work to provide different perspectives and over the years I believe things will change."

Marilyn Ward saw a "silver lining" in being one of the few women in a male-dominated profession. She said:

. . . it allows me to break some ground for people and I do that in a very subtle way because I've never been one to point out that difference. I still really believe in the strength of the person, the strength of the mind and the strength of ability. So I try to subtly influence.

Marilyn said that there appears to be a greater acceptance of women in senior management, however men "say they want females in administrative roles and they really believe that, but they don't know how to work with them."

Leslie Adams noted that at times it was difficult to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession. Although at first she didn't enjoy going "to the superintendents' conferences and seeing all those gray suits and trying to find collegial support" she attended because "I believe we have to go and be seen. It's a very slow working in - women must be a viable part of it."

When I asked Doreen Nielsen if gender had played a role in her career, she said, "It's not easy sometimes," however she expressed a great deal of respect for the men she works with. Doreen noted that the superintendency is not so "lonely" with more women moving into upper management positions and there is little distinction between the men and women. She elaborated:

I think the distinction between male and female is no longer there in the groups that I work in. It's just that we're superintendents. We work together. We're a group, a subcommittee working on something and we're there . . . Gender doesn't enter into it. At least I don't sense it does anymore. It did for the first few years but it doesn't anymore, but that's my perception.

When I asked Beth Daniels what it meant to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession she said that at first she didn't really notice, but lately she was becoming "sick and tired" of it. She went on:

I mean that's been my career. Because you go to the Social Studies PSA and there's one other woman in the room. You go to the secondary administrators' meeting and there's two other women in the room. I mean that was my whole career. So I didn't notice anything moving into the superintendency. It was still the same world and I guess I just thought that was the flow but I'm becoming less patient and more angry about it.

These women have remained connected to the fact that gender has been an issue in their career, and yet they have also accepted the fact that one of their roles is to subtly influence the androcentric organization of the superintendency.

Internal barriers. Interviewees' comments on internal barriers were identified during the coding process. Internal barriers, which Shakeshaft (1989) identifies as those which can be overcome by individual change, focus on each individual and as demonstrated by the data, have been overcome by the women interviewed.

Carolyn Parker noted that for her the biggest barrier to her career development was

simply the lack of time and because I think, . . . like everybody else, I had home responsibilities and community responsibilities and for me that was a big barrier; there was always more I wanted to do, but never had enough time to do it. And it's essentially the same now. . . . the demands of the work are far greater than the time there is to do it.

Alison Larsen also spoke of her home responsibilities. She said she often used her husband and children as an excuse - for example, she did not apply for the position of primary supervisor because her children were growing up. Perhaps Alison was only making a realistic choice based on her family responsibilities and the support available to her.

The management of family and career can be a struggle, as Margaret Jones noted when speaking of barriers.

The first one [barrier] is cultural. I've struggled for awhile with guilt. I have three children . . . There are still times when I am at a meeting or a conference and my kids are doing something important that I miss and I still struggle with that. . . . I've had to work out details in my life because I do believe that you need a caregiver for your kids and I didn't want my kid's lives to be totally crazy because I had chosen a career and my husband had chosen a career, so we had a lot of details to work around and eventually sort out.

Diana Fox also elaborated on the number of roles women must maintain.

We have so many roles . . . As a woman, I have so many different roles than the people here. I mean I go home at night and I make supper. I do the laundry. I do all of those things. I just don't go home and put my feet up. . . . I don't have a wife.

Capps (1976), Marshall (1986), McShea (1979), Paddock (1981), and Whitaker and Lane (1990) note that often women must maintain both professional and personal duties and therefore are seen as "superwomen." Edson (1988) found that

in various ways, marriage and family influence female aspirants' career goals. Regardless of their marital status, and their involvement or lack

of involvement with children, all female aspirants are affected by the stereotypes of women as wives and mothers and men as husbands and executives. (p. 113)

Although these four women have overcome an internal barrier by juggling career and family, it is clear some felt that the superintendency was not a realistic choice at certain points in their lives. Alison Larsen declined an administrative role until her children were older, Margaret Jones has worked hard to manage all the details of raising a family and having a career, and Diana Fox notes the many roles women often face. For these four female superintendents the management of career and family is an important issue - one that needs recognition and planning. This barrier begins as external socialization and is internalized by women and men.

Several women in the study identified the fact that they were unable to get an administrative position in the first school district they worked in, as an early barrier to administration. The frequency of this phenomena has made it worth exploring.

Although Marilyn Ward was seen as a positive light and was well qualified, she was unable to attain an administrative position in her first district. Reflecting on why she had not received a board office position, Marilyn said:

The answer to me was, how it really worked was that basically I'd never tried before for an administrative position and the person who did receive it had nine years where they were trying to get into

administration. . . . was not his background and so it was a little odd to me in some ways and at that time I found it very, very difficult.

After not receiving a vice-principalship, Marilyn said:

. . . I began to really try to understand what was happening in that school district and trying to make meaning of it for myself . . . and I went to some females and said, 'What is going on here?' We had one female principal at the time. I don't believe there were any female vice principals and there was a lot of comments coming back to me about the golf games, the poker games, the old boy's network, and so I began observing that and realizing that I'd probably need to go in a different route.

Marilyn accepted a job with the ministry and was "on a career path out of the district."

Doreen Nielsen discussed the difficulty she faced in getting promoted in the district she taught in.

I never got promoted in the district that I worked in although I was very effective and innovative in the schools there . . . You really feel that eventually you'll get a job there as an administrator. It's not necessarily so . . . And then you've got to come to the realization . . . I could be here until I was 85 and still not be an administrator. Eventually you need to move on.

The fact that the majority of the women in this study were appointed to the superintendency from outside the district may be a concern for women aspiring to the superintendency. There was no evidence of a pattern between rural and urban school districts and no indication of this phenomena in the literature reviewed.

Beth Daniels said that her experience of trying to get a secondary administrative position in the district she taught in, was a barrier. She became

frustrated with applying and never getting interviewed. At one point someone suggested that she think of elementary administration which made Beth dig in her heels even more. She remembered a conversation with the superintendent of the time:

The then superintendent - again probably meaning it nicely - just said there really wasn't a place for women in secondary administration. You know the discipline and the secondary admin. meetings are all men and that's not the environment I'd want to be in and all those semi-heartening little things. So I guess those were barriers.

Edson (1988) also found that women in her study identified discipline as a source of contention for those aspiring to administration. The respondents in Edson's study noted that "discipline is most often given as the major reason for not hiring women in middle schools and high schools." I could find no evidence in the research to suggest that women had any more or less difficulty handling discipline at the secondary level, however it appears that women in educational administration must continue to work at changing people's beliefs of what secondary administrators should look like.

Although she did not identify it as a barrier, Diana Fox applied for the superintendency in her original district and when she did not get the position she became even more determined. Many of the women interviewed refused to take "no" as an answer and often expressed that they felt even more determined to succeed when they faced an internal barrier.

Although I did not use the term "old boys' club" both Beth and Marilyn identified the old boys' club as direct barriers to their career paths. Reflecting on the situation in her first district, Beth said, "I was saying this is a crock. It's an old boys' club and it's outright prejudice. I mean there's no rationale for this anymore"

Marilyn also noted that the old boy's network is still very solid in the superintendent's association.

Certainly there is a desire to have more equity within that group but the old boys' network in the superintendency seems to be really solid and I think what continues to bring that to light to me is my own association with the superintendency. You know, all the committees - people who are asked to sit on various committees are the old boys.

Peggy Franker spoke of not getting a superintendency in one district and the reasons why.

The board was very traditional, but to give them their due, they had the longest debate ever Of the five candidates short-listed, I was the only woman. . . . if I had had a navy pinstripe suit the discussion wouldn't have taken five minutes. That was a very interesting learning experience for me and it also indicated to me the difficulty facing women going into district positions, especially in smaller communities.

For the women mentioned above, the fact that they were not awarded an administrative position in their original school district shaped their career paths. They became more determined and often choose a career path out of the district. Many years later they still identify this as a barrier despite the fact that they are now all superintendents. Perhaps the anger and frustration at the injustice of the time is still with these women. There is no pattern

regarding district size - women were blocked both in small districts and in large districts. These women needed male sponsorship which was lacking; without the old boy's support, they were unable to move into administration.

Balance and women in leadership. A common theme running through the profile papers was the need for a gender balance in the superintendency. Related to this was the identification of the differences in the ways women lead compared to men. Some women in the study tended to see certain characteristics as essential to all female educational leaders, while others were reluctant to say this is how a male leads and this is how a female leads. Gender essentialism is a set of beliefs, which are built on the assumption that there is a set of characteristics that are fundamental to male behaviors and a set of characteristics that are fundamental to female behaviors. Within this study, some interviewees speak of women as a singular category. As a researcher I have had to remind myself to be specific about which women I am speaking of.

Peggy Franker noted the differences in leadership styles between men and women in the superintendency.

Men, because of their ego or their need to be part of the success, need to be front and center and therefore they continue to get involved and try to control the way a project is going, whereas I feel very differently. I think once you help a group get started you've got to let them go

However Peggy was reluctant to put leadership styles down to gender and her response is a good counter to essentialism. "I'm reluctant to say this is how a male leads and this is how a female leads because I've observed differences and similarities. I think quite often it's individual leadership styles."

June Decker felt that a balance was needed between males and females at the district level, as they each bring a different perspective to the job. She noted that women do some things differently. They are up front and they "have a better way of getting to the point of something and getting a dirty job done."

When I asked Alison Larsen if being a woman was significant in her role as superintendent, Alison took time to reflect and said:

I would say yes, in that being a woman you do have certain strengths that men don't have. And one of the strengths is simply this, I don't think that most women's egos are wrapped up in what they're doing. Ego is important - you need it, but . . . You know it's more of a nurturing. . . .

Carolyn Parker's hopes for the future are that there be a gender balance in the superintendency.

I guess I hope in the future that there's a better balance between men and women, because organizationally there has to be a level of androgeny, and there has to be different perspectives and men and women are needed to bring those perspectives.

When speaking of women in management, Carolyn noted that women are "essentially more nurturing and much more affiliation-oriented . . . women don't participate in politics the same way men do."

Leslie Adams noted that often leadership is an "ego thing" and that women are better able to give up absolute control and share.

I think women are better able to do that. I see it now in our schools. It's very natural for the female principals to be the collaborative leaders and some men are struggling with the loss of "I" and "my school" and so on.

Margaret Jones noted that there has been a shift in management style to a more collaborative, nurturing, autonomous model. Although she hesitated to attribute this style to gender, she felt that women do bring something different to the district office. She said:

I hope that more women do apply and I hope in some ways I can influence women to apply because I do believe that women bring something different to the central office and it's been commented to me several times by teachers and by community members that there is something different in the district office with a woman there.

Doreen Nielsen cautioned against reverse discrimination and called for a balance between men and women and a "world that should be shared between men and women; the responsibilities shared."

She went on to discuss a new superintendency (as a move towards decentralized decision making) and said that this system would be ideally suited to the way women lead because

we're prepared to work with a lot of people and prepared to meet with a lot of people. We're prepared to take calculated risks and we're prepared to look very closely to what's happening in classrooms and stand up and speak out bravely for things that we feel should be happening. I think we work better in negotiations when we can operate as women and I think if enough of us - that would be teachers, school

administrators, senior administrators, would be involved in the negotiation process, we would eventually change it.

Beth Daniels felt that if there was a balance in the superintendency, the role would change and be redefined. She elaborated:

I really hope more women go into it because I think we need that style of leadership and maybe with more women in it, maybe the role of superintendent will change. . . . maybe if there's a critical mass of women the role can be redefined and maybe it's a different way of working with the board.

When discussing leadership styles, Beth noted that women have a different way of doing business with people. She felt that women understand people and consensus building. Women do a lot more "listening, nurturing, building from strength rather than exposing weaknesses." Beth felt that these skills were "clustered" around women but was quick to admit that there are some women who do not have these skills.

Diana Fox identified her own leadership style as facilitative and collaborative, however she hesitated to put this style down to gender. She did say she does more of the "feminine kinds of things" in her job, such as sending cards, chocolates and flowers to her administrators, however she noted that one of the men she works closely with is now also doing similar types of things.

Lori Harris indicated that often women have to work harder than men, however she admitted "the benefits of working with men are numerous . . . I

value the male perspective and watch with great interest the manner in which problems are approached."

Although many of the women were reluctant to put leadership styles down to gender, some of the interviewees felt that women do bring something "different" to the superintendency. Women in leadership positions were identified as being nurturing, collaborative and facilitative. There is a general sense that the other sex - men - lead in a different way and this was often related to their ego. Women in the superintendency are aware that they are redefining and recreating the role of the superintendent - they are agents of social change, yet a greater critical mass will be needed in order for there to be a balance in the superintendency. However, women must be careful not to essentialize either themselves or their male colleagues. Not all women in educational administration are nurturing, collaborative and facilitative, just as not all men in educational administration are ego-maniacs and controllers. What is important is that the public school system hire both female and male administrators who believe they can make a difference through their leadership and vision.

Feminism and women in the superintendency. Only two of the women in my study spoke of feminism and women's groups.

Alison Parker spoke of her shift from the avoidance of women's groups to her support of them. She said: "I've always shied away from women's

groups, because it really grated me, the feminist, the real feminist movement in the sixties and I didn't want to have any identification with that particular group of people." Once Alison met with a group of women planning a woman's leadership conference, however, she experienced a shift in her thinking.

. . . they're [the planning group] attempting to make it easier for women to apply into leadership, but they're encouraging . . . they're talking about excellence in leadership, they're not talking about women in leadership, they're talking about excellence in leadership. So when I sat down with this group of women and you hear this talk, all of a sudden you feel this is a group . . . this is something that you would want to be identified with. . . . it makes me proud to be one of the few women. . . .

Doreen Nielsen noted the demise of extreme feminism, but felt that there was a need for the movement and that "we all benefitted from them." She went on to give an example.

You no longer hear in mixed company extreme, derogatory statements made about women's organizations or about women's roles in society. In my early teaching years the Status of Women Committee was referred to as the sows. In the staffroom the men would say, 'Oh, here's the sow notice' and laugh. You don't hear that now . . . More and more men are openly appreciative of the work women do.

The remaining women did not discuss feminism and I did not bring it up during the interview. I am unsure if they actively support women's groups and causes, or have distanced themselves from the label "feminist" and have disaffiliated themselves from women's groups. Bell (1991), in her analysis of female superintendents' gender consciousness, noted that women's ambivalence

about the women's movement may stem from a "defeminization" (p. 4). She noted that women, unlike men,

must prove themselves to be different from a negative stereotype of others like them (i.e., women in general). This often pressures women into doing their own 'defeminization,' by encouraging them to differentiate themselves from other women. In the context of such pressures to disaffiliate from other women, it should not surprise us to find women in the profession refusing to identify with feminism and the women's movement. . . ." (p. 4)

Issues of Support for Women in the Superintendency in British Columbia

Mentors and sponsors. Mentors were identified by a number of interviewees as contributing substantially to their career success. Dodgson (1986), Dopp and Sloan (1986), Edson (1988), Gabler (1987), Maienza (1986) and Shakeshaft (1989) have also cited the importance and value of mentors for women in educational administration. Although this is not surprising, two superintendents noted the influence of women leaders early in their lives. This section examines the relationship between mentorship, sponsorship and the "old boys' club."

Both Leslie Adams and Doreen Nielsen noted the importance of being educated in an all girls' school. They felt that in a single sex school there were a lot more opportunities to take leadership roles. They looked upon women as leaders because they were the leaders in their environment and therefore never considered that women would not be so. Doreen said, "I just

looked upon women as leaders - I mean all the heads of schools were women and I guess I assumed that women did leadership things."

Many of the women I interviewed spoke of their mentor with respect and gratitude. A mentor is a trusted and experienced counsellor who influences the career development of an associate in a warm, caring and helping relationship (Willis & Dodgson, 1986). A variety of the interviewees' comments are included below.

June Decker said of her mentor, "He respected me and had full confidence in me. He let me make mistakes. Just an excellent model and mentor." She went on. "I honestly thought he could do no wrong for the first years. Then as you grow and you start to get ideas of your own, you realize that these people, who are your mentors, are not perfect. But then you realize what they've provided you with. . . ."

When I asked Marilyn Ward about mentors, she said that four came to mind instantly - three females and one male, all with

the ability to see beyond some thing like being female and not just the idea of being female but the idea of presenting ideas and working in a style that's very different than males. They've all been able to see beyond that [gender]. They've all been equity people. They've all been willing to listen and to be confident in me.

Peggy Franker noted the lack of female role models and mentors in her career; however she felt she had had a great deal of support and encouragement from male superintendents during her practicum and director

position. She said, "Funnily enough, the traditional males who had come through that traditional route were very supportive of me and gave me wonderful advice. I could always call them."

When asked if she had any mentors, Leslie Adams reflected and said, "Probably all my male superiors, although I never thought of them in that light . . . certainly their recognition and promotion of my capabilities is significant."

Although she did not specifically identify him as a mentor, Beth Daniels spoke at length about the first principal she had worked with as a vice-principal and the influence he had on her career.

He was a really pivotal person in my career because I got to see what the principal could do and the incredible impact he had on that staff . . . I hadn't worked with very good role models prior to that. I'd worked with some decent managers, but I hadn't worked with leaders and I didn't know there was a difference until I worked with [name of principal]. If it hadn't been for him, I don't know if I would have had the confidence to think I could do the job [principal in another district]. He was the one who said principalships matter because I had seen him as a model and he made me realize that I could do it and it was important.

The women above indicated that they benefitted from their mentors' support, however several points of interest can be made.

There were few female mentors for these women. This fact reflects the male domination of the superintendency and school-based administration.

Often women received support from men or perceived mentorship from their

male colleagues, when there were no female role models. (The issue of role models will be discussed later.)

Although the women may have indicated that they had mentors, in some cases they may have had more of a sponsorship relationship with their male colleagues. Johnsrud (1991) defines sponsorship as an institutionalized practise for promotion. Sponsorship may serve several purposes: (a) it reduces the pool of applicants because it signals to other potential candidates within the organization that there is a designated candidate, (b) it lessens employees' false expectations regarding position vacancies because those vacancies not open for competition are identified, and (c) it eliminates some of the procedures for hiring and promoting because fewer candidates means fewer sets of credentials to assess, fewer non-selections to justify, and thus fewer contacts with personnel staff.

The effect of sponsorship on women, as identified by Johnsrud (1991), is that sponsorship may perpetuate the individual characteristics of those making the promotion decisions, and in some cases the use of sponsorship to avoid external hires serves to maintain the ratio of women to men in the organization rather than increasing the number of women.

With Johnsrud's (1991) comments on sponsorship in mind, women in the superintendency may have been sponsored rather than mentored. For example, June Decker was contacted by a male colleague who she had

previously worked with and offered a six month contract as a senior administrator. Peggy Franker was accepted and supported by the "traditional males" - they chose to promote her. Leslie Adams was promoted internally and noted that as often as her role changed, so did the job title. Diana Fox was advised by the superintendent to sit on an advisory board for a new school as then she would have the inside edge for the principalship. Beth Daniels was often encouraged to apply for administrative positions.

These examples point to the fact that in some cases, the "old boys' club" continues to pick and promote the women they feel will "fit in", women who are perhaps the most like themselves and who they may feel will cause the least amount of havoc.

Another reason why men and women do not have a mentor-protégée relationship is that they may be unaccustomed to working in a close, "warm, caring and helping relationship" (Dodgson & Wills, 1986). This type of relationship may be perceived or may even grow into a love or sexual relationship. Doreen Nielsen commented on the perceived threat women in the superintendency may be. She said:

The difficulty with women in administration, because there are so few of us, is that we are women and we can be perceived as a threat to the wives of other administrators; wives who are not involved in administration or education itself. The reality is in administration you spend a lot of time, long hours together, planning, talking about things, doing the kinds of stuff that needs to be done to run a school district or school. Some men feel uncomfortable about working with women in these very close situations.

Perhaps sponsorship is safer for men and women who do not have a history of working together. Regardless, both Edson (1988) and Shakeshaft (1989) maintain that female aspirants - more than men - must have sponsorship or a mentor in order to be successful in acquiring an administrative position and in many cases the mentor or sponsor must be male.

Role models. Several women in the study indicated that during their career there has been a lack of female role models for them. Various other studies have indicated that female educators lack same-sex representatives upon which to pattern their career aspirations and goals (Adkison, 1981; Edson, 1988; Marshall, 1986; Shapiro, 1987; Sloan & Dopp, 1986; Tabin, 1990; Whitaker & Lane, 1990; Yeakley, 1986).

Two of the superintendents interviewed expressed their concern.

Doreen Nielsen said,

One of the things that concerns me is that some women coming into senior positions have only seen, throughout their whole schooling, men in positions of leadership, and have only seen that model and so they emulate that model . . . and perpetuate it and sometimes are more strident in it than a man would be and I feel badly about that.

Marilyn Ward also spoke of the fact that some females have taken on masculine roles in order to survive in their positions and noted that

very few who have not taken on that masculine role have been allowed to proceed up that career path. I believe I'm one of them. I'm not at all . . . feminine to the point where I'm cutesy in my dress . . . I'm very conscious of an executive look, but I have a manner that is not masculine and I don't want to do that

Doreen Nielsen identified the lack of female role models not only for women in administration but for students, as a concern.

You kind of hope that the young kids coming through the schools now will be looking at the world in a different way. Unfortunately, schools still stay very traditional in their staffing. You still get women in the elementary years. Nearly all primary kids have a woman teacher for the first three or four years and usually there's a man who's principal of the school. They go to secondary school and they see women in the areas where they expect them to be: home ec., special education. They rarely see women in the sciences or if they do they're teaching grade 8. They rarely see women in administration. We're really brainwashing our kids into believing this is the way it's supposed to be.

Several women identified themselves as role models and indicated that there is some pressure in being one of the few women in the superintendency, for it is a highly isolated, yet visible role. Edson (1988) also noted that "women occupying first or solitary entry-level positions share a common feeling of isolation and bear the burden of being a responsible representative for other women seeking similar placements" (p. 66).

Alison Larsen said

. . . it makes me proud to be one of the few women, but it also puts somewhat of a, I was going to say a responsibility on me to encourage, because if I can do it, there are so many other women out there with much greater talents than what I have, that I think would be absolutely wonderful superintendents, and I think it's really important that we recognize that.

Leslie Adams stated:

I'm always conscious of the female role, especially as for a few years I was the sole female in administration. And as I've tried to mentor other females into administration and into district roles and so on, I am

always very conscious of the image women portray at administrators' meetings and other male dominated professional activities.

Leslie feels that women must find a balance in what they wish to project. "I think you can't come across in an emotional way because people think there's just an emotional woman, but there's a danger too, of going the other way and not appearing as yourself." Leslie's comment may lead one to assume that women who appear "as themselves" are emotional, however I believe she was trying to express the need for an emotional balance in the superintendency. Women must not appear to be "hard", yet must also make rationale decisions - not emotionally charged ones. As Marilyn Ward said (and I paraphrase) - not too cutesy and not too masculine. This expectation is unspoken yet exists among both male and female educators and trustees.

Doreen Nielsen advised that being one of the few women in the superintendency can bring its own level of stress. She said:

I think being a woman in the superintendency creates the feeling people will be looking upon you as a woman representing women. You have to distance yourself from that because what you are is a superintendent doing a superintendent's job and you do it the best way you can; but always at the back of your mind is this feeling.

Diana Fox makes a conscious decision to mentor women in education.

. . . I mentor women . . . more than I do men. . . . Right from the time I was principal. I handpicked people and have mentored them and I haven't said to them, "I'm mentoring you," but I just try to do what was done for me. More with females and I am trying to think if that was even consciously. Probably consciously in the sense that I don't think women value themselves in education so I think from that point of view I do.

Because there are so few women in the superintendency, aspiring female educators may be putting undue pressures on these women to be superhuman and therefore have some difficulty finding or accepting fault with them. This enormous pressure to do well as a top female educator, has been documented by Bell (1987), Fraker (1984), Tabin (1990) and Yeakley (1986). Aspiring female educators must come to accept the fact that our few role models are human; they have many strengths, however they will also have weaknesses.

Female superintendents may also be pressuring themselves for they realize that they are in a male dominated profession and both men and women are watching them closely. Again, their role is not an easy one, however it is needed and as Edson (1988) notes, if nothing else it "will offer upcoming generations of school children a different view of administrators and provide positive examples for other women still waiting in the wings" (p. 71).

Family and friends' support. The importance of family support and encouragement during childhood and beyond was emphasized by the interviewees time and time again. It confirmed for me the importance of home expectations for one's self concept and confidence. Often the tone and expectations of the interviewee's parents were not based on sex differences, but rather on equity, encouragement, support and love.

Carolyn Parker spoke of her family background: ". . . I grew up in a home where it wasn't important whether you were male or female, what was important was that you did a good day's work and that you challenged yourself. So I think those attitudes have left a mark on me."

Peggy Franker recognized that her mother was a good role model because she was independent and in her own business. Peggy's father was also supportive. "He was very encouraging and supportive, and in some ways forced me to do very balanced things. He taught me to play golf when I was twelve. I could shoot. He always encouraged me to participate in a variety of activities that were quite non-traditional."

Margaret Jones' parents played a role in her career. She notes,

. . . all of us were encouraged and I was the oldest, to get an education . . . So my mom and dad were really strong influences and to this day if I'm doing a workshop or giving a presentation or I've written a paper or had something published, they're the first ones there to congratulate me or take part. They continue to be a really strong support system.

Doreen Nielsen mentioned the support that she had from her parents.

"I had a father who thought that there was absolutely nothing I couldn't do if I really wanted to, which was rather amazing in that day and age."

Diana Fox spoke highly of her mother.

My mother was certainly a part of it. My mother taught me to believe in myself. She taught me - her line is that you can do anything you want to do. All you have to do is decide you want to do it. It's that simple. . . . So my mother has always been there for me and always shored up that belief that I'm the best thing in the world.

The support from parents, especially mothers, was also verified by Shakeshaft (1989) in her review of nine studies that explored the most important influences on women administrators' careers.

Several of the interviewees also identified the support from their spouses - both professional and personal, as an important factor in their lives. Their partners tended to share responsibilities, were not threatened by their spouse's position and provided a great deal of emotional support. Edson (1988) also noted that in her study of female educators and aspirants that one of the first things married women mentioned was the support they received from their husbands. (It should be noted that both Edson (1988) and myself are assuming heterosexuality when speaking of these women's spouses.)

Leslie Adams spoke of her husband as ". . . mostly my calm support and greatest critic . . . if he wasn't so wonderful I might be a lonely super."

Doreen Nielsen noted that her husband has provided her with a great deal of support over the course of her career. She said:

[He] is the kind of guy who recognizes that what I had to do I had to do and certainly supported rather than impeded me . . . He took on a lot of responsibilities in the home because when I finally did get administrative positions, I had to travel to them.

Beth Daniels noted that her husband has always been a great supporter.

She said:

It was my husband who's always said, "You know you can do it." He doesn't have any ego problems. I mean he's just my first supporter

. . . all through my entire teaching career . . . there's been somebody there who's sort of the greatest cheerleader and not threatened by it all.

Shakeshaft (1988) also notes that a number of women in her research state that they have been completely supported by their husbands, however she questions the apparent testimonials from women regarding their supportive husbands.

The unanimity of the voices of married women who are administrators, concerning supportive husbands, is somewhat puzzling in light of the research that indicates that in dual-career families, women take on a larger share of the work in the home than they do in relationships where only the husband works outside the home. Perhaps the husbands of women in school administration are particularly unlike men in the rest of the world. Or, more likely, what women call support from husbands may be a lack of resistance to their aspirations. In these relationships, as long as the status quo is not upset, the husbands do encourage their wives. (p. 108)

The sample size of this study is too small to draw similar conclusions to Shakeshaft (1988), however her comments are interesting in light of some of the interviewee's comments.

One superintendent, June Decker, reflected on the importance of close female friends. "I think that each of them in some way have given me a little bit of self confidence. Some little bit they've added. They've added somehow to my personality and enriched my life." She also discussed the importance of a friend at work.

When you have somebody that you really trust that you're working with it really puts you at ease in your job because if all else fails, and if somebody dumps all over you, you can go into your friend's office,

shut the door, have a cry if you like and they're going to put their arms around you and say it's alright.

Not surprisingly, the issue of support came up over and over again in the interviewees' advice to perspective candidates.

Carolyn Parker said:

Make sure you have family support. Make sure you don't put yourself in a position where you're sacrificing your family for your career. And I think that that's probably the cross that a lot of women who go into administration carry . . . the management of both. Because I fundamentally believe that ultimately there is nothing to be gained if the person develops her career at the expense of her children, if she has children and the expense of her marriage if she has a marriage. I think there has to be a great deal of understanding about a time commitment. It's a profound time commitment.

Leslie Adams also noted the importance of a support system. "I think if you have children or other responsibilities, there has to be a great support system in there because your hours are just not your own."

Many of the women interviewed acknowledged and recognized that they didn't rise to the top on their own and even in their current position they required the support of loved ones. Although the women spoke of the loneliness of the superintendency, they confirmed their need for support be it spouse, family or friends. A number of other researchers have also noted the need for support and encouragement from families and spouses (Dopp, 1985; Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Frasher & Hardwick, 1982; Gotwalt & Towns, 1986; Jackson, 1980; Tabin, 1990).

Lack of support - from women. Several women in the study indicated that often women are their own worst enemies and do not support each other. Gabler (1987), Gotwalt and Town (1986), Marshall (1986) and McShea (1979) suggest that women have not been trained to support each other and therefore become closed to other women who they feel are competing with them. Edson (1988), in her book Pushing the Limits, notes that "instead of forming alliances, many women in education often find themselves drawing up battle lines" (p. 133).

Peggy Franker spent some time elaborating on the attitudes of women towards other women in administration.

. . . I don't know whether it's a barrier or whether it's just a hurdle you have to cross, but getting support as a new person in this position was far more readily forthcoming from the men in the schools than from the other women administrators. It is something that we as women have to really work at - we have to begin to be far more supportive of each other - to be far more willing to mentor women and support other women. It's almost that streak of jealousy, that comes out in a competitiveness and usually the criticisms are not professional, they are personal.

Margaret Jones, when speaking of support, finds that some women "pay lip service to supporting women in leadership. Professional jealousy, on the part of some women, has made it harder to accept [women as superintendents] than men."

Lori Harris also pointed out that often women are their own worst enemies but failed to elaborate on this point.

Diana Fox noted that the only barrier she had faced was from women trustees. She elaborated:

. . . Probably if there's been any barrier in my career advancement it's the women who have sat on the school boards that haven't supported my application. . . . Now I don't know if that's because I was a woman or not but I didn't get the support. . . . I think women are their own worst enemies. I don't think we support and mentor. We tend to have too many chicken fights. So if there's an obstacle I would say my fellow colleagues.

I was disappointed with this finding, for as a woman in education I often seek and require nurturing from other women in education. However, upon reflection I realize that it is my own stereotyping which leads me to believe all women are supportive and nurturing towards each other. Women can, and do, withdraw support and undermine each other. Perhaps it is our [women] socialization that does not encourage us to compete, to be graceful in our defeats, to support others of the same sex who are successful, which erupts into professional jealousy. Or as Edson (1988) suggests,

perhaps the negative comments and actions toward women with higher aspirations is an understandable response to the general shift of social values. . . . The women's movement and changing family and work patterns leave many women frustrated and unsure of what is appropriate or is expected of them as women. (p. 136)

Whatever the reason, women in the superintendency are in a unique position because they have the opportunity and ability to promote and support women in their career aspirations.

Career Paths and Reflections on Appointment from Women in the Superintendency in British Columbia

The first two topics examined in this section deal with the interviewees' careers before the superintendency. Yeakley, Johnston and Adkison (1986) define career patterning as a sequencing of positions in order that each provides the necessary experience to ensure success in subsequent positions. On examining the fourteen superintendent's career paths, some commonalities were found in their teaching experiences, however once these women moved into administration their careers became much more varied.

Teaching experiences. The interviewees' teaching experiences were both at the elementary and secondary levels, and several had taught at the university level. When reflecting on their teaching careers the women often spoke of the programs they had piloted and the variety of experiences they had as teachers. It became clear that these women, as teachers, were risk-takers and innovators. As suggested by some of the literature, all the women had a background in teaching and curriculum (McShea, 1979; Richardson, 1979; Tabin, 1990).

What I found of more interest was the fact that many of the women interviewed had been involved in their local teachers association, often as a member of the executive or had worked extensively with the Ministry of Education.

June Decker was the first female negotiations chair-person in her district and noted that: "I don't really remember thinking much at that time as to whether I was a woman doing something or just somebody who knew something."

Carolyn Parker felt that her involvement with the provincial teachers' federation gave her an understanding of provincial politics and Beth Daniels was the chair of the bargaining committee for her district. Several other women in the study were members of their teacher association's executive.

I believe it would be fair to speculate that this experience gave those women involved a political perspective and perhaps some credibility with their colleagues, which would be invaluable as they moved into administrative roles. The practical experience of working on committees and speaking in front of their peers could also be seen as beneficial.

Ministry of Education experience proved to be advantageous for a number of the women interviewed. Irene Olsen, in speaking of the reasons she was hired to the superintendency, said one of the things the board liked was, ". . . the fact that I had some ministry experience and a provincial perspective and that for me has been really beneficial."

Marilyn Ward noted that her three years with the ministry (both as a coordinator and then as a director), gave her a broad range of "management,

administrative and consultative" experience, and interviewee Beth Daniels was seconded from the superintendency to work for the ministry for two years.

The women who worked with the Ministry of Education had exposure around the province and through their contacts built up a variety of networks. They were highly visible and in two instances were able to move from a ministry position into the superintendency (however both these women had had previous school based administration experiences).

Maienza (1986), in her study of women and men in the superintendency, found that some predictors of access for women in leadership positions was that they were highly visible, were seen as leaders at an early stage in their career and were innovators. Gabler (1987) and Tabin (1990) also noted the importance of visibility for women interested in administration. The fourteen women in this study were visible in their school district(s) and in some cases at the provincial level.

School-based administrative experience. The interviewees' administrative experience leading up to their present position varied. Many of the women had been vice-principals and/or principals. Some of the women had held one or more central office staff positions, such as supervisor or director of curriculum, instruction or special education, and some had been in a coordinator or consultant role. These staff positions differ from line positions, which Shakeshaft (1989) identifies as secondary vice-principal or

principal and assistant or associate superintendent positions. Both Frasher and Hardwick (1982) and Shakeshaft (1989) note that women rarely find themselves in the traditional male mobility path of secondary administrator to superintendent; several women in this study did, however, move from secondary administrative positions to staff positions, and then to the superintendency. Once entering administration no common mobility paths could be identified among the fourteen women.

What was of greater interest to my study is the fact that three of the women interviewed had no school-based administration.

June Decker moved from a teaching position to a coordinator role, which was reclassified to a supervisor's position and then entered the superintendency.

Marilyn Ward moved from a position in the ministry to a district Director of Instruction and then to the superintendency. Marilyn said she prepared herself for this role carefully aware that she would be expected to supervise principals. Marilyn used her networks from her work with the ministry to "talk to principals . . . visit districts . . . gain information . . . update and go through schools." When I interviewed superintendent Marilyn Ward, she noted that it was unusual for someone in her position to have no school based administration experience and that at times it had created problems. "It is very unusual. Mind you, that brings me some problems

sometimes. I think that within a traditional mind set of the appropriate career ladder that can interfere until a significant amount of credibility builds up."

Lori Harris also took an alternate route to the superintendency. She moved from teaching to a coordinator of special education position and then to a director, which she said "evolved" into the superintendency. Lori indicated that her lack of school based administration was viewed as a barrier. She said:

Because I do not have school based management, principals and vice-principals, in a few cases only, have a difficult time with my role. I doubt that a man in this position would encounter the same reaction, given that males with one year of teaching experience have been given principalships.

June, Marilyn and Lori's career paths are an anomaly among the fourteen women interviewed and although I have no research to indicate this, I would suggest that the majority of superintendents, male or female, have school based administrative experience.

Several of the women I interviewed advised prospective candidates to gain a variety of school based experiences which contradicts the above three women's experiences. For example, Peggy Franker felt it was important to seek out all kinds of experiences and to fully understand the school system.

She said,

Don't worry that you may be taking a few years longer because you're doing either a secondary or elementary experience. This is critical because when you are in a district position as someone supervising schools, it's really important to have been there. It gives you

credibility with the people with whom you work and it also gives you an empathy and an understanding of what they are going through.

Dawn Smith also felt that women should "get as much experience and involvement in the different aspects of education" and get "a fair amount of solid school based administrative experience."

A review of the literature also indicates that studies of women in educational administration reflect the need for varied educational and professional experiences (Abrams, 1978; Costa, 1981; Dopp, 1975; Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Tabin, 1990).

The issue of secondary school based administrative experience was touched upon by two of the interviewees. Beth Daniels noted that it may be an advantage to have some secondary administrative experience.

I think it was an advantage to be in secondary because you get a lot more credibility whether that's real or not. . . . I mean I came out of running a couple of tough secondary schools and I didn't have to prove myself in bigger audiences. My reputation had preceded in terms of being able to take on some tough jobs so I wasn't linked to little kids. I was linked to big stuff.

The secondary principalship and the traditional mind set regarding line positions and experience were identified as a barrier for Margaret Jones.

I think another barrier to becoming superintendent is the belief that you need to follow a series of steps and one of those steps must include a secondary principalship and I think it's been really difficult for women to get into secondary principalships because it's not felt they can handle discipline.

Reflecting on her own career, Margaret noted,

. . . there were a number of people who felt that I could not be an effective superintendent until I had that secondary principalship under my belt, and yet in the time I've had the superintendency, I'm not sure that anything I've handled would have been handled any better had I been a secondary principal . . . so I don't believe that it is something necessary.

The need for secondary administrative experience did not appear to be necessary for the women interviewed, however it may be easier to get a position in the superintendency with secondary experience and to have credibility once in that position. Abrams (1978), Marshall (1986) and Shakeshaft (1989) indicate that often secondary administration is required in order to enter the superintendency, for as Beth Daniels said when speaking of her secondary experience, ". . . I wasn't linked to little kids. I was linked to big stuff." The implication here is that women can "handle" elementary kids, however in most cases men are linked to secondary and handle the "big stuff," therefore are better prepared for the superintendency. In B.C. this belief is perpetuated for very few secondary administrators are women - female administrators tend to be found at the elementary level. (The breakdown of numbers between female elementary and secondary administrators was unavailable from the Ministry of Education Gender Equity Branch, however one can safely speculate that female elementary administrators far outnumber female secondary administrators.) Obviously the organizational structure of B.C. schools has prevented some women from following a more traditional career path into the superintendency.

Appointment to the superintendency. At the time of interviewing (the spring of 1992), there were fourteen women in the superintendency in British Columbia. This figure remains the same one year later, with the only move being the promotion of a female assistant superintendent to superintendent. Approximately seventeen percent of the province's school districts have a woman in the superintendency, however when this figure is compared to the number of positions available, it is found that approximately nine percent are held by women provincially.

When I asked the fourteen women in the superintendency why they were appointed, they often cited their varied experiences, good track record and reputation. The majority of the women interviewed felt they had the skills and had demonstrated the ability to do the job. A variety of comments were heard on this topic.

Alison Larsen indicated that she was hired as she had "as much to offer as anyone else," and she believed that she shared and espoused the same values as the school board.

Carolyn Parker believes she was hired because she was what and who the board was looking for and she had proven her ability and competence in other districts.

I think I was hired because I was the right fit at this point in the district's development. The board was looking for someone who had a background in strategic planning and implementation of that. The board was looking for someone who would take that mandate and look

at it and begin to shift the paradigm of operation. I had clearly demonstrated that ability when I worked in [other districts].

Irene Olsen felt she was hired because

. . . the board was as close to non-sexist as I've run across . . . they liked the school experiences that I had, and in particular special ed; they were looking for someone that was comfortable with and an advocate for, integration of youngsters with special needs . . . I was also fairly knowledgeable in the newer trends and also in working with people to affect change and that was one of the things they were looking for. They were also looking for someone knowledgeable in and committed to the Year 2000 directions. They liked the fact that I had some ministry experience

Surprisingly, only two women indicated that they were either encouraged to apply because they were female or were hired because they were female. Perhaps the other interviewees are not aware that their gender may have also influenced the board's decision to appoint them or that it may have been a hindrance in their appointment.

Dawn Smith said she thought she was appointed to the superintendency because she had the experience, the knowledge of the district, and the support of the people in the district. "I've been encouraged in the district to look at it - probably more recently by some people identifying the fact that there weren't women in the job."

Peggy Franker, in reflecting on her appointment, said, "I guess I was lucky and it was meant to be because at that particular time, the superintendent specifically, and the board, were looking for a woman in the position." She went on.

Those first six months were very difficult because they'd rarely had had someone from outside, at the district level. It had always been through the ranks. They never had a woman before. There weren't many women in administration in the district . . . so it was different for everyone.

Several women thought they were just lucky to get their jobs. I am unsure if this is false modesty or the fact that some women are not comfortable with their successes or that despite their work and experience, they have been socialized into seeing administration as men's territory. Some examples of comments heard were: "I'm probably fortunate in getting this current position"; "Some people would say I'm lucky to be where I am;" ". . . maybe they were so desperate . . . Maybe I just got lucky. Maybe I said the right thing at the right time;" and, "I've really fallen into a lot of these jobs."

Several of the women interviewed did not find the low percentage of women in the superintendency a surprise. Their reflections and cautions are honest and look closely at what the job entails, and what some women may value.

Carolyn Parker said that she was not alarmed or concerned with the fact that there are so few women in the profession. She was not sure whether a lot of women would even want the job.

I think it's hard on some women who might see themselves at a disadvantage because they're women. But I don't see that in other female superintendents. I think they are very much like myself, we just are there and want to do a good job. I think that because of the job and because of the kind of time it demands and kind of self-discipline and kind of objectivity, I'm not sure it's a job where

currently a lot of women might want to be. There is no prestige to the job and there are very few amenities, so I'm not sure if that stops or detracts other women.

Irene Olsen discussed some women's apparent lack of desire to enter the superintendency. She noted that women often take time to look at the job closely: ". . . we're sensible, we stand back and look at it and see what it has to offer and see if it really is going to enrich our lives or not and I think in many cases women come to the conclusion that it isn't." Irene continued to elaborate on this:

I think the women that I know anyway, really like working with people closely and like working with children as well, and like working with teachers closely to support and promote change and in these positions [the superintendency], you really don't do that. I always feel like I'm sort of three steps removed from the action.

Irene added that women look at their careers differently than men. Women analyze their careers and "are not as oriented to looking at the 'up the ladder' kind of thing, but more the quality of experience and in quality of life and I think men are considering that now as well."

Leslie Adams noted that there are some downfalls that come with the role and cautions women to examine the role carefully. "I think people going into this have to really question - is it going to become more of a bureaucratic role as we spend less and less time in schools and less and less time where it really matters."

Carol Shakeshaft (1989), in her study of women in educational administration, also found that for many women the superintendency has little appeal. She said that for many women the job

has power and prestige but it lacks, for these women, the day-to-day experiences that make work enjoyable. . . . For many women, perhaps, the glories of the top are not worth the sacrifices and they choose career paths where the quality of work life makes up for the lower salary, lower power, and lower prestige. (p. 74)

Several of the women in the study indicated that they felt "removed from the action" and one superintendent informally said that where women in education made the difference was in the classroom. There was a sense of isolation from the school, staff and students once these women entered the superintendency. This "aleness" will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Five.

Margaret Jones also questioned the reasons why there are so few women in the superintendency.

Is the reason there aren't more women in the superintendency because they don't apply or is it because people won't take the chance? You know, I'm just not sure what the reason is and sometimes I sense that the reason more women don't apply is because they haven't worked out that ability to coordinate all those aspects of their life that they need to coordinate . . . or they just might not be interested.

Doreen Nielsen stated that the internal barrier of having a family may exclude women from the superintendency. "I think family life certainly puts a delay on many women. I suppose women are more reticent to get involved in

a job that's pretty tough. There are a lot of women who have simply said, "No way - I'm not going to put up with it."

Margaret and Doreen's comments linking some women's lack of aspirations with the balancing of personal and professional duties has also been cited by a number of researchers as an internal barrier (Gross & Task, 1976; Marshall, 1986; McShea, 1979; Paddock, 1981; Shapiro, 1987; Stockard, 1980; Tabin, 1990; Tibbetts, 1979). However, Shakeshaft (1989) states that internal barriers lack substance and no longer can be used as an explanation for women's lack of aspirations. Internal barriers are

merely camouflage for deeper, societal roadblocks to women's advancement. By accepting as fact that inequities toward women occur because of some lack of ability or action by women, we are not forced to look elsewhere for explanations, neither are we pushed to question the concepts and frameworks that conclude that the victim is at fault. (p. 84)

Like Shakeshaft, I believe that family responsibilities can no longer be used as an excuse for women interested in educational administration.

However, there is a realistic struggle that career women in the 90's face, for as Edson (1988) notes, "when women blend both career and family, they struggle not only against the personal demands on their time but also against the stereotypes that women should care for the family and that administration is a male profession" (p. 95). Perhaps where society needs to focus energy in overcoming this barrier is in the area of daycare and support for families, and a general change in perception as to female's role in the family structure.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Advice and Implications for Further Research

Chapter Five is divided into three sections. Section One, Conclusions, reviews the principle findings from the study and provides general conclusions about their significance. Section Two deals with the advice from the interviewees to women interested in the superintendency. The fourteen women's advice is related to the profiles and the current literature. Section Three, Implications for Further Research, identifies topics for further research.

Conclusions

This study extends our knowledge of how women in the superintendency think about their careers and work lives. Although the study was limited to all B.C. women who had attained a superintendent's position, and was specific (white, middle class, Anglo-Saxon women), its depth provides us with a better understanding of fourteen individual women in the superintendency. The profiles and findings present images and impressions of each interviewee, however, some common themes and conclusions can be made for this specific group of women.

Gender

The fourteen women do not all share the same perspectives on gender issues and sex discrimination. However, a predominant theme throughout the findings indicated a disconnection between gender and career. There may be two explanations for this. Perhaps the word "gender" itself caused some of the interviewees to be ambivalent about its influence on their careers. They may have not taken the time to reflect on the issue of being a woman in the superintendency, therefore were unaware of the role gender may have played in their careers.

The second explanation for this phenomenon is that the interviewees, once entering a career in administration, appear to deem gender to be irrelevant and focus more on their professional performance. Gender becomes a non-issue, and though they often related specific examples of sex discrimination or gender-bias barriers, some interviewees denied that gender influenced their professional lives.

How does one interpret the women's apparent lack of gender consciousness with their seemingly contradictory experiences? We know that as women enter the upper echelons of school administration they increasingly become a minority. They are highly visible and often become role models for other women but they are no longer associated with their female teaching colleagues and there are few other women in a similar role. Therefore,

perhaps they must assume a gender neutral stance and get on with the work of the superintendency. By ignoring or bulldozing over gender related issues, these women have simply not allowed gender to emerge as an identified barrier.

Internal Barriers

Although the findings indicate that internal barriers can be overcome, the management of both a professional and personal life was clearly an issue. Societal expectations and the sex role stereotyping of women's roles as wives and mothers continued to cause an internal struggle for some of the interviewees. For others, their decision not to have a family has made the management of their career somewhat easier. Although the superintendents with families appeared to overcome this barrier, there remains a question of sacrifice. How far can women in educational administration advance before there is a cost to their personal relationships, family and general well-being? The women's commitment and dedication to the superintendency was apparent, however many interviewees made it clear that there was a cost in moving to the upper echelons of educational administration. The women in this study agreed that the superintendency experience is worth it, however, they also cautioned aspirants to carefully weigh the effects such a move would have if they were to succeed.

Another somewhat disturbing barrier identified by some interviewees was the failure of women to support each other. I have come to the conclusion that it is women's own stereotyping which leads us to believe that all women are supportive and caring. Some women are unfamiliar with the notion of supporting each other and instead may find a recently appointed woman a threat. Or perhaps some women may feel that their own position is somewhat tenuous and unique, and therefore want to protect that position. Other women may just be too busy to support aspiring female administrators.

Enablers

Possible predictors of access to the superintendency were identified through the interviews with the fourteen women. The findings suggest that the interviewees' background and family support influenced their aspirations and their ability to combine both career and family. Mentors also played a significant role in contributing to the interviewees' successes; however in some cases the women may have had more of a sponsorship relationship with the mentor they identified. Often, a sponsorship relationship can perpetuate the qualities and individual characteristics of those making promotional decisions. Regardless, it was clear that the interviewees had mentors, sponsors and role models who made a difference.

Career Paths

The group of women interviewed had varied teaching experiences: however, one commonality noted was that many of the women interviewed had held an executive position in their local teachers' association. Interviewees appeared to have a lack of career plans until they entered administration, and often the impetus to enter administration came from a colleague or mentor. The women in the study who were unable to gain an administrative position in their original teaching district became even more determined and often were successful in securing an administrative position out of their district.

Once in administration the women's career paths to the superintendency differed and in most cases diverged from the typical male mobility path of secondary administrator to superintendent. It appears that the organizational structure of British Columbia's high schools, with men predominantly serving as principals, has prevented women from following traditional career paths.

An anomaly among the women in this study is the fact that three of the interviewees had no school based administrative experience before entering the superintendency.

The profiles and findings present a clear picture of fourteen individual women who have achieved non-traditional positions in diverse ways. Their voices have given us an understanding and knowledge of women's experiences in the superintendency in British Columbia. They are role models for aspiring

educators, especially women, and are making a difference. The question arises, will women in the superintendency make public education better? This study cannot assess whether these women are influencing public education; however, they are slowly changing and adding another dimension to the role of the superintendent for they are bringing female perspectives, different voices, and experiences to the superintendency.

Advice to Aspirants

The interviewees were thoughtful and honest when I asked for their advice to women aspiring to the superintendency. For example, one superintendent, albeit tongue in cheek, said, "Don't" (as in don't think about a career in the superintendency). I believe that all educators aspiring to the superintendency should read this section with interest, for it has broad relevance and may aid aspirants in making choices about their careers. It also offers the reader insight into the special problems female aspirants may face.

The interviewees' advice appeared to form patterns in four areas: knowledge of self and abilities, acceptance and working towards a balance in the superintendency, the management of personal and professional life, and aloneness. Each of these areas are discussed below, and interviewees' quotes have been included, along with some references to the literature.

Knowledge of Self and Abilities

Some interviewees indicated that a strong sense of self and purpose is required in the superintendency, and aspirants are reminded to have their values grounded in what is best for children.

Beth Daniels advised women to ". . . have a clear sense of who you are and what you want to do before you get in and then apply for what you want to do because there's a lot of differentiation at a board office."

June Decker's advice to women interested in the superintendency was to be curious, inquisitive and a competent teacher. She feels that curriculum work is important and that one must stay close to the schools and the kids to be effective.

. . . I like to be out at the schools and I like to do something that people know I'm doing is a little closer to the kids than pushing paper in an office . . . so something that really matters to somebody - that really helps them out, that can be tied really close to the kids . . . stay somehow close to the schools when you are in the board office because if you're not close to the schools you're going to soon be ineffective.

Carolyn Parker spoke at length about values and the fact that female administrator's values should be grounded in what is really best for children because "when the politics start in any situation, they're all about preserving the rights of adults usually. And unless you are so strong in your values around the children, you will easily succumb to the pressures. Be clear about your values and be prepared to fight for them."

Aspirants entering the superintendency should have a clear vision of leadership and must be able to articulate that to all - students, staff, community and school board. Alison Larsen said, "You can't lead the charge if you think you look funny on a horse," meaning women should have a vision or image of themselves as leaders. Leslie Adams also said, "You do have to have some resiliency to be able to take the good with the bad and I guess to feel very confident about yourself and leadership." Margaret Jones also advised women to have their own "vision and philosophy of what being a superintendent or being a leader is all about and to reflect that and share that and articulate it with the people that you work with." Dopp and Sloan (1986), Marshall (1986) and Tabin (1990) also note the importance of vision and the ability to communicate the vision to people successfully.

Acceptance and Working Towards a Balance in the Superintendency

None of the interviewees indicated that they were angry with the under-representation of women in the superintendency in British Columbia. Several interviewees advised women to be prepared to work in an androcentric world and to come to a personal understanding that change will be incremental and slow. Interviewees cautioned women against dwelling on gender issues. They saw a need for a balance, both in personnel and approach at the superintendent level, for men and women each bring something of value to the position.

Carolyn Parker said:

. . . really understand what it is you are going into and that there is no glory in this world. And that it is a world that you've got to be prepared to work at changing incrementally. I don't believe in the approach that a lot of women's groups in our society take when they want to have equality and equity by denouncing what is, because as soon as you denounce it, you have the male portion of the world becoming defensive. And if you try to do that in the world of the superintendency, the needed connections and the support that you must have at certain levels will simply not be there. You will be dismissed. So I don't think the issue for me is gender . . . [speaks of experience in working with an inquiry group looking into women in administration and the debate of whether it was a gender issue or a human development issue] . . . we came to the conclusion that it was a human development issue. That while it affected women, it also affected men and that we need to be looking at how to strive to have a balanced view and how to strive to have a much more androgenous approach to the running of organizations. So I think if women hook themselves only to the gender issue, I don't think they are going to get very far.

Margaret Jones also cautioned women about the difficulty of working in an androcentric world. She said,

I think that as long as it [the superintendency] continues to be dominated by men, that perhaps you have to recognize that you may be passed by even though you're the one, even though when you compare yourself to some of the males, you know you are showing leadership, . . . yet this person just got the job that should have been yours. You have to almost expect that's going to happen for the next little while.

Gowalt and Towns (1986) caution aspirants to not ignore the traditional networks of influential men for aspirants may learn a great deal about efficient and effective management from male administrators. Marshall (1986) notes that women may expect rejection and not to be impatient. She elaborates:

There is a perception that some young women have a sense of entitlement; because they have completed the necessary years of

schooling, they feel they are ready for a top administrative position. This attitude will go against you. Recognize that you will have to go through a certain number of administrative chairs, and that you will have to put the time in to reach the level of administration that you are seeking. (p. 13)

Gowalt and Towns (1986) and Marshall (1986) advised women not to blame their lack of advancement on the fact that they are female. Marshall (1986) advises, "Forget your sex, be proud of it and then put it aside." In Frasher, Frasher and Hardwick's (1982) study of eighty-two female superintendents, they also noted that the women they interviewed did not perceive sex discrimination to be a deterrent to the advancement of their careers.

Management of Personal and Professional Life

Aspirants are advised to critically assess the position of superintendent and be aware of exactly what the role requires.

Peggy Franker felt it was important for prospective candidates to "explore what the position entails and what the responsibilities are and decide if that's what you want to do." Leslie Adams also cautioned women to examine the role carefully. "I think people going into this have to really question - is it going to become more of a bureaucratic role as we spend less and less time in schools and less and less time where it really matters."

Doreen Nielsen advised women to know themselves and to be prepared for the demands of the job - both physically and emotionally.

You have to know yourself and be comfortable and be able to handle stress of all kinds. Not only is there the workload and the long hours, but there is also stress of other kinds. You're often criticized or undermined or you get furious at things that you know are unjust, or you may be treated badly by groups in the community. It can be very, very damning. You can get angry and frustrated because you can't do the things that you'd like to do and sometimes you're let down by people, and that's very hard to take too. So I think the stress level is probably high. Certainly the physical demands are extraordinary.

Gowalt and Towns (1986) also advise aspirants to learn how to handle stress for it comes with the territory.

Several women mentioned the sacrifices that were involved with the position and the need for personal support and balance. Alison Parker said one must be prepared to ask if one is willing to give what it takes to get there, as there are sacrifices, both professional and personal. She noted the importance of a support system, and felt that it was also important to reward oneself - both physically and mentally. Irene Olsen said to "remember that the job is not your whole life" and to maintain a sense of humor, as did Beth Daniels. Dopp and Sloan (1986), Frasher et al. (1982), Gowalt and Towns (1986) and Tabin (1990) also note that the women in their studies contribute much of their success to family support.

The importance of working out personal details and the management and balance of career and family was advised by Margaret Jones. She said:

. . . sit down and decide and try and work out things in your life that may cause it to be really a negative experience. Like if you've got children . . . You've got to work out the details because if you don't work out those details I think what happens is that it becomes a

negative experience . . . and it really impacts on the way you do the job.

Although Margaret has identified an internal barrier, it is a reality, for women face the constant struggle between career and family. Pavan and Robinson (1991) note that

there is always the nagging question of how far one can advance without jeopardizing personal relationships, motherhood and personal time. For some, the commitment is just not worth the hassle; for others, the decision to proceed is fraught with guilt, recrimination and wistfulness. In short, there is always the question of whether the advancement is worth it. (p. 30)

Aspirants who wish to enter the superintendency must weigh the effects such a move will have on their personal life and make careful considerations before they proceed.

Aloneness

Once the formal interview was over, several of the women expressed an interest in their female colleagues. They wondered if they were all different, what I was finding out and were there any patterns. These comments lead me to believe that often superintendents, both male and female, work in a vacuum, and perhaps because there are so few women the job is even lonelier, as women may be isolated and excluded in this male dominated occupation. Several women commented on the aspect of loneliness and the superintendency.

When asked for advice to women interested in the superintendency,

Carolyn Parker said:

. . . my other advice is to be prepared to be alone. Because unless you have friends who are not part of education or a part of your immediate world, or you have companions, the job demands an aloneness. It's not a job where you can have any close affiliations. I found that in the principalship one has a community base, one has a school, which ameliorates a lot of things. In this work you don't.

Leslie Adams also spoke several times of the loneliness involved in the superintendency and felt women had to be prepared for that.

Beth Daniels did not specifically identify loneliness as a factor of the superintendency, however she did have some reservations about leaving her role as a school based administrator because, "I loved the give and take and the stuff that goes on in a school. It's alive . . . you get a closeness working in a school."

Implications for Further Research

The findings raise several issues which may require further research.

A comparative study, using qualitative methods, of men in the superintendency, could be important. Although gender would be a different sort of issue, an exploration of barriers, enablers, support and career paths would provide an interesting juxtaposition to this study.

In light of some of the interviewees' comments on the demands placed on a superintendent and the effects of the job on personal lives, perhaps

researchers should take a closer look at the role and expectations of British Columbia's superintendents in this regard.

Pertaining to women in the superintendency, several areas could be explored further. What is the experience of minority women in aspiring to the superintendency? What is the role of private life for women in the superintendency? Is there a different experience for female superintendents in rural areas compared to urban areas? How do the roles of assistant superintendent and superintendent differ and why are there more than twice as many female assistant superintendents than female superintendents?

And finally, researchers may wish to do a comparative investigation of what I call "waves" of female superintendents. Although this study's sample was small, I had a sense that there were two waves for women. The first wave identified the problem of sexual discrimination and gender bias, but then put gender aside and got on with the job. The second wave was aware of their femininity and may have even used it to their advantage; they felt they were bringing something different to the superintendency and often were unable to identify any external barriers. I like to think of this second wave as the transitional generation for in the future there will be yet another wave of women in the superintendency. Perhaps in twenty years time researchers could again interview the subjects from the three groups I have identified and compare their experiences, once again giving a voice to British Columbia's female superintendents.

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Appendix A

Letter of Introduction

Letter of Introduction

March 8, 1992

Mrs.
Superintendent
School District

Dear

My name is Julie Pearce and I am writing this letter to introduce myself, my research, and to ask for your involvement.

As a recently appointed vice-principal in the Coquitlam school district and a graduate student in Simon Fraser University's Administrative Leadership Program, I have become interested in the role of women in educational administration. The imbalance between women and men in the superintendency in British Columbia has made me curious as to why, and interested in the women who occupy these few positions.

Current literature on women in the superintendency is predominantly American and tends to focus on barriers to the superintendency, women's career paths as compared to men's, and advice to aspirants. I wish to investigate the perceptions of British Columbia's female superintendents and assistant superintendents on both the opportunities and barriers they have encountered, their career paths, and their experiences in the superintendency. Through my research I hope to provide a viable alternative for women in educational administration who wish to arrive at the superintendency. I also wish to add to the limited body of research available in Canada.

My study is qualitative in nature and my proposal plans are as follows:

- a) I will set up interviews with each superintendent and assistant superintendent. Interviews will be open ended in nature, becoming more focussed as the interview progresses. I would like to tape record the interview and transcribe it at a later date.

- b) The transcript will then be sent back to each of the women interviewed for their comments, deletions, additions and approval. Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality.
- c) A short demographic questionnaire will be sent out with the transcript. All materials will then be returned to me for coding and analysis. A table of the demographic information will be included in the appendix of my final document.
- d) Chapter Five of the thesis, which deals with the findings of the research, will be sent to each participant.

In order to make this a viable study, I am interested in interviewing all fourteen of the women in British Columbia who are currently in the position of superintendent or assistant superintendent. I am aware of the time constraints facing women in educational leadership positions and I am prepared to travel to each school district, at a time convenient to you.

I would appreciate your involvement in my research, however I will respect whatever decision you make. I will be phoning you later this month to ascertain your involvement and discuss a possible meeting date. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at 464-9422 (w) or 939-6405 (h).

Thank you for your time. I look forward to speaking with you.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Pearce

Appendix B
Letter of Confirmation

Letter of Confirmation

#113 1040 King Albert Avenue
Coquitlam, B.C. V3J 1X5

March 9, 1992

Mrs.
Superintendent
School District #

Dear

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in the study I am conducting on women in the superintendency as part of my graduate studies in Education at Simon Fraser University.

The date that we discussed for an interview was: **Thursday, April 23rd, at 4:00 p.m.** I will contact your office a week before this date, in order to confirm the appointment. If you have any questions please phone me at work (464-9422) or home (939-6405).

I look forward to meeting and talking with you, and thank you in advance for taking time from your busy schedule to discuss your career and experiences as a superintendent, with me.

Sincerely,

Julie Pearce

Appendix C
Interview Guidelines

Interview Guidelines

1. Can you tell me about your background leading up to administration?
Probes: Early school experience? University experience? Teaching experience?
2. Can you tell me about your administrative experience leading up to your present position? Probes: Vice-principal/principal experience? Co-ordinator/helping teacher experience? Superintendency experience?
3. Looking back, what do you see as the major components of your career development? Probes: Was there anything outside of the your professional life that had an impact on your career? Any events? Individuals? Did you experience any barriers to your career development?
4. There are very few women in the position of superintendent or assistant superintendent in the province. Why did you attempt to do the "impossible"? Probes: Why do you think you were hired?
5. What does it mean to be one of a few women in a male dominated occupation? Probes: Does or did gender play a role in your career? Has being a woman been significant?
6. What is your perception of the role of superintendent/assistant superintendent? Probe: Would it be different if you were a male?
7. What advice would you offer to prospective women administrators who are interested in a career as superintendent?
8. Is there anything else about your career as superintendent/assistant superintendent that I haven't touched on that you would like to add to?

Appendix D

B.C. Women in the Superintendency Questionnaire

B.C. Women in the Superintendency Questionnaire**Part A: Personal Background**

1. Present age:
 - a) under 40
 - b) 40-49
 - c) 50-59
 - d) 60-69

2. Marital status:
 - a) single
 - b) married/common-law
 - c) separated/divorced
 - d) widowed

3. Number of children:
 - a) none
 - b) one
 - c) two
 - d) three or more

Part B: Educational Background

1. Highest degree attained:
 - a) Bachelor
 - b) Master
 - c) Doctor
 - d) Other: _____

2. Years of classroom teaching:
 - a) 1-5
 - b) 6-10
 - c) 11-15
 - d) 16-20
 - e) Over 20

3. Majority of teaching experience:
 - a) elementary
 - b) secondary

4. Number of years as a vice principal:
 - a) _____
 - b) Level(s): _____

5. Number of years as a principal:
 - a) _____
 - b) Level(s): _____

6. Other administrative positions held (other than superintendent):
 - a) _____
 - b) Number of Years: _____

7. Number of years in the superintendency:
 - a) 1-5
 - b) 6-10
 - c) 11-15
 - d) 16-20

8. Number of school districts worked in:
 - a) 1
 - b) 2
 - c) 3
 - d) 4 or more

Appendix E
Annotated Codes

Annotated Codes

1. **Administrative Experience**
 - the subject's history of leadership roles both school based and at the district level
2. **Teaching Experience**
 - the subject's history of teaching: both in the classroom and any leadership provided as a teacher (ie: committees, teacher associations, P.S.A.s, etc.)
3. **Career Impacts and Events**
 - any external factors affecting the subject's career
4. **Academic History**
 - any information pertaining to the subject's education and details about her schooling
5. **Career Developments**
 - any experiences throughout teaching or after, having an impact on or relating to career, career choice or growth as a person or administrator
6. **Administrative Orientation**
 - an orientation to and focus on administration; why and how the subject became an administrator
7. **Career Management**
 - actions taken by the subject that advanced or affected the direction of their career (ie: mobility)
8. **Appointment**
 - the subject's thoughts and beliefs as to why she was hired as a superintendent/assistant superintendent
9. **Collegial Support**
 - support from colleagues/peers towards administrative position(s)

10. **District Support**
 - support from staff or others at the district office throughout the subject's career
11. **Mentor Relationships**
 - the strong, active support and guidance provided to the subject by another individual
12. **Networking**
 - support from others in similar positions and the importance of such
13. **Spouse, Family or Friend's Support**
 - support from spouse, family or friends throughout the subject's career
14. **Barriers**
 - information regarding the barriers encountered by subjects, throughout their careers
15. **Gender**
 - information regarding the subject's career based on or relating to gender - positive or negative
16. **Leadership Style**
 - information regarding the subject's perceived leadership style and strengths
17. **Problems**
 - the frustrations and difficulties the subject experiences in being an assistant superintendent or superintendent
18. **Job Satisfaction**
 - the satisfaction the subject experiences in her job and the importance of such
19. **Advice**
 - subject's advice to women interested in the superintendency

20. **Perception of Self ("Lucky Me")**
 - subject's perception of how they came to be in certain positions
21. **Balance**
 - information regarding the maintenance of balance in the subject's career and job
22. **Role of Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent**
 - the subject's perception of their current role or position

Appendix F

Letter Introducing Profile

Letter Introducing Profile

February 25, 1993

Ms.
Assistant Superintendent
School District #

Dear

I am writing again to share the enclosed profile of my interview with you. After transcribing the tape, reading through the data and organizing it into loose categories, I have created a draft profile for each superintendent interviewed. In order to protect your identity as much as possible, I have given you a pseudonym and have referred to all interviewees as superintendents. The profiles provide me with a history of your career, barriers and enablers encountered, and your experiences and reflections on being a woman in the superintendency, in British Columbia.

I wish to include the profiles in my thesis. Would you please take the time to read through your profile and make any changes, additions or deletions that you feel necessary?

Please return the profile manuscript to me, in the self-addressed, stamped envelope, at your earliest convenience. I will then begin an analysis of the data. If it would be easier to phone me with your changes and/or comments, please do so. I can be reached at home (939-6405) or work (464-9422).

I appreciate the time you are giving to my thesis and I hope to send you the results of the research later this year.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Pearce

Appendix G

Profiles

Profiles

Profile 1 - June Decker

June Decker is a superintendent outside the lower mainland. June contacted me at home shortly after receiving my letter of introduction. She was concerned with the fact that I would have to travel to her district and wanted to accommodate me by setting up a meeting time in the lower mainland, during her recruiting search. June was friendly and jovial on the phone. We spoke of the amount of work she had, the lack of exercise and weight gain that seems to follow the position.

A couple of weeks later I met June at a local hotel. I explained my research more thoroughly, spent some time discussing June's method of recruiting, and then we began the interview.

June is a young woman (under forty), and appeared to be enthusiastic and vivacious. She was interested in the study and eager to hear what other women had to say. The interview flowed smoothly, with the first guideline following naturally to the second.

June was a classroom teacher who had worked at a number of district level activities, such as the district science committee, and had a leadership role with her local teacher's association, as a member the negotiation team. She was the first female negotiations chair-person in the district and noted that: "I don't really remember thinking much at that time as to whether I was a woman doing something or just somebody who knew something."

A coordinator job came open at the board office and June put in her resume - "I sent it in with actually no hope that I would get an interview." June notes that the big issue in applying for the job was that she would be able to work with a man that she really respected. June was awarded the position without an interview and considers this her introduction to administration. Reflecting, June stated that she achieved this position over a number of male principals in the district and that her appointment must have made for a lot of interesting "bar talk".

After two years as coordinator, June's position was reclassified and she became the supervisor of personnel. June identifies her strengths as budget

and finance. She spent a lot of time working with the secretary-treasurer in this job, learning a great deal about school operations and budget.

Her position was again reclassified to include school operations and was brought up to the management level of the school district. June continued to view her mentor with respect - "He respected me and had full confidence in me. He let me make mistakes. Just an excellent model and mentor."

June's mentor left the district. Due to some internal politics and the fact that she had been in the job for six years, coupled with her desire to finish her masters degree, June handed in her notice.

Before completing her masters program, June and her husband were holidaying in Mexico. The superintendent of her present district (he had worked with her in another district), tracked her down and asked June to come to the district as a senior administrator for six months. She agreed and took the job on a six month contract, with no interview, but on the superintendent's recommendation to the board. After six months June officially applied for the position, was offered and accepted the job.

To recap June's experience: she had taught for less than five years, she had ten years experience at the district level and had never been a school based administrator. She recently completed her masters degree.

June had four main areas of responsibility during the first six months in the superintendency: collective bargaining, the creation of a budget, administrator evaluations and teacher recruiting. She notes that she was treated well by trustees and staff and they probably influenced her decision to stay. ". . . I really should have been hated and should have not been totally trusted. Whatever it was - maybe they felt desperate, you know. Maybe I was lucky. I might have said the right things at the right time. I was really treated well by the staff in the district and really accepted. So when the job was posted in its natural time in April, to be staffed for September, I thought well, it's a little farther north than I might have picked, but on the other hand latitude doesn't mean anything if the people that you are working with like you and trust you and you can get some positive change, so I decided that I would apply."

When asked to identify the major components of her career development, June noted the need for a mentor as one gets started in administration. She spoke with a great deal of respect about her mentor and noted the change in their relationship. "I honestly thought he could do no wrong for the first years. Then as you grow and you start to get ideas of your own, you realize that these people, who are your mentors, are not perfect. But then you realize what they've provided you with . . . I think a mentor is very important."

June felt that her curiosity about the job allowed her to know everything about the operation of a school district. She recommends: ". . . do try to find out how those jobs are done because in the long term I think it really does give you a clear understanding of what people are doing in the organization, how they're fitting in, what contributions they're making, and I think as assistant superintendent you should know those things." June also felt that if you know what you are doing in your position and operate in a positive manner, people are more open to suggestions.

When asked if there were other individuals who influenced her career, June reflected on the importance of close female friends. "I think that each of them in some way have given me a little bit of self confidence. Some little bit they've added. They've added somehow to my personality and enriched my life." The importance of a friend at work was also discussed. "When you have somebody that you really trust that you're working with, it really puts you at ease in your job because if all else fails, and if somebody dumps all over you, you can go into your friend's office, shut the door, have a cry if you like and they're going to put their arms around you and say it's alright."

When asked if gender was an issue for her, June said she wasn't big on the "gender thing." She had not thought about it until recently when she attended a superintendent's conference and noticed the lack of women present. However, in her school district June felt she was treated as an equal and her experience and expertise in the budget area enabled her to tie in with the finance people who did not treat her differently because she was a woman.

When pressed to identify barriers, June said: "I know I should say yes, there were barriers along the road, but maybe I ignored them. Maybe I just trampled over them. I don't know."

June did note that being from out of province often made her feel like an outsider and that the few women who were at her first superintendents' conference did not make any overtures towards her. Upon reflecting on this experience, June felt that it was not a gender issue, but was due to the fact that she was from out of province and not from the lower mainland. June noted that networks are different depending on one's zone and that often there are barriers based on geography. "There's a physical barrier in this province that really extends past Hope and there's another barrier just north of Prince George so I think that more often I'm having to cross these physical latitudes rather than gender attitudes."

When asked why she had attempted the "impossible" in becoming a superintendent, June said: "I can't really say that I never attempted anything. I had a very gradual increase in responsibilities that has really taken place over eight years. So it's not like it's been an elementary principalship one day and an assistant superintendent the next. I'm really thankful for that learning curve that I've had over the last ten years because I think it's been extremely well balanced in terms of understanding things. I haven't really attempted the impossible."

When asked if it meant anything special to be one of the fourteen women in a male-dominated profession, June took some time to collect her thoughts. She said it hadn't mattered for a long time; however the longer she was in the position the more she believed that women administrators were different. "I believe that in a lot of cases we are interested in doing the right thing rather than doing things right. Values play a big part in our decision making. I think the amount of nurturing that we do in our position is a lot higher than what men do."

June felt that a balance was needed between males and females at the district level, as they each bring a different perspective to the job. She noted that women do some things differently. They are up front and they "have a better way of getting to the point of something and getting a dirty job done."

June also spent time reflecting on the title that comes with the position and the issue of influence versus authority. "For a lot of men out there that title is quite important to them. You know that brings prestige and sort of added authority and I think women don't look at the position usually in terms of how much authority you have. You usually look at it in terms of how

much good can you do, how much influence you have to improve things. So It's more a matter of influence than authority. There's quite a difference between us."

It became apparent through the interview that June had a great deal of job satisfaction. When asked of her perceptions of the role of superintendent she said: "I have a very clear perception of the role because it's a job that I love." She felt her role was one of support, visibility and involvement, in all areas of the school system.

June's advice to women interested in the superintendency was to be curious and inquisitive and to be a competent teacher. She feels that curriculum work is important and that one must stay close to the schools and to the children to be effective. ". . . I like to be out at the schools and I like to do something that people know what I'm doing is closer to the children than pushing paper in an office . . . do something that really matters to somebody - that really helps them out, that can be tied really close to children . . . stay somehow close to the schools when you are in the board office because if you're not close to the schools you're going to soon be ineffective."

As the interview came to a close, June was asked if there was anything else she'd like to comment on. She revisited two earlier points: the issue of gender and her feelings of isolation in terms of geography rather than gender.

After the interview we went for a drink in the hotel's lounge. (June insisted on buying.) We spoke of recruiting, working outside of the lower mainland, people we knew in common, and the support we received from our husbands. We then toured June's interviewing room where I was given a great deal of information on June's district. June then walked me to the entrance of the hotel and we said good-bye.

Profile 2 - Alison Larsen

I contacted Alison Larsen, a superintendent working outside of the lower mainland, to arrange an interview date. Alison was most accommodating and felt that it would not be necessary for me to travel in order to interview her. She suggested we meet during a time that she was in the lower mainland, therefore we arranged a meeting date at a local hotel, for the next time she was in town.

Alison greeted me at her hotel room door. She appeared to be in her early forties, a soft spoken woman, with a very pleasant manner. She made us coffee and I explained my research in greater depth. As I began the interview, Alison noticed that I had a sixty minute tape and remarked that she doubted she could speak for more than thirty minutes. Quite the opposite was true, for the interview was ninety minutes in total.

Alison began her career as a primary teacher. After teaching for fourteen years, Alison was approached by the retiring primary supervisor who encouraged her to apply for the position. Although Alison was flattered, she felt her children were too young and declined the invitation to apply. However, she did go back to the primary supervisor and ask her for advice with regards to her future and her career. Alison was advised to return to university to complete her fifth year, which she did. She later went on to complete her Masters Degree in Administration.

On returning to the district, Alison was asked to sit on an accreditation team for an elementary school. Shortly after this she applied for and received an elementary vice-principalship. After six months, Alison applied for and was offered the principalship of a new elementary school. Alison spoke fondly of the excitement of opening a new school - staffing the school, ordering equipment, and getting things ready for September. It was also challenging - ". . . the first year was pretty trying because I had no training, no background, no administrative courses at all "

Reflecting on why she was hired for this position, Alison said: "I guess being young and idealistic, I had a vision, of the type of school I felt I wanted. The board bought it and then of course I felt obliged to create the school."

At the end of her third year as principal, Alison was asked by the superintendent to move to the high school as principal. Her first reaction was negative as her background and training was at the elementary level. However, after reading the high school's accreditation report Alison decided to take the job as ". . . I knew that the skills that were needed . . . to correct what was wrong with the school were skills that I had, and that I could do something about even though I knew nothing about the secondary school." Alison spent some time during the interview reflecting on her work at the high school - the hiring of a vice principal and staff, her first assembly, her first staff meeting, and establishing a mission statement for the school.

After spending four years at the secondary level, Alison was successful in her application for a position in the superintendency in her district. When asked why she thought she was hired, Alison indicated that she had as much to offer as anyone else, and she believed that she shared and espoused the same values as the school board.

Alison spoke of the importance of mentors in her career. She identified mentors as people who believed in her and she felt that her superintendent was most supportive of women in administration. Alison also valued support from her daughters, husband and friends.

Alison stated that she had experienced no real external barriers to her career development. Barriers identified were internal and Alison often used them as excuses. She reflected that early on in her career she lacked a vision and self confidence. She was unable to set goals and a career path for herself. Alison noted that she often used her husband and children as an excuse - for example, she did not apply for the position of primary supervisor because her children were growing up.

When asked if gender played a role in her career, Alison told me that she grew up in a male-dominated household - she has ten brothers. Alison said: "And so I never saw myself as being anything other than one of the guys . . . I never doubted that I would be accepted into a man's world . . . I always did whatever the boys did in our household and so it never occurred to me that being a woman would hinder my career."

As an elementary administrator, Alison did not notice gender differences - "I knew there weren't many females in administration, but I was so wrapped up in what I was doing that it wasn't an issue."

Gender became an issue when Alison was a principal of a secondary school, as there were very few women in the province in that position. She speaks of that experience: ". . . you would walk into the room and there would be 95 men and you were the only woman; that's when it hit me. In the first year I was quite intimidated until I got to know some of the men. By this time things were going well in my own school and I knew I had skills. I knew I had what it took to be a principal of a secondary school. . . ."

Alison admitted to me that she was always somewhat wary of women's groups. On being asked to speak at a woman's leadership conference, Alison said: "I'd always shied away from women's groups, because it really grated me, the real feminist movement in the sixties and I didn't want to have any identification with the strident feminist." However, once Alison talked to the group organizing the conference her feelings changed and she has a new respect for women in educational leadership roles. ". . . Yes, they're attempting to make it easier for women to apply into leadership, but they're encouraging excellence in leadership, they're not talking about women in leadership, they're talking about excellence in leadership. So when I sat down with this group of women . . . hearing this talk, all of a sudden you feel this is a group that you would want to be identified with. So what this question says to me now is, it makes me proud to be one of the few women, but it also puts . . . a responsibility on me to encourage other women, because if I can do it, there are so many other women out there with much greater talents than I, that I think would be absolutely wonderful superintendents . . . I think it's really important that we recognize that."

When asked if being a woman was significant in her role as superintendent, Alison took time to reflect and said: "I would say yes, in that being a woman you do have certain strengths that men don't have. And one of the strengths is simply this, I don't think that most women's egos are wrapped up in what they're doing. Ego is important - you need it, but . . . You know it's more of a nurturing. . . ."

Alison sees her role as one of support. She also felt that she was expected to look at the strengths and values of the community and try to put it all together.

Alison's advice to women interested in the superintendency was "you can't lead the charge if you think you look funny on a horse." By this, she meant that one must know their strengths and weaknesses, their leadership style, and the job expectations. One must also have a vision or image of oneself as an educational leader. Alison said aspirants must be prepared to ask if they are willing to give what it takes to get there, as there are sacrifices, both professional and personal. She noted the importance of a support system and felt that it was important to reward oneself, to be physically and mentally in shape and to have fun. A final piece of advice Alison gave was to "never burn your bridges or cut them down" - remember the people who have helped you.

The interview ended on a positive note. Alison told me that my study was an important one, that she was glad I was doing it, and that she was looking forward to the results. She walked me to the door of her hotel room and promised to send me some material on gender equity.

Profile 3 - Carolyn Parker

Superintendent Carolyn Parker is an experienced educator with a quiet, matter-of-fact manner. My research and request for an interview caught Carolyn at a very busy time in her district, however she was gracious in booking an interview date, early one morning in the spring.

I waited in the outer office for Carolyn. Upon arriving, she greeted me warmly and ushered me into a large, neatly kept office. The office was decorated with student's art work and a variety of yearbooks were evident. We sat at the end of a large table and began the interview.

Carolyn began her career as a classroom teacher in junior and senior high schools. She has taught all subjects except Math, Science and Physical Education. Carolyn's degrees (both bachelor and masters) were obtained out of province.

Her administrative experience is extensive and lengthy, Carolyn was in secondary administration for nineteen years and this experience was invaluable to her.

Carolyn indicated that as a teacher she practised team work in her teaching and taught in an open area, which for that time was a unique and exciting challenge. Carolyn's involvement with the provincial teacher's federation gave her an understanding of provincial politics. Carolyn also did a lot of inservice around the province and curriculum writing from scratch. It was clear that Carolyn had taken advantage of the opportunities she had and was involved in her approach to education.

When I asked Carolyn if there was anything outside of her professional life that had an impact on her career, she said: ". . . it might have been simply my determination to do something that I wanted to do, irrespective of what other people thought or believed. I grew up in a home where it wasn't important whether you were male or female, what was important was that you did a good day's work and that you challenged yourself. So I think those attitudes have left a mark on me. I've always valued community service, I believe very strongly in my responsibility to the community."

Carolyn believes she was hired because she was what and who the board was looking for and she had proven her ability and competence in other districts. "I think I was hired because I was the right fit at this point in the district's development. The board was looking for someone who had a background in strategic planning and implementation of that. The board was looking for someone who would take that mandate and look at it and begin to shift the paradigm of operation. I had clearly demonstrated that ability when I worked in [other districts]."

Carolyn identified two or three mentors, rather than one single person. She did speak highly of one particular teacher: ". . . he probably had a very profound effect on what I believed about teaching and what I believed about learning and what I understood to be leadership at that time, at a very young age."

Carolyn noted that for her the biggest barrier to her career development was "simply the lack of time and because when I think back on it, you know, like everybody else, I had home responsibilities and community responsibilities and for me that was a big barrier. There was always more I wanted to do, but never had enough time to do it. And it's essentially the same now. . . . the demands of the work are far greater than the time there is to do it."

When I asked Carolyn if gender had played a role in her career she stated that her early home life did not distinguish by gender. "I never grew up believing that because I was female that I could do anything less than males and I've never pampered myself around that. I just know who I am and know what I've got to do and I try to get on with it."

Carolyn said that she was not alarmed or concerned with the fact that there are so few women in the profession. She was not sure whether a lot of women would even want the job. "I think it's hard on some women who might see themselves at a disadvantage because they're women. But I don't sense that in the other female superintendents. I think they are very much like myself, we just are there and we want to do a good job. I think that because of the job and because of the kind of time that it demands and kind of self-discipline and kind of objectivity, I'm not sure it's a job where currently a lot of women might want to be. There is no prestige to the job and there are very few amenities, so I'm not sure if that stops or detracts other women."

Carolyn's hopes for the future are that there be a gender balance in the superintendency. "I guess I hope in the future that there's a better balance between men and women, because organizationally there has to be a level of androgeny, and there has to be different perspectives and men and women are needed together to bring those perspectives."

When I asked Carolyn what her perception was of the role of the superintendent she felt that the role was not very well understood by many people. She noted that the role is what "different people make it, and it's what different boards make it." Carolyn expressed a concern with regards to the understanding of the role and the preparation for the superintendency. "It's a role that needs a lot of work in this country and it's a role that needs a lot of preparatory education, and I'm not sure it happens at the universities. My preparation for this job came from on-the-job training and I had a good background in school law and other things like that, but a lot of it is experience and common sense."

Carolyn spoke extensively when asked for advice for women interested in the superintendency. She made some very important observations and many of them relate to both the issue of gender and women's leadership styles.

Carolyn spoke of the need for support and the fact that being a superintendent can be a lonely job, and a stressful one. She said: "Make sure you have family support. Make sure you don't put yourself in a position where you're sacrificing your family for your career. And I think that that's probably the cross that a lot of women who go into administration carry . . . the management of both. Because I fundamentally believe that ultimately there is nothing to be gained if the person develops her career at the expense of her children, if she has children and the expense of her marriage, if she has a marriage. I think there has to be a great deal of understanding about time commitment. It's a profound time commitment. A great deal of understanding about what the indigenous stress of the job does to you, and my other advice is to be prepared to be alone. Because unless you have friends who are not part of education or a part of your immediate world, or you have other companions, the job demands an aloneness. It's not a job where you can have close affiliations. I found that in the principalship one has a community base, one has a school, which ameliorates a lot of things. In this work you don't."

Carolyn advised that women must be prepared to accept an androcentric world. "Be prepared to accept the fact that you're in a male-dominated world, you're in a world that's androcentric. It's been created by men, men are the power brokers and you can't try and beat them at their game. Because if you become more manly than men, they will simply ignore you. If you become overly feminine or cutesy, they will ignore you. And so one has to be really clear around who one is and the persona that you want to project and I have met women who have either not sorted that one out yet, or not figured out that you can't change androcentricity in organizations such as education."

At no time was Carolyn negative or bitter about this androcentric world. Her final comment was: "You've got to work to ameliorate it, you've got to work to provide different perspectives and over the years I believe things will change."

Carolyn noted that sometimes men are brought into the "fold" of the superintendency more quickly than women. She felt that women often have to prove themselves first. "You've got to prove your word. You've got to prove that you can run a school system and you've got to prove that you can take the same pressures and you've got to prove yourself in a political arena."

Carolyn also spoke at some length about values. She said that women interested in the superintendency must know who they are and must be sure their values are grounded in what is really best for children, because "when the politics start in any situation, they're all about preserving the rights of adults usually. And unless you are so strong in your values around the children, you will easily succumb to the pressures. Be clear about your values and be prepared to fight for them."

Having a balance in one's personal life was also deemed necessary by Carolyn.

When speaking of women in management, Carolyn felt that women are "essentially more nurturing and much more affiliation-oriented . . . women don't participate in politics the same way men do."

Carolyn's last piece of advice related to the issue of gender and change. "And my other advice is really understanding what it is you are going into and that there is no glory in this world. And that it is a world that you've got to be

prepared to work at changing incrementally. I don't believe in the approach that a lot of women's groups in our society take when they want to have equality and equity by denouncing what is, because as soon as you denounce it, you have the male portion of the world becoming defensive. And if you try to do that in the world of the superintendency, the needed connections and the support that you must have at certain levels will simply not be there. You will be dismissed. And there's nothing worse than as a professional, to be dismissed. So I don't think the issue for me is gender . . . [speaks of experience in working with an inquiry group looking into women in administration and the debate of whether it was a gender issue or a human development issue] . . . we came to the conclusion that it was a human development issue. That while it affected women, it also affected men and that we need to be looking at how to strive to have a balanced view and how to strive to have a much more androgenous approach to the running of organizations. So I think if women hook themselves only to the gender issue, I don't think they're going to get very far."

As the interview came to a close, Carolyn and I discussed some of my research to date. She told me that the project I was undertaking was worthwhile and interesting, we exchanged pleasantries and I left the office.

Profile 4 - Irene Olsen

Superintendent, Irene Olsen, greeted me warmly in the foyer of the school board office, apologized for being late and took me to her office. Irene's office, although small, contained her desk, a computer, and a round meeting table with four chairs. The office was warm and filled with photographs of students involved in various district events, student art work, educational journals and books. Pictures of Irene's family were on her desk.

Irene, who is in her early forties, is a very enthusiastic, positive and friendly woman. She offered me tea or coffee before we began the interview and checked to make sure I was comfortable. When I had made the appointment with Irene earlier in the year, she had been most accommodating and was concerned that I not make a special trip to see her. I was therefore able to complete two interviews in one day.

Irene, who has worked in four school districts, began her career as a primary teacher. After teaching for five and a half years she was invited to work at the district level for six months, as the primary consultant. The job was then officially posted, she applied for it and received the permanent position.

Irene was the primary supervisor for the next seven years. She spoke of her experiences as being "one of the most profound times in terms of personal and professional growth . . . it was kind of a golden position where you have all kinds of budget, a lot of freedom to develop and implement programs and support teachers in many creative ways, and there was a really strong network around the province of people doing the same, and there were workshops and things that we attended, summer workshops, long weekends, that sort of thing, and a more professional group just kind of sailed at that time."

During this time Irene completed her masters degree in curriculum and early childhood education. She then applied for and received a position with the curriculum branch of the ministry. For the next three years her responsibilities were chairing the revision of the kindergarten curriculum and the elementary fine arts curriculum.

Irene then applied for the principalship of an elementary school and "was lucky enough to get that job." She spoke with great fondness of this experience: ". . . it was wonderful, it was just an exciting time . . . it was a very nurturing environment . . . it was a very interesting time for me to work so closely with adults and observe and change and support change in that way."

Irene was then asked to go, as principal, to an intermediate school. She spoke of the challenge, both personal (she was pregnant), and professional. Irene was at this school for two years and reflected on the experience. ". . . some significant things changed. I learned a lot and needed to pull on every skill I had in terms of supporting adult learner as they move through change, because it wasn't an easy go. But it was just wonderful and great to be working with intermediate kids, whom I hadn't worked with for a while."

In March of her second year at the intermediate school, Irene was asked to work with the ministry again - this time working with a team of six other people to write the draft of the new primary program. Irene again spoke of the excitement and joy involved in writing provincial curriculum. Irene continued to work for the ministry for another year.

Irene then applied for her current position, was short-listed and awarded the position. When asked about her decision to apply, Irene said that she had made the decision that she was suited, qualified and had the skills to be a senior administrator, therefore went ahead and applied. Irene felt she was hired because ". . . the board was as close to non-sexist as I've run across . . . they liked the school experiences that I had, and in particular special ed, they were looking for someone that was comfortable with and an advocate for integration of youngsters with special needs . . . I was also fairly knowledgeable in the newer trends and also in working with people to effect change and that was one of the things they were looking for. They were also looking for someone knowledgeable in and committed to the Year 2000 directions. They liked the fact that I had some ministry experience and a provincial perspective and that for me has been really beneficial."

When I asked Irene what were the major components of her career development, she said, "I guess the first venture out of the classroom in terms of becoming a consultant was fairly significant for me, because it wasn't

anything I'd ever considered. You know, I really had never thought that first I'm going to do this and then I want to be an administrator and do these things. I was very happy doing what I was doing and the fact that the opportunity came up and kind of smacked me in the face, made me stop and think."

Irene also identified her work with the ministry as a component of her career development, for it gave her a provincial perspective and broadened her views on education and her skills in many areas.

Irene noted that she had never set long term career goals, however one of her ongoing goals was to "continue to learn and to continue to do different things." Therefore, Irene does not like to stay at a job for too long. "I've always wanted a change when things become routine and each time I've been ready for a change, I've looked at the positions available."

Irene identified two significant mentors and recalls the advice one mentor gave her on career plans. "Her view was that you probably can't make really long-term plans, because there are so many unpredictable kinds of things and things we can't control. But I remember her saying to me, doors will open and you must stand on the threshold and look through and decide whether or not you in fact want to pass through that door. If you don't, you step back and another door will open at some other time and that has always been the way it has happened with me. So that was significant, just being able to stand and look and make some decisions, especially when they had been initiated by someone other than myself in terms of possibilities."

Irene also discussed her network of both male and female friends but noted there was a difference in networks for men and women. "What I have observed over time, for myself and for other friends who are in administration, is that we tend to build up strong female support networks and it really, really assists . . . I think we build it . . . I don't think because I needed it as an administrator, I think I have it because I need it as a person . . . and as a woman. Men don't have those networks. At least from my point of view. They don't have the networks of friends, of professional supports and so on that women have, for all sorts of interesting reasons that one could explore. So that has been something that has all along been a strength for me. There has been a lot of support there and people that I could talk to."

Irene spoke highly of her husband and of the support, both personal and professional, that he has provided her with. Support from Irene's mother was also mentioned.

Through her position as primary consultant and in working with the ministry, Irene noted that she had built up a strong network of people around the province who had supported her throughout her career.

When asked about barriers to her career development, Irene felt she had never experienced any barriers, however through discussions with her colleagues she was aware that they existed. "I know of other colleagues that have come up against different kinds of barriers, some of them being a lack of secondary school experience, for example, which I don't have either, or we suspect that there have been male oriented, male-dominated kinds of things that happen and they do happen and there's just no two ways about it. But I haven't actually faced that. I seem to have moved along and done the kinds of things I've done, and I don't know if I look at it too simplistically, but I can't honestly say I ran across barriers . . . And I haven't come across any of the male world block, but I know it's there. I think I've just been lucky in the situations that I've been in because I have friends that just run smack into the barriers and blocks."

When I asked Irene what it meant to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession she said that it "is a bit of a novelty, but that it is changing too." She spoke of her experience at a superintendents' conference when talking with a group of women. ". . . we are good professional friends and we always get together to have a talk. Well inevitably someone will come and say, 'Is this the women's group or is this the hen party?' or whatever, and I was thinking about this last time and I thought about how all over that hotel groups of men were clustered doing the same thing and none of us came up and said, 'Is this the men's room?' So some of that still floats through. So you are aware of that. But I think in terms of professional respect and so on, I haven't found or experienced a difference."

Irene indicated that gender did not play a role in her career. She sees little difference between men and women in terms of professional respect and felt that women have proven themselves in the superintendency.

Irene's perception of her role is one of leadership, modelling and support. "I really feel that we are here to support the people in the classroom, and while I'm a couple of steps removed from that right now, that still continues to be my goal - to support through our staff and our activities. And I'll support in any way I can." She noted that the district staff works as a team and she was very comfortable using the expertise of those around her.

Irene's advice for women interested in the superintendency was extensive and thought-provoking.

She noted the need for a balance in the role. "You need lots of time and energy, but you have to keep it in perspective - it is an ongoing challenge to maintain a balance."

Irene felt that the job was often thought of in "mystical" terms, but that it was not out of reach for women. "There's a feeling out there that there's something magical and mystical about it. Or that it's just beyond the reach of many women and it isn't. I think women should just go after it or do these things if they're interested in them."

The lack of desire to be a superintendent was discussed. Irene noted that women often take time to look at the job closely: ". . . we're sensible, we stand back and look at it and see what it is it has to offer and see if it really is going to enrich our lives or not and I think in many cases women come to the conclusion that it isn't." Irene continued to elaborate on this: "I think the women that I know anyway, really like working with people closely and like working with children as well, and like working with teachers closely to support and promote change and in these positions, you really don't do that. I always feel like I'm sort of three steps removed from the action."

Irene also noted that women look at their careers differently than men. Women analyze their career and "are not as oriented to looking at the 'up the ladder' kind of thing, but more the quality of experience and in quality of life and I think more men are considering that now as well. I think that for centuries women have tended to look at things more globally in that way. And women like to nurture."

Other advice offered by Irene for women interested in the superintendency was: ". . . you need to be flexible and able to respond in that

way . . . you need to like people . . . you need to have a sense of humor to survive any of this stuff. . . have a really high degree of optimism . . . have a positive approach . . . remember that it's not your whole life."

Irene and I spent the last ten minutes of the interview discussing the management of career and family. She spoke of the importance of support at home and recommended the hiring of help for housework and child care, as then one can spend quality time as a family. Irene noted that there was a time when women felt they could not have both a family and a career but there has been a change. "There was a time when people felt, women felt, that if they were going to get into that they couldn't handle a family. But then there were all those very traditional views about child rearing and all those kinds of pressures which are definitely easing off. They aren't gone, but they're easing off. So it's interesting to see how that all changes and how it impacts on females. People are in administration when they are younger and in some cases, are having families when they're older and managing it all. It can be done."

Irene said she was excited about my research and interested in the results. She had appreciated the call to confirm dates and times.

Irene took the time to give honest, thoughtful answers. She was personable and warm throughout the interview and made me feel that she had lots of time for me, when I'm sure quite the opposite was true. She walked me to the door of the district office, where we exchanged pleasantries and said good-bye.

Profile 5 - Marilyn Ward

I met with superintendent, Marilyn Ward, on a bright spring morning. She had booked our time for an hour and met me promptly in the outer office of the district building. Marilyn is a vivacious woman, in her early forties. She immediately offered me a coffee and then proceeded to introduce me to other people in the coffee room.

Marilyn's office was neat and airy and we began the interview almost immediately. The interview did run twenty minutes overtime and therefore became slightly rushed near the end. Marilyn made me feel comfortable throughout the interview and appeared to enjoy the process.

The majority of Marilyn's teaching experience was at the secondary level. She began her career teaching senior secondary English and moved into guidance and counselling with female students.

Marilyn interrupted her teaching with travel. "I had gone straight from training into teaching and so I decided I needed to travel and so I travelled. Part of my experience in training really was part of that travel because I ended up running out of money in South America and so I taught - actually went to university in Colombia and took linguistics . . . so took the linguistics training and at the same time I was teaching English as a Second Language in an institute that was quite commercial." Marilyn was then asked to open and direct a new language institute, which she did for six months. Marilyn notes: "I started to get into management pretty quickly at that point, at least an interest in it."

Upon returning to Canada, Marilyn took a position in a junior secondary school as a Math and English teacher. During the thirteen years that she was there, Marilyn made a number of changes - both in the direction of her career and in the school itself. She team taught and had an innovative approach to education for that time. (eg: the use of cooperative learning, individual educational programs, etc.) Marilyn moved into learning assistance, while remaining English Department Head, and it was at this point that she began her career in student services and special education.

Marilyn noted that at the time there were no ministry or district directives so she was "placed in a position of creation and that's been part of

my career path . . . I've always been one to dream and to create and to improve and to look for different ways of helping kids."

During this period, Marilyn was also "professionally going in another direction and that's the direction of opportunities." She was on the executive of the local teacher's association, had experience writing policy on teacher evaluation, had a provincial role in the learning assistance teacher's association, presented and attended a number of workshops, and was involved in the provincial teacher's federation. Marilyn was committed to and involved in education, both locally and provincially.

Marilyn became the department head of the student services department in her school, which included counselling and special education, and at the same time began her masters degree in administration.

Marilyn was then given the district position of developing a resource center and was the district resource teacher for students with learning problems. She created a model for the district and worked in this position for two years. Marilyn noted that she was seen in a positive light in the district, which allowed for further growth at the board office level. Her role was one of support for other teachers and she worked closely with administrators.

Marilyn then applied for the director of special education in her district, but did not receive the posting. She explains the reason why. "The answer to me was, how it really worked was that basically I'd never tried before for an administrative position and the person who did receive it had nine years where they were trying to get into administration. Special ed was not his background and so it was a little odd to me in some ways and at that time I found it very, very difficult."

Marilyn applied for a vice-principalship shortly after that, but did not receive this position either. She reflected on her feelings at that time. "So then I began to really try to understand what was happening in that school district and trying to make meaning of it for myself . . . and I went to some females and said, 'What is going on here?' We had one female principal at the time. I don't believe we had any female vice-principals and there was a lot for comment coming back to me about the golf games, the poker games, the old boys' network and so I began observing that and realizing that I'd probably need to go in a different route."

A ministry job in Marilyn's area of expertise became available and Marilyn applied for and received the job. Marilyn noted that from that point she was on "a career path out of the district." She spoke of the struggle to leave her first district and the importance of job satisfaction.

Marilyn's three years with the ministry (both as a co-ordinator and then a director), gave her a broad range of "management, administrative and consultive" experience. She had many opportunities and valued the experience, however at the end of three years she was ready for a change - for both professional and personal reasons. "I kind of woke up one day and realized I hadn't been to a mother-daughter or son tea or Christmas concert for three years and that was a little hard to handle. My kids were starting to say, 'You're never home.' It really started to make me feel quite neglectful and so I decided that even though I could have remained and continued learning, what I needed to do was to look for an alternative."

Marilyn decided to apply for a role which had less travelling and was administrative in nature. She applied to another district and was appointed the Director of Instruction. She prepared herself for this role carefully as Marilyn had never been a school based administrator, yet knew she would be expected to supervise principals. Marilyn used her networks from her work with the ministry to "talk to principals . . . visit districts . . . gain information . . . update and go through schools."

Marilyn found that "administration is good preparation, good common sense, a willingness to listen and seek out all information, and to seek input prior to making any kinds of decisions, if you've got long term. If it's a crisis, you're dependent on not only your experience, but just good sense."

Marilyn was well accepted by the superintendent, trustees and community. She continued to develop and learn, and after one year as director, applied for and received the position of superintendent in the district. After one year as superintendent in the smaller district, she applied for her current position of superintendent in a larger school district.

When I asked Marilyn why she was hired for this position she said: "They wanted somebody who could take on a broader role than just helping set up particular special education programs. They wanted someone who had enough background to take on the collaborative team model that is very much

part of this district. But they also wanted someone who is knowledgeable in the area of special education because there were considerable problems. I have a good track record . . . I was well known by various groups in terms of reputation. The background and skill was certainly there. I interview well apparently."

Although her thrust is student services, Marilyn also sees her role as a member of a team who looks after the broad scope from facility development to principal supervision and evaluation.

Marilyn noted that it was unusual for someone in her position to have no school based administration experience and that at times it had created problems. "It is very unusual. Mind you, that brings me some problems sometimes. I think that within a traditional mindset of the appropriate career ladder, that can interfere until a significant amount of credibility builds up."

When asked about mentors, Marilyn said that four came to mind instantly - three females and one male, all with "the ability to see beyond some thing like being female and not just the idea of being female but the idea of presenting ideas and working in a style that's very different than males. They've all been able to see beyond that [gender]. They've all been equity people. They've all been willing to listen and to be confident in me."

Marilyn hesitated to generalize on gender and leadership styles, however she spoke of the fact that some females have taken on masculine roles in order to survive in their positions and noted that "very few who have not taken on that masculine role have been allowed to proceed up that career path. I believe I'm one of them. I'm not at all, I guess, like I'm not feminine to the point where I'm cutsy in my dress . . . I'm very conscious of an executive look, but I have a manner that is not masculine and I don't want to do that. I don't think it's necessary but I do think it takes awhile for some people to see beyond your style and recognize your expertise and your conceptualization and your ability."

When asked about significant events in her career path, Marilyn said, "the events that most shaped me were ones that were traumatic perhaps, or major." The lack of an administrative position in her first district was significant in shaping Marilyn's career direction. Another major event was the

challenge of planning a major provincial conference and presenting to ministry staff and having them respond positively.

Marilyn was able to identify a number of barriers. The difficulty and frustration in not receiving an administrative position was the first barrier Marilyn encountered. She noted that the old boys' network is still solid in her association. "Certainly there is a desire to have more equity within that group but the old boys' network in the superintendency seems to be really solid and I think that what continues to bring that to light to me is my own association with the superintendency. You know, all the committees - people who are asked to sit on various committees are the old boys."

For Marilyn, mobility which was at one time a career enabler, has become a barrier. "Geography is a barrier. A number of people have encouraged me to apply for superintendencies but right now that means going out to the hinterland and so that certainly is a barrier."

When I asked Marilyn what it meant to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession she said, ". . . it allows me to break some ground for people and I do that in a very subtle way because I've never been one to point out that difference. I still really believe in the strength of the person, the strength of the mind and the strength of ability. So I try to subtly influence." Marilyn said that there appears to be a greater acceptance of women in senior management, however men "say they want females in administrative roles and they really believe that, but they don't know how to work with them."

Marilyn's advice for women interested in the superintendency was as follows: build skills in a wide variety of arenas, seek mentors, take leadership roles in associations, get onto committees, and get your masters degree. She also noted the importance and need of people skills. "I think in terms of skill development I would focus much less on the content than I would on process skills, communication skills, conflict-resolution skills. I would really move in that direction. It's very much a people job, becoming more and more so as we are in a collaborative style of management. If those skills are not good I don't believe that people are going to survive in these positions anymore because I think those are the skills that allow us to lead."

The interview came to a close and Marilyn walked me to the front entrance.

Profile 6 - Peggy Franker

Superintendent, Peggy Franker, was interviewed in my home early one spring weekend. I was impressed that Peggy gave some time out of her weekend to be involved in my research.

Peggy is an articulate, friendly woman in her early forties. She was eager to participate in my research and I have found her encouraging and positive in all correspondence and meetings.

Peggy has teaching experience at all levels and with adults. Her academic training was in linguistics and therefore she often taught English as a Second Language to adults and teenagers. Peggy has taught at a junior high level, both academic subjects and in the role of counsellor and home economics teacher. She also taught upper intermediate grades for five years.

Peggy's administrative experience is varied. She has had experience as managing director of a large manufacturing trade company, which gave her early hands on administrative experience.

Peggy's teaching experience at the university level also involved the development of an ESL program for recently exiled immigrants. At a different institution, and in a different country, she was instrumental in the establishment of a continuing education/ESL program for grad students from non-English speaking countries.

Peggy's junior high school experience provided her with many different opportunities and experiences. Reflecting back, Peggy said: "I learned a lot about working with people and peers in a leadership role . . . I developed collaborative, collegial working relationships which I found stood me in good stead."

Peggy identifies further experiences at another school and district as beneficial and educational. "Those were exciting teaching years [the seventies], because in many ways we were implementing components of the Year 2000; integration, cross-curricula, tying things together and it just was a result of, I think, some very good teachers who were willing to take some risks and a very good administrator who allowed change to happen and encouraged, facilitated and fostered the group. So from that I learned - how

you could take something that was very different and difficult and make it positive by working with people. I guess that's the secret."

Peggy then took a break from teaching and went back to university to get her masters degree. Sharing her reasons for going back, Peggy said: "I went to finish my masters for three reasons: one, for a break, two, because I like studying, and three, because I had a lot of encouragement and experience and thought I could take on a leadership role."

Part of Peggy's university masters program was a six month practicum, working back in her district as an assistant to the superintendent. Peggy speaks fondly of this experience. "I had a district perspective before a school perspective, which in some ways is very interesting. It helps you understand communications and roles. It also gives you an overall view of the school district so you know where things fit and where things go and that was fascinating. I was involved in many different projects apart from my study - such as French immersion, special education and staffing. I did a bit of everything and the superintendent was very supportive. He allowed me to do things and gave me that full responsibility which was wonderful."

After her internship, Peggy was appointed principal of a small elementary school. The position was half time school based administration and "half time at the district office responsible for curriculum, special education, French immersion and a number of other things." She was also involved during this time in the teacher's association, specifically with professional development. (At this time administrators were still considered members of the teachers' association.)

Peggy was then appointed to a secondary school as vice-principal. She speaks of being the first female secondary administrator in the district. "I was the first woman at a secondary school in the district so that was a little bit of an uphill battle. First woman and one whom people felt had created quite a lot of havoc in the district. I had to walk with my back to the wall for the first four months, but by December it had turned around and I had great support and we really did some wonderful things with staff and students in the school."

Peggy was then seconded to the district for two years as Director of Instruction. Peggy spoke of her responsibilities and the fact that the

superintendent had confidence in her. "I did everything. In a smaller district that's your job . . . Attended all board meetings. Worked very closely with the board. Responsible for policy development with the board committee, all teacher staffing, education budgets, special education, and curriculum. It was a very good training ground for how a district works."

Peggy spoke fondly of the team approach apparent at the district office. ". . . there was a very strong working team with the secretary-treasurer, the superintendent, the assistant and myself. An interrelated team effort and still it was such a huge load. There were many initiatives such as computer program development, writing projects with the primary and intermediate teachers, school based staff development, and the growing demand in the district for special education because we had done a very good job for integration."

After two years Peggy decided that she needed a change and "tossed my hat in the ring for a few positions." She spoke of not getting a superintendency in one district and the reasons why. "The board was very traditional, but to give them their due, they had the longest debate ever. They debated for five hours on just who they would hire as superintendent. Of the five candidates short-listed I was the only woman. . . . if I had had a navy pinstripe suit the discussion wouldn't have taken five minutes. That was a very interesting learning experience for me and it also indicated to me the difficulty facing women going into district positions, especially in smaller communities."

Peggy then applied for and was appointed to her current position and district. Peggy said, "I guess I was lucky and it was meant to be because at that particular time, the superintendent specifically, and the board, were looking for a woman in the position." She reflected on the challenges of the first few months. "Those first six months were very difficult because they'd rarely had someone from outside at the district level. It had always been through the ranks. They'd never had a woman before. There weren't many women in administration in the district . . . so it was different for everyone."

Peggy spoke at some length of the problems facing women who apply for district positions. "It's a little more difficult for women because women have to sometimes do things that may be perceived as a little more high profile or a little different because it's the way they lead or sometimes it's the advice

they get and it's different from what the tradition has been, so they are viewed nervously. I think it's still difficult for women at times although it's getting a little easier as we have more and more women getting into school based administration and a few more getting into the district level, but it's still going to take a long time."

When I asked Peggy what the major components of her career development were, she felt the need to go back further than her career and look at her childhood. Peggy said that she had a privileged upbringing, with "tremendous opportunities to do a lot of travelling, observing and working with people." Growing up in a multicultural country was also of benefit because it gave Peggy an "innate sense of differences and strengthening differences." She noted that this skill often has been used in her career. "I don't know whether it's an ability or just an understanding of coping with ambiguity which is a critical factor in leadership and administration. Nothing goes according to plan. You've got to cope with uncertainty but I think that was helpful."

Peggy recognized that her mother was a good role model for she was independent, and in her own business. Peggy's father was also supportive. "He was very encouraging and supportive, and in some ways forced me to do very balanced things. He taught me to play golf when I was twelve. I could shoot. He always encouraged me to participate in a variety of activities that were quite non-traditional." Peggy noted that often her family would discuss world issues around the dinner table and through this she "learned to think on my feet and conceptualize ideas."

Another aspect of career development identified by Peggy was spending time in European and English universities and mixing with different people.

When asked about mentors, Peggy felt she had had a great deal of support and encouragement from superintendents during her practicum and director position. She said, "Funnily enough, the traditional males who had come through that traditional route were very supportive of me and gave me wonderful advice. I could always call them."

Peggy noted the lack of female role models and mentors during this period of her career.

Peggy identified some barriers but did not feel they had been huge obstacles for her to overcome. She spoke of some resentment she experienced over her career path. "The interesting thing is that many people felt I had moved very fast in my career. Some of the men particularly, were a little resentful. I find that interesting because they only looked back on my career in B.C. They didn't entertain anything that happened before and I think that many of the things that I did in business and at the university level were very critical to my being successful."

Peggy went on to say that the major external barrier facing women is the uncertainty that people have over women in the role of superintendent. "I think the major barrier is the uncertainty people have of how women will do because we have quite a bit of backlash from the late sixties, early seventies, where women were appointed just because they were women. We have taken a long time to get over that and I think it's something we are still going to have to work with. It seems a lot of it is tradition, that people, and when I say people I mean the public, teachers, school based administrators, boards, and most importantly, C.E.O.s if we are talking about the superintendency, do not have a mental image of a woman in that role."

The impact for women coming into this role is important. Peggy advises, "I think that it's really important that the new women coming in do bring some of the tradition to the role but also change the role so that people see that women can successfully fulfill that position in a slightly different way."

Peggy spent some time elaborating on the attitudes of women towards other women in administration. "The other thing, and I don't know whether it's a barrier or whether it's just a hurdle you have to cross, but getting support as a new person in the position was far more readily forthcoming from the men in the schools than from other women administrators. It is something that we as women have to really work at - we have to begin to be far more supportive of each other - to be far more willing to mentor women and support other women. It's almost that streak of jealousy, that comes out in a competitiveness and usually the criticisms are not professional, they are personal."

When asked what it meant to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession, Peggy confessed that she hadn't found it to be much of

a problem. Peggy noted that she had always had equally as many male friends as female and she is comfortable with being the only woman at a variety of meetings.

Peggy's perception of the role of the superintendent was "that you really are not that important in the life of the child on a day to day basis and in their learning. However, what you do, I think, makes a tremendous difference to the learning that takes place in the classroom."

Peggy felt that it was important to be visible and to support principals and teachers. She noted the need to facilitate, but not meddle. "People need a little assistance in developing a vision, getting started and they need the resources to get it done: time, money, and encouragement. All those things together. Then, when they're doing it, don't meddle."

At this point Peggy noted the differences in leadership styles between men and women in the superintendency. "Men, because of their ego or their need to be part of the success, need to be front and center and therefore they continue to get involved and try to control the way a project is going, whereas I feel very differently. I think once you help a group get started you've got to let them go and that's in effect dealing with ambiguity because they may not be going exactly as you see that it should go, but it's meeting what they as a group need and I think that's where you've got to let go."

However, Peggy was reluctant to put leadership down to gender. "I'm reluctant to say this is how a male leads and this is how a female leads because I've observed differences and similarities. I think quite often it's individual leadership styles."

Peggy gave thoughtful advice to women interested in the superintendency. She felt that perspective candidates must "explore what the position entails and what the responsibilities are and decide if that's what you want to do."

She said women must seek out mentors to support and guide them. Further to this she recommends "take a risk and find a mentor that is a little different from you so that you understand an other's thinking and approach which will help you work with a variety of colleagues. It'll help you look at

the whole process of leadership in a more rounded fashion, in a global fashion."

Peggy felt it was important to seek out all kinds of experiences and to fully understand the school system. She said, "Don't worry that you may be taking a few years longer because you're doing either a secondary or elementary experience. This is critical because when you are in a district position as someone supervising schools, it's really important to have been there. It gives you credibility with the people with whom you work and it also gives you an empathy and an understanding for what they are going through."

Her other advice was to "keep current with all educational developments" and subscribe to two or three good educational journals.

As the interview came to a close, Peggy encouraged and complimented me on my research. I was pleased with the tone of the interview and felt Peggy had been honest and sincere.

Profile 7 - Leslie Adams

Superintendent, Leslie Adams, was most accommodating when I phoned to set up an interview date. Because I had to travel to her district, she made sure that the morning of the interview followed a weekend, and therefore I was able to travel on the Sunday.

Leslie welcomed me into her very large office. The office had a meeting table in the center of the room, with Leslie's desk off to one side. Student's artwork, both framed and unframed, adorned the walls. Personal pictures were evident on Leslie's desk. Plants, educational journals, books and magazines were to be found throughout the office.

Leslie, who is in her early fifties, is a modest, friendly woman. Before we started the interview she made sure I had coffee and was set up comfortably.

Leslie's early teaching experiences took place outside of Canada. Leslie was trained as a primary teacher, however her first appointment was at an intermediate school, where she taught grades six, seven and eight for two years. While at this school Leslie became vice-principal for a year. This was Leslie's only school-based administrative experience.

Leslie travelled to another country where she taught kindergarten and grade one; then French at a junior secondary.

Leslie did some further travelling, got married and immigrated to Canada. In Canada, Leslie taught grades seven and five in an open area, and a multi-age group of grades two, three and four.

Leslie was then asked to be a part time curriculum co-ordinator. During this period Leslie applied for, but did not receive a vice-principalship. Instead she was appointed to be the Language Arts Elementary Consultant. From this position Leslie's career path evolved. She became supervisor, director and superintendent all in the same district. During this time Leslie also completed her masters degree.

Leslie identified several components which shaped her career development.

She attended an all girls school and reflected that perhaps for women in single sex schools, leadership is more natural. "It's more natural for them to take leadership roles because you had to in your school . . . the opportunities were there."

Leslie's home environment provided her with support and encouragement. She identified her parents as having high expectations and believing that their children were capable to be the best all around individuals - academically, athletically, and socially.

Leslie also experienced what it felt like to be an immigrant and noted that her lifestyle during this time forced her to be independent and therefore she developed a competitive edge.

Leslie identified her husband as being supportive of her position. "He is mostly my calm support and greatest critic . . . if he wasn't so wonderful I might be a lonely super."

When asked if she had any mentors, Leslie reflected and said, "Probably all my male superiors, although I never thought of them in that light . . . certainly their recognition and promotion of my capabilities is significant."

When I asked Leslie why she thought she was hired for the superintendency, she said that her hiring was evolutionary. Leslie knew the district and therefore had the inside edge. Leslie noted that often as her role changed, so did the job title. She was modest about her achievements and said, "So you know, I am probably fortunate - some people would say I'm lucky to be where I am."

Barriers identified by Leslie were both personal and professional.

Leslie worked hard to get her masters degree. She attended summer school, going to classes through the week and then driving home on the weekend to attend to family responsibilities.

Leslie felt it was significant when she did not receive the vice-principalship for which she applied. A comment and attitude expressed at the

time was, "Leslie, you can't be a vice-principal because you don't take the floor hockey team."

Although Leslie felt that she had been accepted by the men in her district, she was aware that it was difficult for some to accept the fact that a female got the job. ". . . the men that I competed against for the job, that was challenging or difficult for them."

Gender does play a role in Leslie's career. She states: "I'm always very conscious of the female role, especially as for a few years I was the sole female in administration. And as I've tried to mentor other females into administration and into district roles and so on, I am always very conscious of the image that women portray at administrators' meetings and other male dominated professional activities." Leslie feels that women must find a balance in what they wish to project. "I think you can't come across in an emotional way because people think 'there's just an emotional woman,' but there's a danger too, of going the other way and not appearing as yourself."

Leslie noted that at times it was difficult to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession. Although at first she didn't enjoy going "to the superintendents' conferences and seeing all those grew suits and trying to find collegial support" she attended because "I believe we have to go and be seen. It's a very slow working in - women must be a viable part of it."

Leslie did note that things are changing as male and female superintendents become more familiar with each other.

Leslie stated that leadership styles depend on personality types. She noted that often men do things differently from women and women tend to deal more with staff development and the process of change.

Leslie noted that often leadership is an "ego thing" and that women are better able to give up absolute control and share. "I think women are better able to do that. I see it now in our schools. It's very natural for the female principals to be the collaborative leaders and some men are struggling with the loss of 'I' and 'my school' and so on."

When asked her perception of the role of superintendent, Leslie said the role differs and varies from district to district. Her role is one of

supportive leadership and her responsibility is all the elementary schools. She has dealt with many issues such as evaluation, facilities, finance and staffing, and Leslie also looks after staff development and inservice.

Leslie's advice to women interested in the superintendency was interesting and from the heart.

She said, ". . . have goals of excellence in whatever job you're in . . . be totally devoted to education."

The importance of a support system was identified. "I think if you have children or other responsibilities, there has to be a great support system in there because your hours are just not your own."

Networks and contacts are needed. "You have to make contacts. You have to get some kind of reputation for quality work for people to consider you because there is always some kind of competition. Be highly regarded for excellent work by trustees . . . become significant with parent organizations. But it's probably breaking out of your own district that is the most important thing and becoming known beyond that."

Leslie noted that there are some downfalls that come with the role and cautions women to examine the role carefully. "I think people going into this have to really question - is it going to become more of a bureaucratic role as we spend less and less time in schools and less and less time where it really matters."

Leslie advised to "never let your ambitions dominate your human characteristics." She also spoke several times of the loneliness involved in the superintendency and felt women had to be prepared for that.

Leslie's last bit of advice was, "You do have to have some certain resiliency to be able to take the good with the bad and I guess to feel very confident about yourself and leadership."

At the conclusion of the interview Leslie walked me to my car and wished me well.

Profile 8 - Dawn Smith

Superintendent, Dawn Smith, greeted me warmly at the door of her office reception area. Dawn, who is in her early fifties, is very professional both in appearance and mannerisms. She has warm, brown eyes and put me at ease immediately.

Dawn's office building is located a short distance away from the main school board office. It is modern and business like. Her office contains a desk and a computer, plus a meeting corner with two comfortable chairs and a smaller coffee table. Dawn asked her secretary to bring us coffee and we began the interview.

Dawn began her career as a secondary Math teacher. She taught high school Math for twelve years and during part of this time was the Math Department Head.

Dawn's administrative experience is lengthy and took place at the secondary level also. She was a vice-principal for nine years and a principal for eight years. She has worked in a number of different schools, all in one district.

Dawn did her masters degree in Math education early on in her teaching career.

I asked Dawn to identify the major components of her career development. She said her high school experience was very positive. "I was very impressed with my high school teachers and I wanted to get back to where I really respected the people for what they were doing."

Dawn's high school vice-principal encouraged her toward a career in education. He told her that "he knew I could do whatever I wanted to do and he felt that I would not be happy if I couldn't get a job or if I was passed over because I was a woman. It never even entered my head, but he basically said, "Look, that's not going to happen to you in education." Dawn identified her vice-principal, who was also her first principal when she began teaching, as being a mentor. "He was always supportive. He was a mentor before people talked about mentors and definitely the encouragement was always there to go ahead."

Dawn noted that her mother provided her with a great deal of support. She "always said you could do what you want to."

Dawn stated that in the managing of her career she decided quite early to stay in one district only. She respects the people in her district and said it was an advantage to be in a larger district, with many school sites and differing communities. Dawn added, "There has been a district history of a willingness to promote the best people."

The last component identified by Dawn was the decision not to have a family. Dawn elaborates: "A lot of the women were taking time out to have a family and I don't have a family so that was a decision which influenced my career. It wasn't geared to a superintendency or a particular position, it was just geared to doing well in what I wanted to do in my career."

When I asked Dawn why she thought she was appointed to her current position she noted that she had the experience, the knowledge of the district, and the support of people in the system. "I've been encouraged in the district to look at it - probably more recently by some people identifying the fact that there weren't women in the job."

Other reasons given by Dawn deal with her experience and skills. She said, "I think I was ready for the job. I have to feel that I was the right person for the position and I know that I certainly had the background. I had done the work . . . as vice-principal and principal. I was use to dealing with district things and having been president of our own secondary administrators association, I had many situations that have given me the opportunity to get to know more about the system than just the home-school base. I think I showed that I could work with people and I can deal with issues."

Dawn indicated that she had experienced no visible barriers to promotion. She said she always took on leadership roles. Early career visibility occurred as a female in the male-dominated mathematics area.

Related to barriers was Dawn's reaction to my question on gender. She felt that being a female in a male-dominated superintendency was not that significant because of her history of being in Math education - both are dominated by men.

Dawn cautions against reverse discrimination: "There's an effort to encourage the women to move faster or recognize the women sooner because of trying to address the gender equity issue." However, she values the fact that her district is offering opportunities for advancement to women returning to the profession after fulfilling family commitments. Dawn does not limit her networks and support groups to gender and believes that this is vital to maintaining one's credibility.

When discussing leadership styles, Dawn stated that "everyone of us is functioning according to our own style and personality." When speaking of herself she said, "I think that one of my characteristics is to be very honest and direct with people."

Dawn indicated that the demands of the job are far greater than the time and that women may require even more time in the job. "The time factor is more demanding on this job. There are more commitments that pull you in many directions. I think maybe women just naturally try to understand people. As a generality, women may give more thought to people and their feelings and work harder to resolve people issues." She elaborated on the responsibility she feels to people. "We've got so much of the responsibility and the opportunities going for us that we don't need to become defensive. I mean, I learned early in my career that people who have responsibility owe it to provide respect and consideration for others."

Dawn's advice for women interested in the superintendency was extensive and down to earth. She felt that women should "get as much experience and involvement in the different aspects of education as possible" and get "a fair amount of solid school based administrative experience."

She noted the importance of doing a lot of different district things and the need to build networks.

Dawn's advice continued. "If you want to do it, go for it, because there's no reason not to, and I think the time is right now, certainly for young women who want to look at making career opportunities." However, Dawn also includes a caution with that advice: "I think people have to look at positions and say are they doing it because they really want to do it for themselves. Don't look at it as a step to something else."

Dawn recommended not limiting networking to women. "I think you've got to be careful that you don't create a support group that has become so limiting that in effect you're doing exactly what you criticize the men for doing . . . don't rule out people because of gender."

The interview ended on a positive note and Dawn walked me to the office and wished me the best of luck with my research.

Profile 9 - Margaret Jones

I met and interviewed Superintendent Margaret Jones at a local hotel. Margaret was in town for a conference and agreed to meet me late one afternoon. I appreciated her gesture to accommodate me and our interview was brief, yet informative.

Margaret, who is in her early forties, began her teaching career with intermediate students. She was very involved in education in her district and said, "I started teaching in a school and got involved in a lot of committee work and took a lot of leadership initiatives within the school and within the district."

Her administrative experience began with her appointment as vice-principal for two years at an elementary school. She was then appointed acting principal for four months. At this point, Margaret was offered a co-ordinator's job in the district. The responsibilities involved in this job were: ". . . curriculum responsibility for assessment, professional development, and gifted education for K to 12."

Margaret's co-ordinator position was reclassified to Director of Instruction. It was posted and Margaret was awarded the position. She continued as the Director of Instruction for the next six years.

Margaret then applied for, and was successful in receiving her present position as superintendent. When I asked Margaret why she felt she was hired, she said that she did not go out looking for the job, but that the "opportunity presented itself." Margaret stated that the district was looking for someone whose focus would be curriculum and educational matters. She felt that she had those skills. "I wanted to provide leadership. I wanted to provide curriculum leadership, program leadership. I wanted to help people interpret Year 2000, and that's exactly what the district was looking for - an educational leader. When I had the opportunity to be acting superintendent, I forged a number of real relationships with people as an educational leader, and I realized I really did have the control and the power to spend my time the way I wanted (within reason), and if working with teachers is a priority, then that's how I would spend at least a portion of my time."

Margaret also felt that she was the type of person the school board was looking for. "They were looking for someone who could forge some new relationships, who could look at things in a different way, who could work really well with people and who could basically provide really strong, collaborative, educational leadership."

Margaret identified a number of career impacts. She has always focused on curriculum and educational issues and was on a number of ministry committees.

When grants were available, Margaret took advantage of the opportunity. Reflecting back, she said: "I think one event was when funds for excellence came out and there was an opportunity to design some projects and that's when I started to think about how I could make a difference in a consulting role."

Two other events which influenced Margaret's career were her interaction with a university professor and the fact that her co-ordinator position was cut to half time due to budget restraints. Margaret said the cut stimulated her to make a change, as she did not want to go backwards in her career.

Margaret identified three mentors - a high school teacher, a university professor and a principal. Of the high school teacher, Margaret said, "He was my high school English teacher and he really did a lot to build my esteem and tell me I had special skills and I credit a number of things to him." Margaret's university professor discussed and gave her direction and focus into the area of teacher development. Margaret's final mentor was her principal when she was a vice-principal. She noted that he let her run with any idea she had and was a major influence on her.

Margaret has formed a strong network of colleagues and said, "Most of them are men who I phone on a regular basis if I have a question and that way I spend my time on leadership stuff."

Margaret's parents played a role in her career. She notes, ". . . all of us were encouraged and I was the oldest, to get an education . . . So my mom and dad were really strong influences and to this day if I'm doing a workshop or doing a presentation or I've written a paper or had something published,

they're the first ones there to congratulate me or take part. They continue to be a really strong support system."

Margaret also noted that her husband had been supportive and when she applied for the superintendency, "he wanted it more than I did." Margaret admitted that the travel involved in her co-ordinator job did present some difficulties at first, but that her husband now realizes her job often entails travel.

Margaret identified a number of barriers than she has experienced throughout her career. She said, "The first one is cultural. I've struggled for awhile with guilt. I have three children . . . There are still times when I am at a meeting or at a conference and my kids are doing something important that I miss and I still struggle with that."

The importance of working out the details of family and career were stressed by Margaret. "I've had to work out details in my life because I do believe that you need to have a care giver for your kids and I didn't want my kid's life to be totally crazy because I had chosen a career and my husband had chosen a career, so we had a lot of details to work around and eventually sort out."

Margaret also noted that her age and the attitudes of some men has been a barrier. "Another barrier is that I really do think it's more difficult for women, especially at my age, to get into the superintendency. I don't think they are taken as seriously as men are for the job. I have many men friends but I think it's very difficult for some men to imagine a working relationship with a woman."

The last barrier identified by Margaret was the traditional mind set regarding line positions and experience. "I think another barrier to becoming superintendent is the belief that you need to follow a series of steps and one of those steps must include a secondary principalship and I think it's been really difficult for women to get into secondary principalships because it's not felt they can handle the discipline."

Looking back on her own career, Margaret noted, ". . . there were a number of people who felt that I could not be an effective superintendent until I had that secondary principalship under my belt, and yet in the time I've had the superintendency, I don't believe that anything I've handled would have

been handled any better had I been a secondary principal . . . so I don't believe that it is something that is necessary."

Margaret felt that the issue of gender had not been significant in her career. She did admit that for women the initial position of superintendent may be difficult in attaining, but once in the position, male colleagues were very supportive. "I think the initial selection may be difficult and the districts who are willing to take a chance on a woman are perhaps few and far between, but I've found since arriving here, I've found my male colleagues have been very receptive to my ideas and they have been very open and very helpful."

Margaret went on to question the reason that there are so few women in the superintendency. "Is the reason there aren't more women in the superintendency because they don't apply or is it because people won't take the chance? You know, I'm just not sure what the reason is and sometimes I sense that the reason more women don't apply is because they haven't worked out that ability to coordinate all those aspects of their life that they need to coordinate . . . or they just might not be interested."

Margaret again touched on the topic of managing it all and the difficulties associated with that. "I think we are living in a generation with a lot of cultural baggage and when I say guilt, I don't think men feel guilty if they miss their daughter's performance at the music festival or the art day, but I think that culturally women have been brought up with that guilt. You're the care giver. The other thing that I believe is that there's a higher expectation for men that they will follow a career path and that they should be constantly striving to go beyond being a teacher, to being a vice-principal, to being a principal and so on. And I don't think those same expectations are on women."

When I asked Margaret about her leadership style she noted that there has been a shift in styles of management and said, ". . . it's away from the top down, autocratic model to a style that is much more collaborative and much more nurturing and one that really focuses on people as the greatest resource you have within your district. There's a focus on the concept of teamwork and I think I have that as a leader - that I am really able to make tough decisions but still deal with people in a way that's very collaborative and nurturing."

Margaret noted that this shift in management style is difficult to attribute to gender, however, she felt that women do bring something different to district office and that she hoped to influence women to strive for that position. "I hope that more women do apply and I hope in some ways I can influence women to apply because I do believe that women bring something different to the central office and it's been commented to me several times by teachers and by community members that there is something different in the district office with a woman there."

Margaret sees her key role as someone who develops people "because I do believe people are the greatest resource in a school district." She continued on, identifying three main facets to her perception of the role of superintendent. "The first facet is a change agent and I think as an educational leader the major job that you have is to make sure that your district is on the cutting edge, that you are the person with the vision and you're working very hard. Another aspect to the role is one I call the architect because I think that what you do within that role is that you build relationships. You build culture so you're building things around you and then the third facet of the role is manager, because there is a great deal to do and I don't think one excludes the other."

Margaret offered some sound advice to women interested in the superintendency. She said to make sure you take a lead in every sphere of the job, be it teacher, administrator or district office personnel. Margaret advised women to be prepared to take risks and to take initiatives.

She noted that women really do have to go out of their way and they must work out the personal details of their life. ". . . sit down and decide and try and work out things in your life that may cause it to be really a negative experience. Like if you've got children . . . You've got to work out the details because if you don't work out those details I think what happens is that it becomes a negative experience . . . and it really impacts on the way you do the job."

Margaret cautioned women to be prepared to be passed up for a male. "I think that as long as it continues to be dominated by men, that perhaps you have to recognize that you may be passed by even though you're the one, even though when you compare yourself to some of the males, you know you are showing leadership, . . . yet this person just got the job that should have been

yours. You have to almost expect that that's going to happen for the next little while."

Margaret felt it was necessary for women to form a strong network of colleagues and she said to not be afraid to seek assistance.

Her final advice for women was "to have your own vision and philosophy of what being a superintendent or being a leader is all about and to reflect that and share that and articulate it with the people that you work with."

As the interview came to a close Margaret and I continued our discussion on the management of career and family and of the pressures facing women in the superintendency, specifically the fact that they are role models for other women and the expectations associated with this fact.

Margaret walked me to the door of the hotel room, told me that she was looking forward to my research results and said good-bye.

Profile 10 - Doreen Nielsen

Superintendent Doreen Nielsen is an experienced educator with a quiet, confident manner. She was pleasant and accommodating throughout our phone calls and interview. She gave direct answers to all questions and her experience and concern about education was most evident.

Doreen and I met early in May, at a mutual friend's home.

Doreen had a very long background leading up to administration. She said: "I think I really followed the pattern that is in the literature - women take longer before they get their first administrative position and they usually have more indepth experience in teaching, usually at different levels." Doreen began her career as a secondary teacher, but moved to the elementary level in a rural school. Doreen became interested in special education and returned to university to complete her masters in curriculum, with a minor in special education. She taught in a secondary school where she gained her first administrative experience as department head. Doreen has also taught at the university level.

Doreen then moved into her first school-based administrative role - vice principal of a K to 10 school. After a year in this position, she became principal at a K to 12 school, however a year later Doreen applied out of district for a supervisor/director position and was awarded this contract. Doreen describes her responsibilities: ". . . [it was] a position that was very hands on curriculum oriented and provided support from kindergarten to 12 in curriculum and actually toward the end of my stay there, I also embraced special education."

Doreen moved from this position to her current position as superintendent. Doreen identified the disappointment of not getting a position in her original district as a major turning point in her career. She was then encouraged to apply out of district by her mentor and entered the superintendency.

When I asked Doreen why she applied for the superintendency she said, "It didn't occur to me that I couldn't do it." Doreen elaborated on why she felt she was appointed: "I was old in years and certainly rich in

experience. I had experiences at university and in elementary and secondary schools and I also had done a lot of work for the local association."

Doreen also felt that the school board was very supportive. She said: "I think I was the right person at the right time. I think it's sometimes as simple as that and the timing was right . . . I think I was the sort of person they were looking for . . . I have a very broad, strong academic background which I think appealed to them - a fairly broad knowledge base . . . Plus there was an immediate bond with the board, which is really quite important for a superintendent. It was a fit."

Doreen expressed some surprise at being appointed so quickly. ". . . I thought it would probably take me a good three years. I was quite frankly amazed that I got a superintendency more easily than I'd got my first vice principal's job. The first admin. job is the toughest one to get, because if you prove yourself in that job you can move very quickly. Getting that first job, at least for me and my generation, was very, very, difficult."

Doreen went on to discuss the difficulty she faced in getting promoted in the district she taught in. "I never got promoted in the district that I worked in although I was very effective and innovative in the schools there . . . You really feel that eventually you'll get a job there as an administrator. It's not necessarily so . . . And then you've got to come to the realization . . . I could be here until I was 85 and still not be an administrator. Eventually you need to move on."

When I asked Doreen if there was anything outside her professional life that had an influence on her career, Doreen indicated that she had gone to an all girls' school and college, therefore had no experience with co-ed education until she was 21. Because of this Doreen "looked upon women as leaders - I mean all the heads of schools were women and I guess I assumed that women did leadership things."

Doreen shared that she had grown up feeling that she could do anything she wanted as far as education went. She elaborated: "If you want to be head of a school, you be head of a school. I didn't even think beyond the school. I didn't know anybody in a district position."

Doreen also mentioned the support that she had from her mother and father. "I had a father who thought that there was absolutely nothing I couldn't do if I really wanted to, which was rather amazing in that day and age."

Mobility was a factor in the management of Doreen's career. She travelled to a number of positions and indicated that she worked hard for each position - that they were not just handed to her. Doreen initiated a number of new concepts in each district and has a variety of experiences at all levels, including university.

Doreen noted that her husband has provided her with a great deal of support over the course of her career. She said: "[He] is the kind of guy who recognizes that what I had to do I had to do and certainly supported rather than impeded me . . . He took on a lot of responsibilities in the home because when I finally did get administrative positions, I had to travel to them."

When I asked Doreen if she came across any barriers in her career development she was able to identify a number of external barriers. She spoke of androcentrism and the need for society to change the way it views women. "There are very real barriers to women entering administration in North America. I think they're barriers that are probably not acknowledged - that are not talked about, but they do exist. I think that androcentrism really does exist - that public, elected officials and sometimes people in the profession themselves see administrative roles as male roles because they've been so used to seeing men in those positions." Doreen went on to discuss the qualities society deems necessary for administrators. "The qualities that are needed for administration are usually considered male qualities. I think that one barrier we encounter as women is that people cannot see women as 50 per cent of the population. I think some of the barriers to women and certainly the ones that I encounter everyday are in the organizations that we live with."

Doreen identified the negotiation process as an example of the male model of doing things. "Negotiations are always done on the old model; the adversarial model which is really a very strong male way of looking at the world. You clash until the strong one wins and I find it disturbing particularly in a profession such as ours, that we're still using that model."

Doreen applied for administrative positions many times and occasionally found that she was the "token" woman. She identified those times as difficult and said "the discrimination barriers in those days rested almost entirely within the superintendent's office." Men often did the short-listing and Doreen felt they were "unwilling to take a chance on a woman coming in that they didn't know. I don't think they did it maliciously but I think that they did it consciously and I think women were screened out very effectively." Doreen noted that most districts now have a more sophisticated way of looking at applications, however she maintained that in the past, this practise was a "very concrete barrier."

Doreen feels that there is more discrimination now than there was six or seven years ago. When I asked her why she thought this was so, she said: "I think it's a backlash. I think there's a backlash from what it was. I think education has a different, certainly in this province, it has a different face than what it had five or six years ago - tougher, harder times again. People tend to turn internally. Things tend to go internally and certainly the old boys' network is still there and that doesn't help in times that are tough."

Doreen went on to identify another early barrier - that of no access to male groups. ". . . the other barrier was that women never really had and still don't have access to those inner circle male groups. We couldn't become members of the established service clubs for instance, and in small towns members of these clubs included very influential people."

Informal male groups still exist and Doreen felt that these still carry a great deal of clout and power. "Those barriers still exist. There are still very close groups that men have created for themselves that maybe don't actively discriminate against the inclusion of women, but women feel uncomfortable joining in. For example, if a group of male administrators go to the pub or play golf on the weekend, it's unlikely that a woman would be asked to join and so there's this comradery that excludes women. Now men say, 'Well you have the same thing - you know you have the university women's club.' But we don't have the clout in our organizations that men have." Doreen stated that women don't need these informal groups, however we do have to have "men recognize us as equal colleagues."

Another barrier identified by Doreen is that women in administration can be seen as a threat - both to their male colleagues and to their wives.

"The difficulty with women in administration, because there are so few of us, is that we are women and we can be perceived as a threat to the wives of other administrators; wives who are not involved in administration or education itself. The reality is in administration you spend a lot of time, long hours together, planning, talking about things, doing the kinds of stuff that needs to be done to run a school district or school. Some men feel very uncomfortable about working with women in these very close situations."

A final external barrier identified by Doreen was the lack of role models for today's youth. "You kind of hope that the young kids coming through the schools now will be looking at the world in a different way. Unfortunately, schools still stay very traditional in their staffing. You still get many women in the elementary years. Nearly all primary kids have a woman teacher for the first three or four years and usually there's a man who's principal of the school. They go to secondary school and they see women in the areas where they expect them to be: home ec., special education. They rarely see women in the sciences or if they do they're teaching grade 8. They rarely see women in administration. We're really brainwashing our kids into believing this is the way it's suppose to be."

Doreen stated that family life and the difficulty of the position can also be seen as an internal barrier for some women. "I think family life certainly puts a delay on many women. I suppose women are more reticent to get involved in a job that's pretty tough. There are a lot of women who have simply said, 'No way - I'm not going to put up with it.'"

When I asked Doreen if gender had played a role in her career, she said, "It's not easy sometimes," however she expressed a great deal of respect for the men she works with. Doreen noted that the superintendency is not so "lonely" with more women moving into upper management positions and there is little distinction between the men and women. She elaborated: "I think the distinction between male and female is no longer there in the groups that I work in. It's just that we're superintendents. We work together. We're a group, a subcommittee working on something and we're there . . . Gender doesn't enter into it. At least I don't sense it does anymore. It did for the first few years but it doesn't anymore, but that's my perception."

Doreen indicated that there is some pressure in being one of fourteen women in the superintendency. "Until recently I never thought of myself as a

role model. Somebody made that comment in a rather flattering way eight or nine months ago, and I guess I really hadn't thought of it in those terms before that. I think it puts some pressure on, although I really didn't ever think I was going to fail. It never occurred to me that I wouldn't make it."

Doreen noted the need for a change in society's attitudes towards the role of women and felt some change may come from our students. "I guess it's the kids who come from the different home background where the mother is the wage earner or the only parent that they see there is a different way of doing things, a different way from the school."

Doreen cautioned against reverse discrimination. "We must not forget that we have very fine male colleagues and very fine young male colleagues who are looking for administration and looking for positions of responsibility and we can't discriminate against them either . . . We don't want to reverse things and then put them into the position that women were put into for so long. This can happen. We can build up a lot of resentment." Doreen called for a balance between men and women and a "world that should be shared between men and women; the responsibilities shared."

Doreen continued exploring the issue of gender. She noted the demise of extreme feminism, but felt that there was a need for that movement and "we all benefitted from them." She went on to give an example. "You no longer hear in mixed company extreme, derogatory statements made about women's organizations or about women's roles in society. In my early teaching years the Status of Women were referred to as the sows. In the staffroom the men would say, 'Oh, here's the sow notice' and laugh. You don't hear that now . . . More and more men are openly appreciative of the work that women do."

Doreen's perception of the role of the superintendent has changed dramatically over the years that she has been in the superintendency and she predicted that it will change even more over the next decade. Doreen foresees the move "towards decentralized decision making with schools becoming autonomous units . . . the school being the center of decision making . . . [and] the role of the central office changing dramatically, maybe even diminishing."

Doreen felt that the new superintendency will be ideally suited to the way women operate because "we're prepared to work with a lot of people and

prepared to meet with a lot of people. We're prepared to take calculated risks and we're prepared to look very closely to what's happening in classrooms and stand up and speak out bravely for things that we feel should be happening. I think we work better in negotiations. I think we have a better attitude in negotiations when we can operate as women and I think if enough of us - that would be teachers, school administrators, senior administrators, would be involved in the negotiation process, we would eventually change it."

Women in leadership positions "tend to accept the fact that they can make mistakes and they're not as concerned about losing face as a man is," said Doreen. She continued on: ". . . I think women tend to be less hung up on the day-to-day activities than on the bigger picture and I think we are more prepared to share our vision with people and talk about what we see it could be than perhaps men. I think probably that's a social thing: that men may be a little reticent to talk about that."

She continued: "I don't think women see it as a power position. I think men do. If you're really going to be cold and calculated about it, if you really want the power, give it away, and think society declares that that's probably easier for women. I've never seen it as a power position."

The competitive side of men and women was touched upon by Doreen. "I think men tend to be more competitive and yet I'm sure that some of us who are [female] superintendents - I'm sure there are people who would say we're very competitive. Yet I think it's a different type. I've often felt that there's an agreement among female superintendents . . . There's more honor and integrity and maybe we are not as competitive."

However, Doreen expressed concern with the lack of female role models for women to follow. "One of the things that concerns me is that some women coming into senior positions have only seen, throughout their whole schooling, men in positions of leadership, and have only seen that model and so they emulate that model . . . and perpetuate it and sometimes are more strident in it than a man would be and I feel badly about that."

Doreen gave thoughtful, lengthy advice to women interested in the superintendency. She stated that women must have lots of experience "so that nothing really fazes you or puts you in a position where you're unable to cope."

As a superintendent, Doreen felt one must "know the schools, should know education, should be knowledgeable about the whole thing and should remain current on what is happening in education . . . [you also] have to be able to work with communities and to prepare yourself you should get involved in community work . . . recognize that there are very strong forces in the community effecting education." She continued: ". . . you have to know about union groups . . . you are faced with union contracts everyday. Another thing you should do before entering administration is look really closely at the policies of the board. Find out what is in policy, what the direction of the board is."

She encouraged women interested in administration to apply for jobs and to not "stay forever in a principalship or a district position." Doreen felt a masters degree was quite adequate although "more and more superintendents do have doctorates."

On a personal level, Doreen advised women to know themselves and be prepared for the demands of the job - both physically and emotionally. "You have to know yourself and be comfortable in yourself and be able to handle stress of all kinds. Not only is there the workload and the long hours, but there is also stress of other kinds. You're often criticized or undermined or you get furious at things that you know are unjust, or you may be treated badly by groups in the community. It can be very, very damming. You can get angry and frustrated because you can't do the things that you'd like to do and sometimes you're let down by people, and that's very hard to take too. So I think the stress level is probably high. Certainly the physical demands are extraordinary."

Doreen also acknowledged the demands of the job on one's personal life. "It's not an easy job. It does take it's toll. It plays havoc with one's personal and social life, as it does with my male colleague's lives. It certainly is an incredible cost in family life . . . you have to be prepared for the price you have to pay. . . . I think that you can be incredibly successful and if there's any advice it is honesty, integrity and compassion. . . . Never lose sight of the vision. . . Never lose the integrity."

Doreen also advised that being one of the few women in the superintendency can bring it's own level of stress. She said: "I think being a woman in the superintendency creates the feeling that people will be looking

upon you as a woman representing women. You have to distance yourself from that because what you are is a superintendent doing a superintendent's job and you do it the best way you can; but always at the back of your mind is this feeling."

Throughout the interview Doreen appeared relaxed and comfortable. Doreen closed the interview with an explanation of why she has stayed in the superintendency: "[as a woman] I felt it was important to show that not only can we get the job, we can stay with the job for as long as we want to stay . . . We're doing a job and we're doing it the way we want to do it and I hope that this is recognized." Doreen wished me the best of luck with my research and we returned to a more informal situation.

Profile 11 - Beth Daniels

Superintendent Beth Daniels was most accommodating in the arrangement of an appointment. She felt that it was not necessary for me to travel to her school district and since she lived fairly close to me, we agreed that she would come to my home for the interview. Our interview was arranged for an afternoon in early May.

Beth is an experienced educator. She was most honest in her answers and it became clear through the interview that Beth loves working with kids and is interested in the development of curriculum.

Beth began her teaching career in a junior high school, where she taught Social Studies. Although Beth had a brief experience at an elementary school, she continued at the secondary level, becoming a department head for a number of years. She then moved to a senior secondary school and went into counselling, along with taking on a department head position and night school supervision. Beth taught for eleven years in this district and during the latter part of her teaching career completed her masters in administration.

Beth's first administrative appointment was out of her original district. She was appointed vice principal of a junior high school and worked for two years in this capacity. Beth was then encouraged by a colleague to apply for a junior high principalship in another school district. She reflected on her first reaction to this request: "I said, 'No, no. This is bizarre - I've only been a vice principal for two years and I just moved districts. I can't do anything like that.'" However, with further encouragement Beth did apply and was appointed principal of a junior secondary school. After four years at that junior high, Beth began to feel a little restless. She received a phone call from a superintendent in another district who was recruiting candidates for the principalship of a junior-senior high school. Beth applied and was appointed principal of the school.

Beth had made a five year commitment to the school, however there was a change in superintendents along with plans to reorganize the district. Although she had a very "successful accreditation" and had worked hard at turning the school around, she was pleased to receive a phone call from a colleague in her previous district, encouraging her to apply for superintendent.

She applied back to the district for this job and got it. At the time of our interview, Beth was in her fifth year in the superintendency.

During the past two years Beth continued to be based in the school district but was working full time with the Ministry of Education. Although she spent this time working full time for the ministry, Beth was able to keep in touch with school based personnel and stay connected to the day to day operations of a school district.

To recap Beth's administrative experience, she was a school based administrator at the secondary level for eight years, and superintendent for five years, coupled with her ministry role. Shortly after our interview Beth became superintendent of another school district in the province.

Beth identified a number of significant events and experiences which influenced her career. She said that she demonstrated leadership in high school both in the areas of basketball and student council. Beth coached extensively, and through those experiences discovered that she liked working with kids and therefore got into education.

It became clear that there was a pattern to Beth's administrative appointments. She was often encouraged or recruited to apply for each administrative position. Beth also volunteered to work with the ministry, and this contact eventually evolved into a full time position.

Beth stated that her initial motivation for getting into administration was a response to a very bad situation. Speaking of one of the schools she was teaching at, Beth elaborated: "The place was a zoo and I guess I was one of those people. I couldn't stand it because I just felt it was such chaos. My classroom was tight but the school was loose of all standards so what I said to myself at that juncture . . . well, there's three options. You sit in a corner and shut up and accept it or you go into administration and you make sure you're competitive . . . or you get out of education." Beth went on to complete her masters in administration.

Beth was unable to get a secondary administrative position in the district she had taught in for a number of years. This frustration caused her to apply out of district. She reflected back on that time. "I thought - I've been a department head. I've taught grades six to twelve. I've been chair of the

bargaining committee for the district. I've coached. I've done a whole bunch of stuff and now I'm ready for administration and there wasn't any openings in secondary for women in [name of district]. That was blunt and up-front and candid. I mean they didn't pretend that there were. So I applied routinely and got the purple ditto stained letter back, 'Dear Candidate:' I was never interviewed that I can remember. . . . there had been a bunch of admin appointments, secondary, and of course these were all contemporaries of mine and all men."

It was at this point that Beth identified an individual who influenced her career in administration. Beth learned a lot from the first principal she worked with (in her role as vice principal). She said: "He was a really pivotal person in my career because I got to see what the principal could do and the incredible impact he had on that staff, between staff committees and him pursuing and encouraging staff and entrusting staff and whole models of differentiated staff development and I didn't even know that language existed. Staff taking ownership and guiding staff development for their colleagues. . . . I hadn't worked with very good role models prior to that. I'd worked with some decent managers but I hadn't worked with leaders and I didn't know there was a difference until I worked with [name of principal]. If it hadn't been for him, I don't know if I would have had the confidence to think I could do the job [principal in another district]. He was the one who said principalships matter because I had seen him as a model and he made me realize that I could do it and it was important."

Beth noted that she had received support from others also. Her parents did not differentiate according to gender and encouraged her to go into non-traditional professions. With a trace of humor, Beth said, "They were appalled when I went into education."

"In terms of early years teaching," Beth said, "nobody in the district in any leadership position took any interest but I had lots of support from friends and colleagues." She received a great deal of moral encouragement through her involvement in the local teachers' association and the Status of Women committee.

Beth noted that her husband has always been a great supporter. She said: "It was my husband who's always said, 'You know you can do it.' He doesn't have any ego problems. I mean he's just my first supporter, so it's

sort of in the non-profession and not my initial family, but sort of all through my entire teaching career . . . there's been somebody there who's sort of the greatest cheerleader and not threatened by it all."

When I asked Beth why she thought she was hired to the superintendency, she said: "I was hired back to a district where I had been a successful principal so I think probably one of the key things was a track record that they knew of. I think also I had a good reputation with the teachers' association and the community. . . . I think a lot of it was just that I was well known."

Although Beth does not regret her decision to move into the superintendency, she did have some reservations about leaving her role as a school based administrator because, "I loved the give and take and the stuff that goes on in a school. It's alive. . . . you get a closeness working in a school."

When I asked Beth to identify any barriers she had experienced, she said that her experience of trying to get a secondary administrative position in the district she taught in, was a barrier. She became frustrated with applying and never getting interviewed. At one point someone suggested that she think of elementary which made Beth dig in her heels even more. She remembered a conversation with the superintendent of the time: "The then superintendent - again probably meaning it nicely - just said there really wasn't a place for women in secondary administration. You know the discipline and the secondary admin. meetings are all men and that's not the environment I'd want to be in and all those semi-heartening little things. So I guess those were barriers."

Beth observed other districts in the province hiring women for secondary administration and became angry with the situation in her own district. "I was saying this is a crock. It's an old boys' club and it's outright prejudice. I mean there's no rationale for this anymore and especially, I guess, because I saw some of the people getting into appointments who I knew too well."

Beth identified other barriers, although they were not based on gender. She said she wasn't sure that she would get into the superintendency as she didn't have any district experience. Obviously, this was not a barrier for

Beth. The other self inflicted barrier identified by Beth was the fact that she limited her mobility to the southwest corner of the province.

I asked Beth what it meant to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession. She said that at first she didn't really notice, but lately she was becoming "sick and tired" of it. She went on: "I mean that's been my career. Because you go to the Social Studies PSA and there's one other woman in the room. You go to the secondary administrators meeting and there's two other women in the room. I mean that was my whole career. So I didn't notice anything moving into the superintendency. It was still the same world and I guess I just said this was the flow but I'm becoming less patient and more angry about it. I don't know if that's a function of age or just having seen it for so much that I'm tired of it."

Beth felt that if there was a balance of gender in the superintendency, the role would change and be redefined. She elaborated: "I really hope more women go into it because I think we need that style of leadership and maybe with more women in it maybe the role of the superintendent will change. . . . maybe if there's a critical mass of women the role can be redefined and maybe it's a different way of working with the board"

When discussing leadership styles, Beth noted that women have a different way of doing business with people. She felt that women understand people and consensus building. Women do a lot more "listening, nurturing, building from strength rather than exposing weakness." Beth went on to express her style. ". . . so you work with who you've got and find the strength as opposed to that sort of adversarial relationship and I think that's a skill women have way more of. Maybe there's just not the whole macho thing that women, even if somebody's in trouble or seemed to be, they are more nurturing and supportive just by the fact that they are women, whether or not they are in fact as a person. I think there's a lot more openness and certainly in dealing with parents. I think parents are really less threatened by a woman principal or a woman in the board office or a woman chairing a meeting or whatever so I think there's a lot more openness with parents."

Beth felt that these skills were "clustered" around woman but was quick to admit that there are some women who do not have these skills.

Beth differentiated between the role of the assistant superintendent and the superintendent. She said that assistant superintendents work with staffs and schools, but must be attuned to the politics of the district. She said that an assistant superintendent can "sort of carve out things that will give you personal reward and satisfaction and there's opportunities to have some fun." The superintendent's role is more of a political one, with the nurturing of trustees, dealing with the press and an eighty hour work week.

Beth's advice to women interested in the superintendency was to get a broad range of experiences. She said: ". . . the wider range you have the better. You can understand the system better. The wider range of things you've had experience in the better - whether it's curriculum at the provincial level or an assessment committee in the schools. It's just you've got a wider understanding of educational issues. I don't think it's anything extraordinary that you have to do but I think it's that broad base of experience."

Beth noted that it may be an advantage to have some secondary administrative experience. "I think it was an advantage to be in secondary because you get a lot more credibility whether that's real or not. . . . I mean I came out of running a couple of tough secondary schools and I didn't have to prove myself in bigger audiences. My reputation had preceded in terms of being able to take on some tough jobs so I wasn't linked to little kids. I was linked to big stuff."

Beth felt a PHD was not necessary, however she said, "Maybe that's the thing now that pops you up out of the crowd. I mean if you're inclined that way I would certainly recommend it if you want to make the investment in time and effort and it will always be a benefit back."

Beth's advice continued. "You better have a clear sense of who you are and what you want to do before you get in and then apply for what you want to do because there's a lot of differentiation at a board office."

As I interviewed Beth I noticed that she placed a value on the wellness aspect of her job. She stressed the need for a balance between work and home and the fact that it was important to have a "few giggles" each day.

As the interview came to a close we discussed common acquaintances, exchanged pleasantries and said good-bye.

Profile 12 - Diana Fox

Superintendent Diana Fox met me in the lobby of the school board office and escorted me to her office. She was cheerful and up-beat and made me feel very welcome and comfortable. After getting a cup of coffee, we settled into Diana's organized, yet warm office. However, taping was difficult in the office and we therefore moved to a seminar room and began the interview.

Diana began her career in another province, as an elementary teacher. She moved on to junior high school where she taught for a couple of years and then moved to B.C. In B.C. Diana took a position of teacher-librarian in a junior high school. Diana then quit teaching and went travelling for a year and a half. Upon returning to Canada, Diana went back to her original district and junior high school and taught in that school for eight years.

During this period of time Diana was also involved in a number of leadership roles in her district. She said: "I was president of the teachers' union in my local area. I was president of the teachers' association or the convention association which had 4,000 teachers and I became an executive after years and years and was president of the program. I was demonstrating lots of leadership in other areas and hadn't really defined my needs in terms of leadership, period. I just knew being a classroom teacher wasn't enough."

Coupled with her leadership roles, Diana went back to university and worked on her Bachelor of Education and a graduate diploma in library.

Diana became interested in a career in administration only after someone had suggested to her that she apply for a vice principalship. This suggestion was the impetus for Diana to set goals and plan a career in school administration. Reflecting on this suggestion, Diana said: ". . . I was doing all these other kinds of leadership things and somebody said to me one day, 'Did you apply for the vice principalship at this other elementary school?' and I said, 'No, why would I?' they said, 'Why wouldn't you? I mean all the things that you do.' It was like a light bulb and I thought, 'Why wouldn't I?'"

Diana went on to seek advice on how to get into administration. "So because of my political affiliations I was in close working proximity with assistant superintendents and superintendents because I was president of the

local union. . . . So I talked to the fellow who was the assistant superintendent for personnel and he was also a friend. I phoned him up and said, 'You know, I've decided that I want to be a principal - what do I do?' he said, 'What do you want to be a principal of?' I said, 'Well I want to be a principal of an elementary school.' I was in a junior high at the time. He said, 'Then get back into an elementary. I can't give you that opportunity because you haven't been in one for long; you've got to move back.'

Diana moved to an elementary school in September and in January of that school year she was asked to be vice principal, due to a health related leave of an administrator. It was a K to 12 school which gave Diana experience at every level.

Diane noted that the mandate for her as the new vice principal was: ". . . What you are to do is to go out and get some community relationships going. We've had a problem out there and we don't care what else you do but go and build some relationships with that community." Diana said this experience was "trial by fire," however she was very successful and "at the end of six months . . . the community actually petitioned to keep me there which was kind of a nice stroke."

Diana was then appointed principal of a small school. She spoke about her feelings at the time. "I had never been so excited in my life. I mean at the same time I was adopting two kids and I got this principalship I spent all summer planning and I had met with the parents. I mean it was just marvellous."

However, Diana only stayed at the school for a year. She became interested in another new school as it was closer to her home. The superintendent asked her to sit on the advisory committee for the new school as students would be in portables until the site was completed and Diana had had experience dealing with portables and concerned parents. Of this experience, Diana said: "The superintendent said to me, 'Would you sit on the advisory committee?' I said, 'You need to know I have a conflict of interest. I'm going after this new school.' He said, 'Sit on the advisory committee, you'll have an edge.'" Diana became principal and stayed at the school for eight years. She spoke fondly of the school, community, staff and students, saying: "Quite frankly, it was the best school in the province."

Diana, after eight years at the school grew tired of her job. "I mean I had sort of done it and I needed new mountains to climb so I talked to my superintendent." After finding that there were no new positions coming up in the district, Diana told him that she would return to the classroom as "once I'm finished with something I need to move on." He told Diana to wait and see what came up.

The district was starting a staff development program and Diana was hired as Supervisor of Teacher Effectiveness. It was a new concept for the district and Diana worked out of the board office, with "30 people, a number of schools and the superintendent." Diana's position was broadened to include curriculum and instruction. She worked in these two roles for three years.

Diana then received a phone call from an old friend, a superintendent, who she had worked with earlier in her career, encouraging her to apply for a board level position in a B.C. school district. Diana said at the time of the phone call she was fed up with the conditions under which she was inservicing, divorced and ready for a change. Diana applied, was short listed and during her interview "played up the curriculum aspect" of her experience and got the job as Director of Curriculum. Two years later the board reorganized and Diana entered the superintendency.

Diana identified a number of individuals and events which helped shape her career. She spoke highly of her mother. "My mother was certainly a part of it. My mother taught me to believe in myself. She taught me - her line is that you can do anything you want to do. All you have to do is decide you want to do it. It's that simple, and you know when I got the job of teacher-librarian out here, I didn't know the Dewy Decimal system from a turnip and I phoned her up and I said, 'I got the job - I don't know what to do.' She said, 'Dear, as I told you, you can do anything you want.' So my mother has always been there for me and always shored up that belief that I'm the best thing in the world."

One of Diana's mentors was a retired superintendent who encouraged her to apply for a principalship and always challenged her. Another mentor was a colleague in her district who encouraged and supported her in a masters program. Of these two mentors Diana said: "[They were] different from me as day and night: very conservative, but saw something in me and I saw something in them that there was a click." Further to these two individuals,

Diana said that she has had a number of people who have been "milestones" in her career.

Diana now mentors others and reflected upon this practise. "I now mentor people, because I've had that kind of role model. I mentor women actually, more than I do men. . . . Right from the time I was principal. I handpicked people and have mentored them and I haven't said to them, 'I'm mentoring you,' but I just do what was done for me. More with females and I'm trying to think if that was even conscious. Probably conscious in the sense that I don't think women value themselves in education so I think from that point of view I do it."

The event that triggered Diana's entry into administration was the suggestion from a colleague that she should apply. Diana said that once that happened it was "like a light bulb. The fact that somebody recognized in me and put the pieces together for me . . . that was the kick start for me."

Once Diana knew that other people "believed I had the skill" she started setting goals.

When I asked Diana why she felt she was hired to the superintendency, she said that she had established credibility. She went on. "We've got all kinds of stuff and they keep telling me wherever they go they hear my name and they've heard nothing bad about me and I think that's got to have some effect when they're looking overall. They really wanted somebody who had strong interpersonal skills, who's in the schools, and that was certainly a mandate and I knew that when I went in. They also wanted someone who could be tough enough to bite the bullet and I demonstrated that very aptly in my career. I talked about what my expectations would be and the kind of follow up I would have with my administrators if they didn't do it. . . . And I think they see me with lots of energy and dynamics and I'm a hard worker and I had a track record."

Diana had applied in her old district for the superintendency and when she did not get the position she became even more determined. She thought, "I'm going after the superintendency and I'll get it. I believe in visualization and I believe that if you believe you're going to do something you do it. You get it. It happens for you."

When I asked Diana if she had experienced any barriers in her career development she thoughtfully told me that she didn't think so. One of Diana's mentors had given her the following advice: "Don't ever assume because you're a woman you can't do things or don't assume that men have that attitude towards you because if you come across that you should have the job because you're a woman, it will create an issue for you."

Diana said that she has an interest in barriers in terms of women's careers, however it is not an issue. She is interested in the sense that "there's obviously some stuff happening out there which I haven't cognitively dealt with because I haven't had to deal with it in my own particular frame of reference, because I'm a bit of a bulldozer. I mean, if I want something I go for it and it doesn't matter if I'm male or female. I go for it."

Diana was able to articulate one barrier that she had experienced. "The only barrier that I can articulate is female trustees. Probably if there's been any barrier in my career advancement it's the women who have sat on the school boards that haven't supported my application. . . . Now I don't know if that's because I was a woman or not but I didn't get the support. . . . I think women are their own worst enemies. I don't think we support and mentor. We tend to do too many chicken fights. So if there's any obstacles I would say my fellow colleagues."

Diana said that although her marriage was not a barrier, her career did become an issue, resulting in a divorce. ". . . as I was moving up, I got my principalship - we were adopting two kids. He stayed home. . . . it was support. Over time it became an issue. In fact, my career broke us up in actual fact because when he met me I was a classroom teacher and then the more I moved up the ladder . . . it had some really interesting repercussions in my marriage, so I suppose it wasn't a barrier for me because I wasn't stopping but it created the problem. His whole ego was wrapped up in it."

Mobility is an issue for Diana, although she did not identify it as a barrier. She said that although she would go to a small district, she is a "city girl" and would need to be close to a major urban center.

When I asked Diana what it meant to be one of the few women in a male dominated profession she said, "I must admit I use it to an advantage. . . . I use my feminine wiles to achieve my goals. Not to be

deceptive but I just know the strategies that work and so I think it makes me smarter because I think we have to cope differently."

Diana elaborated on the number of roles women must maintain. "We have so many roles I think. As a woman, I have so many different roles than the people here. I mean I go home at night and I make supper. I do the laundry. I do all of those things. I just don't go home and put my feet up. . . . I don't have a wife."

Diana said that being a woman has made "going up the ladder tougher." She said, "I think in my other district, for example, I think I may never have been a superintendent there because it was so stereotyped. It wasn't a woman's job to do that."

Commenting on her current position, Diana said, "I felt in coming into this job it was the first time I felt being a woman was a disadvantage. . . . it's not an issue anymore." Diana gave examples of some male school-based administrators who tried to "end run" her and Diana had to bring those individuals back into line. She noted that this was particularly true with some secondary administrators.

Diana's final comment on gender was, ". . . I set my goals but I've never considered being a woman. It's like a play. I've seen it kind of enter the stage here but it's never been the main drama in terms of my job. I guess that would be the best analogy. Being a woman just has not been an obstacle in terms of what I wanted to do, but I think it's part of my own drive. You know, I refuse to let it be an issue"

Diana sees her role as superintendent as "an advocate and a supporter of my administrators." She said that the bottom line in her job is the kids and that it is her role to provide service and to realize the impact decisions have on them. Diana said that a superintendent must be a "visionary and an instructional leader" and she saw herself as having a "vision of where the district is going and I have to keep working and massaging that." To a lesser degree, Diana noted that her role involved the day to day mechanics of managing a school district.

Diana identified her own leadership style as facilitative and collaborative. However, she hesitated to put this style down to gender. She

said: "It's very hard for me to even say that because I have a man that I work with who is much the same as I am and he's as good as I am and we do that together really well." Diana said she does more of the "feminine kinds of things" in her job, such as sending cards, chocolates and flowers to her administrators, however she has influenced the man she is working with and he is now doing very similar things.

Diana had some sound advice for women interested in the superintendency. She advised that you must be "hungry for the job." Diana went on: "I mean you have to be prepared to go for the gusto. Don't let being a woman be an issue because you can create the issue. I don't think it's an issue. I don't think it has to be an issue. . . . I mean if you want it, you just go for it."

When working with others, Diana said to remember, "If you want to move up that ladder you understand that everybody that you work with, that you touch in your day, will be the ones who report back on you, so don't step on any throats. . . . I don't mean acquiesce but you have to treat everybody equal. Probably one of the strengths that I've had in terms of my success is that I've never considered myself better than others. . . . It's just a different role description. So my advice is that know that everybody there that you deal with is evaluating you."

Diana also advised perspective candidates to "be really visible." She went on. "Do lots of things at the district level. Get to be a political person. Don't pretend education isn't political. It's very political and so get out there and if you take on jobs don't join for the sake of joining. Be a worker."

Several times during the interview, Diana identified herself as a life long learner. She said: "I never pretend to have the answers and I'm really, really honest. . . . Don't try and fool people and it's okay to be human. I mean people don't expect you to have all the answers or expect you to be in control."

When working with people, Diana noted the importance of learning to delegate, not oversupervising, and praising and acknowledging people's contributions.

Diana felt that having a family and children at home provide her with a balance between career and home life. She said, "Because I have my kids, I have family so I have some balance so they've been great for me because I'm still a human. I have to be. I have to do it. . . . I mean the guilt button pushes in, you know, and you go and do those things."

As the interview came to a close, Diana spoke of her plans for the future and some of the research that she was interested in. It was an enjoyable interview, for Diana was comfortable and quick to laugh at both herself and situations she had encountered.

Profile 13 - Lori Harris

Due to conflicting schedules and a lack of time, I did not have the opportunity to meet with superintendent Lori Harris. However, we spoke several times over the telephone and Lori wrote lengthy responses to the interview guideline that I sent her.

Lori took an alternate route to the superintendency. She has had neither a vice-principalship or principalship experience. She taught in a regular classroom, and has expertise in the area of special education.

While she was teaching Lori became president of the special education professional organization. Through this association she "had major insights into a variety of administrative styles and began a networking relationship with a variety of agencies and ministries in the community."

Lori's immediate supervisor became sick and she was asked to step in as Assistant Coordinator of Special Education. This was Lori's first administrative role and her success in the role enabled her to apply for the position upon the supervisor's retirement. The position was given the status of director which eventually evolved into her current position. Lori also has her masters degree.

Lori stated that the stages of her career happened naturally in terms of the opportunity to apply. However, she noted that encouragement from district staff was critical and said: "I doubt that I would have applied on my own." She felt that her "wide range of experience and knowledge in all areas of special education was the critical factor in prompting board office staff to encourage me to apply for a district position."

Lori identified some very personal career impacts. She expressed a strong belief "that to be an effective leader in today's world, difficult personal experiences can provide the foundation for understanding and empathy needed to meet the needs of those less fortunate or at risk." Leaving a bad marriage was a turning point for Lori. "Certainly a belief in myself and my ability to make a difference in my life, in my children's lives, and in the lives of other people gave me the strength to leave a very bad marriage and to meet new challenges head on. I consider that decision to leave to be the turning point in

my life and went on to set goals for myself which included my fifth year and my masters program."

Lori felt that she was hired to the superintendency because of her commitment in special needs. "I was hired because of my knowledge and experience in special education, as well as my networking within the community and I think because of my stamina. They discovered I was tougher than I looked."

Lori identified several barriers which she has had to face. Lori was seen in her district as a people person - "one who worked well with students, parents and teachers" and therefore thought it was difficult for some people to see her in a management position.

Her lack of school-based administration was also occasionally viewed as a barrier. Lori noted: "Because I do not have school-based management, principals and vice-principals, in a few cases only, have a difficult time with my role. I doubt that a man in this position would encounter the same reaction, given that males with one year of teaching experience have been given principalships."

Lori stated that gender can be an obstruction and that often "women have to be twice as good to be noticed and to survive." She added: "The usual politicking at the bar with the 'guys' is touchy, particularly in a small town."

Lori believes that a balance in the superintendency is critical and will continue to push for more women in leadership roles. She elaborated on the issue of gender and the role of women in society. "I believe that women, as men, should have every opportunity to be whatever they want to be - including a stay at home parent if that is their desire. Many men now voice that opinion. I believe that only a few live that opinion comfortably."

Lori's last point on the issue of gender was that often women are their own worst enemies.

When Lori was asked what it meant to her to be one of the few women in a male-dominated profession, she responded that women work harder than men and that men still "want to hear the 'real' answer from a man." Lori

went on to identify a positive side to working with men. "The benefits of working with men are numerous . . . I value the male perspective and watch with great interest the manner in which problems are approached."

Speaking of her own leadership style, Lori said: "As a woman, my ability to work with people in a collaborative way is certainly significant. My goal is leadership for kids and not personal power."

Lori identified the superintendency as a political role, where one "works with the board, ministry, teachers, parents and business community to create a vision backed by policy and practise to produce the best service possible for kids." She felt her job was to "work with all stakeholders to make the vision a reality."

Lori was able to share a number of points of advice for women interested in the superintendency. She recommended the following: "Set your goals early and follow them. Know what you believe in and why you think you should be a leader. Ponder your personal and family goals carefully and understand the trade-offs. Develop personal support systems, including men and women. Focus on developing networks with women. Work on the qualification requirements and seek excellence in everything you do. Be true to yourself."