Career Paths of Female Assistant Superintendents in Manitoba

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Introduction

The number of women in educational leadership positions has increasingly grown over the last few decades. However, there still are discrepancies between the number of women in education and the number of women represented in educational leadership. The most blatant discrepancy is the under representation of women in the Superintendency. To illustrate this point, Charol Shakeshaft, in the Handbook of Educational Administration: the Struggle to Create a More Gender-Inclusive Profession (1999), traces the path of women in educational administration. She examines: “the representation of women in school administration and the struggle to expand the profession both through increases in the numbers of women and through conceptualizing administration in ways that are inclusive of gendered experience and perception” (p.99). Boards and those individuals hired by boards to run educational organizations, consciously and unconsciously, hire individuals like themselves in educational leadership positions.

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

The purposes of the study were to: (a) to determine whether the experiences of female assistant superintendents in Manitoba are comparable to the findings in other studies on women in educational leadership positions; (b) to provide opportunities for females assistant superintendents to offer their understanding of barriers and challenges they have encountered during their career path; and (c) to provide insight into the mentorship experiences and support they have received during their career. I did this by interviewing three assistant superintendents in Manitoba and then I will discuss and synthesize the conversations that occur.

**Conceptual Framework**

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

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

Women’s transition into educational leadership positions is very conflicted and slow
especially given the systematic barriers that have long nurtured their roots in the system.
Moving away from systematic and cultural boundaries that have prevailed for years is not
something that will happen without some serious reservations on the part of many.

Studies support that the lack of social justice for women in nothing new. For example, The 2000 Study of the American Superintendent, published by the American 
Association of School Administrators, and a study by Cryss Brunner and Margaret 
Grogan presented at the AASA 2005 conference, has shown that the percentage of
women increased to approximately 12% in the late 1990s, between 13 and 14 percent by
2003, and an estimated 18 percent in 2005. The irony of this research is that professors in
administrator preparation programs continually comment about a strong majority of their
students being women. Furthermore, educational certification agencies report that the
majority of those licensed for educational leadership positions are women (Dana &
Bourisaw, 2006; Brunner, Grogan & Kim, 2005). Obviously, there is no shortage of
women who are formally preparing themselves for leadership positions. However, despite
their hard work and preparation it is apparent that they are not getting the opportunities to
develop their skills and training in leadership positions.

Women who do end up acquiring educational leadership positions usually have
the odds stacked against them from the beginning. The leadership jobs they get often
come with less prestige and less money. These jobs are usually in smaller, rural districts
or urban districts where failure has permeated the culture (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). These aspects make it difficult on their leaders. For example, in smaller districts the job is often very diverse and the leader must function in very diverse roles. Furthermore, it is more personal and the first time the leader says “no” or does not agree with some ideas it becomes problematic for their relationships and their jobs. In urban areas it is very difficult to change things around in areas with significant problems and failures. Being the primary change agent is not always welcome. Stepping into these situations is not easy for anybody, especially a woman who already has cultural and societal odds stacked against you. Women are also less likely to negotiate for salaries and benefits. Women themselves will often feel “lucky” that they have secured the job and don’t want to rock the boat. Young (2005) in her article *Shifting Away from Women’s Issues in Educational Leadership in the US: Evidence of a Backlash?* notes that “although women tend to have somewhat higher levels of professional preparation than their male counterparts and an average of ten more years of experience they are often paid less” (p. 34). Despite our best efforts and intentions we are not really seen as competition in educational leadership.

Women definitely have their work cut out for them when they aspire to leadership positions. Burke and Karambayya (2004) in their chapter *Women in Management in Canada* describe some of the hurdles women face in aspiring to management positions. They state that:

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

Once they acquire the position there are considerable variables that cause stress on the women in those positions.

Women wanting to enter into educational leadership positions are now being faced with another factor to the dilemma. Young (2005) in her article *Shifting Away from Women’s Issues in Educational Leadership in the US: Evidence of a Backlash?* discusses the notion of a backlash to women’s issues. Young notes that most of the advancements in women’s issues took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Efforts were made to understand the gender gap in educational leadership. However, towards the turn of the century interest in women’s issues began to fade. There started to become more of an interest in men’s issues. But, statistics tells us that after graduation women are still more likely then men to have lower status and lower paying jobs. Thus, the issues faced by men do not impact on their future success and status. Young, in her article, points out that “backlashs occur when advances have been small, before changes are sufficient to help many people” (p. 35). The backlash is another barrier that women are currently facing when striving to attain leadership positions in educational administration.

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

The moral imperative is pursued further in Dana and Bourisaw’s (2006) article *Overlooked Leaders*. They too believe that the issue is one of social justice. They feel that board members have a responsibility to recognize policies and practices that are gender biased. They feel that there are steps that boards can take to ensure social equity. These include things such as establishing parameters with search firms to include full disclosure of information. If they do their own search they need to include candidates with diversity to the pool. Once an offer is made and accepted boards need to actively sponsor leadership. Finally, positive support within the community is a professional attitude for boards to ensure a successful experience for all stakeholders.

In Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivist theory it is his estimation that “it is not the consciousness of men that determine their being; on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness” (p. 19). Critical theorists extend this and center it directly on social action. Structures that constrain individual and group opportunity are reproduced from socially constructed oppressive norms. Both consciously and unconsciously those oppressed engage in their own victimization through the routinization of these social structures (Wallin & Crippen, 2008).

The number of women in educational leadership positions has increasingly grown over the last few decades. However, there still are discrepancies between the number of women in education and the number of women represented in educational leadership.
The participants in the study were asked to elaborate on their career paths, barriers and challenges and mentorship experiences in a dialogue to represent women in educational leadership.

**Methodology**

The study took place from September 2008 to December 2008. Three female assistant superintendents in Manitoba were interviewed to collect data on their career paths, perceived barriers and challenges, and their mentorship experiences and support systems. Each participant was contacted by email to see if they would participate in the study. The study used purposeful sampling: participants were chosen because of past associations with me, though none have been in a direct supervisory role. The participants were given the list of questions through email. Once they consented to the interview a time and place was arranged through email that was convenient for both the participant and me. The interviews were an hour in duration. Each interview was taped and then transcribed. The participants were sent the transcript and had the opportunity to make any changes they wanted to the transcript. The pseudonyms participant 1, 2 & 3 are used to protect confidentiality. The data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative research guidelines. Reductive analysis (the identifying, coding and categorizing of data into meaningful units) was used to identify themes and patterns in the data.

**Findings**

*Career Path*

The participants all started their careers in the early years. Eventually all three participants went into resource and one also spent some time counseling in schools. One
also trained in reading recovery. Two of the three participants were Student Services Coordinators and one ventured to the University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine to work as a Faculty Developer. She states that:

It was an amazing experience working with doctors. It really solidified what I believe and why I believe what I believe because my role was to help doctors become better teachers so you were having conversations with doctors about why they are teaching what they are teaching or how they are teaching what they are teaching.

Today all three are Assistant Superintendents. One is the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, one is the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and one holds the title of Assistant Superintendent and holds both portfolios. They are all Assistant Superintendents in rural divisions.

All three of the participants took career breaks. One went to Quebec to pursue her degree in second language instruction. The other two spent a few years at home when their children were very young. Two out of the three participants are bilingual.

The three participants all credit professional development and learning as an integral part of their career development. They have all pursued further education beyond their Bachelor of Education despite their hectic lives and numerous commitments. One participant is currently working on her PhD. Some interesting comments from the participants include “I would take University courses to understand the theory, so that I could understand what it was I was seeing, so that was very helpful for me”. Another participant shared about her evening course and alluded to the unique experience and commitment of women who attempt to balance career preparation and motherhood:
I was an hour out of Winnipeg, and it was sometimes 25 or 30 below zero, and I was pregnant and remember thinking what if something happens to the vehicle, and I didn’t have a cell phone at that time, nobody did, so I sometimes wonder how the heck I did it.

Two out of the three participants believe that they did not actively pursue the Assistant Superintendency. They felt more like it was something that evolved and came into their lives through a series of steps and progressions. One participant was very honest when she cited a past experience that:

The Assistant Superintendent of Student Services was retiring, so they were advertising her job. I guess nobody had applied for the job, and they said to me well you should apply for the job, and I said well I don’t really know if I want to apply for this job, and then the superintendent at the time said I think you should be applying for this job, and I said well I don’t really know if I want to apply for this job, and then they started making me feel guilty that there was going to be cuts at the elementary school, so if somebody went to the division then everybody would have a job, like nothing like being in a small town. Then they made the job sound like something that it wasn’t, they all fooled me hey. I did kind of feel like I was coerced into it, but once I got there I enjoyed it.

All three women comment on how much they enjoy their job as Assistant Superintendent. They have all found their ways to the position in various circuitous and interesting paths.
Barriers

The second question asked the participants to describe any barriers or challenges they have faced during their career path. Some of the participants comment on working with difficult people throughout their careers. They have definitely learned a lot about people through these experiences. One participant comments on a Superintendent that she once worked with who was always creating controversy by saying that:

To be in an environment with so much drama was draining. Although I’m glad I had the experience with her cause I found out later that she wasn’t the worst superintendent that I have worked with, she at least had vision and a belief.

Later in her career she works in an environment where:

Differences in values and beliefs were real barriers and integrity, I worked with people with values and beliefs that were different than mine, so things that I felt were unethical were happening and that was difficult.

Another participant shares similar viewpoints when she had some challenges with people with whom she worked. In one situation she was the successful candidate for a position where the incumbent had already formed some strong relationships. When she secured the position it was difficult because:

He wouldn’t share the information and others would say well you got the job you do it, you had a real opportunity to hone your conflict skills, your skills of working with people who really didn’t want to work with you.

Later in her career she had another critical moment with the superintendent of her division. She was late for a meeting, where the superintendent had introduced her before
she arrived, because she had to deal with a volatile parent and when she went to speak to him his response was:

You will never be late for one of my meetings again, and he didn’t want to hear why I was late, he didn’t want to hear what the situation was, it was all about him and his meetings, and at that point I thought I don’t know if I want to work for you or with you, I’m not really sure this is a good place for me to be, you know if you are not all about service to kids, and if you don’t trust me enough that I’m doing what I need to be doing.

The two participants recognize the precariousness of working with people who see things from a different vantage point whether it is consciously or unconsciously.

Two of the participants recognize a barrier in that opportunities did not always present themselves easily. One participant shares some profound details related to obvious gender discrimination when she talks of the processes involved in the amalgamation of school divisions of which hers was one. Each division had a Student Services Coordinator. One was male who had the title of Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and the two females had the title of Student Services Coordinators. When the amalgamation took place the male was promoted immediately to the job of Assistant Superintendent. The two women had to apply for their jobs and go through an interview process. Both females applied for the other Assistant Superintendent job and the Student Services Coordinator job. My participant was given the Student Services Coordinator job and the other lady who she thought would have excelled at the Assistant Superintendent job did not get it. They gave it to someone who they hired from far away sight unseen. She was very disgusted with the whole process. She says:
It seemed like many years were rotten, I guess in that it was the boys club, and you kind of had a view of it and thought like no you can’t be doing that, but who do you go to about that, so there was a lot of that, in my mind I think it was a lot but it was in my face.

Additionally, as time went on she noticed some interesting things. For example:

You would do a board meeting, and your report would be more thorough then the Superintendents and all of a sudden you weren’t invited to the board meetings anymore, because you knew more about what was going on then the Superintendent, but it was the nature of the job because you were in the schools. All of a sudden there was written reports so you kind of felt like you were being separated you know what I mean. In order to have a relationship with the board members so that you know each other, that part was a bit of a barrier, and my own naivety in that kind of thinking in that it doesn’t really matter, I don’t think I realized the importance of networking and relationships if you were wanting to go up the ladder so to speak.

The participant became quite aware that there were some barriers along the way that occur for some but not for others. Additionally, she knows what it feels like to not be part of the boys club and to have her role minimized, and to be deliberately excluded from the professional networking that is key to the role.

Another participant also expresses some frustration about being overlooked for professional opportunities. This participant worked very hard to develop herself both academically and professionally to obtain leadership positions. When she met with her superintendents to talk about professional growth their response was:
Typically I would suggest you do this, but you’ve done it, or typically we would suggest you do this, but you’ve done it, so okay then what is getting in my way, I’ve done this, this, and this, why aren’t I getting the positions that I feel I should be getting?

It is easy to see that being well qualified for a position does not always guarantee you the position. This same participant is politically astute and well educated and has a strong sense of gender bias in the opportunities that exist for women by virtue of different divisions. For example, a good friend of hers who is a trustee in a city division asked her:

We had an assistant superintendent position open, why didn’t you apply?

and I said well why would I, I’m female I’m not going to get the job, they are going to hire a male, and she says well how do you know that? I said look at what’s happening.

This participant is well versed through both professional and personal relationships and committees of the political tide for opportunities, especially where it involves the status of women in the profession.

Work Challenges

The challenge of amalgamation came out during the interviews. Amalgamation was a significant change and had a large impact on many divisions and all stakeholders in Manitoba. It was a very unnerving experience for many people in Manitoba and all parties involved had to be sensitive to the needs and worries of many. Besides the gender discrimination in the competition for positions mentioned earlier, one participant spoke of the general difficulties in working through amalgamation issues:

People were upset with the amalgamation; all three school divisions felt that
what they did they did best, so you had to work a lot at relationships and developing relationships, and even with that people were so entrenched in this is how we do things here, so they weren’t even interested in developing a relationship so it took a lot of work and time and effort to do that.

The amalgamation required a huge adjustment and lots of effort from many people. It was a difficult time for many people, and many people were affected in Manitoba.

In addition to the amalgamation, the participants of these smaller divisions have larger and broader portfolios given the smaller economies of scale and personnel to do the job. A participant notes that:

I love getting teachers together because when I hear the professional dialogue around the table, that charges me cause I don’t have the answers, I mean you can’t be an expert at everything when you have this kind of job. I have my finger in everything so you can’t excel at one thing. One of my weaknesses is that I don’t have any experience in high schools, so it is harder for me cause I don’t have anything to fall back on, so that might be a bit of a barrier for me.

The broader the portfolio, naturally the tougher it is to be on top of everything. Assistant Superintendents with broad portfolios must rely a lot on their relationships with veteran teachers and those in the field to advise them.

Critiquing and functioning in the political scene of the position is challenging for new Assistant Superintendents. Learning how a board functions and the roles and responsibilities of board members and senior administration is an ongoing process in human relations. One participant mentions that:

It was difficult understanding the system, the dynamics of the politics and the
relationships, because it's layered, and it's just getting down to the core, but understanding all those layers.

Stepping into this position entails a huge learning curve. I believe it’s a curve that is ongoing no matter how experienced one is.

The relationship between the position titles of Assistant Superintendent of Student Services versus Student Services Coordinator provokes some thought. One participant found a difference in how seriously she was taken under a different title. She shares with me that:

I can go to a school and talk to a principal and because it's an Assistant Superintendent talking to a principal, then I’m taken a little more seriously then I was as a coordinator.

Unfortunately for some people it’s the title that makes them move on an issue versus perhaps just doing the right thing.

Another interesting point that came up through the discussion on barriers and challenges is the whole notion of “fit.” Things like do I work in an environment that fits with my value, beliefs, career aspirations etc? Am I working with people with whom I feel connected? Do I see myself here long term or is this a temporary part of my life.

Different participants talked about the whole notion of “fit” and knowing when it's time to move on to new adventures and challenges. One participant highlights:

I think at some point you realize that where you are doesn’t fit with who you are.

There is this one quote from the book of Flow The Psychology of Optimal Experience where he talks about where roles don’t fit where you currently are
then every person needs to find a way to find their place is sort of the essence of it all.

We all need to feel challenged and excited about what we do and how we spend our time. If not then it is time to move on and pursue new opportunities and take well thought out and calculated risks for growth.

Mentorship Experiences

All three participants talked about professional organizations, associations and committees when discussing mentorship. Their growth and learning revolves around the different groups with which they affiliate themselves. Some examples include Student Services Groups, Superintendents groups, Manitoba Teachers Society and social justice groups. One participant talks about her Student Services Group by saying that:

There were people with various experiences and you could be very forthright and talk about what was happening and they would help you out with that, especially for my first years when I didn’t know what my job was, they would tell me what my job was, you need to do this, this and this. Without the group it would have been quite difficult. The group was just a phone call away and you could phone them at any time.

The people that they meet and converse with through their different associations provide a wealth of knowledge and mentorship opportunities that help them grow professionally. Some divisions and Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) also provide formal mentorship programs. Some of the participants appreciate these opportunities, while some of the participants did not see this as very valuable and would seek out their own personal mentors of choice.
All three of the participants found individual mentors to help them grow. One participant talks about the former Student Services Coordinator and having her as a mentor. Another participant sought out a MASS member. Each credits a past or present Superintendent for a mentorship experience. The women acknowledge the importance of positive mentorship experiences for their career development. They have accessed mentors who are both female and male in order to grow professionally. However, one participant did say that she is more likely to seek out female mentors because it is a different relationship.

The qualities that participants admire most in their mentors include things such as unconditional and non-judgemental listening. Mentors must be open to having conversations with them, giving advice, perspective and learning from their experiences. One participants mentor has fabulous “soft” skills, such as he is good with people, can edify anyone and brings out the best in people. A willingness to learn new things and a commitment to life long learning is cited as important.

The leadership styles of the participant’s mentors include things such as being democratic, logical and sequential; and open to process and not just content. One participant mentions servant leadership. She states that:

When you are in that kind of position there are some people who get carried away with the power, they love the power, and if you can find someone who loves working with the people and is not there for the power, and that’s what I find with the current Superintendent that I work with, he is a servant leader.
All participants have a high regard for mentors who put people first. Some participants also mentioned mentors who can admit when they are wrong and open to learning new things.

**Support Systems**

The participants see supports in the professional and personal groups with whom they affiliate. The mentors that they identify also support them. A third support for them is their friends and family. All three women have children and over the years have relied on a spouse or family to help them meet the responsibilities at home. One participant still would like to pursue more involvement in the Superintendents’s group as she has just started accessing this resource.

**Discussion**

Seven topics of talk settled out of tracing the career paths of Assistant Superintendents in Manitoba: (a) gender based systematic barriers; (b) ghetoization of female Assistant Superintendents; (c) supportive leadership roles; (d) education; (e) women mentoring women; (f) the second shift; (g) relationships.

**Gender Based Systemic Barriers**

The first topic of talk based on career paths of female superintendents was illustrated by gender based systematic barriers. One participant talks about the “boys club” and having it continually in her face for many years. She saw other men walk into Assistant Superintendent jobs both known and completely unknown to the division, while the women needed to reapply for their previous jobs before amalgamation and not all of them kept their positions. Some of them were replaced by men, strangers at that. Plus she
sensed a lack of integrity in the male leadership, evidenced by side deals and negotiations. She felt shut out from building relationships with the board by not being invited back to board meetings after she had given a report which was better than the Superintendent’s report. Today she does the same job in a different division with an Assistant Superintendent title attached to the Student Services and makes forty thousand dollars a year more, which again speaks to the pay discrepancies that are based on title, as well as opportunities granted to women (coordinator) versus men (assistant superintendent), even if the work is similar.

A second participant felt the lack of opportunities as well. She too remembers an incident where she was verbally degraded by a male Superintendent over something completely meaningless. She left education for a short time to pursue leadership opportunities in the healthcare field. Today, she works in a division that she likes. She is forthright in analyzing that she will not apply for her same position in certain divisions because she is female and she recognizes that she will not be hired.

_Ghettoization of Female Assistant Superintendent_

A second topic of talk from tracing female Assistant Superintendent’s career paths occurred over the ghetoization of their career paths. All three participants climbed the career latter with a significant amount of time spent in student services. Student services is primarily female dominated as there are not many men interested. Thus it is often not held to the same status as male dominated positions. Today one is an Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, one is the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and the third oversees both.
Another form of ghettoization if that all three females are Assistant Superintendent’s in rural divisions. Rural divisions do not have the same status and prestige as metropolitan divisions, nor do they have the same wages. Additionally, the workload is normally larger as it is much broader and they have to facilitate and oversee more things.

Supportive Leadership Roles

The third topic of talk is the supportive leadership role of each of the three participants. All three are in supportive leadership positions to the Superintendent who is in all three cases male. The three female Assistant Superintendents have not had the benefit of being mentored by a female Superintendent as there are hardly any in Manitoba. The women in Manitoba in leadership role are primarily in supportive leadership roles as the Assistant Superintendent. I am eager to see if any of these women will have the opportunity to be Superintendent before their careers end.

Education

The fourth topic of talk is the advancement of education beyond a Bachelor of Education. Each of the three participants has advanced and taken more courses in addition to their Bachelor of Education. One is even working on her Phd. at present. If we looked closer at paper credentials I would bet that we see a lot of the females in leadership roles in Manitoba having more education than their male counterparts.

Women Mentoring Women

The fifth topic of talk is women mentoring women. All participants have cited mentors who have been both female and male. Each has stressed the value and appreciation of their mentorship experiences. However, two of the participants leaned
towards seeking out and finding other female mentors. One goes so far as to point out that the relationship between her and male versus female mentors is different. Often through the process of mentorship women become friends and share many laughs and many tears together. Unfortunately, these women have not benefited from having a female Superintendent mentor. Perhaps there is still hope that this will happen at some point in their career path.

*The Second Shift*

The sixth topic of talk is the second shift of all three participants. Each of the three Assistant Superintendents has children. Some of the participants took time away from their careers to stay at home with their children. Some went to great lengths and sacrifice to reach their goals like driving home in the dark in the middle of winter at the latter stages of their pregnancy. They have all had the responsibility of working hard to climb the career ladder while maintaining a family as the primary caregiver with the support of others. There are many women in Manitoba shouldering the same kind of responsibilities. Women’s work does not end at the end of the work day, but exceeds far into the night.

*Relationships*

The seventh topic of talk revolves around relationships. All three participants talked about relationships in their dialogue. Networking with people and building relationships with their colleagues is essential to the success of their positions. What one participant called as the “fit” dictates a lot about what opportunities might present? All three recognize the importance of relationships especially when it comes time to explore change and different ways of doing things. Relationships are the foundation upon which
we build steps to the bigger picture. Especially in smaller divisions where portfolios are so vast, maintaining relationships with key people in different areas of expertise help facilitate growth at a much more evolved pace.

**Conclusion**

The number of women in educational leadership positions has increasingly grown over the last few decades. However, there still are discrepancies between the number of women in education and the number of women represented in educational leadership. The most blatant discrepancy is the under representation of women in the Superintendency. The study focused on determining whether the experiences of female Assistant Superintendents in Manitoba are comparable to the findings in other studies on women in educational leadership positions; provided opportunities for female Assistant Superintendents to offer their understanding of barriers and challenges they have encountered during their career path; and provided insight into the mentorship experiences and support they have received during their career.

The study found that there were similarities between the participants and the findings of other studies on women in educational leadership. The participant’s career paths included student services and some career breaks for personal and professional reasons. Some of the participants found barriers when discussing their career paths and opportunities. The “second shift” was a notable part if each of their lives. Education and mentorship experiences were an important part of their career development and growth. They all have their own support systems in place which allow them to have successful and fulfilling careers. I look forward to following their career paths until their retirement.
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