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Terri Cabbell Benson
August, 2013

BREAKING THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING: PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS
AND SUCCESSES OF FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS IN TEXAS

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the
Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education
in
Professional Leadership

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Dedication

To God, whom all blessings flow, and to my family, whose support has allowed me to accomplish this endeavor. To my husband, Matt, your constant encouragement and support carried me through this process. To my mother, Linda Cabbell, you provided needed relief and care and stepped in as a parent and caregiver to my children. To my children, Sage and John Matthew, your constant encouragement and understanding gave me the strength to endure. This work would not exist without you all.

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The female superintendents who took the time to willingly participate in this study in an effort to assist more women in accessing the superintendency deserve special recognition. Thank you for leading the way for all women! I hope you will be proud of this work.

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Abstract

In Texas, women account for 75% of educators and 18% of superintendents of public school systems. The purpose of this study was to identify career pathways of six female Texas superintendents and their perceptions of barriers and successes in ascension to superintendency. Participants were six female Texas school superintendents who responded to a survey instrument and participated in a focus group process. Responses were categorized into themes and codes to illuminate participant perceptions of pathways, barriers, and successes in the superintendency. Results indicated that facilitating factors were family support, prior experience, and doctoral education. Participants claimed no overt barriers. However, identified inadvertent barriers were familial obligations and societal expectations of women. These results indicate the need for the identification of future leaders using the identified external and internal influences for women and then the utilization of mentorship and guidance along appropriate career pathways in order to facilitate career advancement.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2013, the institution of public education in the United States remains in the midst of reform. School finance and funding are under scrutiny, and the public is calling for change with respect to the manner in which schools are led instructionally and fiscally. A significant aspect of this reform relates to key facets of educational administration and current leadership theory. In recently published books (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2007), school leaders have been encouraged to adopt collaborative leadership styles and, in turn, thwart autocratic, top-down models.

Although the consideration of leadership style and current theory is critical to reform, an equally valid concern is the identification and analysis of the individuals who are leading America's schools. While educators are predominantly women, significantly fewer women than men currently are leading school systems. The human capital present within the ranks of education in women is a resource presently intact and available to assist in the present need for educational reform. Identified in this research investigation are the career pathways of those women who succeeded in obtaining the position of superintendent in the state of Texas, and personal perceptions of their respective barriers and successes in their respective paths to the superintendency.

Unsurprisingly, the political leadership of the world is dynamic and changing. Although in most countries, women still lag behind men in representation of leadership positions, the number of female political leaders is increasing. Currently, 19.6% of members of parliament are female and more women than ever are holding top leadership positions worldwide. German chancellor Angela Merkel is the de-facto leader of the

European Union. Dilma Rousseff and Christina Fernandez are the respective presidents of Brazil and Argentina, the world's fifth and eighth largest countries. Hillary Clinton is the Secretary of State for the United States. Lastly, Julia Gillard became the first female prime minister in Australia in July 2010 (Latu, Mast, Lammers, & Bombari, 2013).

On March 26, 2013, President Barack Obama named Julia Pierson, a 30 year veteran, as the Secret Service director. Pierson is the first female named to this position. On June 3, 2011, Rear Admiral Sandra Stosz assumed command of the United States Coast Guard Academy. Rear Admiral Stosz is the first female to hold this position in American history, and the only female to command a United States service academy.

Underrepresentation of women in leadership roles is not limited to the United States, or to the field of education. Rosin (2010) stated that women are equally represented in managerial and professional jobs for the first time in history at 51.4%. Yet, as the statistics documented as of 2012 "at Fortune 500 companies, women occupied only 16.6 percent of board seats, filled only 14.3 percent of executive offices, ranked only 8.1 percent as the top earners, and served as CEOs in only 3.8 percent of the cases" (Zhou, 2013, p. 12).

A United States Bureau of Labor Statistics report published in 2001 listed that women comprised 47% of all workers and earned 51% of all bachelor's degrees, 45% of all advanced degrees, and 42% of all doctoral degrees, and 43% of all professional degrees. Levitt (2010) documented the increase in education and training of women, and a large number of women in the professional workforce would suggest an increased number of women seeking placement into leadership roles within their respective professions. However, Latu et al. (2013) explained that without proper mentorship and

guidance, professional women find difficulty in being promoted to leadership positions due to the present masculine leadership stereotypes.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the female-male undergraduate student ratio shifted from 42:58 in 1970 to 57:43 in 2010. In 2010, women earned 57.4% of all bachelor's degrees, 62.6% of all master's degrees, and 53.3% of all doctoral degrees. In education, women completed 52% of the doctoral degrees in educational administration in the 2008-2009 academic year, and 64% of the doctoral degrees in the 2010-2011 academic year.

Of the master degrees in educational leadership conferred in 2010-2011, 65% were female versus 35% male, with women earning advanced degrees in educational leadership at a higher rate than their male counterparts. In essence, the underrepresentation of females among superintendents cannot be explained by a shortage of women with the appropriate education or training.

However, Grogan and Brunner (2005) determined that women led 18% of the nation's school districts, a gain of 4.8% in five years. Glass (2000) reported 13.2% of school districts had female superintendents, an increase from 6.6% since 1990. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) decennial study published in 2010 revealed that women comprised 24.1% of superintendencies nationwide. The AASA (2010) reported 29.8% of female representation in the superintendency of the smallest districts and 20.4% of the largest districts nationwide. Thus, although moving in a positive direction, the percentage of women holding top educational positions of leadership still lags behind men.

Glass (2000) determined that 82% of female superintendents indicated school board members found women less capable of being strong managerially, and 76% of female superintendents felt school boards viewed them as incapable of handling district finances. Recent research (Ceniga, 2008; Galloway, 2006; Hanson, 2010; Weatherly, 2010) indicated several factors contributing and inhibiting the successful pursuit of women to superintendency. Galloway (2006) identified the following barriers for women entering superintendency: gender bias, recruiting and hiring practices, women's decisions, career paths, and demands for the job. Ceniga (2008), Hanson (2010), and Weatherly (2010) listed networking capabilities and strong mentors as support structures required for women successfully obtaining the position of superintendent.

Considering the number of women in education actively pursuing leadership positions, the identification of the perceived barriers, successes, and career pathways of those women successfully ascending to the position of superintendent is a valid and significant research concern. Such study requires the discussion of women serving in the capacity of superintendent focusing on barriers for women, factors for success, the importance of mentoring and leadership style, and deliberate career pathways. Gains from this discourse on shared experiences of female superintendents will guide future decision-making and career facilitation in educational leadership.

Statement of the Problem

Grogan and Brunner (2005) contended women have not been seriously considered for the position of superintendent partly due to higher education preparation focused on the traditional male model of leadership. This type of leadership primarily focused on management, with less attention on instruction and community engagement, was listed by

Grogan and Brunner (2005) as more masculine thought versus feminine thought. Further, according to Zhou (2013), gender typing may occur in the workplace because most workplaces are compatible with a masculine view of leadership, and women must demonstrate their abilities more so than their male counterparts to prove their competence in leadership. This view described by Zhou (2013) is validated by Eagly and Karau (2002) role congruity theory.

The underrepresentation of women in educational leadership continues today. Specifically, this underrepresentation translates into a lack of women in key leadership and management roles. “Approximately 75 percent of full-time teachers were women in 2007-08” (Aud et al., 2012, p. 50), yet only 18% of public school superintendent positions are held by females in the United States (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). The Texas Education Directory lists approximately 18% of superintendents as women in Texas. Thus, the specific problem is an underrepresentation of women in the superintendency in the state of Texas, despite the fact that women comprising 75% of the educational positions (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Examining the perceptions of current female superintendents in the state of Texas should facilitate the expansion of the related body of literature in an effort to understand this phenomenon better.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the career paths and perceptions of successes and barriers shared by female superintendents in Texas. A qualitative research method using a phenomenological design guided this study to contribute to the body of literature an understanding of specific attributes and career pathways of female superintendents in the state of Texas. Through the use of a focus group interview, the

present study attempted to illuminate the personal perceptions of the superintendency as described by female superintendents in Texas. As a result, the documented descriptions of the phenomenon should facilitate understanding and guidance for future women who aspire to the superintendency.

Setting/Organizational Profile

The population for this study was six female superintendents in the state of Texas. This population was considered relevant on the basis of the recommendation of Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran (2009) of focus group consisting of four to six. More importantly, this group size is appropriate for research based on phenomenological research. In Texas, 1,035 independent school districts were present. Of the 1,035 districts, 189 districts have female superintendents. In essence, male superintendents lead 81.7% of districts in Texas. See Table 1-1.

Table 1-1.

Superintendents of Texas Independent School Districts

Texas Independent School Districts	Male	Female
1,035	846	189
100%	81.7%	18.3%

Research Design

A qualitative study using a phenomenological research design was used to understand the current perceptions of female superintendents in Texas. A phenomenological research design allows for the identification and illumination of the common meaning of some phenomenon as described by several individuals and in terms of their interpretations of their lived, personal experiences. The use of the phenomenological research design ensured the researcher focused on describing the collective commonalities that emerged as the participants described their personal processes of experiencing the phenomenon of the ascension of a female into the superintendency in Texas.

Phenomenological inquiry was used to conduct this research in an effort to quantify themes generated from participant responses through lived experiences to understand how ascension to the superintendency occurs from the perspective of the participants. Specifically, the purpose of this research was to determine the perceived barriers and successes of female superintendents and their respective career paths to the superintendency. The data produced from the study will add to the current body of literature.

Theoretical Framework/Significance

In the early 1980s, Gilligan (1982) challenged the theories of Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg as masculine theories lacking any semblance of a feminine perspective. According to Gilligan (1982), men think in terms of rules and justice and women are more inclined to think in terms of caring and relationships. Moreover, according to Gilligan (1982), a functional society should value both.

The theoretical framework for this study focuses on Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory as a method of understanding the lack of female representation in the superintendency.

A role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders proposes that perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to 2 forms of prejudice: (a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman.

(Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 573)

Eagly and Karau (2002) listed two divisions of personality attributes defined as communal and agentic.

Communal characteristics, which are ascribed more strongly to women, describe primarily a concern with the welfare of other people—for example, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle. In contrast, agentic characteristics, which are ascribed more strongly to men, describe primarily an assertive, controlling, and confident tendency—for example, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and prone to act as a leader. (p. 574)

Within the role congruity theory, successful female leaders are perceived negatively for displaying leadership attributes gender-norming for males. “A woman leader stimulates a different reaction than a male leader because of learned expectations, shaped and supported by the surrounding social structure, that invalidate and undercut women's attempts to be effective, influential, powerful” (Lips, 2009, para. 7). Eagly and

Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) determined the female gender role is more incongruent with traditional leadership theories focused on authoritative decision-making than the male gender role.

According to Sergiovanni (2007), management literature traditionally written by men for men valued individualism and competition, and defined success in a masculine way. “Maslow’s theory exalts self-actualization: *self* this, *self* that. Well as a group, women tend not to define success and achievement that way. They are more concerned with community and sharing” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. xii). Literature on management and leadership continues to be grounded in masculine personality attributes. Theories about the lack of representation of women in the position of superintendent identified in research include: (a) gender bias (Coleman, 2005; Galloway, 2006) against women in leadership roles; (b) lack of mentoring and professional networking (Shakeshaft, 1989; Weatherly, 2010) (c) personal career balance between home and work (Budde, 2010; Ceniga, 2008; Derrington & Sharratt, 2008); (d) effective recruiting and hiring practices by search firms and school boards (Van Tuyle & Watkins, 2009); and (e) self-perception (Coleman, 2005; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Shakeshaft, 1989).

The significance of the study is the contribution to the literature of perceptions of current female superintendents in relation to the ascension to the superintendency. The data presented will allow women, in the future, to aspire to the superintendency with better and more realistic expectations of likely inhibiting and facilitating experiences related to the ascension. In the present investigation, barriers were identified for women seeking leadership positions, along with factors for successful ascension to executive

positions. Career paths of different female superintendents are presented to provide a guide for future female leaders.

Research Questions

Research question one: To what do female superintendents in Texas attribute their success in ascending to the superintendency?

Research question two: What perceived barriers do female superintendents in Texas experience in their ascension?

Research question three: What career pathways did female superintendents in Texas follow in their ascension to the superintendency?

Definition of Terms

Administrator

This term refers to a position of authority to manage a campus. This position requires a state certificate. In 2013, the certificate in Texas is referred to as Mid-management.

Agentic

This term refers to “assertive, controlling, and confident tendency – for example, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and prone to act as a leader” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). Accordingly, this term is generally used to describe masculine leadership traits.

Career Pathway

This phrase is used to describe a compilation of successive positions an individual obtains while moving to a particular career goal (Tallerico, 2000).

Communal

Communal, in this study, is used to refer to “concern with the welfare of other people – for example, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). As such, this word is generally used to describe feminine leadership traits.

Elementary Assistant Principal/Principal

An elementary assistant principal/principal is the administrator of a school serving children ranging anywhere from grades prekindergarten through sixth.

External Barrier

This phrase is used to refer to an external obstacle preventing a person from obtaining a particular goal.

Glass Ceiling

Glass ceiling is a metaphor to describe invisible barriers through which women can see leadership positions, but cannot reach them. The term refers to barriers preventing women from obtaining leadership positions.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leader refers to a leadership style characterized by interaction, collaboration, and communication that is centralized around student academic performance.

Internal Barrier

This phrase refers to a self-imposed obstacle preventing a person from obtaining a particular goal.

Perception

In this study, perception refers to the personal views and beliefs of the six participating superintendents in Texas.

Secondary Assistant Principal/Principal

This phrase refers to an administrator of a campus serving students ranging anywhere from grades 7th through 12th.

Skillset

This word refers to a set of skills each person has within his/her ability and/or capacity, and has demonstrated that ability.

Social Capital

This phrase refers to a professional network and friendships with colleagues (Brown, 2010).

Superintendent

A superintendent is the chief executive officer of a school district. This position requires a superintendent certificate from the state of Texas.

Underrepresentation

In this study, the experience of a significant number of people within a group is not represented proportionally within a particular job.

Assumptions

This study includes the following assumptions:

1. All participating superintendents will answer truthfully and without bias.
2. The participating superintendents understand the researcher's terminology of investigating barriers and successes to the superintendency.

3. The participating superintendents understand the definition of career path for this purpose of this study.

Limitations

Several limitations of the study were identified:

1. The study was limited to current women superintendents in Texas who agreed to participate. The results may differ in different parts of the United States and/or internationally.
2. This study was limited to superintendents of independent public school districts in Texas. Private, for profit, and parochial superintendents were not represented.
3. The participating superintendents supervise districts ranging from 4,000 students to over 60,000 students.
4. Results of the study only pertain to the participating female superintendents in Texas.
5. Participants through participating in the focus group may identify with an acceptable response by the group, instead of their own response. Responses may modify data and perceptions.
6. The recommended focus group is limited four to six participants, leading to the small sample size of participants and responses.
7. The focus group only occurred over a 1 ½ hour time period.
8. The gender of the researcher might have contributed to a biased effect in the data collection and analysis of the study.

Organization of the Study

A qualitative approach using a phenomenological research design was used to conduct this study. A focus group of six participating female superintendents in Texas was utilized using an interview protocol. The focus group process was audio-recorded, and the recording was transcribed into a word processor. The transcription of the focus group was uploaded into qualitative analysis software, (Atlas.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, Version 7), to be coded and analyzed.

This study is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction to the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research design, theoretical framework, research questions, definition of terms, assumptions of the researcher, and limitations of the research.

Chapter 2 consists of the review of current literature regarding the subject matter presented in the study. The chapter introduces the historical overview and a detailed theoretical framework. Research on barriers for women entering the superintendency is discussed at length, as well as research on other impacting factors for women entering the superintendency. Research on documented career paths of successful female superintendents also is addressed. Chapter 3 presents the methodology the utilized to conduct the study. Further, the justification for the use of a qualitative research study using a phenomenological design is discussed. Details regarding the setting, subjects, procedures, and instruments are presented.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the analysis of the focus group interview and demographic questionnaire. Participant profiles are listed, as well as the result of the coding of the transcribed interview data analysis. Responses to the research questions are

presented at the end of this chapter. Chapter 5 is the conclusion and an overview of the study, and a discussion of the results. The researcher's interpretation of the responses for the research questions is presented. Implications of the study for school leaders and for further study are listed.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The number of female superintendents of schools is substantially lower than the number of male superintendents of schools. This fact raises the question of a glass ceiling existing in education where the staffs are predominantly female. Women comprise the majority of educators worldwide (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tyack & Hansot, 1982), and contain a wealth of knowledge that remains limited to the classroom and campus. The concern of underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is present throughout the world within education.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the female-male undergraduate student ratio moved from 42:58 in 1970 to 57:43 in 2010. In 2010, women earned 57.4% of all bachelor's degrees, 62.6% of all master's degrees, and 53.3% of all doctoral degrees. In education, women completed 52% of the doctoral degrees in educational administration in the 2008-2009 academic year, and 64% of the doctoral degrees in the 2010-2011 academic year. See Figure 2-1.

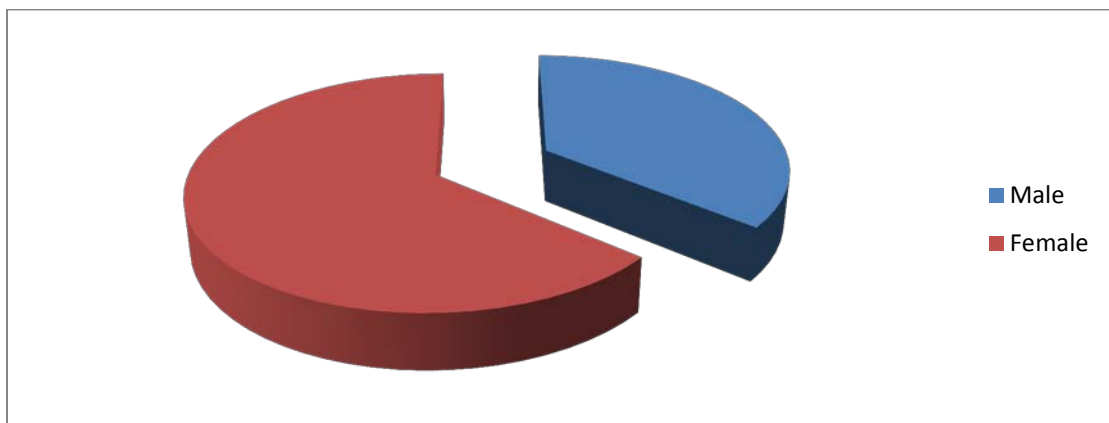


Figure 2-1. Doctorate degrees in educational administration: 2010-2011. Source. Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS).

Of the master degrees in educational leadership conferred in 2010-2011, 65% were female versus 35% male. With women earning advanced degrees in educational leadership at a higher rate than their male counterparts, the underrepresentation of females among superintendents cannot be explained by a shortage of women with the appropriate education or training.

Kaparou and Bush (2007) determined that in spite of recent legislation promoting women's rights in Greece, the distribution of management posts within education strongly favor men. In 2002, women occupied 63% of the teaching positions in Greece, but only 28% of the principalships. Kaparou and Bush (2007) showed "some of the principals experienced covert discrimination in the workplace. Men were sometimes reluctant to accept the authority of women principals. Similarly, male principals did not always treat women principals as equals" (p. 235). Examples of women dominating teaching roles, but not administrative roles can be found in most countries throughout the world. See Tables 2-1 and 2-2 for statistics on women in education.

Table 2-1

Percentage of Female Teachers in Selected Countries

Countries	Percentage of Teachers who are Female
Brazil	91% of primary, 67% of secondary
Central Asia	90% of primary, 71% of secondary
New Zealand	84% of primary, 62% of secondary
Sweden	81% of primary, 59% of secondary
United Kingdom	87% of teachers
United States of America	87% of primary, 61% of secondary

Source: UNESCO 2010.

Table 2-2

Women in Teaching-related Professions, Canada, 1996 and 2006

Profession	1996	2006
	Women Percentage	
Teachers at the secondary, primary and preschool levels and guidance counselors	68.7	73.6
Teachers at the secondary level	50.6	57.3
Teachers at the primary and preschool levels	81.2	83.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

The general problem is a lack of female representation in leadership and management roles. “Internationally the teaching profession tends to be numerically dominated by women, but in most countries, women do not occupy a commensurate proportion of senior leadership and management roles” (Coleman, 2005, p. 3).

Nationally, women hold at least 70% of the teaching positions and 41% of the principal positions.

The percentage of female elementary principals in the United States increased from 52 to 59 between the years of 2000 to 2008. The number of secondary female principals increased from 22% to 29% in the same years (Aud et al., 2012, p. 52). As stated earlier, 18% of public school superintendent positions are held by females in the United States in 2005 (Grogan & Brunner, 2005), and the number has increased slightly to 24.1% as reported in 2010 by AASA.

In the present study, the specific concern is female representation in the superintendency in the state of Texas. In 2013, women comprised 18% of superintendent positions of public independent school districts in Texas. The purpose of this study is to identify the career paths and perceptions of successes and barriers as described by female superintendents in Texas. A qualitative, phenomenological research design using a demographic questionnaire with themes clarified using a focus group interview guided this study in order to contribute to the body of literature an understanding of specific attributes of female superintendents in the state of Texas. A selection of six female superintendents in the state of Texas acted as participants in this study.

The review of current literature revealed several levels of explanation to the discrepancy of representation of women in superintendency. The literature produced a range of positive factors to female leadership, as well as negative factors. Focused upon in this investigation was a discussion of women in the superintendency, factors for success, perceptions of barriers, and deliberate career paths.

Historical Overview

During the expansion of the United States of America, public school thought, structure, and creation was formed out of the missionary field (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Until the late 18th Century, men conducted all teaching due to the prevailing societal culture and denied educational opportunity afforded to women. Toward the end of the Colonial period, women were allowed to teach boys and girls between the ages of 4 years old and 7 years old basic academic skills, such as letter recognition (Shakeshaft, 1989). By the 1830s, industrialization created demand for positions with higher income, and many men left the field of education. “Between 1840 and 1860, the percentage of male teachers in Massachusetts dropped from 60% to 14% and school boards were left with a labor shortage” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 24). The flight of men from teaching positions, and the increased population of students left school boards in a position to allow women to enter the field of teaching. However, women only received a percentage of financial support compared to male counterparts (Shakeshaft, 1989).

As women entered the field of education in response to the shortage, certain parameters were created. In 1903, the New York Board of Education adopted a bylaw prohibiting married women from teaching, unless their husbands were deemed mentally or physically incapable of earning a living or their husbands deserted them for no less than a year. During the depression, local legislation was passed barring married women from educational positions to create opportunities to meet the financial needs of men to support their families (Shakeshaft, 1989).

As populations continued to grow in schools, teachers were unable to keep up with both educational and administrative responsibilities. The position of administrator

was created to meet this need. As schools were adapted from one-room classrooms to large-scale business organizations, the need for business administrators arose. Male teachers administratively took charge of schools, and “women were looked to as the ideal subordinate” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 31).

Tyack and Hansot (1982) explained when women first began replacing men as teachers they were valued because female teachers were more nurturing toward young children, and cheaper regarding compensation. “Men praised female teachers because they were willing to work according to the dictates of their superiors and would require little direct supervision because they bowed to male authority” (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 183). This behavior was a sharp contrast to former school masters who were less compliant, and demanded autonomy from the newly appointed superintendents.

Brunner and Grogan (2007) explained this belief system as gendered roles accepted within the culture of education. The construction of the stereotypical roles in education described by Brunner and Grogan (2007) explained the movement from teaching into educational administration as one representing a move from a feminized culture into a masculinized culture. This model of educational systems continued, and henceforth the battle for equality in education began.

The fight for equality for women, termed Women’s Suffrage, was won in 1920 with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The 19th Amendment granted women in the United States the right to vote. Shakeshaft (1989) reported that by 1910 women could vote in school elections in 24 states. With county and state superintendencies elected by popular vote, women held high positions within education. Tyack and Hansot (1982) described that women were favored as

superintendents when elected by the public, but when political changes occurred and the position became one of appointment by local school boards, the number of women fell drastically.

With the increasing number of publicly elected female superintendents, superintendent associations campaigned to have superintendents appointed versus elected to the position (Blount, 1998). After 1930, the number of women in the superintendency began to decrease as the district superintendent position gained power, and was dominated by men (Shakeshaft, 1989). The district superintendent position was appointed by a school board, instead of a public election. Superintendents tended to mirror the demographic characteristics of the school board that appointed them to the position: predominantly married, White, Protestant males (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

During World War II, an influx of women into administrative and teaching positions was encouraged as men left to fight in the war, and communities reversed previous hiring practices. Following World War II, previous practices were put back into place, and women were dismissed from their educational occupations to provide opportunities for men in effort to support their families. Men returning from the war were given the G.I. Bill to pay for higher education, allowing large numbers of men to attend college and receive advanced degrees (Blount, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1989).

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were important acts of legislation for women. Historically, women were paid less than men within the same occupation, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963 made this action illegal. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended discrimination based on religion, race, color, and sex, and gave momentum to the women's rights movement which had slowed since the passing of the

19th amendment in 1920. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 had a significant impact on women in the workplace by prohibiting gender discrimination in any program or agency receiving federal funds. The Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) of 1974, created to promote educational equity to girls and women, provided funds to assist agencies and institutions in meeting the Title IX requirements. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution guaranteeing equal rights of men and women has not passed, and was most recently submitted by petition in 2012. The ERA passed the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives in 1972, but was 3 states short of ratification. Justice Scalia stated in an interview in 2011, "Certainly the Constitution does not require discrimination on the basis of sex. The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn't. Nobody ever thought that's what it meant. Nobody ever voted for that."

The Glass Ceiling Act of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 was constructed to prevent gender-based discrimination. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) cited discriminatory practices as the most significant barriers to those seeking advancement in senior managerial positions nationally.

To advance their careers, women often must break the glass ceiling (seemingly invisible discrimination about pay, position, and promotion), outrace the glass escalator (preferential treatment of males in female-concentrated occupations), and teeter on the glass cliff (being put in difficult leadership situations from which they're likely to fall. (Zhou, 2013, p. 12)

Drudy (2008) documented a highly feminized profession led to the diminished pay and status of that profession in most Western societies. "If it is the case that

numerical dominance of women in teaching, or any other profession, is associated with a decline in the status of that profession, this raises fundamental questions about the role and position of women in society” (Drudy, 2008, pp. 319-320). Zhou (2013) validated previous findings with research on female-concentrated jobs, such as nursing and education, which offered limited opportunities for workplace authority for both sexes. “Female small-business owners endure more difficulty securing startup funds, reaping profits, and making influential connections than male counterparts” (Zhou, 2013, p. 12). To begin to understand this current discrepancy of women in leadership, the reader must first understand theories of learning and behavior.

Century-old patterns of male dominance had solidified a number of beliefs about women that both men and women accepted and that limited women’s access to school administration. Negative attitudes toward women continued to be a major barrier. Women were thought to be constitutionally incapable of discipline and order, primarily because of their size and supposed lack of strength. (Shakeshaft, 1989, p.39)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study focuses on Eagly and Karau’s (2002) role congruity theory as a method of understanding the lack of female representation in superintendency. The role congruity theory addresses the documented prejudice toward female leaders when the leadership role is incongruent with the female gender role in one of two ways: perceiving men over women as having better leadership behaviors in leadership roles, and perceiving male type leadership traits as undesirable when women demonstrate them. Prejudice actually occurs when masculine leadership traits are

displayed by women, because of incongruence of the predominantly masculine behaviors with society's expectations of feminine behavior from women.

Eagly and Karau (2002) listed two divisions of personality attributes defined as communal and agentic. Communal characteristics are closely identified with societal expectations of women as primarily social justice and the overall concern of the welfare of other people. Examples of communal characteristics are kindness, sympathy, sensitivity, and collaborative problem-solving for the better of the group. Agentic characteristics are more closely identified with societal expectations of men as confident, controlling, assertive, dominant, independent, and self-sufficient.

Within the role congruity theory, successful female leaders are perceived negatively for displaying leadership attributes gender-norming for males. "A woman leader stimulates a different reaction than a male leader because of learned expectations, shaped and supported by the surrounding social structure, that invalidate and undercut women's attempts to be effective, influential, powerful" (Lips, 2009, para. 7). Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) determined the female gender role is more incongruent with traditional leadership theories focused on authoritative decision-making than the male gender role.

Professions led predominantly by men, where leadership theories are based from a masculine perspective, may constrain the leadership behaviors of women. An analysis of the role congruity theory demonstrated two findings: conforming to the gender role conflicts with the leadership role, and conforming to the leadership role conflicts with the gender role. "Particularly consequential for leadership style would be the second form of prejudice, that is, the negative reactions that women experience when they behave in a

clearly agentic style, especially if that style entails exerting control and dominance over others” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 786).

Grogan (2010) stated women educational leaders ascribed importance to relational leadership, social justice, spiritual leadership, and balanced leadership between work and home. This contradicts the traditional textbook leadership explanations that many educators received 20 years ago describing the authoritative, top-down model of leadership (Grogan, 2010). “Women are less likely than men to be associated with leadership, and the awareness of the stereotype may undermine women’s performance in leadership tasks” (Latu et al., 2013).

In the early 1980s, Gilligan (1982) challenged the theories of Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg as masculine theories lacking support of feminine perspective. According to Gilligan (1982), men think in terms of rules and justice and women are more inclined to think in terms of caring and relationships. Gilligan (1982) concluded a functional society should value both.

Sergiovanni (2007) listed management literature traditionally written by men for men valued individualism and competition, and defined success in a masculine way. “Maslow’s theory exalts self-actualization: *self* this, *self* that. Well as a group, women tend not to define success and achievement that way. They are more concerned with community and sharing” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. xii). Literature on management and leadership continue to be grounded in masculine personality attributes. Strober and Tyack (1980) coined the paradigm that men manage and women teach.

Theories for the lack of representation of women in the position of superintendent are identified in research as: (a) gender bias against women in leadership roles (Budde,

2010; Galloway, 2006; Van Tuyle & Watkins, 2009); (b) lack of mentoring and professional networking (Hanson, 2010; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Sampson & Davenport, 2010); (c) personal career balance between home and work (Budde, 2010; Ceniga, 2008; Derrington & Sharratt, 2008); (d) effective recruiting and hiring practices by search firms and school boards (Galloway, 2006; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Van Tuyle & Watkins, 2009); and (e) self-perception (Coleman, 2005; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Shakeshaft, 1989). Societal roles of gender norms and behaviors factor in to the selection of women leaders, as well. However, the continued perceptions of the existence of this glass ceiling are based on the experiences of those women, which can be described under the Gestalt principle of the law of Pragnanz (Olson & Hergenhahn, 2009).

The law of Pragnanz establishes the Gestalt belief that humanity needs to understand the whole of events in their simplest forms. Women are physically created with weaker physical ability than men. In terms of leadership, society has chosen strength as a positive attribute in leaders, as suggested earlier by Eagly and Karau (2002) communal and agentic characteristics. This inherent predisposition encourages the perception of women as weaker. “Women were thought to be constitutionally incapable of discipline and order, primarily because of their size and supposed lack of strength” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 39).

Fels (2005) commented equal access to educational opportunity is available in most developed countries for men and women, but men are more likely to receive recognition for those skills as a social expectation. Babcock (2009) revealed women who assertively pursue their own ambitions are perceived negatively in the workplace. The perceptual phenomenon that exists is documented by research as recently as the last

decade by Weatherly (2011), Budde (2010), and Galloway (2006) in identifying barriers women must overcome for access to leadership positions.

Barriers for Women Entering Superintendency

Budde (2010) clarified women hold 70% of teaching positions across the nation, 41% of principal positions, but only 18% of superintendent positions. Additionally, Budde (2010) qualitatively investigated the reason Iowa ranks below the nation in representation of women in superintendency and examined the factors that influenced the decision for female administrators in Iowa to pursue superintendency. Galloway (2006) conducted a similar study using mixed methodology in Texas. Factors examined in both studies included: gender bias, personal career balance, networking and hiring practices, and self-perception.

Gender Concerns

Lumby and Coleman (2007) expressed the idea that gender is a factor in the marginalization of women with respect to access to leadership across time and boundaries. From the aspect of equal opportunity legislation and human resource best practice, women are encouraged to seek advancement. However, researchers have indicated feminine-dominated roles develop a lack of prestige and as a result a drop in compensation. In most countries, the majority of teaching positions are held by women, and the majority of higher paid administrative positions are held by men. Women hold the majority of elementary administrative positions, which society deems as feminine positions dealing with young children. Secondary administrative positions are dominated

by men and equate to higher pay with additional responsibilities compared to the elementary position dominated by women.

As previously mentioned, women continue to dominate teaching positions in the United States. The National Center of Education Statistics found that 84% of educators in 2011 were women. This percentage reflects an increase to 82% in 2005, from 74% in 1996, 71% in 1990, and 69% in 1986. See Figure 2.2.

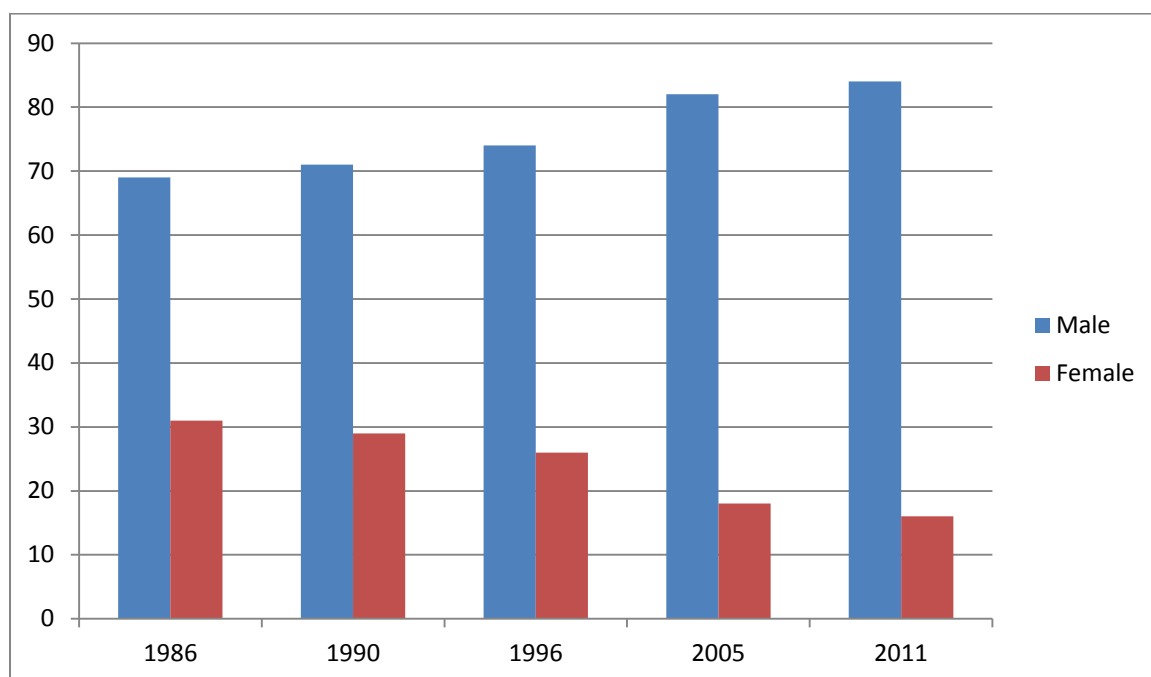


Figure 2.2. Percentage of teacher by gender in the United States, Source: National Center of Education Statistics.

Gender bias results when perceptions of a particular sex preclude the performance of the person, and judgments based on sex versus actual events become applicable in decision-making concerning promotion. Researchers determined gender bias by school boards and search firms as a leading barrier to women entering superintendency (Budde, 2010; Galloway, 2006). The researchers' interpretation of gender bias concurs with the theory of the Glass Ceiling. "Recent research suggests that incompatibility between the

historical expectations for superintendents and the historical expectations for women may, at least partially, explain why women have yet to access the superintendency in proportion to their numbers in education” (Newton, 2006, p. 25). Lemasters and Roach (2012) argued women lead differently than men based on social expectations, and those leadership attributes are viewed negatively by a male-dominated culture of leadership.

Bañuelos (2008) stated female superintendents experienced disrespect and their authority questioned regularly based on their gender versus their male counterparts were consistently treated with deference. Superintendent participants responded to the perpetuation of gender bias with a need for additional preparation from administrative programs on how to understand and react to gender bias. “Many women superintendents complained that they were not prepared for what happened to them because no one, not even their administrative programs, warned them” (Bañuelos, 2008, p. 30).

According to Van Tuyle and Watkins (2009), female superintendents experienced gender bias in three areas: accessing the superintendency, being viewed by school boards as equally capable as men, and established career pathways and networks leading to the superintendency. “Women leaders in male dominated contexts need to moderate aspects of their self-presentation such as dress and language so as to be feminine enough not to meet with rejection as women but not so feminine that they will be rejected as leaders” (Acker, 2010, p. 135). Bañuelos (2008) determined women tend to perpetuate gender bias by remaining silent when they experience it in the workplace.

Other researchers challenged the continued existence of gender bias in the search for superintendency. Female superintendent respondents indicated through surveys gender bias on behalf of school boards and search firms did not play a role in achieving

the position of superintendency, and other factors pervaded (Coleman, 2005; Hanson, 2010; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004). In England, secondary principals polled using open-ended questions to determine their experiences in leadership revealed a different perception. Coleman (2005) concluded a general belief that equity issues were no longer a problem, but findings from the surveys report 50% of women in secondary schools in England perceive gender discrimination in relation to promotion, and 70% of women believed they must demonstrate themselves as principals (10% gain from the 1990s).

Gammill and Vaughn (2011) found that the use of feminine gender expectations in leadership is essential for success in the superintendency, and that female superintendents face significantly more political problems compared to male superintendents due to gender expectations of constituents. The metaphor of a glass-ceiling for women in top leadership positions was challenged by Eagly and Carli (2009) who contended that women are in top executive positions and have broken the glass ceiling. Eagly and Carli (2009) argued that the issue is not the executive level barrier, but the barrier for women pursuing careers outside of female-dominated positions. The researchers contend that women do not advance at the same rate as men in positions dominated by men.

Barriers to women entering the field of education have changed over time. Researchers originally conducted a study in 1993 and replicated the study in 2007 using surveys. Derrington and Sharratt (2008) surveyed female superintendents or aspiring superintendents in the state of Washington in 1993, and using the same instrument surveyed women serving in the same capacity in 2007. The researchers concluded

women responding to the survey had the same barriers, but the priority shifted from gender discrimination (1993) to self-imposed barriers such as family and inability to relocate (2007). Van Tuyle and Watkins (2009) concurred that familial responsibilities contributed as a barrier to the superintendency.

Familial Obligation

Eagly and Carli (2009) stated family care responsibility is a reason some women do not pursue superintendency, and even with men taking more responsibility in the home than ever before, women are still expected to carry the majority of responsibility. Vair (2013) addressed the balance women must make between career and family due to the societal expectations placed on mothers and wives. The ideology of balance between career and family produced tension among women in the study.

Participation in one precludes full participation in the other because work assumes the support of home and family to maintain workers, and family structures delegate the responsibility of care to a wife and mother who is presumed to be fully available to do this. Working women, and working mothers especially, are faced with the task of managing their lives astride the division between these structures. (Vair, 2013, p. 155)

The ability to balance the superintendency and family has been documented as a barrier that causes female educational leaders to opt-out of the position due to the time constraints placed on the position of superintendent.

Shakeshaft (1989) presented that family obligation for a man is to work, to bring home a paycheck and financially support his family. Shakeshaft (1989) corroborated the findings of Vair (2013) stating work responsibilities for women are added to familial

responsibilities. Further, Shakeshaft (2013) contended that not taking on two jobs has nothing to do with the level of aspiration of some women, but the reality of the finite number of hours in a day and the limits of the human body. Hoff and Mitchell (2008) determined that 61.14% of women indicated that they waited until they finished certification and degree requirements, and for their children to be grown before entering administration compared to only 5.21% of men.

Additional obstacles to women pursuing superintendency were the distance from educating students while in the principalship and personal career balance (Budde, 2010; Ceniga, 2008; Derrington & Sharratt, 2008). Glass (2000) found time demands interfering with family life to be a valid reason some women are not interested in superintendency. Brunner and Kim (2010) discredited Glass (2000) citing only 11.1% of women responded family life and time constraints as a deterrent to the pursuit of superintendency.

Gilson (2008) found that educational leaders feel most problems they manage have little to do with education or helping children. Their surveys provided the following results: large amounts of time spent on management of the building and climate detracted from the 20% of administrative time spent on instructional leadership. However, the responding administrators believed the most important responsibility of a principal is to be the instructional leader. The time demands of community, school events, parents, and discipline hindered the availability of prioritizing instructional needs of students. This factor was listed as a barrier to women entering the superintendency.

Inability to Relocate

Women face the dilemma of relocation due to family responsibilities, and the possibility of disrupting a dual-income situation. The inability to relocate stands as a significant factor in a woman's opportunity to obtain a position as superintendent (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). In Maine, Hoff and Mitchell (2008) established that 66.5% of men reported they had moved to get an administrative job compared to 44.5% of women.

Forty-five percent of participants in a study conducted in Texas stated a significant barrier to superintendency for women is the lack of mobility of family members (Sampson & Davenport, 2010). Moreover, Sampson and Davenport (2010) confirmed similar findings in a Midwestern state in 2008, where researchers concluded 80.8% of female superintendent respondents stated an inability to relocate deterred their ability to obtain a position in superintendency (Montz & Wanat, 2008).

Styles (2010) reported 89.6% of respondents reported a lack of mobility of family members being the greatest barrier limiting administrative opportunities for women. Flexibility to relocate is a strategy recommended for those pursuing position of superintendency (Shakeshaft, 1989). Women must work harder, make a significant effort, and be willing to relocate to a geographic area more accepting of female leadership (Haack, 2010; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Styles, 2010).

Budde (2010) discovered a lack of willingness to relocate has hampered the career advancement of women. Styles (2010) documented the primary reason for lack of female representation in South Carolina superintendency was the lack of mobility for family members. Haack (2010) explained that moving was not an option for several female

superintendents as they aspired to move into the executive level position. Reasons found by Haack (2010) were the female superintendents did not want to move their family, or they were tied to a geographical location by their spouse's job.

Networking and Hiring Practices

Additional strategies recommended for candidates pursuing the superintendency are networking through community groups, increasing visibility in professional circles, and attending workshops to meet other professionals (Shakeshaft, 1989). Researchers determined barriers to the superintendency for women included lack of professional network, and exclusion from a male-dominated social network (Montz & Wanat, 2008; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Sharp et al., 2004). "Many of the respondents believed that it is important to develop strong professional relationships and to make time to actively network with other superintendents as well as build community relationships" (Sampson & Davenport, 2010, p. 152).

Hanson (2010) explained participation in professional networks influenced participants' ability to obtain a position of leadership. Montz and Wanat (2008) revealed 87.1% of survey respondents claimed a male-dominated social network continued to promote selection of men over women for the position of superintendent. Networking, demonstrated by researchers as a highly effective strategy for obtaining the position of superintendent, corroborates with the importance of recruiting/hiring practices. Eagly and Carli (2009) stated women lack the supportive networks of men, and the time to pursue networking opportunities places strain on women with families due to the necessity of networking outside of normal business hours.

Women have not been a consistent part of the different functions of men, such as fishing and hunting trips or the golf game, and suffer the exclusion of the network by virtue of being female (Lemasters & Roach, 2012). Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008) recommended women create networks for themselves that are developed and led by veteran and aspiring female leaders. The researchers noted the importance of particular skills to be addressed by the network of women to assist in future advancement. The skills listed by the researchers were confidence building, skill development, and the art of promoting one another by word of mouth.

Recruiting and hiring practices among search firms and school boards act as a deterrent for placement of women in superintendency (Galloway, 2006; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Van Tuyle & Watkins, 2009). Sampson and Davenport (2010) conducted a study on barriers for women in Texas seeking superintendency and 63.4% of participants surveyed stated school board reluctance to hire women was a significant factor. "Search firms predominantly staffed by retired male superintendents were viewed as limiting the opportunity for employment. When the recruiting group was governed and staffed exclusively by men, the perception was that there was discrimination toward women candidates" (Van Tuyle & Watkins, 2009, p. 141). Sampson and Davenport (2010) found the majority of school boards composed of men, and search firms led by retired or current superintendents that were predominantly men, skewed recruiting practices toward men into the superintendency.

Coleman (2005) reported selection panels in England appeared to prefer men in leadership positions, even though female applicants were more qualified. The panels existed of mostly men, and even female panelists expressed preference for male leaders.

Panels, search firms, and school boards are critically important to appointments to positions of leadership.

A study of a corporate organization revealed cultural competence affects the mentorship practice within an organization. A workplace survey given to supervisors and employees regarding employee development, organizational climate, and support guided findings for women and minorities in the workplace. Revealed from the survey was the managers' reluctance in providing feedback to those employees different in gender, race, or ethnicity out of concern of being misinterpreted. Women in this study stated they experienced exclusion from social and informational networks, and a lack of mentors and long-term career development within the organization (Borrego & Johnson, 2012).

Borrego and Johnson (2012) explained cultural competence assists in providing necessary support to grow and develop subordinates within an organization. Networking and mentoring are essential to the career development of others, and provide guidance through the web of unspoken acceptable behaviors toward promotional gains. Detailed information regarding situations from work is communicated through informal networks.

Brown (2010) stated the amount of time women must spend on attempting to balance work and home leaves little time to network in effort to gain social capital. The result in the study was those managers with more time spent networking moved faster up the career ladder than those who worked diligently, but could not add to their social capital. Eagly and Carli (2007) added social capital is more critical to advancement than traditional performance factors.

Self-perception

External barriers such as networking and gender bias are not the sole roadblocks for women pursuing superintendency. Internal barriers within women pose a threat to achieving positions of leadership, as well. “Internal barriers are those that can be overcome by individual change whereas external barriers require social and institutional change” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 82). Montz and Wanat (2008) documented that 58.1% of respondents revealed personal level of confidence limiting in superintendency selection within the Midwestern state, and 51% of respondents listed personal level of assertiveness.

Coleman (2005) conducted a qualitative study to investigate reasons women hold significantly fewer leadership positions in secondary education in England. Coleman (2005) listed age, domestic responsibilities, personal appearance, and lack of confidence as key factors that limited women from entering positions of secondary leadership in England. Additional findings were 50% of women responded they handle secondary leadership better than men, 20% of men responded they handle secondary leadership better than women. With barriers in place, women are obtaining the highest position within education based on specific influential factors. Ceniga (2008), Hanson (2010), and Weatherly (2010) listed support structures required for women successfully obtaining the position of superintendent.

Factors for Women Entering Superintendency

Galloway (2006), Ceniga (2008), Hanson (2010), and Weatherly (2010) indicated several factors to the successful pursuit of women to superintendency. Gender expectations of women as strong instructional leaders, high self-esteem, mentorship,

professional balance, and leadership style have been attributed to women entering the superintendency. The internal and external factors were discovered repeatedly in the literature.

Specific influences directly affected women's ability to achieve the position of superintendent. The internal factors were the balance of professional and personal lives, self-esteem, high level of internal motivation, and a deliberate career path. The external factors the author determined from the study were positive relationships with school board members, ability to handle and face self-imposed sex discrimination, a strong mentor, professional support from educational affiliations, and overall ability of being politically perceptive (Ceniga, 2008).

Instructional Leader

Sergiovanni (2007) stated the societal gender expectation is that men are leaders and women are teachers. This statement also substantiates the findings of Brunner and Grogan (2007) that lists a school board's dominant reason for hiring women and primary expectation for such decision is the need for an instructional leader (35% and 46% respectively), and the dominant reason for hiring men is personal characteristics, and instructional leadership tied with managerial leadership in school board expectations with 38%.

Women have been in the classroom for a longer period of time, and typically on average have more classroom experience than men (Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). This prior experience alluded to women taking more of an instructional focus in the position of superintendent. This experience provides reasoning for why school boards look for women in the superintendency as strong instructional leaders (Grogan & Brunner, 2005;

Newton, 2006). Female superintendent participants in Schiele (2012) commented that demonstrating instructional expertise is a necessity in being a candidate for the superintendency.

“The majority of women superintendents report that their boards hired them to be educational leaders rather than managers, and many women superintendents believe the most important reason they were hired was their ability to be instructional leaders” (Grogan & Brunner, 2005, p. 46). Edgehouse (2008) explained women’s backgrounds in curriculum and instruction along with the additional years spent in the classroom provides the perfect recipe for a superintendent focused on instructional improvement district-wide. The researchers determined school boards searching for superintendents found women as attractive candidates due to their strong backgrounds in curriculum and instruction.

Self-esteem and Internal Motivation

The internal factors for ascension to the superintendency listed by Shakeshaft (1989) were supported by research as recently as 2010. Researchers determined through participant responses that most common personal attributes for success in superintendency included hard work, drive, determination, and commitment (Hanson, 2010). Murphy (2009) listed an intrinsic motivation to seek out difficult and spirited opportunities for growth and exposure and enrollment in a doctoral program as a significant factor in obtaining a position as a superintendent.

Brown (2010) listed internal motivation and self-confidence as traits for successful leaders. Yet, according to Hoff and Mitchell (2008), with respect to deliberate career path, 41% of men reported their intent from the beginning of their careers to enter

administration versus 19% of women. These specific internal factors determine success as much as external factors.

Haack (2010) provided documentation of female superintendents stating the importance of specific attributes that enabled them to successfully enter the superintendency. Self-confident, focused, resilient, balanced, with good communication skills and positive attitude were essential characteristics for women aspiring for the superintendency. Interpersonal skills and the ability to work with different types of people were also listed by Haack (2010) as being essential strengths needed for ascension.

Mentorship

The importance of mentoring in a quest to superintendency has produced significant research in the last 20 years. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission recommended mentoring as an effective way of increasing the number of women in leadership positions. “Mentoring is especially important for women because they may not have access to career enhancing information. However, the mentoring provided by executive men for junior women may be interpreted as a social, rather than a business relationship” (Brown, 2010, p. 17). The concern of inappropriate relationships between men and women in the workplace may result in decreased mentoring of women.

Organizations with strong mentoring programs that assign mentors to women produce higher incomes and career satisfaction, and experience more women in leadership positions (Brown, 2010). Liswood (2010) contended that employees will thrive and production will increase when employees are given challenging assignments,

constructive feedback, and significant mentoring. Corporate organizations have built mentorship programs focused on growing leadership capacity within the organization.

Murphy (2009) analyzed the phenomenon of women attempting superintendency in spite of the documented obstacles and barriers, and concluded the respondents who aspired to be superintendents did so because of having a person of influence in their life to encourage them to pursue the position. Budde (2010) concluded female candidates with access to strong female role models and mentors were more likely to envision themselves in the superintendency. Further, Gibson (2006) determined that male mentors could not address certain issues with women leading to gender gaps in the mentoring relationships, and relatively low numbers of female mentors contributed to this gap.

Liswood (2010) addressed the gender barrier for mentorship by explaining how it is acceptable for men to meet younger men to dinner and drinks in a mentorship capacity to get to know them better, but these behaviors would seem inappropriate with a female mentee. Mentors are more comfortable interacting with others like themselves. However, with the small number of women in high level leadership positions, strain is placed on mentoring women.

Researchers repeatedly determined a significant barrier to the superintendency for women included lack of encouragement from influential sponsors (Sharp et al., 2004). Murphy's (2009) and Hanson's (2010) participants explained mentoring influenced their ability in obtaining a position of leadership. Women seeking superintendency must find a good mentor to find success in obtaining a position as a superintendent (Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Shakeshaft, 1989, Weatherly, 2010).

Budde (2010), Ceniga (2008), Hanson (2010), and Murphy (2009) all listed mentoring as a factor for women successfully attaining the position of superintendent. Weatherly (2010) determined the perception of the importance of types of mentoring functions for aspiring women superintendents in the state of Texas, and examined which mentoring functions they actually received, and explored the relationship between selected mentoring functions and women's entry time into their first superintendency. The purpose of the present study was to determine the mentoring components deemed necessary by current female superintendents in Texas.

Weatherly (2010) surveyed 140 female superintendents in Texas through email. Through the responses on the survey, Weatherly (2010) concluded aspiring female superintendents should seek to experience the mentoring functions of challenging assignments, friendship, role model, and acceptance. Also determined through this study was women mentored by other women with common backgrounds and similar experiences were successful in reaching higher positions in districts in Texas. The connection between effective mentoring and female leadership success is strong and supported through research. Researchers designate mentoring as one of the most effective strategies in successfully managing a school district as a superintendent (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Galloway, 2006; Weatherly, 2010).

Professional Balance

In addition to ensuring mentoring opportunities are available to women pursuing the executive leadership position, women had to exercise balance between professional and personal lives. Balance of the position of superintendent goes beyond personal and professional time commitments. Brown and Irby (2010) listed time constraints of the

superintendency forced female leaders to use personal time with family to keep their professional lives balanced. The time relaxing in restorative activities kept participants from feeling overwhelmed by leadership positions. The act of balancing time is not unique to women, nor is the importance of spending time with family.

Budde (2010) concluded female principals in Iowa analyzed the competing demands for their time in the areas of work and family, and felt the superintendency would complicate their lives and families. Budde (2010) found 52% of respondents claimed personal career balance was an issue. Researchers established women have problem-solved this complication with time and families by altering the roles of leadership. The co-principalship strategy was an effective method for those women struggling with time in an educational environment. Not addressed in this strategy were the time constraints of the superintendency.

Eckman and Kelber (2010) conducted a quantitative study to compare the job satisfaction of traditional principals versus co-principals, and investigated the substantial unease among school superintendents, educational scholars, and policy makers of an imminent leadership predicament. Through the review of the literature, the researchers summarized qualified educators are not applying for positions at a rate to meet the demand for principals, particularly for secondary schools, despite a large number of licensed and certified principals. This action directly affects the superintendency, in that the secondary principalship is a deliberate career position for many superintendents.

Eckman and Kelber (2010) determined through a role conflict questionnaire using a 9-item Likert-scale and job satisfaction survey that traditional principals reported more role conflict in personal lives than co-principals did, and co-principals reported higher

levels of job satisfaction than traditional principals did. The strategy was effective in meeting the predicament for women entering roles of increased leadership. The creation of newly defined roles allowed additional women to enter leadership positions, and further defined effective leadership styles needed in today's educational environment.

Grogan and Brunner (2005) documented women find ways to manage the responsibilities of family and executive leadership. "Many reported their spouses or partners were willing to take a more accommodating job and help out with the household, and 30 percent reported waiting until their children were older to pursue the superintendency" (p. 46). Edgehouse (2008) stated research with the female superintendents in Ohio allowed for successful ascension into the superintendency at a younger age than the national averages based on spousal support for family responsibilities. The researchers also found that successful female superintendents had partners that strongly supported them in familial responsibilities (Edgehouse, 2008; Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

Haack (2010) found that women aspiring to the superintendency expressed needing support from their spouses. The appropriate role for the husband to have as the spouse of the superintendent was another factor that aspiring superintendents considered. Support of the children and the ability to determine if professional and personal balance could be achieved was considered by superintendents, as well.

Leadership Style

Leadership styles utilized by women are also a consideration when understanding the pursuance of the superintendency. Superintendents investigated in Brunner (2000) explained a direct style of leadership was not acceptable from women, and leading in a

direct, decisive, assertive manner met with strong rebuke from community and board members. Superintendents investigated in Brunner (2000) listed embracing their feminism made them more powerful within the superintendency. Perhaps when occupying a role as thoroughly masculinized as the superintendency, women sense the importance of setting aside any ambiguity that could arise over their sexuality – that is, that they are indeed female – and, furthermore, that they fall into the category of the good, virtuous female (Brunner, 2000, p. 97).

Researchers determined different leadership styles are more effective when utilized in education (Burns & Martin, 2010; Campbell, 2010, Sergiovanni, 2007). In a recent study conducted by Johnson, Busch, and Slate (2008), the leadership behaviors of males trended toward “more directive and authoritative whereas females prefer leadership through suggestion accompanied by a strong democratic style in an agreeable and deferential manner” (p. 9). Johnson et al. (2008) determined male leaders had a stronger need for competition with defined rules, and women varied from competitive to service-oriented. “Males tend to be more authoritative than females whereas both of them prefer time to think about issues, even though males require more time than do women” (p. 2).

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) determined different leadership styles between male and female leaders. In their study, women performed higher in three transformational scales displaying motivation of the followership, having a brighter outlook on future goals, and attending to the individual needs of the followership. Of the three areas, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) related that women scored significantly higher than men did on individualized consideration for followers. A consideration for the reason women performed better than men in this study was listed by

researchers as women having to perform at higher standards to retain their leadership positions, and consideration of others as being a natural characteristic of a female gender role.

Brain research conducted by Ned Herrmann in the 1980s led to leadership research conducted at several universities regarding leadership qualities expressed in individuals. The leadership attributes were placed in four quadrants of the brain. Campbell (2010) discussed Hermann's brain quadrant research listing specific leadership attributes strongly aligned with feminine and masculine attributes. Campbell (2010) created a diagram to visualize the findings within Howard (2005) and conceptualized a visual to demonstrate leadership attributes aligned with Herrmann's brain quadrant research. See Figure 2-3.

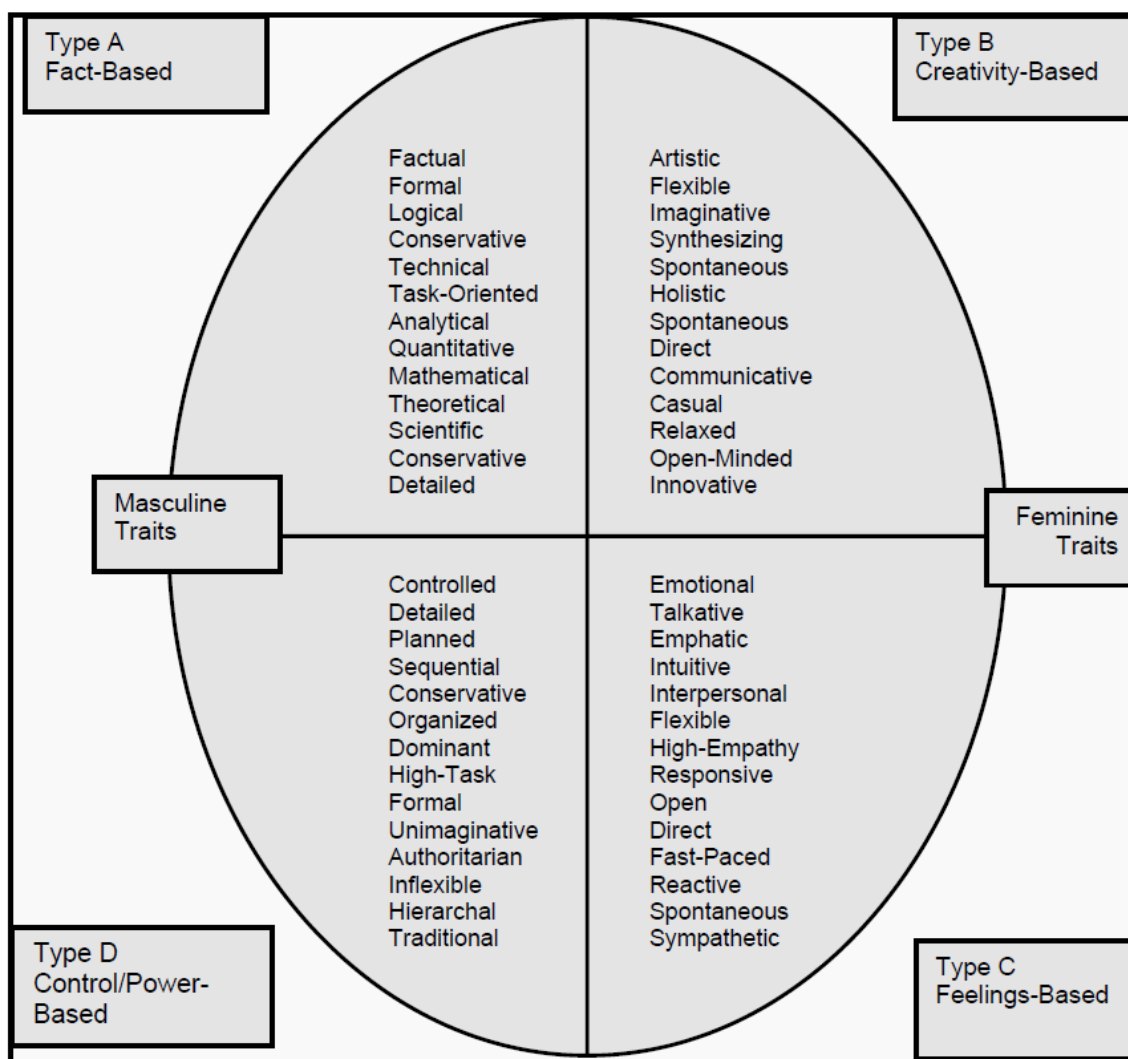


Figure 2-3. Ned Herrmann's Four Leadership Styles. Source: Campbell (2010).

Campbell (2010) listed transformational theory generally aligned with Type B category with some Type C, and authoritarian leadership style more closely aligned with Type D.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, invitational leadership, and synergistic leadership are theories generally used by women leaders compared to their male counterparts and have proven highly effective leadership styles within the academic environments (Burns

& Martin, 2010; Campbell, 2010). Transformational leadership, coined by James Macgregor Burns (1978), described leaders exhibiting collaborative methods and decision-making centered on growing the capacity of their followership. Brown (2010) explained transformational leaders are facilitators of change instead of directors, and provide intellectual stimulation, ownership, and accountability while genuinely considering followers' interests and concerns. "The transformational leader creates a new vision, visualizes the changed organization, and motivates people to make the vision become a reality" (Brown, 2010, p. 46).

Developing human capital by distributing responsibility and shared decision-making within the followership is a focus of transformational leadership. The transformational leadership model directly contrasts the top-down directive model, and provides opportunities for leadership within the ranks. Organizational members become inspired by the shared commitment with leadership, and the collaborative efforts increase productivity within the organization.

Campbell (2010) used principals in the state of Missouri to answer Likert-style scale questionnaires designed to gather information about their leadership approaches. Nineteen African-American females (12% of the total), 13 African-American males (8% of the total), 92 White females (57% of the total), and 36 White males (22% of the total) responded. The researcher determined African-American principals and female principals were more likely to exhibit transformational leadership qualities than their White and/or male counterparts.

Attributes of transformational leadership styles akin to feminine traits such as collaboration and sincerity to individuals is a substantial fact as 77% of educators are

female (Brunner & Kim, 2010). “The transformational leadership model is characterized by the use of collaborative and participative strategies rather than direct coordination and control” (Campbell, 2010, p. 28).

Invitational Leadership

Burns and Martin’s (2010) study participants consisted of 14 principals (7 female and 7 male) and 164 teachers. The researchers revealed a difference between the usages of invitational leadership qualities in effective schools versus less effective schools, and concluded no differences were present in effectiveness in schools based on the gender of the administrator. Burns and Martin (2010) determined through follow-up interviews with participants, teachers believed the invitational qualities of respect and trust were the most influential leadership qualities, and principals viewed trust as the most influencing factor.

The invitational leadership model is described as moving from a leadership mindset of control and dominance to focusing on cooperation and communication. Invitational leadership theory focuses on the followership, and is centered on the interactions between all people within the system. This leadership style was employed by some superintendents within Burns and Martin (2010).

Synergistic Leadership

With the majority of published leadership theory seemingly from a male perspective, the Synergistic Leadership Theory (SLT) provides a framework to examine and reflect on the feminine voice in educational leadership. Irby, Brown, Duffy, and Trautman (2002) introduced SLT as a response to the need of additional theory

incorporating the leadership styles of both men and women. The majority of leadership theory taught within educational administration focuses on leadership from a superintendency view dominated by men. “As long as theories taught are limited to male models of leadership, the female leader’s experiences will neither be valued nor will her voice be heard, rendering our understanding of leadership incomplete” (Irby et al., 2002, p. 307).

Deliberate addition of feminine leadership traits contraindicates prior theories that indirectly contributed to the discrimination of women leaders. Synergistic Leadership Theory incorporates masculine and feminine leadership attributes in four areas: belief systems, leadership behavior, external forces, and organizational structure (Irby et al., 2002). This framework for SLT provides leaders opportunities for reflection by auditing decision-making that is relational and interactive. Each key area within SLT relates and corresponds to the other areas.

Belief systems are the core of any leader’s decision-making, and directly impact leadership of organizations. Leadership behavior within SLT is a compilation of leadership traits from directive and autocratic, to caring and nurturant, from both a feminine and masculine perspective. External forces are the considerations outside the control of the organization such as geography, cultural and political climate, and government regulations. The fourth area of SLT is the organizational structure ranging from bureaucratic to professional learning organization (Irby et al., 2002).

The synergistic leadership theory does not exist as four separate areas, nor is the focus solely on the leader or the organization, but rather how all four areas interact. With feminine leadership traits and attributes alongside other predominant leadership theories

within SLT, female leaders have additional opportunity to lead districts successfully.

“Constant vigilance in the engagement of reflection on whether or not the four factors are harmonious or contentious is critical to leadership and organizational success” (Irby et al., 2002, p. 317). See Figure 2-4.

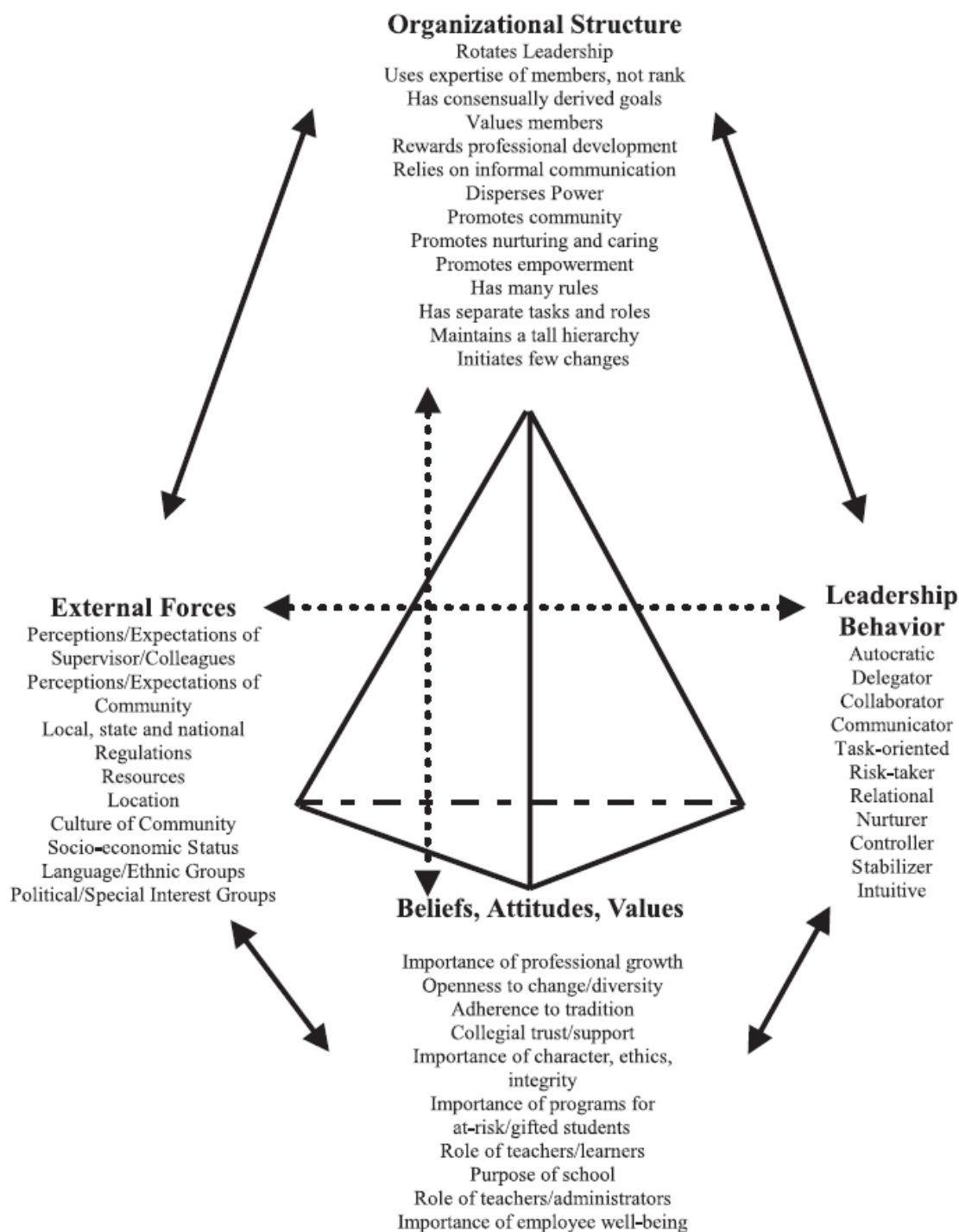


Figure 2-4. Tetrahedral model for the Synergistic Leadership Theory (Irby et al., 2002).

Eagly and Carli (2009) stated that discrimination against women in a leadership role stems from gender stereotypes that are shared around the world. The researchers established people believe men are more authoritative, assertive, and competitive, and women are more helpful, kind and giving. For women to be followed and respected as a leader, Eagly and Carli (2009) explained they must outperform men while staying within the confines of the expectations of a woman. The researchers recommended women combine masculine leadership traits of exceptional knowledge, competence, and confidence with feminine traits of thoughtfulness, compassion, and inspirational to be a successful leader.

Career Paths of Female Superintendents

Grogan and Brunner (2005) addressed the different career paths of female superintendents documented in their study. One of the reasons women are underrepresented in superintendency is their lack of representation in the high school principalship, which in the past has been an important launching pad to the superintendency. Majority of women move from elementary teacher to elementary principal, a position that seldom moves directly to superintendent (Lemasters & Roach, 2012).

Fifty percent of female superintendents stated their route to the superintendency included the traditional teacher to principal to central office administration. Some women took the path more closely resembling men, which is documented as the path of teacher to principal to superintendent, bypassing central office administrative positions. Yet, another group of women followed the path of teacher to central office position to assistant superintendent, and never fulfilled the role of principal (Grogan & Brunner,

2005). The research has not indicated a percentage of male superintendents taking the path of teacher and central office administration, and bypassing campus administration.

Hoff and Mitchell (2008) determined women delay entry into administration compared to men, which may negatively affect their advancement opportunities. The women were found to have averaged 13 years in the classroom compared to eight years for men, before seeking an administrative role. Grogan and Brunner (2005) documented nearly 40% of men have five years or fewer classroom experience before entering educational administration.

Sherman et al. (2008) and Handy (2008) stated women entered the superintendency at an older age than men, usually due to the need to maintain a balance between work and family. Brunner (2000) found that women hesitate to enter the superintendency by self-selecting themselves out of the pursuit until their children are older and less dependent on them as mothers and primary caregivers. The additional time in the classroom was beneficial for women due to additional years of experience and completion of advanced degrees prior to pursuing the superintendent position (Handy, 2008; Sherman et al., 2008).

Styles (2010) determined 10% of female superintendents in South Carolina followed a career path of teacher to principal to superintendent, bypassing central office administration. In the same study, 17.2% of female superintendents followed the career path of teacher to central office position to superintendent with never experiencing the principalship. Forty-five percent of the participants within the study followed teacher to principal to central office position to superintendent.

Manuel (2001) documented that 51.4% of women followed the teacher, principal, central office position pathway to the superintendency, and 16.2% of respondents followed the teacher, central office position pathway bypassing the principalship and moving straight into the superintendency. Handy (2008) determined most female superintendents in the study followed the traditional route to the superintendency of teacher to principal to central office position to superintendent. The male superintendents in the study bypassed the central office position, and most promoted from principal to superintendent. Schiele (2012) explained all participants in the study of female superintendents in the Pacific Northwest had served as district curriculum coordinators or assistant superintendents.

In Texas, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has published that women have dominated administrative positions. Roser, Brown, and Kelsey (2009) indicated women held 73.5% of elementary principalships, 41.3% of junior high principalships, and 29.8% of high school principalships. The lack of secondary principalship experience may impact the representation of women in the superintendency.

Conclusion

The research discussed in the literature review addressed the existence of a glass ceiling for women in educational leadership in the year 2013. Barriers and supporting factors exist for women who aspire to the position of superintendent. Women have successfully obtained superintendency, even with current barriers as described by role congruity theory and social role theory. Leadership theories for educational leaders exist and focus on the male perspective, while leadership theory from a feminine perspective remains minute.

Although theory is relevant and important, the question exists of whether it is better to place the same stereotypical person in the role of superintendent and force them to change leadership style, or to place a person with the desired leadership style in the role of superintendent. The gap in literature that exists lies within the realm of perceptions of shared experiences of female superintendents, and the educational and professional paths taken to achieve the position of superintendent. Research needed for dissolving societal norms for genders remains unresolved.

Summary

The problem of underrepresentation of women in leadership includes leadership within education. Women comprise a majority of educators, but remain a minority in leadership. Identifying barriers, successes, and career pathways of female superintendents in the state of Texas adds to the literature in effort to enhance opportunities of women in leadership roles. Galloway (2006) and Budde (2010) identified the barriers that continue to exist creating a glass ceiling. More importantly, educating women on the path to breaking through the glass ceiling expresses concern still needed in literature and requires further study. Identifying those female leaders having potential for success and providing a delineated path may assist in obtaining the position of superintendent.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Women continue to be underrepresented in educational leadership roles. Specifically, an underrepresentation of women in the role of superintendency exists in the state of Texas, even though the majority of educators are women. The question raised is does a glass ceiling exist for women in education, and if so, how do women break through the invisible barrier. To date, only 18% of the superintendents in the state of Texas are women. The purpose of this study is to identify career paths shared by successful female superintendents in Texas and their personal perceptions of barriers and successes they have experienced along their professional path.

A phenomenological, qualitative research approach combining a demographic questionnaire and an open-ended guided focus group protocol allowed the researcher to document experiences of women in the position of superintendent in Texas in order to understand the participants' success. A discovery of common experiences regarding career paths, barriers, and successes among female superintendents generated a list of shared attributes creating themes clarified through a focus group interview of six female superintendents. "Focus groups can be used to collect shared understanding from several individuals as well as to get views from specific people" (Creswell, 2008, p. 218).

Focus group interviews were utilized over one-on-one interviews due to focus groups affording greater clarification of shared lived experiences necessary for understanding the process of obtaining the position of superintendent. "Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar to and cooperative with each other" (p.

218). The research will contribute to the body of literature an explanation of how more women may access this executive level position within education. This chapter will contain the research method, purpose, and design of the study.

Description of the Research Design

“A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p.76). Phenomenological inquiry was used to conduct this research in an effort to quantify themes generated from participant responses through lived experiences to understand how ascension to the superintendency occurs. The purpose of this research was to determine the perceived barriers and successes of female superintendents and their respective career paths to the superintendency.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study.

Research Question One:

To what do female superintendents in Texas attribute their success in ascending to the superintendency?

Research Question Two:

What perceived barriers do female superintendents in Texas experience in their ascension?

Research Question Three:

What career pathways did female superintendents in Texas follow in their ascension to the superintendency?

Setting

“A focus group interview is the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six” (Creswell, 2008, p. 218). Female superintendents were identified using the online directory of superintendents from the Texas Education Agency. Six female superintendents of independent school districts in Texas were asked to participate in a focus group to discuss their ascension to the superintendency. The superintendents received a questionnaire requesting information on educational and career path demographics. An interview protocol was used to guide the interview questions for the focus group to answer additional questions pertaining to their individual ascension to the superintendency.

The rationale for this range of focus group size stems from the goal that focus groups should include enough participants to yield diversity in information provided, yet they should not include too many participants because large groups can create an environment where participants do not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences. (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, p. 3)

In an effort to provide a variety of responses, the superintendents selected to participate in this study represented different sizes of districts based on student enrollment.

Participants

Focused upon in this study were current female superintendents in the state of Texas. Participants were identified using the online Texas Education Directory. Using the list from the Texas Education Directory, the biographies and pictures on respective

district websites assisted the researcher in the verification of the sex of the selected individuals. Superintendents were contacted through email with an introductory letter explaining the purpose of the study to request participation.

Population Demographics

Participants in this study were six current female superintendents in the state of Texas. Participants were selected using purposeful sampling. “The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). Six superintendents were chosen based on purposeful sampling.

Narrowing the participants to women currently serving as superintendents in the area of southeast Texas instigated the use of criterion sampling. “Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 155). The sample size was limited to six individuals based on participants’ willingness and availability, and criterion selection within the geographic area of southeast Texas.

Participant Selection Method

Each selected female superintendent identified using the online Texas Education Directory received an introductory letter requesting her participation. The selected superintendents were emailed to determine willingness and availability to participate in the study. Confidentiality and privacy was maintained by creating pseudonyms for the participants and respective districts. District confidentiality was maintained through

identification by size based on student enrollment, and not by district name. Protocols documenting participant consent can be located in Appendix A.

Procedures

Selected female superintendents received a questionnaire to document demographic information of each superintendent and their respective districts. During the focus group interview, the guided questions and responses along with additional conversation among the superintendents was audio-recorded and transcribed. The identities of the superintendents were kept anonymous through the creation of pseudonyms.

Districts were identified by size based on student enrollment. Themes were generated from responses from the demographic questionnaire to answer career paths of women to the superintendency. Using guided questions, the focus group had structure to assist in clarification of themes. Open-ended questions assisted in further investigative clarification regarding barriers and successes to the ascension to superintendency. Audio recording the focus group provided the researcher the opportunity to transcribe the interviews to further provide documentation for the creation of themes for responding to the research questions.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Data were collected through a demographic survey, and themes using demographics were generated to find areas of commonality. During the focus group interview, an audio recording device was used to document verbal responses to the guided interview questions. The audio recording was transcribed to allow the researcher

the opportunity to code the data and create themes emerging from the focus group responses.

In addition, researchers involved in focus groups within educational settings also should examine interactions on how individuals communicate with each other, where focus group members might modify their communication styles depending on the audience, the appropriateness of participating in a focus group, and the perceived correct responses expected of them. (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, p.13)

The focus group interview was transcribed with pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. Districts were described based on size of student enrollment. Themes were generated based on participant responses.

Focus group interviews and demographic information assisted the researcher in providing the data to answer the research questions. Descriptive statistics were used to identify themes and patterns of responses. “This process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories is called constant comparative method of data analysis” (Creswell, 2013, p. 86). Constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used in analyzing the data by taking a piece of data and comparing it with others. In constant comparison analysis, data are constructed in three stages: open coding for initial chunking of data, grouping into categories, and the development of themes (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Data from the survey were organized in a spreadsheet to generate data tables to report demographic information, and constant comparison analysis guided the creation of themes from participant responses in the focus group interviews.

Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software was utilized by the researcher once the focus group audio recording was transcribed. The researcher downloaded the Atlas.ti software and imported the transcription to aid in the coding of the data. As the researcher analyzed the data, codes were assigned. Once coding was completed, the researcher found common themes among the codes to develop the overall themes for the focus group discussion.

Instruments

The demographic questionnaire, developed by Dr. Barbara Ceniga, was available prior to the focus group interview for participants to complete. The survey used provided details of participants' educational background, marital status, ethnicity, work experience, size of district, age, career path, and student population of their respective district. The questionnaire and a guided interview protocol were obtained with permission from Dr. Barbara Ceniga. Dr. Ceniga created suggested interview questions and a demographic questionnaire for superintendents in Oregon. The questionnaire and interview protocol were field tested by two retired superintendents in Oregon. Dr. Ceniga adjusted the instruments for her dissertation published in 2008 based on their input and suggestions.

Permission from Dr. Ceniga was granted to the researcher to use these instruments to guide the focus group. Dr. Ceniga's demographic questionnaire was adjusted by removing a question regarding number of administrators in the district, as this information did not pertain to the study. The interview protocol from Dr. Ceniga was adjusted by removing questions that do not pertain to the study, such as personal slogans and questions about superintendents' reading habits.

Summary

This qualitative study assisted the researcher in an analysis of the shared experiences of female superintendents' successes and barriers, and identified career paths to successful ascension to the superintendency. Demographic information regarding educational background, professional experience, and size of districts assisted the researcher in creating the themes for the open-ended focus group interviews. Both instruments used in the study were tested for validity and reliability by Dr. Barbara Ceniga, and permission was granted for their reproduction.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study, and begins with an introduction, followed by demographics and profiles of the study participants, and a description of the coding process and themes which emerged during the coding process. Specifically, themes include external and internal influences and career factors as illuminated and described by the participants in their respective ascensions to the superintendency. The results are presented as the collective, themed perceptions of the participants which emerged during a focus group process and resulting analysis. Using the themed perceptions the following research questions are answered:

To what do female superintendents in Texas attribute to their success in ascending to the superintendency?

What perceived barriers do female superintendents in Texas experience in their ascension?

What career pathways did female superintendents in Texas follow in their ascension to the superintendency?

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to document the perceptions of current female superintendents in their ascension to the superintendency and within the position of superintendent. The ostensible need to illuminate the nature of this ascension as described by the participants arises from the continued underrepresentation of women in the superintendency in Texas. As a result, for the present study, a focus group of

current female superintendents was utilized to provide the participants' perspectives on the necessary attributes that may allow more women the opportunity to achieve the position of superintendent.

Participant Demographic Data

Participants were six female superintendents from school districts in proximity of the gulf coast region of Texas. Participation occurred through a focus group setting on March 1, 2013 at a Houston area hotel during a lunch time meeting. Participant ages ranged from 41 years old to 59 years old, with a range of two years to 11 years of experience as a superintendent. Regarding marital status, five participants reported being married and one participant reported being divorced. With respect to ascension to the superintendency, five out of six participants were promoted to superintendency internally from within their current districts. Moreover, those individuals promoted internally had only sought that particular superintendency. One participant sought the superintendent position outside of their district, and had applied to two other districts before hired for the station.

Five of the participants were between the ages of 46 and 52 when they assumed their initial role in the superintendency; one participant was 40 years old. All participants' conveyed the presence and assistance of a mentor. Three participants reported male mentors provided assistance, and three participants reported female mentors provided assistance. Further, participants described all of the mentors to have been Texas superintendents at the time of mentoring.

One participant became a superintendent in 2002 and was the first female superintendent in the district. Two participants assumed superintendency in 2007; two

others in 2011. Two participants followed female predecessors, and two other participants were the first females in their districts.

As depicted in Figure 4-1, the total years of educational experience among the participants averaged 31.3 years.

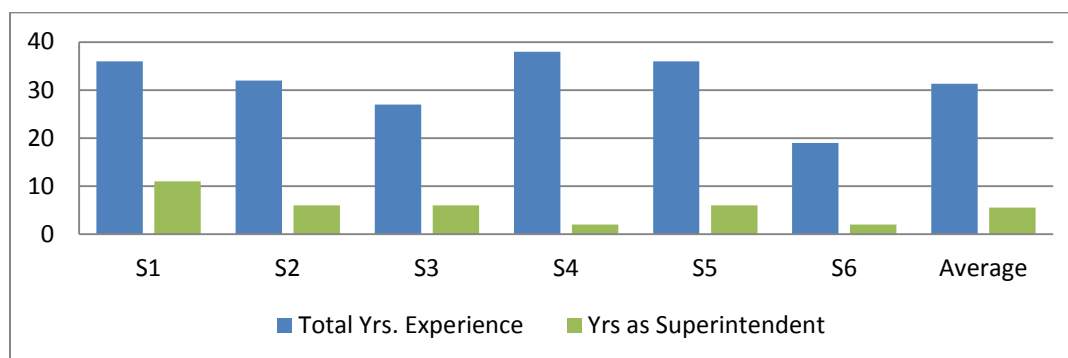


Figure 4-1. Experience of superintendents participating in focus group.

The total years in the superintendency averaged, for the group, 5.5 years. With respect to educational background, all participants hold masters of education degrees. Four hold doctoral degrees in education. See Table 4-1.

Table 4-1

Experience and Educational Level of Participants

Participants	Total Years Ed. Experience	Total Years as Superintendent	Educational Level
S1	36	3	Masters
S2	32	5	Doctorate
S3	27	2	Doctorate
S4	38	3	Masters
S5	36	7	Doctorate
S6	19	2	Doctorate
Average	31.3	5.5	

A description of each of the participating superintendents is presented below.

Profile of Participants

Superintendent 1 (S1): Participant became a superintendent in 2002 at the age of 46. With 36 years of educational experience, 23 of those years were spent in educational administration and 11 years as a superintendent in one district. Her career was assisted by a male mentor, and she was promoted to superintendent from within her district. S1's career path began as an elementary teacher, and then progressed to a secondary teacher. She started her administrative career as an elementary assistant principal, and then she became a director in central office, an assistant superintendent, followed by her current position as a superintendent. She is the superintendent of a suburban district with more than 5,000 students.

Superintendent 2 (S2): Participant became a superintendent in 2007 at the age of 50. She has 32 years of educational experience, and 6 years as a superintendent. Her career was assisted by a male mentor, and she was promoted from within her district. Her career path began as an elementary teacher followed by secondary teacher. As a secondary teacher, she also served in a leadership capacity as a department chair. Her administrative career began as a secondary assistant principal, and then she became a secondary principal. S2 also served in the capacity of a college professor prior to becoming a superintendent. She is the superintendent of a rural district serving more than 4,000 students.

Superintendent 3 (S3): Participant became a superintendent at the age of 52. She has 27 years in education, with 16 years as an administrator, and 6 years as a superintendent. The respondent began her superintendency in 2007, and she was mentored by a female superintendent. S3 was promoted from within her district. Her

career path began as a secondary teacher, and then her career progressed to elementary teacher. Her administrative career began as a secondary assistant principal, and then she was promoted to dean of instruction for secondary school. From the dean of instruction position at the secondary school, she was promoted to the position of assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. She served as an assistant superintendent under the direction of two different superintendents, before promoting internally to superintendent. She is the superintendent of a suburban school district with more than 7,000 students.

Superintendent 4 (S4): Participant became a superintendent in 2010 at the age of 57. She has 38 years in education, with 23 years in educational administration, and 2 years as a superintendent. She was promoted from within her district. She had a male mentor that assisted in her career. Her career path began as secondary teacher, and then she became a counselor. From the counseling position, S4 became a coordinator in the central office administration. Her administrative career began as an elementary principal, from which she was promoted to assistant superintendent. S4 was promoted internally to the position of superintendent. She is the superintendent of a suburban school district with more than 7,000 students.

Superintendent 5 (S5): Participant became a superintendent in 2007 at the age of 52. She has 36 total years in education, with 15 years in educational administration and five years as a superintendent. She was promoted internally to superintendent from within her district, and was assisted by a female mentor. Her career path began as a secondary teacher. From this classroom position, she became a coordinator within central office administration. S5 was promoted in central office from coordinator to

director. As a director, S5 was promoted to the position of assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. She was promoted internally to become the superintendent of schools. She is the superintendent of an urban school district with more than 60,000 students.

Superintendent 6 (S6): Participant became a superintendent in 2011 at the age of 40. She has 19 years in education, with 13 years in administration, and two years as a superintendent. Her career was assisted by a female mentor. Her career path began as an elementary teacher. Her administrative career began as an elementary assistant principal, and then she was promoted to an elementary principal. From the principalship, S6 entered central office administration as an executive director. Once in central office administration, she moved into the position of assistant superintendent. She searched for a superintendent position outside of her district. She was hired by another district after applying for two outside district superintendency positions. She leads a rural district with more than 5,000 students.

Coding Process

The focus group interview was audio-recorded for purposes of allowing the researcher to transcribe and analyze the text. The transcribed text was uploaded into Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software for coding purposes. The Atlas.ti software allowed the researcher to select a specific word, sentence, and/or paragraph and assign a single or multiple codes to derive themes from the focus group. The researcher analyzed every word, sentence, and paragraph and assigned an appropriate code. Some statements fell into more than one code.

Once the coding was completed, the codes were combined by similarities into code families or themes. Three major themes arose during the coding process: (a) career factors, (b) external influences, and (c) internal influences. Table 4-2 lists the final codes and corresponding themes identified by the researcher.

Table 4-2

Open Coding Categories

Code	Theme
Career Path	Career Factors
Central Office	
Doctorate	
School Board Relations	
Family	External Influences
Gender Concerns	
Mentorship	
Prior Experience	
School Board Relations	
Timing	
Age	Internal Influences
Balance	
Communication	
Confidence	
Perspective	

Description of Focus Group Interview Results

Careful analysis of the focus group transcription revealed three major themes in the participants' perceptions of their ascension to the superintendency: (a) career factors, (b) external influences, and (c) internal influences. Within the career factors theme the following codes emerged: (a) career path, (b) central office experience, (c) doctorate, and (d) school board relations. Within external influences, the following codes emerged: (a) family, (b) gender concerns, (c) mentorship, (d) prior experience, (e) school board

relations, and (f) timing. Within the theme of internal influence, personality attributes dominated with: (a) age, (b) balance, (c) communication skills, (d) confidence, and (e) perspective.

Career Factors in Ascension to Superintendency

The career factors for the participating superintendents had similarities and differences, and the panel had differing views on the required experiences or career path to the superintendency. The three major codes within the theme for career factors for ascension to the superintendency were career path, central office, the doctorate, and school board relations.

Career path. Five of the six superintendents did not have a deliberate career path to the superintendency. One superintendent set out at the beginning of her administrative career to the superintendency. The difference in age and experience differs between the two groups. The five superintendents did not enter the position until they were in their late 40s, early 50s, and had 10 years of additional time in education. The other superintendent began at age 40, and took a very deliberate path to the superintendency.

The group had a varied opinion on the choice of a deliberate path to the superintendency. S1 commented, “My career path was pretty deliberate and it wasn’t directed straight to the superintendent, but it was definitely upward.” S3 and S5 concurred with the deliberate path of procuring experiences in curriculum and instruction, and less in management. S3 elaborated, “Actually all my preparation and everything was in instruction. I was never a principal. I was an assistant principal, then a dean of instruction, then moved to assistant superintendent.” S5 further mentioned her

experience in curriculum and instruction is the factor that guided her into the superintendency.

That was the same for me and the superintendent ahead of me, when it was talking about the scores, the children, the instruction, that was coming from us. We were doing most of the talking in the board meetings, and as assistant superintendent I had a longer report. (S5)

Central office. Central office administration experience was mentioned as an important career factor for women aspiring to the superintendency. The participants with the longest years as superintendents recall that career path as the dominant method for women to enter the superintendency.

I think it's a progression, I think as a principal you are leading a school and doing everything like the superintendent does, but I think it would have been hard for me to go from principal to superintendent. I think the central office experience is where you realize there is more to life than just your campus. Even as a principal you are really focused on your own campus. That to me is just the progression that makes sense. Certainly my perspective has changed after central office. (S1)

Doctorate. The doctorate was mentioned by the focus group as becoming a career factor for women aspiring to the superintendency. Four participants out of the six achieved their doctorate degree prior to becoming a superintendent. All four participants believed the doctorate gave them an edge over their competitors. "Part of my doctoral program was in leadership, and I was working on certification while I was doing that, so I would count that, too," S5 responded to a question regarding preparation for the superintendency. She further elaborated,

You know what I have seen, as far as what I think is becoming the expectation for everyone, though. They are looking for somebody, male or female, with a doctorate. When you look around and I think we are going to see it more and more, but most of the superintendents, well many of them have doctorates. But I will say that is, when I have looked at the job descriptions, they all say they are looking for an advanced degree, preferred, that type thing. But I think that's going to be more and more mandatory or expectation for everybody. (S5)

One participant without a doctoral degree became a superintendent in 2002, and the demand for a doctorate degree was not as prolific at that time. The other superintendent without a doctoral degree became a superintendent at the age of 57 with 36 years in education.

I think you might have mentioned the doctorate as a career factor for those aspiring to the superintendency. I think that's an advantage for a woman if she has her doctorate, because they might not require it of a man, but it's almost like it serves as a 'Well, we know she has done this so.' (S3)

School Board relations. The focus group addressed the importance of relationships with school boards as a critical career factor in the ascension to the superintendency. School boards must feel confident in the abilities of the person they will name as the superintendent.

One of the things that I actually said to the board in my interview, I pulled board policy and at the end when they asked me if I had anything else I wanted to – I read their board policy to them that says the superintendent shall be the

instructional leader of the district. I said I can be that instructional leader. You have seen evidence of that in the past. (S3)

S3 had been in the role of assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction when she interviewed for superintendent. She also believed that an active role with the board was a critical career factor to her ascension to the position of superintendent.

S4 followed with a statement about presenting before the board as an assistant superintendent provided important face time. The board was able to get to know her strengths, and the board respected her opinion after so many years of seeing her present as the assistant superintendent. S4 added that part of her career was offering different presentations to the school board, and the board needed to see her different roles.

External Influences in Ascension to Superintendency

External influences mentioned by the participants in the focus group were: family, gender concerns, mentorship, prior experience, school board relations, and timing. These factors were mentioned by the participants repeatedly as influences in their career. Family and gender concerns were the predominant themes within the focus group.

Family. All six participants addressed family as the most important factor in the ascension to superintendency. Four participants did not consider the superintendency until after their children were out of their homes. One participant still had a child in the home at the time of the focus group.

S6 stated “You can’t always sacrifice your family for work,” and S5 added “I don’t know if I would have tackled [superintendency] when both my children were young

and in school. I don't think I would have done that." The superintendents stressed the effect of the time constraints of the position directly affects family members.

It's a challenge but I think it has to be a family decision. When you make the decision to move in to the superintendency, whether you have kids or you don't, it has to be a family decision. Because it does impact everybody, and I will say that probably moving into the superintendency has been harder on my family than me. Just because they have had to adjust to being in that bubble, and everybody knowing everything and the glass walls, everyone watching what they are doing.

(S6)

S3 stressed the importance of family, "I do not recommend women entering the superintendency with children still at home. The time demands and sacrifices are too great. There is always time later." In addition to the effects of the time constraints of the position of superintendent on children, the participants also addressed the stress the position places on marriage. The participants addressed the importance of maintaining personal relationships as a critical component of considering ascension to the superintendency.

I don't think I would have wanted to be superintendent with children at home. But that aside, if you have a husband I think that whole personal thing is still you have to have a balance, because I happen to like him and don't want to lose him. So I think you have to have a balance there and I think [my husband] has been very supportive. I don't think I could have done it if he had not been supportive.

(S3)

S5 concurred with S3 on the importance of time constraints regarding marital relationships due to the high demands of the superintendency, “I remember reading research that there is a high divorce rate for female superintendents.”

All participants addressed the concern of time constraints, external pressure, and lack of privacy of the superintendency as an external influence of their decision to pursue the position. The effects of accepting the position of superintendent extends far beyond the person. The participants addressed that the decision must be agreed upon by the family, because of the sacrifices required of the family members.

Gender concerns. Within the focus group a theme of gender concerns arose on both sides. Situations were discussed where the participants were treated differently because of their sex, and where men were perceived differently based on their sex. Participants perceived that being a female superintendent held different concerns than that of male superintendents.

In some aspects, the participants related the difficulty their spouses had being the husbands of successful women, and the confidence the men must have to be in the background.

I think it is different for men who are married to a superintendent than it is for women who are married to a superintendent. They have to be very strong, too. Know whom they are, at least that is how I feel. A couple of times people joking around said to my husband, ‘Hi, Mr. [wife’s first name],’ out in the community. But my husband explains he is my body guard, my driver, and my eye candy. He has a very healthy self-esteem, and a good sense of humor. (S1)

The gender concern established by the participants is the different societal gendered expectations between being the supportive wife of a male superintendent in Texas, and the reversed gender role of being the supportive husband of a female superintendent. The participants stressed that the supportive men have to exhibit tremendous confidence to allow their wives to be in the public forefront in a political position.

I think that [S1] is right when she says that if you are the woman superintendent, your husband has to be comfortable with who they are and whom they are in your life in order to allow you to be that superintendent. (S3)

The participating superintendents also listed the personality attributes of administrators and based them on gender roles, and this created a reverse gender concern for men. When discussing the path for women to administration, the participant believed most women had to demonstrate less female dominant attributes in order to ascend into educational administration. One of the discussed attributes is the belief that women are emotional. S1 stated, "I think female administrators are less emotional than male." S1 implicated successful female administrators demonstrated less emotional behavior than their male counterparts.

Gender was also addressed by the participants when describing differences between the performance of male administrators and female administrators. "Well [female administrators] can juggle" (S5). "Well they can, because they have had to juggle families and work in the past" (S4). S6 agreed, "I would say our female administrators tend to be more organized, get things in on time. Males are always on the list for not turning things in." S4 added, "[Female administrators] are more focused. More take care of their business."

An additional gender concern established by the focus group was the discrimination of some women against women in leadership positions. S1 stated, “Haven’t you always heard that women say they don’t like to work for other women.” The participants agreed that this belief exists in education. S6 commented that she would not hire a female administrator that didn’t demonstrate confidence. “The reality is that I probably wouldn’t hire a female administrator that didn’t have some level of confidence, because I don’t think you can do an administrator’s job and be meek and scared” (S6). The understanding that some women exhibit less desirable personality traits than men was discussed as a deterrent, however, what was not discussed is this same attribute exhibited in male applicants.

Gender concerns also arose when the participants discussed relations with the school board.

One of the board members made a statement that he doesn’t want a male superintendent, because women work harder than men do. Of course I also have one board member who told me after I had been superintendent for a couple of years; ‘Well, I really don’t think women should have these kinds of positions.

Ha-ha but you have changed my mind about that.’ (S1)

Within the focus group discussion, specific educational gender roles emerged from the discussion. Women were perceived to be strong curriculum and instruction experts, while men were perceived to be strong leaders.

I think that I see more [women] in secondary administration now that there is an emphasis on curriculum – strong curriculum people are women. You don’t want a high school principal any more that can manage the football team, and make

sure the kids don't get out of hand. You want someone to take that campus to the next level. (S4)

S5 contributed, "and with the board members who are more focused at looking at all the data, as they all are, they want someone who understands the data and the curriculum."

The participants explained and agreed that they are aware of a lack of women in the superintendency. S1 stated she acknowledged there aren't that many women to begin with in superintendency, and it was apparent during midwinter conference for Texas superintendents. "I remember at mid-winter going down the escalator, and it was a sea of grey and black suits. I would look for women. The only women I could see were the presenters" (S1). S4 agreed that she made the same observations.

The superintendent participants addressed the perception of the lack of women in the discussion.

When I became a superintendent or right before, I was the first female in our district, and there was a discussion among some people, some board members, and in the community, are they ready for a female superintendent? Sounds kind of funny now, but it wasn't that long ago. It was 12 years ago. (S1)

S4 corroborated that she had the same experience, "It was 2 years ago, and I am the first female superintendent [in my district]. You paved the way for the rest of us – now there are more women." Community expectations of women caused one superintendent to leave their district as an administrator. S3 stated, "I lived in that community and I just saw that it was constantly men [being promoted] and I think part of it was attitude, attitude towards women [in the community]." One participant changed districts as an administrator to a district with a female superintendent in an effort to promote.

I was an administrator at the high school, and the superintendent was a woman and I had changed districts to come to that high school in an administrative position. I didn't feel like the opportunities were going to be there in the previous district where I had been. I could just see the writing on the wall, and that was not going to be a district where women were going to be upwardly mobile very far.

(S3)

As addressed earlier, questions arose regarding the acceptance by the community of a female as a superintendent. Participants felt they had the skill sets, but the community must be willing to look beyond gender expectations. An implication made by the focus group that school boards look for women when needing strong instructional leadership was perceived as an additional expectation of women.

Mentorship. All six participants attributed mentorship to their ascension to the superintendency. Four of the six participants explained that the residing superintendent was their mentor prior to the superintendency. S1 stated, "I had mentors that encouraged me. I had people from board members to former principals, [current] superintendent, and just all kinds of people along the way that kept encouraging me to take another step and to keep going forward." Five out of the six participants had mentors from within their district assist with their career ascension. S6 explained that her mentor encouraged her to extend her search beyond the district to move quicker through the ranks.

I did change districts, but I would agree that it was all based on mentorship and people that had encouraged me to take the next step and continue to move up and apply for positions and things of that nature. So I think the mentorship from people is critical. (S6)

When asked to clarify regarding the mentor role, the participants explained that the respective mentors began grooming early on in their administrative careers. “They started talking about a superintendent role probably 9 years before I applied for the position” (S1). S5 agreed that the mentorship and guidance she received led her to consider and apply for the role.

My experience was similar. I really didn’t think about becoming or applying for superintendent until my superintendent was leaving. I was an assistant superintendent, but she had mentored me a lot, and it just sort of fell into place.

[Former superintendent] was careful the way she phrased it because we had people applying, but she encouraged me and said certainly [5] this is something you can do. (S5)

Three of the participating superintendents had not considered the superintendency until their respective mentors encouraged them to apply. S6 was the only superintendent that left their respective district to be considered for the superintendency.

Prior experience. Prior work experience varied among the participants in the focus group; however, all participants agreed experience was an important external influence to their careers. The superintendents discussed varying expectations regarding required experience for the superintendency. S1 strongly encouraged female administrators to consider taking the route of central office in their ascension to the superintendency.

I think it’s a progression, I think as a principal you are leading a school and doing everything like the superintendent does, but I think it would have been hard for me to go from principal to superintendent. I think the central office experience is

where you realize there is more to life than just your campus. Even as a principal you are really focused on your own campus. That to me is just the progression that makes sense. (S1)

Other participants in the focus group stated that the key for a successful career in superintendency is to learn every job, and to gather those experiences to create a complete understanding of a district as a whole.

Regardless of the role, any of the experiences that you have with campus leadership or district leadership, even teacher leadership are all going to contribute to [superintendency] preparation. All the good and the bad experiences, all the ups and downs, and the opportunities that go along the way definitely contribute [to the overall experience]. (S5)

School Board relations. The ability to function with a school board is an important external influence on the ascension to the superintendency. The focus group panel addressed prior relationship and experience with the school board was a critical factor in becoming a superintendent, as well as the present demographics of those holding school board positions. S3 commented that the increasing number of women holding school board positions has allowed more women to access the superintendency.

Another aspect of school board relations in regard to ascension to the superintendency was the relationship created by the candidate. S1 mentioned, “people from board members to former principals, superintendent, just all kinds of people along the way that kept encouraging me to take another step and to keep going forward, and then they started talking about a superintendent role.” Relationships with the school board prior to the superintendency created opportunity for the participants.

Some of the relationships between the superintendent and school board members occurred while in the central office position or assistant superintendent position.

Well think about it, if you are an assistant superintendent for curriculum, you are always reporting the scores to the board, what [the district] is doing, the district is showing improvement here, and we are going to focus on this. They see you in different roles. (S3)

Further elaboration from S5 concurred with the statement by S3:

That was the same for me and the superintendent ahead of me, when it was talking about the scores, the children, the instruction, that was coming from us. We were doing most of the talking in the board meetings and as an assistant superintendent I had a longer report. (S5)

S4 added, “As an assistant superintendent for curriculum, I was always reporting to the board.” The opportunity to have time before the school board provided three of the participants an opportunity to build relationships with school board members. These relationships contributed to the importance of school board relations as an external influence on ascension to the superintendency.

Timing. All the participants felt that an external influence to obtaining the position of superintendent was timing within their careers, and alignment with the needs of the district. S4 mentioned, “You have to be at the right place at the right time, honestly – I didn’t apply for the position, maybe that’s why I say that.” S4 added, “I was an assistant superintendent in the district, so it was like go get your superintendent certification. We want an inside option.”

S3 mentioned timing regarding her first superintendency, because she had gained additional skillsets at the time of the district’s search for a new superintendent. “The board said we are going to interview inside only first, and then we will decide whether we want to go out and do a search. That was when I put my application in [for superintendent], and was hired,” reflected S3. S1 contributed, “I think women are more strategic in some places than some men are. Although I think there are a lot in our group, and lots in this particular generation.” The strategy discussed by the focus group was corroborated by S6, “I changed districts to become a superintendent, so I pursued the opportunities [when the timing was right].”

Internal Influences in Ascension to Superintendency

Internal influences in ascension to the superintendency determined by the analysis of the transcription were: age, balance, communication, confidence, and perspective. As internal influences, personality attributes were listed repeatedly as having positive and negative effects on those pursuing the superintendency. The focus group addressed these attributes and the effect each had within their own experience.

Age. The superintendents participating in the focus group addressed age as an internal influence in their ascension to the superintendency. Five of the six participants did not initially desire the superintendency, and did not take a deliberate career path to obtain a position as a superintendent. One of the participants, the youngest in age by 12 years, set to aspire to superintendency as a teacher.

I guess I was a little bit different. I had a principal my first year as an assistant principal ask me what my long term goals were, and I told her my goal was to be a superintendent. That's what I pursued. (S6)

S1 stated, "I think that maybe younger women see [superintendency] as a possibility and believe they can do it, which is a great thing." S4 agreed, "It just wasn't the case when I was growing up."

[There is] a higher level of professionalism with those women coming up. It's not the good ole boy, not the former coach, there is more professionalism with the women that I have seen come up. There is a lot of knowledge, a lot of depth with [these women], and this younger group is very professional. They see opportunities that we didn't see when we were younger. (S1)

With more women ascending into positions of leadership, younger women aspiring to the superintendency are seeing the opportunity available to them, where twenty years ago there appeared less of an opportunity.

Balance. The ability to balance professional and personal life was an internal influence listed and a personality attribute deemed necessary by the focus group for those aspiring to the superintendency. Participants generated responses ranging from the ability to juggle work and family to the time constraints required of a superintendent. An

internal influence for those aspiring to the superintendency is the ability to balance personal and professional life with ease.

When discussing balance, the participants addressed an occurrence where a spouse missed an event. S4 stated, “[S6]’s husband couldn’t come to dinner last night because he had to go to the track meet for their child.” S6 commented on the delicate balance of family and profession:

You just balance that out. We keep a really close schedule. We make sure that one of us is always there and there are some times that you have to say no to events for the purpose of being with your family. You can’t always sacrifice your family for work. It is easy to do. I can see how it can happen. But there are some times I just have to say no, and luckily I have an excellent public relations person who says, ‘Okay, this isn’t critical, so don’t worry about going, but you do need to be at this.’ However, I take my family to a lot of things with me. They go to all the ball games. A lot of times we go to the performances and things of that nature. (S6)

The panel of participants addressed the internal influence of balance as part of ascension into any leadership position. S5 reminded the panel, “The ability to balance certain things, and delegate, is a key to successful leadership.”

Communication skills. The ability to communicate to a multitude of audiences was listed as an internal influence of climbing the ladder in educational leadership. The participating superintendents listed communicative ability with the school board and community as essential to becoming a superintendent.

I think the communication piece is so powerful because – if the board does not think that you are giving them all of the information, they are constantly going to be suspicious and not trust you. I tend to go overboard just to be sure that I have shared everything. I don't ever want the board to come back and say that is not what I understood we were doing. (S5)

S3 added the ability to communicate the needs of the district and encourage everyone to work as a team is essential to leading a school district. "If you cannot work with a board and work with all those difference personalities and help them to be a team, you are sunk," S3 elaborated. S5 concluded with the importance of communicating in a way that encourages a crowd is a very important personality attribute for those women seeking superintendency.

Confidence. An important internal influence perceived by the participating superintendents was self-confidence. All participants listed confidence as a required personality attribute for women seeking the superintendency. "I think you have to be [confident], because I think when you are a woman people think this is going to be easy," explained S2. S5 listed a specific situation where she confronted the football coach, and demonstrated confidence her staff did not expect.

They didn't expect me to take on football and take on the football coach. I just let them know how things were going to be, and I had to be very assertive and very professional. [My staff] was thinking they were going to wind up rescuing me and then they realized I didn't need any rescuing. (S5)

The panel also listed the self-confidence required to pursue the superintendency. Five out of the six participants never aspired early on to the position, and it was through

personal experiences and the encouragement of others. S6 demonstrated self-confidence by identifying her goals early as a new administrator, and vocalized those goals to her principal. The other panel members commended S6 for having the confidence and determination to realize her goal.

Perspective. The focus group participants listed the changed view created by combined experiences is an internal influence on one's ability to be a superintendent.

All of the experiences that you had with the campus leadership or district leadership or even teacher leadership are all going to contribute to that preparation. All the good and the bad experiences, all the ups and downs, and the opportunities that go along the way definitely contribute [to the overall experience]. (S5)

S3 added to the perspective of future superintendents using prior experiences.

I would say go into it with your eyes open. Because any job that you have, you don't really understand it until you sit in that chair. Same with superintendency. Until you sit and you can watch other people do it. I did. I watched others do it and I saw the person before me do it, and I thought to myself I could do that, and do it better. Still even watching [former superintendent] and watch the mistakes and successes he did, once you get in that chair it's a learning curve, because now it is the whole district. It's not just one campus, not even just one area of responsibility. It is everything. I would say go into it with your eyes open knowing that you are going to have to learn, and if you don't, you won't last very long.

The panel addressed the importance of utilizing experiences and creating opportunities for growth created the needed perspective for superintendency. An important internal influence is to not allow mistakes to hinder decision-making, but learn from the mistake and look at the whole picture.

Responses to Research Questions

Responses from the focus group organized to respond to the research questions are as follows:

Research Question One

To what do female superintendents in Texas attribute their success in ascending to the superintendency?

The participating superintendents stated academic preparation, timing, mentorship, personal attributes, family support, balance between personal and professional life, prior experience, and ability to work with a school board. S2 stated the superintendent certification program and her doctorate provided academic preparation for the superintendency. S3, S5, and S6 concurred with the doctoral degree assisting in preparation for the superintendency. S1 explained her mid-management certification provided important preparation.

Timing was stated as an attribute to successful ascension into the superintendency by S4.

You have to be at the right place at the right time honestly – I didn't apply for the position maybe that's why I say that. I was an assistant superintendent in the

district, so it was like go get your superintendent certification. We want an inside option. (S4)

S1, S3, and S5 agreed with timing and added the importance of mentorship in successful ascension into the superintendency.

I had people from board members to former principals, superintendent, just all kinds of people along the way that kept encouraging me to take another step and to keep going forward [throughout my career]. And then they started talking about a superintendent role. That was probably 9 years before I applied for the position, so I think the mentorship had a lot to do with it. (S1)

S6 was the only participant who sought the superintendency outside of her district, and she agreed with the importance of mentorship. She attributed mentorship to her successful ascension to the superintendency.

I did change districts, but I would agree that it was all based on mentorship and people that had encouraged me to take the next step and continue to move up and apply for positions and things of that nature. So I think the mentorship from people is critical. (S6)

All participating superintendents commented on required skillsets for successful ascension into the superintendency as a woman. S3 stated strong willed is an important characteristic. S5 expressed the aspiring woman should be focused. S4 commented that the aspirant should know herself. S5 added communication skills, and ability to speak to a variety of audiences, keep them engaged, and move them in a specific direction. S1 expressed good interpersonal skills. S4 commented on the ability to learn by watching others successes and mistakes, and being politically savvy.

I think [being politically savvy] is a skill that you have or don't have, can't ever learn that. I think you watch other people. [Watch] what they do right and what they do wrong. Because I have learned as much from what people did wrong as did right as what they did wrong. (S4)

S2 commented on strength, "I think you have to be strong because I think because you are a woman people think [it is going to be easy to run you over]." All six superintendents agreed that self-confidence is an important aspect of ascension to the superintendency.

Support of family was listed by all superintendents as an important support factor to succeed to the superintendent position. S3 was encouraged by her husband to pursue the superintendency. S6 explained that the decision to pursue the superintendency was a joint decision among family members. S5 further expanded on the family meeting that took place before she turned in her application for superintendent.

The ability to balance professional and personal life was listed by all the participating superintendents as a definitive attribute to their rise into the superintendency. Five out of the six superintendents did not consider the superintendency until their children were older, and five of the six participants mentioned the importance of time with their husbands and the impact of the position of superintendent. Those superintendents still married addressed the fact that their husbands were retired or self-employed, and this fact assisted with balance.

Prior experiences in education were discussed by the focus group as a factor in the successful ascension to the superintendency. Four of the six participating superintendents

were assistant superintendents. The position of assistant superintendent created opportunities for those participants to present to the school board on a consistent basis.

Relationships and experiences interacting with a school board were important factors discussed by the participating superintendents. The ability to maneuver and discuss difficult topics with a school board with varying educational backgrounds, and be viewed as knowledgeable was attributed to successful ascension to the superintendency by all participants. The participants explained that the most critical part of being a superintendent was the ability to work with a school board.

Research Question Two

What perceived barriers do female superintendents in Texas experience in their ascension?

When specifically addressed about barriers experienced as the participants pursued superintendency, all respondents expressed they did not experience barriers to their ascension to the superintendency.

Research Question Three

What career pathways did female superintendents in Texas follow in their ascension to the superintendency?

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the participating superintendents took differing routes to the superintendency. S1's career path began as an elementary teacher, and then progressed to a secondary teacher. She started her administrative career as an elementary assistant principal, and then she became a director in central office, an

assistant superintendent, followed by her current position as a superintendent. She is the superintendent of a suburban district with more than 5,000 students.

S2's career path began as an elementary teacher followed by secondary teacher. As a secondary teacher, she also served in a leadership capacity as a department chair. Her administrative career began as a secondary assistant principal, and then she became a secondary principal. S2 also served in the capacity of a college professor prior to becoming a superintendent. She is the superintendent of a rural district serving more than 4,000 students.

S3's career path began as a secondary teacher, and then she moved to elementary teacher. Her administrative career began as a secondary assistant principal, and then she was promoted to dean of instruction for a secondary school. From the dean of instruction position at a secondary school, she was promoted to the position of assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. She served as an assistant superintendent under the direction of two different superintendents, before promoting internally to superintendent. She is the superintendent of a suburban school district with more than 7,000 students.

S4's career path began as secondary teacher, and then she became a counselor. From the counseling position, S4 became a coordinator in the central office administration. Her administrative career began as an elementary principal, from which she was promoted to assistant superintendent. S4 was promoted internally to the position of superintendent. She is the superintendent of a suburban school district with more than 7,000 students.

S5's career path began as a secondary teacher. From this classroom position, she became a coordinator within central office administration. S5 was promoted in central office from coordinator to director. As a director, S5 was promoted to the position of assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. She was promoted internally to become the superintendent of schools. She is the superintendent of an urban school district with more than 60,000 students.

S6's career path began as an elementary teacher. Her administrative career began as an elementary assistant principal, and then she was promoted to an elementary principal. From the principalship, S6 entered central office administration as an executive director. Once in central office administration, she moved into the position of assistant superintendent. She searched for a superintendent position outside of her district. She was hired by another district after applying for two outside district superintendency positions. She leads a rural district with more than 5,000 students.

To visualize the varied routes to superintendency take by the six superintendents, see Table 4-3.

Table 4-3

Career Paths of Participants

Experience	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Percentage
Elementary Teacher	✓	✓	✓			✓	67%
Secondary Teacher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		83%
Counselor				✓			17%
Elementary Asst Principal	✓			✓		✓	50%
Secondary Asst Principal		✓	✓				33%
Elementary Principal						✓	17%
Secondary Principal		✓					17%
Coordinator				✓	✓		33%
Director	✓				✓		33%
Asst Superintendent	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	83%

Two of the participants held the position of principal prior to becoming superintendents. In the group, the predominant positions held were secondary teacher and assistant superintendent (83% of the group had held each position). Considering coordinator and director positions, 50% of the participants held a central office administrative position prior to superintendency. Five of the participants had been assistant superintendents, and four of these individuals were promoted internally and directly from those positions to superintendent.

Summary of the Analysis of the Focus Group

This chapter presented the qualitative data collected through responses to a demographic questionnaire and a focus group interview of six female superintendents in the state of Texas. The focus group interview was audio recorded, and then transcribed using a word processing software.

The transcription of the interview was uploaded into Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software that was purchased by the researcher. Using the Atlas.ti software, the researcher organized the data using codes determined by the researcher. The data were organized into 15 codes and seven code families using the Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. After analysis of the transcribed interview of the focus group responses using the Atlas.ti software, three major themes emerged. The themes generated out of the focus group of current female superintendents in Texas were external influences to ascension of the superintendency, internal influences to the ascension of the superintendency, and career factors to the ascension of the superintendency.

The analysis of the focus group transcription revealed three major themes in the participants' perceptions of their ascension to the superintendency: (a) career factors, (b) external influences, and (c) internal influences. Within the career factors theme the following codes emerged: (a) career path, (b) central office experience, (c) doctorate, and (d) school board relations. Within external influences, the following codes emerged: (a) family, (b) gender concerns, (c) mentorship, (d) prior experience, (e) school board relations, and (f) timing. Within the theme of internal influence, personality attributes dominated with: (a) age, (b) balance, (c) communication skills, (d) confidence, and (e) perspective. These factors were determined by the researcher's analysis as significant factors for ascending to the superintendency.

The research questions were discussed with the responses from the participants from the focus group and demographic questionnaire. Results from the transcribed focus group interview provided results to research questions one and two regarding perceptions of successes and barriers to the superintendency. The results for the third research

question regarding career path were derived from the demographic questionnaire, and clarified through the focus group interview.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The purpose of the present study was to identify the perceptions of current female superintendents in Texas with respect to career paths, successes, and barriers in an effort to understand the phenomenon of the ascension of women into the superintendency. In Texas, despite the fact that 75% of educators are women, only 18% of superintendents are women. The present study documented the superintendents' perceived barriers, successes, and deliberate career paths. The research process facilitated the illumination of the participants' perceived barriers, successes, and deliberate career paths. In this chapter, conclusions of the study are presented, followed by implications for school leaders and recommendations for further research. See Figure 5.1.

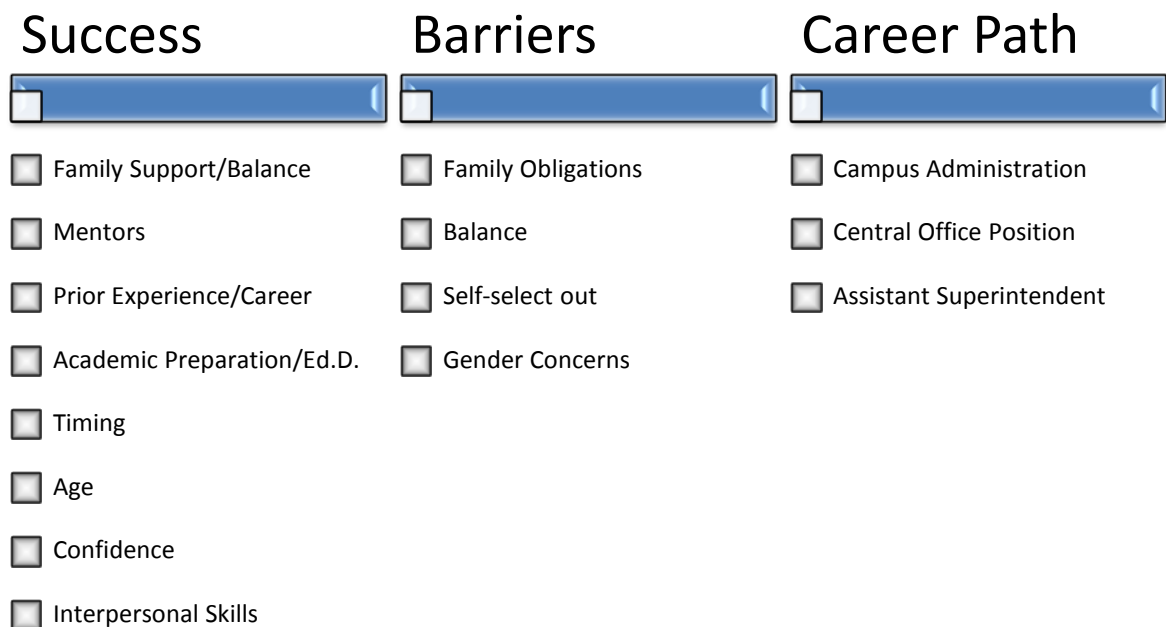


Figure 5-1. Documented factors for success, barriers, and career path to superintendency.

Overview of Study

The purpose of the present study was to identify the perceptions of current female superintendents in Texas with respect to career paths, successes and barriers in an effort to understand the phenomenon of the ascension of women into the superintendency. A qualitative research methodology using a phenomenological research design was utilized to contribute to the body of literature and understanding of specific attributes and career pathways of female superintendents in the state of Texas. Through the use of a focus group interview process, the personal perceptions of the participants were identified and documented in order to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon. Hopefully, this understanding will provide an enhanced perspective and guidance for women aspiring to the superintendency. Moreover, hopefully the present findings will facilitate an overall understanding of the nature of the ascension to the superintendency and the related nuances as perceived by women superintendents in Texas. Specifically, six female superintendents in Texas completed a demographic questionnaire and participated in a focus group to document their perceptions of barriers, successes, and career paths to the superintendency.

Discussion of Results

Research Question One

To what do female superintendents in Texas attribute their success in ascending to the superintendency?

The respondents attributed (a) family support , (b) mentor support, (c) prior experience, (d) timing, and (e) academic preparation as external influences that allowed

them to successfully ascend to the superintendency. These findings are supported by Grogan and Brunner (2005) and Haack (2010) who found that female superintendents identified mentoring and support systems as crucial to their success in the superintendency. In addition, Haack (2010) suggested that female superintendents perceive timing as a factor of their ascension into the superintendency. Also, the participating superintendents described internal influences that they attributed to successful ascension. Those internal influences discussed were: (a) age, (b) confidence, (c) professional and personal balance, and (d) interpersonal and communication skills. Haack (2010) identified confidence, communication and interpersonal skills, and balance as needed skills for female superintendent aspirants.

As women, the participants addressed the need for spousal support as they pursued and achieved superintendent positions. S3 explained that her husband was the first to encourage her to pursue the superintendency, but the ability to balance time and family also was very important. S3 stated, “I don’t think I could have done it if [my husband] had not been supportive.” Budde (2010) revealed a similar finding stated by a participant as husbands must be confident in their position in the home in order for women to ascend successfully into an executive level position. Previous research has suggested that spousal and family support was critical to ascension to the superintendency (Haack, 2010; Van Tuyle & Watkins, 2009).

All six participants said that the mentoring received from their current superintendents prior to ascending to the superintendency was a significant factor to their successful ascension, which supported the findings made by Haack (2010), and Van

Tuyle and Watkins (2009). All participants in all three studies confirmed the feeling of being groomed for the position by the former superintendents.

Career factors also were described as impacting to successful ascension to the superintendency. Specifically, the superintendents discussed: (a) a deliberate career path, (b) central office administration experience, (c) obtaining a doctorate, and (e) the ability to work with a school board. The doctoral degree was discussed as an important factor for the ascension by four of the six participants, all who had begun their superintendency as of 2007. Haack (2010) found that 67% of the participating female superintendents believed the doctorate was a critical factor to their ascension. Likewise, Styles (2010) reported that 66% of female superintendents in South Carolina have a doctoral degree. In the present study, only one participant had not yet earned a doctoral degree. She began her superintendency in 2002 and felt that a doctorate was not in demand by school boards at that time.

Experience in central office administration was addressed by some of the superintendents as providing the necessary exposure to the inner workings and global understanding of the district, which altered their perspectives of their respective districts as school systems. Two of the participants claimed that their experience in central office administration provided necessary opportunities for establishing reputations that afforded them consideration for the superintendency. The central office position also catapulted the two participants into the position of assistant superintendent.

A significant factor to consider is that three of the six superintendents had never been building principals, whereas this position is the typical path of male superintendents. The participants interpreted this fact by explaining that school boards hired them to lead

on the basis of their curricular and instructional capacities in order to place their respective districts higher and more favorably with respect to accountability measures. Very simply, with higher accountability ratings, real estate values increase, families move in, and fiscal status in the community increases, which in turn provides more tax revenue. In a sense, this situation allows all constituents to win.

As described by the participants, school boards were not as concerned with the superintendent's ability to manage a building, but were more focused on system-wide curricular and instructional leadership that would impact student achievement and well-being. This expectation appeared to have the effect of reverse discrimination, intimating that men could not be instructional leaders. This phenomenon or societal expectation corroborates with Sergiovanni's (2007) suggestion an expectation may exist that men are leaders and women are teachers. This finding or phenomenon is supported by the work of Brunner and Grogan (2007) that lists a school board's dominant reason for hiring women and primary expectation as the need for an instructional leader (35% and 46% respectively), and the dominant reason for hiring men as personal characteristics along with instructional and managerial leadership at 38%.

Timing was addressed by the superintendents as being in the right place at the right time. Five out of the six participants were promoted internally, and they perceived themselves as having had the specific skillsets requested by their school boards. All the participants agreed that the timing was right for the experience of the superintendent and the needs of the district. Likewise, Haack (2010) established that being in the right place at the right time was a key enabler identified in a study of female superintendents in Wisconsin.

Age was discussed among the focus group in terms of a division between differential expectations of generations. Five participants were self-described as baby boomers and did not see the superintendency as a viable opportunity when they began their careers in the 1970s. The group believed that younger women see themselves in a leadership capacity at an earlier age with enhanced opportunities. This finding corroborates the findings of Latu et al. (2013) that more women seek to attain higher executive level positions when they see other women in those positions. Another generational finding was the perception that for women to promote into administration, they had to express less emotional behavior than their male counterparts in order to be considered for leadership positions. This idea was shown, as well, in prior studies (Edgehouse, 2008; Montz, 2004).

All participants agreed that confidence was an essential factor in relation to the successful pursuit of the superintendency. “I think you have to be [confident], because I think when you are a woman people think this is going to be easy,” explained S2. Likewise, S5 listed a specific situation where she confronted the football coach, and demonstrated confidence her staff did not expect. The references to the importance of self-confidence confirmed the findings of Brown (2010) and Haack (2010) in relation to the personality attributes of women pursuing the superintendency.

Communication and interpersonal skills were also discussed among the focus group. The ability to work a room, the competence of politics, and the ability to speak to a variety of audiences was an essential attribute to the successful rise to the superintendency. Haack (2010) noted that communication and interpersonal skills were key enablers in the Wisconsin study to ascension by women to the superintendency.

Research Question Two

What perceived barriers do female superintendents in Texas experience in their ascension?

The participants did not openly acknowledge any barriers to their ascension to the superintendency. However, an important point for discussion is that five of the six participants did not aspire to the superintendency, but were groomed and encouraged to embark upon the endeavor by mentors who, at the time, were currently serving as superintendents. Yet, one participant did overtly set out to achieve the position of superintendent and found her only barrier to be lack of positions open in her demographic area. As a result, this superintendent uprooted her family and moved 6 hours away to pursue her first superintendent position.

Familial obligations produced an unspoken barrier among the women, as current superintendents explained that they would not recommend the superintendency to any women with children still in the home. This finding corroborated findings in Sherman et al. (2008) whose participant made the statement, “You can’t be a superintendent, and have small children. Women can’t. I would never advise that” (p. 255). The majority of female superintendents in Haack (2010) and Van Tuyle and Watkins (2009) agreed that they had purposely waited until their children were older and less dependent upon them when they considered the superintendency.

An additional barrier was the ability to balance work and home with family, because of the asserted importance of maintaining a healthy marriage. All of the women had husbands either self-employed or retired, and they believe this fact directly impacted their ability in the superintendency along with their desire to consider the

superintendency. “If you have a husband, I think you have to have a balance there, because I happen to like him and don’t want to lose him,” explained S3.

A barrier documented in the research was the tendency for women to self-select themselves out of applying for the superintendency based on concern for the overall effect on their families created by the time constraints and political obligations. Also mentioned by participants was the lack of support from current female superintendents for younger women pursuing the position of superintendency, due to the perception of the women sacrificing the welfare of their families for the position. S6 stated, “I will say that probably moving into the superintendency has been harder on my family than me.” S4 explained she would not have moved into the superintendency while she still had children at home. S6 mentioned, “You can’t always sacrifice your family for work, and it is easy to do. I can see how it can happen.” S3 explained that she does not recommend women entering the superintendency with children at home. “There will always be time later,” S3 concluded.

The implication of the discussion by the participants is that being a superintendent requires mothers and wives to sacrifice time with their families. Ironically, of course, education is a job about meeting the needs of children. The group addressed the need to support their own children before attempting to meet the needs of thousands. This belief is supported in the literature by Vair (2013).

In regard to gender concerns, this study validated the findings of Vair (2013) and Haack (2010) in defining the barrier of the societal implication that women should take care of their families while balancing careers, and not allow their respective careers to overstep their duty as a parent. The expectation that motherhood and wifely duties

superseded the duties of a superintendent appeared to be only an expectation of the women, which was not perceived by the participants as an expectation imposed upon men. This expectation was an unspoken barrier among the focus group.

An additional gender concern addressed by the focus group was the societal expectations for women in leadership. As addressed earlier, questions arose regarding the acceptance by the community of a female as a superintendent. Participants felt while they had the skill sets, the community must be willing to look beyond gender expectations. An implication made by the focus group was that school boards look for women when needing strong instructional leadership and this fact may be an additional expectation of women pursuing superintendency.

Research Question Three

What career pathways did female superintendents in Texas follow in their ascension to the superintendency?

The six participants described varying routes to the superintendency. All participants served as teachers and five had worked as assistant principal. From assistant principal, divergence was present in career paths with respect to central office administration and campus administration. Five of the six participating superintendents were assistant superintendents prior to the superintendency. Five of the six participants were promoted from within their districts, and were mentored and groomed by the preceding superintendents. Similarly, Haack (2010) stated half of the participating superintendents in that study were promoted internally, and school boards chose this route because the women were a known quantity. Styles (2010) reported 62% of participating study superintendents were promoted internally. In the present study, only

three of the participants had ever served as campus principals. Moreover, the paths of these women varied from the typical career paths of most male superintendents. Most male superintendents move from teacher to assistant principal to principal to superintendent (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1989). In essence, the participants in the present study showed less prescriptive more variable pathways in their ascensions.

Five of the six participants had not planned their careers in pursuit of superintendency. This finding corroborates with Haack (2010). The study of superintendents in Wisconsin revealed 86% of female superintendents had not planned to become superintendents. The findings in the present study and of Haack (2010) were that a majority of female superintendents evolved into the superintendency as a natural progression of their careers and not as a pre-destined goal to be achieved.

Implications for School Leaders

The phenomena described in the present study may provide school leaders and university educators a diagram for preparing future educational leaders. Clarified in the study are specific personal attributes described by the participants that current female superintendents share and external influences necessary for the successful ascension to the superintendency. The identification, mentoring and guidance of potential future female educational leaders using the aforementioned external and internal influences along appropriate career pathways to the superintendency may drive the future of education.

School leaders have the opportunity to grow their own leaders from within the ranks, and using the data from the present study to identify specific personal attributes such as confidence, perspective, and balance has the potential to assist current leaders in

understanding how to shape those individuals having the capacity to lead school systems. Once identified, aspirants may be provided the necessary external influences, such as mentorship and important experiences, and instruction and leadership on managing school board relations.

Leaders also may use the information from this study to help future leaders with understanding how family concerns factor into the role of superintendent, and with working through gender concerns that are prevalent and were discussed earlier. This leadership capacity building has the potential to provide the needed information for the next generation of educational leaders, in the process, drive the future of education. Ideally, identification of those future leaders should occur early within educational careers and should provide guidance along appropriate career paths, so that those individuals with potential do not self-select themselves out of the running for the superintendency.

School leaders may assist with mentoring by providing opportunities for mentoring women during school hours, and by providing networking venues and opportunities in which women are comfortable. Additionally, districts should establish formalized means of recognizing potential leaders, and encouraging those leaders to pursue leadership opportunities. Through encouragement by current leaders, the self-selection of women out of leadership opportunities may diminish.

Implications for Further Research

Several recommendations may be derived from this investigation for further research. Additional interviews and focus groups of female superintendents in Texas and throughout the United States regarding perceptions of the superintendency should be

conducted to gather a greater understanding of women and the superintendency. The present study allowed for an hour and a half discussion and lent significant contributions to needed personal attributes and the effects of external influences on the successful ascension to the superintendency. Yet, further examination is warranted and likely would prove beneficial.

A second recommendation for study is to document the perceptions of male superintendents in regard to the successes, barriers, and career paths from the perspective of current male superintendents in Texas. A study from the perspective of men may conclude similarities and/or differences found among the perceptions and experiences of women. This study may have the implication of validating or contradicting the findings of a similar study from a male perspective. A third recommendation for further study is an examination of the perceptions of barriers for women who aspire to superintendency, but are unable to ascend to the position. A fourth recommendation for further study is to attempt to examine and understand the reasons why women who strive to create a name for themselves as educational leaders exhibit no interest or desire for superintendency.

A fifth recommendation for further study is an examination of the professional balance of social expectations of women as wives and mothers and the role of superintendent. A sixth recommendation for further study is a comparative analysis of male and female superintendents regarding school board relations. Some of the current participants addressed the different ways they handle relationships with the school board versus their male predecessors. Additional research might involve discussion of the importance of family and gender concerns from the perspective of male superintendents.

Lastly, another consideration is the identification of the barriers for women in ascending to the high school principalship.

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Appendix A

Approval from the University of Houston Human Subject Research Committee

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

February 28, 2013

Terri Benson
c/o Dr. Steven Busch
Educational Leadership & Cultural Studies

Dear Terri Benson,

The University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (1) reviewed your research proposal entitled "Breaking through the Glass Ceiling: Perceptions of Barriers and Successes of Female Superintendents in Texas" on February 15, 2013, according to federal regulations and institutional policies and procedures.

At that time, your project was granted approval contingent upon your agreement to modify your protocol as stipulated by the Committee. The changes you have made adequately fulfill the requested contingencies, and your project is now **APPROVED**.

- **Approval Date:** February 28, 2013
- **Expiration Date:** February 1, 2014

As required by federal regulations governing research in human subjects, research procedures (including recruitment, informed consent, intervention, data collection or data analysis) may not be conducted after the expiration date.

To ensure that no lapse in approval or ongoing research occurs, please ensure that your protocol is resubmitted in RAMP for renewal by the **deadline for the January 2014 CPHS meeting**. Deadlines for submission are located on the CPHS website.

During the course of the research, the following must also be submitted to the CPHS:

- Any proposed changes to the approved protocol, prior to initiation; AND
- Any unanticipated events (including adverse events, injuries, or outcomes) involving possible risk to subjects or others, within 10 working days.

If you have any questions, please contact Alicia Vargas at (713) 743-9215.

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Daniel O'Connor, Chair
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (1)

PLEASE NOTE: All subjects must receive a copy of the informed consent document, if one is approved for use. All research data, including signed consent documents, must be retained according to the University of Houston Data Retention Policy ([found on the CPHS website](#)) as well as requirements of the FDA and external sponsor(s), if applicable. Faculty sponsors are responsible for retaining data for student projects on the UH campus for the required period of record retention.

Protocol Number: 13311-01

Full Review X

Expedited Review

316 E. Cullen Building Houston, TX 77204-2015 (713) 743-9204 Fax: (713) 743-9577
COMMITTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Research Form

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Breaking through the Glass Ceiling: Perceptions of Barriers and Successes of Female Superintendents in Texas

You are being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Terri Benson from the College of Education Department of Professional Leadership at the University of Houston. This study is in partial fulfillment of a doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Steven Busch.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any question.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify the career paths and perceptions of successes and barriers shared by female superintendents in Texas to be discovered in participation of a focus group.

PROCEDURES

You will be one of approximately six subjects to be asked to participate in this project

Six female superintendents of independent school districts will receive a questionnaire requesting information on educational and career path demographics. The superintendents will participate in a focus group to answer additional questions pertaining to their individual ascension to the superintendency. Total time commitment will be approximately one hour.

CONFIDENTIALITY

By participating in this group, you understand that all comments are to be kept confidential to this group. You are not to share comments you hear in today's meeting.

Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants.

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number by the principal investigator. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Disclosure of the discussion by other participants.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help investigators better understand barriers, successes, and career pathways of female superintendents in the state of Texas to add to the literature in efforts to enhance opportunities of women in leadership roles. More importantly, educating women on the path to superintendency expresses concern still needed in literature and requires further study. Identifying those female leaders having potential for success and providing a delineated path may assist others in obtaining the position of superintendent.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in professional and/or scientific journals. It may also be used for educational purposes or for professional presentations. However, no individual subject will be identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO TAPES

If you consent to participate in this study, please indicate whether you agree to be audio taped during the study by checking the appropriate box below. If you agree, please also indicate whether the audio tapes can be used for publication/presentations.

- ☐ I agree to be audio taped during the interview.
 - ☐ I agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
 - ☐ I do not agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
- ☐ I do not agree to be audio taped during the interview
 - ☐ I agree that I will participate in the study.
 - ☐ I do not agree for my responses to be included in the study.

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.
2. All procedures have been explained to me and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me.
4. Any benefits have been explained to me.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Terri C. Benson at 936-499-7141. I may also contact Dr. Steve Busch, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-3902.
6. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.
7. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING MY RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (713-743-9204). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.
8. All information that is obtained in connection with this project and that can be identified with me will remain confidential as far as possible within legal limits. Information gained from this study that can be identified with me may be released to no one other than the principal investigator and her faculty sponsor. The results may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations without identifying me by name.

I HAVE READ THE CONTENTS OF THIS CONSENT FORM AND HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO ASK QUESTIONS. I HAVE RECEIVED ANSWERS TO MY QUESTIONS. I GIVE MY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR MY RECORDS AND FUTURE REFERENCE.

Study Subject (print name): _____

Signature of Study Subject: _____

Date: _____

I HAVE READ THIS FORM TO THE SUBJECT AND/OR THE SUBJECT HAS READ THIS FORM. AN EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH WAS GIVEN AND QUESTIONS FROM THE SUBJECT WERE SOLICITED AND ANSWERED TO THE SUBJECT'S SATISFACTION. IN MY JUDGMENT, THE SUBJECT HAS DEMONSTRATED COMPREHENSION OF THE INFORMATION.

Principal Investigator (print name and title):

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

General Demographics Information

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain insight into the women superintendents in Texas. Your name will not be associated with your responses, and a code has been placed at the top of each page for the researcher to use.

Age: _____

Marital Status: ___Single ___Married ___Divorced ___Widowed ___
Partner

Ethnicity: ___ African American ___Hispanic ___White/Caucasian
 ___Asian/Pacific Islander ___Native American ___Other

Years Employed in: ___Education (Total) ___Educational Administration ___
Superintendent

How many districts have you served as superintendent: _____

What year did you begin your first superintendency: _____ How old were you: _____

How many superintendent positions did you apply for before you were hired: _____

How many of these positions were offered to you: _____

What is the average number of hours worked per week: _____

How many people do you directly supervise: _____

Was your career assisted by a mentor: _____YES _____NO

Was your mentor: _____Male _____Female

Selection Process for Current Position:

_____Recruited from another district _____Promoted from within the district

_____Applied and selected while employed in another district _____Other

What was the chronological sequence in your career path: (Use number 1 for the first position and 2 for the second position, etc.)

___Elementary Teacher	___Secondary Teacher	___College Teacher
___Counselor	___Supervisor/Dept Chair	___Consultant
___Coordinator	___Elementary Asst Principal	___Director
___Elementary Principal	___Secondary Asst Principal	___Secondary Principal
___Deputy Superintendent	___Asst Superintendent	___Associate Superintendent
___Superintendent	___Other _____	

Description of District: _____rural _____small _____urban _____suburban

Student Population: _____0-999 _____1,000-1,999 _____2,000-2,999
 _____3,000-3,999 _____4,000-4,999 _____5,000+

Appendix D

Guide for Interview Protocol

Focus Group Conversation Guide

What was your academic preparation for the superintendency?

Tell me the story of your success. How did you get to where you are?

Which experiences helped you achieve superintendency?

What do you feel was the turning point in your career?

What specific professional and personal characteristics enabled you to achieve the top school position?

What strategies did you employ to enhance your professional development and persona?

Who were your professional role models? How did they influence your career path?

How do you balance your personal and professional life?

What factors do you feel contribute to the success of women administrators?

What traits do successful female superintendents have in common?

Have you encountered any barriers to the route to the superintendency? What kinds of barriers?

How did you overcome them? What strategies did you use?

What is the most important thing that has happened to you as superintendent?

Share some lessons you have learned in being politically savvy? How did you learn to negotiate?

Tell me an interesting story interacting with the school board? How did it make you feel? What strategies did you use?

What do you feel has been your most significant contribution as superintendent?

How do you view yourself as superintendent?

Would you share another story about your experiences as superintendent?

Would you do it again? Why?

What recommendations would you offer women aspiring to the superintendency?

