The Experiences and Contributions of the First Female Academics in Programs of Educational Administration in Canada

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The contributions that women make to institutional practices in higher education, and/or to their areas of discipline expertise, have long been debated. Of the current literature relating to women faculty members, the two areas that are of particular concern to this study detail institutional responses and/or resistance to women’s participation within the institution and their contributions to knowledge production (Anderson, & Williams, 2001; Brooks, & Mackinnon, 2001; May, 2008; Pierce, 2007; Quinn, 2003; Reimer, 2004; Sagaria, 2007; Superson & Cudd, 2002; Thorne, 2005), sometimes known as the “chilly climate” (Hannah, & Vethamany-Globus, 2002; The Chilly Collective, 1995). Most of this literature attends to the experiences of women in faculties where women have traditionally been underrepresented: Science and Engineering (Burek & Higgs, 2007; Essien, 1997; Ingram, 2005; Manitoba Education Review Commission, 1995); Economics (Stewart, Malley, & LaVaque-Manty, 2007), Archaeology (Spector, 2007), Management (Hornby & Shaw, 1996), History (Kealey, 1990) and Mathematics (Megaw & Rogers, 1998). However, there has been growth in the literature that includes faculties in which women have been more highly represented, such as Sociology (Pierce, 2007), the Humanities (Rosenberg, 2006), Social Work (DiPalma, 1995), Home Economics (Nerad, 1999) and Women’s Studies (AUCC, 1976; Davis, 2007; Robbins, Eichler, Luxton, & Descarries, 2008).

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This study contributes to this literature by drawing parallels and contrasts within Faculties of Education and, in particular, programs in Educational Administration. Given the fact that (a) Education is one of the areas in which the entry of women in academe was first realized; (b) Faculties of Education are now often staffed by more women than men; and (c) the discipline of Educational Administration often details the foundations of organizational analysis and history, and often is the pool from which faculty administration and leadership is drawn, we believe that it is important to examine the ways in which the introduction of women in the discipline contributed to the development of institutional practices and knowledge construction.

We also believe, given the growing literature and research on the experiences of women in administrative positions in higher education (David & Woodward, 1997; Eggins, 1997; Glazer-Raymo, Townsend, & Ropers-Huliman, 2000; Kearney, 2000; Miville & Constantine, 2007; Wenninger & Conroy, 2001) and the educational research on the experiences of women educational administrators in the public school system (Collard & Reynolds, 2004; Gill, 1994; Reynolds, 2002; Wallace, 1998; Wallin, 2005; Wallin & Crippen, 2007), including some work on the history of women’s roles in these positions (Danylewycz, & Prentice, 1986; Reynolds, 2001; Wallace, 2004, 2005) and life history research (Young, 1992; Coulter & Harper, 2005), that there is a significant contribution to be made by examining the professional contributions of, and institutional responses to, the women whose disciplinary expertise in Faculties of Education was Educational Administration. Thus, the objectives of our study are to situate, contextualize, and analyze the interplay between: a) the lived experiences of some of the first women academics whose disciplinary expertise was/is Educational Administration; b) the trans/formation of institutional practices in those Faculties of Education where these women were/are employed; and c) the re/construction of knowledge of the discipline of Educational Administration.

**Research Methodology**
Because the standpoints revealed in these women’s conceptualization of the interplay between their personal lives and the institutions in which they worked is of primary
importance, this research uses Dorothy Smith’s (1987; 2005) work on institutional ethnography combined with life history research (Behar, 1990; Chase, 1995; Middleton, 1993) as its research methodology. Such a study is valuable because, as Young (1994) points out, “If we are building our knowledge base, in some respects, about women’s viewpoints and experiences, we still know very little about the links between those experiences and the policies and politics of various legislative and organizational contexts” (p. 363). Institutional ethnography examines texts and conversations to gain evidence of the self-organizing activities of groups and is informed by ethnomethodology, which focuses not only on the overt text of the conversation (what is said), but also on what is not said, in the silences and the omissions that exist. As Smith (2005) suggests, power is not located in the texts themselves; instead, it is exercised through text by those who rule.

We used life history research to complement institutional ethnography (Smith, 1987) because of the temporal period under examination. Conversational interviews as well as focus groups provided an opportunity individually and collectively for the participants to share their life experiences, both personal and professional, during the time of their careers as the first female faculty members in programs of Educational Administration in Canada. It was our view that, given the career stage of each participant, which has provided time, tenure, experience, retirement, and distance, these women had the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and solidify sophisticated standpoints. Such conversations offer a rich tapestry from which to study the “ruptures” between lived experiences, knowledge production, and institutional practice.

**Research Methods**

Based on our methodological premises, we have conducted personal interviews with 10 participants across Canada – two in British Columbia, two in Alberta, one in Saskatchewan, two in Ontario, two in Quebec, and one in New Brunswick – who are representative of the first female academics in Educational Administration programs. We have followed those individual interviews with a focus group in Spring 2011 in order to discuss their experiences, and to ensure that our emergent analysis is representative of
the richness of their life histories. We plan a second focus group in early December 2011 to further develop our analysis with the participants. We have chosen this layered approach to data collection not only to provide rich description, and an opportunity for co-construction of knowledge, but also to heed Smith’s warning that researchers may ascribe personal characteristics to experiences that were institutionally/socially constructed. All of the interviews and focus groups have been audio and videotaped for the purposes of data collection and also creating a DVD during the last stage of the project that will become both an historical research document and a teaching resource.

The personal interviews explored the participants’ individual experiences, both personal and professional, at different points of their faculty careers: (a) before graduate school; (b) during their graduate work; (c) securing their position as the first female faculty member in their respective departments; (d) the time between securing the position but before tenure; (e) the time after tenure but before thoughts of retirement; (f) nearing retirement; and, if applicable, (g) after retirement. We chose these periods because they represent particular points of time where the individual’s engagement with institutional practice and knowledge construction are likely to shift. We then brought the participants together to speak to the same time periods. Our purpose was to study the extent to which people’s experiences may have been socially constructed as they commented upon their collective experience as faculty members who had relationships and engagements over time with each other and/or with national research and scholarship, which included involvement with the Canadian Association of the Study of Educational Administration (CASEA), the Canadian Association of Studies on Women and Education (CASWE), publication in journals such as the Canadian Journal of Education, the Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations, the Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Educational Administration Quarterly, and accessing research grants from Canadian funding agencies such as Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The purpose of each focus group is to learn about the nuances of practice within and across institutions that may not have been apparent in personal interviews.
In addition to the personal interviews and focus groups, we have collected documents that represent the knowledge base promoted in Educational Administration as published in Canadian journals or written by Canadian authors with a focus on Educational Administration content, such as the Canadian Journal of Education, the Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations, the Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Educational Administration Quarterly, Education, Management and Leadership, etc. In the final phase of the study we will also be collecting data on the growth and development of the institutional practices found in these programs of Educational Administration, based on forms, reports, data bases, policies, websites, and so on. For these documents we will access institutional archival information housed in libraries, access publicly accessible materials related to programs of Educational Administration, and request materials from Faculties of Education.

We are using a multi-sited institutional ethnographic method to analyze the interviews, focus group, and document data as we explore how “ways of making meaning connect people as they circulate ‘across time and space’” (Hall, 2004, cited in Bogdan & Knopp-Biklen, 2007, p. 76). We are using this method of analysis because, in the attempt to look for the ruptures between lived experience, knowledge construction, and institutional practices, we are interested in “how meanings get taken up, shift, and circulate across different situations” (Bogdan & Knopp-Biklen, 2007, p. 76). Following our initial analysis of the personal interviews and first focus group, we will bring the group together in early December, 2011 for a second focus group during which we will provide a preliminary synopsis of our findings in order to verify and confirm our suppositions, and to ask further questions for clarification as we become more sophisticated in our understandings of these women’s experiences and the power/knowledge constructions embedded within the texts we have examined.

While we are in the midst of data analysis and do not wish to pre-judge the data prior to the second focus group scheduled for early December, based on our current analysis, some preliminary themes have been identified. In the remainder of the paper, we will explore some emergent themes that will guide further analysis.
Emergent Themes

Careers

Non-traditional career paths to academia

Early in our analysis, the divergent career paths that these women took were very evident. For example, while many of their male colleagues had followed a traditional path from teacher to school principal and sometimes to school board administrator prior to pursuing a doctoral degree and becoming a faculty member in Educational Administration, these women came to their scholarly work from divergent career locations, and none from hierarchical line positions in school board administration. For example, although nine of the ten participants were teachers at some point in their careers, four went directly from teaching in a Canadian school system into graduate studies, two worked in international settings prior to graduate studies, two were music consultants, one worked in post secondary administration, and one worked in the post-secondary and non-profit sector prior to graduate studies. Of the ten women, two had immigrated to Canada to pursue a teaching career prior to graduate studies, and eight were born in Canada. Six of the ten women have children, which required “breaks” in their career paths and most waited to pursue graduate studies until their children were in school or grown, although one had her children while doing her doctoral studies and another while beginning her graduate work.

Institutional “fit”

At the time that these women entered graduate studies in educational administration, their presence was an anomaly in that there were almost no female professors of educational administration and very few women in administrative positions in schools. However, the gender equity policy environment was changing in Canada by the mid-1980s, which was also the time period in which most of these women were entering their graduate programs. While the formal policy language was changing, the lived experience of women in practicing or studying about educational administration had improved only slightly. These women embodied “difference” in educational administration and the highly contested discourse of equity across Canada (Wallace, 2004). Thus, their institutional “fit” was often less than comfortable. In many cases, however, they entered the study of educational administration by default or because it
was the closest discipline to their academic interest. For example, one participant’s department was closed during her doctoral studies and one of her choices was to transfer to educational administration. Two other participants did a graduate degree in Music and through various circumstances, took on administrative and consulting work, which led to an interest in administrative studies. In some cases, as one participant stated, entering educational administration was “serendipitous” and in only one case was it with the intention of taking on an academic position.

**Agents of change**

While their entry into academia was, in most cases, serendipitous, in the sense that it was not a planned career path, the women in this study were clearly agentic in their pursuit and enactment of an academic career. This was a point that was made by the participants at the focus group as well. Although the issue of fit, as described above, created some tensions and resistances, they used political acumen, positions of privilege, and “chutzpa” to make their place within the academy. One participant described that initial step into the male-dominated waters of a large department of educational administration:

…but at some point, for some reason, I said to (a senior prof in the department), “I think I’m just going to put my name in to signal my intentions”. And literally that’s all I was doing. But I guess I’d begun to think….I was really thinking in terms of an academic, well, academic employment. I wouldn’t even see a career at that point.

Having taken that first step, participants found a way to “just get on with it” despite varied degrees of sexist behaviour. One participant recalled an incident of sexist behaviour and described her response: “One of my male colleagues made a ‘cute’ comment out in the hallway when there were people around. I dealt with that [snaps fingers], everybody laughed, we moved on.” There were more serious incidents described by participants as well. One participant described sexual harassment and intimidation in her department. A male colleague had been annoyingly flirtatious and so she had attempted to avoid him. The department secretary, however, told her that he had said he needed to see her urgently. She agreed to meet with him but,
I said to her, “If I’m not back at ten after ten, you need to phone the Dean and say, quickly go to that office.” She looked at me, and I said, “Promise me you’ll do it. If he’s not there, get the Assistant Dean, but go to that office and you come too, as fast as you can.” Ten minutes I thought I could handle. I went to the office and just as I thought, it played out. He locked the door, moved over, put his hand between my legs, and then I said, “This stops here and now. I have done nothing, nothing to entice you”, and I said, “I am starting at this building and I’m going to have a career here and you are not going to screw it up for me.” And I said “if you don’t open that door in four minutes and let me out, the Dean will be waiting outside.” And he just jumped back and said, “Well obviously I’ve been misinformed”. And I said, “Obviously you have been misinformed, and this ends now”. And I said, “I’ll tell you something,” because I had talked to my husband the night before because he told me about the old boys in the bathroom, “if there is any problem and any innuendo coming from you, I’m going to sue you.” I was just furious!

In addition to her pre-emptive actions and firm response to unwanted attention, this participant, as did others, worked very hard throughout her career to ensure that students and other faculty were protected in similar circumstances by anti-harassment policies and practices.

Many participants spoke about the pleasure they found in teaching, although most reported that they took on very heavy responsibilities in this area of their work. They were also very active as supervisors of graduate students and took on significant committee work and various administrative positions – Vice-President, Dean, Associate Dean, Department Chairs, and Graduate Chairs. In many cases, the administrative positions enabled them to encourage departments to reconsider the academic discipline of educational administration in ways that reflected their commitment to equity and social justice in theory and practice, as well as a more expansive view of the academic discipline of Educational Administration. One participant described the process she undertook after several years of administrative influence on hiring committees and departmental administration:
...probably about 2001-2002, we were starting to shift the program and to start thinking about the program in terms of, not only the traditional leadership and values kinds of scholarship strands, and to some extent policy as well, but also thinking about social diversity and educational change as part of what we did. And that, the shift in the faculty profile in the whole department, and in Ed Admin was so profound that at a certain point in the mid-2000’s, in talking to my colleagues, we were writing up a job announcement to advertise for people to apply for a new faculty position, I found myself saying, “I don’t even know if we need to emphasize a commitment to and expertise in social diversity anymore. It’s become such a given.”

Arguably, their own lack of “fit” became the impetus for both reconsidering institutional practices and the disciplinary knowledge base and our research confirms that, through their administrative influence and academic contributions, the academic discipline of educational administration and the departments in which it was taught were transformed.

**Contributions to/transfoming of knowledge construction and mobilization**

Both their non-traditional career trajectories and lived experience inevitably prompted non-traditional research questions in educational administration that, in some cases, led to feminist analysis and were predominantly attuned to issues of social justice in the context of institutional practices in education. The influence of career trajectory and its intersection with personal responsibilities often prompted innovative research as well. For example, one participant, who had taken several sessional positions in her early career, because tenure track positions were difficult to obtain at that time, wrote about distance education because that’s what she found herself doing in one of her positions during the early years of satellite course delivery. Another participant, who is Francophone and had worked in international settings, brought that perspective and life experience to her innovative research on the meaning of education leadership in the official linguistic minority settings. At first it was like French speaking minority in Canada. Then I started looking at First Nations, Natives, and English speaking school directors in Quebec; which is the official linguistic minority in Quebec is the English speakers. I also realized there was very
interesting research done on education in official linguistic minority settings all around the world.

Many of the participants specifically pursued research on various questions related to women in positions of educational leadership. Their work provided the core analysis for many students of Educational Administration and opened up a field of inquiry that had not previously been given much credence in most Canadian Departments of Educational Administration. One of the authors of this paper – like many other graduate students – felt emboldened during her doctoral studies to pursue a feminist analysis of equity policy in educational organizations, despite significant resistance, because of the support and scholarly work of several of the women in this study. Two of the study participants edited, and several other participants contributed to, a collection of papers that mapped out the terrain of feminist and gender-based analysis of women in educational administration in Canada. Other participants looked outside the traditional hierarchical relations in educational organizations to explore a critical analysis of the political influences in educational organizations, including industrial relations and the professional development work of teacher federations/unions. Some participants explored aesthetics, emotions, and spirituality in leadership, which opened up fresh philosophical opportunities to think about educational administration in new ways. Others explored innovations in organizing schooling, including twinned principalships and year round schooling.

Clearly, the scope of the work taken on by these women, a fraction of which is represented here, has made a significant contribution to the scholarly literature in Canada and has been influential internationally. The nature of the research and the methods chosen for the research have pushed on entrenched masculinist boundaries around the knowledge base in educational administration. As the walls were permeated, new insights about traditional subjects of inquiry as well as unexplored territory became visible on the scholarly landscape. This did not happen without resistance, which was met with excellent individual scholarship and collective action by the participants. One participant recalls meeting with resistance at CASEA but moving forward with issues that she saw as an essential part of the academic conversation:
I began at conferences like CASEA to propose sessions about social justice and remember entering into conversations and huge debates with people like (two male colleagues) about the role of social justice. I do think that’s something that my generation of academics and particularly female academics has contributed to the field, not just in Canada but in the U.S. as well. When you think of all the social justice people – Linda Tillman, Catherine Marshall, Kathleen Brown, Khaul Murtada-Watts, Colleen Larson, you can go on and on – we’re all about the same age and entered about the same time, just a little bit earlier than the two of you [the interviewers] did. And [two male colleagues] and people like that, for whom I have great affection and respect, kind of treated it as a joke. They would organize counter panels or say, well, you can represent the social justice perspective, but…and so it was never treated very seriously and yet in the 20 years now since I’ve been an academic, it’s obviously gained a lot of currency…But certainly in terms of its acceptance as part of the discourse it’s there. I’m just not sure it’s moved the field away from the rational, technical, instrumental approaches that I would like it to have done.

The problem of “fit”, with which these women struggled in their academic institutions was one that they encountered in their scholarly organizations as well. Collective action and collaboration were often important in moving their academic work forward but this was difficult for women in educational administration as their numbers were small and academic institutions scattered across the vast geography of Canada. The idea for an organization that would support women’s scholarship and provide a rigorous and supportive environment across academic disciplines in education was born. Of the ten women participating in this study, three were founding members of the Canadian Association for Studies on Women and Education (CASWE), an association to promote and support women’s scholarship that is part of the Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CSSE) – the largest Society in the Congress for Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH) in Canada. All of the participants have been involved formally and informally in CASWE and many have presented papers since its inception. In addition, their academic influence has been significant in national academic organizations: for
example, one participant has been President of CSSE, and three have been presidents of the Canadian Association for Studies in Educational Administration (CASEA), also part of CSSE. Further, as these women disseminated their work at CSSE, their scholarship had a significant influence on new scholars and expanded the scope of topics at CSSE – especially CASEA and CASWE – to include issues of equity and social justice, expand notions of leadership to include teacher leadership and leadership in professional unions and associations. One participant spoke of the importance of these collective efforts in supporting her work:

[L]ife within the department could be very difficult. And that could be because I was outspoken about not only feminist stuff, but things like undergrad and how it was undervalued. I mean, I spoke up about a lot of things and it was very, it was very difficult. Um, what, what I think kept me going, not just the support of individuals…was the existence of CSSE and these, you know, the people within CASEA and CASWE, with whom I had things in common. And I mean really that made all the difference in those early days…I can’t imagine what it was like for the earlier women, for someone like [name of female colleague who had preceded her], you know.

In addition to more formal academic venues for knowledge mobilization, participants worked closely with teacher unions, spoke at professional conferences, edited academic journals, and conferred with Ministries of Education. They developed close working relationships with students who were often current or future school administrators, union leaders, higher education administrators, or adult educators and ensured that their courses reflected the expanded knowledge base that they were creating. As they did so, that knowledge became a part of the basis upon which education policies and practices were developed. Although the contribution these women made to Canadian scholarship in Educational Administration was significant, some felt that it was appreciated more by international scholars than their Canadian colleagues. During one interview, a participant noted that Charol Shakeshaft’s work was the only paper that was included in her graduate courses that discussed gender and the interviewer noted that many years later, it was still the only feminist work included widely in graduate courses. The participant sighed and then noted:
Pat Schmuck in the United States, too, her work is like standard so she’s on the reading lists, and then of course some of the Australians, some of the New Zealanders, Jill Blackmore, and others started showing up on the reading lists. But I think we’re still fighting, as Canadian scholars, women in Ed Admin, a lot of people don’t know about us. And they don’t know of our twenty years of publishing and work, and the international contribution. We’re better known when we go to international conferences. Two years ago in New Zealand, somebody came up to me who was just finishing her dissertation in Auckland and she said, “oh [participant’s name], I read all your work, and you’re my hero!” and all this kind of stuff. But here she is in New Zealand and she knows all my work, and I’m sure there are people in Manitoba or in BC who don’t know anything about my work.

When this comment was noted during the focus group, there were nods of assent around the circle. It is difficult to determine why this might be the case, however, it was clear that the ways in which some of these women were positioned within the Canadian academic community had some challenges.

Finding Balance: Tension Between the Personal and Professional

Some participants were positioned as “dangerous” throughout their careers, and although this was the result of an agentic choice to resist and prevail in ensuring that the knowledge base in educational administration grew to accommodate their interests and concerns, there was also a certain weariness and a sense that their careers had taken a toll that became evident in some of the interviews. One participant, who was dealing with significant personal issues, was well known in both academic and professional contexts for her feminist analysis of the ways in which women were positioned in educational organizations. She noted that she often felt that, in speaking to the issues, she was also expected to organize activist responses to the issues.

Well, it just occurred to me as I was thinking about the later part of my career that that was part of the fatigue that set in, I think, you know? Cause I really had fought quite a lot of battles on quite a lot of fronts, but I just needed to not have to be doing that for a while at least. But everywhere I looked, out here still, even though there are ways in which things have changed that are great, and I celebrate
those for sure, but there were other places where it was so discouraging, you know? [laughs]

Another participant remarked about the shrinking number of women faculty in educational administration, “So women’s fight is a never-ending fight. And I am not very optimistic about the future.”

Perhaps the regrets and sense of frustration many participants felt were an inevitable result of their heightened awareness honed by the kind of critical scholarship in which they had engaged throughout their careers. After discussing the guilt she felt in relation to not spending as much time with her children as she would have liked, one participant explored the notion of guilt within a wider social context:

But there is a sub-theme of guilt in my work history, my life history. But some of it is the white privilege too. When you really do realize how privileged you are … and at [name of institution], that street that I had to walk, homeless people on every street corner, and actually well known in the [...] building, we had 4 homeless people that were like shadows, they lived in the [...] buildings … in the cold, cold weather, they basically just moved around in the building. And as I was moving you would kind of just see them out of the corner of your eye. Here’s this hallowed hall of all this privilege and intelligentsia and disseminating knowledge and saving the world and all the international work and all the development work and there’s people right in the building that we can’t save or we can’t seem to help and that we can’t even seem to see.

Awareness, weariness and pessimism were evident in many comments, but also an awareness of the challenges and efforts to find balance among the multiple demands of responsibilities that were important to them. One participant spoke about finding satisfaction in the choices she had made in order to find balance between her home and work responsibilities, but also signals that a price in terms of the possibilities of her academic career had to be paid.

I am pretty happy with my publication record. I don’t want to be a star. I am too busy doing other things in my life to pretend that. I think to become like our colleagues who are known around the world, are quoted all the time... I think that is good but I think it has to be something to focus on so much and spend so much
time on... I am a mother, I am very active in social work like volunteer work, I am a grandmother now... With what I wanted to do in my career I am very satisfied.

The tensions, ambivalences, and even regrets that these quotes demonstrate suggest that the personal and the professional continued to intertwine for those who were retired as well as those who were still actively engaged in an academic career. However, the intersection of personal and professional is informed by a critical awareness of the world in which the participants are engaged. One participant described the ways in which her professional service reflected her critical academic and public engagements that continued into her retirement:

I considered my political work as service because … I knew I couldn’t be a member of Parliament, but I knew that every talk I gave, every letter I wrote, I was saying the very same things I was bringing to my classes, so I saw that as an intellectual service to the community and that was just barely tolerated [by the faculty administrators]. So now as a retired person, when I [ran again for parliament], nobody was standing in the way, and I could do this again.

Other participants were actively engaged with local school boards, principal associations, or community organizations and all spoke of the importance of their work with students in carrying forward the work that they cared so much about. While they were hopeful that the work would go forward, they were certainly not naïve. They were not only aware of, but had lived, the resistance to moving their work forward. One participant summed up the hopes of many participants for the work they had engaged in when she said of her own work:

I think my research and teaching have influenced a number of people who have either been my students or who’ve read my work to see the social world of education in some different ways. I think that’s some of the most powerful stuff we do. I can see that some of the social dynamics that I was instrumental in helping to redefine and some of the organizational routines that I put in place but as I said, I’ve become much less naïve about my own ability to change the world and I’m much more likely to think that if you’re in a position of leadership, what that’s good for is trying to mitigate harm during the period when you’re in leadership and that’s it. I don’t think it’s appropriate to look for durability as
some sort of an indicator of *I did a good job or I didn't do a good job*. It’s too harsh an environment to really expect that. In many ways this is still a really good department, we have a good program, I can claim some credit for that, but it’s also much bigger than you and I.

Another participant shared her hope at this point in a lengthy academic career:

The hope, I think, is that, if you were helping to prepare principals or superintendents, that you could have an impact on a wider segment of society, a larger number of people that maybe you could make a difference. That’s pretty optimistic, pretty idealistic, I’m not sure, that any of us have made the kind of difference we want to make, but…

In each case, their hopeful assessment of their career in academia is tempered by the realism that comes from experience in an academy and the wider social environment, which are not always hospitable to new ideas and have become more traditional and conservative in the wake of neo-liberal ideologies informing organizational politics and practices.

**Final thoughts**

As our study moves forward, we will be analyzing the themes more fully that have been introduced in this paper as well as adding others. Although the organizational culture, academic traditions, and knowledge base that have shaped and been shaped by the participants in this study are indeed “bigger than you or I”, our research provides evidence that the first women faculty members in Educational Administration added significantly to the broader academic conversation. Although they encountered tensions and challenges along the way, they persisted because they were deeply engaged with ideas and were committed to their dissemination within the academy, in educational organizations, and in the wider community.

**References**


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Endnotes

1 It is important to note that these women cannot easily be attached to a particular geographical location in that over the life span of their careers, most have lived, studied and been faculty members in various locations and institutions in Canada.
Collectively, these women represent a significant proportion of the first women in educational administration in Canada.

The work on women in educational leadership was sometimes the primary focus of a participant’s work and in other cases was in addition to other scholarly research topics that were taken up by participants. Many, but not all, participants brought a feminist awareness and analysis to all of their work, no matter what issue was being explored.


Manitoba and BC (British Columbia) are two of the ten provinces in Canada.

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