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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, OVERCOMING BARRIERS: WOMEN IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY, by CLAIRE MICHAEL MILLER, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

OVERCOMING BARRIERS: WOMEN
IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY
by
Claire M. Miller

Women currently represent the largest number of teachers in the United States but remain underrepresented in the superintendent position. This suggests that the superintendency has been influenced by patriarchy. If women are to break through the barriers that prevent them from attaining a superintendency, we will need to understand the social construction of the position and women superintendents' experiences with barriers. What do women in the superintendency think about what it means to be one of a few women in a male-dominated occupation? How does gender consciousness play a role in the ability to examine and understand barriers? How do characteristics of the position interacting with gender? Literature is reviewed surrounding these questions and includes barriers with feminine expectations, career mobility, good old boy network, mentors, family obligations, and the selection process.

A qualitative approach was used to examine the experiences of five female superintendents. Additionally, race was masked to protect the identities of the women. Patriarchy was identified as the central structure for understanding the women's experiences with barriers. This study also sought to draw on the theoretical model of sociocultural explanations for the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency.

This model analyzes gender differences and focuses on sex role stereotyping, career socialization, and women's culture to describe women's experiences.

The findings indicate that women are beginning to overcome some of the barriers; however, many of them are still present. This inquiry is important because it allows us to examine the barriers within the superintendency in order to provide a new perspective to the body of literature that has historically been grounded in almost exclusively white, male, and heterosexist epistemologies. This new perspective includes methods to overcome the barriers rather than navigate them.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS: WOMEN IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY

by

Claire M. Miller

A Dissertation

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in
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in
the Department of Educational Policy Studies
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the College of Education
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CHAPTER 1

OVERCOMING BARRIERS: WOMEN IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Introduction

Rationale for the Study

There is minimal information about women and the superintendency because most of the literature is based on men's experiences in this executive position. The American Association of School Administrators has published data on the position every ten years since 1920 (Glass & Franceshini, 2007). However, the information about women contained within these studies is limited because it only provides numerical information about women in the position rather than discussions of some of the reasons why there are fewer women than men. This lack of information demonstrates that there is a gap in the literature about women's experiences in the superintendency. An approach was needed that examines how women can overcome barriers in order to access the superintendency. The superintendency remains a complex political position that is often referred to as a gender stratified executive position (Bjork, 1999), with men 40 times more likely than women to advance from teaching to the top leadership role in the school district (Skrla, 1999). The most recent data in 2006 from the *American Association of School Administrators* (Glass & Franceshini, 2007) reflect that only 21.7 percent of superintendents are women. Furthermore, most superintendents are married, white, male, of middle age, come from small towns, have advanced degrees in educational

administration, and, for the most part, share common values and opinions (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; Johnson, 1996; Kowalski, 1995). The Study of the American School Superintendency (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000) found that 94.9 percent of American superintendents are white and 86.6 percent are male. Brunner and Grogan (2007) state that by 1900 women occupied 70 percent of all teaching positions and one hundred years later they still significantly dominate the teaching profession. This suggests that the public education system has been influenced by patriarchy. Therefore, I found it useful to explore women's experiences with barriers in the superintendency with a postmodern feminist perspective. This postmodern perspective will be used to analyze the data and present recommendations at the end of this study.

In order to understand the patriarchal construction of the education system and the superintendency, it was important to examine the historical data to understand the context of the position and to see if the historical barriers women experienced are similar to the barriers women experience today. During the first several decades of the twentieth century, women experienced some success in accessing administrative and superintendent positions in the United States. It appeared that it was the beginning of a flourishing career in administrative and superintendent roles for women. According to Blount (1998), 28 percent of county superintendents nationwide were women in 1930. This percent is higher than the current 21.7 percent of women superintendents (Glass & Franceshini, 2007). Ella Flagg Young became the first woman superintendent of the Chicago schools in 1909 and declared:

> Women are destined to rule the schools of every city. I look for a large majority of the big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women

> than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. (*Western Journal of Education, 1909, p. 515*)

Ironically, just the opposite occurred, and these positions drastically diminished for women. Blount (1998) concludes that between 1873 and 1995 the teaching profession became women's work while men dominated the administrative positions. Furthermore, Blount suggests that these socially constructed gender roles have been maintained in spite of the efforts of organized activist groups. As a result, women have experienced difficulties accessing the superintendency for over 130 years. Guba (1990) explains the process of social construction: "All social realities are constructed and shared through well-understood processes. It is the socialized sharing that gives these constructions their apparent reality, for if everyone agrees on something, how can one argue that it does not exist?"(p. 89).

Statement of the Problem

Some of the literature that examines the social construction of the superintendency indicates that being female increases the difficulty of overcoming barriers to attain the superintendency (Shakeshaft, 1989; Grogan, 1996; Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999). Furthermore, Dana, and Bourisaw (2006) claim that when women behave in a stereotypical female manner they are not viewed as having the strength, financial knowledge, and competencies that men possess. In addition, these barriers suggest that certain assumptions our society holds about the superintendency may promote the access of males to the position because it is socially constructed through agreed upon meanings that are shaped through interactions.

In a similar way that society has constructed the superintendency as male, it has shaped expectations about femininity and female behavior (Skrla, 2000a). Bardwick and

Douvan (1971) explain that these socially constructed feminine expectations include "dependence, passivity, fragility, low pain tolerance, nonaggression, noncompetiveness, inner orientation, interpersonal orientation, empathy, sensitivity, nurturance, subjectivity, receptivity, inability to risk, emotional liability, and supportiveness" (p. 147). It appears that there is a conflict for women pursuing the superintendency because the discourse of feminine expectations is in conflict with the discourse of the superintendent position.

Additionally, Skrla (2000a) explains that the norms associated with the superintendency are constructed with the assumption that males will occupy this position. These norms can be explained in terms opposite from those used to describe feminine expectations. These terms might include independence, assertiveness, sturdiness, high pain tolerance, aggression, competiveness, career orientation, self-sufficiency, stoicism, justice, objectivity, unyieldingness, remoteness, risk taking, and rationality. Furthermore, Skrla argues that male superintendents have the socialized characteristics and behaviors that society expects of someone in the superintendency. Thus, it appears that the superintendency has been socially constructed by society as masculine. Therefore, this study will seek to examine how women can adopt a sense of resistance that challenges these assumptions.

Since the numerical studies indicate that there are more males in the superintendency, it appears to be difficult for women to access the superintendent position. Are women overlooked for superintendent positions as a result of the socially constructed role of the superintendent? Bell (1988) explains:

> Given a general cultural preference for male leaders in our society the tradition of male leadership in schools, and the predominantly male membership of school boards, the most persuasive characteristic a candidate for superintendent could possess seems to be maleness....

> Maleness signifies to board members... shared language and experience, predictability, connection with the power structure, and leadership that satisfies stereotyped preferences. (p. 50)

While both male and female superintendents likely experience personal and professional difficulty in attaining the position, it is possible that women encounter difficulties more frequently than men. For example, Dana and Bourisaw (2006) argue that women are compelled to learn how they are expected to act in a predominately male context while still maintaining a sense of femininity in order to access the superintendency. While men must also learn the expected behaviors, they typically do not have to balance femininity and masculinity as many women might be forced to do. Brunner and Grogan (2007) state: "Without a doubt, the superintendency is a masculinized role and, when women move into this role's environment, they have traveled from their earlier, perhaps more comfortable, experiences in the feminized territories of teaching" (p. 14).

Furthermore, in addition to negotiating the inherent tensions of the socially constructed superintendency, women appear to face different barriers than men in accessing the superintendency. Can this be attributed to the societal perceptions of women as homemakers and men as bread winners (Kimmel, 1993). It seems that equal access to the superintendency does not exist and women who pursue the superintendency might come to the conclusion that they are operating in a system that is constructed with a glass ceiling. The glass ceiling refers to barriers blocking the advancement of minorities and women (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) explain this equity barrier, "What women want is equity of opportunity, equity of access, and equity of treatment…"(p. 1). It appears that the literature suggests that women need to embrace aspects of both the male construction of the superintendency and the societal expectations

of femininity. The literature about the barriers women encounter supports an essentialist belief that gender serves as the means to define a superintendent's behavior. Therefore, in this study I will deliberately examine the conflicting binary expectations of the male and female gender in the superintendency and then propose a reconception of the position.

Additionally, the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency is acknowledged, but the reasons for this phenomenon are only partly explained in the literature. As Tallerico and Blount (2004) noted:

> Numerous scholars have elaborated factors contributing to the persistence of male overrepresentation in educational administration. These factors include ideologies about appropriate sex roles, social stereotypes about who looks and acts like a leaders, the socialization of children consistent with such stereotypes and norms, the bureaucratization of schooling that was built on separate spheres for women (teaching) and men (leadership), the conceptualization of schooling and its leadership in ways that emphasize competition and authority (stereotypically masculine strengths) rather than collaboration and service, administrative employment practices that present higher barriers for women than for men, and the greater proportion of men than women earning graduate degrees in educational administration up until the mid – 1980s. (pp. 641-642)

While the barriers listed above are examined in the literature, we do not fully know why males are selected more often than females. Furthermore, we do not understand how women overcome barriers to access the superintendency (Tallerico, 2000b). We also do not completely know why the patriarchal institution of the superintendency in public education has not changed. This is particularly interesting in light of the fact that the staff of the public school institution is predominately female.

This incomplete understanding about why the superintendency is a gendered position warranted further exploration into the reasons there are more men than women superintendents. One of the barriers that needed examination is the selection process. It

appears that consultants serve as gatekeepers to promote men in order to keep women from attaining the position (Shakeshaft, 1999). Moody (1983) suggests that the superintendency has long been perceived as a private club with access controlled by a structure of old boy networks. According to Moody, the old boy network appears to serve as an informal alliance among men to promote one another to top positions. Another barrier is that women don't have the sponsorship and mentors that men have to promote them within the system. These barriers are considered structural barriers and will be further developed in chapter two.

Additionally, Shakeshaft (1999) claims that another barrier is that women often believe they lack the time needed to pursue the superintendency while raising children due to the large time commitment required by both. Also, women must negotiate the pressures they face as a result of the high societal expectations for women to balance the discourses of the superintendency, mothering, and partnering. Grogan (1996) claims that these discourses will collide at times and result in a sense of fragmentation. He explains this concept:

> The data reveal that, at best, a woman aspiring to the superintendency moves back and forth between the different discourses, professional and personal, never at any time able or willing to abandon completely the practices that have constituted her as partner, mother, or homemaker. (p. 110)

Bell (1988) argues that an additional barrier is that some members of the Board of Education are not ready for women to serve in the role of the superintendent because they worry about women's abilities to assert authority since society has traditionally expected women to be non-assertive. Bell also claims that when women do exhibit authority and strength the board members do not consider these to be suitable actions because the

women are giving up the mothering and partnering discourses for the superintendency discourse. The following explanations lend support to the barriers suggested by Bell. Lips (2000) and Lott (1985) suggest that competent women may be perceived as unfeminine while Eagley, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) claim that women who have a dictatorial directive leadership style are viewed more harshly than men with a similar style.

Lips and Lott also claim that when women do exert authority or act in competent or directive ways, they may receive poor evaluations because they violated the feminine stereotype. Finally, Carli (2001) explains that women who behave in such highly assertive, confident, or competent ways might find that their ability to influence others, particularly males, is diminished. Pierce (1974) uses the term microaggression to explain this subtle form of discrimination, which I will explore in chapter five. By examining these microaggressions, other women might learn ways to circumvent these barriers or perceptions. These sociocultural barriers will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

Purpose of the Study

The quantitative data show that women are underrepresented in the superintendency even though they have made great strides attaining the superintendency in the last two decades (Glass & Franceshini, 2007). In addition to the numerical descriptions of women in the superintendency, there is a significant amount of research that includes an historical analysis (Blount, 1998), narratives of accomplished women in the superintendency (Bjork, 2000), barriers to the superintendency (Chase & Bell, 1990; Ortiz, 1998), experiences of women in the superintendency (Beck, 1994; Chase, 1995; Grogan, 1996), the effectiveness of women in educational administration (Shakeshaft,

1999), and men and women's experiences together in educational administration (Shakeshaft, 1999). While it is important to understand these issues regarding the social construction of the superintendency, it would also be helpful to examine how women overcome the barriers within the superintendency position, which this study proposed to do.

Furthermore, since descriptions of barriers and numerical accounts of women in the superintendency are prominent in the literature, it is possible that these accounts might serve to reinforce the perception that the educational bureaucracy operates in a system of patriarchy. If so, without a new direction of research that focuses on overcoming the barriers, the structure of the current system could be perpetuated. Margaret Mead (1935) provides a description of how gender roles are constructed in our society:

> Three primitive societies have grouped their social attitudes towards temperament about the very obvious facts of sex difference.... Our own society makes great use of this plot. It assigns different roles to the two sexes, surrounds them from birth with an expectation of different behavior, plays out the whole drama of courtship, marriage, and parenthood in terms of types of behavior believed to be innate and therefore appropriate for one sex or the other. (pp. viii-ix)

Mead's description reinforces the perception that our society has constructed widely accepted expectations for what are perceived to be patriarchal and matriarchal roles. However, this belief serves to reinforce the belief that women are not capable to serve as superintendent because the position has been shaped by patriarchy. Skrla (2000b) suggests that the expectations of the socially constructed superintendency are based on male behaviors. A better understanding of the construction of the patriarchal system

might help explain how women can circumvent the patriarchal barriers to gain access to the superintendency.

Additionally, the current literature appears to lend support to the patriarchal system because it explains how women should learn to act in a position that is predominately occupied by males. Shakeshaft (1989) explains:

> This ideology of patriarchy is also called androcentrism, meaning male centered. Androcentrism is the practice of viewing the world and shaping reality from a male perspective. It is the elevation of the masculine to the level of the universal and the ideal and the honoring of men and the male principle above women and the female. This perception created a belief in male superiority and a masculine value system in which female values, experiences, and behaviors are viewed as inferior. (p. 94)

To some extent, women must be aware of the patriarchal codes and how to negotiate the boundaries of a male-dominated position.

Furthermore, the literature describes the gendered nature of the superintendency but lacks descriptions of women who might prevail over the sociocultural and structural barriers women face while pursuing the position. Is it possible that this gap in the literature serves to reinforce the perceived patriarchal structure? It was important to examine how women can confront the barriers given that gender disproportionality in superintendent positions has been apparent for a long time, and there remains an imbalance between men and women holding these positions. Women pursuing the superintendency need to not only understand why it is difficult to attain the position but also how they can overcome the barriers women experience within the context of the position since most of the literature is based on the traditions and norms of the white male. Moreover, we need to acknowledge that women may have vastly different experiences in the superintendency than men and therefore cannot rely on the stories that

are documented in the literature. Biklen and Shakeshaft (1985) call for research on women's perceptions of their experiences in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the social construction of gender in the superintendency. They propose that this is necessary "since an inadequate conception of the female experience distorts our perspectives on the human experience as a whole" (p. 47). According to Marshall (1997):

> Policy researchers and analysts have gained and retained legitimacy by focusing on the problems and methods identified by powerful people. Those with a different focus are silenced, declared irrelevant, postponed, coopted, "put on the back burner"... or otherwise ignored. Policies - authoritative agreements among powerful people about how things should be – have been made without a feminist critical glance.... Policymakers and analysis need to pause in order to recognize how issues of gender, the needs of particular groups like the urban poor, women, and non-dominant nationalities are left out of educational policy analyses. (p. ix)

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the current body of literature by exploring whether women superintendents acknowledge that barriers exist and, if so, how they define, explain, and overcome these barriers. While this study examined the barriers women encounter in attaining a superintendent position it does not suggest that all women in educational leadership positions aspire to the superintendency. In this interview study, I sought to describe women superintendents' experiences with barriers to accessing and maintaining the superintendency. I utilized a feminist perspective to analyze the participants' experiences in the superintendency and determine if women identified that barriers exist. I also examined how women overcame these barriers, and if the barriers are consistent with those that appear in the literature. Finally, I examined the assumptions of patriarchy in the superintendency that are grounded in feminist theory

through in-depth interviews with women who are currently serving in the superintendency.

The research approach that I employed in this study is qualitative methodology. I conducted an interview study with five women who serve in different size districts in the same state and who are in their first six years in the position. I studied five women from different districts in order to determine if there are common themes that transcend districts. I used the data to determine if there is a common perception among these women regarding the existence of barriers and how they negotiate these barriers.

It is important that women who have attained the superintendency tell their stories as a method to help overhaul the barriers for other women who aspire to this position. Since the literature describes some of the barriers such as family, board/community resistance, glass ceilings, lack of mentoring, search consultants, and lack of appropriate preparation, we must seek methods to understand how women successfully overcome these barriers (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Additionally, this study provides a voice for these women to help correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experiences in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position (Lather, 1991, p. 26).

Theoretical Framework

I utilized a postmodern feminist perspective as a framework to guide my research approach and analysis of the data in this study on the patriarchal institution of the superintendency. More specifically, I sought to examine if barriers impede the career mobility of women obtaining the superintendency and how they overcome these barriers. "Career mobility is a socially constructed process marked by individual agency within the

context of organizational/institutional constraints and opportunities" (Riehl & Byrd, 1997, p. 46). Riehl and Byrd also explain that gender is salient in career mobility in the superintendency because men and women's experiences and outcomes are different. Some researchers have sought to document and explain the impact of gender on career mobility in educational administration (Adkinson, 1981; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Richards, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989). Riehl and Byrd identify three theoretical explanations that have emerged from this work.

The first explanation identified by Riehl and Byrd is based on differential sex-role and occupational socialization. This model suggests that women have not been socialized to aspire or prepare for administrative positions thus resulting in women having low self-perceptions. The second explanation is based on the premise that the public school institution is structured in ways that exclude women from seeking and obtaining administrative positions, even if they aspire to them. The third explanation seeks to understand the underrepresentation of women in administrative positions by focusing on male hegemony. For the purpose of this study, I sought to incorporate a feminist perspective as a means to understand women's perceptions of male hegemony, sex-role stereotyping, and the structure of the public school institution as they relate to the superintendent.

By examining the problem from a feminist perspective and focusing on the theoretical explanation of male hegemony I placed the gendered construction of the superintendency at the center of my inquiry. For the purpose of this study, male hegemony is used to describe male dominance in the superintendent position. Those who argue that male hegemony is the real problem suggest that career mobility for women

will not change unless and until women take serious legal and political action to secure better opportunities for themselves (Shakeshaft, 1989).

This study also sought to draw on the theoretical model of sociocultural explanations for the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency. This model analyzes gender differences and focuses on sex role stereotyping, career socialization, and women's culture to describe women's experiences. Additionally, I inquired about the women's perceptions of sociocultural and structural barriers. As Marshall (1997) notes, feminist perspectives "uncover cultural and institutional sources and forces of oppression.... They name and value women's subjective experience" (p.12).

For the purpose of this study, gender was considered as a "basic organizing principle" for the public school institution and, more specifically, the superintendency (Lather, 1991, p. 71). Lather explains: "Through the questions that feminism poses and the absence it locates, feminism argues the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege" (Lather, p. 71). The underlying goal of feminist research is to change the "invisibility and distortion" of female experiences in order to ultimately end inequality (Lather, p. 71). Alston (1999) explains:

> Often in research on women in administration, there is an absence of feminist scholarship. This absence and silence of women in leadership is perpetuated by the contention that women are trying to be leaders inside of hierarchical organizations that promote gender stratification by roles and maintain values and beliefs based on men's experiences. (p. 83)

Margaret Grogan (2000) suggests that the most significant contribution of feminist theory to the way we consider the superintendency is to adopt its paradigm of social criticism. This paradigm of social criticism suggests that women must adopt a

sense of resistance to the microagressions and gender discrimination they experience . Drawing on Grogan's work, I employed a postmodern feminist perspective to examine the barriers that occur within the social construction of gender in the public school superintendency. More specifically, I examined women's experiences with barriers in the superintendency from a postmodern feminist perspective in order to provide a new viewpoint to the body of literature that has historically been grounded in almost exclusively white, male, and heterosexist epistemology. By utilizing a postmodern feminist perspective, I placed the social construction of gender at the center of my inquiry.

The assumptions about the socially constructed position of the superintendency hinge on the ideas that are woven throughout feminist theories. Feminist theory is founded on the recognition of gender as a legitimate category of analysis (Scott, 1986). Flax (1990) suggests that feminist theory seeks "to analyze gender relations: how gender relations are constituted and experienced and how we think or, equally important, do not think about them" (p. 40). Since the majority of the literature on the superintendency is based on men's perspectives about their experiences in the position, it seems that women's voices have largely been silenced and undocumented. There is a gap in the literature about barriers that men experience in the position; therefore, a feminist approach was needed in this study. It was important to examine the position from a feminist perspective in order to more fully understand the complexities of the position rather than relying exclusively on the perceptions of the men who have predominately occupied the position.

I examined how women's perceptions of how the social construction of gender, the social construction of the superintendency, and the interactions of the constructions of gender and the superintendent's role relate to barriers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain constructed realities: "Events, persons, objects are indeed tangible entities. The meanings and wholeness derived from or ascribed to these tangible phenomena in order to make sense of them, organize them, or reorganize a belief system, however, are constructed realities*"* (p. 84).

First, I examined women's perspectives on the local discourse of the superintendency in their community to determine if there are common themes that transcend districts. Grogan (2000) suggests that our understanding of acceptable behaviors in the various discourses in which we are positioned depends on our relative power within each discourse. The superintendency is a field that has been ordered, shaped, and regulated by the patriarchal institution of public education. Hence, women have not historically held the power to shape the discourse of the superintendency. Foucault (1972) proposes that we question these socially constructed discourses.

> These pre-existing forms of continuity, all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively of course, but the tranquillity [sic] with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction of the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized: we must define in what conditions and in view of which analyses certain of them are legitimate; and we must indicate which of them can never be accepted in any circumstances. (p. 28)

Foucault's call to challenge socially constructed discourses can be used as a lens to examine the discourse of the superintendency to determine if women question the rules of this discourse and how they overcome this perceived barrier. In addition to challenging

socially constructed discourses that have been historically formed and culturally conditioned it is important to realize that discourses can also be changed. Therefore, if the discourse of the superintendent was historically defined as male then it can also be changed to include female subjectivity.

Subjectivity is molded and shaped through the interaction of dominant values and beliefs found within a discourse. In other words, we are subjectified by the discourses we participate in and can find ourselves with many different subjects rather than a fixed identity. For example, a female who enters the superintendency is subjectified by the dominant male discourse of the position. Additionally, these women can become fragmented subjects because they are negotiating between the socially-constructed feminine discourses of mothering and partnering and the androcentric discourse of the superintendency (Grogan, 2000).

This crossing over of discourses can become difficult for women as the lines separating the different discourses blur or disappear. Irigaray (1985) suggests that female subjectivity has historically been constructed as the other or weaker version of man because most discourses are defined from the male perspective. Irigaray (1985) also proposes that in order to locate places that female subjectivity can be constructed we must stop considering woman as the other to man and consider woman as woman. I examined how women define their subjectivity and how they have overcome these perceived barriers by listening to the participants' stories who have negotiated the discourse of the male-dominated superintendent simultaneously with other feminine discourses. By viewing women's perspectives of barriers through a feminist lens I sought to "provide a much needed contrast to still dominant, androcentric policy views of the

superintendency" (Skrla, 2000, 294). Finally, by conducting this research for women I sought to take women's needs, interests, and experiences into account in order to improve women's experiences in the superintendency one way or another. "Until we have... a literature from the silenced, we will probably not have a full critique of the social order from their perspectives. Nor will we have their proposed solutions, or the means of sharing their daily worlds" (Lincoln, 1993, 9. 44).

Summary

In this chapter, the problem is defined and the purpose of the study is explored. The problem is that women are underrepresented in the superintendency position. More specifically, the most recent data from the *American Association of School Administrators* (Glass & Franceshini, 2007) show that only 21.7 percent of superintendents are women. The purpose of the study was to provide a contribution to the literature on how women can overcome the barriers to attaining and maintaining the superintendency. Chapter two will examine the literature that relates to the problem of barriers that women encounter while pursuing and maintaining the superintendency. The review of the literature will present an account of historical data regarding women superintendents, an overview of the current data about women in the field of the superintendency, and a review of some of the barriers to attaining the superintendency. Chapter three will describe the qualitative method I used in this study. The qualitative approach included an interview study with five women who are in their first six years in their current superintendent position. In Chapter four, I will discuss the data collected and in chapter five I will analyze the results from a postmodern feminist perspective to draw conclusions for the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The American Dream of a meritocratic system that provides opportunities for everyone based on merit is flawed. Tallerico (2000a) suggests, “The concept of meritocracy is linked with several values embedded in American culture: that hard work and initiative lead to success; that individuals are masters of their own destiny; that possibilities are limitless...”(p. 84). This flaw is demonstrated through the barriers women experience that prohibit them from accomplishing their dream of becoming a superintendent. The barriers these women have experienced can be examined through the conceptual framework of either internal or external barriers.

Hansot and Tyack (1981) suggest that internal barriers may focus on the individual woman as possessing obstacles that prevent her from advancing into an educational leadership position. This model supports the concept that socialization and sex stereotyping are seen as the guiding forces behind women’s behavior, thus creating internal barriers. Shakeshaft (1989) suggests: “This perspective originates from a psychological paradigm and, essentially, blames the victim for her lack of achievement in school leadership. Its remedy is for women to be resocialized so that they will fit into the male world” (p. 82). Henning and Jardim (1977) provide several examples of internal barriers: (a) lack of aggressiveness; waiting to be chosen, discovered, invited, persuaded, or asked to accept the promotion; (b) reluctance to take risks; and (c) lack of self-

confidence. According to Shakeshaft (1989), internal barriers are those that must be overcome by individual change whereas external barriers require social and institutional change.

However, Hansot and Tyack (1981) suggest that barriers are a result of male dominance which has kept women from attaining positions of power and prestige, thus creating external barriers. The conceptual lenses of both internal and external barriers appeared to be an appropriate framework for this study because the literature suggests that barriers to the superintendency are related to male hegemony. Therefore, this study explored both internal and external barriers to describe some of the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency. However, it is difficult to neatly distinguish between internal and external barriers because they often overlap.

A number of sociocultural barriers for women in the superintendency have emerged: patriarchy, gatekeepers, selection processes, glass ceilings, lack of mentoring for women, family expectations, feminine expectations, and societal perceptions of women's leadership abilities. As Brunner (2000) notes:

> Underrepresentation of women in the position of superintendent of schools is well known. Depending on the year, between 88 percent and 99 percent of all school superintendents are men despite the prevalence of women in teaching positions.... Lack of role models, lack of support from networks and mentors, lack of experience in leadership positions in non-governmental institutions, and the greater amount of family demands for women are among the many factors thought to contribute to such underrepresentation. (pp. 9-10)

These barriers appear in the literature but there is still a lack of information about the experiences of women who overcome these barriers by challenging the patriarchal institution.

Sociocultural Barriers

The Patriarchal Institution of Public Education

The institution of the public education system today is based on the same patriarchal structure as it was when it was established. Furthermore, the difference in the societal expectations for women and men are reflected in the organizational structure of the system. For example, historically men have dominated the executive leadership positions while women have occupied the majority of the teaching positions. As Tallerico and Blount (2004) noted:

> Numerous scholars have elaborated factors contributing to the persistence of male overrepresentation in educational administration. These factors include ideologies and appropriate sex roles, social stereotypes about who looks and acts like a leader, the socialization of children consistent with such stereotypes and norms, the bureaucratization of schooling that was built on separate spheres for women (teaching) and men (leadership), the conceptualization of schooling and its leadership in ways that emphasize competition and authority (stereotypically masculine strengths) rather than collaboration and service, administrative employment practices that present higher barriers for women than men, and the greater proportion of men than women earning graduate degrees in educational administration up until the mid – 1980s. (pp. 641-642)

The factors listed by Tallerico and Blount include sociocultural barriers of patriarchy that have become inculcated in our educational system over time, thus making them overt barriers.

Blount (1998) suggests that the historical account of the superintendency indicates that there would be an increase in women superintendents; however, Blount concludes that between 1873 and 1995 the teaching profession became women's work while men dominated the administrative positions. Furthermore, Blount describes in detail how these socially constructed gender roles have been maintained in spite of the efforts of organized

activist groups. Even though women formed interest groups to lobby for changes in access to the superintendency the male constituents have maintained the power.

Blount explains that by the early 1800s single and married women began teaching for low wages and often far from home, which provided women with economic independence, education, and public service. This economic independence contributed to social independence enticing many women to choose teaching over marriage. These new economic privileges afforded to women might be attributed to an increase in female teachers. Blount argues that this was the initial shift from the male-dominated to the female-dominated teaching profession.

However, at the same time women began to hold the dominant number of teaching positions men appeared to seek ways to exclude them. For example, according to Blount (1998), the local and state officials created an administrative level to provide men an opportunity to remain in the educational profession while still maintaining professional power over women. According to Blount (1998): “School officials lauded the notion of paid male school administrators who could monitor female teachers and keep them from getting out of line” (p. 26). Furthermore, the male constituent group developed new administrative and teaching requirements that supported women serving as teachers and men as administrators.

The change started with the formation of preparation schools which began placing a greater emphasis on pedagogy rather than advanced content matter. This shift provided men the opportunity to move out of teaching and into educational administration or other careers. Second, the male administrators began requiring more certification courses and credentials for teachers. These additional credentials were typically pursued during the

summer when men chose to work additional jobs to supplement their income. This change also encouraged men to move out of teaching and into administration or other careers.

Third, teachers began to lose their authority at the same time that the male administrators gained power. According to Blount (1998): “Administrators favored single rather than married women because the latter had husbands who occasionally complained about district practices. In time, administrators imposed progressively greater restrictions on teachers’ employment and practices, thereby tipping the power balance toward themselves” (p. 31). Blount claims that these three shifts in educational practice are key reasons that women accounted for over 70 percent of all teachers by the turn of the twentieth century.

A final cause Blount associates with the loss of men from the teaching profession is the Civil War. Men left their teaching positions to fight in the war leaving another opportunity for more women to pursue teaching positions. Many men chose not to return to teaching in an effort to preserve their post-war masculine identity. Thus, there was a concerted effort from communities and organizations to create more masculine positions for men in the teaching field. According to Blount (1998): “A final important means of making teaching more appealing to men involved the creation of male-identified niches such as coaching, vocational education, other manual trades, and certain high school subjects such as science and mathematics” (p. 35). However, in spite of these initiatives, the percentage of male teachers and administrators declined from 40 percent in 1870 to 14 percent in 1920. The teaching field experienced a large gender shift from male to female during the twentieth century.

Blount also analyzes the social and economic conditions that led to the positions of school administrators. First, local and state politicians established several types of superintendents which were followed by central office staff and principals. The state superintendency was established in the early 1800s primarily to oversee the distribution of state funding. New York assigned the first superintendent in 1812. During the 1800s the responsibilities of the state superintendent expanded and evolved into a position that demanded a politically-savvy person. To assist state superintendents with the distribution of funds, data collections, setting school district lines, and examining and training teachers the county superintendent emerged. In the initial years of the county superintendency there were not any specific training requirements in place to attain the position. However, since it was initially an elected position "Superintendents... worked to assure that decisions about funding, school locations, district boundaries, and personnel matters did not alienate key constituencies" (Blount, 1998, p. 43). In addition to the state and county superintendency, the local school boards appointed district and city superintendents to take over their administrative duties.

Due to the rapid growth fueled by industrialization, city superintendents began to face more administrative responsibilities; therefore, they added more central office staff and principals to assist with these duties. The various types of superintendents provided responses to many of the educational concerns. Particularly, they gave states extended control over schools, decreased the Board of Education's administrative work, provided higher salaries and greater control for male educators. In the 1800s the administrative positions were held by men for the most part. Blount (1998) explains:

> Allowing men to control their own affairs did not challenge traditional gender expectations; however, for women to expect equivalent trust and

> control of a public institution presented a serious challenge to their socially approved gender roles. Middle-class women were to submit, or at least to confine their controlling reach to the domestic sphere. (p. 51)

However, some women began attaining the superintendency as some districts in western states made it an elected position. The voters began to prefer women superintendents because they invested so much time in their work and also did not demand a high salary.

During the time that women began accessing the superintendency in the 1800s the male superintendents formed organized associations to collegially address the educational issues they faced in their districts. One of the primary issues they sought to gain control over was the growing number of women superintendents. To assist with the endeavor to block women's access to the superintendency the men succeeded in developing a program of educational administration at the universities. The formation of the educational administration program led to increased certification requirements for superintendents. In turn, the result was a decline in the number of female superintendents because women were typically denied admission to these programs. Blount (1998) explains: "As their power increased, the social, economic, intellectual, and even physical distance between superintendents physically isolated themselves from teachers as central offices stood even more distant from classrooms" (p. 59). The isolation of male superintendents from teachers along with the superintendent's increased power fueled the activity of the women's movement. "The net effect of these changes is that the superintendency became a formalized position, one that was increasingly male-defined and male-occupied, while being distanced from and firmly in control of the work of teachers, most of whom were women" (Blount, 1998, p. 54).

Following men's alienation of women from administrative roles in the nineteenth century, women's suffrage activism in the early twentieth century helped many women gain access to the superintendency. As women gained the right to vote, another effort to limit women's access to the superintendency arose. Male-dominated superintendent organizations lobbied to change superintendencies from elected to appointed positions. Blount (1998) claims that "when women assumed their newly won positions, they quickly discovered that the public held them to a higher standard than men" (p. 67). Again, women were faced with gender discrimination since they were expected to outperform men.

Even with the suggested gender inequities, the number of women superintendents began to quickly increase after the turn of the century, and by 1913, four hundred ninety-five women held county superintendencies and four held state superintendencies. This increase doubled the number of women holding county superintendencies since 1896. Furthermore, once women won full suffrage in 1930 they also gained increased political power which helped them advance their career goals of accessing the superintendency. However, as women's rights increased in the 1930s, it was not possible for women to fight the gender discrimination alone; therefore, they leaned heavily on the strong constituency provided by the women's movement. Even though women experienced successes in gaining administrative positions, they had to fight for the positions and once in the position they had to prove that they could do a better job than men.

Blounts' research indicates that the next obstacles women faced in education were social attacks on the femininity of single women educators. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 70 percent of teachers were female and about 95 percent were single,

divorced, or widowed. However, following World War II the percentage of female single teachers and superintendents declined. Blount (1998) provides a reason for this decline:

> Since many women's activists had chosen to pursue their education, to stand outside conventional marriage, to refrain from motherhood, to support themselves through work such as teaching, and to build supportive social networks among themselves, critics initiated a powerful backlash that essentially accused single educated women of neglecting their feminine duties to their families, or worse, of deviance. (p. 92)

Society viewed single female educators as threats to the social order because they were not bearing children. To this end, school systems lifted the ban on married women being barred from the field of education. This, in turn, resulted in another gender shift in the educational field. In 1940 sixty-nine percent of female teachers were single, whereas in 1960 less than 30 percent of these positions were held by single women.

Additionally, the increased gender polarization and homophobia affected women pursuing the superintendency. Women seeking administrative positions were often seen as masculine and aggressive which resulted in women either not pursuing these positions or they compromised by dressing and behaving more femininely. During this time society expected superintendents to be married, which created problems for women since their husbands usually worked full-time jobs and were not available to assist with household chores. Consequently, female superintendents declined from 9 percent to 3 percent of all superintendents between 1950 and 1970.

Blount's final argument regarding the decline in women superintendents focuses on the social and cultural changes that resulted from World War II. The federal government established the Veterans Preference Program to assist veterans with the return to civilian life by providing them with federal jobs. Furthermore, the G.I. Bill of Rights was instituted to provide scholastic grants along with monthly allowances for

veterans attending four-year colleges. Blount claims that the G.I. Bill of Rights also had a large affect on the decrease in women superintendents because men used the grants to pursue educational administration degrees and quickly moved into superintendent positions. “Not only had men been enticed into education, but they also had been tracked into leadership positions at the expense of women’s opportunities and often with federal government support” (Blount, 1998, p. 118).

In addition to these barriers, Blount (1998) presents a numerical study of the superintendency in the twentieth century. The study is based on data that have been documented in *Patterson’s American Education* since 1904. With respect to the study of women superintendents, Blount’s findings indicate that women held between 9 and 11 percent of superintendencies from 1910-1950, 3 percent from 1950-1970, and between 3 to 5 percent from 1970-1990. The data presented above indicate that historically there have been a disproportionately low number of female superintendents in relation to the teaching force. Blount suggests that numbers must also be associated with the meanings people attach to their actions in order to capture an accurate understanding of the statistical findings. Moreover, Blount (1998) contends that numbers are used as a political weapon in the field of education.

> Therefore, they must be understood as a part of the context and language of the time rather than as ends in themselves. Clearly, to understand women’s experiences in seeking superintendencies, arguably positions that have symbolized power in shaping the course of public schooling, a much more intricate and complex exploration beyond the limitations of a statistical report is necessary. This statistical study, however, offers a useful start and has compelled much of the work presented in this volume. (p. 201)

Men have historically dominated leadership, management, and administrative positions in public education, thus creating a patriarchal institution. However, this

remains true as the data from the *2006 American Association of School Administrators* study show that 21.7 percent of superintendents are currently women (Glass & Francesini, 2007). While the numbers increased in 58 years there is still an underrepresentation of women in this position. Moreover, the *American Association of School Administrators* study indicates the number of female superintendents increased from 16 percent in 2000 to 21.7 percent in 2006 (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Even though more women are gaining access to the superintendency, it is noteworthy that the data verify that women are underrepresented in this executive educational leadership position. According to Blount (1998), there are more than four million professional educators and only 2,000 women serve in educational leadership positions.

Additionally, the current *American Association of School Administrators* survey points out that one of the key difference between male and female superintendents is the highest degree held, which might be another barrier. According to the *2000 Study of the American School Superintendency*, more female superintendents (56.8 percent) hold a doctoral degree while 43.7 percent of male superintendents hold a doctoral degree. This suggests that women might need the higher degree in order to access the superintendency. These data indicate that for women "aspiration is not the issue; opportunity is" (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 108).

Blount's analysis of the female teaching and administrative roles from 1873 to 1995 stages a comprehensive argument to support how teaching became women's work and the school superintendency became men's work. Blount proposes that the access to the position is predominately controlled by the institution of the good old boy network and is not equitable because society views men to be more successful in this position.

However, even though the numbers represent the lack of women in the superintendency, considerations concerning equity and social justice have been largely ignored.

These barriers within the patriarchal institution of public education suggest that equity and social justice in the workplace are not a reality for many women. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) suggest that "access to equity is one of the most visible examples of political ideologies at work" (p. 58). Okin (1989) notes:

> We as a society pride ourselves on our democratic values. We don't believe people should be constrained by innate differences from being able to achieve desired positions of influence or to improve their well-being; equality of opportunity is our professed aim. The Preamble to our Constitution stresses the importance of justice, as well as the general welfare and the blessings of liberty. The Pledge of Allegiance asserts that our republic preserves "liberty and justice for all." Yet substantial inequalities between the sexes still exist in our society. (p. 3)

Even though affirmative action policies were created to help reduce gender barriers, the results have been minimal within the superintendency. It is difficult for women to overcome barriers to the superintendency due to the lack of changes that have resulted from the affirmative action legislation and the glass ceilings that have been created by cultural expectations. For this reason, The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) was created by the 1991 Civil Rights Act to conduct a study and prepare recommendations regarding artificial barriers impeding the advancement of minorities and women. One of the key findings of the study is that prejudice against minorities and white women is the single greatest barrier to their advancement into the executive ranks. "It has revealed the ceiling that keeps women out of upper management positions and has shown us that this ceiling is glass if one is White, but concrete if one is a woman of color" (Skrla & Young, 2003, p. 1).

The report also suggests that discrimination remains another deep line of demarcation between those who prosper and those left behind. While the image of a glass ceiling is appropriate to use when describing the barriers women face in attaining a superintendent position, it does not complete the picture. Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) pointed out that it's not just the ceiling hindering women from advancement; it's the entire structure of the patriarchal institutions in which women work; the foundation, the beams, the walls, the very air. However, the findings of the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission seem to be forgotten or neglected since women have experienced little change in the advancement of women and minorities in the superintendency.

Selection process

The lack of change that resulted from the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission suggests that our society continues to operate in a patriarchal manner. Furthermore, our culture perpetuates the access of white males to the superintendency through the structure of the selection process. Hudson (1991) acknowledges some of the sociocultural barriers that are grounded in the patriarchal institution of the superintendency. She suggests that the selection process for the superintendency is filled with prejudices toward women and minorities. Both the silent and overt prejudices that exist in this arena sustain the long-standing process that is intricately tied to the good old boy network. Moreover, Hudson believes that white males dominate the selection process by controlling the majority of the formal and informal job contact networks.

Dana and Bourisaw (2006) suggest that search committees base their superintendent choices on their personal interactions and experiences with educational leadership, which is white and male. Furthermore, it appears that the selection process for

the superintendency is not an equitable process and that the formal structure is in place to appear that the procedures adhere to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Hudson, 1991). The process supports the perpetuation of white men dominating the high-level administrative positions such as the superintendency. For example, men seem to enter the selection process simply by submitting their resume while women might be considered if someone knows them both personally and professionally (Tallerico, 200a).

In addition, there are other covert practices that may contribute to the difficulty women have accessing this position. Tallerico (2000a) explains that specific facets of school board and search consultants' selection methods and the prevailing ideals our society holds about the superintendent position collectively promote the access of white males to the superintendency. She also suggests that many women don't make it through the search consultant's initial screening process and, if they do, they are often presented to the board as a token female candidate so that it appears they are being equitable in their selection process. Tallerico (2000b) reports that a search consultant for 26 years describes the "best" superintendent candidate as:

> My model is a man who was a teacher for 3 to 5 years.... Many others of them teach too long. When you teach 10, 15, 20 years you get socialized into the norms of teaching. Now, in my book, administrators *are* teachers. But teach 5 to 8 years then move on.... Now if you've taught for over 15 years and haven't even gotten into a principalship yet, or some other central office position, when you finally get to that superintendency position, you're 50 years old. (pp. 73-74)

This example shows how the search consultants can serve as gatekeepers to the superintendent position. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) state: "Their lack of exposure to alternative leadership styles and beliefs about whom and what creates a good superintendent contribute to eliminating women applicants from the pool" (p. 115).

School boards and search consultants also value candidates that have gone through the appropriate positions: teacher, assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent. However, it is not just sitting in the various chairs that seem to be important, rather, it is preferred that candidates have spent a short length of time in the various positions. Women spend about half of their career in the classroom, usually ten to fifteen years. Therefore, school boards and search consultants may consider women to have a difficult task in transitioning from the teacher mentality to administrator since they have not experienced responsibilities with finance, personnel, and other administrative tasks (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

One prominent reason that women spend a longer amount of time in the classroom prior to entering into an administrative position is because they need to delay the entry until their children and family can take care of themselves. This can be considered as a lack of equity because the delay of entry into the administrative ranks means that women have less time to work their way up the ladder to the superintendent position and less time to serve in the role of superintendent. Kamler and Shakeshaft (1999) quote a "well-established regional consultant" from a search firm who raises this issue:

> Many of the females had been teaching fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years, so they were very experienced teachers – senior-type persons. At fifty-five or sixty, they are out looking for a superintendency when the males were retiring at fifty-five, and so it was difficult for them to get jobs. The board's looking to replace somebody who is retiring at fifty-five and the women who were applying for the job were fifty-eight and had never been a superintendent. Board members were saying, "Well, wait a minute." (p. 57)

It appears that the socially constructed sex roles serve as discriminators for women attaining the superintendency.

Dana and Bourisaw (2006) explain that this sex role discrimination can be seen during the interview process when women are often asked if their spouse will be moving to the district with them. The Board of Education should want to spend time learning about the experience, knowledge, character, and attributes that the candidate can bring to the district rather than the housing arrangements of the candidate's spouse. This reinforces the conclusion that discrimination exists in the selection process.

In addition to the length of time spent in the classroom, the search consultants also consider the length of time spent in administrative positions and the level of experience. More specifically, secondary administrative experience is preferred over elementary experience because school boards believe that the secondary experience is more rigorous (Tallerico, 2000b). High school principals are more visible in the community than elementary principals due to the large number of evening extracurricular activities that involve members of the community. Also, the high school is often seen as the heart of the community and, therefore, the principal is well known.

For these reasons, the high school principal is often perceived as having greater management skills that will afford him more success in the superintendency. Furthermore, the high school principalship is a male-dominated position and women predominately serve as elementary principals, curriculum coordinators, or staff development coordinators (Hodgkinson & Motenegro, 1999). The preference of hiring a former secondary principal for the superintendent position instead of a former elementary principal is another barrier of the patriarchal institution for women since there is also an underrepresentation of women in the high school principalship.

Mentors

The structure of the mentor system is similar to the selection process in that it also serves as a gatekeeper for women accessing the superintendent position. Both of these systems are constructed around the good old boy network that serves to promote and maintain the patriarchal structure of the superintendency. Moody (1983) explains:

> The activities of encouragers, advisors, nominators, and sponsors are transmitted by way of networks. The top spots in school administration have been viewed for a long time as a private club with entry controlled by a system of old boy networks. The old boy network refers to the informal alliance between men in organizations, whereby they help each other to the top. (p. 389)

In 1992, 56.5 percent of the superintendents reported the strong existence of a good old boy network, and in 2000, 52.5 percent reported this network exists (Glass et al., 2000). In order to navigate these systemic barriers women must seek the support of mentors, sponsors, and advocates. Marshall (1985) explains:

> The most powerful training and mobility structure in the educational administration career, the sponsor-protégé relationship, occurs when a powerful person notices, tests, trains, and promotes a protégé. The sponsor-protégé relationship is a close and personal one. Male sponsors are reluctant to invest their efforts in women because women are different and because close male/female relationships most often are seen as non-professional. (p. 133)

Because it appears more difficult for women to have mentors, this system also constitutes as a barrier to the superintendency.

Bjork (2000) explains that “mentoring has served as a powerful developer of human potential throughout the centuries.... Mentoring is a key component of induction programs” (p. 156). A mentor may assist in developing a superintendent’s leadership skills but more importantly for women, a mentor can promote a woman’s access to the superintendency through his/her network. Bell and Chase (1996) found that women

superintendents' positive professional connections to white men held promise for being integrated into the power structures and support networks of educational administration. Conversely, Bjork (2000) states: "The absence of mentor relationships, role models, and networks is frequently cited in the literature as a primary reason why women and minorities do not go into the superintendency" (p. 157). However, it may be difficult for women to identify potential mentors and networks to assist them in their pursuit of the superintendency. Babcok and Laschever (2003) explain:

> Typically, men's instrumental networks and their friendship networks are predominantly male. Women's instrumental networks, in contrast, are usually made up of both men and women but their friendship networks tend to be predominantly female. As a result, women's ties to the men in their instrumental networks – frequently the more powerful member of the group – can be less strong and therefore less valuable. Compounding the problem, in workplace situations in which women are a minority, women are more likely to be marginal members of any informal friendship networks of which they become members, a marginalization that appears to result more from exclusionary pressures than from preferences. (p. 441)

Family and feminine expectations

In addition to the barriers within the patriarchal structure and selection process women also encounter barriers as a result of family and feminine expectations. The social construction of the superintendency as a patriarchal institution has its own discourse just as society has created a discourse for women. Skrla (2000a) states: "In the same way that the US society has constructed the superintendency as male, it has created a package of norms about femininity and female behavior" (p. 297). Bardwick and Douvan (1971) described these norms as including dependence, passivity, fragility, low pain tolerance, nonaggression, noncompetiveness, inner orientation, interpersonal orientation, empathy, sensitivity, nurturance, subjectivity, yieldingness, receptivity, inability to risk, emotional liability, and supportiveness. However, when entering a male-dominated profession such

as the superintendency, women are faced with learning how to adapt to the norms expected of people who enter this position. For example, some studies show successful women superintendents adopt a discourse style that includes power, authority, and decisiveness – values usually associated with the male gender (Chase, 1995; Grogan, 1996; Scott, 1999).

One of the consequences women face because of these expectations is that "women more than men must walk a tightrope of conflicting expectations" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 347). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) explain:

> Leaders are expected to build power and use it, but women should not be powerful. Leaders are expected to be authoritarian; women are expected to nurture others. Leaders are expected to aggressively pursue interests that improve education for children, but women are criticized if they are aggressive in their pursuit. (p. 18)

Additionally, men typically employ the leadership model of "power over" others while women work to establish "power with" others (Brunner, 2000). This is an example of how women and men choose to lead organizations by utilizing these opposing expectations that society holds for men and women. While both leadership styles might be effective, the nurturing leadership styles appear to be problematic for women because society views the superintendency through the lens of patriarchy.

Harris (2004) also explores these conflicting societal expectations. Harris explores women educational leaders' childhood experiences, educational experiences, leadership styles and skills, career paths, mentoring experiences, and personal and professional barriers. The common thread that appears to exist among these women is that they are all energetic, dedicated to their job, have the ability to collaborate, maintain a passion for

keeping their focus on students, and most importantly they have the support of their family members.

Harris explains that the women express the importance of finding a balance between their family and professional lives. However, many of the women were able to attain their success as a result of their families becoming a part of their career and accepting many of the household responsibilities. More specifically, some of the women discussed how they involved their families in activities and events within their career in order to maintain a healthy balance. Harris points out that while these women have been successful in their careers they have each sacrificed their personal lives significantly. For example, while some of the women found a way to involve their families in their career others explained that they had to choose either a family life or an educational leadership position. Many of the women that chose to pursue both rarely spent time with their family or divorced as a result of the demands on their time. These examples lend support to the challenges women face while navigating these conflicting societal roles.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature surrounding the main research question for this study; *how do women overcome the barriers within the superintendency?* In order to conduct a focused review of the literature I examined some of the sociocultural barriers that women encounter. These barriers within the patriarchal institution of the superintendency include the selection processes, lack of mentoring for women, family expectations, and feminine expectations. While these barriers are well documented in the literature there seems to be a lack of information about how women have successfully

overcome these barriers. There was a need for more women to share their experiences with these barriers. Chase (1995) explains:

> Although everyone has stories to tell, some people's experiences are culturally interesting because they bring together divergent strands of culture in a new way and promise to elicit new stories. The experiences of professionals in the United States who occupy positions of power previously held by white men are storyworthy in this way. (p. 33)

Since the current percentage of women superintendents has increased to 21.7, it is evident that some women have learned how to navigate and overcome the barriers that exist within the patriarchal construction of the position, but it is important that these stories are told.

It is apparent in this review of the literature that many aspects of the superintendency have changed since its inception; however, the position is still greatly affected by the social issues of the community and society as a whole. More specifically, the societal expectations of the superintendent position remain focused on the patriarchal construction of the superintendency. Thus, I chose to focus on the patriarchal barriers that women face in attaining and maintaining a superintendent position.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how women navigate and overcome barriers to the superintendency. This study was also conducted to examine why so few women occupy the superintendency. One of the reasons might be a result of the barriers that women encounter while navigating the patriarchal construction of the public school institution. However, we do not exactly know how women who obtain a superintendent position effectively negotiate the barriers. In order to describe these experiences it seemed appropriate to explore how knowledge about barriers is socially constructed by different women. More specifically, I sought to understand how the participants acknowledge and negotiate the barriers to determine if there are similarities and differences.

In this chapter I will explain the methodology I used in this study. I will outline the rationale for adopting this methodology and explain the postmodern feminist perspective that I used to guide the study and interpret the data that I collected. Next, I will present the research questions that guided the study. Additionally, I will explain how the participants were selected for this study. Finally, I will discuss my role as the researcher and explain how I collected, analyzed, interpreted the data, and disseminated the results.

Research Process

I used a qualitative research approach in this study because it supports the view that individuals continually and actively construct reality through interactions with their social world (Merriam, 1998). Schutz (1967) found that it is difficult to explain reality unless it is grounded in the meaning that individuals construct based on their unique life experiences. More specifically, he suggests that this approach attempts to "study social behavior by interpreting its subjective meaning as found in the intentions of individuals. The aim ... is to interpret the actions of individuals in the social world and the ways in which individuals give meaning to social phenomena" (p. 11).

A qualitative approach allows the researcher to enter the participant's world to derive meaning from her descriptions of experiences and behaviors rather than to test hypotheses. This approach was appropriate for this study because I examined how women interact within the patriarchal construction of the superintendency. Furthermore, this approach supported my interest in "understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Marshall and Rossman (2006) provide a more detailed explanation:

> Most qualitative researchers... are intrigued by the complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life by the meanings that the participants themselves attribute to these interactions. These interests take qualitative researchers into natural settings, rather than laboratories, and foster pragmatism in using multiple methods for exploring a topic. Thus, qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people. (p. 2)

I was also interested in understanding women's perceptions and how they articulate their experiences as they relate to the social construction of the patriarchal institution of public education. Patton (1985) explains:

> Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting.... The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p. 1)

For the purpose of this study, I adopted a qualitative approach and conducted an interview study. An interview study design allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in a "bounded context" (Miles & Hubberman, 1994). The interview study was "intrinsically bounded" by the five female superintendents in this study (Merriam, 1998, p. 27).

This study can also be described by its "particularistic," "descriptive," and "heuristic" characteristics (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). A particularistic study focuses on the "particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon" (Merriam, p. 29). This study is characterized as particularistic because it focuses on the specificity of the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency in five particular locations rather than producing knowledge that is generalizable to all women superintendents.

The results of an interview study that yield rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon are descriptive in nature. "Thick description is a term from anthropology and means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). This study is also considered as descriptive in nature because the

results are my interpretation of the descriptive stories of these women superintendents. Finally, the heuristic qualities of this study clarify the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency by providing new interpretations and explanations for the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency. Additionally, this study is considered to be an "interpretive" study because I used the data to "develop conceptual categories, or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions" about the superintendency (Merriam, p. 38). More specifically, these conceptual categories were developed around the barriers the women superintendents have experienced. These barriers included feminine expectations, the good old boy network, the selection process, family expectations, balance, and relocation.

Selection of Participants

I selected five female superintendents for this study in order to examine different perspectives on the social construction of knowledge about barriers to the superintendency. I utilized "purposeful sampling" in order to select the participants from which the most can be learned and that meet the selection criteria (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). "The criteria you establish for purposeful sampling directly reflects the purpose of the study and guides the identification of information-rich cases. You not only spell out the criteria you will use, but you say why the criteria are important" (Merriam, p. 61). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain:

> In naturalistic investigations, which are tied so intimately to contextual factors, the purpose of sampling will most often be to include as much information as possible, in all of its various ramifications and constructions; hence, maximum variation sampling will usually be the sampling mode of choice. (p. 201)

The selection criteria for this study included women who are in their first six years in their current superintendent position and women who are serving in small, medium, and large size school districts. However, due to the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency and the required confidentiality of this study the district sizes are not disclosed in this study. Additionally, race was masked to protect the identities of the women.

I purposefully studied women who are in the early stage of their experiences in the superintendency because they might have a different perspective than women who are in the latter part of their tenure as superintendent. For example, someone who is at the end of her tenure might not focus on her experiences attaining the position in the district and this would yield a different perspective. I was interested in learning about the experiences of women attaining the position and negotiating the barriers to attain and maintain the position. It is possible that a veteran might have more difficulty recalling her initial experiences acquiring a superintendency.

Furthermore, as a result of the underrepresentation of female superintendents it was necessary for the scope of experience to include one to six years in order to have enough women to constitute a sample. The participants were also selected from small, medium, and large size districts in order to collect data from women serving in different size school districts. This was important to determine if similar issues transcend district size or are more dependent on the local context.

Research Questions

We, as researchers, need to begin asking new questions about women and the superintendency.

The following research questions drawn from Bell (1988) guided this study:

1. What do women in the superintendency think about what it means to be one of a few women in a male-dominated occupation?
2. How does gender consciousness play a role in the ability to examine and understand barriers?
3. How do characteristics of the position interact with gender?

Negotiating Entry

The complex role and the many demands on the time of the superintendent are reasons that it was critical to carefully negotiate entry into the school districts to conduct my research. Since the superintendent is responsible for approving any research conducted in the school district I approached her first to gain access. Due to the sheer number of contacts a superintendent makes on a daily basis I introduced myself in person, explained the purpose of my study, and asked the superintendent to consider my request. Additionally, since the superintendent is constantly in demand, I sought the assistance of colleagues who were already acquainted with the superintendents to introduce me to them. It was also important that I schedule the interviews with the superintendents soon after I met them in order for their busy schedules to accommodate the timeframe of my research study. Therefore, I followed up with each superintendent after our initial meeting to schedule the interviews.

Additionally, the superintendency is a political position and can be related to living in a glass house because the superintendent is such a visible person in the community. For this reason, the superintendents might have been unwilling to talk about some of their experiences unless they trusted me and understood that the study was

confidential. It was important for me to develop a relationship with the participants and deliberately try to make the participant feel at ease during the interviews so they felt comfortable telling their stories. This was accomplished by providing the women with the opportunity to talk about their experiences and also to allow them to determine what information was important to share.

Researcher Role

The interviewer-respondent relationship is a complex phenomenon and must be treated with sensitivity. Seidman (1991) suggests that "interviewing requires interviewers to have enough distance to enable them to ask real questions and to explore, not to share assumptions" (p. 77). The interviewer should be respectful and nonjudgmental of the data drawn from the interview with the respondent. Seidman suggests that the interviewer should strive to form an "I-Thou" relationship that borders on a "We" relationship (p. 96). However, Seidman also urges that the relationship should strike a balance but should be more focused on the components of an "I-Thou" relationship. By focusing more on the "We" relationship "the interviewer would become an equal participant, and the resulting discourse would be a conversation and not an interview" (Seidman, p. 96). It was important that I was conscientious toward establishing a friendly relationship that was trustworthy rather than a friendship.

Generation of Data

I utilized the "person-to-person" interview design in order to create an environment that encouraged the participants to share their stories (Merriam, 1998, p. 71). This type of interview can also be defined as a conversation with a purpose (Dexter, 1970) because I was obtaining the participants' reconstructions of their experiences

during their tenure in the superintendency. By using the person-to-person interview design I was able to elicit the narratives of the women's personal experiences in the superintendency without the limitations of a survey, which is commonly used in quantitative studies. Patton (1990) explains the interview process:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

The participants were interviewed two times in an "unstructured" interview format (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). More specifically, the interview was unstructured because I asked each superintendent to tell me her story regarding her experiences with education. I also utilized the unstructured format to allow me to respond to the situation and make adjustments to my follow-up questions. I created an "interview guide" to list all of my questions to use as a point of reference during the interview (Merriam, p. 82). As a novice researcher, the guide assisted me when the women paused and asked what else I wanted to hear.

Initially**,** I used in-depth interviews in order to uncover the five participants' distinct perspectives about how they obtained the superintendency and the experiences they encountered while pursuing the superintendency. I conducted one in-depth interview for at least two hours with each superintendent for a total of five interviews. After the initial interviews I conducted a follow-up interview of at least two hours to ask more in-depth questions about their previous responses. The interviews were structured with time in between each interview to provide opportunities for transcription, data analysis, and

reflection. The time also allowed me to prepare follow-up questions that helped to gather data that built upon the knowledge constructed in the previous interviews. Additionally, I scheduled a third interview with the participants in case I needed to follow-up on any issues that needed clarification; however, I only needed to follow up with one of the women for a third interview

It was also be important for me to ensure that this study was rigorous and trustworthy in order to uphold the standards of qualitative research as scientific inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified a set of criteria that can be employed to judge qualitative studies just as conventional criteria are employed to quantitative studies. The criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Qualitative research presumes that there are multiple truths and does not seek to find the one truth. More specifically, "Events or situations are theoretically open to as many constructions as there are persons engaged in them, or as many reconstructions by a single individual as imagination allows" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 77). Stake (1977) explains further:

> There is too great a temptation to suppose that truth is to be found in words and to suppose that intuitions are only poor facimiles of truth. In practical matters, what is in fact true is that which is understood.... In any circumstance the truth might be but a single truth – but evaluators are certain not to find it. What they can find are multiple truths, multiple understandings, some contradictory to others. Evaluators should seek to resolve the contradictions and misunderstandings but should expect that they will have to portray the multiple realities they find. (p. 19)

However, the multiple realities that are constructed must be credible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that credibility can be ensured through member-checks and follow-up interviews based on the reflective practices embodied in the qualitative approach. I utilized the follow-up interviews to enhance the credibility of the study. I also employed member-checking to further establish trust with the participants and to ensure

transparency. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this technique as the process when data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are reviewed by the members of the groups from whom the data were collected. Morse (1994), Angen (2000) and Sandelowski (1993) provide a critical analysis of using member-checking to establish credibility. They posit that member-checking assumes that there is one fixed truth that can be described by the researcher and then confirmed by the participant. This assumption is in conflict with the theories that there are multiple truths that are co-created and derived within the local setting. Nevertheless, I thought that it was important for the women to review the transcripts to ensure I captured their stories correctly and also to uphold ethical standards. Therefore, I provided each participant with copies of their transcribed interviews and asked them to inform me if they agreed with the data. Only one participant requested that I remove a comment so that she could not be identified and I immediately deleted those remarks.

Credibility is also established through the analysis of multiple data sources. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that triangulation is achieved by using multiple data sources to develop an understanding of the phenomenon. I utilized "analyst triangulation" by using multiple analysts to determine if the categories and themes that emerged from the data were reflective of the participants' experiences (Patton, 1999). I enlisted the assistance of family members, colleagues, and the chair of my dissertation committee to conduct these external reviews. Patton (1990) also notes: "Multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective" (p. 244). Therefore, I drew upon a number of sources by reviewing job descriptions, newspaper articles, job postings, letters, and

observing the behaviors of the participants during the interviews. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) note, “Even in studies using in-depth interviews, observation plays an important role as the researcher notes the interviewee’s body language and affect in addition to their words” (p. 99). The additional data were documented in field notes and analyzed along with the transcripts.

Qualitative studies differ from quantitative in that the results cannot be generalized to other populations. However, transferability can occur if the researcher provides sufficient details so that the conclusions can be transferred to another setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interpretations should include “thick descriptions” or a detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher precisely describes the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context (Geertz, 1973). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further explain thick description:

> It is entirely reasonable to expect an inquirer to provide sufficient information about the context in which an inquiry is carried out so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment. We shall call that appropriate base of information a thick description. (p. 125)

In addition to thick description I included time for reflection in between the interviews and designed the second interview so that it built upon the responses in the first interview. The additional time provided greater opportunities to add to the sufficiency and detail of the data, which also provided a better chance for transferability. Furthermore, I addressed confirmability by bringing in the external reviewers to look at the data and review drafts of my writing. The external reviewers provided an outside critical perspective by providing suggestions, asking questions, and confirming results. The dependability of the study was addressed with member checking and also reflected in

the detailed explanation of the procedures of the study, which resulted in the ability of someone else to replicate the study.

The Analysis of the Data

I conducted the data collection and analysis simultaneously so that the data were not "unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming with the sheer volume of material that needed to be processed" (Merriam, 1998, p. 162). The data collection and analysis could have continued indefinitely so it was important to base my decision to end this phase of the study on the following criteria:

> Exhaustion of sources (although sources may be recycled and tapped multiple times); saturation of categories (continuing data collection produces tiny increments of new information in comparison to the effort expended to get them); emergence of regularities – the sense of "integration" (although care must be exercised to avoid a false conclusion occasioned by regularities occurring at a more simplistic level than the inquirer should accept); and *over-extension* – the sense that new information being unearthed is very far removed from the core of any of the viable categories that have emerged and does not contribute usefully to the emergence of additional viable categories. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 350)

In addition to the above criteria I also looked for exceptions that arose in the data. I established a systematic data management plan prior to beginning the initial interviews in order to effectively manage the voluminous amount of data in this study.

I recorded my observations and interpretations by writing memos and field notes to assist with the analysis. Maxwell (1996) notes that "memos do for ideas what field notes and transcripts do for perception: they convert thought into a form that allows examination and further manipulation" (p. 12). It was important for me to process and write up all field notes immediately following the interviews. Additionally, I hired someone to transcribe the taped interviews into typed documents immediately following each

interview. The transcribed data was stored on my computer and I also kept a hard copy in a file cabinet.

One component of the data management plan was to code all of the data. Coding is considered to be a component of the initial data analysis and is a tool for organizing the data into meaningful categories. Merriam also suggests that the researcher needs to assign a code to chunks of data in each interview, memo, field note, and document in order to easily access the data during the analysis and the write-up of the findings. I created a "start list" of codes prior to the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58) but then refined the codes based on the themes that arose from the data. Miles and Huberman suggest that the researcher develop the codes in the start list from the theoretical framework, research questions, and hypotheses. I also used Atlas.ti, a software program, to technically manage the organization of the coded data.

In the next phase of the data analysis process I began to draw some initial conclusions from the coded data. "To review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). I analyzed the data to search for categories or themes that emerged and cut across the data. These categories or themes are "concepts indicated by the data (not the data itself).... In short, conceptual categories and properties have a life apart from the evidence that gave rise to them" (Taylor & Bogdon, 1984, p. 36). The categories "reflect the purpose of the research" and are also "the answers to the research question(s)" (Merriam, 1998, p. 183).

In this interview study, I utilized the concepts from both "within-case" as well as "cross-case" data analysis (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). More specifically, I analyzed the data

from each of the interviews as separate entities. By drawing upon the within-case analysis approach, I created a comprehensive individual context for each of the five participants. Merriam explains: “Data are gathered so the researcher can learn as much about the contextual variables as possible that might have a bearing on the case” (p. 194). The second stage of analysis for this study began with the culmination of the within-case analysis approach. I sought to build abstractions across the interviews of women superintendents by drawing from the “cross-case analysis” method (Merriam, p. 195). In the cross-case analysis the researcher attempts “to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (Yin, 1994, p. 112).

In order to help manage the sheer magnitude of data that I analyzed through both the within-case and cross-case methods I constructed a data display. The data display served as an organizing tool to assist me with sorting the relevant data into meaningful categories. More specifically, I created a “thematic conceptual matrix” for each case that was organized by general conceptual themes that emerged from the data (Miles & Hubberman, 1994, p. 131). The common themes included advice, balance, Board of Education expectations, career path, childhood, difficulties, divorce, education, family, feminine expectations, gatekeeper, good old boy network, husband’s role, internal barriers, leadership styles, mentors, mothering, next steps, patriarchy, spirituality, relocation, respect, selection process, support network, therapy, token female, and women superintendents.

Confidentiality and Ethics

I ensured that confidentiality was upheld and I followed ethical procedures throughout the course of this study. These tasks were accomplished by employing a variety of techniques. First, each interview was conducted in person in their offices. This location provided the privacy that allowed the women to talk freely about their experiences. Prior to the interview, I provided each participant with an information letter and a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study and explained how the data would be used in this study. Additionally, I informed the participants that the interviews would be recorded. I also explained to each participant that the study is confidential and their participation is anonymous. In order to protect their confidentiality I assigned pseudonyms to each participant, their district, universities they attended, and people they referred to during the interviews. Additionally, I explained to each participant that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Assumptions

The researcher's personal experiences can always shape the research study and the conclusions drawn from the data. "A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (Malterud, 2001, pp. 483-484).

As a female assistant superintendent I inherently bring some personal assumptions about access barriers to the superintendency. My interest in the superintendent position began when I became an assistant superintendent. This interest led to my awareness that women are underrepresented in the superintendency. While the numerical data explain

that there are more men than women in the position, it neither describes the reasons why nor does it tell the stories of women who aspire to the chief position in the public school system. I was interested in learning about some of the reasons why women perceive that they are underrepresented in the position. I also wanted to know how women respond to barriers while pursuing the position. My perception was that men establish and reinforce the barriers within the patriarchal education system in order to maintain the majority of the superintendent positions.

My personal claim signifies that I believe that women do not have equal access to the superintendency and that they are oppressed within the patriarchal structures of public education. The assumption of the patriarchal system might have shaped my interpretation of the women's discourses. Therefore, it was critical for me to acknowledge my personal beliefs. I acknowledged these beliefs during my doctoral program of study when I began reading about women superintendents and responding to their experiences in book reviews and papers. Malterud (2001) explains: "Preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to mention them" (p. 484).

Findings

I organized the findings from this study around the themes that emerged from the data in order to explain what I learned about the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency. In order to mitigate the complex task of determining the balance between the concrete description and the analysis and interpretation I utilized Loftland's (1974) method. Lofland explains that "sixty to seventy percent of the report is events, anecdotes, episodes, and the like, and some thirty to forty percent is conceptual

framework" (p. 107). I also took into account Erikson's (1986) differentiation of particular description, general description, and interpretive commentary.

Based on Erikson's (1986) model, the raw data are presented as particular description, the patterns are reported as general descriptions, and the interpretive commentary serves as a framework to understand the particular and general descriptions. In other words, the particular description consists of "quotes from people interviewed, quotes from field notes, and narrative vignettes of everyday life" (Merriam, 1998, p. 235). General description is used to "tell the reader whether the vignettes and quotes are typical of the data as a whole" (Merriam, 1998, p. 235). Erikson (1986) explains the importance of the interpretive commentary:

> The interpretive commentary that precedes and follows an instance of particular description is necessary to guide the reader to see the analytic type of which the instance is a concrete token.... Interpretive commentary thus points the reader to those details that are salient for the author, and to the meaning-interpretations of the author. Commentary that follows the particular vignette or quote stimulates the retrospective interpretation of the reader. Both the anticipatory and the subsequent commentary are necessary if the reader is not to be lost in a thicket of uninterpretable detail. (p. 152)

By including particular description, general descriptions, and interpretive commentary in the final report I provided the reader "a vicarious experience of the inquiry setting" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 214). Lincoln and Guba (1981) also define the case study report as "a snapshot of reality," a "slice of life," or "an episode" (pp. 370-371).

Timeline

I wrote the introduction, review of the literature, and the methodology sections from January 2008 through December of 2008. I submitted the proposal to the Institutional Review Board at Georgia State University and it was approved in January,

2009. The participants were selected and the interviews were scheduled in December of 2008 and then finalized upon approval from the Institutional Review Board. I conducted the interviews in January of 2009, February of 2009, and March of 2009. Next, I immediately hired someone to transcribe the interviews so that I could begin the data analysis. I analyzed the data from January of 2009 through May of 2009. Then, I wrote my findings and conclusions in May of 2009 through September of 2009 and conducted the final revisions in October of 2009.

Summary

I was interested in the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency and investigated some possible reasons for this phenomenon. I utilized a qualitative interview study approach to explore this issue. In this chapter I defined the underrepresentation of women, explained the research approach, the theoretical framework, participant selection, research setting, negotiating entry, data collection plan, ethical considerations, assumptions, data analysis plan, and the report. Following the explanation of the method, chapter four will present the results of the study and chapter five will present conclusions drawn from the findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the data gathered from the interviews, documents, and artifacts to help understand that women can overcome barriers to the superintendency and that the glass ceiling needs to be shattered. In this study I interviewed five women superintendents on two different occasions. Each interview ranged from two to three hours in length. During the first interview each participant was asked to tell her story rather than beginning with a list of questions in order to encourage them to share what they believed was important. However, a list of questions was also utilized to prompt the participants for additional information when they asked what else I wanted them to talk about. These questions are included in appendix A. Each interview was transcribed and then coded prior to the second interview. By reviewing the transcripts prior to the second interview follow-up questions could be developed based on issues discussed in the initial interview.

Following the interviews, artifacts and documents were gathered to further explore these women's experiences in the superintendency. Each superintendent was asked to share newspaper clippings announcing their superintendency, memoirs, notes, job postings for their positions, and the current job description for their position. The information gathered from these documents is incorporated in this chapter as well.

A feminist perspective was used to explore how women have overcome barriers within the superintendency. As stated in previous chapters, more research on this topic was needed due to the low number of women superintendents. It was important to conduct a qualitative research study to examine the experiences of women superintendents who could share their stories with other aspiring superintendents. This chapter will include a discussion of the barriers that emerged from the data, explanations of how women responded to the challenges, and advice for aspiring women superintendents.

The Women Superintendents

The participants in this study consisted of five middle-aged women superintendents from school districts in the state of Georgia. The women represented different size districts with varying demographics; however, the district sizes will not be presented in this study in order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Based on the list of superintendents located on the Georgia School Superintendent Association website, women currently make up twenty-seven percent of the superintendents in Georgia. While this percent is slightly higher than the national percentage, it is low enough that it remains important not to disclose the population characteristics of the participants' school districts. The following section of the chapter will provide a description of the participants' backgrounds to familiarize you with the women in the study.

Andrea Burton

Andrea is the oldest of five children and moved to Georgia when she was ten years old. Her father was the first person on either side of her family who went to college,

and he graduated the year before she graduated from college. Since her father was busy working and going to school, she helped her mother with the household duties. She explained: “I had a lot of responsibility as the oldest child... so I always had teaching in my blood.”

Andrea’s parents did not have a lot of money, so when her father left her mother to marry a co-worker she took on even more duties by helping her mother raise her younger brothers and sisters. She also began working in high school to help with the finances and later took on the burden of paying for her education.

> We didn’t have money, so I was going to go to college wherever it was free. And, in fact, when I was in tenth grade at Westside I started leaving school part day. Through DECA, or something like that, I could work. I worked through high school. So, by the time I graduated high school, I was working thirty-six hours a week. Then, I worked all through college as well. I really wanted to go to Yorktown, but I got a full scholarship to St. John University. So, that was where I was going.

After Andrea graduated with her Bachelor of Education degree she entered the teaching field where she spent six years in the classroom.

Andrea described herself as always wanting to have a new challenge and said that she likes to stay busy. She knew that she would need the doctorate degree for her career but also knew that it would be challenging since she had a child and was also teaching. She said: “I wanted to get my doctorate in Administration and, of course, I would have to work and get my doctorate at night, so St. John was the best plan for that.”

During the time she was working on her doctorate she moved into the position of instructional lead teacher and was commuting fifty miles each way to work and also driving to school at night. Andrea turned thirty years old the day after she defended her dissertation and three months later gave birth to her second child. At this time, she

decided to take a sabbatical for nine months. She returned to work the following year as an instructional lead teacher in another school. Andrea served as the instructional lead teacher for one year, assistant principal for two years, and then was a principal for three years.

After spending several years in the principalship Andrea was ready for a new challenge. She approached her supervisor and asked him if she could open a new school the following year. Instead of granting this request he asked Andrea to consider moving to the central office. Andrea explained that she had not considered a central office position, much less the superintendency at this point in her career.

> Look, we've got a new superintendent.... He is really going to shake up the District Office.... I think you can do it. Will you go talk to him? So, that was the first time that I even had any thinking that I would ever do anything more than principal and really began to think, if I can do this, maybe I can be superintendent. So, over time I had the opportunity to do many of the things that the superintendent does. So, as I got into it, I said I can do this.

She worked in the central office for ten years in a number of different positions. During this time, she received a letter of recommendation for a superintendent professional development program. Andrea decided to submit her application and after a competitive interview process she was selected for the program. She said: "That was a great experience.... I really wanted to be a superintendent to make a difference.... So, I started interviewing as I got opportunities." Andrea was successful in attaining a superintendency and is currently the superintendent of Carmel School District.

Sylvia Rabun

Sylvia described herself as decisive, fair, determined, supportive, encouraging, and consistent. She also said: "I care about people, I know we are in this business for

children, but I do care about the employees." Sylvia is a determined woman who has always had to work hard but has not taken anything for granted along the way.

Sylvia grew up in a small town and has four brothers and sisters. She had a lot of responsibilities growing up and explained:

> Well, I grew up in rural, south Georgia. I mean really rural, south Georgia. It was Jones County. But, before we moved to the town of Sidney we were out on a rural, dirt road where you just saw houses every now and then. So, that was my humble beginnings. There were five of us and I am the oldest. Of course, I played teacher when I was a little girl in the country.

Sylvia attended elementary school in a three-room schoolhouse in the country. She stated: "During that time… we didn't have a lot. But we had teachers who cared about us and talked about the importance of getting a good education and that we could do anything." Sylvia said that her parents also had high expectations for her. Even though she grew up in a small rural town, she had the opportunity to go to New York and stay with her aunt during the summer months every year. She stated: "So, for a little country girl to go to the city was quite exciting."

After graduating from high school in her hometown, Sylvia went to college and earned a Bachelor of Education degree in business. She said that she did not have a good experience with her student teaching, so she decided that she did not want to be a teacher and went to work for a newspaper. After a few years Sylvia decided to try substitute teaching and eventually decided to begin her career in education. She taught for a total of nine years in two different districts.

While Sylvia was teaching she decided to go back to school to earn a Master of Education degree and then went on to complete a Specialist of Education degree in Educational Leadership. Sylvia had a lot of financial responsibility for her education and

explained how she managed the expenses for earning her masters and specialist degrees. She said: “With my masters and specialist, I would pitch back... so I could pay it. I didn’t want a loan or anything, so that is how I paid for it.” Next, she decided to pursue a doctorate degree and, once again, found herself in the position of figuring out how to support herself financially through another degree.

> Then when it was time for the doctorate, that is very expensive, so I had no money. I was going through a divorce, so I just thought, I will apply.... So when I was accepted, I met with the Chair. I drove up to meet with him and to look at the campus and just to talk to people. He said, we really hope that you are going to start next month. I said, well, I have no money. He said, oh, that is not a problem, just go fill out an application for a scholarship. So, I did it. I started in September and I had not been approved for the scholarship. I said, I’ll get registered, but I don’t have any money. I made it known and I think I didn’t get notification about the scholarship until November and I had been taking classes since September. I was awarded the scholarship.

She wrote and defended her dissertation while she was serving as a principal. Sylvia was a middle school principal, a high school principal, and also served in a curriculum position in the central office.

After Sylvia finished her doctorate she said that she felt like something was missing, so she decided to apply for a superintendent professional development program and was accepted. She said she realized that she wanted to be a superintendent while she was in her doctoral program. Sylvia explained that the professors in her doctoral program encouraged everyone to strive for the superintendent position. She said: “At Brighton, it is not if you become a superintendent; if you think you might want to be a superintendent; but the talk is always when you become a superintendent.” Sylvia is currently the superintendent of the Providence School District.

Angela Parks

Even though Angela is a long-time educator, she explained that school was very difficult for her. She believes that the challenges she experienced during her childhood might have led her to a career in education. Angela moved around a lot when she was a child, which caused her to struggle as a student. She explained:

> We moved almost every year, which made my education very difficult for me. Seems like I was always behind in school because we were changing schools every year. Now, my father was not in the armed forces. He was an evangelist, a preacher, Southern Baptist; very Southern Baptist. I did not wear a pair of pants until after high school. I came from a very religious family. But, came to Rosemont County in the late seventh grade and been here ever since.... Of course, like I said, I was always a little bit behind in school.

Being a preacher's daughter, she also rarely spent time at home because she was either at a revival or eating dinner at someone else's home. She said: "So, I was at church, honestly, every night of my life and every weekend of my life." However, even though Angela believes her childhood schooling experiences encouraged her to be an educator she didn't pursue education right away. In fact, Angela did not go to college immediately after high school and worked in another industry for about six years.

> But, I didn't go to college right out of high school. I did not even want to be a teacher. I did not like school growing up. My dislike of school was the traveling. Every year, new school, new friends and just never feeling like I was a part of anything in my life. So, I didn't want to go to school.

Financially, she was successful in her initial job after high school but was also working long hours. Due to her long work hours, Angela and her husband did not see each other much. The hours she was spending at work were making it increasingly difficult because they were ready to start a family. Angela finally decided to go to college so that she could pursue a different career.

> So, I thought, what can I do? I cannot continue with this kind of schedule and have children. I was never home. He was in bed before I got home. I was just never there. So, honestly, I was looking for a career that when I had kids, I could stay at home with the children. I decided I was going to quit and go back to school.

Her boss graciously agreed to pay for her tuition if she continued working for him. However, after a couple of years Angela said that she and her boss began to have problems. Apparently he was encouraging her to quit because he did not want to continue paying her tuition. Angela finally gave in to his encouragement and quit when she became pregnant with her first child. She spent her last year of college at home studying and preparing for the birth of her child.

After completing her Bachelor of Education degree, Angela began her teaching career. During her teaching years Angela went back to school and completed a Master of Education degree, a Specialist of Education degree and then a Doctor of Education degree. Angela said that she had been happy teaching for fourteen years and never thought about an educational leadership position until a principal approached her and asked her to be his assistant principal. “I never aspired to be a leader. I didn’t want to be. I was happy in my own little world, in my own little classroom. I felt that I was a very effective teacher.” At that time, she earned a leadership certification and served as an assistant principal for a few years. Angela did not like the school assistant principal position. She stated: “It was a miserable time. I was back to where I was gone when my husband got up, and for two and half years I never had any time.”

During the time she was working as an assistant principal the curriculum position opened up Angela decided she was ready for a change and submitted her application. However, the superintendent did not support Angela and made it clear that she would not

be recommended to the board. Angela finally got the job after several board members told the superintendent to hire her and served as curriculum director for several years.

Next, Angela decided that she would enter the superintendency. She explained that she had never aspired to be a superintendent and still did not really desire to be a superintendent. However, Angela finally changed her mind.

> You know, I never wanted to be a superintendent, but I will just try it to see if I like it. It is a good opportunity, I guess. So why am I saying no to it? So, I did and I became superintendent…that year.

Angela is currently serving as the superintendent for Rosemont School District.

Kathy Clayton

Kathy immediately told me that her father had high expectations of her and instilled in her the importance of being a good student. While her father set these high standards, she described herself as an immature, sensitive, disorganized, and fun person who liked to joke a lot. She also said that she forgot her homework a lot while she was in school. However, in spite of these traits, she said that she was a fair student growing up. Kathy said: "Although I was in all of the advanced classes, I never considered myself to be a really great straight A student. I just made good grades."

While Kathy spoke fondly of her mother, she indicated that she aspired to be more like her father than her mother. She explained: "My mother was a stay-at-home kind of mom. I never modeled myself after her, she is very feminine, wanting to be cutesy and look good.... That was who she was, so I am more like my dad." Kathy explained that her father served as a role model for her continued education and career aspirations because he never settled for less than the best.

> He is an achiever himself. He came from a blue-collar kind of background but went to Drayton College on the G.I. Bill, which opened up a whole lot

> of world to him. So, he has been a real source of inspiration to me. Not because he especially believed in women's rights, but just that you do your very best.... So that was a big influence on me. I've always been motivated.

After Kathy graduated from high school, she immediately went on to college to pursue a postsecondary degree. Kathy initially pursued an education in public relations when she entered the university. She said: "I didn't ever think that being a television commentator in those days didn't fit with being a parent, a mother." During this time Kathy fell in love and got married. Soon after Kathy was married, she decided that she loved children and wanted to pursue a degree in Early Childhood Education. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education and accepted her first teaching position.

> It was kids from a local, nearby housing authority and that kind of stuff. So, tough kids. I tell you, it really blew me away about how much I did not know about how to teach those kids and how to make it all work. So, I came away from there wishing that I knew more about how do children learn and especially how they learn to read.

Kathy taught at this school for one year and left wishing that she knew more about how children learn.

After Kathy completed her first year teaching school, they moved for her husband's career. Kathy explained: "My husband, of all things at the time, got a job back at the university where I had lived for a year and he was a professor. So, I am back in the academic activity." Soon after they moved there, Kathy got pregnant and decided not to look for a teaching position. Instead, she decided to go back to school and earn a Master of Education degree. Once she completed this degree, she began working in schools again. While she was working she returned to school to earn the degree of Doctor of Philosophy degree. She said her father was instrumental in her pursuing this degree.

> For my father, the more education you have the better. You just keep getting education as long as you can. To him, to get your doctorate is to get your union card. That is what he would tell me. That is your ticket to doing whatever you want to do and you need to have that. So, later in my life he became the source of paying for me to have my doctorate. So, he has always been there to be a supporter for me to be achieving.

However, she experienced some difficulties while pursuing her doctorate because she went through a divorce during that time. Kathy explained: "I got a divorce right before I finished, and they gave me an extension because I couldn't do anything for about a year. I went back, and they were very good to me." Kathy said that it took her approximately eight years to complete the degree.

After the divorce Kathy decided that she was ready for a change, so she applied for some administrative positions. She served as a director in the central office in two different districts over the course of six years. At this time her son graduated from high school and left home to attend college. Once he left, she decided again that she was ready for a change and wanted to move to another state for a fresh start. She served in several different positions at the school level for the next few years.

After serving as a principal, Kathy decided that she was interested in a new challenge. She applied to a superintendent professional development program, and she was accepted. Meanwhile, her superintendent approached her and asked her to come to the central office. However, when he approached her, he told her that he wanted her to know that she was not going to be the next superintendent. In spite of him saying this to her, she decided to take the position to assist her with her aspiration to be a superintendent. She said: "I was not going to be able to get a superintendent's job from being an elementary principal. I would have to work at the board office first before I could ever change."

Kathy worked for two difficult years as an assistant superintendent. She said that she was the only female on the executive cabinet, and she was also the youngest member of the group. She was not included in the decision-making process and said she felt like she was constantly being isolated. Kathy said she could read the writing on the wall and she finally decided that it was time to begin her pursuit of a superintendent position. She applied and was hired as a superintendent in Everett School District.

Kathy talked about her leadership style as a superintendent. She described herself as having high emotional intelligence, which helps her understand other people's emotions as well as her own. She said she has high expectations of herself and staff but won't ask anyone else to work harder than she is willing to work. Kathy described her leadership style as being participatory.

> I love participation, I want everybody involved. I don't think that I have all of the answers by any means and I want to set up systems and processes where there is lots and lots of input and exchange of ideas. I want to be good at what I do. I have high expectations for myself, I want to study and be a scholar of work. I am that way and I think that it is evident to other people. So, that kind of is where my pressure towards people to perform comes from... I have high expectations for myself and what I want us to be.

One of the teachers in the school district remarked that she appreciates Kathy's hand –on leadership approach. She said that she is happy working in this role and continues to nurture and develop her leadership skills.

Patricia Dillard

Patricia grew up in rural Georgia in a blue collar family. Both of her parents dropped out of high school but went on to serve as role models for Patricia.

> They were both very smart people, just not college-educated people. Because they did not come from wealth... they did not have the monies nor

> the affordability at that time to go to college and I don't think at that time women were really encouraged in that area.

Her father was a source of inspiration to her because he earned his GED in the military and then went on to go to electrical school and became a master electrician. She explained that her father became a leader in a company where the only man he answered to was the man who owned the company. She said that her mother was also a leader both in her home and in the church. For example, she taught bible study in the local women's prison and also developed a visitation program at the prison so children could visit their mothers. Patricia said: "So, I've always seen my mother work in a leadership type role even though she was not college educated."

In addition, Patricia talked about how she grew up in a religious family. She said she believes her experiences teaching at church led to her interest in education.

> So, I guess the church is where I did a lot of my initial teaching and actually experienced how to follow a lesson and plan out a lesson when I was really young. Even in my play, I always wanted to play school.... If somebody would just sit still we would have school. So, I've always wanted to teach school.

After graduating from high school she decided to go to a Bible college. She said that she had some unique experiences studying evangelism. Patricia explained: "I got to go into some of the nurseries and daycares in the impoverished areas and did a lot of poverty work during that year, year and a half and loved it."

After Bible college Patricia returned home and entered a secular college to pursue a career in education. She stated: "We were not, like I said, my parents were not wealthy and coming up through school I had to go to school on my own money. So, I worked basically two jobs through college..."

> I would get up early in the morning and work the breakfast shift… change clothes in the bathroom and work the evening from 1:00 on in a retail store…until we closed at 9:00. I did that so that I would have the money where I wouldn't have to work during my student teaching.

Patricia said that she would study in the back of the department store in the evenings when they did not have customers. She also would study while she was standing up at the fast food restaurant when the business was slow. She said: "But it didn't faze me. I knew it was hard... but hard work was something that I always had seen my parents do and so it was something that I felt I could handle."

After graduating from college she began her teaching career. She stated: "At that, time we had thirty kids in the classroom, there was no such thing as a planning period. We taught music, health, physical education, art. We sat with the children and ate with the children." Patricia taught for several years and she was also the coach of the high school dance team. During this time she returned to school and earned a Master of Education degree. She stated: "I really loved the classroom, I was enjoying what I was doing, but I got that for down the road." After several years in the classroom her superintendent approached her and asked her to move into an assistant principal position at one of the elementary schools. After a lot of contemplation she finally accepted the offer and served in this role for several years. Patricia talked about her experiences working with her principal.

> Yes, I was pretty much running the show. He was a nice person, but he wasn't much on taking care of the paperwork, running the building, setting the goals, the objectives, moving it forward. That was not what he did. So, I found myself having to assume the principal's role without really being the principal.

While she served in the assistant principal position several board members told her that she would be the next principal of the school. Therefore, Patricia was waiting for the principal to retire so that she could assume the official role of principal.

Meanwhile, the superintendent from another school district called her and asked her to consider a principal position in his district. Patricia said: “There was a lot of turmoil in that little school that he was talking about me being principal in. So I knew it was going to take a pretty heavy commitment.” She said that she initially turned the superintendent down but accepted after he approached her the second time and made a more lucrative offer. She served as principal for several years and also completed her doctorate during that time. Next, she decided to apply for an Assistant Superintendent position. She said: “So, I applied for that job. It is the first applied job that I ever, I had never applied for one single job ever.”

Next, Patricia found herself deciding if she wanted to serve as a superintendent.

> Then the superintendent retired... the job came open and in all of my planning I had never in a million years thought I would be a superintendent. Never thought about it, never dreamed I wanted to do it, never aspired to be a superintendent.

Finally she decided that she wanted to be the superintendent. She explained: “There was nobody I wanted to work for. I am being flat out honest with you... and so I said, I think that I can do as good of a job as anybody else.” The board never interviewed anyone else and offered her a contract. Patricia stated: “They never entertained anybody else doing this job.”

Patricia has served as the superintendent position in Centennial School District for several years. During this time she has further developed her leadership style. Patricia explained that she has drawn upon the strengths of both her mother and father in her role

as superintendent. She described herself as honest, well-rounded, focus-driven, open, and a listener. Patricia also talked about how other people in the school district would describe her as a leader.

> They would probably say that I believe in work, I am very work-oriented but at the same time I will not ask anybody to do what I can't do or would not be willing to do myself.... They would tell you that I am blunt, that I am going to speak to the truth of it, and that there is not a lot of gray area.... I hope that they would tell you that I was a people person because I deal with a lot of people and I enjoy it.... I hope that they would tell you that I was kind to people. The main thing that I hope that they tell you too is that they would describe me as a person that is all about kids - kids first.

Patricia is passionate about education and committed to her work as superintendent.

Throughout the interviews, multiple barriers emerged; however, there were some that were more commonly experienced among the women. This chapter will focus on the most common barriers but will also include some of the unique barriers the different women have experienced. The women believed that it is important that women are mentally and emotionally strong in order to challenge the barriers and survive in the superintendency.

Patricia explained the importance of knowing your internal strengths before ever considering the superintendency.

> Once your core is established, all of the rest, you know you can learn and hopefully be effective at.... But I am glad that I had enough solidness about myself already and knew those kinds of questions about me internally that the rest just has come along.

Patricia also shared some advice for other women aspiring to the superintendency. She was emphatic that women must be sure that they have the inner-strength to do the job or they will most likely experience numerous barriers in the superintendency.

> I would say that the first thing that she better know is that she understands the concept of "to thine own self be true." She better know herself very,

> very well. Know inside of herself and be solid with who she is before she steps to this plate. Because, if she is not solid and grounded in who she is, then she will be thrown about by every storm, every turmoil, and every wind. Whether it comes through a human being, through a board system, somebody not doing their job, somebody putting pressure on the board, or the board putting pressure on you. You've got to know who you are. You've got to know who you are as far as your capabilities, whether you have the intellect to handle it. You have to know whether you can handle the physical end of the pressure and the responsibility that comes along with it. You've got to know how grounded you are, I think, internally so that people's perceptions don't persuade or sway your perception of yourself. So, you've got to have a firm ground. If you are not firm on the ground in those areas of your life, then this is not a job that you even want to remotely attempt. Because... with something that can happen that would be bad, it could shake you to your core.... But, the first thing is, all of that has to be settled in my opinion and then you can move forward.

Sylvia also explained that she believes that women do have the inner-strength to do the job and believes that the perception of women in the superintendency is changing.

> I just don't think that women are perceived that way any longer... that we are weak and can't make decisions. I think that it is just the opposite... because women leaders do tend to be strong leaders and are able to make tough calls. That is just in my experience. Other women that I have observed around the state, around the nation....You know, I am finding that they really do have to make tough calls and they make them.

While the participants in this study did not believe they have personally experienced challenges with a lack of inner-strength and self-confidence, Patricia briefly commented on how they might hinder other women from pursuing the position. She said, "I think that some of them may not have the self-confidence to step out, to give it a try. That might play into it too." The next section of this chapter will unveil some of the participants' experiences with barriers in the superintendency.

Barriers

Selection Process

As previously mentioned, numerous barriers emerged during the conversations with the participants. One of the common barriers that emerged was the selection process

for the superintendency. One of the frustrations the participants expressed was that the Board of Education seemed to always want a man for the superintendent position. Andrea said, “I really think that if I had been a man… I think that I would have gotten the job.” She explained in greater detail:

> I think what happened, and now I am just kind of speculating. They were going through a lot of issues with facilities and the superintendent that they hired before me had experience. In fact, he had been a high school principal and then he had gone to work after he retired from a company The Facility Group that was working with school facilities. So, I think that they thought that he could clean that up. But, I also think that they thought, he is a man, other people will respect him more. Andrea is more of the little curriculum person.

Andrea also experienced difficulty with the selection process in another school district and attributed the difficulty to her being a female. Andrea explained: “Through case study and my own experience, I have seen board after board that just wasn’t ready for a woman superintendent.”

She explained that she never thought the glass ceiling existed until she participated in a superintendent preparation program and then began interviewing for the superintendency.

> So much of what is going to work for you as superintendent is going to be relational based on how people think of you. I think that people have perceptions of you based on the fact that you are a woman. I never thought about those kinds of things.... I never hit any kind of a glass ceiling in education. I never even believed that it mattered until I became aware of the superintendent interview process.

Sylvia also talked about one of her interviews for a superintendency and explained why she believes she was not selected. “I think, because the board knew that they needed to build a new high school and I had no experience with facilities and building. They needed a man.”

Kathy also experienced difficulties with the selection process in one of the districts where she applied. She felt like the cards were stacked against her and that she did not have a chance of getting this position.

> I am just a woman. I didn't live there all of my life. So, basically, one of the board members later told one of my principals that if it had been three years later she probably would have had a great chance. But, we just need to have some roads done right now and some infrastructure things. We just needed to have a good political power. Like I couldn't do that?

Kathy described the process: "It was very emotional. I couldn't sleep at night, running things through my mind all of the time. Questioning, should you really be doing this....Well it was a lost two months of my life."

The women also said they encountered difficulties during the selection process because people did not believe that they could do the job required for the superintendency. For example, when Andrea interviewed for a superintendent position someone in her school district said, "Well, do you really think that you are capable of handling that type of job?" A search agency also asked Andrea to interview for another superintendency while she was interviewing for the position in Carmel. Since she was already interviewing in Carmel she encouraged a colleague to pursue the opportunity. However, her colleague did not return the support.

> The vibes that I got from her were that it is great that you are supporting me, but I am not supporting you for Carmel. I thought, well why wouldn't you? Unless... maybe she wanted that job. But, I don't think that she had ever put in for Carmel. Whatever, I can't understand that.

Andrea explained that she had become aware that some men did not think that women could do the job, but was surprised that women felt the same way. She wondered if the lack of support from women could be attributed to jealousy.

Another part of the selection process that proved to be challenging was being selected as the token female. In other words, sometimes search firms include a female in the interview process in an effort to appear non-discriminatory. Sylvia said that she had experienced being the token female and was aware of it going into the interview. Andrea also experienced being selected as the token female.

> When I went to Brighton and had that interview.... They used a national search firm and they had gotten my name and asked me to interview. I think the only reason I got that interview was to be the token woman that they interviewed.... I think they really wanted an internal candidate from the get go, but yet they had to go through the motions of doing a national search. I think that they said to the national search team, bring us a woman, bring us an African American, but be sure you bring this person. It happens.

The women did not express a lot of concern or frustration with being the token female but expressed that they thought it was a barrier within the selection process.

Family Expectations

Another challenge the participants discussed was that the superintendency takes a lot of time and can be a toll on the family. The superintendent is constantly on call and is expected to be visible in the community, available for stakeholders, involved in the community, and also be present at school events. Andrea talked about how all of these activities kept her very busy during her first few months in the position.

> I think that you are expected to be at Chamber events, speak at Rotary, and speak at Kiwanis. So, I have tried to accept just about every invitation that is extended to me in my first year.... So, the first few months that I was superintendent, I dare say that I didn’t have one night or weekend day or night for me. Luckily, my youngest is now in college, so it works out. My husband is very understanding.... As a leader, I think you have to decide how much of that can I personally handle before it starts to impact my family time and that kind of thing. Because, unlike the superintendent in Smithtown, as much as I love my job, it is not my whole life.

Additionally, since women have typically taken care of the children and the home, some of the participants expressed that this position takes away from their family. Andrea shared her feelings about how she believes women feel obligated to spend more time with their families than at work.

> I think some people maybe can live with it better. I just have a feeling that maybe women, because of our emotions, maybe get a little more wrapped up in that kind of thing, the worry of it, than we probably should. The other thing I think about also with women is that I think we feel more family obligation..... With my two children and my husband, I feel like even though they might understand, I don't want to let go of that.

Andrea also said that when she is busy on the weekends her husband will ask her if she will get off her Blackberry so that they can spend some time together and go to a movie. Angela also talked about how her husband was supportive but that the job required a lot of her personal time.

> What I find is that I don't have many free weekends.... I'm expected to be out there. I go to a lot of the school council meetings... a lot of PTA meetings.... So, you are busy. You are a very busy person. You better be out there supporting their kids.... It just takes a lot of your time, your personal time.

Patricia was very aware of the fact that this job takes away from her family but also said that her husband is supportive.

> He understands that this is the job. He understands that this is what is required from this job. He understood it from the get-go. He is very supportive of my work and he has an understanding. He understands that, which is why every day at lunch he eats at the local diner and has his meat and vegetables.... This job is all consuming. This is your life.

Kathy has also experienced some difficulty balancing her family life with her husband and the hours required to be a superintendent.

> He likes to do what he wants to do, he likes having no demands on him... so he gets something out of it. But, to say that I focus on that relationship probably to the extent that I should? No, I would say I don't. I don't. You

> know, I mean, I don't. That is just the way that it is... and you know he gets mad at me sometimes.

On the other hand, Sylvia has not seen family as a barrier to getting the work accomplished. She said, "Well, I don't know if this is an advantage.... my son is grown, so it is just me." All of the women talked about how they are able to do the work because their children are grown and out of the house. They said that it would be very difficult to do the work of the superintendency and raise children. Andrea talked about the barrier of women being the caregiver and raising children while being a superintendent.

> My husband was saying to me this morning. He said, can you imagine doing what you are doing now if our kids were still young? There is just no way I would have done it. I certainly could have, but I would not have done it because I wouldn't have done that to my children. I think that a woman, for the most part, is going to be the caregiver of the kids. And, as much as my husband loves the kids and relates to them, when they are sick, when something is really bad in their life... they still want their mother. I never could have been a superintendent and had something happen with my kids... and not been there for them. There is just no doubt in my mind that my kids come before the job. I think that there are a lot of men that figure, well, my kids are important, but if they really need me and I am going into a board meeting, my wife will handle it.

Angela also talked about how it is difficult for her to cook meals and that it would have been hard doing the superintendency work while cooking and caring for her children.

> I just make it work. I have a husband that is very supportive. I have to admit, sometimes when he comes in and says, what are we going to eat tonight? Waiting for me to come home and prepare, well... I want to say what do you want to cook darling? I can say that these days, because it is just us. I would never have done that with my children at home. I fixed a good breakfast for the children before they went to school. I did go home and cook for my children at night, but now with my husband I am a little bit more, well you know. Let's just have sandwiches tonight, let's go to a restaurant tonight. You know that kind of thing.

Another issue that arose is that it is difficult for a man not to be the spouse who is in the spotlight. Andrea said, "I think that a lot of men, their wives understand when they are

gone all of the time, but it is not typical for a man to be willing to be second fiddle." Patricia also commented on this: "You know you have to be careful with a man. If you go to all of these events and he is always known as Dr. Dillard's husband, then men don't like that either." Patricia said that this type of work environment could be toxic for a marriage and that you need some firm guidelines in your marriage. She also said, "I do know that it is tough on marriages. That it can be, not every marriage can handle it."

Patriarchy

Many of the challenges and difficulties the participants experienced in both the pursuit of the superintendency and maintaining the position can be attributed to patriarchy. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the public school system and the superintendency are dominated by male leaders. The patriarchal institution of the public school system has made it difficult for women to attain the superintendent position because it is perceived to be a man's job. Additionally, while the superintendent position is usually considered to be a man's position, the curriculum position is considered to be a woman's position. Patricia explained:

> It is okay for women to go to a certain level. You know, it is okay for women to be in charge of instruction at a central office. That is a woman's job. When we look at a man, and we think, what is he doing there... that is a woman's job? So, but to see a woman in this kind of position... we get that same feeling probably from people that look at it. That it is an odd thing that a woman would be in that job. I look at it like that is pretty cool, she's in that job and she is doing a good job. But, society doesn't always, I guess, encourage women to move to that level.

The women said they were aware they are operating in a male-dominated field and that sometimes people do not know how to approach a woman superintendent. Kathy explained: "It is just that it is a male world, it is a male culture, and if you don't fit into

the male culture they're kind of knocked off kilter." Andrea also talked about some of her initial experiences with the male culture.

> But, like with the Chamber people. They are mostly men and they're like, well now, who do you work for in the school system? I say, well, I am the superintendent. Well, but yeah, but the superintendent of what? Like, which schools? Like all of them. Because they are just shocked, you know. Or, I will go to a meeting with one of our area superintendents, who is a man, and they will know the superintendent is coming. As soon as I get there, they walk right up to the man who is with me... Hi, I'm so glad you could come.... Okay, but here is the superintendent. It is just like people assume that it would not be a woman that would be the superintendent.

Even though the number of women in the superintendency has increased, people still do not think of it as a woman's job. Patricia explained: "Most of the boards of education are majority of men on the boards and I see very few boards that have more females than men. So I think that they still like to see a man in that role." Andrea also talked about the perception that the superintendency is not women's work but curriculum is.

> My area is more curriculum and instruction, which is a very female role. I think that perhaps, if you are a woman, that if you are not seen in a female role you might have a better shot of superintendent than if you come up through the ranks the way that I did.

One of the board members in Andrea's district even commented on her strengths being in curriculum and instruction. The women also expressed that getting the first superintendency is probably more difficult for a woman than for a man. Andrea explained: "I think that if you are a woman folks are more likely to see you as someone that is more family-oriented, doesn't really have the time to commit to a 24/7 job, which everyone knows that it is." She also commented: "When you come in... generally you are going to be following a man and I think they will have in their minds that you are not tough enough."

In addition to expressing difficulty attaining the position because they are women the participants also talked about challenges they have faced in the position that they attributed to being female. They felt that sometimes they are treated differently because they are women. For example, Angela described a situation where a male board member tried to run the school system and became verbally abusive to her in an executive session meeting. Angela said when she became superintendent that this board member would come and sit in her office and he would want to go over the agenda.

> He thought that he was running the school system. Well, then I was just a secretary. I was beginning to feel like a puppet those first few months. It didn't take me long to figure out it was his way or the highway.... I mean very, very bold. It has not been easy, Claire, I will tell you. It has not been easy at all, at all. And, what has not been easy about this job is that board. The main one that gave the previous superintendent a fit gave me a fit too.

Angela said: "If I had been a man in that position, I probably wouldn't have taken the abuse, verbal abuse that I had taken."

Patricia shared an experience she had with a vendor who thought he would be able to take advantage of her because she was a woman superintendent. She said a male vendor recently sent her a bill that was $14,000 more than the quoted cost. Patricia said: "So, then when I called him to question him about it, he didn't like that. He didn't like being questioned by a woman. I could tell by the way that his voice changed." Patricia felt like it was important for him to be aware that she knew he had taken advantage of that situation. She said: "See, he probably thought that I might not even look at the bill."

Patricia also said that she believes women get questioned on certain topics more than male superintendents.

> I think that sometimes that some of things that I am questioned about; a man would never be questioned about. Like, when it comes to when we are working a building project. I am glad that they questioned me on some

> of them. But, it might be did we do this, did we do that? How many bids did we have? For a man, they might just assume that he took care of it. I may be wrong, but sometimes I think that.

She suggested that the male board members felt like they have this area on common with men and that women need to be questioned since this is typically a man's area of expertise. However, she also attributed it to the perception that the overall operations of a school system are a man's job and not a woman's.

> I think that there are still some old mindsets when it comes to managing the operation of the school system. They look at things like budget and buildings and facilities. Instruction is a part, yes. But, I think they think that a man would be better suited sometimes for all of that area, the overall stress level of this particular job. I think that you have mindsets by boards that maybe they think that a man would be more suited to handle that kind of thing, more assertive, more in that kind of domineering role. That a man would work better.

In addition, the women talked about the importance of showing their board that the superintendency is not solely a man's job. For example, Andrea was working very hard but she had a difficult time telling board members she needed to call them back because she was with her daughter. She felt like women are held to a different standard than men because women are still being tested in this role. She said: "I was real careful because I didn't want them to think that we've hired the first woman superintendent and now she is going to let her family interfere with the job."

While the superintendency has long been a patriarchal position, the women were optimistic about the future for women in the position. Even though the women all believed we would continue to see more women in the superintendency their ideas of what this will look like varied. Patricia explained:

> Well, think of the role that most women take. We are really good at the house. We take good care to manage our homes and a lot of women still listen to their husbands. So, I think that the more generations to come,

> they'll be more concrete, that they will have equal footing. I don't see it changing dramatically. I don't. I think that you might see it get into the thirties. I don't think you'll see it, I won't see half. If I do, I think I will be an old woman.

Andrea believed that the increase in the numbers has been very positive for women. She said: "I think that it is maybe a sign of the times that women, especially in the last few years, are being more accepted as superintendents. Additionally, Angela expressed that she believes that people should not judge people's ability to do the job on their race or gender and thinks that this mindset is changing.

> Well, I think that the opportunities are probably out there for women to become superintendents, more than they were.... I just think that if you can do the job then who cares what you are. I don't care what color you are and I think that may be changing in America overall. People are more accepting to different colors, such as we have the first black president. When I was growing up, I never thought that would happen, you know? So, I think that the views are changing. So, I think the chances are greater now, that you will see more women superintendents.

Andrea also expressed that she thinks that the number of women in the superintendency will continue to increase. She said that she remembered years ago when women were named superintendent it was news but that is really changing. She said:

> It just isn't that big of a deal anymore. So, I think that is changing real fast. I would say the past five years has really seen an escalating percentage of women. It is just like the more that get out there, the more that glass ceiling is broken. I think that helps all women because then people get that mindset that I guess a woman can do that kind of job.

Even though Andrea believes that it is not a big deal anymore for women to be named superintendents I found two newspaper articles that discussed her being the first women to lead her school district. The women expressed that it is important to recognize the women that have forged the ground for other women. In other words, at the same time we are looking forward and encouraging more women, we need to look back and recognize

those women that sat in the superintendent chair before them. Sylvia said: “But you know there were outstanding leaders in this State who set the bar, set a standard for the rest of us and just had an opportunity to show that, yes, we can do this job.” She also said: “I just don’t see a lot of places having reservations about it being a woman.... I just think the time is right. I think other boards around the state will continue to choose women.” Patricia also expressed the importance of recognizing women who have previously served as superintendent.

> I think that you are going to see more women that might aspire to that because of people like me and other women before me that have already moved to the position. I think that they can see that it can be done, especially women that have worked for women. I think that that helps them. They look at the woman in the position and think if they can do it, then I can. I know that is what I thought with the woman that I worked for. If she can do it, I sure can do that too.

The participants’ beliefs that the landscape in the superintendency is changing for women was also shared by a teacher. One of the teachers in Kathy’s district indicated that she liked the fact that their new superintendent is a woman.

Good Old Boy Network

Another barrier for women in the superintendency is the good old boy network, which all of these women agreed still exists and operates. The good old boy network can be described as a close-knit group of men that resembles a private men’s club. I told Patricia a story about a male superintendent laughing and claiming that the good old boy network does not exist anymore. She said: “Oh for Pete’s sake, how naïve. Gosh.” While the women all believe this network still exists, they discussed that they think the network is losing power. Patricia described how she sees the superintendency shifting from the good old boy to the change agent as a result of accountability.

> Well, the job has changed so much. Back fifteen years ago, you were just a good ole' boy politician... go and talk with people, shake hands. But now, with accountability, with having to make AYP, with so much pressure from that end and moving school systems forward and dealing with test scores.... It is a very complex job.

Patricia also explained that the system needs to be challenged in order to take the power away from the good old boys. She said: "I don't play the good old boy game. I treat the good old boys just like I treat anybody else, which probably makes me unpopular with the good old boys." Even though the women said they think the good old boy network is fading they acknowledged that it is still operational. Andrea reflected on her experiences:

> You feel a little bit like, you are not really one of them... a lot of them play golf together and kind of get together at meetings and chat about things that they don't want to chat about in front of me. So, I feel a little bit of an outsider in the club of superintendents. Not that it really bothers me, you know, but you notice it.... I think it takes longer as a woman to be in that club.

Andrea also talked about her experience with the good old boy network prior to being a superintendent.

> It took him until…to give me even some of the footprints of direct reporting. I really think that he never really saw that role as something a woman could do. Now, he is…older than me and he grew up more in the old school - the men are the leaders.

Sylvia experienced the strength of the good old boy network when she went in and tried to be a change agent in a school system that she described as on the verge of corruption. She said that the good old boy network challenged her on everything she did and tried to turn the community against her. Sylvia explained:

> They would go out and use the community people because they didn't know any better. They poisoned them against me to say things like, well she's coming in here making all of these changes. Just minor things.... just expecting people to come to work every day and on time. Expecting maintenance not to take the buffers and do jobs on the weekend using the schools' buffers and making money. Expecting the lunchroom people not

> to take the meat home and use it. Expecting the schools not to take the hotdogs out of the lunchroom program and sell them on Friday night at the football game.

Another topic that came up is that many of the events that are organized for superintendent conferences are still based on activities men like to do together. The women expressed frustration with the fact that these activities have not changed to reflect the increased number of women attending the conferences. Kathy explained: “We are not saying that you can’t golf. How do you have time to even get good at golf and be a superintendent? I can’t even imagine.” She explained further:

> The best thing that they could do... is getting rid of those golf tournaments. That is not professional. That is ridiculous. Those people are down there on school time. So, I don’t want to go shopping either. I don’t want you to make me have an alternative activity that is going to be gender-based. I just want you to keep having professional learning opportunity or we go home.

In addition to feeling ostracized by the male-oriented activities for superintendents, the women also expressed that they have struggled finding a way to socialize with male board members. However, Kathy talked about how it has been difficult but that she believes she has found a solution.

> I’ve worked on it and I feel much better about it now. It is hard to socialize with them, because I am a woman. There is one woman on the board and four men. Now, how am I supposed to socialize with four men? How can I take them out to dinner, or lunch, or meet for breakfast? If you talk to these men superintendents, that is what they do. Well, what I have finally come up with is that I have our food service... to cater for me a meal at the end of every work session and that has worked great. Finally, we are in a rhythm about that. They are enjoying it. They all stay after. She makes delicious food and we just sit around for about thirty - forty-five minutes and we talk.

Feminine Expectations

The women in this study also noted that they must overcome perceptions society has about women being able to serve as superintendents. More specifically, some people think that women are not assertive enough and do not have the strength to handle the challenges of the superintendency. On the other hand, these women also have to balance the way people perceive them because if they are too assertive then people will characterize them as outspoken and unfeminine. Patricia said: "That is the first thing they say about women. Instead of, she has a really strong resolve, she is a great leader." Patricia also said that men and women are both quick to judge a powerful woman as overly assertive; however, she was unsure which would do so more often. She said: "I don't know which one. I think they are both about the same. I think both of them perceive women the same way when it comes to that. I don't know which would perceive it quicker, I don't know." Andrea also talked about her beliefs regarding assertiveness:

> As a teacher, they say never smile before Thanksgiving. I think, as a woman superintendent, you can smile but be very assertive and firm. If you are not, any little crack can be seen as too weak, emotional and not tough enough to make the hard decisions.

Andrea also talked about the importance of finding a balance between being assertive and empathetic.

> I think as a female superintendent it is great that we have more empathy and people skills kind of things that just comes with being a mom, especially. So, that is good. You will listen. You will be more inclined to sit back. But, then again, you also have to be ready to be assertive and to make it clear what your expectations are as a leader.

Patricia believes that the negative perceptions about assertive women are changing but that there are still people of the old mindset that believe women should not be superintendents.

Additionally, the women talked about how the boards of education tend to believe that women are not capable of managing the budget and the facilities aspects of the superintendency. Patricia elaborated:

> My expertise... because my background is curriculum and instruction. It has not been facilities because usually that is a man thing.... I'm still working on that. I don't know the first thing about air conditioning. All I want to know is that when I go to turn it on, it will work. So that is something... but I have learned a lot. I've learned a lot about concrete and blocks.

Andrea also talked about the difficulty women have moving into the superintendency because they typically have only curriculum and instruction experience, which is considered a woman's role. She said: "Especially because my area is more curriculum and instruction, which is a very female role." She suggested that it might be easier for women to attain the superintendency if they have some experience in areas other than just curriculum. While the women talked about this being a barrier, Patricia explained that women can learn the facilities and budget if they are given the opportunity.

> You have to learn. It has been a learning process. I've had a learning curve like you would not believe. It has been a tremendous learning curve. But, I learned. I called people. I talked to folks.... Especially when it comes to the facilities, you are dealing with men. I just tell them that I am sorry but I don't understand that. You are going to have to explain that again until I get that. They'll just smile and explain it all over again.

Angela also discussed the challenges she has experienced in the areas of finance and facilities. She explained that her expertise was in the area of curriculum and instruction, but she did not know anything about building projects. Angela oversaw the federal program budgets as a curriculum director but said she did not know the first thing about capital outlay.

> I'll tell you what I lacked when I came on board. I wish I had known.... But, what I didn't know anything about was capital outlay.... I had no clue.

> My gosh! That first year it was tough for us to do our five year facility plan. I had a facility director who had never done it, I had never done it. So, I got thrown into that. But, I have learned a lot about capital outlay. We started looking for land to build a new high school. So, we've been building a new high school….I am doing the new high school... myself and the finance director. We are doing it together because I don't have the money to hire a facility director. I didn't know a lot about that but I am learning that as I go.

Kathy shared how she overcame some of these perceptions early on in her superintendency. Her school district had to go through a serious budget cut soon after she became superintendent and she said that this process helped her credibility.

> Probably the best thing that ever happened to me was the budget cut. Because, whatever doubts they had that I could be knowledgeable in that area... were immediately put to rest. Whereas, if I hadn't had that to show my whole leadership style.... I might have had more trouble if you want to know the truth.

One of Kathy's colleagues also commented on what a difficult situation the budget cuts were but that she handled it very well. So, even though the women see the landscape changing, they still expressed frustrations that people do not see the superintendency as a woman's role. Furthermore, the job vacancy postings as well as the job descriptions for the participants' positions emphasized managerial skills, finance, and facilities over curriculum and instruction.

Another point of discussion was that women tend to move into the superintendency later in their career because they are busy raising their family and the husband has typically been the spouse with the high-powered job. Kathy said: "I think that we are socialized that way. Plus, most of the time women in my generation have not been the sole provider for a family or expected by society to be the sole provider." Angela explained that one of the reasons she initially went into education was so that she would have more time with her family. She said: "So, honestly, I was looking for a career

that when I had kids, I could stay at home with the children." Andrea and Kathy talked about how they delayed their careers to stay home with their children. Andrea was worried that she would have a career setback while she stayed at home and so she continued to serve on committees in the school system where she had been teaching. Kathy said that she worked on a Master of Education degree and tutored children at her house while she stayed home with her son.

Additionally, the women said that it would have been difficult for them to be a superintendent while their children were young. Andrea talked about how she believes that women have more to juggle between their career and family.

> But, I've always been there for my kids. So, I think that as a woman, you are trying to do for everyone; your husband wants you there; the kids want you there; and you can't just let things go on the job. So, it is very difficult. I think for the most part men don't have that.... I think women are, unless I'm atypical, I think women are more child and family-oriented. Because of that, if you have more responsibility there, you have more to juggle than with the job.

These women have experienced difficulties balancing their personal life and doing the work required of the superintendency while being mindful of society's feminine expectations. Kathy shared how she believes women can use some of the feminine characteristics to their advantage.

> There is a level, maybe it is sensitivity, that a woman has and that you can cultivate.... You know, when we grow up we are allowed to cry. Well, they can't cry. Where they are given negative feedback for crying, we are not. So, our emotions do come out because we are not forced to keep them back. We are sensitive. So, that means we pick up on things, which make us good leaders in that sense. But, then it bothers you more to deal with people's frustrations and anger.

Kathy also explained that she believes that there are some things about being a woman superintendent that you have to learn to live with.

> You have to put up with some stuff where men don't know how to relate to you. I see it more of that than playing down my feminine part. I would just say that they are really more uncomfortable and really don't know how to relate to a woman that is in authority or a real professional position.... I think that, what I have always tried to do is not to deny that I am a woman. I act, well I am not acting it, it is how women are.

Finally, Andrea offered some advice on how women superintendents need to learn to compartmentalize in order to effectively strike a balance between family expectations and the job.

> Make sure that you are able to compartmentalize your life really well.... You've got to be able to say to your husband, I'm in a meeting, you'll have to call me later and not have him get all mad at you and you get all stressed out about that.... You know, you've got to be able to compartmentalize... have the kind of marriage, or no marriage, to where your husband is understanding. Or, you are not married and happy about that. With kids, likewise, you've got to be able to compartmentalize with them... and not let that eat at you because you are going to be dealing with huge issues on the job. You've got to be able to compartmentalize that, at least until you get home for the day, and that may be 10:00 or 11:00 at night. So, that is an important thing.

The women in this study have experienced difficulty learning to navigate the feminine and masculine expectations of women superintendents.

Board of Education Expectations

The Board of Education typically has expectations of their superintendent that will vary from district to district. The board selects a superintendent that will represent their district, and therefore usually expects the superintendent to live in the district. This expectation has served as a barrier for some women because they are not able to relocate for a position because of family responsibilities. Andrea talked about the time she began interviewing for the superintendency. She said: "My problem was that my Mom is here... and I am the oldest of five and I feel very obligated to her, which meant I wasn't going to

leave." Eventually Andrea was offered a superintendency close enough to her family so that she didn't have to relocate.

Sylvia talked fondly about how much she loved where she had lived most of her professional life but understood that she would need to relocate for her new position as superintendent. She said that during her interview with the board they made it clear that she would need to live in the community.

> When we were having that discussion that night, Steve, who is my vice chair... said, we know that you like living in Prince County, you've always lived there. But, we kind of expect our superintendent to live in town. Do you have a problem with that? I said, no. I don't have a problem with that.

Kathy also bought a house in the community because she knew it was important to the board. Fortunately, her husband was able to move with her because he is retired.

> A big thing that we did here was buy a house.... But, I just told my husband that I think that it is real important that we buy a house to make a statement. So, we did. So, the bank helped us with the bridge loan and they wanted us to do it too, so that helped. But, when the realtor was taking us around, he started out telling us... you know that other superintendent and his wife, they never fit in. Then, by the time we went back to see this house that we finally bought... he said, I think you all are going to fit in here.

Kathy felt that living in the community was a great way to establish a rapport and trust among the stakeholders. She said that at one point she thought she would retire in this community but now she might consider relocating for another superintendent position. "But now my husband said, now wait a minute, I am happy here. He does like it a lot. So, I'm not saying it will happen, but I could kind of see me doing one more time."

Angela already lived in the community and was not faced with having to relocate for her current superintendent position. However, Angela said that she would not have taken a superintendent position if it meant that she would have to relocate.

> I don't want to relocate, this is my home.... I will never pursue another superintendent position anywhere else. I don't want to. I really didn't want this one. I was happy being curriculum director, you know.... I'm not going anywhere. I don't want to work anywhere else.... Even if I wanted to, my husband would never leave. I am not leaving my husband. So, you couldn't get him to leave.

Patricia was also opposed to relocating for her current superintendent position. She said: "I told them upfront that I would not move.... That my mother was sick and ill and that I could not leave her and that if they wanted someone to live here they needed to get busy and find somebody." However, she said that she might consider relocating for another position in the future but commented that her husband probably wouldn't move with her. Patricia explained: "Probably what we would end up doing is we would keep where we are at now as a central base and then I would just go somewhere during the week and come back on the weekends."

Conflicts with the Community and Board of Education

There were also some unique issues that have caused the women frustrations that did not fit in the categories previously discussed. The difficulties that the women encountered also varied and were not necessarily common occurrences. For the most part, the difficulties the women have experienced have been with the board members and cabinet members. Andrea experienced some resentment from her cabinet members when she first moved into the superintendent position. She explained: "My biggest problem has been my top leadership staff, a lot of cabinet members." Andrea said that the female cabinet member she had trouble with also applied for the superintendency and that probably created some of the problems.

> I don't think Susan was in the top running, but I do know she interviewed. When I first came on I said here is what I see you doing, etc. She said, well I don't really see myself doing that. I did the reorganization and she

> said I see myself doing this. I said I understand you seeing it differently than I do, but I am the superintendent and here is what you are going to do.

Another challenge Andrea talked about was how the long hours have taken away from her exercise routine. In fact, she said that it really began in her previous position and has continued on during the superintendency. She shared a story about the time she had lunch with the woman whose position she was taking as at the central office level.

> The gal that had your job, I was sort of replacing her.... She said... can I take you out to lunch? So, I asked her what she wanted to tell me.... She said I just want to tell you that this is the hardest job in the world and I hate these people that I work with. You know what? I couldn't do this job so they are running me out. You can't do it either and, besides that, you are going to get fat because you are going to have to work all of the time. Stupid me, I was so shocked. Instead of saying, I can't believe you just said that to me. I just said, oh, well, I'll be thinking about you in your new role. So, I really did gain the weight. But, I am trying to lose it.

Andrea commented: "Can you believe that? People are just mean, women are mean."

Sylvia talked about the difficulties she experienced because the community and staff did not accept her. She thinks that some of the difficulties arose because two of the people in the district wanted the superintendency and they intentionally made it difficult for her. Sylvia commented: "It was just the most horrendous experience that you...." Her voice trailed off and she got teary as she went on to describe the state of the district when she arrived as superintendent.

> They were just getting by. I don't even know if you would call that getting by. That is... barely existing. That is just bad. It was horrible. The test scores, the schools were on needs improvement. The test scores were horrible.

I asked Sylvia how she endured the situation and she responded by saying that she is not a quitter. She also expressed the importance of the children in that district having a good

leader so that they would have the opportunity for a good education. She said: “I could have just quit, but I am not a quitter. So I just dug in.”

The people there made it so difficult for her that there were people in the community who would come to board meetings and ask for her resignation. She commented: “It was awful. It was beyond awful.” I asked her if the turmoil was constant for her in that position and she explained that it would let up for awhile and then it would start up again. She recalled one of the times she made a decision that resulted in retaliation.

> No, you can’t use a school bus for all of the parents to load up in December to go do Christmas shopping. So, anytime I made a decision about things like that it was a retaliation. There was always retaliation for decisions like that.

Furthermore, she said that the community had always used the school buses for transportation and she put an end to it soon after she arrived. She explained: “Oh, another reason they were upset and retaliated was that everybody rode the school bus, parents, workers in town, school bus passed by, everybody got on. The school bus was not just for children.”

At one point in her tenure Sylvia said she could see herself just giving up because it was so awful. She said:

> Some of the people in the community decided that since the board was supportive of me... they needed to get some of the people off of the board. So, they handpicked people to run to get rid of me. What was so amazing was that the people that they handpicked, when they got on the board, they recognized that this woman is doing her job. So, they could not find any fault in what I was doing.... But, when I knew that was the goal, to try and get rid of me.... that was a very low point. I remember one time just thinking... they could just buy me out and I’ll be done with this place. I could just go on a very long vacation. I saw myself just sitting on the beach, just relaxing. Well, then I thought, what would I do after that? But, I didn’t quit. I didn’t resign until I had this job.

Finally, Sylvia realized that it was time for her to move on and look for another job because things were not changing in this small town. She explained:

> I could go on and on. It was to the point that the first audit, the head auditor asked me who did I want to come in, the GBI or the local police? When I say corruption, it is not an understatement. But, I stayed there because I really did care about people getting a good education. I knew if those kids did not get an education, they would fall in that same cycle. But, I think it was towards the end of my third year when I realized.... It was like a revelation. The reason I was having such a time was because people in that community did not value education. When that hit me, I just thought, I just have to do something different. I think then I started thinking about that I had to start applying other places.

I commented to Sylvia that I did not understand how people could treat her that way. She stated: "It was just a different world. It was just a different world.... It was good old boy."

Angela talked about some of the difficulties she has experienced with her Board of Education. She explained that things were difficult with her from the beginning of her tenure.

> Well, at first, I was very green. I'm trying to, okay, not always agree. But, I am very professional. At the board meetings, I thought, I am their secretary. So, I am up there trying to run the show. I try to just be very standoffish at the board meetings and try not to be too outspoken.

I asked Angela if she was challenged when she spoke up and she explained that the board chairman made it a habit of challenging her in the public meetings. She said: "Absolutely. Absolutely. All of the time.... It was pretty bad. I was beginning to feel like a puppet those first few months." She talked about one particular situation that was extremely frustrating to her. Her school district was in the process of the district accreditation visit and the visiting team was about to present the final report when a board member stormed in. She explained:

> Well, Mr. Jones came in and he came marching over to me. Did you say this? Did you say that? Very loudly, I said, beg your pardon? He said did you see this in the paper? I said, well no, I haven't read the paper today. He threw the paper at me. So, I am looking at the paper and all I read is the headlines. I said, well, I've not read it but what? He said how could you screw up? He was very mad. So, anyway, we went through the district SACS accreditation. I couldn't even enjoy the day or celebrate.

Furthermore, to make the situation more difficult Angela said that he made a scene by involving some other board members that were present. Angela said she was mortified.

> So, they came back and he was just screaming and complaining about that was not what the board decided, that is not what they said. I said... if that is not what you said, I totally misunderstood and I apologize because that is what I got out of that meeting that day.... Well, so he went on and on and on and had a huge fit. Well, the other two just sat there... pretty well agreed with him.

Angela said that she called the chairwoman and told her what he had done and then they called a board meeting to discuss the issue.

> She said, is he crazy? That is what we agreed on. I said, I know, but he said it wasn't and the other two just sat there. Well, we had to call a board meeting to discuss this. It was terrible. We called the board meeting and he starts screaming at me about how I had jumped the gun. Well, then finally Sue spoke up and said, no she didn't. That is exactly what we talked about that night. That is exactly what we said, that is exactly what we told her to do. Well, then the other one quoted in the paper said, well I'm not really sure. I know that I said that but I guess I just thought that is what we said. Well, then another board member spoke up and said, yes that is what we said.

This is one example of how Angela has been treated by her board but she shared many other stories of how difficult they have made her life. As a result of some of the difficult situations Angela experienced with her board she explained that "I started videotaping everything. Now our work sessions, they are online here, but I videotape all work sessions, because I knew that would never happen again." She also shared that the board began questioning everything she and her staff presented to them.

> He was driving me crazy... because I couldn't get my own job done because he was calling me about this, this and this. But, others too. He and two of the board members began to question everything we did. The finance director would get up and speak and he wouldn't know what he said. We've got board members going in and threatening people's jobs, in public.... He made people cry. They were scared of him.

Angela went on to describe how awful this particular board member was to her. She explained: "One night in a session, we were having a heated discussion, he screamed at me. He said, you forgot who your boss is, I am your boss... just screamed at me."

The board was making it so difficult for Angela to accomplish anything in the district so a retired educator decided to run for the board. She said that three of the board members wanted to get rid of Angela so they made it difficult for the retired educator throughout the election process.

> Two weeks after it was announced that she was running for school board several of the board members went down to the courthouse and signed a petition to bind her qualifications.... That she could not run for the board... and that she falsified information.

Angela explained that the vice chairman of the board called the retired educator to inform her that people were trying to get her disqualified.

> He said I have heard that someone has gone into the courthouse and challenged your qualification and I think you ought to know that…You are such a fine lady that I would not want your reputation to be tarnished in the community because of this. So, you really just need to go and withdraw your name. We don't want this in the paper.

Angela also said that the educator still wanted to run for the school board even though the other members of the board decided to take her to court.

> So, then it got in the paper. But, they had a trial... So, we had board members trying to keep her off of the board. Do you know why they didn't want her? Because they knew that she would support me. She won in every precinct.

All of this turmoil was due to the fact that several board members did not want Angela to be the superintendent. At one point Angela was convinced that she was going to be fired if they did not have turnover on the board.

> I knew. I knew, Claire. I know it was stupid. But, I knew that if the board got who they wanted on that board that I would be out of a job in October. I was going to be fired. I knew that. I would not have had this job in October had that not changed. I would have lost my job. You know why I would have lost it? Not because I am not trying to do my job but because I didn't do what they told me to do. I didn't hire, fire, and play the politics.

Angela's first several years in the superintendency were challenging because of the difficulties she experienced with her board. She said that numerous times she wished that she had not taken the position.

> After a couple of board meetings I would walk away thinking what did I do, why did I do this? I made a bad decision. I should have stayed in curriculum. I've done that more than once. I wish that I could turn back the time and that I wouldn't have taken the position. Oh yeah, I've done it many a times.

Additionally, she said: "I would go home at night and I would wake up and my heartbeat would be pounding. I must be dreaming. But I would wake up angry... mad. I thought, oh my gosh. I can't keep living like this." The pressure that the board put on her created a tremendous amount of stress on Angela and began to affect her job performance.

> I got to where I found myself being the kind of person that was second-guessing myself. I was almost afraid to make a move. I was afraid to make little decisions because I knew when I made a decision I was going to get jumped on. I would upset a board member or they would send a nasty e-mail. I couldn't let that control me. I had to stop it. I had to stop.... So I decided... no more.

Eventually, there were several new board members elected and Angela said that things were much better. However, her experiences with the previous board appeared to have taken a toll on her self-confidence. Angela stated:

> If you want to stay in the position, you've got to last it out. I know they have the power to get rid of you. If you aren't doing what they want you to do and maybe I'm not a good school superintendent.... Maybe it is that I am a horrible school superintendent. But it is true, that is my perception.

The other women also experienced some difficult situations in their position. Patricia talked about the time when she almost left the district because of her board's behavior. She said that the board was not supporting someone that she hired. She explained:

> I felt like the board should have listened to me and put more stock in what I was saying than what these few teachers that didn't want to have rules were saying. So that bothered me. I almost left at that time.

Patricia also said: "What you have to realize is whatever the tangent might be when you are working with a board... you have to decide which war you are willing to die in. I live by that." She explained that you have to be aware of all of the different agendas the board members have and you must realize that it is not always about you. She stated: "They each have their own little interests and agendas. That is the hardest thing to me in this job... because you have five bosses with five sets of goals and five agendas." Therefore, you must be savvy enough to navigate the politics of individual agendas rather than getting caught up battling with every agenda that you do not agree with.

> It's like I told you before, it is not good for a community to see an embattled board with a superintendent. I will not get to that point. Not for myself professionally nor would I do that to a community.... If it got to an impasse and I felt that this is a war that I would not end, yes, I would just resign and find me another job.

While Patricia acknowledged the difficulties of the political challenges she also said that "it is a very lonely job, this job is... very lonely." She also stated: "The work is a toll on your body."

How Women Respond to Barriers/Difficulties

The women all experienced barriers and challenges during their pursuit of the position and continue to encounter difficult situations in their work. In addition to talking about these challenges, we spent a lot of time discussing how the women have overcome the barriers. All of the women acknowledged that is difficult to find a balance between their personal life and the superintendency. However, they all talked about how they try to seek a balance in their lives. The themes of spirituality, husband's role, and stress relief were common topics of discussion among the women.

Spirituality

Sylvia got vey emotional as she talked about her spirituality and how it helped her to get through her difficulties during her first superintendency. She said that she believes that God led her to the district because He needed to work on her attitude and she needed to experience the challenges in order to be the effective leader she is today.

> That is why I got teary a few minutes ago. I was thinking that the reason I had to go there is because the Lord had to work on my attitude. I had a bad attitude. My attitude was, I know how to do this, I have been successful here, I... I, I, I. Well, it is not about me. So, that is what He had to show me. That it is not about me. That if I profess to be His child, a Christian, a follower then it is not about me... that any accomplishment is Him working through me.

She explained that she only went on the interview to gain experience and improve her interview skills and did not have any intentions on being the superintendent.

> I was just trying to get the experience and have someone critique me so I could do better in a different system. But, it was for my good. It really helped me to be humble and to recognize that I needed Him to be a good leader. We can go to the best schools in life and we can do all of that. But... if you don't have the Lord ordering your steps, in the end you are really not successful. That is the reason that I teared up. I was thinking of how awful I had been thinking it was about me. It is not about me.

Sylvia said she believes that she has been successful because she has put her faith in God and He has led her where she is supposed to be. She stated: “He could have put anybody in this position. But, you have to know that I am called by Him to be in this position at this time, for this season.”

Sylvia also talked about how she draws upon the strength of the Lord on a daily basis by beginning her day in prayer. She explained that “the first part of the day with the Lord is critical and it is scriptural because He wants the first fruits.” Additionally, Sylvia talked about how she turns to God when she is having a difficult time making decisions at work.

> When I am wrestling with a tough decision I just take God at His word. If He tells me in the scripture not to be anxious about anything, to cast all of my cares on Him I just take Him at His word.... Well, what I am finding sometimes is that you just have to be quiet. You just have to be still. The Word says, be still and know that I am God. So, there are times that I just have to be still and pray about what it is I am going through or need an answer on. I don’t ever want to make a decision that is going to not benefit children.... So, I need divine guidance on things in life. I am not ashamed to say that I rely on divine guidance.

Sylvia said that that she believes the superintendency has to be your calling; it is like your ministry.

Kathy also explained that her spirituality is an important part of every day. She said, “I pray everyday. I have my own spiritual life... I do my daily devotional. I have just as many spiritual readings by my bedside as I do leadership ones.” She also said that her prayers and spiritual readings help keep her life in balance. She stated: “You know, you can just pull out something to read that helps you see it more clearly and to detach somewhat from it. Calm yourself, center yourself.” Kathy also said that she believes she is working as a superintendent because that is where God wants her to be

> I have a spiritual sense that this is where I need to be, this is what I am supposed to be doing.... I do want to be doing what God wants me to do in my life.... I feel that force for good in my life. It has always been there.

Andrea also talked about how she draws upon the strength of the Lord in her daily work. She explained that she has a difficult time letting go of things and that she has a tendency to try and control everything. When she finds herself in these situations she says, "Let go and let God. With my thoughts on trying to control everything and wanting to be in control of everything.... I've got to let go and offer it up to God in prayer." More specifically, she shared this prayer: "God will you take this burden from me and let me go home this weekend, put it out of my mind." Andrea also said that she believes that she has been given the opportunity to improve the lives of children and she said that "it is a spiritual thing with me, it is a calling."

Husband's Role

Another common theme that arose among four of the women was their husband's role in their personal and work lives. The women discussed how the support they get from their husband is the only way that they are able to do their job successfully and maintain their home. For example, Andrea explained: "He is home a lot now, which is good. Since I have become superintendent he does all of the cooking and cleaning."

> Now, when I say cook, he heats up the Lean Cuisine. He works all day from home, but, then he will quit that around 5:00 and then from 5:00-7:00 he will clean. So, when I get home at 7:00 the house is clean and he will have a Lean Cuisine heated up and we will sit down and eat together and watch TV.

Andrea said: "I'm just so appreciative that he doesn't mind doing that kind of stuff... he has a lot of business experience and he has kind of had to let his job go for me."

Patricia talked about how her husband supports her and is understanding that her job requires long hours away from home. She said that as a result of her busy schedule and long hours that she rarely has time to cook a meal.

> I don't cook. I haven't cooked in years except for when there is something that I want to have. Then I will cook. Maybe on the weekend when there is something I might want to eat. But we eat a lot of Stouffers and stuff like that during the week. I just don't have time. So, the job bleeds into your personal life at this particular level.

Patricia said that her husband is very supportive but that he also works long hours so they hired someone that comes to their home once a week to take care of the laundry and housework.

Kathy's husband takes care of a lot of the household chores so that she can focus on her work. She explained: "He does all of it... he takes all of the cleaning, runs all of the errands, pays all of the bills, he cooks... I don't do a thing." Kathy said: "That helps a lot, but that is not normal, that is not what normal folks have." She explained what she would do if she did not have her husband taking care of her and the home.

> I would just say that I would have to have a full-time nanny. I would have to have somebody else to cook if my husband couldn't do it. For a few years it might take all the pack of money I made.... I would still do that. That is what you have to do.

Kathy also acknowledged that she could not work at the level she is without her husband. She said: "If I didn't have him, and I was by myself, I would probably be very overweight, very tired... not taking care of myself.... So, he provides that kind of balance." Kathy explained:

> I have a wonderful husband, who is retired, who cooks, and does all of the family life. I basically have a wife, a full-time wife. I do... that is how he is. Everything is centered around my schedule and what I have to do.

Angela was the only woman who said that she still takes care of the cooking and cleaning in addition to her work. However, she said that she does not have much time to cook meals anymore. She commented: “I just make it work. I have a husband that is very supportive. But, there are times that you get tired of the sandwich or going out, but you don’t want to cook. But, we manage.” She explained: “Usually Saturday is my time to clean the house, which I really do not like because it takes up my Saturday and I could be doing something else.”

Balance

The women also talked about how they struggle, and some talked about the ways they manage the stress of their busy schedules to help maintain balance. Andrea explained that she is struggling with finding balance because she is in constant connection with the board members through her Blackberry. She said: “I try to have some time when I don’t look at the Blackberry. I would say turn it off but I can’t quite do that. But, I do have some time when I don’t look at the Blackberry.” Angela said that she and her husband went on vacation for a week over the Christmas holidays and she would go for three or four hours without looking at the Blackberry. She said that her husband will ask her: “Can you just stay off your Blackberry for today and let’s go see a movie or something?” Angela said it is difficult to find balance because the community expects to see her at most of the events. She explained:

> Well, of course at the high school, they want you to be at all of the high school games... you are pretty much expected to be at the games. What I find is that I don’t have many free weekends.... I’m expected to be out there. I go to a lot of the school council meetings, which of course are on Sundays or before school starts.... A lot of PTA meetings.... So you are busy, you are a very busy person.... It just takes a lot of your time, your personal time.

Andrea said that she thinks it is more difficult for women to find balance between the job expectations and home. Andrea also talked about how the job requires a lot of energy. She said: “It also takes a lot of energy because it gets to your heart and soul. So when you give yourself like that... sometimes you go home and you don’t give as much as you should to your family.” Andrea was very aware of the burden the job has on her personal life and is trying to work through it. She said: “I’ve got to be better about going to work out and trying to get that kind of stress out, because you just let it... but you do let it get to you.”

As Sylvia reflected on how she finds balance in her life she said: “Well, don’t you know? We don’t have a personal life!” She also talked about how the fact that she lives alone might make the balance between home and work easier.

> But when I get home, you see, it is just me. So, I don’t really have to try and balance getting home, doing homework, taking care of a spouse, taking care of a home the way that people with families.... So, I really don’t have to balance that part of it. You don’t have to go home and fix dinner for a family and wash clothes and do all of that.... Things that families have to do, wives do. Surely it is easier, but it is still important that I balance a personal life.

Sylvia explained that she tries to take mini-vacations with her friends and family, is a member of a cycling club, and is also a member of a fitness center. She said: “So, I try to exercise every day and there are days I miss but I make an effort. I am always a member of a club, always.... so that I can go and workout.”

Kathy explained that she had to learn how to relax when she became a superintendent and is still learning how to do this. She stated: “I think that I am now just getting to that spot where I see the importance and I wish that I had seen it earlier in my life that it is okay to take some time for yourself.” She said that she always believed that

if you want to be good that you push yourself and you press hard all of the time. However, she said: “But that is not true. If you want to be good, you pace yourself. I wish I had known that.”

> You want to make good decisions... if you are tired, you are not going to make as good decisions. Early in your life you can get away with it, but by the time you are my age, you really can’t get away with it. You are going to be tired. Even to the point of this week when I know I have a whole lot of stuff, I am very aware of when I’ve got to work out.

Patricia is an avid motorcycle rider and her outlet is riding her motorcycle with her husband. She talked about how riding her motorcycle is her stress reliever.

> Well, on Sundays...we go out with a group of people that ride every Sunday. After church, or sometimes I don’t go to church, we’ll ride and go eat lunch and then ride all day.... I enjoy that. I can have the worst week but get on that bike and just ride.... Everything is okay.... So that is an outlet for me.

Patricia talked about the importance of finding a way to relieve the stress you encounter on a daily basis. She said: “It is a fight to keep it balanced.” Patricia explained:

> Sometimes it is worse than others, as far as balance. But, it depends on what you have going on. I am a very involved superintendent... it is very hard to keep what you do personally separate from what you do at school. That is the reason that I told you before like to ride my motorcycle. It will get pretty again, in about April, and I will start doing weekend riding to keep it separate. During the school year it is very, very tough. I read at night before I go to bed, something that I want to read instead of instructional reading.

Patricia commented: “I’ve always been a high-energy person, but it does wear me out. Now, Sunday I will be tired, very tired and I will sleep very late. I might just stay at home and rest to prepare for Monday.”

Finally, some of the women discussed the importance of making sure that spouses have a clear understanding of the demands the superintendency will place on your lives. Patricia talked about the importance of deciding early in a marriage how to negotiate the

demands of work and home. She explained that marriage should be viewed as a partnership.

> I think that marriage is a partnership between two people. It is a communication emotionally and every other way and a partnership between two people. Of course, not all people think that way. Some people still do the traditional role where the man runs the house and the woman does everything. I don't believe in that and I started that very young in our marriage. I didn't fulfill that role for twenty-five years and then change the role. That role was set early because that is how I believe. But you have to realize that I was raised by a strong woman that set those rules in her house.

The women acknowledge that they have not been able to effectively balance their personal and professional lives but still seek ways to navigate this barrier.

Next Steps and Advice

After discussing their experiences in the superintendency I asked each of the women to look ahead and reflect on their next steps. Most of the women said that they do not see themselves in another superintendent position at this point. Andrea stated: "I think whenever I leave, I don't think I would want to be superintendent anywhere else again." Kathy remarked: "I think this is my "swan song" as far as organizational leadership." Patricia explained that she did not see herself applying for another superintendent position. She said: "I don't think so. I've about had as much fun as I can take right here." Angela also said that she would not pursue another superintendent position.

> I will never pursue another superintendent position anywhere else. As I said, I am glad to have had the opportunity. It is a wonderful opportunity to be the superintendent of this system. But, if they were to fire me tomorrow, I don't have so much pride that I cannot go back to the classroom.... I have my doctorate; I would still make pretty good money. It would be easier.

Finally, I asked the women to share some advice for other women aspiring to the superintendency. Andrea said that she believes it would be helpful to serve as a high school principal prior to pursuing a superintendency.

> If you are able to get the job as a woman, and I think that it is harder to get the job... it helps if you have been a high school principal. I think in the mind of the board you have been more like a superintendent, they see those women as tougher.

Sylvia said that you must be ready to take ownership of both the positive and negative things that happened in the district prior to your tenure.

> When you get in the position... it is your position no matter what happened before you took the position. Once you get in you have to take ownership. It is your position. You can't make excuses or talk about what should have happened in the past. You have inherited whatever is there. Then you have to make the best of that situation. No matter what is going on and what has not gone on in the past, you have to think about the children that you have been entrusted with and know that if you are an educator, you want what is best for them.

Sylvia also explained that you have to always be prepared. She said: "You cannot go in once you have gotten the job and think well, I've arrived. You have to be prepared." She also stated: "You have to keep an open mind, be willing to learn and you have to network. Not only in the region or the state, but I think it is extremely important that you network on the national level."

Kathy emphasized the importance of always trying to improve your leadership skills. She explained: "You never, ever can be just good at what you do. You can't beat expertise and ability in schools.... study leadership.... so that you become a student or a scholar of the whole field of leadership." Kathy said that she is always reading to stay informed and learn more about leadership.

Patricia explained that the superintendent needs to have a clear understanding of the big picture rather than trying to be an expert in all areas of the system.

> The actual nuts and bolts as far as the job... you need to have a good understanding of the budget. The truth of the matter is that you can buy a good accountant and a good budget and finance person. You can know the workings, but you can have a person that really knows the details of it. You can hire a good curriculum and instruction person. You, as a superintendent, only have to know how it all fits together and works. A lot of superintendents are not experts in every one of those areas. They know a little bit in each one of those areas and have expertise in one area.

Patricia also suggested that it would be helpful for aspiring women to work under current women superintendents.

Angela thought it would be important to know that the board that hires you might not be the board that stays with you. She also explained that if they turn against you as superintendent, you might not know why. Angela stated: “I never knew what I did to get them to turn against me. I still do not know that.... to this day.... I don’t know why.” She said that it is important to know that it is a huge job with no job security. Angela remarked: “I think that most people couldn’t do this job.”

Summary

The findings from this study explain how five women have overcome some of the barriers that exist within the male-dominated position of the superintendency. Additionally, there is evidence that barriers for women still exist in the superintendent position. The evidence was identified by examining the women’s experiences and then grouping the barriers around common themes. The women’s stories were organized around the common themes of patriarchy, Board of Education expectations, feminine expectations, family expectations, good old boy network, conflicts with the community and Board of Education, and the selection process. In the following chapter, conclusions

are drawn regarding women's experiences with these barriers and recommendations for change are examined.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of gender structuring and discrimination in the superintendency and make recommendations to change these sex-role stereotypes. The interpretation of the findings and the recommendations are discussed from a postmodern feminist perspective and grouped around common themes that cut across the data and emerged from the study. Additionally, the discussion is organized around the three research questions: What do women in the superintendency think about what it means to be one of a few women in a male-dominated occupation? How does gender consciousness play a role in the ability to examine and understand barriers? How do characteristics of the position interact with gender? These three questions provided a clear focus for the data analysis and they served as a framework for developing an understanding of women's experiences with barriers in the superintendency. The findings of this study indicate that there are numerous barriers women experience while pursuing a superintendent position as well as while they are serving in the position. Additionally, the findings indicate that women are beginning to overcome some of the long-standing barriers.

Patriarchal Construction of the Superintendency

As previously stated, the superintendency is a male-dominated position with masculine expectations that have been developed by the men who occupy the position

and reinforced by society. The masculine expectations that define this position have been accepted by society and by the men who occupy the position. Since society expects the superintendent to behave according to these masculine expectations, women experience discrimination when they serve in a superintendent position. Women who enter this male-dominated position experience explicit discrimination as well as more subtle forms of discrimination. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) explain: "Sexism is a barrier for women who aspire to become CEOs of school districts because people respond to women on the basis of sex-role stereotypes" (p. 17). In order to propose changes to the superintendency it is important to understand the gender discrimination that occurs within the position. I propose that we might better understand this phenomenon by examining the normalizations that define the discourses and practices of the superintendency. Skrla and Young (2003) notes:

> In the case of the public school superintendency, there are multiple normalizations at work, but there is, in my view, one particularly powerful normalization that plays a key role in the maintenance of male domination in this role – the normalization of femininity and masculinity. That is, the normalization of socially well-understood gender roles, characteristics, behaviors, ways of being undergirds the entire superintendency culture. (p. 252)

The normalizations of masculinity and femininity remain so deeply entrenched in our society's expectations for men and women that they serve to perpetuate gender discrimination. In view of the fact that many people still expect women to behave according to these expectations, they experience gender discrimination when they challenge the feminine rules within the superintendency. Bardwick and Douvan (1971) describe the normalization of femininity with the following terms: dependence, passivity, fragility, low pain tolerance, nonaggression, noncompetiveness, inner orientation,

interpersonal orientation, empathy, sensitivity, nurturance, subjectivity, yieldingness, receptivity, inability to risk, emotional liability, and supportiveness. It appears that the superintendency is constructed around opposite masculine terms that include quite different qualities: independence, assertiveness, sturdiness, high pain tolerance, aggression, competiveness, outer orientation, self-sufficiency, stoicism, justice, objectivity, unyieldingness, remoteness, risk taking, and rationality (Skrla, 2000a) Therefore, it seems that the normalization of femininity is in conflict with the social construction of the patriarchal position of the superintendency.

Jackie Blount (1998) proposes that the normalization of femininity and masculinity in the superintendency was established during the years following World War II.

> Psychologists, sexologists, educators, and social critics invested considerable energy in the effort to produce scientifically derived definitions of acceptable White middle-class femininity.... Gender divisions became increasingly starkly delineated, and those who defied the conventions suffered the burdens of deviance and ostracism. (p. 110)

The demarcation of feminine and masculine expectations in our society has reinforced the belief that the superintendency is a man's position because society has placed the male gender at the center of the superintendency discourse. Skrla (2000a) explains: "Society expects that men in the position will have those socialized characteristics and behave in those socialized ways; and, thus, the role of the superintendent has been socially constructed by society as masculine" (pp. 296-297).

Findings and Interpretations

Gender Consciousness

The research questions in this study were developed in response to the perception that the superintendency is socially constructed as masculine. The first question I examined was how gender consciousness plays a role in the ability to examine barriers. More specifically, how does the women's awareness of gender barriers assist them in navigating these barriers? My committee members and I shared an initial concern that the women would be reluctant to discuss any gender issues they have experienced because the recent research on women superintendents indicates that women interviewees are silent about the role gender plays in their work (Skrla & Young, 2003; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Chase, 1995; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Smulyan, 2000). However, the stories these women readily shared challenge the previous findings of silence. The women did not hesitate to share their experiences and have adopted a sense of resistance to the silence barrier. Kathy noted:

> I think that helps us sort things out when we talk about it. I think that this is one thing that is a gender related kind of thing... that we tend to talk out our feelings. That is why we have best friends and we have people. That is probably one of the things that I would say about being a superintendent is hard for women... we do have best friends and we like to be close. Not all of us, but we do like to have confidants and buddies because that is how we work things out and it is harder to do that in this job. You really cannot afford it and so it makes it lonely. I think that it is lonelier. I would imagine that it would be a lonelier job for women just because we like to have that.

Even though it appeared they had tucked the stories away deep inside themselves, they knew exactly where to retrieve them and appeared grateful to have the opportunity to share. The experience of sharing these stories was emotional and heart -wrenching at times for the women. This was evident through the tears and anger that were displayed

as they shared their stories. At the same time, the women explained that it was therapeutic for them to discuss and critically explore how these experiences personally affected them. They were not silenced by the perception that they should not discuss their experiences with sexism.

Each of the women in this study quickly acknowledged that they have experienced difficulties in the superintendency and believe that many of these issues occurred as a result of their gender. Patricia explained:

> I think that you have mindsets by boards that maybe they think a man would be more suited... more assertive, more in that domineering role. That a man would work better.... I think that you just have some boards that just really see it as a man's position and that a man can handle it better.

Andrea, Sylvia, and Kathy shared their experiences of not being selected for a superintendent position because they are women. As they shared their experiences with gender discrimination, they displayed feelings of anger as well as a strong sense of determination to overcome these gender barriers. The women said that even though they were qualified for the position, some of the board members implied that they needed someone that had experience with facilities. Sylvia noted:

> I didn't get the position. This was the second interview. Now, the first time I clearly was not prepared. But, the second time I just felt that I was prepared and when I did not get it... I was just really upset... because the board knew that they needed to build a new high school and I had no experience with facilities and building.

Sylvia, Andrea, and Kathy were frustrated with their experiences with gender discrimination, but it did not hinder them from pursuing another superintendent position. In fact, the women suggested that these experiences created a sense of awareness for them and helped them to navigate other gender barriers.

Even though the women were comfortable discussing their experiences with gender barriers within the confines of this study, they probably would not be willing to have these conversations without the anonymity and confidentiality of a research study. This suggests that while women are beginning to chisel away at this barrier, there is still a lack of security in openly discussing the ever-present gender discrimination in the superintendency. Additionally, it also suggests that it will be difficult for women to break down this barrier without some changes in the way society perceives the superintendent position.

The women also explained that they are aware that board members question them in the areas of building and finance more than they question men. However, each of the women acknowledged that these are not areas of strength for them and that they work hard to overcome the perception that women can not operate the budgets and facilities as effectively as men. They attributed this to the fact that women are perceived as the curriculum and instruction leaders while men are the building and finance leaders. It is common for women to climb the ladder through the curriculum and instruction side of the school district while men typically climb the ladder through building and finance experience in the school system. The women also acknowledged that while they are questioned about their decisions in the areas of building and finance men are rarely questioned in the areas of curriculum and instruction. Patricia stated:

> I think that we get questioned sometimes more than a male.... I think that some of the things that I am questioned about that a man would never be questioned about.... Like when it comes to when we are working a building project.

This suggests that women are held to a higher standard because they are expected to be experts in all areas of operation. These deeply entrenched societal expectations continue

to perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency and also serve to promote subtle forms of gender discrimination.

These subtle forms of gender discrimination are evident in the women's experiences of being questioned frequently in the areas of finance and facilities. This type of discrimination is considered to be subtle because an observer might not recognize the occurrence to be gender discrimination without knowing the context of the situation. For example, if an observer did not know that women are expected to be curriculum leaders they might not acknowledge that persistent questions to women about facilities and finance could be considered gender discrimination. Pierce (1974) uses the term microagression to describe these subtle forms of discrimination against black people.

> These racial assaults to black dignity and black hope are incessant and cumulative. Any single one may be gross. In fact, the major vehicle for racism in this country is offenses done to blacks by whites in this sort of gratuitous never-ending way. These offenses are microaggressions. Almost all black-white racial interactions are characterized by white put-downs, done in automatic, preconscious, or unconscious fashion. These minidisasters accumulate. It is the sum totals of multiple microaggressions by whites to blacks that has pervasive effect to the stability and peace of this world. (p. 515)

While Pierce (1974) focuses on the perspectives and experiences of women and men of color with racial microagressions, I use the concept relative to women's experiences with subtle forms of gender discrimination. These microaggressions could be unconscious acts of discrimination that occur because the discriminator is operating under the patriarchal expectations for women. In addition, most of the research on women's experiences with barriers focuses more on the covert barriers that are easier to observe so we know little about these gender microaggressions that women experience. Pierce (1974) has maintained that Blacks "must be taught to recognize these microaggressions and

construct his future by taking appropriate action at each instance of recognitions" (p. 520). Women could also construct their future in the superintendency by recognizing these microaggressions and learning how to respond and challenge them. It is apparent that the women are aware of the gender discrimination they experience in the superintendency, but how can this change? I propose that the goal must be to dilute, challenge, and abolish gender discrimination within the superintendency. There is no justification for the fact that gender discrimination remains prevalent in the superintendency.

While it is apparent that gender discrimination is prevalent in the superintendency it appears that women are learning to overcome some of these issues. For example, the women's willingness to acknowledge and share their personal experiences with gender issues suggests that women are overcoming the societal expectation that they should not acknowledge and discuss sexism. While women's acknowledgment of these gender barriers is important they need the support, understanding, and advocacy of others in order to re-define the patriarchal position of the superintendency.

Even though the women shared their experiences with gender discrimination, they also indicated that in order to navigate the barriers they must maintain a balance between feminine and masculine behaviors in the superintendency. Bolman and Deal (2003) state: "One of the many consequences of sexism for women is that women more than men must walk a tightrope of conflicting expectations" (p. 347). For example, Patricia explained that an overly assertive woman might be perceived as an outspoken and unfeminine woman. She said: "That is the first thing they say about women instead of she has a really strong resolve and she is a great leader." Additionally, women are expected to be able to

make the difficult decisions, but they are also expected to convey their decision in a feminine manner. The stories these women shared suggest that women are beginning to openly acknowledge that gender barriers exist in the superintendency. However, it also appears that even though they acknowledge the gender barriers, they still believe that it is important to be aware that there are masculine expectations of the superintendency.

The results of this study suggest that women experience conflicts between gender and the social construction of the superintendency. Therefore, it is important for women to understand the root causes that have created and sustained the barriers and gender discrimination they experience. By acknowledging the root causes of barriers, women might learn how to challenge these microagressions to help generate a transformation of the superintendency. Currently, as a result of the social construction of the position as masculine, women are faced with trying to weave their feminine identities into the masculine expectations of the position rather than being able to define their subjectivity within a gender neutral discourse. Dana and Bourisaw (2007) explain: “Some women feel they need to create an alter ego because their natural self could not possibly be successful in a male world” (p. 123). While the women in this study do not appear to create a complete alter ego they do purposefully strive for a balance between masculine and feminine behaviors in their identity as superintendent. In other words, they learn how to behave in a male-dominated position in order to avoid some of the barriers and gender microaggressions.

Leadership Styles

Even though the women seek a balance between masculine and feminine behaviors, each of the women in this study identified her leadership style as

collaborative. This leadership style is usually described as feminine and is in stark contrast to the authoritarian approach men typically utilize in their work as superintendents. Banks (1995) explains: “Men focus on achieving success in tasks while women seek interpersonal successes; women put more energy into creating a positive group effort; men focus on displaying recognizable leader behavior” (p. 72). Sylvia explained:

> I just believe in the team approach. I am a people person and I know how to pull people together. I know how to make folks feel good about what they are doing. I know how to appreciate people. It is never about me. I know that it is about the team. It takes all of us. Anytime we are planning anything I won’t just sit down and do it on my own. It is the team.

The other women also talked at length about involving their staff, teachers, parents, students, the community, and board members in the decision-making process. Patricia talked about her leadership style with her board of education. She explained:

> I just kept trying to include them together as a group. I would not leave people out.... I finally got them to where they would all eat dinner together.... We plan things as a group. We have discussions as a group.

Andrea also believes that women in the superintendency tend to adopt a collaborative leadership style.

> I think that women are more relational and more open from what I have seen. I know that I am much more open and hands on than any superintendent that they have had... for the past twenty years. People tell me that a lot.... but I think it is that women are more collaborative.

Additionally, Kathy suggested that society expects women to utilize a collaborative leadership approach in their work.

> We are socialized. I am not thinking that we are genetically that way, but we are socialized with those skills. A girl will figure out how to make everything work out for everybody if at all possible. I think that is why most women probably wouldn’t attribute their success completely to

> themselves where I think men would be more likely to be proud of themselves.

This leadership style is often defined as "power with" because it draws on the ability to achieve certain social goals through cooperation among various interests and concerns (Follett, 1942; Sarason, 1990). A collaborative leadership style embraces the concept that power belongs to a group rather than to individuals. Arendt (1972) explains: "Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together" (p. 143). Arendt's explanation of power along with Patricia, Andrea, and Sylvia's description of their collaborative leadership style both seem to draw upon the concept of "power with." This concept of a group holding power is in conflict with the masculine expectations of the superintendent holding the power. In this study I observed "power with" which is derived from women's tendencies to nurture, collaborate, and support others while working together toward a common goal (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Brunner & Grogan (2007) states:

> Thus, the collaborative model of power is not only a feminist idea that represents the experiences of women; it may also be an increasingly emergent paradigm of power. In other words, feminists view orthodox conceptions of power as incorporating masculine preoccupations with how people control one another to secure their personal wants, and they suggest that such conceptions must be complemented with more feminine concerns about how people can effectively organize themselves to solve social problems and transform their environment. (pp. 72-73)

Is this decision to embrace a collaborative leadership style a result of the normalization of femininity and masculinity? Do women choose this leadership style over an authoritarian style since that style is typically viewed as masculine? Are women aware of the gender microaggressions that they might experience if they adopt an authoritarian approach? Dana and Bourisaw (2006) state:

> A number of studies of women superintendents' work have found that when women are uncomfortable in using directive, authoritarian behaviors to assume the power of their position as school superintendents, it's mostly because of the consequences, that is, others see them as behaving inappropriately. (p. 67)

Skrla (2003) also suggests: "By validating stereotypical feminine behavior as a leadership style, and thus avoiding stereotypical leadership behaviors, women hope to be able to escape the negatives attached to violating gendered norms for individual behavior" (p. 257). Additionally, Lips (2003) suggests that women are uncomfortable using directive, authoritarian leadership styles because society views this as inappropriate. Skrla and Lips seem to suggest that women adopt a collaborative leadership approach because that is how society expects them to lead. However, I suggest that the women in this study deliberately utilize shared decision-making and collaborative leadership styles because they believe it is more effective than the authoritative approach. These women have worked in the patriarchal system that is organized around a top down decision-making model and are deliberately choosing a different leadership style. Kathy stated:

> Well I think also, what it takes to lead now, being a leader has changed. I think that the soft leadership skills... teamwork, facilitation, listening, consensus building, collaboration... all of those things is now fitting more of a feminine approach.... We are more empathetic. We are taught from the beginning to be that way. Now, a lot of that comes from being one down in the power structure. When you are one down in the power structure, for your survival, you learn those skills at a level that men don't.

The intentional adoption of a collaborative style suggests that these women are seeking to transform the superintendency by challenging possible gender microaggressions they would encounter if they chose an authoritarian style.

The women in this study are aware of gender barriers and are beginning to express their frustration with the more subtle gender microagressions they experience. Their acknowledgment of barriers, microaggressions, and societal expectations for women has helped them to challenge and overcome some of these barriers. Women aspiring to the superintendency must also be aware of the gender conflicts that occur in the superintendent position to assist in dismantling these barriers and transforming the superintendency. It is also critical that these stories are shared so that others are aware of the importance of overcoming the gender barriers that define the superintendency.

Women's Perspectives on the Social Construction of the Superintendency

The next question I examined in this study focused on what women think about being in a male-dominated occupation. This is an important question because I wanted to understand how women view and define themselves in a position that is defined by male norms. Scott (1999) states: "Women enter the superintendency not merely as women but as subjects in an institutional world that is ordered, shaped, and regulated by a set of practices, or discursive fields, that define notions of what is expected and normal" (p. 85). Furthermore, Scott (1999) explains that "these orderings are based on an institutional knowledge constituted by patriarchal assumptions, language, and patterns of relating that reproduce and reinforce gender polarization, and hence, inequality" (p. 86). As a result of the patriarchal ordering of the superintendent discourse, it is important to understand how the women perceive and define their subjectivity within the discourse of this male-dominated position. Many people believe that the male perspective solely defines and explains the superintendency (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). However, while this belief has held true in the past, it is critical to examine the superintendency from other perspectives.

I propose that we need to understand the superintendency from a feminist perspective so that we can transform the social construction of the superintendency.

Since the current system is infused with practices that support men in the superintendency, it is important to acknowledge how women perceive their experiences in this male-dominated position in order to propose change. The women in this study recognized that, as women, they are underrepresented in the superintendency and are both proud and humbled to have the opportunity to serve in this role. They also acknowledged that they do not think of themselves as being different because they are one of the few women in the superintendency. Patricia explained:

> I don't think that it has made me feel any different.... I am excited that I am one of the few because I hope I am trailing a path for others to step up and come on and do it behind me. That part I am proud of and I am excited about. But, I don't feel like it is something that I am like 'look at me I'm just one of 20%.' No, I don't look at it like that. I don't look at it that way at all.... I guess it never occurred to me that I am one of the 20%.

Even though they are grateful to have the opportunity to be superintendents, they expressed frustration that this patriarchal structure still exists. Furthermore, the women believe that gender is not a factor in being an effective superintendent. Angela said: "I just think that if you can do the job then who cares what you are." They are hopeful that they are paving the way for other women to enter the superintendency and were eager to share their experiences in hopes that they can assist other women in accessing the position. However, I question this because the implication is that gender does not matter.

The women also talked about the difficulties they experience navigating the typical social functions that are often expected of superintendents. More specifically, the women explained that there are masculine customs and practices that men have embedded within the culture of the position. For example, male superintendents typically

socialize and network by playing golf together and discussing sporting events. However, the women in this study explained that they are not invited and they do not have a desire to participate in these activities. This is another example of subtle gender microaggressions that men engage in to sustain their dominance and control within the superintendency. These forms of microaggressions can make the position lonely and also can make them feel like outsiders to the superintendent club. Kathy commented about being isolated in the superintendency.

> But then I have been deliberately left out because of being a woman too and I don't like that either and I try to address it when I really feel like it is coming and it is impacting my ability to have influence.

Additionally, board members tend to discriminate against women superintendents in terms of societal expectations. Sylvia said: "It is hard to socialize with them, because I am a woman. There is one woman on the board and four men." Furthermore, they also perceive women as being more family-oriented and believe that they will not be able to devote the time that is needed for the job. Andrea also explained that she often feels like she is playing a role in order to prove that women can be a good superintendent so the board does not view her just as a mother or wife. In order to transform the superintendency, these discriminatory practices need to be challenged.

While women are capable of doing the work required of the superintendent, it appears that others do not readily share this belief. Additionally, when women are given the opportunity to be superintendent, they must work harder than their male colleagues to prove they can do the work. Marshall (1985) explains:

> Aspiring women, having no power to challenge or change the requirements, must find ways to convince the men in power positions that their ascribed handicaps are unimportant.... Because this... requires time,

> energy and constant vigilance, it constitutes a barrier to women's entry and mobility in the career. (p. 133-134)

Therefore, women might not be willing to do the extra work required of them to prove themselves and also might not be interested in subjecting themselves to gender discrimination. Women who pursue a superintendent position continue to face numerous gender barriers that need to be challenged.

Another barrier the women in this study have experienced is learning to navigate the long-standing good old boy network of mentors and sponsors that functions as a means for men to help each other advance in their careers. This is another form of overt gender discrimination that exists in the superintendency because this is an informal network of men whose sole purpose is to help one another. Women are not included in this network but are aware of its existence. The women in this study believe that this structure still exists; however, they also think it is beginning to lose some of its power. They explained that they make a conscious effort to avoid the people that still operate within this network; however, if members of the good old boy network attempt to create problems, the women said that they confront them. The women suggested that by ignoring the tactics of this group they hope the good old boy network will continue to lose power. However, I question whether this will succeed in changing behaviors that are entrenched in society.

Intersection of Gender and the Superintendency

The next question I examined was whether there are characteristics of the superintendency that interact with gender. I wanted to understand how the traditional feminine expectations interact with some of the typical masculine expectations of the superintendency. In this study, I observed conflicts between gender and the

superintendency rather than an interaction. More specifically, one of the conflicts between gender and the superintendency is a result of society's expectations for women's role at home and the time demands on the superintendent. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) explain:

> One of the most traditional sex-role stereotypes is the woman as family and home caregiver. Because women are the childbearers, they are also expected to be the primary family caregivers, which traditionally has meant the women stay home to rear the children, fix the meals, maintain the house and all family operations, and, since they are at home, take care of the secretarial, organizational, and social duties for the family. Men are expected to be the financial providers for their families. (p. 22)

These feminine expectations make it difficult for women to access a superintendent position because it has been defined around masculine expectations.

The conflict between gender and the superintendency was evident in this study because all of the women have deeply embedded feminine identities that emerged throughout our conversations. One example of this is that several of the women talked at length about the importance of making sure their husbands were not always seen as superintendents' spouses when they attend school and social events. It is important to them that their husbands are not perceived as spouses with the less important job because this might make their husbands feel inferior. For example, Andrea and Patricia are both keenly aware that the societal expectations are for the man to be the breadwinner. Andrea said that one of her female superintendent colleagues told her that she did not think that a woman could be a superintendent and be married because men could not handle being number two. Andrea commented:

> I think there is some truth to that. I think that a lot of men, their wives understand when they are gone all of the time, but it is not typical for a man to almost be willing to be second fiddle.

Patricia also commented on how the demands of the superintendent position can be a strain on your marriage.

> Well, I think it does take a special kind of person you are married to but I do think... that it can be very troublesome in a marriage. I mean, you have to think about it, most men are not going to sit at home when their wife comes home at 10:00-11:00 at night.... So, it takes a special man that is willing to share his wife with her job. It takes a different kind of make-up for a man and it can wear on a marriage.... I am not foolish to think that it doesn't put some type of strain on a marriage because you are working such intense hours that it does open the door for that person to get frustrated because of the fact that you are still at work and they are at home.

Another aspect of their feminine identities emerged as they shared stories about how they enjoyed cooking for their families and taking care of their children prior to becoming a superintendent. None of the women cook anymore because they do not have time.

Additionally, while each of the women talked lovingly about raising their children all of the women waited to enter the superintendency until their children were grown and out of the house. They indicated that they do not think that they could have done the work required of being a mother and a superintendent at the same time. Andrea's husband asked her: "Can you imagine doing what you are doing now if our kids were still young?" Andrea remarked:

> There is just no way I would have done it. I certainly could have, but I would not have done it because I wouldn't have done that to my children. I think a woman, for the most part, is going to be the caregiver of the kids.

Kathy was the only woman that suggested the possibility of hiring someone to assist her if she had children while being a superintendent. Kathy said: "Now, if I was younger and I had children... I would have to have full-time help at home, to do it at the level that I want to do it." Kathy's proposal suggests that women might be beginning to think beyond

the societal expectations for the woman to serve as the primary caregiver for their children.

Even though it appears that these feminine tendencies have remained entrenched in the women's identities, they seem to have temporarily discarded them in order to do the work required of the superintendent. Their choice to delay their entry into the superintendency suggests that it might have been difficult for these women to co-exist within the discourses of the superintendency and motherhood if their children were still home. While these women have overcome many barriers to obtain their superintendent position, it is possible that their delayed entry serves to perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency. Kathy noted: "But then we hurt ourselves in that we do all of these other things and so we will continue to be underrepresented in jobs as long as we do that."

Another conflict between gender and the superintendency is that women are often still faced with maintaining the household while assuming the time-consuming role of the superintendency. Typically these tasks are viewed to be the woman's responsibility since men are usually expected to be the primary breadwinner for the family. Brunner and Grogan (2007) explain:

> While life at home has changed to some degree, women still shoulder the majority of family and household responsibilities. Given the time demands of top administrative roles, women may not aspire to the top because they simply have no desire to take on more responsibility or work. (p. 42)

Therefore, the women in this study had to negotiate this conflict in order to be able to devote themselves to the endless hours that are involved with the superintendency. Brunner and Grogan explain: "Societal norms do not work in her favor, so she must

address this particular aspect of her life in some way in order to move forward in her career" (2007, p. 43).

Four of the women in this study have overcome this barrier by giving up these responsibilities and seeking additional help at home. Sylvia and Patricia pay someone to clean their homes and do the laundry every week while Kathy and Andrea's husbands have taken on the responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, and doing the laundry since they have become superintendents. These four women were convinced that they would not be able to perform at the level they do in their job without this help. Kathy explained:

> I couldn't do it at the level that I am doing it I don't think. If I didn't have him and I was by myself, I would just probably be very overweight, very tired... not taking care of myself.

However, Angela's experiences with this barrier have been different than the other women. Angela still takes care of all of the household duties and has not negotiated any changes in this area since she became a superintendent. She appeared to dread the time she had to spend on housework. Angela explained: "Usually Saturday is my time to clean the house, which I really do not like because it takes up my Saturday and I could be doing something else." Even though she still does all of the cleaning and laundry she said she does not have the time or the energy to cook as much. Angela's household and superintendent responsibilities appear to be in conflict with each other.

Another example of how gender can conflict with the superintendency is that Boards of Education often require the superintendent to relocate and live in the community where they work. This can be a conflict for women because it is more difficult for women to relocate for superintendent positions than it is for men. More specifically, women can not always readily relocate for a superintendent position because

their spouses typically have careers that will not allow them to move. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) state: “Although there are now recognizable exceptions to the cultural expectation that the man’s job has the priority.... the underlying cultural value continues to be for men to assure the financial security of the family” (p, 159). This is another conflict between gender and the superintendency that was acknowledged by the women in this study. Angela, Patricia, Andrea, and Kathy felt like their opportunities for superintendent positions are limited because they are unable to relocate as a result of family obligations. However, since Sylvia is not married she did not view relocation as a conflict. It appears that this barrier is still present and needs further examination.

Another conflict between gender and the superintendency is that society places higher expectations on women superintendents which could result in higher stress levels for women who occupy this position. Women must spend more hours on the job because they have to prove that they can do the work. Evans (2003) explains:

> My research shows that women get promoted based on their performance, while men might get promoted based on their potential. Women are doing a job for 10 years before they get promoted because they must prove they know how to do it.
> (p. 36)

Therefore, in addition to discussing barriers the women also talked about how they negotiate the tensions of a high pressure position while being a female.

Balance

While all of the women have their own outlets to relieve stress, they all value the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. Sylvia explained: “I try to exercise every day and there are days I miss but I make an effort. I am always a member of a club... so that I can go and workout.”

Dana and Bourisaw (2006) note: “Because women work longer hours than men in the superintendency, both exercise and nutrition become increasingly important to physical and emotional status” (p. 210). Andrea talked about how it is difficult but important to make the time to exercise.

> I’ve got to be better about going to work out and trying to get that kind of stress out, because you just let it. It is not like it is a bad kind of stress, but you do let it get to you. It is hard not to when you are dealing with people’s lives.

Even though the women struggle finding the time in their busy schedules the women said that by taking care of themselves with diet and exercise they perform better in their work. Kathy explained the importance of taking the time for herself while serving in the demanding role of superintendent.

> And you want to, you think that if you want to be good, then that means that you press hard all of the time. But that is not true. If you want to be good, you pace yourself. I wish I had known that.

These women are aware of how the stress and time demands can affect their personal health and attempt to negotiate this barrier by seeking balance.

Recommendations

Reconception of the Superintendency

I suggest that the literature surrounding women in the superintendency is problematic because it serves to reify patriarchy by neatly defining between masculine and feminine expectations. Additionally, the women in this study also utilized this form of strategic essentialism by conceptualizing their experiences around these binary expectations for men and women. However, even though the women appear to reconstruct their experiences from a strategic essentialist perspective their stories are inspiring. These women are just a few who survived the demands and barriers and are

willing to openly discuss their experiences. However, in addition to hearing these stories there must be a more conscious effort to challenge the deeply entrenched social practices that neatly define the superintendency as a patriarchal position. To this end, we must work to find solutions to this problem by re-defining the discourse of the superintendency and challenging the social construction of the position. I suggest that the position should be transformed so that gender does not serve as the central means for defining a superintendent.

In order to transpose gender from the mechanism of defining the position there must be a reconception of the superintendency. More specifically, there must be a solution to challenging the barriers that are currently entrenched in the patriarchal construction of the superintendency. What could the superintendency look like if the current political and social practices are overhauled? We can not continue to rely on addressing the problematic gender-constructed position of the superintendency with the same methods if they are not resulting in change. Skrla (2003) states:

> It could be that nothing has changed for women in the superintendency because, at deeper levels where these normalizations operate within individuals and organizations, nothing has changed. Individual men and women in educational administration have internalized normalizations of femininity and masculinity into their thoughts, behaviors, and desires, and they discipline themselves accordingly. (p. 259)

For this reason, it is critical that the superintendency is viewed from a postmodern feminist perspective to posit a different description of what the position could look like. Furthermore, a postmodern feminist perspective on the position deserves consideration because there needs to be a new voice that can explain the current role of the superintendent in the global society.

A proposal for a reconception of the superintendency was introduced by Margaret Grogan (2000). The most significant contribution of feminist theory to the way we can consider the superintendency is to adopt its paradigm of social criticism (Grogan, 2000). She suggests that we might look more closely at how the superintendency does or does not concern itself with social criticism and whether a focus on equity and care could prompt different approaches to the superintendency. Furthermore, she claims that it is imperative to view the superintendency from a postmodern perspective, which includes discourse, subjectivity, power, knowledge, and resistance.

In the past, we have not widely examined other approaches to the superintendency because the position has been well-defined by the masculine norms. Additionally, these masculine norms have not been challenged and so the position has remained a patriarchal construction. However, it is evident from the results of this study that women question and acknowledge gender microaggressions and barriers as problems. This acknowledgement is important but will not invoke change without action. Solórzano (1989) suggests that we must take individual or collective action to resolve the problem of gender microaggressions. I suggest that this action should begin by examining a reconception of the superintendency. What would happen if we utilized Grogan's five concepts of discourse, subjectivity, power, knowledge, and resistance to reconceptualize the superintendency? This proposal for a reconception of the superintendency will provide a new way of looking at the patriarchal construction of the superintendent position.

Discourse is the first concept that should be examined since the discourse of the superintendent position is solely defined by male rules and norms. If we explore the

superintendency from the notion of discourse then we could challenge how we are situated as subjects in different relationships with others (Foucault, 1980). The women in this study have learned to navigate some of the male rules in the superintendency but they still experience gender discrimination as a result of their gender conflicting with the discourse of the superintendent. “Our understanding of the ways we should behave and what we should think in the various discourses within which we are positioned are dependent on our relative power in each discourse” (Grogan, 2000). Women currently have little power in the superintendent discourse and must seek ways to overcome gender barriers to survive in the position.

Each discourse contains a unique set of both written and unwritten rules that determine how subjects think and act within that discourse. These rules are initiated by the subjects who claim the power within the discourse. In the discourse of the superintendency it is the white males that define and shape who can claim the power, who makes decisions, and who is allowed to enter the superintendent position. Each of the women in this study has experienced this male power domination of the superintendent discourse. This imbalance of power creates tension for women and coerces them to walk a tightrope of conflicting expectations. Therefore, we must seek to re-define the discourse of the superintendency to include gender neutral rules rather than only the masculine rules that currently exist.

Another important concept that needs to be examined in this reconception is subjectivity, which frames itself upon the concept of discourse. Subjectivity occurs as a result of discourse and the subjectivity of oneself can vary among different discourses. “Subjectivity is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of

the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon. 1997, p. 32). A person's subjectivity is described by how she defines herself within a discourse. For example, if a woman attains the superintendency, she is molded by the dominant values, beliefs, and expectations of the discourse of the superintendency in that particular district. However, when she leaves work and goes home to her family she might enter the discourse of motherhood or wife. Based on the discourse she is operating in she defines herself according to the rules that have been established for that discourse.

The women in this study navigate the discourses of motherhood, marriage, and feminine expectations simultaneously alongside the superintendent discourse. Alcoff (1988) proposes a positional definition of woman which "makes her identity relative to a constantly shifting context, to a situation that includes a network of elements involving others, the objective economic conditions, cultural and political institutions and ideologies" (p. 433). Therefore, the women do not have a fixed identity but define their subjectivity based on the discourse they are operating in at that time. Since the women must constantly re-define who they are within the discourses that have been clearly delineated as either masculine or feminine, they encounter conflicts. These conflicts suppress their sense of self in certain discourses because they must adhere to the rules of that discourse.

At times, the women's fluid movements among the discourses might overlap creating opportunities for gender discrimination. In other words, women define themselves based on the dominant discourse that is embedded in a network of power relations. Gherardi (2003) states:

> We settle gender relations amongst the subject positions available to us and produced by existing discourses – we are lived embodiments of discourses – but discourses are historically and temporarily located and there are limitless other ways of being, thinking, and doing. (p. 239)

Therefore, it is important that the superintendent discourse be examined and that gender neutral rules are introduced so that women can construct a de-centered subjectivity that is not in oppositional terms to a male defined discourse. More specifically, a de-centered subjectivity would result in an open-ended and indeterminate subject (Gherardi, 2003).

In addition, the superintendent should examine knowledge and power and how they relate to the superintendency in the local context. This examination can begin by learning about the social conditions in their respective community rather than trying to understand the truths of a community based on a global perspective. By understanding the local issues the superintendent can seek to re-define the discourse of the superintendency in her community instead of following the traditional masculine discourse that defines the position.

The postmodern feminist embraces the approach of respecting and understanding the context of the local situation. This approach is also informed by Foucault's (1980) insights into the interdependence of power and knowledge. The understanding that knowledge is challenged and that what counts as knowledge depends on the relative power of those who claim it urges a critical analysis of the power relations that contribute to a local context (Grogan, 2000). More specifically, superintendents must seek to learn whether the power is distributed within the community or if it is maintained by a dominant group. Additionally, it is important for the superintendent to understand how those who claim power communicate their beliefs or knowledge to the community. These understandings become important when examining Foucault's two hypotheses of power.

Foucault (1980) claims that the basis of the relationship of power is in hostilities and that the mechanisms of power are those of repression. Foucault's insightfulness suggests that we should expect conflict and also question and resist the implied norms and policies of the local community. Furthermore, by understanding the interdependence of knowledge and power the superintendent can allow oneself to share the power of the position rather than maintaining the current patriarchal system of hierarchy.

In order to invoke such a transformation, the superintendent must understand and appreciate dissent in decision-making rather than desiring the ultimate power with unanimous decision-making or even consensus. By allowing this change in power, the superintendent is opening the decision-making to all groups in order to provide the students with the most appropriate education for their future. The women in this study all utilize a "power with" approach to decision-making, which suggests that they have relinquished some of the power that is typically retained solely by the superintendent.

Another concept that needs examination in order for a reconception of the superintendency to occur is a sense of resistance. Solórzano (2001) explains that "resistance theories demonstrate how individuals negotiate and struggle with structures and create meanings of their own from these interactions" (p. 315). I propose that we need to adopt a transformational resistance in order to reconceptualize the superintendency. Transformation resistance suggests that women must have an awareness and critique of her oppressive conditions and structures of domination but must also embrace a need for social justice (Solórzano, 2001).

By accepting a sense of transformation resistance, the superintendent is relinquishing the power that the position has historically held and rejecting the

established norms in pursuit of social justice. Additionally, the superintendent must embrace the knowledge of other interest groups, who are working together, to eliminate gender discrimination. Grogan states:

> If the definition of knowledge is expanded to include others' voices... then it is to be expected that such new knowledge will include a resistance to the formerly accepted knowledge claims.... the doubt that knowledge is fixed and independent of the knower will produce a constructive appreciation of multiple perspectives. (p. 129)

These multiple perspectives are critical since the superintendent position and most of the literature about this position is based on the white male and the traditions and norms that encompass the white male superintendent position. However, in order for women to introduce these concepts into the superintendency they must have greater access to the position.

It is not acceptable for women to be taught how to be successful in a male-dominated position. Shakeshaft (1989) states: "Molding ourselves to be imitation men or becoming successful while the doors are closed to other women will do nothing to restructure society so that the barriers will cease to exist" (p. 144). In order for a reconception to take place then people are going to have to change their beliefs about women instead of women continuing to learn how to navigate a system that is white male centered.

It is evident that there must be systemic changes in order for women to gain access to the superintendency. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) state:

> Men and women in the field need to set aside their own prejudices and condition themselves to a gender-neutral approach to recruitment, screening, and selection. We have all contributed to a culture where gender prejudice is tolerated and gender structuring is the norm. Cultural change means changing behaviors, attitudes, and practices. This is not an easy task (p. 101).

It is time to redirect the efforts to changing the social construction of the superintendency because the traditional methods of the past are not working. In order to invoke a change there must be a reconception of the superintendency. This reconception could include an emphasis on "destabilizing the traditional categories of the discipline, and which therefore conduct critical reflection on the subjects and objects of knowledge..." (Gherardi, 2003, p. 230). While many aspects of the superintendency have changed since its inception the position is still greatly affected by the masculine norms and rules that define the position.

Moreover, it is apparent that the problems women face in attaining the superintendency have remained rather consistent. For this reason, there must be a different approach to ensure that women have greater access to the superintendency position. There must be awareness that inequalities still exist within the superintendency and that a reconception of the position is warranted. I suggest that the reconception of the superintendency include a critical analysis from the position of an ironic feminist. This perspective proposes that ironic discourses can produce a destabilization in gender arrangements. Gherardi (2003) suggests:

> Irony insinuates doubt. It suggests that the world can be described in different terms, but it does not propose these other terms as alternative, better, more correct, or truer, Irony is a processual invitation; an invitation to consider how things can be redefined; how common sense can be problematized. Irony does not offer solutions; instead, it calls into question the linguistic games that produce a vision of the world (p. 230).

While the experiences of the women in this study will help other women to understand how to navigate the barriers, there must also be an emphasis on a reconception of the superintendency to destabilize the patriarchal construction of the position.

Personal reflections

It is important to incorporate reflections into the culmination of this study. Without reflecting on the work completed there is no rationale in making recommendations for future research. To this end, these interview studies provided me with the opportunity to be immersed in five women's lives and seek to understand their experiences in the superintendency. These women gave their valuable time, opened their hearts, and trusted me with their sacred stories. It was overwhelming and humbling that they shared their stories and that they were willing to share their experiences with gender discrimination.

However, I struggled with scheduling the interviews with the five superintendents. It was difficult to find large blocks of time within their already full calendars as well as coordinating those times with my busy schedule. Each interview was scheduled for three hours which made the scheduling even more challenging. It was important to schedule the interviews several months in advance, immediately confirm the interviews, and then contact them prior to the appointment to confirm once again. Additionally, the women always had appointments immediately following the interviews and so it was critical to pay careful attention to the clock in order to not run out of time.

I also acknowledge the limitations that occurred during the study. As with any study, time can limit both the depth and the extensiveness of the study. While it would have been helpful to expand the study to include more participants and to spend more time with the women, the amount of time to complete the study was limited. Additionally, the women were limited by the amount of time they could spend with the researcher as a result of the time demands on their schedules. Even though these

interviews presented both challenges and limitations, the findings provide explanations of barriers women superintendents encounter and how they have overcome some of these barriers. This is an important problem given that gender disproportionality in educational leadership positions has been apparent for a long time and yet there is still an imbalance.

Suggestions for further research

In this study, I examined the experiences of five women superintendents and provided insights into the barriers they have encountered in the position. Because the study was limited to five participants the conclusions are also limited to this study. Therefore, it would be useful for a researcher to expand the study to include more participants from other states to examine whether women's experiences are similar or different based on their geographic location. It would also be helpful to examine similar positions held by women in other countries to determine if they experience gender barriers. This might lead to further recommendations to change the social construction of the superintendency in the United States.

In addition, it would be valuable to include women serving in central office positions who have not pursued the superintendency. Brunner and Grogan (2007) state: "There is no doubt that the largely untapped resource of quality women candidates is underutilized and, due to numerous factors, it is clear that a number of women do not aspire to the superintendency" (p. 21). Therefore, a study including women in cabinet level positions and motivation might contribute to the research on the underrepresentation of women in the position. I also recommend that future research include men's perspectives on women serving in the superintendent position.

Additionally, it would be useful to expand the research on the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency to include board of education members. Board members' perceptions of the selection process would provide a more in-depth understanding of how we can change this process to provide greater access for women. Currently, the selection process is almost invisible to the public so it is difficult to make recommendations for change unless we understand the process.

Finally, the results of this study imply that women are deliberately choosing to adopt collaborative leadership styles or a "power with" approach. It would be useful for future research to focus on the leadership styles of women and men superintendents to determine if more women adopt a collaborative approach and to determine which style is more effective. More specifically, it would be important to understand if there are relationships between leadership style and student achievement, community support, board relationships, and staff morale. This information could be helpful for re-defining the superintendency.

Summary

This study sought evidence of gender consciousness of women superintendents, gender interaction with the superintendency, and an understanding of how women define themselves in the superintendency. Upon examination of the five women superintendents in the study, it appears that there are still barriers that women encounter within the patriarchal construction of the superintendency. The women in this study talked openly about their experiences with feminine expectations, the good old boy network, the selection process, family expectations, balance, and relocation. While the women have learned how to navigate many of these barriers in order to operate within the socially

constructed position they have also overcome some of the barriers. Most of the women have overcome the barrier of balancing their household responsibilities with their work responsibilities by either hiring someone or their husband taking over the household chores. They are also beginning to overcome the feminine expectation barrier that women should be silent about their experiences with gender discrimination.

However, even though the women have made progress in overcoming some of these barriers they still experience difficulties. For example, the selection process still appears to be discriminatory with the women being overlooked for positions when they are qualified for the job. Additionally, each of these women delayed their entry into the superintendency until their children were grown because of the conflicting demands between the discourses of mothering and the superintendent. Finally, most of the women feel that they are limited in their opportunities to obtain a superintendent position because they can not relocate their family. According to the results of this study, in order to transform the superintendency we must adopt a postmodern feminist perspective to redefine the socially constructed position.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Interview #1 Questions

1. Describe your educational background.

2. Tell me the story of your career beginning with your first education position.
    - Describe the factors that influenced your career path.

3. As a classroom teacher, what were your career aspirations?
    - What inspired your career path change?

4. Describe your journey to the superintendency. What was the process?
    - When did you decide to be a superintendent?
    - Why did you decide you wanted to be a superintendent?
    - How many years have you been a superintendent?
    - How many other superintendent positions did you apply and interview for prior to this one?

5. Describe the challenges you experienced when seeking superintendency.

6. What experience, characteristics and qualifications do you think a superintendent should have? Do you think these are the same for both women and men?

7. What experience, characteristics and qualifications do you think the Board of Education expects the superintendent to have? Do you think these are the same for both women and men?

8. If you were able to listen to the deliberations of the Board of Education members when they were making the decision to hire you as their superintendent what do you think you would have heard various members say about you? What do you think they would have said about your qualifications for this superintendent position?

9. During the interview process with the Board of Education or individual members of the Board of Education what did you find predictable? Were there any surprises? Were there things you expected to come up that didn't?

10. It is not uncommon for candidates to be selected for an interview based on qualifications and demographical data. What has been your experience with this?

11. Describe your community's expectations regarding their superintendent's role in the community. How does that differ from your predecessor?

12. Where do you find your support network?

13. What leadership organizations do you value? Why?

14. Describe your first "oh my gosh…why am I here" moment.

15. At the end of your tenure here what is next for you?

APPENDIX B

Interview #2 Questions

1. Describe your perception of what some people call the "good old girl/boy network" that exists to help individuals acquire a superintendent position. What is your experience with this system?

2. There are 180 school systems in Georgia. What do you think is the percent of female superintendents? Why do you think that is the case? What do you think is on the horizon?

3. Everyone has a leadership style. How would you describe the differences in how men and women serve in leadership roles? Explain. Are there a particular experiences that you can recall that you were aware of different leadership styles?

4. Frequently superintendents enter a district that is established with long-time personnel. Tell me how you have dealt with that? What were the challenges? How did you overcome/resolve this?

5. You always pass failure on the way to success. Were you ever afraid about being able to do the job? Explain.
    - Talk about your experiences with other people's fears about you being able to do the job.

6. If you were sitting in the stands at a local ball field and overheard some local business leaders talking about you being hired as superintendent what do you think you would hear them say about you?

7. Describe your work-life balance.

8. Help me to understand any recurring gender-related barriers that you face on a routine basis in the position. How do you overcome these barriers?

9. You are successful in a male-dominated field. What do you attribute this to and what does it mean to you?

10. If you were mentoring a young woman what would you want her to know about the superintendency? Help me understand what you think would be the most important things for her to know about attaining a superintendent position.

APPENDIX C

Coding Categories

Advice
Balance
BOE Expectations
Career Path
Childhood
Difficulties
Divorce
Education
Family
Feminine Expectations
Gatekeeper
Good Old Boy Network
Husband's Role
Internal Barriers
Leadership Styles
Likes
Mentors
Mothering
Next Steps
Patriarchy
Relocation
Respect
Selection Process
Spirituality
Support Network
Therapy
Token Female
Women Superintendents

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

Georgia State University
Department of EducationalPolicy Studies
Informed Consent

Title: A Case Study of Women Superintendents

Principal Investigator: Donna Adair Breault, Principal Investigator
Claire Michael Miller, Student Principal Investigator

I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate the lived experiences of women serving in the superintendent position. You are invited to participate because you are a female superintendent who has been in the position for less than five years. A total of 5 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require two 1-2 hour primary interviews with a possible follow up interview of 1 -2 hours.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed 2 times for a 1-2 hour period. You will also agree to a possible follow up interview that will last approximately 1-2 hours. The interviews will be conducted at Georgia State University. The follow-up interview will be scheduled if there is a need for further exploration of topics that are discussed in the primary interviews. The interviews will be conducted with 3 weeks in between each interview. You will incur all travel expenses to Georgia State. I will conduct both of the interviews and they will both be audio taped.

III. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. If you discuss something in an interview that you later determine is a personal issue that should not be included in the data you will have the option to remove it from the study at any time.

IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may benefit you personally. This experience may allow for professional growth by reflecting on and analyzing your lived experiences as a woman serving in the superintendency. Overall, we hope to gain information about how women attain the position and work in the role of the superintendency.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VI. Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. We will use a pseudonym rather than your name on study records. Only the Primary Investigator or student Primary Investigator will have access to the information you provide. It will be stored on the researcher's home computer and will be under password and firewall protection. The audio recordings and data transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home and the key will be stored on her personal key chain. The audio tapes will be stored in the locked cabinet from January 1, 2009 until January 1, 2010 at which time the tapes will be destroyed. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact Claire Miller at 678-697-3327 and cmichael3@student.gsu.edu if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio or video recorded, please sign below.

_____ _____

Participant Date

_____ _____

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

Consent Form Approved by Georgia State University IRB January 14, 2009 - January 12, 2010