

CHAPTER I

In the near future, we shall have more women than men in charge of the vast educational system. It is a women's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the large part of the work and yet be denied the leadership.

-Ella Flag Young, 1909
Superintendent Chicago Public Schools

Introduction

As education moves into the 21st century, the premise is germinated that the role of the superintendent will change significantly. According to Konnert and Augenstein (1995), the face of the superintendency will literally change as the increase of women and minorities occurs in the position. There will be significant paradigm shifts in the educational process, curriculum content, organizational structure, and role definition. These paradigm shifts will require a new understanding of and commitment to visionary leadership on the part of the superintendent (Konnert and Augenstein, 1995).

One can visualize the environment for which students will be prepared in the 21st century. Science and technology will have made quantum leaps. Konnert and Augenstein (1995) postulate that cybernetic intelligence will be well along the path to implementation. Many diseases will have been eradicated, and life expectancies will be longer. A revolution in the speed of electronic and transportation systems will occur. Food supplies will be grown more extensively using hydroponic techniques. Sea farming will be commonplace. The predicted increase in the population will reach 275 million by 2000 and 383 million by 2050. The number of individuals 85 and older will increase (Konnert and Augenstein, 1995). The diversity in the population will rise dramatically especially for Afro-American, Asian-Americans and Hispanic-Americans. Pear (1992) notes that the median age for Americans will rise from 33 to 39 by 2035, and the white population will reach 208 million in 2020 and then stop increasing. All these factors will have an impact on the education of future citizens.

Futurists feel strongly that human resources are the keys to future productivity. Naisbitt (1985) states that the human element will be far more important than the organizational considerations. As we progress into technological and information ages, human relations will become paramount in determining success or failure in business. Thus, the teaching of respect and tolerance of individual and cultural diversity will assume a position of increased stature and importance in the educational process (Konnert and Augenstein, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

In the organizations of tomorrow, leading will become a process of influencing others to achieve mutually agreed-upon purposes for the organization (Patterson, 1993). The occurrence of systemic reform will shift from a more traditional educational system to one that emphasizes interconnectedness, active learning, shared decision making, and high levels of achievement for all students (Anderson, 1993). Gupton and Slick (1996) state that with trends toward participatory style leadership and decentralization of power on the upswing, women's tendency toward a more integrative leadership style may actually be coming into vogue. Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) predicted that the nineties will be the breakthrough decade for women throughout corporate America.

Historically, the role of superintendent in education has been directive and competitive, one of command and control. Houston (1996) stated in his keynote address at the Women's Leadership Conference of the American Association of School Administrators in San Antonio, Texas, "A competitive, command and control leadership style is a counterproductive strategy in today's environment and the role of the future superintendent. The job will entail a far more participatory and collaborative model." Houston (1996) believes that no matter what gender the leader is, strengths identified as feminine, such as nurturing, caring, and collaborating, will be employed in leadership roles. He says that women superintendents will have the natural edge for utilizing many of their innate skills of intuition, nurturing, and consensus building. Langford (1995) and Shakeshaft (1986) say, feminine leaders are well equipped to handle the emerging problems of organizations because they possess the qualities of a change agent with attributes of creativity, flexibility, and orientation toward people rather than things.

However, as historical records have shown, the barriers today are not much different from the barriers that kept women from becoming high school principals in 1900 or superintendents in 1930. According to Grogan (1996), few superintendents in public school districts in the United States are women. Although many women have leadership positions in schools, Shakeshaft (1989) reports the number found for female district superintendents range from 1.6 percent in 1928 to 3.0 percent in 1985. In 1987, a nationwide study showed that 96 percent of public school superintendents were men. More recent statistics reveal a slight increase with women superintendents at 5.5 percent in 1990 (Blount, 1993), climbing to 7.1 percent in 1993 (Montenegro, 1993). Male dominance of public school superintendencies is particularly striking because women comprise 70 percent of all the teachers, the group from which school administrators are drawn (Chase, 1994). Grogan (1996) states, "The absence of women in the superintendency at present suggests that women are being seen through traditional lenses and are being measured against ideals that have historically served men best" (p. 25).

For more than three centuries, American women were barred from certain positions of public authority; according to Biklen and Brannigan (1980). Gender disqualified women from participating in political affairs until the early 20th century, and for a long time their ability to collaborate for political and social action was stifled by their own acceptance of society's narrow definitions of women's roles and abilities (Biklen and Brannigan, 1980). Cantor (1992) says that, "Males dominate our culture and regard

females as powerless beings" (p. 49). She explains this phenomenon as rooted in the natural division of labor that emerged in the earlier days of human history; men were the hunters and women the nurturers. Males evolved as the doers, and females as the ones who expressed feelings. Cantor (1994) postulates that once having achieved power and dominance in society men are not in a hurry to give them up; therefore, an unconscious process and societal constrictions perpetuate the notion that power and leadership roles are masculine. Due to this continued perception Chase (1996) concluded, although the education system has undergone a great deal of change during the 20th century, the social characteristics for the superintendency has not .

As women compete for opportunities to become administrators, Gupton and Slick (1996) say they have to wrestle with the type of persona they must project in the executive office. A candidate for the superintendency is thought credible depending on the extent to which he or she corresponds to an established image of a superintendent (Grogan, 1996). Hill and Ragland (1995) point out that the survival of contemporary education requires leaders with new sets of skills.

Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs and Thurston (1980) suggest future trends towards developing collaborative cultures. According to Miller (1986), the new way of leading will stress empowerment and human development, as well as an overriding value for responsibility and interconnection. Greenleaf (1977) believes servant leadership, a new moral principle, is emerging. Sergiovanni (1992) explains that the servant leader understands that serving others is important, but that the most important thing is to serve the values and ideas that help shape the school as a covenantal community. The more traditional conceptions of leadership which are decidedly male-oriented will be replaced by leadership with emphasis to the feminist tradition (Sergiovanni, 1992). The feminist tradition addresses ideas such as servant leadership and community. "Serving others is a basic principle around which women's lives are organized (Sergiovanni, 1992)." Relying on the research of Gilligan (1982), Miller (1986), and Shakeshaft (1987), Sergiovanni points out that women tend to emphasize successful relationships, affiliations, power as the means to achieve shared goals, connectedness, authenticity, and personal creativity. The female perspective on school leadership is important and needs to gain legitimacy (Sergiovanni, 1992).

Need for the Study

Looking beyond the numerical count of female superintendents, little is known about whom the women are that attain the superintendency, how they view themselves, the professional image they develop, successful career strategies they employ, and if there are any differences in their work experiences and career paths. As Grogan (1996) recommends, future research should include in-depth studies of successful women leaders. If we are better informed about daily administrative actions and reflections of women school leaders, we can provide better training for others to follow (Chase, 1996; Grogan, 1996). The shared experiences of successful women leaders will benefit practicing administrators in their work to ensure a more bias-free workplace through improved personnel practices, policy, and the overall working relationships between the genders

(Gupton and Slick, 1996). Also useful information will be provided to administrators, teachers, and school board members by giving them a better understanding of the paradigm shifts that require a new understanding of and commitment to visionary leadership on the part of the superintendent (Konnert and Augenstein, 1995). It is hoped the results will provide information to those women who aspire to the position of public school superintendent.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe through qualitative inquiry the professional identity that emerges as a woman attains the superintendency and to delineate those factors that facilitate and contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency.

The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What patterns, themes, or trends emerge that characterize how female superintendents shape their professional identities?
2. What strategies do female superintendents use in establishing their professional identities?
3. What are the keys to successful entry into the role of superintendent?
4. Do female superintendents encounter "glass ceilings" on the way up to the position, and if, so, how were they overcome?

DEFINITIONS

Aspirations: MacLeod (1987) defines aspirations as "one's preferences relatively unsullied by anticipated constraints". According to Grogan (1996) aspiration is taken to mean the hopes of a superintendency as experiential preparation that motivates certain administrators in the public school system.

Discourse: Grogan (1996) refers to the all-encompassing experience of individuals negotiating their way through everyday interactions with sets of commonly shared words, phrases and symbols. Discourse implies a hierarchical structuring of "statements, terms, categories and beliefs" (Scott, 1988, p.35).

Glass Ceilings: Barriers/obstacles that exclude women from the upper decision-making positions in organizations (Kanter, 1977).

Professional Identity: The aspirant begins to take on the values, norms, and behavior of a superintendent and develops a connection and forms an unconscious emotional tie with characteristics to the position (Konnert and Augenstein, 1988).

Socialization: The term is applied to those processes by which an individual selectively acquires the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to adequately perform a social role in this case, the superintendency (Merton, 1963).

Limitations to the Study

This research was limited to selected women who are superintendents in public school educational settings in the state of Virginia. Generalization in naturalistic inquiry should be viewed as something different from generalization from a sample to a population. If generalizations are to be made, they should be applied to the same situation

from which the study is drawn. The study shares the viewpoints and experiences of the women represented in the study. Assuming the truthfulness of the subjects, the study's findings are based on their perceptions and thoughts only.

Organization of the Study

The dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter I contains the introduction, statement of the problem, need for the study, purpose of the study, research questions, definitions, and limitations to the study, and the organization of the study.

Chapter II presents a review of the literature relevant to this study. The review of the literature includes a chapter overview, the historical and contemporary barriers to women's advancement in educational administration, the socialization process, and looking beyond the barriers to the future scenario for the role of the 21st century superintendent.

Chapter III presents the introduction, research design, population and sample selection, methods and procedures, qualitative interviewing, data analysis, validity and reliability, and ethical issues.

Chapter IV presents an introduction to the research findings. It provides demographics and thumbnail sketches of the women superintendents, the setting for the data collection, narrative themes, a tapestry of other themes, and a chapter summary.

Chapter V presents the conclusions on the findings of the study; they are organized for the reader as responses to the study's research questions. In addition the relationship of the findings to the literature, the women superintendent's recommendations to aspiring female superintendents, and recommendations for future study are included.

CHAPTER II

A long habit of not thinking a thing
wrong gives it the superficial
appearance of being right.
Thomas Paine, Common Sense

Review of the Literature Chapter Overview

The purpose of this study was to describe through qualitative inquiry the professional identity that emerges as a woman attains the superintendency and to delineate those factors that facilitate and contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency.

This chapter review of the literature includes discourse on the integration of feminine principles into the public realm, and on the socialization processes that individuals experience as they seek the position of “managers of virtue” (Hansot and Tyack, 1981). This chapter begins with a brief review of historical barriers to women’s advancement in the field of educational administration. Hill and Ragland (1995) state, “As a necessary step to achieve success, the baggage of the past must be examined to find individual and gender-specific ways to progress” (p. 7). The chapter continues with a review of the contemporary barriers to women in educational administration and the socialization process of educational administrators. The chapter concludes by exploring the changing role of the 21st century superintendent. Researchers (Anderson, 1993; Hoyle, 1989; Wesson and Grady, 1994) state that the leadership characteristics for the 21st century superintendent requires a more feminine approach. Other researchers (Lansford, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1986) identify that approach as a leadership style with emphasis on collaboration, team building, flexibility, and an orientation toward people rather than things. According to Konnert and Augenstein (1995), "Those who are to lead education into the twenty-first century must have a vision to which they are enthusiastically committed" (p. 46). The challenge to this visionary leadership will be for superintendents to work effectively achieving goals that are an integral part of not only the educational community but society as a whole.

Historical Barriers to Women’s Advancement in Educational Administration

A handful of models can be found in the literature to explain how barriers to women in educational administration originated. In this section models will be presented that have been discussed by Estler (1975), Hansot and Tyack (1981), and Kanter (1993). Estler (1975) proposes several models of barriers to women in administration. The first model, “the women's place model”, assumes that women's comparative absence in the field of educational administrative careers is based solely on social norms. The model assumes that women and men have been taught to perceive their roles as distinct and different.

Socialization patterns for males and females are institutionally reinforced and continue in adult life. Women are taught to be family caretakers and nurturers. Society does not necessarily admire the pursuit by women of a career requiring planning and long hours of work which takes women away from their families.

A second model proposed by Estler is the “discrimination model”. This model draws on the assumption that institutional patterns are the result of the efforts of one group to exclude the participation of another group. The discrimination model suggests that preferential hiring and promotional practices explain the sexist imbalance in educational administration (Estler, 1975). Estler’s models have been discussed by later researchers, such as Dopp and Sloan (1986) who say that Estler’s discrimination model is supported by an examination of the number of years it takes women to achieve the rank of principal or superintendent, in comparison to men.

An analysis of Estler’s work by Dopp and Sloan (1986) shows that almost the same absolute number of female and male teachers hold credentials to become administrators. “However, the median number of years in teaching before appointment to the elementary principalship is five years for males and fifteen years for females” (p. 121).

Estler’s (1975) third model is the “meritocracy model”. This model assumes that the most competent people have been promoted, suggesting women are not competent. Estler discovered, however, that there is very little data to support belief in the higher general competence of men. According to Estler’s research, the meritocracy model links the existence of sex roles and occupational stereotypes to the reduction of women actively seeking leadership positions.

In addition to Estler, others have addressed models of barriers that describe glass ceilings that women experience in organizations. Hansot and Tyack (1981) postulate three explanatory models from their review of the literature. The first model focuses on the individual woman as possessing internal barriers that keep her from advancing; socialization and sex stereotyping are seen as the guiding forces behind all her behavior. For example, studies by the American Association of University Women (1992) highlight gender bias and patterns of low expectation beginning early with the school experiences of many girls. This early treatment conveys the message that females are less deserving and less worthy, eroding a woman’s self-esteem with lifelong effects. Hansot and Tyack (1981) say that internal barriers that keep women from advancing in their careers range from a personal lack of confidence to a fear of challenging the cultural expectations of their role. This perspective originates from a psychological paradigm and, essentially, blames the victim for her lack of achievement in educational leadership.

Hansot and Tyack’s (1981) second model describes an organizational structure that shapes the behaviors of its members. The chief source of male hegemony lies not in the psychological makeup of individuals, but in the structures and operations of organizations. Women behave in self-limiting ways, not because they were socialized as females, but because they are locked into low-power, low-visibility, dead-end jobs. Hansot and Tyack show that over the last hundred years a distinct pattern of male hegemony can be seen in school administration. They found that men were more likely to be in administrative positions in education where power, pay, and prestige were the greatest.

Also, men predominated in positions where the job required supervising other males; while women were more likely to be found in roles dealing with other women and children. Their findings state that men generally did not want women as bosses. According to Hansot and Tyack (1981), Men were sought for positions like high school principal and superintendent that linked the educational system with its external environment where maleness gave the schools a higher social credit rating because of the higher general standing of men in society; women, by contrast, were more likely to occupy administrative positions that looked inward toward the system (p. 8).

Hansot and Tyack's (1981) third model portrays a world that is male defined and male run. It is male dominance that has led to conditions that keep women from advancing into positions of power and prestige. Hansot and Tyack point out that the school boards that make appointments to positions as superintendents are themselves composed largely of men. They report that studies have shown that male boards believe males to be superior candidates for the top positions. So the attitude of the lay decision makers have obviously been a major reason for the scarcity of women at the top. Also, Hansot and Tyack report that within the school district, males have access to the men at the top of the district hierarchy and can get to know them on grounds of intimacy normally inaccessible to women. It is more common for male superiors in school systems to serve as sponsors for other men since rigid social customs make friendships between men and women highly suspect. They report that men have opportunities to get the attention of superiors and to curry public favor through activities like coaching a successful team, which is a notable and visible exercise of leadership (Hansot and Tyack, 1981).

Men have had similar advantages in the community, ways of tying the schools to the power structure of the larger social environment. Hansot and Tyack (1981) point out in the 1970's and the 1980's that men could join all-male organizations like the Rotary Clubs and Chambers of Commerce and there gain important information, friendships and political support. Hansot and Tyack (1981) conclude, "In a society that was deeply biased in its distribution of power, in which informal networks and voluntary organizations of influence were often single-sex, being male is a strong asset"(p. 22).

In a world that is male defined and male run, Hansot and Tyack (1981) assert that marriage has operated with an opposite valence for men and women. Marriage was an asset, if not a tacit requirement in upward mobility for men, whereas for women it was often a liability, if not an actual barrier. A strong cultural belief dictated that married women belonged at home, caring for husband and children.

Kanter (1977) presented the thesis that it was neither gender nor an individual's personal characteristics, but organizational structure that limits the opportunities of women and minorities. Kanter (1977) pointed out that, "Opportunity structures shape behaviors in such a way that they confirm their own prophecies" (p. 158). People who have very little opportunity to move up the hierarchy (women teachers) disengage in the form of depressed aspirations (Hansot and Tyack, 1981). Shakeshaft (1989) found that those people who are highly mobile within the hierarchy (men teachers), however, "tend to develop attitudes and values that impel them further along the track: work commitment, high aspirations, and upward orientations" (p. 91). Kanter says that the so called lack of

aspiration that women have toward administration might more accurately be seen as an expected response to lack of opportunity. This can be more fully explained by a framework that holds organizational structure as paramount in preventing women from moving into school administration. Kanter's (1977) assertion that "things may become evaluated as less desirable as they become less likely" (p. 140) is crucial to understanding women's aspiration levels.

Kanter's thesis is further strengthened by recent studies documenting that once organizational or societal barriers are removed that women begin applying for positions in school administration (Chase, 1996; Hill and Ragland, 1995). Edson (1987) determined that as positions open up, as women were encouraged to apply, and as they saw other women achieving, more women began to aspire to administrative jobs. Picker (1980) also documented that aspiration increased as women begin to believe that they have a chance in administration. The result of her study shows that female administrators, in contrast to men who participated in the study, generally aspired beyond the position of principal as their ultimate career goals.

Kanter's work on the structural determinants of opportunity and power is most useful for explaining behavior in an organization. However, it does not address the cause of the initial inequity. Although many of the behaviors attributed to females - behaviors often cited as evidence for not promoting women into school administration - are shown to be behaviors exhibited not by females, per se, but by those who are low in organizational opportunity, power, and proportions (Kanter, 1977).

Male dominance explains much of the source of inequality in education, deeply imbedded as it is in both social institutions and individuals (Shakeshaft, 1989). The ideology of patriarchy is also called androcentrism, meaning male-centered. Shakeshaft (1989) describes androcentrism as the practice of viewing the world and of shaping reality from a male perspective. It is the elevation of the masculine to the level of the universal and the ideal, and the honoring of men and the male principle above women and the female. This perception creates a belief in male superiority and a masculine value system in which female values, experiences, and behaviors are viewed as inferior (Shakeshaft, 1989).

According to Shakeshaft (1989) the barriers can only exist in a world that divides people into categories such as gender; thus these barriers need to be seen not as a woman's fault, not as a result of organizational structure, but as the outcome of sexual hierarchy in which males are at the top and females are at the bottom. It is this ideology of patriarchy resulting in an androcentric society that explains why men, and not women, occupy the formal leadership positions in school and society (Shakeshaft, 1989). From a feminist perspective, Grogan (1996) suggests women renegotiate the power balance in their relationships in an attempt to dislodge social constraints.

Contemporary Barriers to Women's Advancement in Educational Administration

A number of contemporary barriers to women advancing in administration has been identified in the research literature. A review of the literature shows those barriers to be: lack of political savvy; titles and job labels which structure future advancement; lack of mentoring; lack of professional goals; and lack of mobility.

In their 1995 study, Hill and Ragland interviewed thirty-five women in public school leadership positions. These researchers felt that there was a dearth of information about the contributions and practice of women in public school administration. They found that little literature focuses on women leaders in education. According to their review, the theoretical bases of educational leadership are overwhelmingly established on research generated by white males studying white male leaders. Hill and Ragland wanted to explore new understandings and possibilities for women in educational administration. In their study, women were selected who had started their educational careers as classroom teachers, then moved to positions as principals, superintendents, school board members, and school officials at national, state, and local levels. The population was of mixed ethnic diversity and ranged in age from the early thirties to the sixties. Also, the study sample represented nineteen of the United States and two Canadian provinces that included rural, suburban, and urban geographic areas.

Hill and Ragland found that despite promising demographic statistics and opportunities for women to secure positions in educational leadership, women continue to be hampered by contemporary barriers. The first contemporary barrier they describe is the lack of political savvy which has prevented women from moving forward in administrative positions. Hill and Ragland (1995) say that, "Men act as gatekeepers, in which deals are often made and agreements cut before many women know positions are available" (p. 11). Often, understandings have been negotiated during golf or social interactions. Women are not normally privy to those venues or decisions made outside the formal work setting. "The 'good ol' boy' network exists so strongly in many school districts that many men can tell you their number in line to the superintendency," say Hill and Ragland (1995, p. 11). Houston (1996) says that women are not enamored with the politics of the superintendent's position. However, every negotiation between human beings is a political act. According to Houston (1996), women are very good at the political act in other settings; but when they look at the superintendency in a strictly political sense they cannot see it that way. In a personal interview at the American Association of School Administrators Conference in San Antonio, Texas, Paul Houston (1996), said that, "Dealing with school boards is like dealing with a difficult child, and dealing with community groups is like dealing with some neighbors." Houston suggests a solution to the lack of political savvy is for women to apply strategies that work politically in the context of other natural settings. Houston states that the really successful women superintendents go beyond politics and the mind-forged manacles of self doubt.

Hill and Ragland (1995) found that other contemporary barriers that have hurt women's advancement are "positioning" and "job labels". Pay scales are structured according to job positions and can predict or prevent future advancement. The gap and

limited scope of varied experiences necessary to gain the superintendency has hurt women's chances. "Glass ceilings have been easily installed and maintained" (Hill and Ragland, 1995, p. 12).

Hill and Ragland cite the lack of mentoring as another contemporary barrier. They found that mentoring, which increases a woman's career opportunities and political savvy, was lacking for a variety of reasons. First, many potential male mentors did not consider that some women would be interested in leading. Second, in some organizations cross-gender mentoring was discouraged because such relationships could potentially be misconstrued as something more than career support. Third, they found that many women in influential positions lacked understandings of the power and processes of mentoring behavior. Hill and Ragland (1995) found that women in certain educational areas or in specific school districts did not have the time or recognize the value of the mentoring role in the scope of their careers. Furthermore, they concluded, that if a woman views herself as a token in a position of authority, regardless of her capability, a self-perceived token will be unlikely to foster leadership in others.

Due to the lack of mentoring, the women in Hill and Ragland's (1995) study discussed a common thread of feeling that they were "the only one" or alone throughout their career. They guarded their feelings of ambition and drive because it could be construed as socially unacceptable or misunderstood. The women expressed that it was prudent to keep their ideas to themselves. However, Hill and Ragland report, as the women in the study made gains in educational leadership positions they did discover the concomitant gains of mentoring others.

The lack of mobility is a cultural perception that exists in limiting women's career options. In their study, Hill and Ragland (1995) report that mobility is a bigger consideration for women than men. They found that problems associated with being alone in a new setting are more significant for single women than for single men due to safety, socialization, and child care factors. They found that married women most often elect not to move in order to protect their husbands' positions, ensure more stability for their children's schooling, and maintain an extended family support base. Over half the women in Hill and Ragland's study had their career or graduate study interrupted or limited by a husband's career moves or the lack of his ability to move due to his job. The majority of the women who were interviewed recalled experiences of losing good jobs or promising promotions due to husbands relocating or because of the husbands inability to relocate.

The mobility consideration does hinder female job advancement, especially if organizations assume married women will decline a necessary move. Often affecting women's aspirations to leadership is the lack of clear professional goals. Studies by Bonuso and Shakeshaft (1983) and Thomas (1986) show a strong correlation between women's lack of career advancement and their lowered aspirations in career goals. In Gupton and Slick's (1996) study, their respondents reported they had not carefully planned their ascent to the top. Their acquisition of position was often by default, tenure, a suggestion by a mentor or an opportunity that simply emerged. Gupton and Slick cite Newman as suggesting, "Women frequently have had to compromise their career aspirations because of inner conflict created by family responsibilities and role

identification” (Newman in Gupton and Slick, 1996, p. xxviii). Gupton and Slick’s research revealed that many women aspire to less than the top-level administrative positions in education. They reported that many women in their study still see themselves in supportive roles in administration. The majority of their respondents were in assistant superintendent positions rather than in the “chief” position of superintendent. The majority of the assistant superintendents were in the area of curriculum and instruction, an area traditionally staffed by women. However, women who have achieved executive positions in education and who have broken through glass ceilings often demonstrate a strong desire to succeed and view themselves as leaders despite the white male leadership stereotype dominant in our society (Benton, 1980; Pavan, 1989; Swiderski, 1988).

Socialization Process

According to Chase (1995), in the contemporary United States, we take for granted that the professions are integral to society’s functioning, that professional work is a sphere of achievement and competence based in specialized knowledge useful to society at large, that such work encourages professionals to develop identities based in their work (p. 17). Konnert and Augenstein (1990) concluded that the socialization process of a superintendent begins prior to assuming the role and continues during the performance of the role. Current research (Chase 1995; Grogan, 1996; Gupton and Slick, 1996), examining the discourse of women as they aspire to the superintendency found that a woman portrays her professional identity as developing in the context of opportunity and the process of her socialization.

Hart (1995) relates that when a person is appointed to leadership positions they enter existing social groups with established norms, beliefs, and assumptions that guide interactions and relationships. The person begins to experience an organizational socialization process which is likely to result in their personal development. Hart describes the organizational socialization theory in the new leader as the changes in the knowledge, skills, and professional practices used in the enactment of the leadership role. This theory includes the evolution of fundamental assumptions and conceptualization of the role being assumed by the new leader.

Konnert and Augenstein (1990) agree that, "The new leaders must continue to seek new knowledge, develop new skills, and hone existing ones" (p. 193). The formal and informal preparation for the superintendency is grounded in socialization theory. Socialization (Clause, 1968) is the process by which a role aspirant learns the values and the behaviors and hones the skills required for a specific role (Konnert and Augenstein, 1990). The first component of the socialization process is that one identifies and internalizes the values and norms that are shared by the group to which one aspires (Spencer and Inkeles, 1976). During the process, the second component occurs when one assumes an identity like the superintendency. The third component is one of what Mead (1934) called “significant other”. It is the role, behavior, attitude, and values of the significant other that are taken on by the one being socialized (Konnert and Augenstein, 1990). This is most often a mentor. Mentors often play an important part in the socialization process as they structure activities to provide formal and informal exposure

to organizational values and norms (Hart, 1995).

Another component is role learning. "A role is an organized set of behaviors that belongs to an identifiable position, and these behaviors are activated when the position is occupied" (Sarbin and Allen, 1968, p. 545). Hart (1995) found that role innovation is the most dramatic outcome of leader succession, for it redefines the mission, goals, and content of leadership. Hart states that when a strong professional identity is affirmed and individuality supported, the outcome is role innovation. Under role innovation, the new leader makes an attempt to redefine the ends as well as means. This outcome is more likely to result in personal growth and change for the new leader.

The socialization process is continuous and interactional. Konnert and Augenstein (1990) say the socialization of a superintendent begins prior to assuming the role and continues during the performance of the role. Individuals who anticipate seeking a superintendency need to understand that their socialization does not stop. In order to perform the role of superintendent, the aspirants must know what is expected and be willing to meet those expectations (Konnert and Augenstein, 1990).

Beyond the Barriers The 21st Century Superintendent

According to Konnert and Augenstein (1995), the future scenario for the role of superintendent will be to provide the leadership so that the school structure can be adapted to support new modes of operations. The complexity of issues and the need for systematic approach to problems, "calls for educational leaders to move away from the traditional, hierarchical, control-and-command environment that is pervasive in many schools today" (Wesson and Grady, 1994, p. 413). In business management literature (Aburdene and Naisbitt, 1992; Covey, 1990; Peters, 1988), the paradigm shift in leadership is to a more flexible organizational structure. In this new organizational structure, leadership is valued over management and emphasizes collaboration, consensus-building, and empowerment (Wesson and Grady, 1994).

Johnson (1996) states, The superintendent no longer acts as the sole educational authority, but, rather, has the potential to be an influential educational leader whose authority is grounded in expertise and reaffirmed by constituents' respect and trust. In the complicated environment of public education today, there are increasing demands for the superintendent to build coalitions and negotiate agreements that will strengthen the standing of schools in the community (p. 275).

What will these new leaders be like? Hoyle (1989) predicts that the 21st century superintendents will have a healthy respect for others and a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. They will work in a less hierarchical organization and will be comfortable with empowerment of others. The 21st century superintendent will have strong skills in persuasion and an appreciation for ethnic diversity.

Hoyle (1989) states that the superintendents in the 21st century will be using testing and evaluation procedures that measure more than a student's ability to recall facts. The curricula will deal with complex issues confronting technological and pluralistic societies. The school leaders and students will be learning to work and live in an

international and interdependent world. The 21st century leaders will need to be excellent managers of resources, budgets, and strategic planners. They will be information brokers and intuitive decision makers. Tomorrow's leaders must have the skills of writing, listening, and persuasive speaking.

Also, the 21st century superintendents will be in tune with other state and national agencies and with business and industry (Hoyle, 1989). They will form collaborative efforts and will think holistically and will be aware that all social institutions and corporations are interconnected. Hoyle predicts that they will be futurists who use state-of-the-art forecasting, monitoring, and scanning technologies and who model intuition and creativity. These education 'pathfinders' will lead their states and the nation by keeping one foot in the present for stability and one foot in the future for possibility (1989, p. 379).

As the ways of thinking about leadership shift, the literature references the need for leadership skills often associated with women (Gupton and Slick, 1996). "Systemic reform emphasizes team-building, interconnectedness, group problem solving, and shared decision making - concepts and skills often associated with female leadership" (Anderson, 1993, p. 14). In corporate America, women lead in new and different ways, ways which are non-hierarchical, cooperative, and collaborative (Wesson and Grady, 1994). Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) refer to the concept of "women's leadership style" as being "open, trusting, compassionate, understanding and supportive of continuous learning" (McGrew-Zouili, 1993, p.43). Shakeshaft states that women administrators more often are guided by what Gilligan describes as, "An injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the real and recognizable trouble of this world" (Gilligan in Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 195).

In Helegesen's (1990) study of women's ways of leading, she researched the strategies and organizational theories of four successful corporate female leaders. She describes her female subjects as seeing themselves creating webs of inclusion where communities sharing information is key and where the rules of hierarchy come undone. As leaders, the women are at the center of their organizations reaching out for a more inclusive and shared ownership in decision making. The leadership characteristics of the women in Helgesen's study stressed empowerment and human development rather than subordination to the chain of command. The subjects had overriding values of responsibility and interconnection rather than the quest for authority and autonomy. Helegesen states that the women in her study provided models of what leadership can become when guided by feminine principles.

In their study of creating relational leadership, Regan and Brooks (1995) describe five feminist attributes arising as they listened to stories of women's experiences of leadership. The first attribute they define is collaboration, the ability of the women to work in a group and create a synergistic environment for everyone. "Cooperatives as women have practiced it through the ages is one of women's hidden sources of power", says Lenz and Myerhoff (1985, p. 10). Regan and Brooks (1995) found that the women of their study reached out to people, asked for help when needed, and gathered people in, and collaborated to get the job done. Their behavior was inclusive. They found a significant result of this approach was greater self-esteem for those empowered through shared ownership.

The second attribute Regan and Brooks (1995) define is that of caring. The themes of care and connection have been identified as central to women's psychological development and learning (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982). Noddings (1984) states that "caring involves stepping out of one's personal frame of reference into the other's" (Noddings in Regan and Brooks, 1995, p. 27). Regan and Brooks (1995) understand "care to be the essence of education; education is a project undertaken on behalf of others" (p. 27). The goal of care is promoting human development and responding to the needs that are realized within interdependent relationships occurring in communities (Beck, 1992).

Regan and Brooks' (1995) third attribute is courage. They found that the women studied had the ability to move ahead to the unknown, testing new ideas in the world of practice. These women embarked on careers traditionally associated with men and had to take risks; to confront the possibility of failure, not fitting the mold; and to endure the many problems of being female in a male-based environment. Regan and Brooks agree that it takes courage to enter such an alien world, a struggle to decipher and apply a different set of rules, and then go on to change them when it became apparent that the rules conflicted with their core values as women. The intuitive sense of self gave each of the women studied the courage to move on to places that were compatible with their own beliefs.

The fourth attribute, intuition, is defined by Regan and Brooks as the ability to give equal weight to experience and abstraction, mind and heart. It is a natural mental ability, strongly associated with experience. Regan and Brooks note that as one builds on their experiences they place a greater trust in their intuition.

The last attribute described by Regan and Brooks is vision, the ability to formulate and express original ideas, enabling others to consider options in new and different ways. They feel that vision is one of the facets of collaboration and by eliciting everyone's thoughts and creating a trusting environment vision is possible. Regan and Brooks found that the women studied had the ability to move ahead to the unknown, give equal weight to mind and heart, and enabled others to consider options in new and different ways.

A number of researchers (Hemphill, Griffiths and Frederiksen, 1962; Shakeshaft, 1989) have found that women are perceived as being more democratic and participatory than men. Comparative studies indicate that women principals are more democratic than men principals (Hines and Grobman, 1956) and women use more cooperative planning strategies in meetings than men do (Berman, 1982). Fairholm and Fairholm (1984) found that the predominant power tactics among women principals are coalition building, cooptation, and personality. Shakeshaft says, "Neuve documents that women are less committed to the formal hierarchy and are more willing to submerge displays of personal power in an effort to get others to participate in the decision-making process" (Neuve in Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 187).

Charters and Jovick (1981) and Pitner (1981) examined women superintendents' administrative styles and concur that more participatory and collegial styles appear to enhance, rather than threaten the power base of female administrators. Bell and Chase (1989) found that women superintendents recognized that "an organization is its people"

(Scherr, 1995, p. 319). Women superintendents talk about trusting and investing in their staff, use teaching metaphors, and employ strategies that de-emphasize hierarchy, but facilitate shared decision making. Studies of women managers confirm their ability to adapt to flexible, evolving structures of organization (Fruer, 1988).

Conclusion

This review of the literature has included a discussion on the historical barriers as well as contemporary barriers to women in educational administration; on the socialization process that aspirants experience as they seek positions of power, and on the leadership characteristics needed for the 21st century superintendent. The researchers reviewed in this chapter generally agree that barriers to women's advancement in educational leadership are entrenched in societal concepts. They found that throughout history, and in most cultures, conflicts between the role of leader and expectations for female roles have occurred. This has often resulted in distorted images and stereotypes of women leaders. They conclude that, societally, much of our thinking about women in leadership positions has not progressed far.

Researchers (Chase, 1995; Grogan, 1996; Gupton and Slick , 1996) found that a woman portrays her professional identity as developing in the context of opportunity and the process of socialization. Konnert and Augenstein (1990) point out that part of the socialization process includes the internalization of values, role learning and the effect of a significant other on the one being socialized. Chase (1996) explains that a woman's sense of self is defined through feelings and the quality of her relationships. Chase (1996), Grogan (1995), and Gupton and Slick (1996) found that the discourse of shared experiences of women administrators as they negotiated their way through everyday interactions contributed to their understanding of their process of developing a sense of self and a professional identity. The researchers in this review state that by women telling their stories and sharing the discourse, they are able to bridge gaps. As Jagger concludes, "Feminist theory is at its best when it reflects the lived experiences of women and when it bridges the gap between mind and body, reason and emotion, thinking and feeling" (1983, p. x).

As documented by the review of the literature, characteristics of leaders for contemporary educational settings have shifted to a more feminine perspective. The scholars reviewed state that a trend toward a participatory style of leadership and decentralization of power has been occurring. Feminine traits such as nurturing, collaboration, and consensus building are emerging as positive aspects of leadership in educational and business organizations. Johnson (1996) says the superintendent for the 21st century will be the enhancer of the system who builds capacity for learning communities to do.

CHAPTER III

How shall I ever find the grains of truth
embedded in all this mass of paper?
Virginia Woolf, A Room of Ones' Own

Research Methodology

The purpose of the study was to describe the professional identity that emerges as a woman attains the superintendency and to delineate those factors that contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency. This chapter describes the research methods used in the study. The chapter is organized into the following eight sections: introduction, research design, population and sample selection, methods and procedures, qualitative interviewing, data analysis, validity and reliability, and ethical issues.

A qualitative interviewing approach with descriptive methods of data collection was employed. Grounded in literature on the socialization process, barriers to women in educational administration, and theory guiding a new leadership style for the 21st century superintendent, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What patterns, themes, or trends emerge that characterize how female superintendents shape their professional identities?
2. What strategies do female superintendents use in establishing their professional identities?
3. What are the keys to successful entry into the role of superintendent?
4. Do female superintendents encounter “glass ceilings” on the way up to the position, and if, so, how were they overcome?

To investigate these questions fully, a qualitative methodology was selected.

Research Design

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) define qualitative research as inclusive of five features: qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the key instrument; qualitative research is descriptive; the qualitative researcher is concerned with process rather than outcomes; the qualitative researcher tends to analyze the data inductively; meaning is an essential concern to the qualitative approach (p. 29).

Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis provided the researcher an opportunity for in-depth understanding of complex factors that influence the development of a professional identity and the strategies that facilitate and contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency. Qualitative studies, Miles and Huberman (1988) purported, are well suited for examining the meanings that people place on the events, processes, and structures in their lives. Miles and Huberman further cite the power of the qualitative study for collecting data over a sustained period. Qualitative research permitted the investigator to consider findings within the natural context of events and provides opportunities for making new and significant contributions to what is currently understood (Merriam, 1988). An understanding of individuals' interpretations and perceptions are

critical to the investigation (Stainback, 1988), especially when manipulation of potential causes of behavior is not possible or feasible, or when variables are too deeply embedded in the context to be studied in isolation (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1989).

The research design for this investigation was qualitative interviewing. This design required the investigator to listen to people as they described how they understand the worlds in which they live and work (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). According to Rubin and Rubin (1995) qualitative interviews form explanations and theories that are grounded in details, evidence, and examples of the interviews. Such grounded theories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) explain what is happening in the terms of those involved in a situation. Grounded theory is based on exchanges in which the interviewees can talk back, clarify, and explain their points.

Qualitative interviews share three pivotal characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of data gathering in research. Rubin and Rubin (1995) define these shared characteristics of qualitative interviews. First, qualitative interviews are modifications or extensions of ordinary conversations. Second, the qualitative interviewers are more interested in the understanding, knowledge, and insights of the interviewees than in categorizing people or events in terms of academic theories. Third, the content, flow and choice of topics of the interviews, change to match what the individual interviewee knows and feels (p.6).

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), the qualitative interview primarily relies on three guiding themes. First, qualitative interviewing requires an understanding of culture. Rubin and Rubin (1995) say culture affects what is said and how the interview is heard and understood. Second, interviewers are not neutral actors, but participants in the interviewing relationship. Third, the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to hear and understand what the interviewees think and to give them public voice (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

The qualitative interview approach relies on inductive reasoning. Although questions are posed at the onset, hypotheses emerge from the data, and the expectations of the researcher are subject to reformulation as the study advances (Merriam, 1988). The qualitative interview design potentially leads to rich descriptions of complex situations and meaningful explanations for existing phenomena.

Population and Sample Selection

Qualitative samples tend to be purposive, rather than random (Kunzel, 1992; Morse, 1989). The purposive sample in qualitative research is a small group of people studied in their context (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In qualitative research initial choices of participants can lead to similar and different ones, and understanding one key relationship in the setting reveals facets that can be studied in others (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The researcher elicited expert nomination from a group of educational professionals who were familiar with women superintendents in Virginia. This group was composed of a consultant for the executive director of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, two education administration professors from Virginia Tech University,

and a headhunter for a Superintendent Search firm. The seven participants were selected purposely through expert nomination on the bases of their availability, their willingness to participate, and their knowledge and experiences as women in educational leadership positions. The two women in the pilot study were selected purposively on the basis of their knowledge about women in educational leadership positions, moved through the profession from teachers to the Area superintendency, and their availability and willingness to participate. Due to the large size of this Northern Virginia district, these two women, as area superintendents, had job responsibilities similar to superintendents of medium to large districts in the rest of the state. They worked with the division superintendent as part of a leadership team. Nominations for the study interviews were elicited both of the experts that contributed to the selection of the participants in the first group and of the two area superintendents participating in the first round of interviews. The nominators were asked to suggest names of superintendents who had varied leadership experiences as a woman administrator and would be willing to share stories of their attaining a superintendency. The second group of superintendents were chosen according to three criteria: First, their names were mentioned by a number of experts and the two area superintendents interviewed in the pilot study, second, they were known for their candor, story telling, and a variety of educational experiences, and third, were employed in regions of the state that would represent diverse populations. Each selected woman superintendent received an introductory letter explaining the study and a letter of support from Dr. Paul Houston, Executive Director, American Association of School Administrators for the study (Appendix B). After the women superintendents received the introductory letters, the researcher called each of them to discuss the study and determined their willingness to participate in this study. The participants and their districts were described using pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

Methods and Procedures

This study used data collection techniques, both to gain insight into factors that influence the development of professional identity as a woman aspires and attains the superintendency, and to delineate those factors that facilitate and contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency. After selection of the seven participants the researcher made one to two hour interview appointments with the selected participants. Each participant was told that follow-up sessions in person or by telephone may occur, if necessary, to clarify or explain previous information.

Data in this study were primarily generated through interviews and informal conversations with superintendents, and interviewer's reflective notes. During the interviews the researcher took notes, recording observations or thoughts that occurred to the researcher as the interviews progressed. After each interview session the researcher's reflective field notes took into consideration the following three questions: What was learned from the person interviewed? What areas of the interview format needed to be improved? and How can the content of the next interview be improved or expanded? Summaries of what was learned during the interviews, and a running file of ideas were recorded in the researcher's reflective journal.

Prior to subject selection, approval from the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, was obtained. The protocol used for participant consent is found in Appendix A. The suggested interview questions format for the superintendents to guide the conversational sessions are found in Appendix C.

There was intentional overlapping of some questions to strengthen confirmability of responses (Patton, 1980). The interview guide was used for all discussions. All the interviews were taped and transcribed, and reflective notes were taken after all interviews. The participants were given the chance to deviate from the guided questions and to use their own 'voice' to describe experiences related to obtaining and working in the superintendency. All interview transcripts were color coded as emergent themes and categories were created. The researcher kept a log which aided in clustering themes at the end of each interview (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Qualitative Interviewing

One cannot observe events that took place at some other point in time, nor can one observe the meanings one attaches to what goes on in the world; one must ask questions about those things (Patton, 1994). Rubin and Rubin (1995) recommend interviews using guided conversation to allow the researcher to capture the perspectives of participants. They explained that grounded theory is based on exchanges in which the interviewees can talk back, clarify and explain their points. Fowler (1988) related that the personal interview is probably the most effective means for enlisting the cooperation for most populations. He cited answering respondent questions, proving and building rapport and confidences as key advantages to the personal interview.

McCracken (1988) suggests that the interview format use a series of prompts designed to give structure to the interview. In this study the interviewer employed prompting strategies for biographical information and for asking respondents to recall exceptional incidents (McCracken, 1988). This study's interview guide utilized a combination approach of open-ended and general questions (Appendix C) and the interviewer encouraged the interviewee to relate stories of their experiences. As Patton (1994) suggested, with the use of a combination of interview probes, the researcher has the opportunity to explore certain themes more extensively.

The interview format of this research was based upon Rubin and Rubin's (1995) topical interviewing. Topical interviews begin with preplanned main questions that together cover the overall subject. Each of the main questions may stimulate a few probes and follow up questions. This affords the opportunity to make conversational repairs; to acknowledge that the question is understood and the interviewer understands the answer; and to encourage the interviewee to give complete and detailed responses. Rubin and Rubin (1995) noted that the interviewer needs to remain free to build conversation and to word questions spontaneously in order to establish rapport with the conversational partners.

The researcher served as the interviewer, and each interview was tape recorded and transcribed into text by the researcher. Respondents were asked permission to audio-tape before the interviews began and were given assurances of confidentiality. Because interview success is dependent upon the relationship between the interviewer and the respondent (Merriam, 1988), the researcher attempted to establish rapport and provide a casual and non-threatening atmosphere for the respondents prior to beginning the interviews.

The interview guide and a guided conversation approach were piloted on two women superintendents in order to establish if the questions were clearly constructed and to allow the interviewer to develop an ease with the interview process. One of the pilot interviewees was a former area superintendent with a large school district in Northern Virginia and currently the executive director of Washington Commission on Learning in the state of Washington. The other pilot interviewee is currently an area superintendent in Northern Virginia. This pilot process provided the researcher with the opportunity to further develop interviewer skills and re-frame interview questions and observation techniques.

Record keeping is an essential component of qualitative research that assists in establishing reliability (Merriam, 1988). In this study, reflective notes and interviews were key methods of data collection. Field notes of observations during and after the interview and transcriptions of audio-taped interviews constituted the body of qualitative data used for analysis.

Immediately following observations, the researcher reviewed the preliminary notes taken during meetings and expanded them to preserve an accurate account of events. As suggested by Merriam (1988), interview data were gathered through tape-recording, note-taking during interviews, and further note-taking following interviews. Although tape-recording is considered preferable because it allows for verbatim transcription for later analysis (Merriam, 1988), the researcher would have rejected this method if respondents had appeared hesitant or uncomfortable with the process. The content of interview notes included participants' responses, descriptions of participants' behavior and office, and researcher's comments.

Data Analysis

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), "The purpose of data analysis is to organize the interviews to present a narrative that explains what happened or to provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behavior" (p. 229). The naturalistic inquiry lends to the ongoing process of analyzing data throughout data collection. Rubin and Rubin (1995) and Stake (1995) say that the analysis of qualitative data begins during data collection and involves studying notes and transcripts, organizing or coding interview or observation excerpts into interpretive categories, searching for patterns and connections among the excerpts, and reorganizing excerpts into new and different categories. The excerpts may contradict or connect to passages from other participants or to literature on the subject. This technique of analysis permits freedom to

continue to focus the study while gathering new and different data which provide a greater depth to understanding the problem (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that data analysis is an ongoing part of data collection. Thus, data analysis began while the interviewing was underway, and continued after completing each interview and while reviewing multiple sources. This afforded the opportunity to pull out themes and concepts that described the world of the interviewee and facilitated the decision on which areas to be examined in more detail (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). This ongoing analysis provided direction and the chance to clarify information and refine interview questions.

Data collection strategies included at least one general/guided interview per subject, informal conversations, observations, and interviewer's reflection notes. The data included: field notes of conversations and of observations while with the participants, transcripts from audio tapes of the interviews, vitae, and written media communications by the superintendents in the form of newsletter and brochures. Interview, observational, conversational and document data received separate codings.

Initially in coding the interviews, categories were identified from the literature by putting key words such as 'politically savvy' in the margins. Also each passage was marked with a brief summary of what the person told the researcher. Following Spradley's (1979) idea of domain analysis the researcher asked which ideas go together to form a cluster of related terms and processes. Each cluster then became a major coding category; the individual ideas and themes were treated as subcategories. These categories were organized into groupings of ideas that are thematically related, a process that Strauss (1987) labeled axial coding (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The researcher designated coding categories by using color highlighting of the interview transcriptions for example yellow denoted politically savvy and blue denoted mission. Portions of transcripts were divided into small sections of dialogue focusing on particular topics and were hand-sorted categorically to order information into similar groups which could be given temporary codings. The transcripts were analyzed along with field notes of informal conversations and observations and review of pertinent documents to assure triangulation of the data (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). These data were analyzed to identify patterns, themes or trends that characterize how superintendents shape their professional identity, keys to successful entry into the role of superintendent, strategies used in establishing professional identities, and ways perceived glass ceilings were overcome.

Color coded data were extracted, condensed, and entered onto matrices, which were developed as themes emerged from the coded data. From these matrices, conclusions were drawn through noting patterns and themes and making comparisons and contrasts. Miles and Huberman (1988) state that drawing conclusions from displays increase the chance of verifying valid conclusions because the display is arranged coherently to permit careful comparisons, detection of differences, noting of patterns and themes, and seeing trends (p. 92).

Validity and Reliability

McCracken (1988) states, “ The issue of qualitative inquiry is not one of generalizability” (p.17). The purpose of the qualitative interview is not to discover how many, and what kinds of, people share a certain characteristic. It is to gain access to cultural categories and assumptions according through which culture one construes the world (McCracken, 1988).

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995) most indicators of validity and reliability do not fit qualitative research. They say, “Trying to apply these indicators to qualitative work distracts more than it clarifies” (p. 85). Rubin and Rubin suggest judging the credibility of qualitative work by its transparency, consistency-coherence, and communicability. The transparency allows the reader to assess the intellectual strengths and weaknesses, the biases, and the conscientiousness of the interviewer. Coherence offers explanations for why apparent contradictions in themes occurred and what the contradictions mean. Also credibility is increased when the researcher can show that core concepts and themes consistently occur in a variety of cases and in different settings. Communicability is achieved when the conversational partners see themselves in your descriptions, and other researchers can understand your text and accept your descriptions. Rubin and Rubin (1995) cite these standards through qualitative interviewing as measures of credibility.

Reliability, generally, is defined as the ability to replicate a particular study. In qualitative inquiry, however, the researchers view reliability as the goodness of fit between recorded data and phenomena in the setting being studied (Merriam, 1988). Some experts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) in qualitative research have suggested thinking about dependability or consistency of results rather than replication. They proposed that issues of reliability be subsumed within those of validity. With validity being the preeminent concern of the qualitative researcher, reliability often is considered verified once validity has been established. Reliability is attained when the reader concludes that, given the data collected, the results make sense.

Ethical Issues

The responsibility of producing a study that has been managed and disseminated in an ethical manner belongs to the researcher (Merriam, 1988). Several guidelines have been suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) to ensure the maintenance of high ethical standards. These included protecting the identities of informants, treating participants with respect, fulfilling any agreements made during negotiating the terms of the study, and telling the truth when reporting the findings. The researcher adhered to these guidelines in conducting and reporting the study. Participants were assured that they and their school districts would remain anonymous in all reports of the study results.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology and a rationale for the methodology of the study. The population and sample selection were described. A description was provided of qualitative interviewing and data analysis procedures. The basis for validity and reliability of the study was described along with the ethical considerations of the study.

CHAPTER IV

I have met brave women who
are exploring the outer
edge of human possibility,
with no history to guide them,
and with the courage to
make themselves vulnerable.....
Gloria Steinem, The First Ms. Reader

Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the professional identity that emerges as a woman attains the superintendency and to delineate those factors that contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency. Seven interviews with women superintendents were conducted, in all, between November, 1996 and November, 1997 from a selected state. The pilot study was conducted with a present area superintendent and a former area superintendent now in another position. These two subjects were instrumental in the selection of subjects for the study. In addition, informal conversations, observations, and interviewer's reflection notes were examined for significant factors. Demographic information, profiles, and emerging themes were gathered from informal conversations, and an analysis of the interview sessions. The women who participated in this study, as those in Moire and Wilson's (1996) study, recounted many different stories when they talked about becoming and being superintendents. They had varying opinions about the open-mindedness of school boards, staffs, and constituents toward women superintendents. They have varying feelings about themselves as women and as leaders. They have taken different paths to obtain their positions. Literature on historical and contemporary barriers to women's advancement in education administration, the socialization process, and leadership for the 21st century superintendent were used as a framework for this study.

The following research questions guided data collection in the study:

1. What patterns, themes, or trends emerge that characterize how female superintendents shape their professional identities?
2. What strategies do female superintendents use in establishing their professional identities?
3. What are the keys to successful entry into the role of superintendent?
4. Do female superintendents encounter "glass ceilings" on the way up to the position, and if so, how were they overcome?

This chapter contains four sections. The first section is demographic information of the school systems, and thumbnail sketches of the superintendents. The second section

presents the themes which emerged through the women's voices. The third section discusses a tapestry of other themes which emerged in the study, including some of the commonalities and differences in professional and personal characteristics of the women superintendents and their path along the career advancement ladder. The chapter ends with a summary.

The seven participants were selected purposely through expert nomination on the bases of their availability, their willingness to participate, and their knowledge and experiences as women in educational leadership positions. Selections were also made according to size and geographic location of districts in which the superintendents worked, in order to study the possible differences and similarities in divergent settings.

The researcher approached the selection process in two phases in order to facilitate the iterative or self-correcting process design of the study (McCracken, 1988). This process provided the researcher with a means to pursue themes and topics as they emerged in the study (McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990).

The pilot study was composed of two area women superintendents from urban/suburban communities who moved through the profession from teachers to the superintendency. The second group of superintendents were chosen according to three criteria: First, their names were mentioned by a number of experts and the two area superintendents interviewed in the pilot study, second, they were known for their candor, story telling, and a variety of educational experiences, and third, were employed in regions of the state that would represent diverse populations.

Demographics and Thumbnail Sketches

All the superintendents had a background in teaching in the public schools. Five had been principals, two had been assistant principals and all had central office experience in positions such as director of instruction or special education. They all had been assistant superintendents. Two had experience working for state departments of education. Six of the women administrators had earned doctorates and one had started a doctorate program but had not completed it. The majority of the women held three to six degrees. Five of the women superintendents represented urban/suburban type communities and two represented more rural areas. Three had been the division superintendent for four to nine years, and one of the women had a two year tenure and the other had tenure less than a year. Six are Caucasian and one is African American. Their ages ranged from the early fifties to the early sixties. All of the women are married, four with grown children, and three with no children.

The following are thumbnail sketches of each of the seven subjects:

Superintendent 1. P.H. is the chief executive officer of an urban/suburban community school system. The school system is composed of 17 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 4 high schools, 1 vocational-technical school and 1 alternative education center. The county has an estimated population of 80, 000 and encompasses 250 square miles. The school system enrollment is 13,791, preschool through grade 12 in 28 schools. There are approximately 1,900 employees. In this district 98% of the students complete high school and over 80% pursue some form of post-secondary education.

This is P. H.'s first superintendency, and she moved up from the ranks of the school district she serves. She is entering her fifth year as superintendent in this district. P. H. has been an assistant superintendent, director of a curriculum area, an assistant principal, and a teacher. She earned her doctorate in educational administration from a university in the state where she is superintendent. Dressed in a business suit during the interview, P.H., a Caucasian in her late fifties, gave the impression of a reserved yet friendly woman. She is from the south, married with no children. As the interview progressed, a feeling of openness and welcoming in speaking about her superintendency prevailed. The two hour interview took place in P. H.'s very polished office where education certificates, blueprints of current school construction, family pictures, P. Buckley Moss prints, and a historical collage of the male superintendents of the county were displayed. The bookshelves contained various educational texts, the Chaos Theory, Kappan, and philosophy books. She shared that she rarely reads fiction anymore. P. H. belongs to a number of professional and civic organizations, including a church board, Chamber of Commerce, Art and Historical Council, and Phi Delta Kappa. The interview was interrupted once so that P.H. could confer with the school board attorney on a special education issue. As a superintendent, P. H. views herself as "a symphony conductor...up to me to put the score together".

Superintendent 2: J.M. is the superintendent of a small, city school system which presents a small-town atmosphere within a larger metropolitan area. The city's population is approximately 10,000. There are two elementary schools and a middle/high school with a student population of approximately 1,400. J.M. has been on the job as superintendent for two months. She had previously served as interim superintendent when this city school system conducted a national search. J.M. came up from the ranks of this school district. She had been a primary teacher, a middle school principal, an elementary supervisor and an assistant superintendent. J.M. started a doctorate program in curriculum but has not completed it.

J.M. presented a calm and non-pretentious manner as she interacted with the office staff and began the interview. As of yet, her office did not have that lived-in or personalized look, with displays of professional certificates, art work, or family pictures. She is Caucasian, in her early fifties, married with no children. In a one hour interview, J.M. related that she has a good relationship with her school board and she has been known for her credibility, given her long history in the district in a variety of positions through the years. As superintendent, it appeared that J.M. was developing a comfort level and adjusting to the fact that this was now "her system".

Superintendent 3: D.S. came from a large city school system to the rural community whose school district she leads. She is in her mid-fifties, Caucasian, married, and with grown children and grandchildren. She applied for this superintendency because the historic rural area had been an attraction to her and her husband as a possible place for future retirement. When the position opened she did not hesitate to leave the glamour and opportunities of her former large city school district. In her first superintendent position, D.S. has been at the helm of this 2,500 student population school system for nine years.

There are two elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, and a vocational/tech school. D.S. holds six degrees, with a doctorate in educational leadership. She has been a librarian, a principal, and an assistant superintendent of instruction.

At first D.S. appeared whimsical through choice of dress, and contrary to the researcher's expectations of meeting a high-charging New Yorker, she opened this three and half hour interview session with a variety of stories of her early beginnings. D.S. shared that she decorated her office to communicate an image and to give a message of "what I am about, what I value, and what I hold special". In the office there was an oriental rug, a rocker, a montage of pictures, student art work, organizational plaques, pictures of the building program, and her grandson's hand print hanging on the wall by her desk. She does not think of herself as a woman in the job but as a person doing the job that needs to be done. As superintendent, D.S. related, "The best I can ever hope for is that I can be the right person for my time and if you can inspire others with that sense that they can be the right person for their time... you can do amazing things."

Superintendent 4: J.A. is the superintendent of a rapidly growing suburban county within easy access to an urban area. The county population has increased 80% within the past decade to nearly 65,000 residents. This 17,000 student population is serviced by thirteen elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools and a vocational center. Although this school system is growing rapidly, J.A. believes it is a good fit for her. Her challenges for the next few years will be building three to five new schools. She smilingly related, "One can't get stagnant in a school system that is growing."

This is J.A.'s second superintendency and she has been in the current position for two years. Previously, she had been a superintendent in a rural area of 1,600 students. J.A. is in her early fifties, Caucasian, and married with grown children. J.A. earned four degrees including her doctorate. She decided while in the classroom that she needed to earn her superintendency certificate. She has been a middle school teacher, a band director, an assistant principal, a principal, director of special education and an assistant superintendent.

J.A. was a half hour late for the appointment, as she was involved in a meeting with the school system's transportation department. Coming into the interview, she presented herself in a very confident and professional manner. She easily established a rapport as she apologized for her tardiness and explained some of the logistics she was balancing in the course of the day. The two hour interview occurred in an organized, professionally appointed office. There were diplomas and organization plaques displayed as well as professional journals and books. She is drawn to the classics such as Frost's poems and Shakespeare sonnets. Her briefcase was stacked with professional readings. J.A. was described by a colleague as a woman superintendent who was well liked, and related well with the male superintendents in the state. As superintendent, her mottos are: "Keep the circus under the tent." and "If you are not part of the solution then you are part of the problem."

Superintendent 5: F.M. is the superintendent in a 214 square mile county school system steeped in rich Civil War history, with a population of about 30,000. The area is a growing community which has attracted several industries. The school system has an

enrollment of approximately 5,000 students in grades K-12, with five elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. F.M. is Caucasian, married and in her late fifties. She earned her doctorate from a university within the state and had a variety of professional experiences on her way up to the superintendency. F.M. has been a teacher, director of staff development, conference organizer, supervisor at the State Department of Education, assistant principal, and assistant superintendent. This is her second year in the current superintendency and she previously had been a superintendent in a small rural area of the state.

Before the interview began, F.M. had to mediate a controversy between the contractor and architect on the renovations of a school building, confer with the school board lawyer, and consult with an ecological organization on a local pollution issue; all which impacted on some part of the functioning of the school system. F.M. presented a non-pretentious, "folksy" type of personality. As this two hour interview progressed, she laughed at being described as someone's grandmother and having people initially underestimate her. However as F.M. related dealing with difficult situations, one was able to conjure up the image of a "Steel Magnolia". Her office can be described as a state of organized chaos for there were piles of paper, books, and documents on the conference table, desk, and floor. The walls were decorated with the school board's mission statement, plaques, and inspirational posters. Family pictures, treasures from European travel, and school related artifacts decorated her desk and bookshelves. She eagerly shared newspaper articles about her leadership in the community and school system. F.M. is community oriented and both she and her husband are involved in various civic organizations. She does a lot of professional reading in order to use current research in her talks and presentations. F.M. has been described as "A lady with a soft voice who carries a big stick."

Superintendent 6: M.A. presently is an area superintendent in a 400 square mile diverse metropolitan area with a population of 913,012. The school district's projected enrollment for 1997 is 149,830. Due to the size of the school division it has been divided into areas. Each area superintendent has a responsibility similar to those superintendents of medium to large sized districts in the rest of the state. For example, M.A. runs thirty-two elementary schools, seven middle schools and seven high schools.

M.A. is an African American woman in her early sixties, married with grown children. She has earned a doctorate degree and held a variety of professional positions in several school systems and the State Department of Education.

A one hour interview took place in her office where African American artifacts, photos, collectibles, and special mementos of world travel were displayed. As a superintendent she related that she has the innate ability to deal with people. "I can go into the lion's den with angry people and when I leave they are applauding me. We not I...we..move the organization. As a leader you only have the power and authority that other people let you have."

Superintendent 7: W.S. had been an area superintendent in a different area, but the same school system as M.A. The hour interview with W.S. took place at the 1996 AASA National Women's Leadership Conference. W.S. is currently an Executive Director of a

State Commission on Learning. She has earned a doctorate and held education positions as a teacher, principal, director of instruction, and assistant superintendent. She shared that the variety of positions made her “well groomed”. W.S. is Caucasian, in her late fifties, married with grown children and grandchildren. W.S. related that there is glory and pain in the superintendency. “In order to make tough decisions you have to stay firm and need to be full of integrity.” M.A. and W.S. were part of the first iteration of interviews.

Setting for the Data Collection

Standardized open-ended interviews were used to provide respondents a non-intrusive forum in which to share their views, beliefs, and experiences (McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1991). Observation data gathered during the interviews were recorded as field notes and entered into a research log, and, in some cases, noted on the transcripts of the interviews.

The seven superintendents gave permission to have their interviews audio-taped. They knew their identities would be confidential. However, none of the superintendents expressed any concerns about sharing the stories and information they related. The interviews ranged in length from an hour to three and half hours, based on the willingness of the subject to go beyond an hour. All but one interview was conducted in the superintendent’s office.

The interviews included “grand tour questions” (McCracken, 1988) concerning preparation for the superintendency, family influences, values and attitudes, their self image in the role of superintendent, interactions with the school board and experiences in educational administration. Depending on their answers, the researcher employed certain probes and follow-up questions to ascertain their views on traits or characteristics that helped them achieve the superintendency, perceived barriers encountered on the route to the superintendency, and balancing personal and professional life. Generally, as the superintendents responded to the questions and provided examples to illustrate different points, they divulged information about themselves, both personally and professionally, in the variety of roles they juggle in the position of superintendent. The interviews tended to end with the researcher asking what advice they would have for aspiring female superintendents, and what type of legacy they would like to leave their school district. The conversational guide is included in Appendix C.

Themes Emerging Through the Women’s Voices

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the seven interviews. The first theme, **Makes a Difference for Kids**, involved the women’s personal belief system that they were significant persons and could make a difference in others lives. Their vision of themselves were as contributors to the success of others. This self view provided these women superintendents with the commitment and tenacity to make a difference and to accomplish dreams. The second theme, derived from their **Powerful Personal Motivation and Drive**. The women of the study had developed both personal and professional competence and confidence. Their positive self-images enabled them to draw on inner strength to overcome obstacles and tackle challenges presented in the superintendency

position. The next theme, **Thirst for Knowledge and Experience**, illustrated that the women superintendents in the study were constantly busy, learning and growing. They drew on a wealth of experiences and educational background. Strong motivation, drive and energy propelled them to the pursuit of excellence. With a thirst for knowledge and experiences, the women used the strategy of developing personal action plans. The fourth theme related to the importance of **Knowing the Politics**. These women were able to employ an intuitiveness in acquiring new knowledge vital to make change. They had an awareness of their communities' culture and the games people play. Knowing the politics of the superintendency position, they devised strategies that would be advantageous to accomplishing their goals and vision. Seeking the job that was the right fit for them contributed to meeting the school board's needs as well as to using their talents as a complement to the district.

These salient themes are illustrated from extracted narratives of the interview sessions. The themes are explored and reported using each woman's voice to express her unique experiences. These are their stories without comment from the researcher. These women superintendents embrace their power, achievement, and success, and speak with genuine enjoyment about developing themselves as competent, committed educational leaders.

Makes a Difference for Kids

The superintendents were asked to talk about any particular traits, characteristics, or themes that emerge as women superintendents and why they aspired to a superintendency. M.A. (Superintendent 6, p. 29) responded, "Women who aspire to the superintendency are very student-orientated and want to make a difference at the school level in the classrooms. Women have the drive to make the difference. They are caring."

When asked why F.M. (Superintendent 5, p.29) came to her district which was known for political controversy, she explained; "I care for children and I am a strong woman who is serious about my business. I am here to make a difference. I care about what happens to kids." J.M. (Superintendent 2, p.27) related, "I felt if I really wanted to make a difference the way to go was education. I could make significant changes in people's lives." W.S. (Superintendent 7, p. 29) summarized, "You can't lose sight in the top school position that you are there because you make a difference for kids."

The sense of mission intertwined with being a significant person was illustrated by a story told by D.S. (Superintendent 3, p. 27). At her first school board meeting as superintendent she asked the board what they wanted her to do. Their response was for her to build a school and to make it the best school system possible. D.S. smilingly reminisced, "I have done that...we are not the best school system possible yet ...we will never be because it is a journey...but we have done incredible things." She shared that she completely replaced the school system. When she came to this rural area there were separate schools for black children and white children. The system was under three court orders for integration. Five of the elementary schools were crumbling around the children. She spent a year trying to convince the community that they needed to replace the schools and at least build a new school. The community's response was that they could not afford

it . D.S. explained, “They knew that it was needed, but their vision ended with not being able to afford it. Once you say you can't afford it you go home, and not being able to afford it was part of the culture.” D.S. shared this interesting concept on the fundamental culture of this area. “It was that by being pitiful you succeed, so success is linked with being a failure for you survive by handouts and welfare.” D.S. related:

A year after talking to twenty five different groups trying to get them to understand the situation, a ceiling fell down in one of the oldest buildings. I went and looked over the rubble on students' desks...it was twenty minutes before they were to arrive. I turned around and went to my office and knew a day would come that I would stand at a funeral of a child because of something I should have done but didn't do.

D.S. continued, that she called the department of education and related the situation. She explained she is not an engineer and doesn't know when to close a building. A team of people came from the state department and saw a teacher who stood with the back of his neck touching the ceiling with fluorescent bulbs on either side of his face. They saw troughs in the floor where water could run past the children as it goes out the door and mice cavorting and running around the rooms as children sat at their desks. A building with no bathroom. "Shocking, absolutely stunningly shocking - nobody thinking it strange, for after all, where are these black kids going anyway?", shared D.S. The community felt that the public schools were for the black kids and the people who really cared about their kids sent them to private schools. D.S. stated:

I forged a partnership with the state which ultimately resulted in a challenge to our accreditation and I helped write the document that sealed our doom. The Governor and Secretary of Education came and the General Assembly was involved. They told me that I would probably lose my job over this. I responded, I didn't come here to keep a job, I came here to do a job and I will be here as long as I need to be. I'm in for the duration. We did what was totally unprecedented, and it will never happen again. The state threatened to sue the county if they did not do what they had to do.

With a team of fifteen people from the Governor's office, D.S. went over resources available and the finances. They concluded that she needed to build not one but two schools and by closing five schools enough money could be saved with no increase in taxes and would not cost the community a nickel more than it cost to keep the five old buildings opened. It meant reducing fifty two positions. However, no one lost his job since it was done over a three year period.

D.S. shared that the entire school system was replaced. They closed down five elementary schools and opened two new ones. The school for the black students was converted to a office building. They closed the old office, building which was just as bad as the old school, and built an alternative school. Then they refurbished the high school - all for thirteen million. "That's half a high school now a days", shared D.S. She continued

to relate:

We made a miracle, we made a miracle and I will never be forgiven for it. I was threatened with my life more than once, had phone calls in the middle of the night, told to: pack my bags and get out of town, or we will make you, nigger lover. You name it, I have been called it, - the devil incarnate, also the guardian angel. We did something that will live forever - forever as part of a cultural change - it is the most remarkable thing.

D.S. goes on to tell how on moving day to the new schools many people with their pick-up trucks came to help and be part of a remarkable day. "So for that one day the community was all together, black and white, rich and poor, young and old - doing something special for the future of their children." D.S. expressed that she felt that overcoming this challenge made a statement to staff, students and the community that what they do is valuable, and that hard work pays off. She hoped that they had evidence that the issue of "failure culture" doesn't have to be that way.

There is no place I could have gone that I could have, number one, used what I know so well...without ever knowing I was going to do that. The other is to make a difference, such an incredible difference, to make good things happen. It is like a dream. I go into the new schools, children who used to hold their heads down and take on a submissive posture, angry, now look up. The schools now belong to them. They walk down the halls proudly. They do things in their schools that other people do that they read about, heard about, and they do them too. They, too, can have a Blue Ribbon School. They can be viewed as "excellent". That is what we did. This is my ninth year, but I will never be forgiven for this thing I did. They say you did a good thing, a miracle, but this time I have only been offered a two year contract.

Powerful Personal Motivation and Drive

The superintendents were asked to talk about their childhood, who was the most influential person as they were growing up, and what values and attitudes were instilled in them. They were asked how they viewed themselves professionally and personally, and how their self image was portrayed as a superintendent.

According to the participants, it was from the vantage point of the central office that they were able to perceive themselves as more capable, knowledgeable, and having the experience base to be multi-faceted. Other people's views of their leadership potential helped to shape their own strong self-view. Most of the women were very confident in themselves and believed in what they were doing. They viewed themselves as being task-oriented, organized, change agents, and risk takers. They saw themselves as being "strong women".

M.A. (Superintendent 6, p.29) shared that she is very outgoing and people oriented. " I always accept a challenge. I felt within my self if somebody else can do it so

can I". She shared that as a child her teachers built a lot of confidence in her. She came from a poor background and was the image of today's latch key child. She laughed as she related that, "Nobody told me that I couldn't learn, so I grew up thinking if you can do it so can I".

P.H. (Superintendent 1, p.26) views herself as having "Chutzpah". She said that she is a risk taker and has an attitude of "why can't I?". She is not afraid of getting her feelings crushed. She just picks herself up, dusts herself off, and goes on. P.H. learned from her parents the value of fairness and treating everybody as valuable human beings.

"When I was growing up my aunt instilled in me being modest, and in this interview I don't sound modest", laughed J.A. (Superintendent 4, p.28). "I am honest, flexible, fair and have a respect for everyone, no matter what walk of life." J.A. also describes herself as self confident, resilient and very motivated. "I have always been self-motivated and have perseverance. I try to keep a sense of humor and can take a joke."

Another self-view was F.M. (Superintendent 5, p.29). She was described by a local newspaper as a petite woman with a disarming smile who walks softly but carries a big stick. She is known for her hands on leadership, consensus building, and being the first one there and the last one to leave at night. F.M. said, "I know I come on strong and know I can be out there like a man. I am tough but I think I am caring."

D.S. (Superintendent 3 p.27) described herself as very determined and focused on goals. She can work eighteen hours a day and doesn't get tired. D.S. takes five minute power naps and can get another three hours out of that. She does not view herself as an intellectual. "What I have is the ability to link seemingly unrelated things together to meet a goal that I have and to focus very specifically on what I want to do. Keep my eye on the prize." She shared her strength is leadership, for she has the ability to pull people together. Her skill in making linkages with disparity has facilitated this leadership ability.

D.S. mentioned that as a child she experienced being an outsider, growing up a tall blond Methodist in a Catholic Italian upstate New York community. So, she developed, through experiences of rejection, the skills to withstand the pressures in a superintendency position and to see them as exciting challenges instead of obstacles. "When I discovered leadership, I learned if I can't be on the team, then own it. It has been a real joy to me in this position to make room for everybody to be on the team."

Her background and inner strength helped during the turmoil of the integration time of revamping the school system. When she was getting threats, she let the word out that she was more determined to succeed than anyone was to thwart her. She felt that they didn't understand that she came from a childhood of being shunned so it was not going to break her heart. "If there is a challenge out there, if there is something somebody hasn't done or says can't be done, just tell me it can't be done, I'll break down every barrier possible to get to do that thing."

As D.S. reflected on herself, I guess I have some kind of charisma, somehow I inspire people. I am idealistic and trusting. I'm childlike in a kind of strange combination of whimsy and serious business. I have begun to recognize myself as a change agent and I'm damn good at it.

Thirst for Knowledge and Experience

The women of the study felt that graduate study, especially the doctorate, was empowering. Each of the women sought course work and experiences in areas that would enhance their professional potential. They joined civic and professional organizations. The women went to conferences to keep current in instructional and administrative trends. At these conferences they took the opportunity to attend seminars on resume preparation and interviewing skills. Most of the women in the study acquired academic mentors as well as professional mentors who suggested they could be superintendents. They gained reputations for being intelligent, highly motivated, and hard working educators. The women of the study were all child-centered, program and instruction focused and well-versed in reflective practice. They were highly energized and constantly seeking to achieve.

P.H. (Superintendent 1, p.26) never did just the job assigned. She was always searching for ways to broaden the opportunities and gain experiences. She laughed, "Sometimes people like me are called 'brown-nosers', but I learned to live with that." So she was always looking for ways to volunteer. J.M. (Superintendent 2, p.27) concurred, as she explained that she took every position offered her. She didn't mind that they were short term or interim positions. She gained experiences that helped her to market herself and was able to put them on her resume.

"Women are more associated with the instructional process, so I made it my business to learn the business end," said J.A. (Superintendent 4, p.28). She continued, "When I interviewed for a position, I wanted to make sure people knew that I knew how to build a budget and was confident with transportation and maintenance issues. I would just educate them on how knowledgeable I am." J.A. has been a real go-getter and an initiator. The first place where she was superintendent they had been studying a building program for five years. In her first year of that superintendency she had completed the study, had a budget proposed and laid out the plan for a new elementary, middle, and high school. The study was presented and approved by the Board of Supervisors within five months. "They are now in the second stage and when I drive by I feel good. It was a small district so I had no staff and I did it within five months; literally did it myself."

F.M. (Superintendent 5, p.29) burst forth with what she wanted to achieve within her district. "I'm here to do a job. I want to share a vision with the people and if they don't come on board with me then I make those decisions needed to make the accomplishments." She shared that they need to work on technology and she wanted to get an international baccalaureate program. Her list of initiatives included an alternative education program, gifted programs, raising test scores, and improving the evaluation process. At the school board retreat she encouraged changes - from new ways to look at human productivity to energy conservation to improving attendance and student achievement. F.M. said that she is constantly learning, modeling to the staff and interacting with the community to support the initiatives dedicated to the children of her county.

D.S. (Superintendent 3, p. 27) from her early beginnings had always been motivated and was not afraid to strive to make things better. When she thought that she would have to work in a factory she decided she might as well work in an office. As a library clerk she wrote a curriculum which she did not know was a curriculum. She thought it was a fun kind of game and things that would teach kids how to use the library. She walked into that library job at age twenty six, coming out of her kitchen and having had two kids. From cardboard boxes, folding chairs, and cafeteria tables, she designed a fully functioning library. "I worked there for five years and that school system implemented my curriculum for ten years after I left", D.S. proudly stated.

In another district when D.S. began to feel restricted and bored doing the same job every day, she consulted with her superintendent. She considered three options: leaving the district, working to change the district, or get a doctorate. She stayed and worked to change the district and earned her sixth degree, a doctorate. Although she has had many challenges with her superintendency, D.S. taught college courses, has been a consultant with the United States Justice Department, and had two of her district schools named as Blue Ribbon schools.

Knowing the Politics

A candidate for the superintendency is thought to be credible, depending on the extent to which she corresponds to an established image of a superintendent (Grogan, 1996). Most of the women in the study had been exposed to male leadership styles on the political scene. All the women had male mentors who encouraged them and provided opportunities for them to aspire to the superintendency. Some would agree that they would not have gotten where they are today without male tactics, however, all agreed they would not be able to maintain it if they did not have a woman's empathy.

All the women in the study had some remembrance of school boards not allowing enough time to present their credentials, being asked illegal questions, and the school board not being convinced that a woman could make tough decisions. Often the women developed strategies on how to politically handle these interview situations. One superintendent developed a question bank after having gone through ten different board interviews; another one presented a portfolio and had civic leaders write letters of recommendation. Having developed a strong self-view, the women of the study felt they brought to the superintendency highly developed intuitive skills, mediation skills, the ability to articulate tactfully, and a sensitivity to people. In other words, they were politically savvy.

P.H. (Superintendent 1, p. 26) shared that she never shied away from the politics of the job. She doesn't think negatively about politics. "Politics is the way we do things in a democracy". P.H. enjoyed policy and governance courses, did her dissertation on the Political Influence In Economic Curriculum of the Social Studies Supervisor, and has taken an active role in state legislation through the state superintendency association. She laughingly remembered that her first talk as appointed superintendent was on operating in a political environment. "I may not be so bold now". P.H. said that she does not shrink

from parents coming to the school board to protest; it is part of the process. "I don't hesitate to use politics to my advantage either," she said.

"When I first came here my husband and I went to a different church each Sunday" shared F.M. (Superintendent 5, p. 29). It helped her get to know people, make contacts, and relate to people she never would have. F.M. felt it is very important to be visible. She and her husband belong to a number of civic organizations, participate in many of the community activities, and have attended all athletic events, which is a very important part of a rural community life. By being visible F.M. is accessible to the people of her school district.

"On the way to the superintendency, I felt I needed to do an analysis of the obstacles I would face as a female and one was the perception that females would not be knowledgeable about building a budget" related J.A. (Superintendent 4, p.28). She asked for more responsibility for parts of the budget process and went with her superintendent as he presented to the Board of Supervisors. J.A. related that being confident and being a couple steps ahead in the game is most beneficial. As a superintendent J.A realized that she works for the board. She shared:

We've had some heated debates, but it is important to remember that you can disagree and still respect each other's opinion. Whenever I have a particularly unpleasant exchange with a board member...it will not be me that initiates it...but if one occurs..public one, I'm talking about...I'll call that person later...'I know we disagree on this but I want you to know I respect your opinion and even though we're on opposite sides of this...we have lots of common ground' (gives examples). It is important not to have relationships deteriorate to one of mistrust or dislike. Respect is very important and the day my bosses don't trust me something is wrong.

J.A. continued to share that it is important to maintain your credibility and never give incorrect information. She learned to be politically savvy from a superintendent in another county. "He had a good relationship with his board. He always kept them informed and got word to them before it came from other sources." One of J.A.'s mottos has been, "Beat the buses home". She said that one thing school board members hate is when a neighbor tells them something they don't know.

I have found that no matter what it was, a gun at school or drugs at school if I tell them before anyone else does, it makes them look good. Harder to beat the buses home in a big system, got to train the building people to get the information to us immediately.

D.S. (Superintendent 3, p.27) felt she has been viewed as being politically savvy. "I ought to be, with a degree in media communications and you learn to be political coming from the big city from which I came." She shared:

Everything I did here was calculated for a political message. Who I am. What I am. My image is portrayed in everything I do. Now that's the political part of being superintendent. Being aware of how you communicate yourself. I walk into a room I can't be thinking of

something else...need to work the room....otherwise, people wonder what's wrong...does she have a problem.

When dealing with the integration situation and trying to give the community a vision, D.S. realized that the school board was unable to comprehend what she was doing. She also came to the realization that in Virginia the decision she needed to have made was made by men in back rooms where she would never be privy. So she followed a different tack by making contact with the media. "I used the media shamelessly", reported D.S.

I had TV cameras over here all the time. I had pictures of little children going into their decrepit buildings, and had children touring people through their old school. Not in a way which was an embarrassment, because my portrayal to the reporters was that these are hard working people who want the best for their children, but are under a tremendous handicap, economically, and they are brave people struggling to survive and to overcome. If you help us just a little, we can go over the top. I would say directly to the reporters, You hurt my people and I will never give you another story. You work with me on this and I will give you the best stories of your career. And not one reporter betrayed my trust. They were partners in this dream, and, in fact, on dedication day many of them came to be a part of it.

A Tapestry of Other Themes Pathway to the Superintendency

It was the intent of this study, as was Morie's and Wilson's (1996), to contribute specifically to the research on women in the superintendency, and to introduce successful role models for the superintendency. One cannot reject the literature of the past which describes why women do not make it to the superintendency (Hill and Ragland, 1995), but we can focus on successful approaches used by women to attain the superintendency. Although the superintendents interviewed in this study had different styles and personalities, a common thread was woven through their stories to form a tapestry of capable, professional women worthy of respect.

There does not appear to be one pathway to the superintendency among the women in the study. There has been a prevailing perception that women need to have held a secondary principalship in order to become superintendent. Research data does not support this perception (Shakeshaft, 1989; Moire and Wilson, 1996); nor does the data from this study. None of the women in the study held a secondary principalship on the route to the superintendency. Most of these women were elementary or middle school principals or assistant principals and all had central office experiences or other administrative experiences before becoming assistant superintendents. Two superintendents came up through the ranks in their district. Others moved around the state to gain experience and others gained experience out-of-state in North Carolina, Maryland, or New York. Only one superintendent said she knew at some time in her career she would be a superintendent. Most of the women did not initially plan to be a superintendent.

M.A. (Superintendent 6, p.29) commented, "In each one of your experiences you grow, you network, you learn and, success is built on success. You need to reflect on why and how you were successful. There is no formula to attaining the superintendency."

Mentors

As in Moire and Wilson's (1996) study, the women reported that mentors are of critical importance to women. Many of the women gained in self-confidence in their graduate school experiences with professor mentors. The feeling of self-confidence was built by relationships with central office mentors that confirmed the women's positive self-view of themselves as superintendents.

The professor mentors did several important things for the women. They observed their intellectual and leadership abilities, pushed them to complete the doctorate, and linked them with a network of contacts and recommendations. The professional mentors encouraged them to take on more administrative responsibilities, gave them great independence in their areas of school administration, involved them in budget and other division-wide planning activities, took them to county and regional meetings, and alerted them to appropriate job vacancies (Moire and Wilson, 1996).

"I have always had a mentor even though we may not have used that word in our relationship", related J. A. (Superintendent 4, p.28). She continued, "Even as a teacher my principal, and especially the superintendent, were guiding me when I was in Dover schools. My graduate professor in the doctorate program was very instrumental."

D.S. (Superintendent 3, p. 27) referred to doing her dissertation on mentors. She said:

The issue of mentoring is a very interesting one. Mentoring for me has followed a male orientation. I have always had a mentor. I have always linked with someone who I could learn from and who would be willing to teach me. When I moved into the assistant superintendent position I had a wonderful opportunity to be a partner to the superintendent. I was taking over his old job. I had the opportunity to train with someone willing to share the superintendent's role with me. I was with him for every experience he had, committee meetings, car pooled...we were together sixteen hours a day...had two meals a day together for four years...had the most wonderful opportunity to train on day to day life as a superintendent without having to be a superintendent. It made me conclude that I never wanted to be a superintendent, that was the last thing I wanted to be. All my former superintendents call me to see how I'm doing. There are three of them. They often stop by or call. My last one is still superintendent where I was his assistant. We visit each other with our families. I think in a sense it is a testimony to that relationship...that unique relationship between mentor and protégé...that many women don't have and that I'm grateful that I did.

Supportive Spouses

In the conversations each woman mentioned supportive husbands who were willing to move, who were willing to sacrifice their own career agenda, and were understanding of the drive and tenacity of their spouse in seeking a superintendency position.

J.A. (Superintendent 4, p. 28) shared that she does not balance her life well and the last time she was satisfied with the balance was when she was an elementary principal. She also commented that when she was teaching she was not satisfied with the balance, for she was working on her doctorate. "Thankfully, my husband has supported all that I do and he understands that this job demands more than eight hours." J.A. said that they scheduled time together, and she does not break the scheduled times unless there is an emergency. "The impromptu ones are not there as much. We give each other enough time to sustain a relationship and we enjoy the times together more. He is very supportive. I could change but it is a choice I have made."

D.S. (Superintendent 3, p. 27) said that her spouse of forty years has been more than supportive of her dreams and career advancement. D.S. explained that he willingly moved and sustained financial loss in real estate and job salary. He built a new career for himself and has never been anything than supportive. D.S. felt that he believed in her personal commitment to the community and was the solace when situations were more than difficult.

"My husband is a partner", related F.M. (Superintendent 5, p. 29). "He is just as active as I am in going to school activities, belonging to the civic organizations that I do not belong to, and being active in community activities." F.M.'s husband has sat in on her interview sessions in order to show his support and to help critique her performance. She laughingly recalled that one board member asked her if sex has ever been a problem. "I assumed as in sexual harassment, but I looked at my husband and we both laughed as I responded, 'not really'." F.M. felt it took lots of energy to be a finalist for a superintendency and her husband has helped in the preparation for these interviews and community sessions. They traveled prior to the interviews to the school districts to get a take on the culture of community and to do research in the library, scanning the local newspapers for issues that she might be questioned on.

P.H. (Superintendent 1, p. 26) related that her husband is in a completely different field and tries to help her keep a balance in their lives. "He enjoys the role I'm in." They schedule time to get away and when they go out to dinner people usually respect that she does not have lots of private time.

Perceived Barriers

There have been barriers identified in other studies to the success of women attaining the superintendency. There are several models for viewing barriers such as organizational, psychological, and male dominance (Hansot and Tyack, 1981; Hill and Ragland, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1989). The women of the study described barriers that were more subtle and would fit the psychological model. Two of the women indicated they felt there were no barriers to their progress to the superintendency. In general, the participants

felt that women impose their own internal barriers which can be changed only by the women themselves. Some of the experiences and stories the women of the study shared had supported the difficulty in advancing in a male defined world.

Both M.A. (Superintendent 6, p.29) and W.S. (Superintendent 7, p.29) felt that it was hard to cut through the male dominance. "Still have the good ole boy network, no question about it. When I was very close to a district superintendency, the male got the position where he was not considered the top of the pool of candidates", commented M.A. She continued, "It is hard to break through the ceiling if you don't act and behave like a male. Boards don't seem to have much confidence in females and it is not just with the issue of finances."

When asked why there are so few women superintendents M.A. responded, "Other than the ole boy network? Women don't think they can make a difference and already have to sacrifice family life. Hard to balance private and professional life. If you feel you are making a difference... gives you strength to pursue the superintendency."

W.S. concurred that it is hard to cut through male dominance. She believed that men learn the old way so they are not mentoring as many women. In fact she shared that lots of women do not support other women. Also women may not be self actualizing and find it very difficult to uproot families and move to other areas.

"I'm sure that since I interviewed ten times with ten different boards before I was chosen, barriers were encountered", stated J.A. (Superintendent 4, p.28). She reflected that the boards were interested in her, professionally, but they felt their communities were not ready for a female superintendent. "Don't really know this because no one ever tells you." Displaying her humor, J.A. confessed that the State Superintendent Association staff thought she had a record for the number of panel interviews.

D.S. (Superintendent 3, p. 27) shared three stories on her experiences with perceived barriers as a woman and in the superintendency:

I'm told being a woman is the thing they have the most against me. If I were a man I would be respected in a different way than I am a woman. That's interesting, too, because in my career I have found that women have an incredible advantage being a woman. I never knew many ways I was discriminated against because I was a woman since I felt it was an advantage. It is an advantage in this way, especially if working with male chauvinists. Male chauvinists do two things: first, they always let you go first as a woman, second they always underestimate you. So while they are standing there holding their penis, you can run with the football to the finish line and they don't know what happened because they let you go first and they underestimate you. So I never found it a disadvantage working with male chauvinists...always saw that as a plus.

D.S.'s second story was about the only time she knew that she was discriminated against in getting a position. She had applied to this particular school district to see how marketable she was, and became one of the four finalists. After the extensive interview she was told that she came in second. She was told by the current superintendent that she had

done an outstanding job and he felt that he could not get the job if he competed against her. He also advised that it was not the right job for her, that she needed to go for a K-12 school district not a K-6. "I was shocked...couldn't believe the superintendent was telling me these things and was very gratified he would call me."

She continued to relate that she was thrilled to come in second and that was good as far as she was concerned. "I really didn't care a whole lot about the job. It was a test marketing deal." A year later a friend of mine was talking to a member of that school board telling her about me getting this position. The women told her she remembered me for I was by far the best candidate, but they knew that the community was not ready for a woman yet. Those are things you don't normally learn. Here I was thrilled because I came in second and never would have known I came in first but didn't get the job. So how many ways are women discriminated against. It is hard to tell. Now when I got this job there was an uproar. No one had met me. An uproar! A woman from (a large city) with an ethnic name.... so before I walked in here there were people absolutely determined to be against me.

This did not discourage D.S. for she has never seen anything as a barrier. "I just see the problem like a game for me to figure out how to win...what it's going to take to win this game." She has felt that she has an old-fashioned view on what women are about. She related that she is not a feminist and never wanted to be. It might be best told that it is just an innate part of her being. "Always been what I wanted to be. I never found anything that I couldn't do if I wanted to do it. After all, its a matter of type of package you put together to do it."

D.S. concluded her barrier stories with a tale of breaking through the glass ceiling of male dominance of the local Rotary Club. She began:

It was a year after the Supreme Court ruled that women could be members of the Rotary and the Kiwanis clubs that this fellow asked if I wanted to join the Rotary. He told me because they never had a woman he didn't want to take the chance of discussing me with them if I was going to reject it. I said, Wait a minute! I've made all the social statements I need to make in my life. Are you asking me because I'm a woman or superintendent of schools? My answer if you are interested in me as a woman is no I'm not interested. If you want the superintendent of schools, I am very much interested. As I said before, I'm not a feminist and don't make decisions or do things because I am a woman. He said they wanted the superintendent. Well, I did not know that the Smith County Rotary approached the Columbia Rotary where I live as a courtesy to ask them if they wanted me as a member. The Columbia Rotary had a big harangue over it, apparently, and it was a controversial topic, par excellence. They took a vote and I missed by a vote or two and determined they too were not ready for a woman yet. The Smith County Rotary, which has an average age of about 65 to 70,...those old folks...old men were more progressive than the young businessmen in Columbia. Those older folks handled it quite well. I became president of

that Rotary four years ago and have been a member for eight years...always been treated as one of the guys...I love the Rotary...love the group of fellows we have...now three women...there are four in the Columbia Rotary by the way. I broke the barrier on that. I've broken barriers before. I've been the only woman doing a whole lot of things, but not because I wanted to be the only woman doing it. To make social statements have never been an interest to me. Although it does give me a private chuckle.

Legacy

When asked what type of legacy they wanted to leave their school district or if they felt that they would leave a legacy to their school division the women responded in surprisingly the same fashion. First J.M. (Superintendent 2, p. 27) felt that she had just begun and hadn't given any thought to the type of legacy her leadership would contribute to the school system. "I know I will be making strategic changes", stated J.M.

P.H. (Superintendent 1, p. 26) responded, I'm not a legacy type person. The prior superintendent was here for thirty seven years and we talked about a legacy. I'm comfortable with history and don't give a thought how I'll be viewed two days, two years, or two hundred years after. My picture will still go up on the wall. Don't want to be known simply as the only woman...know I'm stuck with that. Since I have been involved in a huge renovation I'll be remembered for that. Members of the community care about who their child's teacher is...legacy is not important to others.

Whereas J.A. (Superintendent 4, p. 28) responded that she would like to be known as a leader who assessed, set goals, gathered data, and designed strategies for school level improvement. "So, in a few words, school planning for improvement."

F.M. (Superintendent 5, p. 29) hoped her legacy would be a respected image for her controversial school system. "I want people to feel good about this school division by raising test scores, improving attendance rates, and increasing teacher salaries. There are good people here and we need to be recognized instead of being looked down on."

Last but not least, D.S. (Superintendent 3, p. 27) sadly commented, "They won't know the legacy till I'm gone...don't know it while I'm here...they will know it when I'm gone, but that's kind of an unfortunate thing. A miracle...a remarkable miracle occurred here."

Chapter Summary

Chapter four described the findings of the data analyses of this study investigating the professional identity that emerges as a woman attains the superintendency. An examination of the themes which emerged from the interviews of the seven women superintendents who participated in this study was included, as well as their stories and narratives concerning their role as superintendent, along with factors that contribute to successfully attaining a superintendency. Descriptions of the participants, and of the setting for the data collection, were also presented.

CHAPTER V

A good integration, at the same time that it shows how much is known in an area, also shows how little is known. It sums up, but it does not end. In this, it is only a beginning.
Felman, Sociology of Education

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to describe through qualitative inquiry the professional identity that emerges as a woman attains the superintendency and to delineate those factors that facilitate and contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency. In this chapter, conclusions on the findings of this study are reported; they are organized for the reader as responses to the study's research questions. In addition, the relationship of the findings to the literature, recommendations from the study superintendents to aspiring female superintendents, and recommendations for future research studies are included.

The women of this study had a total commitment to attaining the superintendency. These women achieved executive positions in education, demonstrated a strong desire to succeed and viewed themselves as leaders, despite the dominant stereotype of white male leadership. Although the participants corroborated that the "good ole boy" system continued to thrive, they used it to learn from their male leaders and to establish networks which fostered their credibility as strong women leaders.

Data drawn from the participant superintendents would show their agreement that personal assets critical to their success were hard work, determination, motivation, and perseverance. Additionally, to these particular female subjects, a significant key to success was a supportive husband. Each stated they loved their job and would certainly do it again. Among the many elements contributing to their rise in position, the women superintendents emphasized the importance of "time and place" and "staying the course". In fact, they revealed an emotional toughness that women are not commonly credited with in the workplace. Their motives for seeking positions of greater authority did not appear to be a quest for power, so much as it seemed to stem from a need to have a positive impact on the lives of students and teachers as described through their own words.

Research Question 1

What patterns, themes, or trends emerge that characterize how female superintendents shape their professional identities?

The themes that emerged from this study which characterized how female superintendents shaped their professional identities have been labeled **Makes a Difference for Kids, Powerful Personal Motivation and Drive, Thirst for Knowledge and Experience, and Knowing the Politics**. The first theme, **Makes a Difference for Kids**,

involved the superintendent's personal belief system that she was a significant person and made a difference in others' lives. The second theme, **Powerful Personal Motivation and Drive**, was characterized by the woman superintendents ability to draw on inner strength to overcome obstacles and tackle challenges. This motivation and drive enabled her to develop personal and professional competence and confidence. The next theme, **Thirst for Knowledge and Experience**, illustrated that the women superintendents in this study were constantly seeking more knowledge and experiences. They displayed varied interests that kept them busy, learning, and growing. Finally, the subjects developed an intuitiveness for acquiring knowledge of the political climate and players of their communities which resulted in **Knowing the Politics**.

The first theme emerging from the data analysis characterizing how female superintendents shaped their professional identity was **Makes a Difference for Kids**. In general, the women who participated in the study saw themselves in the role of superintendent as advocates for children. They all expressed the belief that if society is to endure, then favorable conditions for its children must be pursued; these women each took pro-children stances. The reason they went into education in the first place, they said, was to make a difference for "kids". In describing how they made a difference, the women superintendents cited examples of what they had done to enhance student achievement, including smaller class sizes, differentiated services, incentive programs for improved attendance, and classroom resources in technology. Even when controversial issues were involved, they found the courage to act in the best interest of kids and schools. As one superintendent related, she made tough budget considerations and challenged the board of supervisors in order to make available greater resources and technology in the classrooms. From words and actions, it appeared that being an educator was more than a job, even more than a profession to the subjects, rather more of a calling and a moral expression of their very being. This moral commitment to action on behalf of others translated into stepping out of their personal frame of reference. In order to fulfill a need of making a difference, the superintendents related that they were willing to make personal sacrifices in time and family relationships; their commitment to children was the essence of their educational mission.

Each of the women saw themselves as caring persons who were able to touch the lives of others. Care for children undergirded their actions as leaders, a concern they carried with them from their role as classroom teachers. One of the superintendents for example became the mentor to a disadvantaged high school student. She provided tutoring, helped him get an after school job, and eventually provided financial aid for the student to attend a community college. She became involved not only as the superintendent, but as a person.

The second theme identified was **Powerful Personal Motivation and Drive**. Whether as a result of biology or social conditioning, the participants of this study could be described as "strong women". They had a confident view of themselves as women who had the perseverance to meet the professional challenges of attaining a superintendency. They viewed themselves as task-oriented, organized, change agents, and risk takers. Instilled in their persona was the concept of "why can't I?". Their positive self-images

enabled them to draw on inner strength to overcome obstacles. For example, although one subject had to go through numerous interviews for the superintendency position, she never considered herself a failure. She looked upon those experiences as part of the learning curve and always believed that she was superintendent material. "It is important to develop a positive mind set and to appear confident even when you are not." Overall these women superintendents believed themselves to be capable, knowledgeable, having had experiences which were multi-faceted.

Part of the theme of **Powerful Personal Motivation and Drive** related to stories from early childhood that the superintendents told about experiences that they believed made them strong individuals. Two of the women had faced discrimination; one was brought up by a single parent, then lost that parent and was raised by relatives; another shared the hardships of inner city living; and another, as the oldest of a large family carried the responsibility for her siblings. Helping them through those childhood burdens however, at least for some of them, were role models who were educators or women executives. At that time, such models were highly unusual for women and so they provided the study subjects with the motivation to be different, and not the norm. Additionally they had had families that believed in them, and always encouraged them to be all that they could be. One superintendent shared that her grandmother always told her if somebody else can do it so can you. In that way, she said, she gained confidence that she could learn, and that if someone else could do it, so could she. A common trend in their early stories was the instilling of a moral fiber and a respect for all human beings learning honesty, courtesy, and fairness from their families and church. One of the women shared stories of being involved in the church not in a pious way but in a leadership way, learning the values of "fairness" and "treating everybody as valuable human beings". Another superintendent related that the values instilled in her as a child was a respect for everyone no matter what walk of life they came from. Her family told her that everyone has some good so she always looked for the positive in a person. Their early beginnings were the cornerstone for a strong personal identity and the foundation for building character.

A third theme was that these women developed a **Thirst for Knowledge and Experience** in all aspects of their lives. There was evidence that their inquiring minds sought additional information and knowledge that expanded their experience base. They pursued graduate degrees and took courses or seminars to enhance their professional repertoire. Six of the women earned doctorates and it was an empowering experience for them. Often, they were not satisfied doing just the job assigned. They sought other opportunities for growth experiences, and looked at new ways to accomplish goals and resolve issues. According to the superintendents, they attended seminars to develop new skills, networked within the professional organizations, and kept current with educational issues through professional journals.

These women superintendents described themselves as being involved in the community, and they belonged to a number of civic and professional organizations. This involvement established networking systems which supported them professionally and personally. One subject stated, "By being involved I was kept informed and current on many challenging issues." The superintendents of this study were constantly busy with a

project, teaching college courses, being consultants with state agencies or associations, reading professional materials, and learning new skills such as Power Point presentations in technology, building model railroads, or designing stain glass windows.

It became apparent that the women superintendents "begin with the end in mind". As high achievers, they developed personal action plans and time lines to reach their goals. When they knew that their goal was attaining a superintendency, the women sought opportunities to enhance their qualifications. Some of the women learned the process of building and presenting a budget. Others took advantage of the opportunity to become a partner with their male superintendent who was willing to train them and share the role of superintendent. The opportunity to work closely with their superintendent was an invaluable experience for enhancing skills related to the job of being a superintendent. These experiences enabled the women to see themselves in the position of superintendent. Learning the role was an important factor in the development of their professional identity.

The final theme that emerged was that the women superintendents displayed the attribute of **Knowing the Politics**. The superintendents who participated in the study identified the benefits of belonging to the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary and other civic organizations. They implied the advantage of having an established relationship with civic and business leaders. One superintendent said that by attending community activities and athletic events she had been able to acquire the community's perception on issues and glean information to which she would not normally be privy. Also, by being visible within the community, the superintendents were able to acquire funding for scholarships, technology, and business partnership initiatives. They did not shy away from the politics of the position. One superintendent said, "I thrive on working the room to make contacts and using the media to facilitate my agendas. Politics is part of the territory. It goes with the job." According to the superintendents, it was important to know the agencies, people, and resources available to support the school district's academic mission and to enhance the district's financial capacities to meet the needs of its students.

The superintendents calculated the image they portrayed by being aware of how they communicated in different situations. One of the superintendents shared that she decorated her office to convey a message. Also she had three seating arrangements in which business was conducted, and each arrangement conveyed a different message. For example, if one was invited to the sofa an informal atmosphere would prevail; the conference table signified a team effort of collaboration and brainstorming; the chairs before her desk lend itself to a formal business-like no nonsense scenario. Another superintendent emphasized the importance of working a room and conveying the image of superintendent. In the words of one superintendent, their actions established them as credible leaders - "one who talks the talk and walks the walk."

Research Question 2

What strategies do female superintendents use in establishing their professional identities?

The women superintendents in this study commented that the first step toward upward mobility involved analyzing personal and professional goals, competencies, and potential. It was important to know areas of strength as well as to identify areas that need development; they believed self-assessment provided a starting point for examining skill development. Mentors helped to provide the work related experiences necessary for them to be upwardly mobile in their administrative positions and introduced them to key players in education and in the community which helped to broaden their networking bases.

Several of the women believed that their strategies were first developed in the classroom, by seeing themselves as excellent teachers. This view provided them with the incentive and courage to seek other challenges. Many of the skills they learned in the classroom such as; fostering, encouraging, motivating, and stimulating are ones that they use in an organization working with adults. Additionally, the women superintendents said that they enhanced their leadership skills by being caring, nurturing, and collaborative.

Each of the women in the study had held a variety of positions within education and felt that they learned from each of them. By having a broad experience base they learned to relate to a variety of people and situations.

Some of the women reported that they made deliberate decisions about fostering their professional identity, perhaps one of the more deliberate ones was to obtain a doctorate. After earning a doctoral degree they began to think about themselves differently and found that they were treated by others as "intelligent" and "respected" women. They believed themselves to have gained prestige.

The women superintendents capitalized on their areas of strength and watched what their bosses did to make the men successful. They learned their lessons from men, but also were comfortable using their feminine side. All the women learned to become determined, persistent and developed a thick skin. From each experience and interview they learned how to approach the next situation better and how to better prepare and present themselves. Although some expressed surprise that they did not attain a position because a community was not ready for a woman. As one superintendent said, "Nobody tells you." In these situations it appeared that networking was not effectively taken advantage of or some of the women had difficulty coming to terms with their feminine side being an issue.

In their view it was from the vantage point of the central office that they gained experience that built their confidence to apply for a superintendency. Generally while they were in the central office their male colleagues suggested they could be superintendents. Also from this position the women of the study felt they were able to expand their view about the superintendency and were able to visualize themselves doing the job differently or better than they saw it done. At this time they believed a strong self-view was developed. By believing in themselves, the women superintendents were able to project a confident and qualified persona.

Research Question 3

What are the keys to successful entry into the role of superintendent?

The seven superintendents who participated in the study identified several keys to successful entry into the role of superintendent. These keys included school based administrative experience, central office experience, attaining an assistant superintendency, and total commitment to attaining a superintendency. Several believed a strong work ethic, luck, and being at the right place at the right time were important.

According to the superintendents, the building level administrative position as principal or assistant principal (did not matter at what level) was the most critical because of the schedule of responsibilities and the constant demands on your time. An added plus was to have central office experience and it was from this position that the true jumping stone into an assistant superintendent position became possible for them. During an assistant superintendency the women of this study saw their readiness for the superintendency emerge. There were several reasons for this. First, they had the opportunity to observe the work, lifestyle, and the political nature of the job. At this point in time, they became more visible by attending public meetings, joining civic organizations, and giving presentations to the board and the community.

Other keys to their successful entry into the superintendency position were their total commitment to attaining the job, and a strong work ethic. They learned to market themselves successfully, communicate well, and deal well with political issues. The women's personal assets that were critical to their success was hard work, determination, motivation, and perseverance.

Research Question 4

Do female superintendents encounter “glass ceilings” on the way up to the position, and if so, how were they overcome?

The short answer is yes, however the women of this study described barriers which fit a subtle psychological model, and two of the women indicated they felt no barriers at all to obtaining their positions. This was attributed to the fact that they progressed through the same schools system from teacher to superintendent and were known and credible as educational leaders. Generally, they felt that women imposed internal barriers on themselves, mainly the balancing of home and work life. Often women deferred career decisions due to family consideration and mobility issues. They did not think they had the capability to fill the role of superintendent.

These internal barriers were overcome by supportive spouses and families. Besides being willing to give up their careers and to move to other areas, their husbands built up their positive images and their confidence. The men understood their drive to become superintendents. The women felt that their supportive spouses were integral in encouraging them to persevere.

Another barrier the women described as encountering along their administrative pathway was the stereotypical view school boards had of women. They related that many school boards have a majority of males as members, and these men find it difficult to envision a woman making tough decisions. Some of the women mentioned that school

board members felt that women did not know finances, budgeting, or facilities and maintenance issues. Most of the women of the study got around this barrier by resolving difficult situations and letting their reputations stand for themselves.

The most dominant barrier described by the participants was male dominance. In the world in which they work males control the power and hold the top positions. These women learned after numerous interviews, that communities as well as school boards were not necessarily ready for a woman superintendent. They believe that the superintendent position is still perceived as a male job, even when the male is not as qualified as they are. Things have gotten better, but the women felt the "good ole boy" network still prevails.

Since it is hard to cut through male dominance, the women of the study shared that it was helpful to have a male advocate or mentor. These male mentors facilitated introductions, experiences, and networking essential to being viewed as a credible women administrator. One mentor provided the opportunities to share in all of his experiences, meetings, and provided introductions to community leaders. This partnership forged opportunities for the women to become more visible within the organization and the community. It provided entry into male dominated clubs and helped to establish a positive non-threatening leadership reputation for them. Another strategy the women applied was learning from the men for whom they worked. By assessing male tactics and the politics of playing the game, they were able to identify their areas of strength and areas for improvement. Several superintendents commented that the reflective practice of self assessment assisted them in attaining "confidence" and "competence".

Relationship of Findings to the Literature

The results of this study related to the literature on women administrators, particularly in three areas: perceived barriers encountered, socialization into the role of superintendent, and women's leadership style.

As with other studies mentioned in the literature about women in administrative leadership, this study has identified particular barriers to success which women need to be aware of as they pursue the path to the superintendency. As Gupton and Slick (1996) reported, the literature is replete with claims of sex role stereotyping as one of the major barriers to women in educational administration. The women in this study shared that many school boards and communities were concerned if women could be tough enough to handle some of the difficult issues. Perceptions existed that women could not handle developing a budget, and did not have a workable knowledge of construction or school facilities. Attitudinal studies (Whitaker and Lane, 1990) consistently show a bias against women compared with men for school administrative positions. Although these attitudinal studies found that women were perceived to be more capable in school administration, regardless of their age, experience, or grade level organization, men still were recommended for administrative positions to a greater extent than females (Whitaker and Lane, 1990). Gupton and Slick (1996) concluded, "The main impediment to women's career advancement seems to be the unstated but understood requirements that aspiring candidates must look and act like those already in power." This attitude is pervasive, and typical of those in power. Ironically it exists among women, themselves, within the

profession (Garland, 1991, Gotwalt and Towns, Ortiz and Marshall, 1988).

The study's findings verified the existence of continued male dominance as a major impediment to women aspiring to the superintendency. This study agreed with findings reported by Gupton and Slick (1996) that men have the usual "good ole boy" network to assist them, but women, traditionally, have had very little support in the political or professional arenas. Also political control has been accomplished by male dominance; not only in superintendencies, but in school board positions, professional associations and civic organizations. Further, the university, in its role of training chief school executives, has been a closed fraternity as well.

The application literature on socialization was confirmed by the women superintendents in this study; they related that their professional identity began to develop in the context of their diverse work opportunities (Gupton and Slick, 1996). Their leadership role continued to evolve as changes in knowledge, skills, and professional practices were enacted in a variety of job experiences (Hart, 1995). As Konnert and Augenstein (1990) recommended, the women in this study continually sought new knowledge, developed new skills, and honed existing ones.

The study superintendents described themselves as observant of the behaviors and leadership style of male models in superintendency positions. As they worked closely with their own male superintendent, they began to identify and internalize the values and norms shared by those in the superintendency (Spencer and Inkeles, 1976). From their central office positions they assumed identities like those in the top school executive position.

One very important component from the literature that many of the women superintendents of this study experienced was what Mead (1934) called "significant other". As Hart (1995) pointed out, mentors play an important part in the socialization process. Their mentors structured activities to provide exposure to organizational values and norms. The women related that they learned from experiences shared by their mentors. They gained insight into the political arena of the superintendency and were exposed to the broad spectrum of responsibilities of the position. Hart (1995) stated that when a strong professional identity is affirmed and individuality supported, the outcome results in personal growth and change for the new leader. The socialization process of the superintendent is continuous and interactional (Konnert and Augenstein, 1990). As the women leaders of this study confirmed, they see themselves as lifelong learners. In their role as superintendent they are continually redefining their mission, goals, and content of their leadership. As Konnert and Augenstein (1990) related, the process of socialization does not stop when attaining the position.

The women superintendents of this study defined their leadership roles in ways that are different from the paradigm of command and control in the hierarchical model. These women superintendents have leadership characteristics that are similar and that fit a new leadership paradigm. As defined by the literature, their strengths can be described in terms of connectedness and vision. They are able to work with people, able to communicate effectively, and able to convey their vision (Morie and Wilson, 1996). They have been able to provide stability, structure, and organization to their districts. These women were hired to be change agents and consensus builders.

Wesson and Grady (1994) described the paradigm shift in leadership to a more flexible organizational structure. This flexible leadership emphasized collaboration, consensus-building, and empowerment. As the women related in their discourse, they provided opportunities for everyone to be part of the mission and be an active member of the team. They sought to build communities which instilled an investment in the goals and accomplishments of their districts.

As Hoyle (1989) described, these women leaders were characterized with a healthy respect for others and a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. They were comfortable with empowering others. They had strong skills in persuasion and an appreciation for ethnic diversity. These women displayed the insight to be strategic planners, excellent managers of the resources, and information brokers. They have formed collaborative efforts and are interconnected with civic and social institutions and business corporations. They appeared to exemplify characteristics needed for the role of superintendent in the future.

Greenleaf (1977) and Sergiovanni (1992) believe the servant leader understands that serving others is important. Pivotal to this concept is to instill values and ideas that help shape the school as a covenantal community. The superintendents in this study displayed a commitment to their mission, which was to make a difference in the educational sphere of children. As in Morie and Wilson's (1996) study, these women wanted to be superintendents because they would be "able to make changes in the instructional program", because they would be "able to provide leadership", and because they would have a "chance to do better than those before them".

The women superintendents of this study conceptualized leadership that is closely associated with the notion of responsibility to, and empowerment of others. That empowerment was effected by sharing ideas through democratic processes and developing a politics of care and mutual support, rather than of dependency (Blackmore, 1989). Their leadership was people centered; it involved personal commitment and emotional attachment.

Langford (1995) and Shakeshaft (1986) wrote that feminine leaders are well equipped to handle the emerging problems of organizations because they possess the qualities of a change agent with the attributes of creativity, flexibility, and an orientation towards people. It is not surprising to discover that the women of this study utilized many of their innate skills of intuition, nurturing, and consensus building. The persona which evolved for these women were that of confident, tenacious, and high-achieving educational leaders. They believed in themselves and upheld the philosophy of "why can't I". They understood the importance of preparation for the role, the necessity of a wealth and variety of positions, the need to be articulate, and being successful in dealing with political issues (Morie and Wilson, 1996). Moreover, these superintendents believed that mentors were vital as role models, and the assistant superintendent position was the jumping stone to a superintendency.

Superintendents' Recommendations to Aspirants

When asked for recommendations for women aspirants to the superintendency, the women superintendents of this study suggested:

1. Seek varied positions and experiences.
2. Obtain building level and central office administrative experience.
3. Do a self assessment and bolster areas that need development.
4. Seek mentors and develop networks.
5. Focus on the interview process, doing your homework on the district and the community.
6. Match yourself to the appropriate school district.
7. Decide to overcome any perceived obstacles.
8. Ask the question: are you ready to make the time commitment and do you have the necessary support systems to sustain you?
9. Think of yourself not as a women first, but as a person doing the job that needs to get done.
10. Believe in yourself and stay on your course.

Recommendations for Future Study

The findings in this study may have implications for other research in the area of the development of professional identity of women attaining the superintendency and those factors that facilitate and contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency. The following recommendations are being made:

1. Submit the findings of this study for further study with a larger and more representative sample of women superintendents.
2. Conduct a case study of several superintendents to determine the development of professional identity and salient factors which contribute to attaining a superintendency.
3. Study the process used by superintendents to establish successful mentor relationships and the development of political networks.
4. Examine, in depth, successful women superintendents as role models for aspiring female educational leaders.
5. Study the process of socialization on role innovation and the shaping of professional identity.
6. Conduct case studies of women who have aspired to the superintendency and failed or given up to explore the elements that obstructed them.
7. Study the professional career paths to the superintendency for women, drawing a national sample.

Researcher's Comments

The most powerful and influential position in public education, the superintendency, has been dominated by men since its inception during the late nineteenth century. The position was first established in Virginia in 1846, yet the first woman was not appointed until 1981. By 1995 only 7% of Virginia's division superintendents were

women (Moire and Wilson, 1996). The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has acknowledged the small gains made by women in attaining the superintendency. In an AASA (1992) report, the assertion was confirmed that attracting more women to this leadership position will be a major challenge in the nineties, and will continue to be one in the 21st century.

There has been a dearth of research information that describes who the women are that have successfully attained a superintendency, how they view themselves personally and professionally, and what strategies were employed to facilitate catching the brass ring. Most of the research has concentrated on the barriers for women to attain a superintendency. Thus, women who aspire to becoming superintendents have had little or no opportunity to read about the experiences of women who attained the top leadership position in public schools.

The intent of this study was to contribute specifically to the research on women in the superintendency, and to introduce female aspirants to successful role models for the superintendency. Role models are important for women (Edson, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989), and learning from these role models can only contribute beneficially to the knowledge base of women aspiring to top leadership positions. The focus of this study was to go beyond the barriers and to reflect on the experiences and strategic practices that the women superintendent pathfinders are forging.

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Appendix A

Appendix A

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects

Title of Project: Professional identity of women who attained the superintendency

Investigator: Jude Isaacson

I. The Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of this study is to describe through qualitative inquiry the professional identity that emerges as a woman attains the superintendency and to delineate those factors that facilitate and contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency.

II. Procedures

A qualitative interview approach with descriptive method of data collection will be employed in this project. Data in this study will be primarily generated through interviews and informal conversations with superintendents, observations, and interviewer's reflective notes.

The data will be coded using domain analysis, wherein related terms, themes, ideas, and processes form clusters which become major coding categories. Coded data extracted will be condensed and entered onto matrices as themes emerge. Validity and reliability of findings will be addressed through triangulation of multiple sources of data and multiple methods of data collection.

A conversation guide and probe approach will be utilized to interview the participants. Descriptive, structural, contrast type questions will be asked of informants during each interview session.

Initially eighteen potential participants were identified through the current 1997 Virginia Educational Directory. Five candidates were selected to be interviewed based on expert nomination. Each of these women superintendent received an introductory letter explaining the study and a follow up telephone call after receipt of the letter. The five participants will agree to participate based on the following criteria: the willingness to provide one to two periods of time approximately one and half hours in length for the interviews, provide the researcher with additional telephone interviews if necessary and provide written documentation, such as vitae, newsletters, or communications. Each of the participants in the sample will be interviewed during the summer/fall of 1997. Individual interviews will be conducted with the superintendents at their school district setting.

III. Risks

There is minimal foreseen risk to informant's participation in this study.

IV. Benefits of this Project

There is little known about whom the women are that attain the superintendency, how they view themselves, the professional image they develop, successful career strategies they employ, and if there are any differences in their work experiences and career paths. The results will have implications for practitioners who recognize the significance of understanding the female perspective on leadership. Educators can glean from this analysis information which maybe helpful in planning future professional growth and development activities in their careers.

V. Extent of Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information gathered from informants will be coded according to themes and patterns. Codes will be selected and assigned by the researcher to each of the five participants involved in study. The researcher will store, secure, and maintain the confidentiality of all information. Information will be reported in the study utilizing pseudonyms for each participant and their school district. A list of the participant's identity will be maintained in a safety deposit box. This list will be destroyed at the completion of the research.

All interviews will be tape recorded. Prior to the tapes being transcribed into text all names and identity indicators will be eliminated from the tape's text. Audio-tapes will be transcribed by the researcher of this study. Tapes will be stored and secured by the researcher prior to and after being transcribed.

VI. Compensation

Informants will not be compensated for their participation in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Informants are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. Informants are free not to answer any question or respond to experimental situations that they choose without penalty.

VIII. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

IX. Subjects’s Responsibilities

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:
- * provide one to two periods of time, approximately one and half hours in length for interviews
 - * provide researcher with additional telephone interviews if necessary
 - * provide written documentation such as vitae, newsletters, or communications.

X. Subject’s Permission

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I agree to abide by the rules of this project.

Signature

Date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

Jude Isaacson
Investigator

Phone

Dr. Joan Curcio
Faculty Advisor

Phone

Dr. Cline
Chair IRB
Research Division

Phone

Permission to Tape Record

Name of Superintendent _____

I give permission for Jude Isaacson to tape record an interview which will be used for research for a doctoral dissertation. My identity and school system's name will be coded and known only to the researcher. The researcher will eliminate all names and indicators of my identity from the tape prior to it being transcribed into text. I am guaranteed that neither my name or the school system name will be used in the written dissertation report.

Signature of Superintendent

Signature of Researcher

Appendix B

Appendix B

August 17, 1997

Dear Dr.

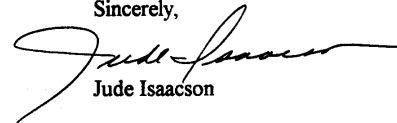
Currently, I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech completing work for my doctoral dissertation, conducting research related to the professional identity of women who have attained the superintendency. You are one of the women identified as important to this study. Your participation in this study, however, is voluntary. Indeed, you may elect to participate in all or part of this study or not at all. Should you consent to be part of the study, you may withdraw your consent or participation in the study at any time.

I am using a human science research method which involves qualitative study, focusing on life-world experiences of the participant. This approach involves one to two periods of time approximately one and half hours in length for an interview and informal follow up conversations. The information you give me will be treated confidentially. Information will be reported in the study utilizing pseudonyms for each participant and their school district. It will be coded so that only I know from where the information comes.

Research on women in educational administration has been sparse: there is little known about whom the women are that attain the superintendency, how they view themselves, the professional image they develop, successful career strategies they employ and if there are any differences in their work experiences and career paths. The results of this study will have implications for practitioners who recognize the significance of understanding the female perspective on leadership. I do need your input on strategies used in establishing your professional identity and the keys to successful entry into the role of superintendent.

Enclosed is a letter of support from Dr. Paul Houston, Executive Director, American Association of School Administrators for my dissertation research. I will call you within the week to discuss your willingness to participate in this research project. Hopefully, we can schedule an interview appointment in August or September. I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jude Isaacson



American Association of School Administrators

June 11, 1997

Dear Colleague:

I am writing this letter in support of Jude Isaacson's educational dissertation research. She is a student of Dr. Joan Curcio and a candidate for a doctorate at Virginia Tech.

I meet Ms. Isaacson at AASA's Women Administrators Conference in San Antonio, Texas. We discussed her research effort and the importance of understanding the female perspective on leadership. Ms. Isaacson's study will describe through qualitative inquiry the professional identity that emerges as a woman attains the superintendency and will delineate those factors that facilitate and contribute to successfully attaining the superintendency.

Looking beyond the numerical count of female superintendents, little is known about whom the women are that attain the superintendency. Future research needs to include in-depth studies of successful women leaders. I am endorsing this dissertation research and encourage you to participate in the study.

Thank you for your support of Jude and Virginia Tech.

Sincerely,

Paul D. Houston, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Appendix C

Appendix C

SAMPLE CONVERSATIONAL GUIDE

- * **What was your academic preparation for the superintendency?**
- * **What professional positions have you held?**
- * **Tell me the story of your success. How did you get to where you are?**
- * **Which experiences helped you achieve a 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 was the most influential person as you were growing up? How do you feel that they shaped you? What values/attitudes were instilled as you grew up? Any particular comments made to you as a child that influenced your concept of self?**
- * **Who were your professional role models? How did they influence your career path?**
- * **What do you read and reflect on?**
- * **What slogans do you use?**
- * **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 a superintendent?**
- * Would you do it again? Why?**
- * What recommendations would you offer women aspiring to the superintendency?**
- * Is there anything you would ask if conducting the interview or would like to add?**
- * Would you recommend another candidate to participate in this research study?**

VITA

Jude Isaacson was born on April 16, 1946. She attended public schools in Dickson City, Pennsylvania and Owego, New York. She graduated from Owego Free Academy in 1964. She earned an Associate of Arts degree with a concentration in History from Corning Community College, Corning, New York in 1966 and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from the State University of New York at Potsdam in 1968. In addition she completed her Masters in Education with a concentration in special education in 1986 from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Educational Administration in 1996 from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Ms. Isaacson has taught first grade for the Union Endicott School System in Endicott, New York and kindergarten, gifted and talented fifth/sixth, and learning disabilities for Fairfax County Public Schools in Fairfax, Virginia. As an Area III Fairfax County Public School elementary special education administrator she supervised thirty three elementary school special education programs representing all disabilities. In this capacity Ms. Isaacson served under the Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services and the Area III Superintendent. Currently Ms. Isaacson is on a staff development assignment as Assistant Principal at Herndon Elementary School, Herndon, Virginia which has a diverse population of one thousand twenty five students.

Ms. Isaacson has been adjunct professor at the University of Virginia and has presented at many conferences. She has been recipient of an Impact II Grant, Area III Instructional Grant, and Phi Delta Kappa Educators in Action Research Grant for her doctoral research.

Her professional affiliations include: Phi Delta Kappa, National Association of Elementary School Principals, American Association of School Administrators, Council for Exceptional Children, Learning Disabilities Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Additionally she had been the vice president and treasurer of the D. C. Branch of Orton Dyslexia Society and the Coordinator for Volunteers the 41st Orton Dyslexia Society 1990 National Conference.

Jude Isaacson