Summer 1998

Women and the superintendency: Personal and professional demographics and the perceptions of barriers and strategies held by women superintendents

Deanna Mary Anderson

Louisiana Tech University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.latech.edu/dissertations

Part of the Educational Administration and Supervision Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.latech.edu/dissertations/741

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Louisiana Tech Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Louisiana Tech Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@latech.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6” x 9” black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
WOMEN AND THE SUPERINTENDENCY: PERSONAL
AND PROFESSIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS AND
THE PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS AND
STRATEGIES HELD BY WOMEN
SUPERINTENDENTS.

by

Deanna Anderson, Master of Arts

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Educational Leadership

College of Education
Louisiana Tech University
and the
Louisiana Education Consortium

August 1998
We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under our supervision by Deanna M. Anderson entitled Women and the superintendencv: Personal and professional demographics and the perceptions of barriers and strategies held by women superintendents be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Educational Leadership.

Recommendation concurred in:

Supervisor of Thesis Research

Head of Department

Curriculum, Instruction & Leadership Department

Advisory Committee

Approved:

Director of Graduate Studies

Dean of the College
ABSTRACT

The major purposes of this study were to identify the personal and professional characteristics of women superintendents and to identify women superintendents’ perception of barriers and successful strategies.

The survey instrument, Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency, was sent to 360 women superintendents with a response rate of 60%. Frequency distributions showed that the average respondent was married between the ages of 50 and 59, was white, holds a doctoral degree, works in district with 1,000 to 2,999 students and has been in her current position for 1 to 4 years.

Frequency distributions and t-tests were used to analyze the perceptions of barriers and strategies. Frequency distribution results on barriers showed that nine of the twenty-one barriers are perceived by the respondents as major barriers. Frequency distribution results showed that eighteen of the twenty-one strategies are perceived by women in this study to be highly successful. T-tests showed that women superintendents with a doctorate perceive two of the barriers as more of a major barrier and two of the strategies as more successful than women without a doctorate. T-tests showed that women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below perceive two of the barriers as more of a major barrier and one of the strategies as more successful than women in a metro status of 10,000 or above. T-tests showed that women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above perceive two of the strategies as more highly successful than women
in a metro status of 9,999 or below. T-tests also showed that women superintendents 49 or below perceive one of the barriers as more of a major barrier and one of the strategies as more successful than women 50 or above.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter

### I. Introduction to the Study
- Introduction                                                        1
- Problem Statement                                                    5
- Need For Study                                                       6
- Significance of Study                                                7
- Theoretical Background                                               8
- Definition of Terms                                                  10
- Assumptions of the Study                                             11
- Limitations of the Study                                            11

### II. Review of Literature
- Introduction                                                        13
- Historical Review                                                    16
- Profiles of Superintendents                                          20
- Career Patterns                                                      22
- Barriers Faced By Women                                              24
  - Glass Ceiling                                                      24
  - Gender Role Stereotyping                                           26
  - Male Bias                                                          30
  - Family Roles                                                       32
  - Mobility                                                           36
  - Mentorship                                                         38
- Strategies Used By Women                                            41
  - Family Coping Skills                                               41
  - Mentorship/Sponsorship                                             41
  - Political Expertise                                               43
  - Selection Process                                                  44
  - Training                                                           45
  - School Boards                                                      48
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Age ........................................................................................................... 60
Table 2: Marital Status ......................................................................................... 60
Table 3: Number of Children in School (K-12) .................................................... 61
Table 4: Age of Youngest Child ............................................................................. 62
Table 5: Highest Degree Earned ............................................................................ 62
Table 6: Racial/Ethnic Origin ............................................................................... 63
Table 7: Extended Family in Area ....................................................................... 64
Table 8: Number of Students in District .............................................................. 64
Table 9: Metro Status Where Employed .............................................................. 65
Table 10: Number of Years in Present Position ................................................... 66
Table 11: Longest Superintendency Held .............................................................. 66
Table 12: Number of Superintendencies Held Including Present One ..................67
Table 13: Age at First Superintendency ............................................................... 67
Table 14: Last Position Held Before First Superintendency ................................. 68
Table 15: Existence of the “Buddy System” in Which Men Refer Other Men to Jobs 70
Table 16: Covert Gender Discrimination ............................................................ 70
Table 17: Obtaining a Doctorate .......................................................................... 71
Table 18: Increasing Flexibility to Relocate ......................................................... 72
Table 19: Doubt By Those In a Hiring Position of Women’s Long Term Career Commitment ................................................. 73
Table 20: Gender Bias in the Screening and Selection Process ................................................................. 74
Table 21: Obtaining a Doctorate ............................................................................................................. 75
Table 22: Preparing an Effective Resume .............................................................................................. 76
Table 23: Adopting a Female Role Model ............................................................................................ 77
Table 24: Developing Political Expertise .............................................................................................. 78
Table 25: Conflicting Demands of Career and Family ........................................................................ 79
Table 26: Enlisting a Mentor .............................................................................................................. 80
Table 27: Enlisting a Mentor .............................................................................................................. 81
Table 28: Developing a Strong Self-Concept ....................................................................................... 82
Table 29: Frequency of Barriers Encountered by Women Superintendents ........................................ 84
Table 30: Frequency of Strategies Encountered by Women Superintendents .................................... 86
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my appreciation to my doctoral committee: Dr. Fran Holman for her continuous help and support as my committee chairperson and for always being my advocate and friend; Dr. Tom Springer for his statistical knowledge; Dr. Mike McCready and Dr. Augusta Clark for their generous devotion of time.

To my colleagues who were always understanding and patient when my energies were elsewhere, thank you. I appreciate their flexibility and willingness to work around my schedule.

Special thank you to my family who has always believed in me and encouraged me to be my best. Their pride in my work is what has been my motivator. To my husband, Chris Anderson, for encouraging me to pursue my doctorate and then always being there to keep me motivated and to help me, thank you.

It is with my deepest gratitude that I once again thank the above mentioned people.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Since the early 1900s, women have played a significant role in America's workforce. By the year 2000, women are expected to constitute nearly half of the workforce. With such a large number of women represented, it would be expected that women should also constitute a large number of higher level administrative positions. However, over the years women have struggled to overcome barriers they face in obtaining higher level positions. The most substantial gains made by women occurred in the 1960s during the time of social unrest. Despite tremendous gains made during that time, women still face discrimination so subtle as not to be seen, yet so strong as to prevent them from achieving the high level of success that they deserve. This barrier is known as the “glass ceiling,” and most professional women at some point in their career have felt the effects of this obstacle.

Although women constitute the majority of the education workforce, they face barriers to advancement there as well. Few women today hold administrative positions in United States' schools. Ragguet, Russo & Harris (1994) stressed the following:

Women have long been well-represented in the teaching profession. Yet, traditionally there has been an inverse relationship between the number of females qualified to serve in administrative positions in the schools and the rate at which women actually fill these jobs (p. 398)
Like in the business world, a glass ceiling exists in the educational arena. This glass ceiling has prevented many qualified females from assuming leadership and supervisory roles. Lovelady-Dawson (1980) stated that "women predominate in numbers but men predominate in power" (p. 19). Tallerico, Burstyn, & Poole (1993) emphasized that "the superintendency is a key position of power and influence in America's approximately 15,000 school districts" (p. 1). In 1993, the American Association of School Administrators reported that only 7% of school districts have women superintendents. Women are under-represented in this leadership role.

What has emerged from the research on female superintendents' perceptions of barriers, strategy techniques, and personal and professional demographics is a qualitatively rich descriptive data base of the experiences and perspectives of women administrators as well as a beginning of a quantitatively rich data set. The literature supports the theory that women face major disadvantages when pursuing the superintendency position. Reasons for these disadvantages relate to historic restraints, selection process, role conflicts, informal job contact systems, and the use of power. Pigford & Tonnsen (1993) summarized research findings that showed that women face both external and internal barriers as they attempt to join the administrative ranks. "Among the external barriers are sex-role stereotyping, sex discrimination, career socialization, lack of professional preparation, and balancing career and family responsibilities. Internal barriers include sex-role socialization, lack of confidence, low aspiration, and negative self-image" (p. 88). Jones & Montenegro (1982) defined internal barriers as that which stems from the personal conflicts faced by women.
To overcome internal and external barriers, women have developed assistive strategies. A small percentage of women have used these strategies and have overcome these barriers and secured the superintendency. The female superintendents studied by Dopp & Sloan (1986) recommended the following strategies to aspiring candidates:

1. Gain broad backgrounds in education, including principalships and central office positions.
2. Engage in advanced educational degree programs, especially those involving school finance and practical administrative experiences.
3. Engage in early career planning.
4. Develop personal and professional support systems to aid them in their successful careers.
5. Perceive themselves as social change agents on behalf of women and society.
6. Possess the ability to communicate and work well with people.
7. Have positive interpersonal skills, excellent conflict resolution skills, and a high energy level.
8. Be willing to be geographically mobile.

These strategies, combined with the others presented in this paper, are among the most effective techniques presented in the research that will assist women in becoming superintendents.

Research on women superintendents focused on barriers and strategies used by women and on their personal and professional characteristics. Several studies
(Feistritzer, 1988; Dulac, 1992 & Blanche, 1996) focused on women superintendents' age, household and personal income, number of children, positions held, number of students in district, highest degrees earned, and total years in teaching. These studies showed a difference between male and female superintendents with females possessing more teaching experience, more elementary experience, and higher levels of training and education.

Mertz & McNeely (1994) stated that despite nearly two decades of efforts to achieve gender equity, the world of school administration remains masculine. To deny that stereotypes exist about women’s abilities is to deny the reality of women’s experiences with discrimination and barriers to their advancement. Pavan (1995) reported that “the world of school administration remains masculine even though there has been nearly two decades of supposed efforts to achieve gender equity” (p. 10).

In the 1970s, the National School Board Association gave the following assessment of women in superintendencies:

(1) The talents of women are grossly under-utilized in school governance;
(2) attitudes widely held by both men and women are a major impediment to increasing the participation of women; and (3) women currently servicing exhibit personal qualities of service comparable to, and sometimes superior to, those of men currently serving (1974).

Unfortunately, many of these facts still hold true today. There is still a need to analyze hiring practices and administrative roles in the school systems.
The purpose of this study was to research female superintendents perceptions of the barriers to attaining the superintendency and the perceptions of strategies they employed to attain their positions. This study also examined the personal and professional demographics of the female superintendents.

**Problem Statement**

Little research has been done from the female superintendents’ perspective. Blanche (1996) reported that because research in this area is scant, the research provides minimal guidance for removing the barriers and limited guidance about strategies that women aspiring to the superintendency might use.

The research problem was to determine the causes for the continuation of the relatively small numbers of women obtaining the superintendency in America’s schools, despite the work force, to determine what the barriers faced by women are, and to identify the personal and professional demographics of female superintendents. The research conducted for this study focused on the personal and professional demographics of women superintendents, the barriers faced, and the strategies that female superintendents use.

The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. What are the personal and professional demographics of women superintendents nationwide;
2. What are women superintendents’ perceptions about possible constraints on their own attempts at attaining the superintendency and
(3) What do women superintendents view as successful strategies for overcoming these constraints?

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to determine if women superintendents nationwide are experiencing barriers when aspiring to the superintendency and to determine the strategies they used for successfully attaining the superintendency.

**Need for Study**

In 1909, Ella Flagg Young, the first woman superintendent of Chicago and the first woman president of the National Education Administration, predicted that women were destined to rule the schools of every city. She stated that in the near future there would be more women than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. She stressed that education is the woman's natural field and that women were no longer satisfied to do the larger part of the work and yet be denied the leadership. Despite the optimism of the early 1900s when progress was being made, women quickly lost ground. Tysack & Hansot (1982) reported that:

Young herself was an anomaly; almost all city superintendents were men, and she was the first woman to head a big-city school system. Although women predominated as teachers—the pool from which administrators were drawn—they held nowhere near a proportionate number of leadership positions (p. 182).

Almost 90 years later, the situation has changed little for women. Women still predominate in the teaching field, and the superintendency is still largely held by men (Shakeshaft, 1994). “A look at the number of women in educational administration since 1909 reveals women have never dominated” (Ryder, 1994, p. 28).
Why have women been unable to gain access to the superintendency? What prevents their progress? Have the barriers changed for women? What strategies are women using in an attempt to rectify the situation?

Shakeshaft (1989) stated that “for many reasons, some understandable and others less clear, research in educational administration has largely looked at the male experience” (p. 324). To answer the previous questions, it is necessary to explore the perceptions and experiences of current women superintendents. It is necessary to investigate the situation faced by women. Clearly, laws passed and efforts made by women have not begun to make a substantial difference in the percentage of women holding the superintendency as compared to the percentage qualified to hold the superintendency.

**Significance of Study**

Because minimal research has been done from the female superintendents’ perspective, this study addressed a knowledge gap in the literature related to females at the superintendency level. This study contributed to the knowledge base on the personal and professional demographics of women superintendents, the perception of barriers faced by women, and the strategies used by women to overcome these barriers.

This study serves as a guide on the barriers and strategies to overcome these barriers that Blanche (1996) reported as missing from the research for aspiring women superintendents. Obermeyer (1996) reported that “by studying the profile of successful women superintendents, women aspiring to the superintendency will have valuable
information for arriving at the superintendency” (p. 11). This study provided women with the valuable information that is lacking in the research.

**Theoretical Background**

The theories and the concepts currently held in most of the research on superintendents are shown solely from a male perspective. Shakeshaft (1989) stated that this perspective may be irrelevant for women and may be inadequate in explaining female behavior. These theories and these concepts are best described as androcentric, which is “the practice of viewing the world and shaping reality through a male lens” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 325). Women’s experiences, beliefs, and values are underrepresented in the literature. Studying male behavior and perspectives does not offer a complete explanation for the reasons women do not reach the superintendency position in America’s schools.

Because only 7% of school superintendents are women, women do not see the superintendency as a possible career path. Swiss (1996) reported that until women see themselves at the top, their views about advancement opportunities will not change. In support of this philosophy is the critical mass theory. Swiss (1996) defined the critical mass theory as a business theory that “has it that once women reach a critical mass in the managerial pipeline, equal access to senior management positions will follow” (p. 151). Nichols (1993) described this philosophy by stating that “the sheer numbers of women in the work force could overcome this problem. Once a critical mass of women had been achieved in any organization, people would stop seeing them as women and evaluate their work as managers” (p. 60).
In theory, the critical-mass concept appears to be viable. However, Swiss (1996) stated that the weakness of the critical mass theory "lies in a fundamental catch-22: How can women reach the top of their organizations and change the unwritten rules that hold them back when these very rules are what hinder them from reaching the top?" (p. 152). Nichols (1993) further stressed that it will take more than a critical mass of women in the lower echelon of the organization to change the work world. She stated that the critical mass must be reached at the upper echelon of organizations to create an organizational and societal change.

Discrimination against women aspiring to the superintendency exists partially because of the belief that women are less suited for management. Morrison & Von Glinow (1990) cited the rational bias theory as an explanation for this discrimination. This theory stated that "discrimination is influenced by contextual circumstances in which sexual or racial bias results in career rewards or punishments" (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). A manager's decision to discriminate is based on the possibility of receiving rewards from relevant stakeholders for discriminating. Rational bias explains how discrimination continues to happen despite regulations against it.

The career profiles and paths of school administrators differ between men and women. Blanche (1996) pointed out that as administrators develop their careers they follow a certain sequence of career events, collectively known as a career path. A career path is defined by Shakeshaft (1989) as a "a traditional, pre-established total patterned, organized professional activity with upward movement through recognized preparatory stages and advancement based on merit and honor" (p. 65). Men and women follow
different career paths and experience different events. Although men and women follow
different paths, careers are generally defined by the norms established by men. Unless
women are perceived as following the same paths as men, they are not considered to be
establishing a career. The different career experiences faced by women often prevent
them from obtaining the highest position in schools: the superintendency. These
different experiences provided the theoretical framework for this study.

Definition of Terms
The following terms are defined for purposes of the study:

Superintendent was defined as “the title of the position of the individual
selected and designated by the governing board of a public school district to serve as the
chief executive officer of the organization” (Obermeyer, 1996, p. 13).

Glass Ceiling was defined as “those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or
organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their
organization” (Powell & Butterfield, 1994, p. 69).

Barrier was defined as “any obstacle that is believed to hinder the employment
of women as school superintendents” (Dulac, 1992, p. 8).

Perceived barrier was defined by Dulac (1992) as “any factor that is believed
to facilitate the employment of women as school superintendents” (p. 8).

External barriers were defined by Shakeshaft (1989) as those “that require
social and institutional change” (p. 82).

Internal barriers were defined by Shakeshaft (1989) as “those that can be
overcome by individual change” (p. 82).
Aspiration was defined by Blanche (1996) as moving up the hierarchy.

Mentoring was defined by Fleming (1991) as a method for experienced personnel to promote the professional and personal development of an inexperienced worker.

Career was defined by Shakeshaft (1989) as a preestablished total pattern of organized professional activity.

Career path was defined by Smith (1991) as “the positions held prior to becoming a superintendent which are common to a group of individuals” (p. 9).

Androcentrism was defined by Shakeshaft (1989) as the result of viewing the world and shaping reality from a male perspective which creates a belief in male superiority and a masculine value system in which female values, experiences, and behaviors are considered inferior.

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of the study were as follows:

1. Women superintendents encounter barriers on their path to the superintendency and are able to identify the barriers.

2. The individuals in the study provided accurate and reliable information on the survey questions.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations applied to this study:
1. The study focused on women superintendents currently serving in public school districts nationwide.

2. This study did not include non-public schools, independent school districts, or parochial schools.

3. The study dealt with women superintendents’ perceptions of barriers and strategies from only one perspective: that of the subject.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature and research about women who aspire to become superintendents, the barriers they face, and the strategies they use to overcome these barriers. The motivation or aspiration for entering teaching is different for men and women. Most women enter teaching to teach, but most men enter teaching to become administrators or coaches. Aspiration was defined by Blanche (1996) as moving up the hierarchy. She further expressed that aspiration has been defined by using only male experiences and that women are judged according to this male experience. The male view of experiences does not acknowledge the fact that women have an interest in administration. Women are judged by both the male experience and the male viewpoint. Neither of these male functions acknowledge that women have an interest in administration.

Because women are judged from a male perspective, they are not perceived as qualified as men to be administrators. Research has shown that this perception is incorrect. Arons (1980) reported that women have as much administrative potential as men. The women superintendents surveyed by Dopp & Sloan (1986) reported that they learned in their first administrative position that they possessed strong
interpersonal skills and competencies which made them successful. Grady & O'Connell (1993), in a study of dissertations, found that 18% of the studies produced the following findings of the qualifications of women administrators: women have more education, degrees, certifications, and years of teaching prior to becoming administrators. Having better qualifications than the typical male candidate does not automatically advance women into the superintendent position. Despite better qualifications, women face barriers and special problems in their attempt to become superintendents. McDade & Drake (1982) listed the following top five special problems associated with the women respondents in their study:

1. Women usually must be better than their male competitors to be considered for an administrative appointment,
2. Successful women usually are viewed as the exception,
3. Aggressiveness usually is viewed as a negative trait in women,
4. Women frequently do not receive salary, title, and status to match their responsibilities, and
5. Women usually are not willing to compete for the top level jobs" (p. 214).

What has emerged from the studies of women superintendents is a qualitatively rich descriptive data base of the experiences and perspectives of women administrators as well as a beginning of a quantitatively rich set of data. Research on female superintendents has been limited due to a lack of reliable data that chart how many women are school administrators (Shakeshaft, 1994, p. 357). Overall, there has been relatively little research focusing on women superintendents. Dulac (1992), in her dissertation, cited Crosby's (1973) research as the earliest documented nationwide study on women superintendents.

The qualitative research completed suggested strategies and techniques to help women reach the superintendency. The barriers faced by women can be put into two
categories: internal barriers and external barriers. Shakeshaft (1989) described the internal barriers as those that could be overcome by the individual. These include low aspirations, low self esteem, and lack of motivation. On the other hand, external barriers require a societal and institutional change, for example, sex-role stereotyping and role conflicts.

The literature showed limited studies offering rationale for the lack of women in administrative positions. Several common reasons for lack of advancement have emerged from the literature: mobility, lack of mentorship, family arrangements, and sex-role stereotyping (Shakeshaft, 1994). Identified barriers found by researchers include a lack of good role models (Restine 1993), resistance from community members, lack of central office experience (American Association of School Administration 1992), gender discrimination (Morrison & Von Glinow 1990), the existence of the “good old boy” network, and role stereotypes (Glazer 1991). Sharratt (1993) placed the common barriers faced by women in the following rank order:

1. Sex-role stereotyping
2. Sex discrimination
3. Availability of appropriate female models
4. Availability of sponsorship or mentorship
5. Lack of encouragement from other female administrators
6. Availability of networking with other females
7. Lack of encouragement from male administrators
These barriers prevent women from becoming superintendents despite their superior qualifications

**Historical Review**

Trends in demographics predict a higher level of women in the work force in the upcoming century. The female work force will continue to steadily grow during the next decade and is expected to constitute nearly half of the work force in the year 2000. This is a significant difference from the early 1900s when only 21% of the work force was female.

Historically, women were simply considered a reserve work force used to fill positions abandoned by men at war or to fill positions that were undesirable. Attempts at success in the work force were faced by women with many problems and backlashes. Shakeshaft (1979), in her dissertation, stated that in the early 1900s women held 55% of the elementary principalships, 25% of the county superintendencies, and nearly 8% of the secondary school principalships. However after 1930, women did not maintain these high percentages for several reasons. The stock market crash of 1929 brought about a 25% unemployment rate, causing a diminution in interest in the advancement of women. During World War II, women’s participation rate once again rose to a record high of 35%. When the men returned from war, women were replaced by men and once again were barred from advancement. Jones & Montenegro (1982) identified two events that brought about the decline of women in school administration: the depression of the 1930s and the decline of feminist activities. Because of the depression
married men who had families to support were hired over women. The depression also
decreased the activities and successes of the women’s suffrage movement.

One career field that has been dominated by women despite the depression and
the decline of the feminist movement is the field of education. Teaching and education
have traditionally been considered a woman’s job. Ortiz (1982) reported that “when
women enter teaching, the general expectation is that they will remain there” (p. 58).
This expectation is based on three factors: women are prominent at the elementary
levels; it is perceived that women are appropriate for teaching children; women who
express an interest in administrative positions are restrained in one way or another.
Teaching was one area that women predominated. However, in the administrative ranks
of education, the difficulties faced by women mirrored that of society as a whole.
Women did not readily and easily advance into administrative jobs.

Ortiz and Marshall (1988) described how history has perpetuated the under-
representation of women in administration. Beginning with the National Education
Association (NEA), one of the strongest teacher’s organizations, women have long been
discriminated against. The NEA began as an organization which allowed only male
membership even though, as Dopp & Sloan (1986) reported, during the 1870s women
comprised nearly two-thirds of the public school teachers. Women were admitted only
as honorary members, a restraint which meant that their opinions, thoughts, and papers
could not be presented. Therefore, these women had to gain the trust of a male member
who could then agree to present their papers. In addition to national organizations, early
policy bodies such as the Committee of Ten of 1892 established proposals on the
superintendency that included only men and added to the discrimination of women. Ragguet, Russo & Harris (1994) described one policy that perpetrated discrimination against women by stating that “the Draper Report stressed the importance of managing schools as ‘businesses,’ with the superintendents, all of whom were men” (p. 399).

Although Brown v. Board of Education (1954), one of the most important U.S. Supreme Court cases, ushered in the civil rights era and concern for equal opportunities, it was several years before any gains were made (Ragguet, Russo, & Harris, 1994). In 1966 Daniel Griffiths wrote in The School Superintendent: “It is known that there are a few women superintendents in the United States, but for all practical purposes it is correct to say that the superintendency is a man’s world” (p. 43). It was not until the 1960s and 1970s, during the time of great social unrest, that the most substantial gains were made by women. Several laws were passed during the 1960s that have helped women put a foot in the door of the superintendency. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was the first federal law to have a direct impact on women. This act was designed to prohibit discrimination in pay based on gender. The Equal Pay Act mandates that equal wages must be paid to women and men for equal work if it requires equal skill, responsibility, effort, and similar working conditions. (Ragguet, Russo & Harris, 1994). This act began the official recognition that problems voiced by women actually did exist.

“Over the decade of the seventies, a rapid increase in intolerance of sex discrimination was manifested by legislative and judicial reforms” (McDade & Drake, 1982, p. 210). Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1972 was an important law which
greatly affected women in the work place. This law prohibits discrimination based on
gender in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. In
1982, Title IX was clarified in North Haven Board of Education v. Bell (1982) by the
Supreme Court to cover employees as well as students. Mertz & McNeely (1994)
stressed that “The passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments in 1972 called
public attention to the situation and launched a period of scrutiny and debate about the
status and condition of women in administrative positions” (p. 361).

After the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the passage of Title IX of
1972, women made very slow progress with small gains. Since the late 1960s and early
1970s, a substantial law was passed for women: The Glass Ceiling Act of the Civil
Rights Act of 1991. This law was created to combat gender based discrimination and
called for the creation of the Glass Ceiling Commission. This Commission was charged
with the duty of conducting a study and of offering ideas on ways in which women can
be given greater representation in administrative and decision making positions. “This
act should help to assure equitable treatment of female administrators and to combat
gender-based discrimination” (Ragguet, Russo, & Harris, 1994, p. 402).

“Taken together, these laws and their judicial interpretations significantly
increase the legal rights afforded women by providing clear guidelines under which
they may seek redress” (Ragguet, Russo & Harris, 1994, p. 402). These laws also give
school boards and male administrators a reason to think seriously about the decision
being made before rejecting female applicants. Laws passed to stop discrimination have
helped women further their cause in obtaining administrative positions. Not only have
these laws provided a basis for equitable treatment, but they have also provided a basis for women to pursue a legal course. Women are filing suits and citing their employment rights as the foundation for the suits. In Spears v. Board of Education of Pike County, Kentucky, (1988), a female teacher was found to be better qualified for administrative positions she sought than the men who received the jobs. The teacher was granted monetary damages until she could be placed in a position comparable to the one she should have occupied.

Gender discrimination has been declared illegal through the process of legal mandates and developments. The general message of national laws and mandates is that discrimination on the basis of gender violates women's rights under the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution (Paddock, 1981). The effect of national laws and mandates is best summed up by Blanche (1996) in the following statement:

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, women's progress to leadership positions in education has continued to be minimal. This has been the case even though national legislative and judicial mandates were passed in the 1960s which specifically prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender in the recruitment and hiring of employees (p. 3).

Profiles of Superintendents

As early as 1640, schools were administered by governmental bodies. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, boards of education handled all aspects of school administration. When state funds began to be appropriated for education, boards of education could no longer handle the job of managing the schools. (Obermeyer 1996). Konnert & Augenstein (1990) described the superintendency as beginning in the early 1800s when it became a full-time job to oversee school funds. In
1837, Buffalo and Louisville were the first cities to create superintendencies. Since then, the roles of school superintendents have increased from the limited duties of overseeing school funds to the duties of managing an entire school district. Hoyle, Fenwick, & Steffy (1994) described the superintendency as a demanding job that requires flexibility, values, ethics of leadership, and the ability to work with people.

The school superintendent is typically considered to be a white male, middle-aged, married, protestant, and reared in small towns (Bilklen & Brannigan 1980; Murdy 1988; Kowalski 1995). Obermeyer (1996) reported that this profile has changed little in the last one hundred years, thus creating a stereotype of the superintendent.

Women who are superintendents differ from the typical image or stereotype of a superintendent. Shakeshaft (1989), after researching data from dissertation studies, found women superintendents to be older than men superintendents, less likely to be married, more likely to be members of minority and ethnic groups, more likely to be from urban backgrounds, more likely to be politically more liberal, more likely to be non-protestant, more likely to have taught for a longer period of time, and more likely to earn less than male superintendents.

In addition to personal demographics, women superintendents differ professionally as well. Blanche (1996) described the professional differences found between male and female superintendents. Female superintendents possess more elementary school teaching experience, more years of teaching, less outside employment, and higher levels of formal preparation. In addition, women superintendents often started their graduate programs at an older age and served as
supervisors in their first position. During the twentieth century, the years of formal education for women superintendents has changed significantly. Fifty percent or more of the doctoral students in administration were women, and more women administrators reported working for advanced degrees than did aspiring men (Marshall, 1984).

Women who obtained the superintendency have different leadership styles than men. Grady, Ourada-Sieb & Wesson (1994) described the leadership style of women as more collaborative and non-hierarchical. The characteristics associated with being collaborative include nurturing, being holistic, identifying a vision, acting as a role model, and reaching out. This leadership style fits into a new leadership paradigm for superintendents (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Career Patterns

Because of societal perceptions of women and their role in society, women do not enter the field of education with the thought of becoming an administrator. Williams & Willower’s (1983) nationwide study of women superintendents found that their careers had evolved and had not been planned in advance. Women superintendents follow different career paths than do male superintendents.

“Administrators reach the superintendency through various career paths” (Obermeyer, 1996, p. 3). Shakeshaft (1989) identified the following three paths to the superintendency: 1) from specialist to assistant superintendent to superintendent, 2) from assistant principal to secondary principal to assistant superintendent to superintendent, and 3) from assistant elementary principal to elementary principal to superintendency in an elementary district. Ortiz found similar paths as Shakeshaft
except that some of the women in his study worked in the central office prior to their superintendency. Glass (1992) found that 39.4% of the women in his study were teachers, then principals and then worked in the central office before assuming their first superintendency. Edson (1988) found that having a family affects women's career decisions. Edson found that women either delay having a family for a career or delay a career for their family.

Women usually teach longer than men before they receive their first superintendency. Ortiz (1982) reported that school administrators begin their school administration careers by teaching, with males teaching an average of 5-7 years and females teaching an average of 15 years before assuming their first administrative role. Glazer (1991) found that men taught an average of 9 years as compared to women who taught an average of 12.3 years. Whitaker & Lane (1990) found that men enter the teaching profession with administration as a goal and women enter teaching as their career choice with little thought given to administration.

Gender plays an important role in the career paths of both men and women. Chase & Bell (1990) described how teaching and administrative positions are segregated by gender stratification which poses a monumental problem for women. "There is a historical pattern of age or grade level hierarchy of teaching positions in which women teach young children and men teach older students" (p. 165). Gender segregation exists in schools, with 83.5% of elementary school teachers being women and 50% of high school teachers being women. Additional stratification and segregation are seen in high schools by subject: men teaching science and social studies and
women teaching English and foreign language. Furthermore, women principals are more likely to be found in the elementary schools at the than in the secondary schools. Since superintendents are more likely to be selected from high schools than elementary schools, women are denied access to the superintendency (Ortiz 1982; Edson 1988; Shakeshaft 1989; Obermeyer 1996). Schuster's study (1987) identified the secondary principalship as a diverse training potential and identified the value of the larger size of the school and staff. Shakeshaft (1989) explained that there is more prestige in being a secondary administrator; therefore, superintendents are selected from this arena. These studies showed that there is a relationship between secondary principalships and gender and between secondary principalships and the superintendency. This relationship adversely affects women's ability to gain the superintendency position.

**Barriers Faced By Women**

**Glass Ceiling**

Despite the gains made by women, women still face a discrimination so subtle as to not be seen, yet so strong that it prevents women from achieving the high level of success they merit. With the disappearance of legal segregation, discrimination has taken a new form that is subtle, informal, and difficult to document (Hudson, 1994). This discrimination or barrier is known as the glass ceiling, and most professional women at some point in their careers have felt the effects of the glass ceiling. Obermeyer (1996) reported that the term glass ceiling was popularized in the 1980s as women began to climb the career ladder and move toward the upper ranks of
management where they were often barred from senior management positions. "Women could see the top, yet they could not reach the top. Hence, the term 'glass ceiling'" (Obermeyer, 1996, p. 6).

Powell & Butterfield (1994) defined the glass ceiling as a transparent barrier that keeps women from rising above a certain level in corporations (p. 68). The U.S. Department of Labor defined the glass ceiling as those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization (Powell & Butterfield). Morrison & Von Glinow (1990) identified the following barriers which create a glass ceiling for women: (1) differences handicap women and they receive differential treatment, (2) bias and stereotyping account for the slow progress of women in management, and (3) policies and practices in the social system preserve discriminatory treatment of women in management.

Few women today hold administrative positions in the nation’s schools. Chase & Bell (1990) reported that in 1986, 69% of teachers were women. But in contrast, only 3% of superintendents, the top position at the district level, were women. Four years later, "In 1990 only 5 percent of 11,346 school districts report women superintendents" (American Association of School Administrators, 1990). The glass ceiling in the educational arena has prevented qualified women from assuming leadership and supervisory roles. Lovelady-Dawson (1990) reiterated the fact that women predominate in numbers but men predominate in power. "The superintendency is a key position of power and influence in America’s approximately 15,000 school districts. Women are
woefully under represented in this leadership role" (Tallerico, Burstyn, & Poole, 1993, p. 1).

Gender Role Stereotyping

Decisions are made about women purely on the basis of their gender. Porat (1991) reported that although administrative hiring practices have been scrutinized for gender discrimination and laws have been passed, inner dialogue of individuals remain stuck in old grooves. A common barrier faced by women is gender-role stereotyping. Swiss (1996) found that 92% of the women in her survey viewed the attitudes of male colleagues as a barrier to equal opportunity. Both men and women have certain societal assumptions about the roles, jobs, and duties of the opposite gender. A survey conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (1981) found that the important gatekeepers in schools still believed that some jobs were better suited for men and some jobs were better suited for women. Whitaker & Lane (1990) reported that the common beliefs that women encounter are that females cannot discipline students, particularly male students; females are too emotional; females are physically weak; and males resent working for women. Different characteristics are attributed to men and women who display the same behaviors. Andrews & Basom (1990) described this phenomenon in the following way:

Men might be called absentminded, but women are scatterbrained; men might be described as intellectually curious, but women are nosy; men are planners, but women are schemers; men are sensitive, but women are emotional; men are managerial, but women are manipulative (p. 40).
Men and women are judged through different perspectives which create a double
standard that has an adverse effect on the ability of women to obtain higher level
administrative positions.

In 1982, Flora Ortiz in Career Patterns in Education, wrote the following
statement which perpetrates the gender-role stereotype:

Entrance into the school organization is legitimately gained through
teaching. For instance, since it is assumed women wish to remain as
teachers, the organizational lore encourages them to do so. Other
characteristics of the position such as the retention of the school schedule
remain attractive to women who can return early to their homes to prepare
the evening meal. The consequence is that women are socialized to remain
teachers. In contrast, white males are strongly encouraged to “move up” to
administration (p. 26).

Ortiz (1982) quoted school administrators who said, “I tend to suspect white males who
want to teach kindergarten” and “men are more likely to be good administrators.” From
the statements made and reported by Ortiz (1982), it is apparent that society expects
men to “move up” and women to remain in the classroom. Any variations on the theme
described by Ortiz (1982) cause a gender-role conflict. Shakeshaft (1989) pointed out
that women have not been socialized to be administratively inclined; and, moreover,
they have been socialized to believe that women do not have the qualities needed to be
superintendents.

These societal assumptions about women’s roles create a tremendous roadblock
for women along the path to the superintendency. Often these assumptions are
impossible for women to control and to overcome. “The structural, cultural, and
interactional barriers that confront women who work in male-dominated professions
and administrative occupations have been well-documented, for example in business,
law, medicine, academia, and educational administration” (Chase and Bell, 1990, p. 164).

A clear pattern of discrimination toward females during the selection process exists because of school board members’ negative attitudes toward women and gender-role stereotyping. Chase & Bell’s (1990) qualitative study showed views and assumptions held by male school board members. Most board members and superintendents are men who control hiring and who are decision-makers and power-brokers. Characteristics associated with school leadership have been stereotypically masculine, and the expectations that school board members have are based on a taken-for-granted idea of a superintendent as being a middle-aged, conservative, married white male. Board members are generally looking for individuals who can show power, authority, strength, decisiveness, and other stereotypical male characteristics. Nichols (1993) stated that the link between masculine traits and managerial abilities is deeply entrenched. Tyack & Hansot (1982) found that when looking for school leaders, school board members perceived male candidates were superior to females.

Cultural expectations of educational leaders are compatible with masculinity, a connection which conflicts with expectations of women. This issue is a double-edged sword for women. Bell (1990) described this double edge sword by stating that “on the one hand, board members questioned women’s ability to assert authority; on the other hand, when women exhibited decisiveness and directness, these behaviors were not necessarily viewed positively” (p. 51). Porat (1991) summarized the sex-role stereotype phenomenon by stating that “people carry in their minds a set of expectations
concerning the auxiliary traits properly associated with specific positions and are reluctant to accept candidates who deviate from these expectations” (p. 412).

In a further study conducted by Chase & Bell (1990), school board members acknowledged that assumptions were made that a female may not be as strong a leader as a man. One board member stated that upon comparing a female candidate with the other male candidates there was concern regarding whether she would be able to stand up to the teachers and the union. He asserted that his statement was kind of sexist. Grogan (1994) reported that applicants are first seen as women and then as administrators. This belief that women do not have the unique blend of skills and competence needed to be an administrator is described by Hanson (1996) as the meritocracy model. Dopp & Sloan (1986) explained that this model assumes that people are promoted according to their ability. Because men are chosen more often, they must be more competent than women.

Role conflicts in the school system cause women to be evaluated less favorably than men. Andrews & Basom (1990) reported that “many teachers, both male and female, have preconceived notions about a female administrator’s ability to lead” (p. 40). These preconceived notions affect women not only during the interview process but also during their tenure in administrative positions. Men, specifically male board members, see women as good at detail but incapable of seeing the larger picture; as democratic, but indecisive; and as dedicated, but obsessively so (Adkinson, 1981). Kanter (1975) stated that both males and females appear to accept gender-role stereotypes which elevate the traits assumed to belong to men: a tough-minded
approach to the problem, analytic abilities to abstract and plan, a capacity to set aside personal, emotional considerations, and cognitive superiority in problem solving. Men do not necessarily see women as incompetent but instead see their presence as upsetting the “traditional” relationship between the sexes. These stereotypes, perpetrated by both men and women, remain a barrier for women.

Male Bias

Despite publicly advertising for a job and conducting “official” interviews, school board members hire in order to maintain cultural patterns. This theory was established by Kanter (1977) who stated that organizations recruit individuals to maintain preestablished cultural patterns. Women do not fit into these cultural patterns and are overlooked for the job. Hanson (1996) described this phenomenon as the discrimination model. The discrimination model states that men conspire to keep women out of administrative positions by consciously hiring people like themselves. This model explains the gender imbalance in educational administration (Dopp & Sloan, 1986). Swiss (1996) found that since most people promote individuals they know and understand, gender clouds men’s ability to see women’s potential.

Hudson (1994) described the tendency to hire in order to maintain cultural patterns in the following two discrimination theories:

(1) Organization process discrimination, where job search traditions, the structure of organizational recruitment, and the tendency of employers to choose people like themselves serve to advance hiring opportunities for white men and hinder the hiring opportunities for blacks and women and

(2) Territorial discrimination, where excluded groups, included groups, and their job contacts operate within race and gender defined employment territories, and where such territories severely limit the role of job contacts for women and blacks and broaden the role of job contacts for white men (p. 393).
These two discrimination models show that women are restricted and limited in their choices because of gender. Tyack & Hansot (1982) stated that it is more common for men to serve as sponsors for other men because of social customs. Friendships between men and women are often suspect and socially unacceptable.

School boards, which are primarily comprised of men, are looking for individuals like themselves when making hiring decisions. They are looking for individuals they know and can trust, a search which creates a middle management wall or glass ceiling for women. Swiss (1996) offered an explanation for the middle management wall:

The men who support the organization's informal system are the insiders: people who understand and support each other, the structure, and the rules; people who share common aspirations and dreams; people who grew up with similar backgrounds; who played together, learned together and competed together (p. 72).

Swiss (1996) supported the concept that the men who are doing the hiring are looking for individuals like themselves. She further stated that this barrier often grows tighter the higher up an individual goes in an organization. When facing the choice of whom to hire, top managers lean heavily towards someone they know or trust. Dopp & Sloan (1986) reported that men hire people like themselves to reduce the interpersonal tensions of the workplace. At this level in the organizational structure, performance standards become more subjective with qualities such as leadership potential, decision making, and team building becoming more important. These qualities are harder to define and quantify; therefore, it is easier for top administrators to choose an individual that they know or trust. Male board members communicate with and trust male
candidates (Bell, 1990). In a study of dissertations, Grady & O'Connell (1993) reviewed three dissertations and found that men favored male candidates when deciding who will receive an administrative positions. Likewise, women favored female candidates. School boards or committees that included female members hired more female administrators.

Men are often gatekeepers to the administrative positions and, hence, have control over most organizations. This male dominance has been identified by Tyack & Hansot (1981) as a barrier model which leads to conditions that have kept women from advancing into powerful and prestigious positions. Regales (1995) identified male dominance or the practice of viewing the world and shaping reality through a male lens or androcentrism, as the barrier most often identified by women in her study. Androcentrism, which is the result of viewing the world and shaping reality from a male perspective, creates a belief in male superiority. Shakeshaft (1989) reported that this androcentric bias has limited the ability for women's working lives to be seen from the male perspective. School organizations and societal standards support this male superiority and view female experiences as inferior. This male dominance is a reality in America's schools (Greenberg, 1978). Hudson (1994) pointed out that until women are in the position to hire other women, women will always be at a disadvantage.

Family Roles

Closely related to gender-role stereotyping is the conflict presented by family arrangements. Child birth and parenting are perceived primarily as a female role. The male's role then becomes a full time career. Nichols (1993) stated that it is impossible
for women and men to ignore pregnancy and motherhood and the impact that they have on the workplace. The one immutable difference between the women and men is women's ability to become pregnant.

An acceptance of gender-role stereotyping makes work and a career difficult for women. What emerges for women is a conflict of what is expected of them at home, what is expected of them at work, and how they are to combine the two roles. The difference between cultural definitions of women's roles and the demands of a career make the transition from teaching to administration especially difficult for women. Pavan, Winkler & Dovey (1995) summarized the problems of role conflicts in the school systems in the following manner:

In the meantime, the women who head our school systems will still need to prove that they can be as masculine (business-like and rational problem solvers) as men while at the same time not neglecting their feminine sides (care and concern for both their own families and for their school families) all within a twenty four hour day! This role conflict so demanding of a woman's time will continue until men share equally the responsibility of caring. Once this happens, work organizations could be restructured to enable workers to assume the multiple roles presently undertaken mostly by women (p. 11).

These unresolved conflicts create anxiety and fear in women which leads to low aspirations or stifle aspirations (Ragguet, Russo & Harris, 1994). Self-limiting beliefs women hold about their roles and abilities were created by societies' expectations of women as being followers and not leaders (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993). These low aspirations become a reality to women.

Balancing family and career is an overwhelming barrier for women. Derrington (1991) reported that a study done in 1986 found that the largest career constraint for
women was the family. Women are socialized to nurture and support, to carry the responsibilities of family, and to assume the traditional familial role of caretaker. Paddock’s study (1981) found that over 40% of the women took sole responsibility for housework, cooking, and child care. Women have to make a choice between career and family in a way that men seldom do (Eakle 1995; Kaplan & Tinsley 1989). The women in Feistritzer’s study (1988) had to postpone their professional goals until their children reached school age because of the difficulty in balancing their role as child care givers and their career. Because of family commitments women have had to leave organizations adding to the stereotype that women leave to bear and care for children. This childbearing biological fact has been the premise for unfavorable biases in performance evaluations, leadership assessment, occupational segregation, and compensations. Many women are denied jobs because the people who make the hiring decision fear that they would soon be pregnant and have to take maternity leave.

Chase & Bell (1990) found that some consultants attribute the low numbers of women in superintendency related to the structure of the family arrangements. Swiss (1996) reported that “eighty-nine percent of the women surveyed believed that successful women must make greater personal sacrifices than successful men. Seventy-three percent of the women report that once a woman has a child, she is automatically perceived to be less committed to her career” (p. 130). The belief is that women place family above work, and “therefore they take themselves out of the running” (p. 171). In Pavan, Winkler, and Dovey’s (1995) study, respondents listed family arrangements (33%) as one of the most frequent obstacles to administrative advancement.
Women candidates often cannot get past the paper review. If they are fortunate and interview, they are often asked illegal questions about family (Shapiro, 1984). Chase & Bell (1990) reported that assumptions are made by board members and the community that a woman’s place is in the home. Hanson (1996) identified this as the Women’s Place Model, which states that women belong in the kitchen and not the boardroom. Researchers (Lyman & Speizer, 1980; Dopp & Sloan, 1986) explained the Women’s Place Model by stating that young boys and girls are socialized differently and that this socialization continues throughout adulthood. As women grow up, they are taught that their place is in the home caring and nurturing for the family. Society did not admire women who pursued a career that took them away from their family. “Centuries old attitudes and prejudices can also explain discrimination in training and hiring practices that encourage promoting more men than women” (Jones & Montenegro, 1982, p. 8). Whitaker & Lane (1990) stated that men are socialized to seek professional success and women are socialized to assume traditional female roles. These traditional roles limit women. Herkelmann (1993) reported that this difference in socialization creates less confidence, less independence, and lower self-esteem in women.

Combining a career and family is often a difficult task faced by women. Grogan (1994) stressed that women experience daily pressures when trying to combine career and family. Swiss (1996) further stressed that easing the work/family crunch is not viewed as a societal concern but as a woman’s issue.
Mobility

Much of the literature describes women as immobile and unwilling to move for a job. Derrington (1991) described the situation in the following way:

Whether male or female, anyone aspiring to the superintendency must be able to pick up and move to a new school district. A woman who wants to get to the top in school administration must be able to go where the jobs are (p. 13).

Blanche (1996) found that women superintendents in her study were appointed to their present positions from outside their district. This fact indicates the importance of mobility for women aspiring to the superintendency. Despite the obvious necessity of being mobile, women choose not to move for a superintendent job due to family pressures. Hill & Raglan (1995) reported the following reasons that women choose not to move for a promotion: to maintain stability for children, to maintain a support base of family and friends, or to protect their husband’s career.

The importance of geographic mobility for aspiring women superintendents has been supported in the literature (Marshall; 1986, Jackson; 1980). Marshall stated that women “must be able to move if they wish to secure a superintendency” (p. 11). Natale (1992) reported that moving from district to district generally is the best route up the career ladder. Because of family arrangements, women are seen as immobile. Porat (1994) maintained that marriage is importantly related to career mobility. If a women is married and has a family, she becomes immobile in the minds of the school board members who do the hiring. Chase & Bell’s (1994) interviews with consultants showed that women have been hindered by traditional family arrangements. Societal conditions limit women’s mobility. It becomes the woman’s responsibility to arrange their private...
lives so that they can stay in the running for administrative positions. Chase & Bell (1990) asserted that women's placeboundedness is a result of structural conditions which limit women more than men. They further explained that because there are so few women applicants to begin with, those that cannot move because of family arrangements become highly visible and readily scrutinized.

Krchnaik's (1977) survey of over 1,300 female educators in Illinois found 78% unwilling to relocate their homes. "The majority of female aspirants have many years in a particular district, already own their own home, and are more concerned with local relationships, they often are unwilling to relocate if a job opening occurs outside their district" (Porat, 1994, p. 33). In Porat's study of women superintendents in the Torrance Unified School District, only 5% of Torrance administrators have ever relocated their family to secure an administrative position. However, Natale (1992) reported that a 1992 study conducted for the American Association of School Administrators found that 64% of the superintendents came from outside the district. Similar studies (Paddock, 1981 and Carlson's 1972) have reported the same results. Chase & Bell (1990) reported that most women who do become superintendents have been required to rely on alternative arrangements which do not affect mobility. Unlike men superintendents who are historically married, these women superintendents have been single, widowed, or divorced. Altering the structural conditions becomes a woman's responsibility and does not change the system and will continue to adversely effect women.
Mentorship

The common saying "it's not what you know; it's who you know" holds true in the field of education. The lack of role models and mentors is a major employment barrier for women. For women to succeed, mentoring must occur. Lasher (1986) and Fairbaim (1989) found that mentoring is one of the most important factors in the career advancement of women. Restine (1993) reported that the lack of networks hampers women's efforts in gaining access to superintendent positions.

Hudson (1994) reported that 62% of superintendents learn about their jobs through informal contacts. This fact emphasizes the importance of mentors and personal contacts. "According to the literature, one of the most powerful predictors of women's access to the superintendency is sponsorship" (Radich, 1992, p. 6). However, Obermeyer (1996) reported that the most frequently encountered barrier women face is the lack of a mentor who is able to teach and give advice about the job and is able to promote careers through recognition. "The higher women rise, the more difficult it is to find a mentor - male or female" (Swiss, 1996, p. 170). The tendency to gravitate toward people like oneself makes it more difficult for women to find mentors. Swiss (1996) reported that for men, mentoring easily evolves through golf games, business trips, and after hours socializing. These are the places where mentoring opens the doors for men. "For women, one of the greatest challenges is to find viable alternatives to such door-opening opportunities" (Swiss, 1996, p. 170).

A mentoring program is one that has traditionally been used to help someone new on the job. Mentoring is a way for an experienced person to help promote the
professional and personal development of an inexperienced worker. Sharratt (1993) defined mentoring as guidance, training, support, and one-on-one counseling through both formal and informal means. The women superintendents in Illinois in Jackson’s study (1980) described two types of mentors. The first were educational associates who influenced and supported these women, and the second were influential people outside of education. Having a mentor affords women with the opportunity to grow both personally and professionally.

Having a mentor helps women gain access to the superintendency. Bell’s (1990) qualitative study found that one superintendent was hired because a well-known and well-respected administrator who was her mentor helped ease the doubts that the board had about her. “Sponsors provide an important signal to other people, a form of reflected power” (Kanter, 1977, p. 182). Mentors provide a credibility by association. Adkison (1981) asserted that the social composition of peer groups help shape the behavior of both men and women in hierarchical organizations.

Among the women Swiss (1996) surveyed, 70% had at least one mentor in their career, and 66% had male mentors. Pavan, Winkler & Dovey (1995) reported that male mentors assisted 85% of the women superintendents in their study. The predominance of men in the upper-management ranks is directly related to the high percent of male mentors.

Porat (1994) in her study of superintendents in the Torrance Unified School District found that 100% of all women administrators expressed a desire to participate in a mentoring program. A lack of role models and mentors for women has held women
back from applying for administrative positions. Because women see no women superintendents, many women do not consider administration an option for their careers. Swiss (1996) further stated that 90% of the women in her study believed that an absence of female role models perpetuates gender inequity. Dopp & Sloan (1986) stated that “the paucity of female role models in administration promotes a circular socialization; women are not perceived as being competent to hold administrative jobs, therefore they do not hold them and consequently cannot change this perception” (p. 121). This fact has caused many of the women surveyed to become role models and mentors for less senior women. Often women need encouragement from someone before they consider administration as a field. More than 60% of the superintendents in Torrance indicated that they were encouraged by someone to apply for the position. To make strides in educational administration, women will need the support and encouragement of their colleagues.

Granovetter (1974) pointed out that regardless of merit, women without the right contacts are penalized. Granovetter (1974) noted:

Personal contacts are of paramount importance to connecting people to jobs. Better jobs are found through contacts, and the best jobs, the ones with the highest pay and prestige and affording the greatest satisfaction to those in them, are most apt to be filled this way (p. 22).

The use of informal job contacts and mentors remains important in acquiring jobs in public school administration.
Strategies Used By Women

Family Coping Skills

To overcome the existing barriers and to create an alternate way of viewing the world other than through the androcentric way, women must create change strategies. Behavioral changes are required from women, men, schools, and society. The conflict between their families and their careers is one of the most overwhelming barriers faced by women. Because of this it is necessary for women to develop coping skills. Blanche (1996) stated that “The roles for men and women must change to accommodate the needs of the family and childrearing if women are to successfully attain superintendency level positions” (pgs. 53-54). Women must decide how to balance the various roles they have as they move up the administrative ladder.

McDade & Drake (1982) suggested that women should “achieve a balance between femininity and leadership - do not give up one for the other” (p. 214).

Mentorship/Sponsorship

As previously reported, having a mentor or an encourager is one of the most successful strategies used by women to help them obtain the superintendency. Marshall (1984) stated that role models help women by providing them with the following: role models for administrative functions; ways to learn attitudes, behaviors, and norms; support so that women can maintain their confidence and aspirations during difficult times; and information about and recommendations for administrative positions. Role models also provide women with individuals who can encourage them. Brown (1994)
stated that "moms and dads, school teachers, and especially the college professors" need to encourage women (p. 22). She asserted that women who were encouraged may eventually become interested in pursuing administrative or leadership positions. The feelings of loneliness and isolation felt by women who have reached the higher ranks can be dispelled with the help of peers and family members. Mentoring helps to reduce barriers as women's advocates open doors and support women. Swiss (1996) described a two pronged mentoring approach to gender reform. On a personal level, women are helping other women by being a sounding board for ideas or by giving suggestions based on experience. On a more professional level, women are using the strength of numbers to encourage organizations to recruit and promote women.

In defense of the "good old boy" network, McDade & Drake (1982) suggested that women build their own network. Forty-six percent of the women in Pavan's study (1995) reported joining a support network to overcome barriers. Women should keep in contact with both men and women who can be of assistance and are eager to help them. These relationships "help women determine what kind of administrator you do or don't want to be" (Natale, 1992, p. 214). Erickson & Pitner (1980) reported that verbal communication is the method that administrators use to recruit, train, and replace one another in educational organizations. At conferences and workshops male administrators exchange information on how to handle problems, and they also exchange information on job openings. Women should attend these conferences and workshops and develop their own networks that will, like men, exchange information.
Not only should women seek out the help of a mentor, but also they should help other women. McDade & Drake (1982) suggested that women should become mentors to other women who have potential. A formal mentor program as suggested by Dopp & Sloan (1986) should provide training on how to be a mentor and how to be mentored. This approach helps build awareness of barriers and increases women’s choices when seeking help. Attitudes and perceptions about gender roles must change. Whitaker & Lane (1990) stated that this will happen when more women are in the position to mentor to others. Mentors provide career guidance and psychological support in managing career difficulties.

**Political Expertise**

Becoming politically knowledgeable about school board dynamics and about the local community is another strategy adopted by women to overcome barriers. Tallerico, Burstyn & Poole (1993) found the following specific areas relating to politics that women were lacking in:

- understanding school board politics, vulnerability in the superintendency; the importance of one’s career path to the chief executive role; analyzing external and political influences on the board-superintendent relationship;
- understanding the media’s influence on shaping, expanding, or constraining conflict; awareness of board turnover and knowledge of how to prevent, cope with, or capitalize on it; ways of dealing with the relentless scrutiny on the job; the predictable mobilization of teacher or administrative union forces and self-awareness training . . . all urged increased attention to political skills building. (p. 17).

Dulac (1992) identified the necessity to learn the skills of political know-how to compete for positions that traditionally belonged to men.
Selection Process

Discrimination by school boards and individuals who do the hiring of superintendents is hard to prove. Because of this, Hudson (1994) suggested that boards of education need to play a more prominent role in the selection process. By investigating the extent to which women are represented in their administrative staffs, Jones & Montenegro (1982) believed that school boards can help women. Arons (1980) asserted that the personnel responsible for the selection and placement of candidates needs to recognize the evidence in research that shows that no one leadership style is universally suitable for all situations. Selection personnel should concern themselves with the individual whose leadership style is appropriate to the position being sought regardless of gender. This method will allow the individual with the greatest potential for leadership to be selected for the position.

For women a knowledge of the steps used by other women who have acquired superintendencies needs to be systematically studied. Hudson (1994) stated that the steps for acquiring jobs need to be ascertained and shared with others. McDade & Drake (1982) stated that struggling to become a superintendent may be too overwhelming for women because of the barriers and obstacles that they face. However, McDade & Drake (1982) asserted the following template on how to overcome this obstacle:

If the career paths of women superintendents could be described in more detail, with the specific problems, or challenges faced by successful women identified according to the specific path taken; and if these same women offered advice to aspiring women-advice that is also tied to specific career paths - perhaps more women would consider the challenge (p. 210).
By studying career paths, women are provided with a viable alternative in arriving at the superintendency.

**Training**

Being prepared, qualified, certified, and demonstrating competence for an administrative job is specified by Erickson & Pitner (1980) as a necessary job strategy for women applying for administrative positions. McDade & Drake (1982) suggested that women should “obtain the necessary training and certification early in your career so you are prepared when a position becomes open” (p. 214). Data gathered by Arons (1980) showed that although women possess as much administrative ability as men, attention still needs to be given to women in the following ways:

- Attention needs to be paid to the career paths of potential female administrators to ensure that capable women receive encouragement to enter administrative careers, obtain the adequate preparation for administrative certification, and enter the applicant pools in numbers relatively equal to their male counterparts (p. 8).

Whitaker & Lane (1990) listed the following strategies that are needed to ensure greater access for women: school districts should establish programs, university should encourage women, females should mentor to other females, and attitudes in society must change. Through these strategies women should be able to increase their chances of being promoted.

By knowing the career paths of successful superintendents, aspiring superintendents can decide what training and experiences are necessary and helpful in their attempts to be successful. Professional objective setting and career planning were specified by Erickson & Pitner (1980) as methods that will enable women to move
toward the goal of securing an administrative position. In a study done by Dopp & Sloan (1986) the vast majority of superintendents who did not formulate a plan expressed regret in not doing so.

Eakle (1995) reported that in an attempt to train administrators, the California Department of Education established the California School Leadership Academy to help aspiring school administrators strengthen and improve their leadership skills. Other states have similar leadership programs. "Staff development programs for potential administrators should concern themselves with the training and expansion of the individual's style flexibility, as well as the development of the skills to diagnose situational demands" (Arons, 1980, p. 8). In a program conducted by the American Association of School Administrators, Jones & Montenegro (1982) found the curriculum was designed in the following way to help women overcome barriers:

develop a positive self-concept and to present it; become professionally visible; enlist influential sponsors; discover potential jobs; analyze jobs to determine their professional desirability; write letters of application; prepare an effective resume; prepare for the interview; and discuss conditions of employment (p. 9).

This workshop helped prepare women for the superintendency by giving them special insights into the position. These training opportunities can also help women who are starting their careers in education.

Obtaining leadership experience is a necessity for women who aspire to the superintendency. The women in Erickson & Pitner's study (1980) suggested that women seek internships, productive field experiences, and the best university preparatory programs to obtain leadership experience. Marshall (1984) reported that on-
the-job training helps develop appropriate values and provides a visibility which is crucial to women. The author’s study showed that simulation of administrative functions, organizational theory, sociological approaches to administrative problems, and the special problems of women were the experiences especially helpful to women.

Visibility is an important strategy used by many aspiring women. Dopp & Sloan (1986) suggested that bias can be decreased through exposure and experiences with men. Engaging in activities with men will give the visibility and exposure women need. Natale (1992) stated that “it's important to get involved in activities that will give you leadership experience” (p. 21).

In order to get noticed, women must market themselves and make sure that the decision makers of the district see them in leadership roles. Eighty-seven percent of the women in Pavan’s study (1995) used strategies that involved demonstrating their competence, obtaining visibility on the job, and attending conferences. All of the women in Pavan’s study felt that they had to persevere professionally and to maintain a professional demeanor. Erickson & Pinter (1980) listed the following guidelines for women to demonstrate one’s competence:

Seek opportunities to showcase one’s abilities other than in the classroom, encourage more women to be willing to take the risk of getting into administration, don’t ever hire incompetent or ill-prepared women, publicize the admirable traits of woman administrators in your area, view yourself as an equal, ignore the historical prejudice, and use time and performance to remedy the situation (p. 10).

For women who were successful, Dopp & Sloan (1986) reported that they viewed themselves professionally, had experience working with men, and were motivated to be successful.
School Boards

As previously reported, school board members who are mostly men tend to hire individuals like themselves. To overcome this barrier, it may be necessary for school boards to incorporate a mandatory use of minority members. Hudson (1994) indicated that a four fold plan used by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to include minority appointments to corporate boards seems to apply to educational institutions as well.

Placing women on school boards is a strategy that can help women obtain the superintendency. Marietti & Stout (1994) in their study found that female-majority boards were more likely to hire female superintendents than male-majority boards were. “As females increase in proportion on school boards (which they have been recently) we might anticipate more female superintendents” (Marietti & Stout, 1994, p. 383).

Conclusions

“Research indicates that fewer women than men choose to work as school administrators” (Andrews & Basom, 1990, p. 40). Women are aware of a double standard that is prevalent when dealing with women in administration. This double standard or cultural stereotyping of female behavior makes women uncomfortable and causes women to find it difficult to break into school administration.

The previous findings support the theory that women face major disadvantages. Reasons for these disadvantages relate to informal job contact systems, historic restraints, selection process, role conflicts, and use of power. The number of women with the credentials to hold higher level positions is growing. “School boards may be
hard pressed to justify discriminatory hiring practices" (Ragguet, Russo & Harris, 1994, p. 404). “To deny that stereotypes exist about the ability of women to hold administrative positions is to deny the reality of women’s experiences and the extant research on discrimination and barriers to their advancement” (Mertz & McNeely, 1994, p. 369). Pavan (1995) summed up the problem by stating that despite years of efforts to achieve gender equity, school administration still remains masculine.

Tyack & Hansot (1982) reported that in public schools there continues to be a structuring of opportunity by gender that discriminates against women. They summarize the inequalities by the following rules of thumb:

(1) Men were more likely to be found in administrative positions conferring the greatest power, pay, and prestige; (2) Men predominated in positions where the job required supervising other males, while women were often found in administrative positions where they dealt mostly with other women and with children; (3) Men were sought for positions such as superintendent or high school principal that linked the educational system with its external environment, where maleness gave the school a higher social credit rating because of the higher status of men in the community. Women were more likely to be in administrative positions that looked inward toward the system (p. 182).

In order to cope, women should not become defensive simply because they are women. McDade & Drake (1982) advised women to learn ways to effectively deal with gender discrimination. Natale (1993) stated that “with a mentor, if possible — and with time, planning, and careful consideration of all the options — you can get to where you want to be in school administration” (p. 21).

Natale (1992) asserted that it is a great time to be in education with the emphasis on improvement and reform. She further stressed that there are many challenges that need to be faced. The lack of women in higher levels is one of the
greatest areas of deficiency for public education and one of the most viable areas for change through researching and exploring existing barriers and assistive strategies used by women superintendents to overcome these barriers.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter presents the methodology for this study and includes a description of the population, procedures, the instrumentation, the variables and hypotheses, and the statistical analysis. The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. What are the personal and professional demographics of women superintendents nationwide;
2. What are women superintendents' perceptions about possible constraints on their own attempts at attaining the superintendency and
3. What do women superintendents view as successful strategies for overcoming these constraints?

The research problem was to determine the causes for the continuation of the relatively small numbers of women obtaining the superintendency in America’s schools, to determine what the barriers faced by women are, to determine the strategies that women superintendents use, and to identify the personal and professional demographics of female superintendents. The research that was conducted in this study focused on the personal and professional demographics, the barriers encountered, and the strategies that female superintendents use.
Research Design

This was a quasi-experimental study seeking to identify the personal and professional characteristics of women superintendents, the barriers they encounter, and the strategies they use to overcome these barriers.

The personal and professional characteristics of women superintendents were examined to develop a profile of women superintendents. Barriers were analyzed for the degree to which they may have hindered the advancement of women superintendents. Strategies were analyzed for the degree to which they may have been used by women superintendents.

Sample

The population for this study consisted of women superintendents nationwide. Nationwide there are approximately 15,000 superintendents, including both male and female. Of this 15,000 approximately 7% are female. For this study 1,050 women superintendents were identified.

The sample was comprised of 360 randomly selected women public school superintendents nationwide. The sample was selected using Market Data Retrieval. Market Data Retrieval, a private organization in Chicago, Illinois, is used by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and was recommended to the researcher by the AASA. Market Data Retrieval provided a computerized listing of the sample and mailing labels for all the subjects.

Results of the research were offered to the participants upon their request.
Instrumentation

This study utilized a survey instrument that assessed selected characteristics and differences of the women subjects and their perceptions of barriers and strategies to superintendency level positions. The instrument The Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency was developed and used by Dr. Betty Jane Dulac in her dissertation study (1992). The Dulac questionnaire consisted of 18 questions that addressed the personal and professional characteristics of women in superintendency-level positions and two sections of 30 statements each utilizing a Likert scale to determine perceptions of barriers and strategies of women to attaining the superintendency. The Likert scale was chosen by Dulac for its appropriateness in collecting information on perceptions. In a Likert scale each item is followed by five response choices placed along a horizontal continuum. Scoring was completed by computing the numerical value for rating barriers from number “1” representing not a barrier to number “5” representing a major barrier. Scoring for rating strategies were coded from number “1” representing not successful to number “5” representing highly successful.

The reliability and validity of the instrument were established by Dr. Dulac in her dissertation study:

When using Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient, a computed application of the data determined a reliability coefficient of 0.96 for barriers and 0.86 for strategies. Content validity of the questionnaire was established by submitting it to two experts in the area of women in administration. Dr. Catherine Marshall and Dr. Jean Stockard confirmed their review of the instrument and made some suggestions for improving it. A Boston College statistician also analyzed the instrument format and provided suggestions to facilitate coding.
Pilot study participants were also asked to critique the instrument and indicate any ambiguities. The questionnaire was revised according to suggestions. (p. 74).

The researcher obtained written permission from Dr. Betty Jane Dulac to alter the instrument. To provide the sample with a more concise questionnaire, statements in the original questionnaire that did not relate to the hypotheses of this study were eliminated. These changes did not impact the reliability and validity previously tested by Dulac. The revised instrument was reviewed for clarity and content by conducting a pilot study of 50 women superintendents. The altered instrument consisted of 14 questions that addressed the personal and professional characteristics of women in superintendency-level positions and two sections of 21 statements each utilizing a Likert scale to determine perceptions of barriers and strategies of women to attaining the superintendency.

A copy of the revised questionnaire entitled *The Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency* is included in Appendix A.

**Procedures**

The following procedures were used to collect and analyze data. The researcher adapted a questionnaire created by Dr. Betty Jane Dulac. Written permission to use the survey instrument was received from Dr. Dulac on September 30, 1997, and is included in Appendix B.

A pilot study was conducted in order to obtain feedback on the clarity of the questions and the format. Using a list of women superintendents provided to the
researcher by Market Data Source, a random sample of fifty women superintendents was chosen. A table of random numbers was read until all 50 women superintendents had been selected. A master list of the pilot study participants was maintained by the researcher. The pilot questionnaire was mailed to the 50 women superintendents on October 24, 1997, with a cover letter (see Appendix C) explaining the purpose of the study, assuring confidentiality, and stating the importance of participation. A self-addressed stamped envelope was included for returning the completed questionnaire prior to an established four week deadline. Code numbers were assigned to each subject and were placed on the inside flap of the return envelope. Respondents were informed that all questionnaires would remain anonymous and that envelopes destroyed upon receipt. Returned questionnaires were matched with the master list and dated.

After the three week deadline, 26 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 52% return rate for the pilot study. Six of the questionnaires could not be used due to various problems. Two questionnaires were returned incomplete, one subject had moved from her job, and three subjects were not superintendents although Market Data Source had them listed as such. Consequently, 20 (40%) of the completed questionnaires were used in the pilot study.

Once the pilot study was complete, the researcher selected the 360 women superintendents for the dissertation study. A table of random numbers was read until all 360 women superintendents had been selected. A master list of the survey participants was maintained by the researcher. On January 5, 1998, the questionnaires were sent out to the 360 randomly selected study participants. All questionnaires were mailed with a
self-addressed stamped envelope, cover letter (See Appendix D), and letter of consent (See Appendix E). Participants were also informed that the researcher would send the results of the survey to them upon request. A four week deadline for the return of completed questionnaires was established. The researcher’s goal for response rate was sixty percent. Code numbers were assigned to each subject and were placed on the inside flap of the return envelope. Respondents were informed that all questionnaires would remain anonymous and envelopes destroyed upon receipt. When a questionnaire was returned, it was matched with the master list and dated.

Four weeks after the initial mailing, another questionnaire with a follow-up letter (see Appendix F) and a return self-addressed stamped envelope was sent to nonrespondents. A request was made to have all questionnaires returned by February 20, 1998 to begin data analysis.

After the second mailout, 256 surveys were returned to the researcher, resulting in a 85% response rate. Of the 256 returned surveys, only 216 (60%) could be used for the study. The remaining 40 surveys could not be used for the following reasons: 1 respondent did not want to participate, 22 respondents were not superintendents even though the sample indicated them as such, 1 superintendent had died, 8 were no longer superintendents, 2 respondents were men, 3 respondents were retired, and 3 respondents’ surveys were received after data analysis had begun. Consequently, 216 or 60% of the surveys were used for data analysis.
Variables

The personal and professional demographics surveyed and analyzed in this study included age, marital status, professional degree attained, highest degree earned, number of children in school, race/ethnic origin of respondent, extended family in area, number of students in district, metro status where employed, number of years in present position, longest superintendency held, number of superintendencies held including present one, and age at first superintendents. Items measuring these variables were adapted from Dulac's assessment instrument. These variables were tested for frequency and percent.

Perception of barriers analyzed in this study included existence of "buddy system, covert sex discrimination, doubt by those in a hiring position of women's long term career commitment, gender bias in the hiring and selection process, and conflicting demands of career and family. Perceptions of strategies analyzed in this study included obtaining a doctorate, increasing flexibility to relocate, preparing an effective resume, adopting a female role model, developing political expertise, enlisting a mentor, and developing a strong self-concept.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were coded numerically and prepared for computer analysis. Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) was utilized for statistical analysis and tabulation of the findings.

Frequency distributions and measures of central tendency of the personal and professional demographic information were compiled to provide profiles of women
superintendents. Frequency distributions and percent of responses were compiled on each individual question statement for the strategies and barriers. T-tests were used to identify areas where significant differences existed among women superintendents.

The following hypotheses were established to test for significant differences between women superintendents:

Ho1: There is no significant difference on barriers and strategies among bachelors, master’s and doctorate women superintendents.

Ho2: There is no significant difference on barriers and strategies among rural, town or small city, suburb, and urban center metro status women superintendents.

Ho3: There is no significant difference on barriers and strategies among women superintendents 49 or below and 50 or over.

Ho4: There is no significant difference on barriers and strategies among women superintendents in their present position less than a year, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 8 years, or 9 or more years.

Each of the null hypotheses was tested for rejection at the .05 level of significance.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents an analysis of the data gathered from a questionnaire mailed to 360 women superintendents. The data analysis was used in answering the problem statements set forth in Chapter One and in the hypotheses. In addition to statistical analysis that was used to answer problem statements and to test the hypothesis, the respondents were given an opportunity to make additional comments concerning their perceptions of barriers and strategies. These comments are included in Appendix G.

The findings of the data analysis are organized as follows: a) biographical and demographic information on women superintendents and a profile of the average women superintendent; b) perceptions of barriers and successful strategies among doctorate and nondoctorate women superintendents; c) perceptions of barriers and successful strategies among women superintendents in metro status areas of 9,999 or below and 10,000 or more; d) perceptions of barriers and successful strategies among women superintendents 49 or below or 50 or over; and e) percent distributions of responses on each individual barrier and strategy.

Biographic and Demographic Information

The respondents for the study included 216 female superintendents. This section presents personal and professional demographic information on these women.
superintendents and presents a profile of the average woman superintendent of this study. Frequency distributions were used to analyze the biographic and demographic information.

Table 1

**Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or over</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents, 187 or 86.6%, are between the ages of 40-59. The range of 50-59 year olds has the highest number of women superintendents. In addition, only 7 (3.2%) of the respondents are under the age of 40.

Table 2

**Marital Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced or Separated</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows that a majority of the women superintendents, 155 or 71.8%, were married. The remainder of the superintendents, 61 or 28.3%, were single, widowed, divorced, or separated.

Table 3

Number of Children in School (K-12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children (K-12)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 4

Table 3 shows that 75.0% or 159 of the superintendents had no children in grades K through 12. Twenty-five superintendents had one child in grades K through 12. Twenty-three superintendents had 2 children in grades K through 12. The remainder 2.3% had 3 or more children in K through 12.
Table 4

**Age of Youngest Child**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Youngest Child</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No children</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under 5 year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - 19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 90

Table 4 shows that the majority (52.4%) of respondents had no children. The range of 13 - 19 years old has the next highest number of respondents with 43 or 34.1% of the respondents in this range. Ninety of the participants did not respond to this question. Several respondents wrote in answers which indicated that their children were 20 or older.

Table 5

**Highest Degree Earned**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 10
Table 5 presents a summary of the highest degree obtained by women superintendents. The doctorate has the highest number of superintendents with 49.0%. The majority of the superintendents, 96.1% or 198, had obtained either a master’s or doctorate degree.

Table 6

Racial/Ethnic Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, not Hispanic origin</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, not Hispanic origin</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 presents the summary of the racial/ethnic origin of the respondents. The majority of the superintendents, 198 or 91.7%, were of White, not Hispanic origin. Responses indicated that 2 (0.9%) of the respondents were American Indian/Alaskan Native. Two of the superintendents were Asian or Pacific Islander, 6 were Hispanic, and 8 were Black, not Hispanic origin.
Table 7

Extended Family in Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family in Area</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority (51.9%) of the women superintendents surveyed had extended family in the area. One hundred four (48.1%) had no family in the area.

Table 8

Number of Students in District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Size</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-299</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 - 599</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 - 999</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 - 2,999</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 - 4,999</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 - 9,999</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 24,999</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000 - 49,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 2

Table 8 indicates that a majority (136 or 63.5%) of the women superintendents were employed in school districts of under 3,000 students. Fifty-two women
superintendents, the highest number are employed in a school district of 1,000 - 2,999 students.

Table 9

Metro Status Where Employed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural (under 2,500 pop.)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town or small city (2,500 - 9,999 pop.)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb (10,000 - 99,999 pop.)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban center or large city (100,000 or more)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 2

The majority of women superintendents (41.1%) serve in rural populations of under 2,500 people. Only 9.8% or 21 of the respondents serve in a metro status population of 100,000 or more. (See Table 9.)
Table 10

Number of Years in Present Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a year</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 4 years</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 8 years</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or more</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 indicates that a majority (109 or 50.5%) of the respondents had been superintendents in the present job between 1 and 4 years.

Table 11

Longest Superintendency Held

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 4 years</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 8 years</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or more</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 5

Table 11 shows that the majority of women superintendents longest held position was between 1 and 4 years. Sixty eight (32.2%) respondents longest held position was between 5 and 8 years; less than a year for 1.4%; and for 18.5% , 9 years or more.
Table 12

Number of Superintendencies Held Including Present One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 2

Table 12 shows that a majority (99.5%) of the respondents held 3 or less superintendencies, including their present one. The largest number of respondents held only one superintendency position. Only one respondent had 5 or more superintendencies.

Table 13

Age at First Superintendency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or over</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 2
Of the 216 respondents, 125 (58.4%) obtained their first superintendency between the ages of 40 and 49. Two superintendents obtained their first position between the ages of 25 and 29, 36 between the ages of 30 and 39, 44 between the ages of 50 and 59, and 7 at 60 or over. (See Table 13.)

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Superintendent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Superintendent</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency Missing = 14

Table 14 shows that the majority of superintendents, 69 or 34.2%, were assistant superintendents immediately prior to becoming a superintendent. Fifty seven (28.2%) were administrators in a school board office prior to their first superintendency, and 54 (26.7%) were principals. The remaining 22 (10.9%) held one of the following positions prior to becoming a superintendent: associate superintendent, professor, superintendent, teacher, or vice principal.
Superintendent Profile

The typical female superintendent in the sample for this study is white between the ages of 50 and 59. She is married and has extended family in the area. She does not have children in K through 12 grades. She holds a doctorate and works in a district with 1,000 to 2,999 students. She works in a rural metro area of a population under 2,500. She is in her first position and has been in her current position for 1 to 4 years. Her longest held superintendency was between 1 and 4 years. Prior to becoming a superintendent, she was an assistant superintendent.

Perceptions of Barriers and Successful Strategies Among Doctorate and Non-Doctorate Women Superintendents

Perceptions of Barriers

T-tests indicated that there were significant differences at the p<.05 level in the perceptions of barriers for women superintendents for 2 of the 21 barriers listed in the questionnaire. The null hypothesis for these 2 barriers was rejected. Tables for each barrier for which the null hypothesis was rejected are included in the section. The 2 tables appear in the same order in which the barriers appear in the questionnaire (see Appendix A).
Table 15

Existence of the “Buddy System” in Which Men Refer Other Men to Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctorate</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.0471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.0488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a T-test on perceptions of barriers, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women without a doctorate and women with a doctorate. Table 15 shows that women with a doctorate find the existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs as more of a barrier than women without a doctorate. Perceptions of barriers differed significantly at p<.05 among women superintendents with a doctorate and women superintendents without a doctorate.

Based upon the results shown in Table 15, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 16

Covert Gender Discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctorate</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.0084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>0.0086</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16 shows that women with a doctorate perceive covert gender discrimination as more of a barrier than women without a doctorate. Perceptions of barriers differed significantly at $p<.05$ among women superintendents with a doctorate and women superintendents without a doctorate.

Based upon the results shown in Table 16, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Perceptions of Successful Strategies**

T-tests indicated that there were significant differences at the $p<.05$ level in the perceptions of successful strategies for women superintendents for 2 of the 21 strategies listed in the questionnaire. The null hypothesis for these 2 strategies was rejected. Tables for each strategy for which the null hypothesis was rejected are included in the following section. The 2 tables appear in the same order in which the strategies appear in the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Table 17

**Obtaining a Doctorate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctorate</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>$p&lt;.05$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of successful strategies, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women
without a doctorate and women with a doctorate. Table 17 shows that women with a
doctorate perceive obtaining a doctorate as a more successful strategy than women
without a doctorate. Perceptions of strategies differed significantly at $p<.05$ among
women superintendents with a doctorate and women superintendents without a
doctorate.

Based upon the results shown in Table 17, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increasing Flexibility to Relocate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of successful strategies, the women
superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women
without a doctorate and women with a doctorate. Table 18 shows that women with a
doctorate perceive increasing their flexibility to relocate as a more successful strategy
than women without a doctorate. Perceptions of successful strategies differed
significantly at $p<.05$ among women superintendents with a doctorate and women
superintendents without a doctorate.

Based upon the results shown in Table 18, the null hypothesis was rejected.
Perceptions of Barriers

T-tests indicated that there were significant differences at the p<.05 level in the perceptions of barriers for women superintendents for 2 of the 21 barriers listed in the questionnaire. The null hypothesis for these 2 barriers was rejected. Tables for each barrier for which the null hypothesis was rejected are included in this section. The 2 tables appear in the same order in which the barriers appear in the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Table 19

Doubt By Those In a Hiring Position of Women’s Long Term Career Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,000 or over</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.0136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,999 or below</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.0154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of barriers, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or over and women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Table 19 shows that women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below perceive doubt by those in a hiring position of women’s long term career commitment as more of
a barrier than women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above. Perceptions of barriers differed significantly at p<0.05 among women superintendents employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above and women superintendents employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below.

Based upon the results shown in Table 19, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 20

Gender Bias in the Screening and Selection Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,000 or over</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.0440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,999 or below</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.0467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of barriers, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or over and women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Table 20 shows that women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below perceive gender bias in the screening and selection process as more of a barrier than women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above. Perceptions of barriers differed significantly at p<0.05 among women superintendents employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above and women superintendents employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below.

Based upon the results shown in Table 20, the null hypothesis was rejected.
Perceptions of Successful Strategies

T-tests indicated that there were significant differences at the $p<.05$ level in the perceptions of successful strategies for women superintendents for 4 of the 21 strategies listed in the questionnaire. The null hypothesis for these 4 strategies was rejected. Tables for each strategy for which the null hypothesis was rejected are included in the following section. The 4 tables appear in the same order in which the strategies appear in the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Table 21

Obtaining a Doctorate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>$p&lt;.05$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,000 or over</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.0179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,999 or below</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.0231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of strategies, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or over and women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Table 21 shows that women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above perceive obtaining a doctorate as a more successful strategy than women in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Perceptions of barriers differed significantly at $p<.05$ among women superintendents employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above and women superintendents employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below.
Based upon the results shown in Table 21, the null hypothesis was rejected

Table 22

**Preparing an Effective Resume**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,000 or over</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.0361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,999 or below</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>0.0394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of strategies, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or over and women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Table 22 shows that women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below perceive preparing an effective resume as a more successful strategy than women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above. Perceptions of strategies differed significantly at p<.05 among women superintendents employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above and women superintendents employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below.

Based upon the results shown in Table 22, the null hypothesis was rejected.
Table 23

Adopting a Female Role Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,000 or over</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.0114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,999 or below</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.0160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of strategies, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or over and women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Table 23 shows that women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above perceive adopting a female role model as a more successful strategy than women in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Perceptions of strategies differed significantly at p<.05 among women superintendents employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above and women superintendents employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below.

Based upon the results shown in Table 23, the null hypothesis was rejected
Table 24

**Developing Political Expertise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.000 or over</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>0.0018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.999 or below</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.0054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of strategies, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or over and women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Table 24 shows that women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above perceive developing political "know how" as a more successful strategy than women in a metro status of 9,999 or below. Perceptions of strategies differed significantly at p<.05 among women superintendents employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above and women superintendents employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below.

Based upon the results shown in Table 24, the null hypothesis was rejected

Perceptions of Barriers and Successful Strategies Among Women Superintendents 49 or Below or 50 or Above

**Perceptions of Barriers**

T-tests indicated that there were significant differences at the p<.05 level in the perceptions of barriers for women superintendents for 1 of the 21 barriers listed in the
questionnaire. The null hypothesis for this 1 barrier was rejected. A table for the barrier for which the null hypothesis was rejected is included in this section.

Table 25

Conflicting Demands of Career and Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 or above</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.0450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 or below</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.0544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of barriers, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women 50 or above and women 49 or below. Table 25 shows that women 49 or below perceive conflicting demands of career and family are more of a barrier than women 50 or above. Perceptions of barriers differed significantly at p<.05 among women superintendents 50 or above and 49 or below.

Based upon the results shown in Table 25, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Perceptions of Successful Strategies

T-tests indicated that there were significant differences at the p<.05 level in the perceptions of successful strategies for women superintendents for 1 of the 21 strategies listed in the questionnaire. The null hypothesis for this strategy was rejected. A table for
the strategy for which the null hypothesis was rejected is included in the following section.

Table 26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>p&lt;.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 or above</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.0208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 or below</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.0235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of strategies, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women 50 or above and women 49 or below. Table 26 shows that women 49 or below perceive enlisting a mentor as more of a successful strategy than do women 50 or above. Perceptions of strategies differed significantly at p<.05 among women superintendents 50 or above and 49 or below.

Based upon the results shown in Table 26, the null hypothesis was rejected
Perceptions of Barriers and Successful Strategies Among Women Superintendents In Their Current Positions Less Than 5 Years and 5 or More Years

Perceptions of Barriers

T-tests indicated that there were no significant differences at the $p<.05$ level in the perceptions of barriers among women superintendents who have been in their current positions for less than 5 years and 5 or more years.

Perceptions of Successful Strategies

T-tests indicated that there were significant differences at the $p<.05$ level in the perceptions of successful strategies for women superintendents for 2 of the 21 strategies listed in the questionnaire. The null hypothesis for these 2 strategies was rejected. Tables for each strategy for which the null hypothesis was rejected are included in the following section. The 2 tables appear in the same order in which the strategies appear in the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Table 27

Enlisting a Mentor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Position</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>$p&lt;.05$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.0215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more years</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.0211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
To conduct a t-test on perceptions of strategies, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years and women who have been in their current position for 5 years or more. Table 27 shows that women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years perceive enlisting a mentor as a more successful strategy than women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years. Perceptions of strategies differed significantly at $p < .05$ among women superintendents in their current position for less than 5 years and 5 or more years.

Based upon the results shown in Table 27, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 28

**Developing a Strong Self-Concept**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Position</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>$p &lt; .05$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.0322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more years</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.0307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conduct a t-test on perceptions of strategies, the women superintendents who responded to the questionnaire comprised two groups: women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years and women who have been in their current position for 5 years or more. Table 28 shows that women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years perceive developing a strong self concept as a more successful strategy than women who have been in their current position for 5 or more years.
years. Perceptions of strategies differed significantly at $p<.05$ among women superintendents who have been in their current position for less than 5 years and 5 or more years.

Based upon the results shown in Table 28, the null hypothesis was rejected

Frequency Distributions of Each Individual Item

Frequency of Barriers

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rate barriers they had encountered during their careers and the strategies they use to overcome these barriers. The questionnaire included twenty-one barriers and twenty-one strategies. The respondents were asked to indicate their perception of the barriers utilizing a Likert scale ranging from number “1” representing not a barrier to number “5” representing a major barrier.

The frequency of barriers encountered by women superintendents is reported by percentages in Table 29.
## Frequency of Barriers Encountered by Women Superintendents

### Table 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting demands of career and family</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment.</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The belief that women do not make good administrators.</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate career path experiences.</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood socialization to “proper” roles for men and women.</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The predominance of male candidates for administrative positions.</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a mentor.</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs.</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubt by those in a hiring position of women’s long term career commitment.</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs.</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender bias in the screening and selection process.</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network”.</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of acceptance by male administrators and staff.</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of acceptance by female administrators and staff.</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of political “know how”.</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation to compete for top jobs.</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions.</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a strong women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network”.</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covert sex discrimination.</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overt sex discrimination.</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential colleagues’ insubordination in working for a female boss.</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = Not a Major Barrier  5 = A Major Barrier; Findings are reported in percentages.
Table 29 shows that nine of the twenty-one barriers are perceived as a major barrier by at least 10 percent of the women superintendents. The barriers are as follows: conflicting demands of career and family (15.3%), lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment (22.7%), the predominance of male candidates for administrative positions (18.1%), existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs (24.8%), gender bias in the screening and selection process (14.9%), exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network” (21.9%), the belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions (14.0%), lack of strong women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network” (18.6%), and covert sex discrimination (15.5%).

The two barriers that have not been a problem for the women superintendents are lack of motivation to compete for top jobs (44.2%) and lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs (38.9%).

Frequency of Strategies

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rate the strategies they use to overcome the barriers they perceive they face. The questionnaire included twenty-one strategies. The respondents were asked to indicate their perception of the strategies utilizing a Likert scale ranging from number “1” representing not successful to number “5” representing a highly successful. The frequency of strategies encountered by women superintendents is reported by percentages in Table 30.
**Frequency of Strategies Encountered by Women Superintendents**

Table 30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increasing visibility in professional circles.</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining a doctorate.</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing an effective resume.</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing a women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network.”</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing interviewing skills.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining access to community power groups.</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlisting a mentor.</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining the support of family.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a strong self-concept.</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for the position.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending workshops to improve professional skills.</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invoking affirmative action and Title IX</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions.</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing flexibility to relocate.</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the job description of position for which applying.</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting a female role model.</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing political “know-how”.</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = Not Successful 5 = Highly Successful; Findings are reported in percentages
Table 30 shows that eighteen of the twenty-one strategies are perceived as highly successful strategies by at least 10 percent of the women superintendents. The strategies are as follows: increasing visibility in professional circles (31.3%), obtaining a doctorate (35.7%), formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals (34.0%), preparing an effective resume (32.2%), enhancing interviewing skills (43.5%), gaining access to community power groups (27.6%), enlisting a mentor (25.7%), obtaining the support of family (52.8%), learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family (38.3%), developing a strong self-concept (65.1%), learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for positions (56.8%), attending workshops to improve professional skills (31.8%), being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions (30.5%), increasing flexibility to relocate (37.6%), learning how to deal with sex discrimination (14.6%), knowing the job description of position for which applying (48.6%), developing political "know-how" (48.8%), and learning strategies of successful women in other fields (33.8%).

The one strategy that women superintendents indicated was highly unsuccessful was invoking affirmative action and Title IX (39.4%).
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings and conclusions, a discussion of implications for women superintendents, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to a) identify the personal and professional demographics of women superintendents nationwide; b) to identify women superintendents' perceptions about possible constraints on their own attempts at attaining the superintendency; and c) to identify what women superintendents view as successful strategies for overcoming these constraints.

The review of the literature was divided into three sections: a) historical review; b) barriers faced by women superintendents; c) strategies used by women superintendents in the pursuit of the superintendency.

The sample was chosen from a nationwide list of women superintendents. The sample was comprised of 360 women superintendents. The women superintendents were sent a survey questionnaire that was used for collecting data. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) identified personal and professional demographics of the women and measured their perceptions of barriers they faced and their perceptions of successful strategies used.
Frequency distributions were used to analyze the biographical and demographic information. Frequency distributions and t-tests were used to analyze the perceptions of barriers and strategies. The findings were presented in Chapter 4 and are summarized in the following section.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

Biographic and Demographic Information

The first research question of this study was as follows: What are the personal and professional demographics of women superintendents nationwide. Frequency distributions were used to analyze the personal and professional demographics of women superintendents. The findings were used to create a profile of the average woman superintendent in this study. The typical woman superintendent in this study is between the ages of 50 and 59. This agrees with earlier findings by Dulac (1992) and McDade and Drake (1982). The superintendent in this study is married. This differs from Shakeshaft’s (1989) findings which showed that women superintendents were less likely to be married. Dulac’s (1992) dissertation study supports the findings of this study that the average woman superintendent is married.

The average woman in this study holds a doctorate and works in a district with 1,000 to 2,999 students. Blanche (1996) found that women superintendents had higher levels of formal preparation such as the doctorate. The woman superintendent in this study is in her first position and has been in her current position for 1 to 4 years.
Perceptions of Barriers

The second research question of this study was as follows: What are women superintendents' perceptions about possible constraints on their own attempts at attaining the superintendency. Frequency distributions were examined on each individual questionnaire item. Nine of the twenty-one barriers are perceived by the women in this study as major barriers. The nine barriers identified by at least 10% of the respondents as major are as follows: conflicting demands of career and family, lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment, the predominance of male candidates for administrative positions, existence of the "buddy system" in which men refer other men to jobs, gender bias in the screening and selection process, exclusion from the informal socialization process of the "Good Old Boy Network," the belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions, lack of strong women's network similar to the "Good Old Boy Network," and covert gender discrimination.

The review of literature supports the previous findings. Swiss (1996) found that 92% of the women in her study viewed the attitudes of male colleagues as a barrier. The American Association of School Administrators (1981) found that the gatekeepers in schools still believe that some jobs are better suited for men.

Derrington (1991) reported that balancing family and career is an overwhelming barrier for women. In a later study, Pavan, Winkler, and Dovey (1995) supported the findings that respondents' family arrangement is one of the most frequent obstacles to
administrative advancement. Chase & Bell's (1994) findings showed that women have been hindered by traditional family arrangements.

To further examine barriers, t-tests were conducted to test the four research hypothesis. Hypothesis One states that there is no significant difference on barriers and strategies among bachelors, master's, and doctorate women superintendents. The findings of these t-tests are as follows:

1. Women superintendents with a doctorate find the existence of the "buddy systems" in which men refer other men to jobs as more of a barrier than women without a doctorate.

2. Women superintendents with a doctorate perceive covert sex discrimination as more of a barrier than women without a doctorate.

Based on these two findings the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant difference on barriers and strategies among rural town or small city, suburb, and urban center metropolitan status women superintendents. T-tests were conducted to test the null hypothesis. The results of the t-tests are as follows:

1. Women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below perceive doubt by those in a hiring position of women's long term career commitment as more of a barrier than women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above.

2. Women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below perceive gender bias in the screening and selection process as more of a barrier than women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above.
Based on these two finding the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Three states that there is no significant difference on barriers and strategies among women superintendents 49 or below and 50 or over. T-tests were conducted to test the null hypothesis. The finding of these t-tests is as follows:

1. Women 49 or below perceive conflicting demands of career and family as more of a barrier than women 50 or above.

Based on this finding, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis four states that there is no significant difference on barriers and strategies among women superintendents in their present position less than a year, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 8 years, or 9 or more years. T-tests were conducted to test the null hypothesis. T-tests indicated that there were no significant differences at the $p<.05$ level in the perceptions of barriers among women superintendents who have been in their current positions for less than 5 years and 5 or more years.

In addition to the survey questionnaire, respondents were given an opportunity to write in any additional barriers that they perceive as hindering their progress (See Appendix G). Seventy-one or 20% of the women superintendents responded to this portion of the survey. The following are additional barriers listed by women superintendents: women who do not help other women, limited background, lack of sense of balance, inexperience in the competitive environment, lack of technical knowledge, racial makeup, women's need for approval, and lack of exposure.
Perceptions of Strategies

The third research question of this study was as follows: What do women superintendents view as successful strategies for overcoming barriers. Frequency distributions were examined on each individual questionnaire response item. Eighteen of the twenty-one strategies are perceived as highly successful strategy by at least 10 percent of the women superintendent. The strategies are as follows: increasing visibility in professional circles, obtaining a doctorate, formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals, preparing an effective resume, enhancing interviewing skills, gaining access to community power groups, enlisting a mentor, obtaining the support of the family, learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family, developing a strong self-concept, learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for positions, attending workshops to improve professional skills, being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions, increasing flexibility to relocate, learning how to deal with sex discrimination, knowing the job description of position for which applying, developing political expertise, and learning strategies of successful women in other fields.

Being prepared and qualified for an administrative position is specified by Erickson & Pitner (1980) as a necessary job strategy for women. Erickson & Pitner (1980) stated that professional objective setting and career planning were successful strategies for women to use. They suggest that women seek internships, productive field experiences, and the best university preparatory programs to obtain leadership experience. Dulac (1992) identified the necessity to learn the skills of political know-how to compete for positions that traditionally belonged to men.

To further examine successful strategies, t-tests were conducted to test the four research hypothesis. Hypothesis One states that there are no significant differences on barriers and strategies among bachelors, master's and doctorate women superintendents. The findings of these t-tests are as follows:

1. Women with a doctorate perceive that obtaining a doctorate as a more successful strategy than women without a doctorate.
2. Women with a doctorate perceive increasing their flexibility to relocate as a more successful strategy than women without a doctorate.

Based on these findings, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Two states that there are no significant differences on barriers and strategies among rural, town or small city, suburb, and urban center metropolitan status women superintendents. The findings of these t-tests are as follows:

1. Women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above perceive obtaining a doctorate as a more successful strategy than women in a metro status of 9,999 or below.
2. Women employed in a metro status of 9,999 or below perceive preparing and effective resume as a more successful strategy than women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above.

3. Women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above perceive developing political expertise as a more successful strategy than women in a metropolitan status of 9,999 or below.

Based on these findings, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Three states that there is no significant differences on barriers and strategies among women superintendents 49 or below and 50 or over. To test the null hypothesis, t-tests were completed. The following is the result of the t-tests.

1. Women 49 or below perceive enlisting a mentor as more of a successful strategy than do women 50 or above.

Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Four states that there is no significant differences on barriers and strategies among women superintendents in their present position less than a year, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 8 years, or 9 or more years. T-tests were conducted to test the null hypothesis.

The following are the results of the t-tests.

1. Women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years perceive enlisting a mentor as a more successful strategy than women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years.

2. Women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years perceive
developing a strong self concept as a more successful strategy than women who have been in their current position for less than 5 years.

Based on these findings, the null hypothesis was rejected.

In addition to the survey questionnaire, respondents were given an opportunity to write in any additional strategies that they perceived as successful (See Appendix G). Seventy-nine or 22% of the women superintendents responded to this portion of the survey. The following are additional strategies listed by women superintendents that are not in the survey questionnaire: persistence, demonstrated success in other jobs, developing an expertise, learning conflict management strategies, developing oral and written communication skills, developing relationships with headhunters, willingness to work long hours, developing a leadership style, developing personal relations skills, having courage, having a clear vision, taking risks, and gaining experience.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study have implications for women aspiring to the superintendency. Current women superintendents in this study perceived eighteen of the twenty-one strategies as highly successful. Women who plan to pursue a superintendency career can use these strategies to obtain the superintendency.

Women aspirants need to obtain the support of their family since 52.8% of the women superintendents responding to the questionnaire listed this as a successful strategy. Blanche (1996) stated that the roles that men and women play must change to accommodate the needs of women if they are to successfully attain the superintendency. Society as a whole needs to examine their perception of women and their abilities.
Developing a strong self-concept was a strategy listed as highly successful by 56.8% of the women superintendents responding to the questionnaire. Aspiring women can develop self-confidence and a strong self-concept by being prepared, qualified, and certified. Women should seek out university and school district programs which help them enhance their skills. More states should adopt the methods of the California Department of Education which has established a California School Leadership Academy. If an aspiring woman’s district does not offer such a program, she should investigate other options through other districts, states, and agencies.

Like the previous two strategies discussed, the other 16 successful strategies should be employed by aspiring women. Each individual aspirant would need to examine her goals and opportunities to determine the correct course of action.

The findings of this study also show that women strongly view the use of affirmative action and Title IX as not a successful strategy. Although the review of literature has shown that historically Title IX had a great impact on women, the women in this survey did not view it in a favorable light. Further study into the effect of affirmative action and Title IX on women aspirants, women superintendents, and local school boards needs to be examined.

The findings of this study also show that different groups of women perceive different barriers as major. T-tests results showed that women in metro status of 9,999 or below perceive doubt by those in a hiring position of women long term career commitment and gender bias in the screening and selection process as more of a barrier than women employed in a metro status of 10,000 or above. The implications of these
findings are that women in a small metro area perceive that they face more major barriers than do women in a larger metropolitan area. However, the literature and this study show that the average woman superintendent is employed in a school district of 2,500 or less. Although women in smaller districts perceive barriers as being greater, they are more likely to be employed by that district. Further study needs to be conducted on the differences for women in small districts as opposed to larger districts.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Further Study

The findings showed that the average profile of a woman superintendent is consistent with past research studies. The findings also showed that women face barriers in their pursuit of the superintendency and have used successful strategies to overcome these barriers. The following are recommendations for further research in this area:

1. A study of the barriers and strategies used by men aspiring to the superintendency needs to be conducted and compared to aspiring women.
2. A study of administrative women in other fields such as business, medicine, and sciences should be conducted and compared to the field of education.
3. A nationwide study of aspiring women superintendents perceptions of barriers and strategies should be conducted and compared to current women superintendents.
4. A study of the differences in perceived barriers and successful strategies among difference states, regions and population areas should be conducted.

5. A study of the effects of affirmative action and Title IX on women superintendents and aspiring women superintendents should be conducted.

6. A study of the available training programs provided by the school districts and universities to assess how they address the needs of women should be conducted.

7. A study of the perspective of the school boards and selection committees who interview women should be conducted.

**Recommendations For Women Superintendents**

The following recommendations are for aspiring women superintendents:

1. Examine the barriers that exist and be aware of the problems that they may cause.

2. Examine the successful strategies used by current women superintendents and employ those that can be useful.

3. Set career goals and use the successful strategies to obtain those goals.

The following practical recommendations made by Swiss (1996) for individual women to overcome are consistent with the findings of this study:

1) Educate yourself first. Then educate your workplace on concrete strategies to remedy the unequal treatment of women.

2) Formulate a plan around facts that are indisputable. Management will always react more favorably to a plan than to a problem.
3) Focus on the solution, not the problem.

4) Establish measurable goals for collective efforts in women’s organizations and in professional networks.

5) Repeat your message at every opportunity.

6) Adopt the role model strategy by reaching out to women in less senior jobs.

7) Establish links to community groups and to young girls and women who will enter the workforce next.

8) Initiate from the bottom up what is not happening from the top down. Find new points of entry to effect change (pgs. 166 - 167).

Concluding Statements

This study showed that women perceive that they experience certain barriers in their pursuit of the superintendency. They also perceive that there are several highly successful strategies to overcome these barriers. The findings of this study also showed that different groups of women perceive different barriers as major and different strategies as successful.

These findings imply that although there are barriers, if women employ certain strategies they can be successful in their goals. Based on the findings of this study, women need to be encouraged to seek positions. Grady & O’Connell (1993) cited the following groups that should be used to encourage women: family, peers, colleagues, professional organizations and associations, school board members, state department officials, and college/university preparation training programs.
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE ON PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES IMPACTING ON WOMEN SECURING THE SUPERINTENDENCY
Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency

I. BIOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please circle the most appropriate answer.

1. Age
   a. Under 25 years
   b. 25 - 29
   c. 30 - 39
   d. 40 - 49
   e. 50 - 59
   f. 60 or over

2. Marital Status
   a. Single
   b. Married
   c. Widowed
   d. Divorced or Separated

3. Number of Children in School (K-12)
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3
   e. 4 or more

4. Age of Youngest Child
   a. no children
   b. under 5 years
   c. 5 - 12
   d. 13 - 19

5. Highest Degree Earned
   a. Bachelor's
   b. Master's
   c. Doctorate

6. Racial/Ethnic Origin
   a. American Indian/Alaskan Native
   b. Asian or Pacific Islander
   c. Hispanic
   d. Black, not Hispanic origin
   e. White, not Hispanic Origin

7. Extended family in immediate area?
   a. yes
   b. no

8. Number of Students in District
   a. 1 - 299
   b. 300 - 599
   c. 600 - 999
   d. 1,000 - 2,999
   e. 3,000 - 4,999
   f. 5,000 - 9,999
   g. 10,000 - 24,999
   h. 25,000 - 49,000
   i. 50,000 or more

9. Metro Status Where Employed
   a. Rural (under 2,500 pop)
   (2,500 - 9,999 pop)
   b. Town or small city
   (10,000 - 99,999)
   c. Suburb
   (100,000 or more)
   d. Urban center or large city

10. Number of Years in Present Position
    a. Less than a year
    b. 1 - 4 years
    c. 5 - 8 years
    d. 9 or more

11. Longest Superintendency Held
    a. Less than a year
    b. 1 - 4 years
    c. 5 - 8 years
    d. 9 or more

12. Number of Superintendencies Held Including Present One
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5 or more
13. Age at First Superintendency
   a. Under 25 years
   b. 25 - 29
   c. 30 - 39
   d. 40 - 49
   e. 50 - 59
   f. 60 or over

14. List all positions you have held beginning with your first position after teaching.

II. PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS

Please circle the number on the scale that best describes your perception of the possible barrier that women must contend with when attempting to secure the superintendency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not a Major Barrier</th>
<th>A Major Barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Conflicting demands of career and family.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The belief that women do not make good administrators.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Inappropriate career path experiences.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Childhood socialization to “proper” roles for men and women.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The predominance of male candidates for administrative positions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Lack of a mentor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Doubt by those in a hiring position of women’s long term career commitment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Gender bias in the screening and selection process.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network”.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
27. Lack of acceptance by male administrators and staff.

28. Lack of acceptance by female administrators and staff.

29. Lack of political "know-how".

30. Lack of motivation to compete for top jobs.

31. The belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions.

32. Lack of a strong women's network similar to the "Good Old Boy Network".

33. Covert sex discrimination.

34. Overt sex discrimination.

35. Potential colleagues' insubordination in working for a female boss.

Please cite other barriers that you perceive to impact on women securing the superintendency.

III. PERCEPTION OF STRATEGIES

Please circle the number on the scale that best represents your perception of each strategy as it relates to women securing the superintendency.

36. Increasing visibility in professional circles.

37. Obtaining a doctorate.

38. Formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals.

39. Preparing an effective resume.

40. Utilizing a women's network similar to the "Good Old Boy Network".

41. Enhancing interviewing skills.
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Gaining access to community power groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Enlisting a mentor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Obtaining the support of family.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Developing a strong self-concept.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Attending workshops to improve professional skills.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Invoking affirmative action and Title IX.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Increasing flexibility to relocate.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Knowing the job description of position for which applying.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Adopting a female role model.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Developing political “know-how”.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please cite other strategies that you perceive to be successful to women in securing the superintendency.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time and effort in completing this survey.
APPENDIX B: WRITTEN PERMISSION
Consent Form for Use of Questionnaire

I, Dr. Betty Jane Dulac, hereby give my consent to Deanna Anderson, a doctoral student at Louisiana Tech University, to use all or partial contents of my doctoral dissertation’s questionnaire. I understand I will receive a copy of the results upon completion of the study.

Betty J. Dulac
Signature

10/1/97
Date
APPENDIX C: PILOT STUDY COVER LETTER
Dear School Superintendent:

I am in the process of completing a doctoral dissertation at Louisiana Tech University. The main purpose of the research study is to identify the personal and professional characteristics and perceptions of barriers and strategies to attaining the superintendency for women. Nationwide the percentage of women superintendents is relatively small. This study will serve as a resource for women aspiring to the superintendency and for those concerned with women's advancement in school administration.

Through a search conducted by Market Data Source, your name was selected to be a participant in a pilot study. Your contribution to this study would be invaluable to its success. May I enlist your participation? Responses will remain anonymous and confidential. All surveys will be destroyed upon completion of this study. Return envelopes, which will be coded to record response rates, will be destroyed upon receipt.

Could you please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by November 21st. Please feel free to make any notations in the margins which you feel will make the survey more valid and easier for participants to complete.

Thank you in advance for your participation and prompt response. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. My daytime number is (318) 257-4917 and my evening and weekend number is (318) 257-2983. My email address is us44428@vm.cc.latech.edu

Sincerely,

Deanna Anderson

Enclosure
APPENDIX D: STUDY COVER LETTER
January 5, 1998

Dear School Superintendent:

I am in the process of completing a doctoral dissertation at Louisiana Tech University. The main purpose of the research study is to identify the personal and professional characteristics and perceptions of barriers and strategies to attaining the superintendency for women. Nationwide the percentage of women superintendents is relatively small. This study will serve as a resource for women aspiring to the superintendency and for those concerned with women’s advancement in school administration.

Through a search conducted by Market Data Source, your name was selected to be a participant. Your contribution to this study would be invaluable to its success. May I enlist your participation? Responses will remain anonymous and confidential. All surveys will be destroyed upon completion of this study. Return envelopes, which will be coded to record response rates, will be destroyed upon receipt. Results of the study will be available upon request.

Could you please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by January 30th.

Thank you in advance for your participation and prompt response. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. My daytime number is (318) 257-4917 and my evening and weekend number is (318) 257-2983. My email address is us44428@vm.cc.latech.edu

Sincerely,

Deanna Anderson

Enclosure
APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM
HUMAN SUBJECTS CONSENT FORM
The following is a brief summary of the project in which you have been asked to participate. Please read this information before signing the statement below.

TITLE: Women and the superintendency: Personal and professional demographics and the perceptions of barriers and strategies used by women superintendents.

PURPOSE OF STUDY/PROJECT: To determine the personal and professional demographics of women superintendents, to determine women superintendents perceptions of barriers and to determine the strategies used by women superintendents.

PROCEDURES: Approximately 300 women superintendents will be randomly selected from a nationwide list and will be asked to voluntarily complete a questionnaire. Data will then be analyzed to determine the demographics, barriers and strategies.

INSTRUMENTS AND MEASURES TO INSURE PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY. The instrument used to collect data for this study will be questionnaire developed by Dr. Jane Dulac entitled The Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency. All collected information will be held confidential and only viewed by the researchers.

RISKS/ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS: There are no risks associated with participation in this study. There are no alternative treatments. Participants volunteer and complete a survey composed of the aforementioned instrument.

BENEFITS/COMPENSATION: None

I, ____________________________, attest with my signature that I have read and understood the description of the study, "Women and the superintendency: Personal and professional demographics and the perceptions of barriers and strategies used by women superintendents", and its purpose and methods. I understand that my participation in this research is strictly voluntary and my participation or refusal to participate in this study will not affect my relationship with Louisiana Tech University or my grades in any way. Further, I understand that I may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any questions without penalty. Upon completion of the study, I understand that the results will be freely available to me upon request. I understand that the results of my survey will be confidential, available only to the researcher, myself, or a legally appointed representative. I have not been requested to waive nor do I waive any of my rights related to participation in this study.

Signature of Participant Date

CONTACT INFORMATION: The researcher listed below may be reached to answer questions about the research, subjects’ rights, or related matters.
Deanna Anderson
P.O. Box 3054
Ruston, LA 71272
(318) 257-4917

The human subjects committee of Louisiana Tech University may also be contacted if a problem cannot be discussed with the researchers.
Dr. Mary Livingston 257-4315
Ms. Margaret Nolan 257-5075
Dr. Terry McConathy 257-2924
APPENDIX F: SECOND MAILING COVER LETTER
February 10, 1998

Dear School Superintendent,

A few weeks ago you should have received a questionnaire along with a request to participate in a study. If you recall, the purpose of the study is to identify the personal and professional characteristics and perceptions of barriers and strategies to attaining the superintendency for women.

Your participation is important to the success of this study. Your contribution to this study will be invaluable to its success. By taking a few minutes to respond to the questionnaire and returning it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope, you will be a resource for women aspiring to the superintendency. Return envelopes, which are coded for response rates, will be destroyed upon receipt. Responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

Please return the completed questionnaire by February 28th.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Deanna Anderson
Comments Added to Surveys
(reproduced as written by respondents)

Barriers

1. Many of the same barriers as men. A key is the ability and willingness to be bold, take risks, be persistent and deal with conflict. Lots of women say - It’s just not worth it. (They may be right!)

2. Those women who go the extremes - they change their haircut and dress to appear masculine or those who overdue their feminism. Just be who you are!

3. Women do not help other women to rise up the ladder of administration. Once they “make it”, they want to be part of the old boys’ network and forget where they came from.

4. A related barrier is the belief that women should receive less pay than men for the same job.

5. It’s “OK” to be an elementary (K-8) superintendent, but women “can’t handle” a high school (K-12) district.

6. I have a wonderful situation. The board has always been fair.

7. Many of the barriers that used to be “major” are diminished as more women move into top positions as superintendents and assistant superintendents, finance officers, principals, etc.

8. Women are perceived as having “little” or “no” business/finance sense. Men subordinates often think they know more on issues since they are men.

9. Women with a strict educational background need to round out their backgrounds with some courses in educational leadership, school finance and law, and organizational behavior. This will make a women more attractive to potential employers.

10. Lack of sense of balance in one’s life - generally revealed or perceived by others as “single-focused and driven.”

11. Ignorant school board members who believe they are knowledgeable.

12. Male school board members’ resistance to strong female image.
13. Rural areas are still archaic in beliefs about male dominance - even women board members seem to prefer men superintendent. The good ole boy system is alive and well.

14. Leadership style has an import in receiving a superintendency.

15. Relocating - husband and children. Idea that men are more able to handle crisis situations.

16. Male and sometimes female board members who believe we are without direction unless they give it to us.

17. Much of my experience was in alternative education - people thought I couldn’t handle “real” school stuff. I’d have to say (having gotten my superintendency at the age of 44) that I really didn’t encounter many barriers. I think energy and intelligence more than compensate when competing with the good ole boy network.

18. I think the more women try to make the above issues an issue, the more they meet with frustration. If they would just be a “person” instead of a “women”, they would not meet many barriers. Personally, I have not experienced any of the above barriers and have been recruited for all but one of my administrative positions.

19. Number of women administrators in the system (if “too many” may be a concern of interview committee - especially balance of superintendent and assistant superintendent. Whether previous superintendent was a women and the perception of her.

20. Inexperience and rejection of competitive environment. Inability to remain objective in the competitive environment.

21. In my experience barriers exist only when you allow them to. Men have been very accepting and have mentored me. Most of my staff have never worked for a female but quickly forget the gender as an issue.

22. Lack of technical knowledge in areas like facilities and transportation.

23. In our state there appears to be some regional issues regarding beliefs about success of women in superintendency. Farming areas don’t hire women.

24. Make-up of employing board of education - are there any (or have there been) women on the board? If ever a poor woman administrator - it is used to stereotype all women administrators so no others got employed because they had “one of them” before - but it doesn’t work the same if they ever had a poor male administrator.

25. Committed hard working women have no barriers. They must be willing to make the small scarifies as males.
26. I have experienced some of the above.

27. Women's desire to be in higher paying jobs with more status than superintendency.


29. Community acceptance to woman in the position. Male dominated board reaction.

30. For the most part there is no difference except because there are fewer women, women are not part of some network of support - it is lonelier at the top for women.


32. Lack of confidence of community especially small communities. Dominant roles of men in small community.

33. Political implications that discourage current administrators from moving - making openings.

34. Some boards of education will not hire or interview a woman.

35. Self-confidence, time commitment, out-of-town meetings, attending school activities evenings and weekends.

36. Fewer women as compared to men complete Ph.D. or other doctorate work. Having a doctorate is often a preferred qualification although it really does not guarantee good performance as a superintendent.

37. Major barriers are internal. Women do not see themselves as capable leaders and therefore often don't prepare themselves or make the sacrifices (e.g. relations) necessary to compete effectively.

38. Lack of support by upper level male administration as one is attempting to climb the administration career ladder. Lack of clear goals and an "action plan" for moving through the ranks.

39. Women who are minorities face a double challenge to proving their competency - gender and racial bias.

40. Probably tradition - seen as a man's job.

41. Individual board members with sexist views.
42. Lack of socialization at an early age of development which trains young girls and women in teaming and leadership.

43. I'm still in a small school district. I'll find out when I move on to a bigger school district!!

44. Perception of males as “leaders” in leadership roles and female “followers” in subordinate roles.

45. Pregnancies.

46. Color continues to be a major barrier.

47. Whether the woman can “handle” a large district without previous experience in a small district.

48. Focus on education aspects of position rather than on budget and political aspects of job.

49. Budget experiences.

50. I had a Board of Education member publicly state that “women shouldn’t be allowed to get Master’s degrees because they could become administrators”. My school district is very blue collar and the male blue collar perception and prejudices about women administrators is a real challenge.

51. I see so many really fine competent women superintendents who because of good self esteem know they can compete with men for top jobs. They are real inspirations to me. Attitude is everything! The cream shall rise.

52. Selection listed - pretty well covered. Women, I found tend not to want to create formal/informal socialization structures for fear of being even more ostracized by male counterparts. This posture seems to inhibit us in the mentoring/networking process.

53. Not effectively seeking/cultivating appropriate mentors; perceived “soft” or excessively harsh management styles; perception that women are not knowledgeable about transportation, maintenance, construction (typically viewed as male domains); women who either make gender an issue or are hesitant or unwilling to proactively and positively respond to boards who may have unspoken gender concerns.

54. I experienced age related problems at the beginning of my career.

55. A women who is perceived as a “strong” leader is seen differently than a man who is a “strong” leader. Men are “freer” to be non-assertive and participatory than women are - to get things done.
56. Women’s concern/need for approval. Women’s avoidance of conflict situations.

57. Courage!

58. Getting a search firm to present your application to boards.

59. The perception that when men are “tough” and women are “bitchy”.

60. For me, it was strictly because of commitment to raising my children. I did not even try for administration positions until my youngest child was away at college due to the time commitment.

61. Lack of understanding the requirement of the position. Lack of training on how to work with a board of education.

62. Number 15 and 16 above say it all!

63. Not understanding the political realities of the position. Lack of preparation in budget development.

64. Family commitments and the inability to relocate are the most important in my view.

65. Lack of “knowing the system.” Lack of being willing to relocate and to work up through the ranks like the men do.

66. Personal desire to hold the position.

67. Female governing board members perceptions questioning women’s ability.

68. Standard career path here - basketball coach, high school principal, superintendent.


70. Barriers are still there - but what a role to play to get there. My impression as a teacher and administrator is regret at what happens when they get there. By playing the old-boy circuit game they seem to me to lose their depth and empathy and sincere care for students and teachers. Sometimes they are worse at power and social manipulation and game playing than male superintendents.

71. Belief that women are weaker than men. Lack of experience working with female boss. Girls can’t do finance, facilities, and transportation.
Strategies

1. Persistence - go for it; stick to it. You have to network politically, be visible, open thought. An honest, politically astute person sounds impossible but it's not.

2. Demonstrated success in other jobs. Knowing the right people male and female. Having the same values as the community in which you work. Know that you will spend 60 hours per week and enjoying it. My children are five and eight. My husband is supportive. There's a high divorce rate in school administration that crosses male and females.

3. Role models may be male or female. There should be a willingness to help other females attain administrative positions. Women should not feel threatened by other females.

4. Developing the ability to accept networking contacts (male or female) whenever and wherever they occur.

5. I have developed an “expertise”. In the last year, I’ve become the technology leader for my county. This has placed me in a very influential position to improve programs for students. It has also “highlighted” my work as a change agent and “risk taker”. Job and consultant opportunities have become very plentiful and people “head hunt” me instead of me begging for interviews. Quite a change! I’m also mentoring new superintendents.

6. Always do a good job. Be personable. Know latest research on education. Don’t be afraid to push the envelope on improving teaching and learning. Be student oriented!

7. Learn conflict management strategies. Improve speaking skills and presentation opportunities.

8. Consistency, fairness, strength, endurance and a strong devotion to family and to work. Knowing how to balance! Wisdom and prayer are most important. A woman can’t give the perception of being weaker - frightened or reluctant to jump into a nasty situation.

9. Women need to learn how to mentor other women and adopt protégés. I see too many woman take the viewpoint. “I had to fight hard to get where I am, other women should do the same.” We need to help our female colleagues by smoothing the way for them. I grew up in a home with three brothers and no sisters. I have always been one of the boys. This ease of being in the company of men as their equal has greatly helped me in my professional life.

10. Developing appropriate interview presence - strong, competent, capable without surrendering “femaleness” and without being very aggressive.
11. Gaining support of female educators in the school district.

12. Being an ex-coach. Ability to “survive” top position with little communication with men as support group.

13. Good work ethic, honest, sincere, dedicated and knowledgeable.

14. Developing a reputation as a leader. Learning to get along in a man’s world. Not too pushy, but not too soft.

15. #50 - You must hone your credentials!

16. Demonstrate real commitment to children first - show caring for people balance with ability to make a tough call. Be willing to leave a district with a glass ceiling.

17. You have to believe in yourself and be qualified for the position. Don’t make excuses.

18. Visibility in superintendent circles (associations, groups which include superintendents - particularly taking leadership role to be able to show skills). Having a male superintendent speak favorably about your skills (if he is respected).

19. Developing a sense of humor. Understanding and becoming comfortable with power and authority. Become aware and enhance the achievements of male leadership.

20. Actually, these are the same strategies that help males to succeed!

21. Oral and written communication skills must be excellent.

22. Experience record is the best strategy - make sure you’ve done the very best you can at all of your positions.

23. Develop positive relationship with “head hunters”. Make sure they know your skills and accomplishments.

24. A lot of this constitutes a list of “cop-outs” for women who don’t want to make a sacrifice and commitment to background and preparation.

25. Always act like a woman - don’t try to get into a man’s world acting like a man.

26. Ability to retain feminine qualities and being proud of same. A women’s worst enemy is more apt to be other women who are successful and the perception that one must imitate a man in order to succeed.
27. Same strategies that men use - there are no “quick tricks”. Don’t waste time looking for discrimination and barriers.

28. Look at and listen to successful administrators - what style and communication skills.

29. Successful experiences, strong interpersonal skills, deep and profound dedication to purpose. Sacrifice of personal needs (i.e. time, family, etc.).

30. Excelling in performing the work in current positions - let them know you “know your stuff”.

31. Willingness to work long hours. Using PR techniques such as article in newspaper whenever you have an achievement that can get your name and accomplishments out to the public.

32. Increased personal skills in dealing with difficulty people and the politics of the community.

33. Be good! Know you are good! Get a good match between your district’s beliefs and your own. Be prepared! Plan! Then the confidence is there for those hiring to trust you for the job!

34. Being different, Bold! More refined written and verbal skills. More refined interpersonal skills. Experience and or course work in budgeting, financing, school construction, facilities design a.k.a. “hard stuff”.

35. Must be strong but personable. Well-grounded.

36. Developing a personal leadership style with the ability to adjust as needed to reach goals.

37. Find search groups with good track record for women and placement in top slots.

38. Know school law, familiar with basic required policies, proper dress attire, friendly and caring, a good listener.

39. I did not interview for my position. The board contacted me. At the time, I had been in the system 26 years.

40. This list includes some activities which enhance preparation for the superintendency but don’t ensure success. For example, earning a doctorate, interviewing well, and research applicant district are all necessary but not sufficient. As in competitive sports the mental game is equally important to the technical game. As Langston Hughes put
it, "You have to dream it before you can be it." The trouble in my view is that too few women dare themselves to dream it.

41. Connect with head hunters, Keep in touch with them. Gain experience interacting with board members in different settings, both professional and social, if possible. Actively observe other successful superintendents.

42. Not a strategy, simply a characteristic: perseverance!

43. Maintain good health, regular physical exercise. Maintain balance in your life - regular routine of entertainment, social events, travel and spiritual guidance.

44. Develop PR/ media skills. Communication, visibility, speaking skills, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, vision for reform.

45. Love of one’s work for children. Ability to laugh at oneself and not to allow difficulties to wear you down.

46. Being successful is being successful - male or female it really doesn’t matter. Sometimes it’s an advantage being a woman, sometimes it’s not. Same with being a man!!

47. Professional attire; appropriate and professional resume; performance objectives; experience in traditional male areas of finance, discipline, staff job actions; successful speaker; honest and forthright; P.R. handouts form previous school.

48. Successful experience in principalships or high profile curriculum/special projects positions. Established track record.

49. Do not give up! Look for a match to your strengths, vision and personal leadership style.

50. Stick to the goals you set, evaluate progress, be flexible in expectations.

51. It is one thing to secure a position and another to keep it. Must have experience with highly visible and political positions before going for a superintendency. Must have commitment to position otherwise it will be too hard to withstand the "slings and arrows" you get daily.

52. Having the courage to go for it!

53. Being involved with highly respected male mentors who can provided recommendations and access the "old boy network" on your behalf. Learning strategies to effectively deal with stress.
54. Use the established “good old boys” network. I have several male mentors. Even though I mentor female colleagues, I always connect them with male mentors, too.

55. I have always viewed myself as an “administrator” not a “female administrator”. I don’t spend time and energy trying to convince prejudiced people not to be prejudiced. I let my actions speak for themselves.

56. Being tenacious in applying for many jobs not just a couple then giving up. Not to stay in a position too long assuming things will get better. Watch political trends like men do. My husband is a superintendent also. I have been able to view differences from a personal aspect.

57. Learning to be on the feet thinkers and doers, while being prepared/organized. Often, we do not voice our opinions/thoughts for fear of being perceived as too aggressive. I have a female mentor, but also have a male role model who seems to be concerned about women moving into the profession. He has been extremely helpful and supportive.

58. Have a clear vision. Seek a more creative level of partnership with men. Confidence not arrogance.

59. Know full expectations Board of Education for district you apply to. Do as many jobs as you can prior to superintendency i.e. assistant principal, principal, director, assistant superintendent. Each adds to knowledge of job “at the top”. Many times internships are “go-fer” jobs. I have seen people move from classroom to principal to superintendent and struggle because of lack of depth of knowledge of the job.

60. Become visible in managing leading opportunities. Create opportunities to lead. Learn to work with male colleagues in collegial, not sexual, friendly, humorous manner.

61. One needs to be willing to take risks in gaining opportunities and experience. One cannot play it safe (which we as women are taught to do). Women need to define their career path early on as men usually do.

62. Learning how to adapt the most successful strategies of male execs to the female situation. Learning not to “lead with” my gender. Developing real competencies and honing them to a higher level than my male counterparts.

63. Have a plan and high energy level. The ability to motivate employees.

64. Seek experience/training in facilities and finance.

65. If you are qualified for job this should give you as much of a chance as anything. Confidence and self concept.
66. Working with strong effective superintendents in a central office prior to acquiring a superintendency.

67. Being in “the right place” at “the right time”.

68. Gaining as much administrative experience as possible in a variety of district operations. Experience, experience, experience! Take on special projects and initiative which increase your visibility and enhance your skills.

69. Set a goal, begin work on it early, and don’t be afraid to be proactive. Let others in the organization know what you want.

70. Being willing to work hard within the “system” rather than a “women’s libber”. Establishing a solid reputation in current position. Use the “old boys’ network” by getting to know the “old boys”.

71. Learning how to deal with set backs and disappointments. Learning how to work with people who may not like you. Learning how to stay focus on issues at hand.

72. Be active, approachable, honest and never betray trust.

73. Doing a great job in your present position is the #1 criteria for gaining the position of superintendent for women.

74. Personal appearance issues.

75. Being able to work with men and get along well with them in a professional manner that is still friendly. The ability to make them feel comfortable with you.

76. Get involved with those who “know”. Be seen everywhere at all levels - local, state, etc.

77. Elect the “best” women educators - not the politicians. I have seen brilliant, caring and female educators make wonderful administrators with deep regard and love for teachers, students, and community. Superintendent jobs are seen by me often as self serving political job hoppers.

78. Look for a good match between district and candidate. Be secure enough to be yourself.

79. It is important to develop support of male colleagues and mentors as well as women.
REFERENCES


Dulac, B. J. (1992). *Women superintendents and school board presidents: Profiles, and perceptions of barriers and strategies that have an effect on women in attaining the superintendency*. UMI, Boston College.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Williams, R. H. & Willower, D. J. (1983). Female school superintendents: 
Perceptions of their work. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American 
Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.