

12-17-2010

The Career Paths, Successes and Struggles of K-12 Public School Women Superintendents in the State of Louisiana

Dinah Robinson
University of New Orleans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>

Recommended Citation

Robinson, Dinah, "The Career Paths, Successes and Struggles of K-12 Public School Women Superintendents in the State of Louisiana " (2010). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 1274.

<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/1274>

This Dissertation is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Dissertation in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Dissertation has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

The Career Paths, Successes and Challenges
of K-12 Public School Women Superintendents
in the State of Louisiana

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Administration and Leadership

By

Dinah M. Robinson

B.A. McNeese State University, 1990
M. ED McNeese State University, 1993
ED. S McNeese State University, 2000

December 2010

Copyright 2010, Dinah M. Robinson

Dedication

In loving memory of my mother Teresa J. King (1941 – 2001)

To my most precious mother who is no longer with me, thank you for teaching me to love the Lord, to know His awesomeness and that He will always be with me. I thank you for teaching me to pray and for praying for me. I thank you for supporting me, loving me and believing in my dreams. Mom, you were always present when I needed you. I love you deeply and truly miss you.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank God for His unconditional love that gave me the knowledge and strength to complete this dissertation. With my most awesome God, I can do anything and everything. Everything that I have accomplished, I owe the Lord, our God. Earning this degree was His will. How awesome art Thou!

To my daughter who was with me through the good and bad days, I appreciate your encouragement and assistance. During many days and many struggles, you offered support and motivated me. For everything that you have done and continue to do, I love you, and I truly thank you.

To Dolores D. Hicks, my Administrative Director, best friend, and family, I thank you for helping me, understanding me, and providing me with many words of encouragement. I am very grateful for your support and appreciate you for being patient when days seemed tough and I was indifferent. You were there when my mother departed this world, and there, you have remained. I will always love and appreciate you.

To my professors, thank you for assisting me and encouraging me. You helped tremendously to remove all doubts. Especially to Dr. Tammie Cause-Konate, you are a beautiful person with a beautiful heart. Thanks for the continuous encouragement.

To my extended family, Dr. Nancy Shepard, Mrs. Carol Weston, Desmond Wallace and Mrs. Gloria Rogers, thank you so much for the support and the encouragement throughout the years.

To my long-time colleague and friend, Dr. Pamela Payne and Dr. Washington, thank you for your time, assistance and support. I truly appreciate you.

To all of my John F. Kennedy faculty, family, and friends, thanks for the support and prayers. Memories of hard times and good times will always remain close to my heart. You are a family to be remembered. Thank all of you for everything. You could not have been a better faculty.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF GRAPHS	xi
Abstract	xii
Chapter I: INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Study	6
Role of the Superintendent	6
Career Paths of Women in Education	7
Statement of the Problem	10
Research Questions	11
Significance of Study	12
Definitions	12
Assumptions	14
Delimitation	14
Implications	15
Organization of Study	17
Chapter II: LITERATURE REVIEW	18
Introduction	18
History of Feminism	19
Theoretical Framework	21
Research Methodology.....	22
Feminist Standpoint Theory	23
Black Feminist Theory.....	27
History of Women and the k-12 Public School Superintendency	29
History of Women of Color and the k-12 Public School Superintendency	30
Gender Identities and the Early Education of Women.....	32
Women and Universities	33
Historical and Societal Barriers	34
Contemporary Barriers to the K-12 Public School Superintendency	36
Support for Women Aspiring to the Superintendency.....	38
21st Century Women.....	39
Qualifications of a Superintendent.....	40
Summary.....	44
Chapter III: METHODOLOGY.....	45
Introduction	45
Researcher As An Instrument	46
Research Design.....	47

Sampling Procedures.....	49
Description of Participants	51
Negotiating Entry.....	52
Confidentiality	52
Data Collection	53
Interview.....	53
Observations	55
Complimentary Data Gatherings	56
Recordings	56
Field Notes.....	57
Non-verbal Cues	57
Instrumentation	57
Trustworthiness and Credibility.....	58
Member Checking.....	59
Transferability.....	60
Data Analysis.....	61
Summary.....	62
Chapter IV:RESULTS.....	64
Introduction	64
Women's Identity	66
Portrait of Five Women Superintendents	67
Survey of Louisiana Women Superintendents	67
District Profile	69
Career Paths of Louisiana Women Superintendents.....	69
Observation of Women Participants in Action.....	74
Leadership Skills.....	78
Encountered Barriers.....	78
Gender Discrimination against Career Women	80
Racism (a form of discrimination)	80
Sexism	82
Ageism (a form of discrimination)	83
Ascending in light of barriers	84
Faith.....	85
Effective Leadership.....	85
Power of Negotiation.....	86
Effective Communication.....	88
Professional Support	89
Support of Peers.....	90
Support of Board Members	91
Support of Mentors.....	92
Family Support.....	92

Participants' Perceptions regarding the under-representation of women	93
Effects of Traditional Obligations.....	94
Women's Lack of Appropriate Preparation and Certification	95
Women's Lack of Confidence.....	95
Societal's Stereotypical Attitudes.....	96
Women's Lack of Business Savvy	100
Comradery of Men	101
Summary.....	101
Chapter V: DISCUSSION.....	103
Introduction	103
Discussion.....	103
Encountered Barriers.....	104
Gender Discrimination	105
Racism	107
Sexism	108
Ageism.....	109
Ascending in Light of Barriers	109
Faith.....	110
Effective Leadership.....	110
Effective Communication.....	111
Power of Negotiation.....	112
Professional Support	112
Support of Board Members	112
Support of Mentors.....	113
Support of Family	114
Support of Peers.....	115
Participants' Perception of Under-representation	115
Traditional Obligation.....	116
Women's Lack of Preparation & Certification	117
Women's Lack of Confidence.....	117
Women's Lack of Business Savvy	118
Comradery of Men	119
Chapter Summary	120
Limitation of Study	124
Implications	125
Recommendations for Future Practices.....	126
Recommendations for Future Research	127
Recommendations from Women Superintendents.....	127
Passing the Torch.....	127
Conclusion	128

REFERENCES	134
APPENDIX A.....	150
APPENDIX B.....	151
APPENDIX C.....	153
APPENDIX D.....	154
APPENDIX E.....	155
APPENDIX F.....	157
APPENDIX G.....	158
IRB Approval Form	158
Vitae	159

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1: Percentages of White Women Superintendents in the Nation.....	- 9-
Table 2: Disproportionate number of	- 11-
Table 3: Percentage of Black Women Superintendents in the Nation.....	- 31-
Table 4: Louisiana Women Superintendents Survey Data.....	- 68-
Table 5: Career Paths of Louisiana Women Superintendents.....	-73-
Table 6: Encountered Barriers of Louisiana Superintendents.....	- 79-
Table 7: Ascending in light of Barriers.....	- 85-
Table 8: Support Promoting Success.....	- 90-
Table 9: Perceptions of the Under-representation of Women Superintendents.....	- 94-

List of Graphs

	Page
Graph 1: Percentages representing gender.....	-42-
Graph 2: Percentages representing race.....	-43-

Abstract

Inequalities in the representation of women in higher administrative public school positions are a product of historical and societal patterns (Byrd-Blake, 2000). These patterns have determined the constraints women have faced and continue to face when they attempt to obtain administrative positions in public educational school systems. Shakeshaft's (1999) study revealed that women represent the majority of the teaching profession in public education (83.5%), but they represent approximately 14% of the minority of top level administrative positions in public education. According to Davies-Netzley (1998), women continue to be at the bottom of the corporate organizational charts, have fewer chances for advancements, and earn less income than men in similar positions. Out of the nation's 13,728 k-12 public school superintendents, 1,984 are women (AASA, 2000). This lack of gender balance and related inequities raises the question of whether women are treated inequitably with regard to national statistics on administrative hiring. According to the Louisiana State Directory (2007), 20 of the state's 64 superintendents are women. Yet, the number of k-12 public school women superintendents remain disproportionate to the number of women serving as classroom teachers. This study examined the career paths of five women superintendents, their successes, struggles, and barriers to k-12 public school superintendents in the state of Louisiana. In addition, the under-representation of women superintendents in this state was investigated through interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Keywords: Inequalities, struggles, barriers, under-representation, disproportionate, women superintendents.

“Men weren’t really the enemy -- they were fellow victims suffering from an outmolded masculine mystique that made them feel unnecessarily inadequate when there were no bears to kill.”

(Friedan, 1963, p 521)

Introduction

Where are all the k-12 public school women superintendents? There have been many changes in education throughout the years in the number or percentage of women who served as k-12 public school superintendents. Historically, the education profession has been dominated by women (Blount, 1998; Brunner 1999). Women comprised nearly 75% of public school teaching positions (Vail, 1999; AASA, 2007). It wasn’t until the early 1900s when women were forced to work and help promote the economy while the men went off to war (Riehl & Byrd, 1997). This became the golden age for the women in education who aspired to be administrators. During this time, it was very common for women to obtain lead positions as elementary administrators. But even though women obtained nearly 55% of the elementary administrators positions during that time and occupied at least 60% of the central office positions, it was still uncommon for women to obtain a k-12 public school superintendent position (Vail, 1999; AASA, 2007).

Between the years of 1928 and 1984, the number of women administrators began decreasing from 55% to 18% and then to 6.6%. This decrease allowed a tremendous increase in the number of men administrators in education in the United States. But according to the American Association of School Administrators (2004), the number of women administrators again began increasing during the years of 1984 to 2000. More women began obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency (AASA, 2004), but not nearly as many as during the golden age.

The number of women superintendents nearly doubled from 6.6% to 13.2%, but the percentage of men superintendents heading American public schools tremendously outweighed the number of women superintendents; men held at least 87% of the superintendent positions (AASA, 2004). Even though women continued to comprise more than 70% of the teaching positions and at least 13.2% of the k-12 public school superintendent positions, the number of women serving as k-12 public school superintendents is clearly disproportionate to the number of women serving as classroom teachers in public education (Blount, 1998).

In the year 2000, the United States Department of Education reported that women comprised 72 % of all k-12 educators in the nation. Although the publication reports women as the majority educators in the education system nationwide, women were also reported as the minority nationwide positioned as k-12 public school superintendents. In 2002, the National Education Association's (NEA) report found 12.0 % of the nation's superintendency were women. Johnson's (2006) study identified 11.9 % were women. However, AASA (2007) showed a one year increase from 11.9 % women superintendents in 2006 to 20.0% women superintendents in 2007.

There was also a small increase for Black women superintendents serving as k-12 public school superintendency. When Black women were positioned, they were found in poor southern states. The first percentage of Black women superintendents in the nation was revealed in Shakeshaft's (1993) study which was .01 %. Glass's (2000) report revealed a percentage of 3.0%. The National Education Association (2002) report found that 5.0% of the nation's women superintendents were Black and Johnson's (2006) study revealed 4.9%. By 2007, the percentage of Black women superintendents had decreased to 4.1%. Even though the numbers

varied for Black women superintendents, the percentages had increased throughout the years from .01 % to 4.1%.

Today approximately 75% of classroom teachers are women, but there is still a disproportionate number of women representing the k-12 superintendency when compared to the number of women in education. Why then are there so few women in this position? As an educator who has been employed as a high school teacher, an elementary, middle and high school principal, my interest in this study is personal. Before retiring from the education profession, I would like to extend my administrative career to the position of a k-12 public school superintendent. I first began working in the Calcasieu Parish School System as a Special Education Paraprofessional. Attending college in the evenings and summer, I received a BA in education and began teaching. Continuing in education, I received a Master's Degree, a Master's +30, and a Specialist Degree in Administration. At this time, I am pursuing a Doctoral Degree in Administration. My last education aspiration is to obtain the k-12 public school superintendency, but not necessarily where I reside. However, this study strongly relates to my future career aspiration. Because women dominate the education field as classroom teachers, again, where are all the k-12 public school women superintendents and why is the ratio of women who serve as classroom teachers so disproportionate to the ratio of women serving in the k-12 public school superintendent's position?

In the state of Louisiana, there are 64 public education school districts, and each has one superintendent. Out of the 64 public education school districts in 2007, 20 were headed by women, totaling 32%, which is more than the nation's average of 20.0% (Louisiana State Directory, 2007). Since there are so few women as k-12 public school superintendents, studies have revealed experiences felt by men superintendents. Therefore little is known about the

women who have obtained the superintendency, especially Black women: There have been a few studies that relate to women and leadership (Garfinkel, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Genzen, 1993; Greenfield, 1994; Issacson, 1998).

For example, Garfinkel's (1987) study of women superintendents revealed that women in leadership capacities were non-supportive of aspiring women and they actually were limited with hiring them; they preferred hiring their male counterparts. They reported that because of pressure, they felt they had to distant themselves from aspiring women. Hiring aspiring women they believed threatened their credibility and their job security. When hiring aspiring women, they were considered token women.

Shakeshaft (1989), Genzen (1993), Greenfield (1994), and Issacson (1998) found that women superintendents held certain valuable leadership strengths. Shakeshaft's (1989) study made note of women leadership style. Women superintendents are unique in the way they spend their time in their daily interactions; they prioritized issues and/or concerns and utilized them to guide their actions, their perceptions. Women's satisfaction was found in their work and accomplishments. Women superintendents often devote their time to preparation of building tours to observe teachers and students and dialogue with members of the school's community. They also utilize their unstructured time on curriculum and instruction matters. They worked hard to disregard the politics (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Genzen's (1993) study determined that women superintendents held a high degree of self assurance and were generally transformational leaders. Greenfield's (1994) study on the leadership of women discussed strands of generative leadership among women superintendents. According to Greenfield (1994), generative leaders are ones who evolves from a transformational leader by valuing care and nurturance to their faculty, staff, and students and

also seeking to provide a community that fosters the same values. Other values include: empowerment of others through collaborative efforts, an open communication, shared decision-making and conflict prevention (Greenfield, 1994).

Issacson's (1998) study on the leadership ability of women superintendents concludes that women have leadership qualities that the superintendency needs. The study interviewed women displayed strength in the areas of people skills, reflective practices, and alternate perspectives in problem solving and decision making. The strengths mentioned in Issacson's (1998) study along with socialization skills such as caring and nurturing made women leadership skills unique (Issacson, 1998).

There are a few studies relating to the success stories of women who have obtained the superintendency and their perceptions of the under-representation of women. However, no studies have been found regarding the success of women superintendents or their perceptions regarding an under-representation of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana.

Because there is limited research about the stories of women superintendents, particularly relating to their career paths, Isaacson (1998) suggested that further research on the career paths of women superintendents is needed. Grogan's (1996) study recommended the utilization of in-depth research studies on successful women leaders to assist them in becoming successful educational leaders. She also suggests utilizing studies that would include information on guidelines, strategies, techniques, and advice that could assist future women administrators. The sharing of experiences by successful women administrators may ensure less barriers in the workplace for women who strive to obtain an administrator's position (Gupton & Slick, 1996).

Purpose of the Study

Again, very little has been written on women who have obtained the position of public school superintendent, or their successes, struggles, and barriers in the k-12 public education school system. There persists a scarcity of research on women superintendents and no research has been done specifically on Louisiana women superintendents. The purpose of this study is to examine the career paths and experiences of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana and document the participants' perceptions on why the number of women classroom teachers is disproportionate to the number of women serving as k-12 public school superintendents in this state. The researcher will observe some recurrent themes and personal accounts of each of the women superintendents that may be relevant to their rise to the k-12 public school superintendency.

Role of a Superintendent

Superintendents are the chief administrators in a parish or school district in a state. Superintendents are referred to as senior administrators of schools; they are hired and/or selected by an elected school board of a local district. Superintendents report directly to the parish, county or district Board of Education. The superintendents' overall responsibilities include personnel selection and appointments, preparation of operating budgets, and implementation of school policies and regulations. Superintendents must be familiar with technology, curriculum, teaching and different learning styles, methods, and team building. They must possess the skills to vision the big picture. Superintendents are the superior officers of all principals, administrators and all the people who report to them in all schools in a school district. Their duty is to work with principals and administrators to make improvements within the district and to develop them into a cohesive team (Louisiana Department of Education). Superintendents make sure that

everything that happens within the schools is done correctly and in a way that is best for all students, regardless of their socio-economic status, age, gender, race, creed, and/or innate abilities. Superintendents oversee bus drivers, cafeteria staff, custodians, secretaries, maintenance personnel, teachers, principals, and central office staff. They must have a working knowledge of every position in the school system (Louisiana Department of Education).

Superintendents' contracts may vary, but each is provided a 12-month, two-to-three-year contract with 10 to 20 days a year vacation. Superintendents are responsible for negotiating contracts for their certified and non-certified employees. They must develop a level of mutual trust and respect with each employee. They must also develop trust with the community.

Career Paths of Women in Education

Historically women have not regularly obtained the position of k-12 public school superintendency. However, more recently, women have made substantial gains in acquiring other education positions. Shakeshaft's (1989) study verified that the percentages of women as classroom teachers and elementary school principals tremendously exceed the percentages of women superintendents. For example, one study found that 91% of the elementary level teachers were women; 38% percent were elementary school principals; 6% were secondary principals; and only 2.1% were district school superintendents (Shakeshaft, 1989). The report revealed a slight increase of women superintendents throughout the years, but it also reflected an extreme under-representation of women superintendents (Shakeshaft, 1989). In 1995, Eakle completed a study on women in education. Consistent with the findings of Shakeshaft's (1989) study, Eakle's (1995) study revealed that 88% percent of elementary classroom teachers were women, which was extremely high. The study also found that, out of 1,074 superintendents in the U.S., only 157 were women, totaling 14% (Eakle, 1995). Compared to Shakeshaft's (1989) study, Eakle's

(1995) study revealed an 11% increase in the number of women serving as k-12 public school superintendents.

In 1999, Shakeshaft completed a second study on women superintendents and the findings were very similar to the Shakeshaft's (1989) study. Shakeshaft's (1999) study found that 83.5% of the elementary teachers were women; 16.9% were elementary principals; 50.1% were secondary teachers; 3.5% were secondary principals; and 3% were school superintendents. Both studies revealed that women were still representing the majority of the teaching profession but indicated that women were under-represented in top-level administrative positions. Other studies have also verified that the education profession, which has always been dominated by women, is totally managed by men (Gupton & Schlick, 1996; Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999),.

As illuminated above, percentages of female superintendents in the U.S. has continued to fluctuate throughout history. Studies completed after 1993 on women and the k-12 public school superintendency identified similar percentages. A study on women and the superintendency found a 7% representation of women and acknowledged that 0.01% were Black (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). In 2000, Glass also completed a study on the "American School Superintendents." The results revealed a continuous dominance of male superintendents. Out of 2,262 superintendents across the nation, only 297 were women, totaling 13% (Glass, 2000).

Mertz's (2000) study revealed the same findings of small percentages of representation; women superintendents represented only 0.01% of the superintendents' population, 6% of the deputy and associate superintendents' population, and 5% of the assistant superintendents' population, which was an even larger decrease from earlier findings. However, in 2002, Mary Hatwood Futurell, former President of the National Education Association, reported that 12% of the superintendents in the U.S. k-12 public schools were women. According to Johnson's (2006)

study, 11.9% of the k-12 public school superintendents were identified as women. At the turn of the last century, the percentages were approximately the same for women superintendents (American Association of University Women, 2002). According to AASA (2007), 20% of the k-12 superintendents in the nation were women. Table 1 shows the growth of the nation's percentages of women superintendents from 1993 to 2007.

Table 1

Number of White women superintendents in the nation

Dates	Percentage of White Women Superintendents
1928	1.6 %
1993	7.1 %
2000	13.0 %
2002	12.0 %
2006	11.9 %
2007	20.0 %

According to Glass (2000), the fluctuation of the percentages of women superintendents in the U.S. is because women earn fewer entry points than men to the superintendency. Two of the main reasons can be because of their lack of knowledge or lack of opportunities available at the higher education level. The most common career path of women who had become public school superintendents progressed from included teacher to elementary principal to central office administrator, and then to the superintendency (Manuel, 2001). However, according to Keller (1999), women are more likely to receive promotions as consultants and supervisors of instruction, which were considered staff positions instead of line positions that led to the superintendency. This may be explained by the fact that line positions to the superintendency

include high school assistant principals, high school principals, associate superintendents, and assistant superintendents. Therefore, the typical career path of women superintendents was a non traditional career path and because of this non traditional career path, the superintendency remains out of reach for most women (Keller, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

Historically, the superintendent's role has been male. According to Grogan (1996), "the absence of women" (p.25) in the superintendency may suggest that women were being seen through traditional lenses and measured against ideals that have historically served men. Even though the percentage of women superintendents employed in k-12 public educational school systems has increased, women still have not reached parity in terms of the percentage of men superintendents (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Women have led the teaching profession for decades, but when compared to the number of men serving as k-12 public school superintendents, there is an under-representation of women serving in this capacity. Based on the experiences of five of the twenty Louisiana k-12 public school women superintendents identified, this study will attempt to fill the void in the literature relating to the career paths of these women and document their perceptions regarding the under-representation of women serving as k-12 public school superintendents in this state. The table 2 displays an example of the disproportionate numbers of women serving as k-12 public school superintendents.

Table 2

Disproportionate number of classroom teachers and women superintendents in the nation

Dates	Percent of Women Teachers	Percentage of Women Superintendents
1989	91.0 %	2.1 %
1995	88.0 %	14.0 %
1999	83.5 %	3.0 %

To provide data for this study, the researcher relied on the experiences and recollections of five k-12 women superintendents along with information regarding their perceptions of the disproportionate numbers of women serving as classroom teachers and the number of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. The following questions were utilized to assist with guiding and gathering data to accomplish this purpose.

Research Questions

The research questions included:

1. What barriers, if any, did the participant face when aspiring to the k-12 public school superintendency?
2. How was the participant able to ascend to the superintendency in light of the perceived barriers?
3. What professional support did the participant receive that contributed to her successes?
4. What are the participant's thoughts relating to the under-representation of women superintendents?

Significance of Study

Women serving as k-12 public school superintendents are understudied. According to Grogan (1996), more studies need to be conducted from a perspective that focuses on understanding women superintendents and their actual experiences. Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000), stated, “women must learn from other women’s voices and experiences.” (p.29). Through qualitative inquiry, this study explores the career paths of women superintendents, along with their achievements and obstacles. This study also notes the participants’ perceptions regarding the disproportionate number of women employed as classroom teachers when compared to the number of women serving in k-12 public school superintendency positions in Louisiana. This study adds to a body of knowledge concerning women who have obtained the k-12 public school superintendent position in a European American male-dominated educational school system. The study reveals the experiences of each of the participants along with their struggles, barriers, and successes. Perhaps reporting the experiences of these Louisiana women superintendents will provide an essential model for other states who aspire to increase their number of women superintendents and inspire other women to seek the superintendency.

Definitions

The following terms are defined for to clarify their use in this study:

1. **Administrator** in the field of education is one that handles the leadership and administration of a school. Administrators are responsible for managing and supervising school faculty, education programs, student achievement and staff development (Glass, 2000).
2. **Barriers** are blockages or limited opportunities to advancements in higher levels of leadership (Ingersoll, 1995).

3. **Black feminist standpoint theory** is a type of critical theory whose aim is to empower the oppressed to improve their situation (Johnson, 2006).
4. **Career path** is progress taken through a sequence of jobs within the workplace in which each successive position has additional responsibilities and power (Giuglianao, 1995).
5. **Discrimination** is an open reluctance to hire women or nonwhites (Kennelly, 1999).
6. **Feminine standpoint theory** is a feminist critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practice of power (Harding, 2003).
7. **Glass ceiling** is an artificial barrier based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward (Elkiss, 1994).
8. **Observation** is the act or practice of noting and recording facts and events (Gay and Eurasian, 2000).
9. **Sex role stereotype** is the belief that certain types of employments are for women and certain types of employment are for men (Johnson, 2006).
10. **Socialization** is a term applied to those processes by which an individual acquires the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to perform a social role adequately; in this case, the superintendency (Merton, 2000).
11. **Superintendents** are those individuals who are appointed to serve as the chief executive officer of a school district, providing professional leadership for a district's schools (AASA, 1994).
12. **Systemic Sampling** is a random sampling technique in which individuals are selected from a list by taking every Nth name (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

13. **Under-representation** is the disproportionate number of women serving as classroom teachers compared to the number of women serving as k-12 public school superintendents (Barrios, 2004 revised by (Robinson, 2010).
14. **Voices** are a framework of detailed expressions of one's way of knowing. Voices include expressions of one's life experiences, values, beliefs, needs, and concerns (Turner, 2004).

Assumptions

The assumption is that all of the participants will answer the questions in an honest manner. According to Cook and Campbell (1979), research methods that take the approach of asking questions to the person directly are known as self-report methods. Self-report methods mainly take the form of interview, questionnaire, and/or rating scales. Self-reported data's main qualitative form is the utilization of the semi-structured interview. One of the main advantages of self-reported data is that it gives the respondents' personal views, and their perceptions of themselves and their experiences, which are unobtainable in any other way. The main disadvantage of self-reported data is that there are a number of potential validity problems. Cook and Campbell (1979) stated that subjects tend to report what they believe the researcher expects to hear and what reflects positively on their own abilities, knowledge, beliefs, or opinions. Schacter (1999) maintained that human memory can be fallible, and therefore, the reliability of self-reported data can be tenuous. Self-reported data is also based upon the honesty of the participants. The researcher must rely on the information from the participants to be true.

Delimitation

The delimitation of this study concerns the boundary of the problem researched and the individuals to be studied. The delimitation includes women who serve as k-12 public school

superintendents in the state of Louisiana. This study will provide detailed descriptions of the career paths of the participants, including successes, struggles, and barriers to the k-12 public school superintendency in Louisiana. The participants for this study will be conveniently selected based on seniority, race/ethnicity, availability, interest, and willingness to participate.

Implications

The purpose of this study intends to: (1) provide insight to women aspiring to become superintendents, and to inform personnel supervisors, board members, universities, and school systems regarding practices associated with the hiring of qualified women as superintendents; (2) share information that can be beneficial to individuals aspiring to become superintendents by identifying possible barriers; (3) help individuals to become more knowledgeable about skills, education, leadership and professional development opportunities that will enhance leadership skills to build success; and (4) support the improvement of recruitment and the hiring practices associated with administrative leadership positions to assure greater equity particularly with regard to gender.

Gendered identities are developed before birth, and during the early years, parents demonstrated certain attributes and expectations (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Hayes and Flannery's (2000) study also affirmed that gender expectations communicated at an early age are reinforced and challenged in adult women's lives. These attributes and expectations are demonstrated throughout a child's life until they become adolescents. At an early age, girls are stereotyped as caregivers, nurturers, model mothers, and wives. Boys are also stereotyped to be providers, strong, sexually assertive and without emotions. Because girls are stereotyped, they are more likely to experience discrimination. Girls are not expected to do certain jobs. Boys are expected to grow up and have jobs in a leadership capacity. For example, boys are expected to

become men and head the household and be the sole providers for their families (Hayes and Flannery, 2000). Lukas's (2006) study had similar findings regarding children's behavior and their assigned gender. According to Lukas's (2006) study, little girls are provided pink blankets, given cuddly Barbie dolls, and are taught to play house and read fairy tales. While little boys are wrapped in blue blankets, given trucks and building blocks to play with. Then they are taught to play rough, to run and compete. Each is assigned a behavior based on their gender (Lukas, 2006).

Dunn's (1997) study revealed that literature implies that the creation of an invisible "glass ceiling" over upper management jobs has developed a caste system in corporate America where men are at the top and women are at the lower tier. The glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that women deal with when aspiring for corporate hierarchy (Dunn, 1997). Accordingly, women have been socially programmed to take secondary roles from birth, and may act on a belief that they are secondary to men (Dunn, 1997).

Through a qualitative methodology approach and feminist theories, the researcher desires to provide a clearer understanding of women superintendents, their accomplishments, problems, concerns of inequities, and note their perceptions regarding women and the k-12 public school superintendency. However, the researcher does not claim that all women who aspire to become superintendents will have the same experiences as the ones in this study. However, the researcher does intend for women who aspire to become superintendents to discover for themselves ways to utilize the information in this study to assist them when seeking the k-12 public school superintendency.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I contains a discussion of the purpose and the context of the problem. A qualitative perspective serves as the methodology needed to research this study. The research focus was presented along with a discussion of the significance of this study.

Chapter II contains a review of literature focusing on the voices of 5 Louisiana women superintendents. This chapter expands upon the feminist standpoint theory, and Black feminist thought which served as the foundation of this study.

Chapter III presents the research methodology and design used for this study. The qualitative research methodology will be used because of the nature of the study. Sample selection, data gathering instruments, procedures for collection, and a discussion of the actions to ensure trustworthiness of the research were included.

Chapter IV provides the results of this study in rich, thick descriptions of the experiences of each participant in their own voice. A portrait of the study participants includes demographic data about each such as the participants' background, career paths, and experiences in becoming a k-12 public school superintendent. Other data included the participants' stories that were obtained through in-depth interviews. The chapter concluded with recommendations provided by the participants for others who aspire for the superintendency.

Chapter V discusses the findings. The experiences, struggles, and barriers of the participants were discussed along with the participants' perception of why women are not acquiring the superintendency at the same rate as men. Finally limitations, recommendations, implications for theory and practice, and conclusion are also presented.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

The direction research takes is often influenced by the intellectual climate in which it develops. According to Glesne (1999), the review of literature should begin with collecting, scanning, and examining literature that relates to the researcher's selected topic. However, there is a scarcity of literature on women who have obtained the k-12 public school superintendency, and on the barriers affecting women seeking such educational leadership positions in the past (Grogan, 1996). There is also a limited amount of literature relating to why women who make up 70-75% of the teaching profession and who are considered more qualified than both women and men of the past, are not obtaining superintendent positions in k-12 public school systems (Grogan, 1996).

The literature reviewed for this study will assist the researcher in exploring the career paths of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana, and their successes, struggles, and barriers, and document their perceptions of why women are under-represented as k-12 public school superintendents in this state. To shed light on women and the k-12 public school superintendency, this chapter will discuss the history of feminism; theoretical framework; research methodology; feminist standpoint theory; Black feminist standpoint theory; the history of women and the k-12 public school superintendency; the history of women of color and the k-12 public school superintendency; gender identities and the early education of women; women and universities; historical and societal barriers; contemporary barriers to the k-12 public school superintendency; support for aspiring women to the superintendency; 21st century women; and the superintendent qualifications in Louisiana. This chapter ends with a summary. Hence, the

perspective addressed in much of the literature pertinent to this study represents a feminine orientation rather than the more traditional masculine orientation.

History of Feminism

Feminism is best defined by its concerns to correct the inequities that women have been subjected to, and to address ideas about what constitutes a woman, her nature, history, and future (hooks, 1984). According to history, feminism in the U.S. began with Abigail Smith Adams, the wife of John Adams, second president of the U.S. (Otten, 1993). Adams was the first American woman to speak of women's rights. She was very vocal in her belief that the U.S. should give women their full legal status and put an end to slavery. She believed that women were equal to men in intelligence and should be allowed to pursue an education. Adams wrote several letters to her husband expressing her feminist sentiments. In 1776, she wrote and asked him to "please remember the ladies" in his new code of law (Otten, p. 37). She also asked her husband to put limited power into the hands of husbands. However, Adams was never able to see any representation for women in her lifetime.

According to hooks (2000), feminist activists fought for women's legal rights, rights of contract, property rights, and voting rights. They campaigned for rights for bodily integrity, autonomy, abortion rights, and reproductive rights. They also fought for protection from domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape. Today women continue to fight for workplace rights, which include maternity leave and equal pay. Because of unfair treatment against women, the feminist movement was brought about to help women rid society of sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression (hooks, 2000). From the feminist movement emerged feminist theory, which is manifested through disciplines, such as feminist geography, feminist history,

and feminist literature (Lukas, 2006). According to Lukas (2006), the feminist movement is divided into three different waves, beginning with the convention held at Seneca Falls in 1848.

On July 19th and 20th in 1848, the Seneca Falls' Convention marked the first women's rights convention held in New York and in the U.S. This convention, led by the great suffragist, Cady Stanton and others, completed *The Declaration of Sentiments*, which unapologetically states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal." (Lukas, 2006, p. xii) This declaration asked for the right to vote for women. It also called for the maintenance of women's legal status in marriage and divorce, as well as their right to own property and to have equal rights to parenting their children in case of divorce. Finally, this declaration called for equal access to education, and the recognition of women as equal in the eyes of God. In 1919, the 19th Amendment permitted women to vote. This was seen as the first wave of the feminist movement (Lukas, 2006).

The second wave of the feminist movement occurred during the 1960s and the 1970s. During this wave, feminists wanted an end to societal expectations for them and the opportunity to have jobs that were traditionally reserved for men. This wave was sparked by a book entitled *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan written in 1963. This book discussed "the problem that has no name." (p.6) It was a dominant belief that women were fulfilled through their role as wives and mothers. According to Lukas (2006), this book not only sparked the second wave, it also brought about Title IX, *Roe v. Wade*, and the National Organization for Women, an organization of feminist activists in the U.S. (Lukas, 2006). Title IX was administered by the Office of Civil Rights in the United States Department of Education to outlaw sex discrimination where federal funds are received and utilized (Gunderson, Hyatt & Slinn, 2002). Written assurances must be submitted to the Department of Education regarding compliance.

Roe v. Wade was a landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court on the issue of abortion. The court held that the constitutional right to privacy extended to a woman's decision to have an abortion. The National Organization for Women founded in 1966, it is the largest feminist organization in the United States. A criticism of the second wave was that it focused too much on the lives of White middle class women and did not connect with discriminations of race and class (Lukas, 2006).

Lukas (2006) concluded that the third wave of the feminist movement is known as the modern feminist movement. It focused on the concerns of minority women, lesbians, and women living in poverty. The modern feminist movement is not simply about women's equality, but is more concerned about women who are in pursuit of the professional feminist's idea, which relates to what a woman should want. The modern woman utilizes airways, the internet, and the media. The modern woman walks the Halls of Congress. In 1917, Representative Jeannette Rankin was the first woman to serve in Congress; however a total of 260 women have served as United States Representatives or Senators to enhance government policies and subsidize political choices for women. The modern woman works to change the culture for women and to promote change within liberal colleges to assist women in reaching their goals (hooks, 2000; Lukas, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework is a system of ideas or conceptual structures that help us see the social world, understand the social world, explain the social world, and change the social world if needed (Bjork, 2000). A framework guides our thinking, research, and our actions. It provides a systematic way of examining social issues and providing recommendations for needed changes. A framework consist of many assumptions about the nature of the social world and the

people and their attitudes. One assumption regarding the social world was that society is a total conflict that is rooted in class, race, and gender. In addition, many assume that this conflict is rooted in struggles over power and resources (Bjork, 2000).

This study utilizes a theoretical framework comprised of two theories; feminist standpoint theory, and Black feminist standpoint theory. This framework guides the research and determines what things will be measured and what relationships will be observed. It represents an alternative way of looking at the social world regarding women, men, and the k-12 public school superintendency.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative methodology that consisted of a naturalistic inquiry with descriptive methods of data collection giving consideration to the major research questions of this study. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry appropriated in many different academic disciplines. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern the behavior. Qualitative methodology investigates the why and how of decision making and not just the what, where, or when. This methodology was selected to provide an understanding of why women who dominate the education profession are not obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency position at the same rate that men are obtaining this position.

Feminist theories will be used to assist with understanding the nature of gender inequalities by examining the experiences of the participants in this study who are considered oppressed. These theories explore discrimination, stereotyping, and oppression. Feminist theories make a significant contribution to understanding the discussion of the superintendency by “introducing the dimension of gender” (Grogan, 2000, p. 126).

Feminist Standpoint Theory

A theory utilized for this qualitative research study was feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory is a theoretical stance that focuses on what women have in common (Andersen, 1994). It suggests that women speaking their truths result in a new perspective on gendered experiences grounded in women's discourse regarding reality and experience. The fact that women are charged with maintaining their everyday life is the basis for the feminist standpoint theory. According to Andersen (1994), standpoint theory assumes that systems of privilege are less viable to those who benefit the most and who control the resources that define the dominant cultural beliefs, which are whites, males, and heterosexuals. Standpoint theory takes a standpoint for the oppressed groups such as people of color, women, and homosexuals, to recognize systems of oppression and privilege (Andersen, 1994, p.373). Olsen (2000) states that "standpoints are cognitive-emotional-political achievements, each crafted out of social-historical-bodily experiences" (p.222). Feminist standpoint theory provided an effective and productive venue to study the effects of gender on White women superintendents.

This theory has been used to explain the relationship between the production of knowledge and practices of power. Feminist standpoint theory originated in Hegel's thoughts about the relationship between the master and the slave (Harding, 1991). According to Harding (1991), Hegel argued that men's dominating position in social life results in partial and perverse understandings, whereas women's subjugated position provides the possibility for more complete and less perverse understandings. The basic premise of the standpoint theory was to explain the success of emerging feminist (Harding, 1991).

Feminist standpoint theory is also considered a type of critical theory that aims to empower the oppressed to improve their situation (Harding, 1986; Seelinger, 2000). It emerged in the

1970s and 1980s, and proposed as an explanatory theory, prescriptively as a method or theory of method to guide future feminist research (Harding, 1986). Women are considered oppressed and, therefore, have an interest in representing social phenomena in ways that reveal the truth.

According to Harding (1986) feminist theories aim to understand the nature of inequality and focuses on gender, politics, power, relations, and sexuality (Harding, 1986).

Feminist standpoint theory arose among feminist theories, such as Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, Hilary Rose, and Sandra Harding. According to these theorists, one's standpoint is a place from which to view the world; it influences how people adopting it socially construct the world; it creates differences in the perspectives of different social groups based on the inequalities of the social groups; it is affected by the membership of social groups; and finally, it is considered to be partial (Harding, 2003).

Nancy Hartsock was born in 1943. Hartsock is a feminist philosopher who is known for her work in feminist epistemology and standpoint theory, especially the essay "The Feminist Standpoint." Her standpoint theory derives from Marxism which claims that the proletariat has a distinctive perspective on social relations and that only this perspective reveals the truth. She draws an analogy between the industrial labor of the proletariat and the domestic labor of women to show that women can also have a distinctive standpoint. Hartsock (1983) is concerned with the development of theory in response to current concerns and within feminist communities dealing in representation and social change. Two central contentions shape this collection of essays: "theory plays an important part in political action for social change. The second is that political theorists must respond to and concentrate their energies on problems of political action, most fruitfully as these problems emerge in the context of efforts for social change" (p.7).

Hartsock (1983) identified two central themes of theory and political action which are power and its relationship to epistemology.

Hilary Rose has published extensively in the sociology of science from a feminist perspective. In 1997, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Uppsala for her contribution to the feminist sociology of science in 2001 her book *Love Power and Knowledge: Towards a feminist transformation of the sciences*. Dorothy Edith Smith is a Canadian sociologist who has had immense influence on sociology and many other disciplines including women studies, psychology, and educational studies, as well as sub-fields of sociology including feminist theory, family studies, and methodology. She also founded the sociological sub-disciplines of feminist Standpoint and Institutional Ethnography. She wrote and published many papers after this, some political, among them a pamphlet called *Feminism and Marxism: a place to begin, a way to go*, and some more strictly out of research and thinking sociologically. In 1987 she completed and published *The Everyday World as Problematic: a feminist sociology*. In 1990, she published two more collections of papers: “The Conceptual Practices of Power: a feminist sociology of knowledge and Texts, Facts, and Femininity: exploring the relations of ruling;” and in 1999, she published “Writing the Social: Critique, theory and investigations.”

Harding (1986) and feminist theorist, Hartsock (1983), contend that knowledge is always situational and culture is always experienced by the members of a cultural group. Moreover, women are traditionally positioned at the bottom of work and wealth. From this bottom position, women have been conditioned to understand their existence, both from the perspectives of their own experiences and from the worldview created in great depth by the oppressors as such. Harding suggests that the historical domination of women by men has prevailed because men’s

single vision offered an understanding of gender privilege and not gender oppression. These gender privileges are possibly in regards to the assumed differences between men and women.

Harding (1991) identified seven basic assumptions concerning the differences between the experiences of men and women. They are:

- 1) Women's different lives have been erroneously devalued and neglected as starting points for scientific research and as the generations of evidence for or against knowledge claims.
- 2) Women are valuable "strangers", "outsiders" to the social order...women's exclusives from the design and direction of both the social order and the product of knowledge...this status is seen as an advantage.
- 3) Women's oppression gives them fewer interests in ignorance...this is the ground for transvaluing women differences because members of oppressed groups have fewer interest in maintaining the status quo.
- 4) Women's perspectives are from the other side of the battle of the sexes "that women and men engage in on a daily basis...human knowers are active agents in their learning and women's knowledge emrges through the struggles.
- 5) Women's perspectives are from everyday life, which is best for the origins of research.
- 6) Women perspectives come from mediating ideological dualisms, nature verses culture, which enables us to understand how and why social and cultural phenomens have taken form.
- 7) Women especially women researchers, are "outsiders within"...this increases objectivity (pp. 121-131).

Harding (1986) found that feminist scholars have studied women, men, and the social relations between men and women across the conceptual frameworks of the disciplines. Feminist theories are very controversial when they claim epistemic privilege over socially and politically contested topics on behalf of disadvantaged social groups, relative to the perspectives of the groups that dominate them. Harding (1986) observed that what is accepted as “truth” has traditionally been defined by men and dominant social groups. Additionally, she states that those who define the *status quo* live in its singular reality, believing that women belong only in certain positions. Furthermore, those who live outside the *status quo* have a dual reality; they know who they are and where the social structure implies what they should aspire to be. Feminist standpoint theory will assist in empowering the oppressed to improve their situation.

Black Feminist Standpoint Theory

Black feminist standpoint theory is based on the theoretical understandings of Black women’s everyday experiences (Collins, 2000). Because the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s did not include women of color, African Americans developed the Black feminist standpoint theory, which was called Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000). It addressed the ideas of African American women in a voice that was “individual, collective, personal, political and one that reflected the intersectionality of race and gender” (Johnson, 2006, p. 34). According to Johnson (2006), the European American feminist movement suggested that people of color did not need equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, but African American women realized that they needed a venue to express their experiences, exclusion, and other concerns.

A Black feminist movement began in the 1960s to address ways in which sexism, racism, and classism influence the lives of Black women. Alice Walker, a Black feminist, described herself as a “Womanist” signifying an inclusion of race and class issues in feminism (Walker,

1983) Alice Walker published *The Color Purple* in 1982. Collins (2000) acknowledged that her intention in conceptualizing Black feminist thought was to regain feminine voice by placing, “African American women’s ideas in the center of analysis,” [which serves to] “not only privilege those ideas but encourage White feminists, African American men, and all others to investigate the similarities and differences among their own standpoints and those of African American women” (p. vii). Collins (2000) admitted that her initial goals were to examine “how knowledge can foster African American women’s empowerment,” but she later recognized that “empowerment of African American women would never occur in a world characterized by oppression and social injustice” (p.35). Some of Collins works include: *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism*, 2006; and *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, 2005.”

hooks (1984) stated being oppressed means the “absence of choices” which was the primary “pattern of suppression” by omission (as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 52). The under-representation of Black women superintendents demonstrates a pattern of suppression for women who have dominated the education profession as classroom teachers, acquired the education and certification for the k-12 public school superintendency endorsement, and they are still not allowed to reach parity with the number of male superintendents. hooks’ works include: *Feminist theory: From Margin to Center*; *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Polotocs*; and *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. According to Collins (2000), Black feminist thought contributes to empowering Black women by specifying the “domains of power that constrain Black women, as well as how much domination can be resisted” (p.19). Black feminist thoughts explain factors pertaining to race related inequities.

The combined components of qualitative design, feminist standpoint theory, and Black feminist thought offers a multitude of venues for this study. Qualitative method and both theories were chosen together to provide a framework for a comprehensive examination of the experiences, struggles, and encountered barriers endured by these women superintendents. Also the participants' perceptions regarding the under-representation of Louisiana women superintendents when compared to the number of women classroom teachers will be documented as well. All theories will help explain a number of important factors relating to gender biases and inequities relevant to hiring women for leadership positions.

History of Women and the K-12 Public School Superintendency

According to Bjork (2000), the percentage of women who have obtained the k-12 public school superintendency has been minimal, fluctuating throughout the last 60 years. The superintendency has been a position that was heavily dominated by men, and today, it is still heavily male-dominated (Glass, Bjork, and Brunner, 2000). According to Gunderson, Hyatt and Slinn (2002), it was not until the 1970s to 1980s, that numerous legislations were established to assist women in the labor market. Title VII promotes equal employment opportunity; the Equal Pay Act promotes diversity and equity among the minority populations; and Affirmative action initiatives initiated equal employment for Blacks (Ransom & Megdal, 1993). Affirmative action was broaden in the 1970s to include all women (Ransom & Megdal, 1993). Nevertheless, even with these establishments, there remains an under-representation of women positioned as superintendents in k-12 public education school systems (Shakeshaft, 1999). For example, in 1928, 1.6 % of the nation's k-12 public school superintendents were women. In 1993, the percentage of women superintendents had increased to 7.1%, which is a tremendous under-

representation of women superintendents (Shakeshaft, 1999). The growth during this 60-year span showed that the percentage of women superintendents had only grown 5.5%.

Several studies recognized an under-representation of women superintendents throughout the years and were prompted to investigate this under-representation, but were unable to locate data that could assist them in completing a legitimate study (Bjork, 2000; Issacson's, 1998; Kowalski & Stouder, 1999). Bjork (2000) indicated that the statistics in the past 20 years on women and the superintendency were too unreliable and unstable to complete an actual study. Recognizing this lack of data on women superintendents, Issacson (1998) recommended that more research be done on the career paths of women superintendents. Although other researchers were aware of this under-representation, their interest related more to studying women's leadership skills and comparing their skills to those of men (Tallerico, 1999).

History of Women of Color and the k-12 Public School Superintendency

Historically, women of color have not been able to achieve the superintendency readily. According to Johnson (2006), women of color who aspire to become k-12 educational leaders face a double whammy of race and gender. Therefore, the gender barrier for Black, qualified women is perhaps wider than for other women. Johnson's (2006) research suggests that the gender barriers that women superintendents have faced may have been imbedded during the early formation of the superintendency in American public education schools. Even though the 1930s suffrage movement increased the number of women superintendents, women of color did not experience much change in their representation in this position. Cunningham and Hentges's (1982) study found that the number of Black women in the k-12 public school superintendency was minimal between the 1930s and 1950s. Black women employed as k-12 public school superintendents were employed in school districts in predominantly Black southern states. But in

1980, the number of Black women superintendents had grown to 2.1%; in 1990, the percentage increased to 3.2%. By 1992, 3.9% of women superintendents in the nation were Blacks, and 46% of Black superintendents were employed in urban districts made up of more than 50,000 students (Johnson, 2006). This study was based on four Black women who had obtained the k-12 public school superintendency. According to Johnson’s (2006) study, all of the women superintendents studied felt that race and gender were not only liabilities, but also served as an asset because they assumed their positions at a time when race and gender could assist them with employment. They felt that they had been treated differently, and they knew they had to work even harder so that the door would not be closed for other women of color who wished to obtain the k-12 public school superintendency. Table 3 displays the number of Black women superintendents in the nation.

Table 3

Percentage of Black Women Superintendents in the nation

Dates	Percentage of Black Women Superintendents
1993	0.01 %
2000	3.0 %
2002	5.0 %
2004	4.8 %
2006	4.9 %
2007	4.1 %

The literature shows that men have always represented more than 50% of the k-12 public school superintendent positions in the U.S. Today, the research indicates that more women are

better preparing themselves for the superintendency by enhancing their education and qualifications (Glass, 2000). However, for unknown reasons, there is still an enormous difference in the percentage of women compared to men obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency. This study provides important insights regarding the successes and challenges of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. Their perspectives may assist other women who aspire to become superintendents. They may also inform personnel supervisors, board members, universities, and school systems of those practices impacting women who seek the k-12 public school superintendency.

Gender Identities and the Early Education of Women

Hayes and Flannery (2000) completed a study on “gendered identities” for men and women. They defined “gendered identity” as the initial learning within the home, and then the community that guided the identity development of children along the traditional lines of gender-based expectations (p. 64). As stated earlier, the researchers found that when parents knew the gender of their children, they immediately began to demonstrate these expectations. They acknowledged, “gendered identities” as an early societal expectation that kept women from acquiring k-12 public school superintendent positions.

Lukas (2006) completed a similar study and found that children are indoctrinated to behave according to their assigned gender. The study found that when little girls are born into the world, they are wrapped in pink blankets, given cuddly dolls, and later, Barbie dolls. In addition, according to the findings, little girls are taught to play house and read fairy tales; little boys are brought into this world wrapped in blue blankets, and later given trucks and building blocks to play with. Boys are taught to play rough, to run and compete. Parents taught their girls to be caregivers, nurturers, model mothers, and wives; boys were taught by men to be providers,

strong, sexually assertive and to show no emotions (Hayes and Flannery, 2000). Friedan (1963), noted in her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, how women everywhere were having an identity crisis. Women were suppose to be fulfilled by being categorized as “the wife and mother, but in actuality they were not (p. 66).

Even before the early civil war, young women were educated in domestic studies so that they were able to assist their husbands and educate their sons (Rudolph, 1962). Middle-class girls in the Western culture were also taught by their mothers to cook, clean, and care for children while boys were taught at dame schools. During this time, girls were able to attend dame school in the summer while boys were out working. Girls were not expected to pursue employment outside of the home and because of different expectations from their families and their teachers, girls’ expectations for themselves remained low (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Friedan’s (1963) study found that women wanted more out of life than just being moms. She concluded in her study’s first chapter that “We can no longer ignore the voice within women that says: ‘I want something more than my husband, my children and my house’ (cited in hooks, 1984, p.1).

Women and Universities

Friedan (1963) surmised that education in the past only convinced women to make adjustments to their role as housewives and mothers instead of teaching them to use their intelligence creatively in a career. Even though many women’s early teachings reflected gender and their position in society, a small number of women did attend college. By the 1870s, the number of women attending colleges began to increase tremendously. During that time, women made up one fifth of resident college and university attendance. By the 1900s, the attendance of women had increased to a third, and around the 1960s, women obtained 19% of the undergraduate degrees. By the mid 1980s, women earned 49% of all masters’ degrees and at

least 33% of doctoral degrees. According to a Women's International Center Report, published online in 1995, in 1985, the percentage of women attending college had increased to 53%. This new wave caused a tremendous fluctuation in the percentages of women seeking and obtaining leadership positions. Wanting something more than having a husband, children and a house is what Friedan (1963) considered "the problem with no name" which referred to married white women who were bored with leisure, the home and the children, and wanted more than being stay at home mothers and wives. They had earned college degrees and were considered educated middle and upper class women.

With regard to university studies, women chose curriculums in literature, social science, and health courses; they excluded curriculums in medicine, and liberal arts. According to Sadker and Sadker (1994), men chose curriculums in hard sciences, and in professions, such as engineering, law, and medicine; they surmised the differences in curricular choices between men and women. The differences may have served as another barrier, which kept women from finding mentors to assist them in being promoted to positions of power. Rimm (1997) stated that in order for women to fill traditional roles held by men, or positions in a leadership capacity, gender issues must be re-addressed and women must have an opportunity to an appropriate education.

Historical and Societal Barriers

Today, women have become the largest proportion of participants in many of the colleges and/or universities in educational leadership programs, but they still face barriers that prevent them from obtaining the superintendency (Bjork, 2000). Tallerico's (2000) study identified stereotyping as a major barrier for women who aspired to the superintendency. Seventy five persons were interviewed for his study which included: 25 headhunters, 25 school

board members, and 25 applicants for the position of superintendent. According to Tallerico (2000) study, men or male bosses made negative comments towards women who seek leadership positions; these negative comments related to their abilities. Their comments were “Can she do discipline? Can she do budgets? Do we have to pay her as much as the male contender?” (p. 32). Tallerico’s (2000) study revealed findings of stereotyping, which is one of the major barriers that prevent women from obtaining any type of position in a leadership capacity.

Manuel’s (2001) research utilized a survey and a focus group interview to examine the perceptions of 125 men and women superintendents and 68 school board members. The participants were to give their perceptions of barriers that they felt women faced when aspiring to acquire a superintendent position. The focus group, which consisted of 14 women who were currently serving as superintendents, provided major factors. The survey found that women who were successful in obtaining the superintendency were much older than men who obtained the superintendency, and they had been employed at one time by women who were now serving on the school board.

Manuel’s (2001) study concluded that because of the early teachings of women and the understandings regarding their positions in society, women were hesitant to apply for the superintendency. According to Manuel (2001), women would apply for positions; however, if they were given the position, they became very apologetic to others for applying. Because of the early teachings provided for them, women often thought of politics as something for men, and for which men were better equipped to handle. Therefore, many women did not seek the superintendency; they were conditioned to believe that the position of superintendent should be obtained by men.

Contemporary Barriers to the K-12 Public School Superintendency

Hayes and Flannery's (2000) found that the changing of social norms and roles of women in education led to a tremendous growth in their number in educational administrative programs. Although today's women are better preparing themselves for the k-12 superintendency, they are still being hampered by contemporary barriers (Hill & Ragland, 1995). Hill and Ragland (1995) completed a study to identify contemporary barriers encountered by women in leadership capacities or those interested in obtaining a leadership position. They interviewed 35 women in public school leadership positions. The first contemporary barrier identified was that women lacked political shrewdness which they felt was needed for a large business referring to the education system. The researchers found that men acted as gatekeepers and were better able to negotiate deals for positions that were unknown to women. Hence, when women were informed of an available position and applied, the positions were already filled by men (Hill & Ragland, 1995).

According to Hill and Ragland's (1995) study, women superintendents also revealed that most of the deals made by men were made on golf courses or during male social gatherings where women were not allowed. These researchers stated that women were not a part of the good ole boy network, and therefore, did not possess a number in line to the superintendency (Hill & Ragland, 1995). They also cited that the lack of mentoring was a major barrier for women in leadership positions. Apparently, many potential male mentors did not feel that their assistance would be accepted by women. Furthermore, cross-gendered mentoring was discouraged. Respondents also reported that they perceived that many women lacked the understanding of the power and processes of mentoring. Due to the lack of mentors, women in Hill and Ragland's (1995) study revealed that they felt alone throughout their entire career. Their study also found

that women in leadership capacities in specific school districts did not recognize the value of mentoring, which was considered effective in preparing other women aspiring to become leaders. Some of the women in leadership capacities stated that they did not have time to mentor other women (Hill & Ragland, 1995). The absence of mentors for women who aspired for the superintendency was considered a second identified contemporary barrier.

Ingersoll's (1995) study identified the glass ceiling contemporary barrier. It was considered one of the major hidden barriers that kept women from advancing to higher-level leadership positions. The term 'glass ceiling' was first used in the Civil Rights Act of 1991. This act defined it as a barrier that blocked minorities and women. The *Wall Street Journal* began popularizing the term in their articles in relations to the invisible barriers that women dealt with when seeking corporate advancement (Dunn, 1997). Ingersoll (1995) and Scherr (1995) defined glass ceiling as an invisible barrier that women experienced when trying to climb the corporate ladder, preventing them from entering the top corporate hierarchy. The term has been applied to women as a group who were kept from advancing "*because they were women.*" (original emphasis) (Morrison, et al., 1987, p. 13)

According to Grunig, Toth, and Hon (2001), women were programmed to take secondary roles and when they were placed in top positions; they were very apologetic. They found that the creation of an invisible glass ceiling over upper management jobs had developed a caste system in corporate America where men were to be positioned at the top and women were at the bottom. Because of barriers, such as the glass ceiling, it has been suggested that women doubt themselves as leaders, therefore contributing to their own inability to climb the corporate ladder (Grunig, et al., 2001).

Tedrow's (1999) study confirmed that women were not being true to themselves about their abilities, which limits their chances of becoming successful as k-12 public school superintendents. According to Tedrow's (1999) findings, women utilized their energies to survive or fit into the male context rather practice and refine their own ways of leading. Because of glass ceiling, women and their skills were considered secondary to men and the skills of men.

Support for Women Aspiring to the Superintendency

Several studies sighted sponsoring, mentoring, and internships as strong strategies of support that can assist women with successful career advancements (Allen, Jacobson, and Lomotey, 1995; Logan, 1999; Gardiner et al., 2000). Mentoring is described as connecting on an emotional level with the person being mentored while assisting that person with the physical, emotional and logistical aspects of leadership (Gardiner et al, 2000). In their study, six identified needs were identified that would assist, encourage, promote and support women who aspire to obtain a position in educational administration (Gardiner et al, 2000). Their study consisted of 18 women, 14 African Americans and 4 Hispanics. The first need was to understand politics in public education, and to develop the skills to survive as both a woman and a minority. The second need was to gain access into networks inside and outside the school system. The third was for participants to identify their desired mentors. Fourth, the participants wanted mentors who were different from themselves. The fifth need expressed was to have a mentor of the same color and same sex. Lastly, the participants found a need for alternate support systems that were not of the educational organization. These women felt that they were more able to learn administration from the voices of other women who shared their experiences (Gardiner et al, 2000). Other researchers such as Grunig, Toth, and Hon (2001) identified strategies of support to assist women with career advancement.

Allen et al.'s (1995) study referenced sponsoring along with mentoring, as a strong strategy for career advancements. This study defined sponsors as ones who assist others to obtain goals distinguishing sponsors from mentors; they defined mentors as ones who motivate others to obtain goals. Their study included 38 African American women school administrators. Each of the participants revealed the importance of sponsors and/or mentors as playing a very important role in the success of their careers (Allen et al., 1995). These respondents noted that having sponsors and/or mentors during the early stages of their career provided much encouragement and plenty of moral support, which assisted them in attaining their highest goals. The participants for this study agreed that sponsorship was the most critical component to African Americans who aspired to become administrators.

Internships have also been identified as a strong strategy for assisting women with career advancement (Logan, 1999). His study found that universities and/or institutions of higher education could be blamed for the under-representation of women in positions that lead to the superintendency. He noted that universities have access to the hiring boards of local school systems and can influence internships for women. Young and McLeod (2001) asserted that women must have support; they must see other women in leadership positions and they must be able to interact with other women in those positions. Research suggests that unless school systems and universities address barriers that prevent women from obtaining leadership positions, the candidate pool for aspiring superintendents will continue to dwindle (Glass, 2000; Houston, 2000).

21st Century Women

Women in the U.S. today have different and better opportunities than their predecessors (Hakim, 2000). These new opportunities have allowed women to not only make better career

choices, but also different choices from women in the past. Data representing the nation indicate that over 50% of graduate students enrolled in educational administration are women (Glass et al., 2000). Women of today can choose either a work-centered lifestyle or a home-centered lifestyle, or both. Hakim contends that contemporary women have different views on work and home, which allows three groups of women to emerge. The first group consists of home-centered women whose main priority is the family; the second group is work-centered women whose main priority in life is employment; and the third group is considered adaptive women who want both the home-centered life style and the work-centered lifestyle. Data indicate that because more women are enrolling in administrative programs, there is an increase in the number of women obtaining a superintendency licensure or certificate who are both home-centered and work-centered (Hakim, 2000).

Qualifications of a Superintendent

According to the Louisiana Department of Education (2007), the minimum qualifications for a superintendent in the state include: 1) a valid Educational Leader Certificate; 2) five years of successful administration or management experiences in education at the level of principal or above; 3) a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education; and 4) 48 semester hours of graduate credit including 30 hours in administration and supervision, 12 semester hours in professional education, and 6 semester hours of electives in business, political science, psychology, sociology, or speech. The superintendent must also pass the School Superintendent Assessment (SSA) as approved by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Some superintendents have Doctorate degrees, but they must have at least a Master's degree in school administration. The superintendency certification is a special certification, which may vary across states (Louisiana Department of Education). The state of

Louisiana has 64 school districts. Each school district has one k-12 public school superintendent, in which 56 of the 64 k-12 public school superintendents are White and eight are Black. Twenty of the sixty-four k-12 public school superintendents have been identified as women. Regarding the under-representation of k-12 public school women superintendents, this study will reflect on the lived experiences of five women superintendents and their encountered struggles to the superintendency. The first graph below shows the percentages of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana; and the second graph relates to the percentages of race regarding Louisiana k-12 public school superintendents.

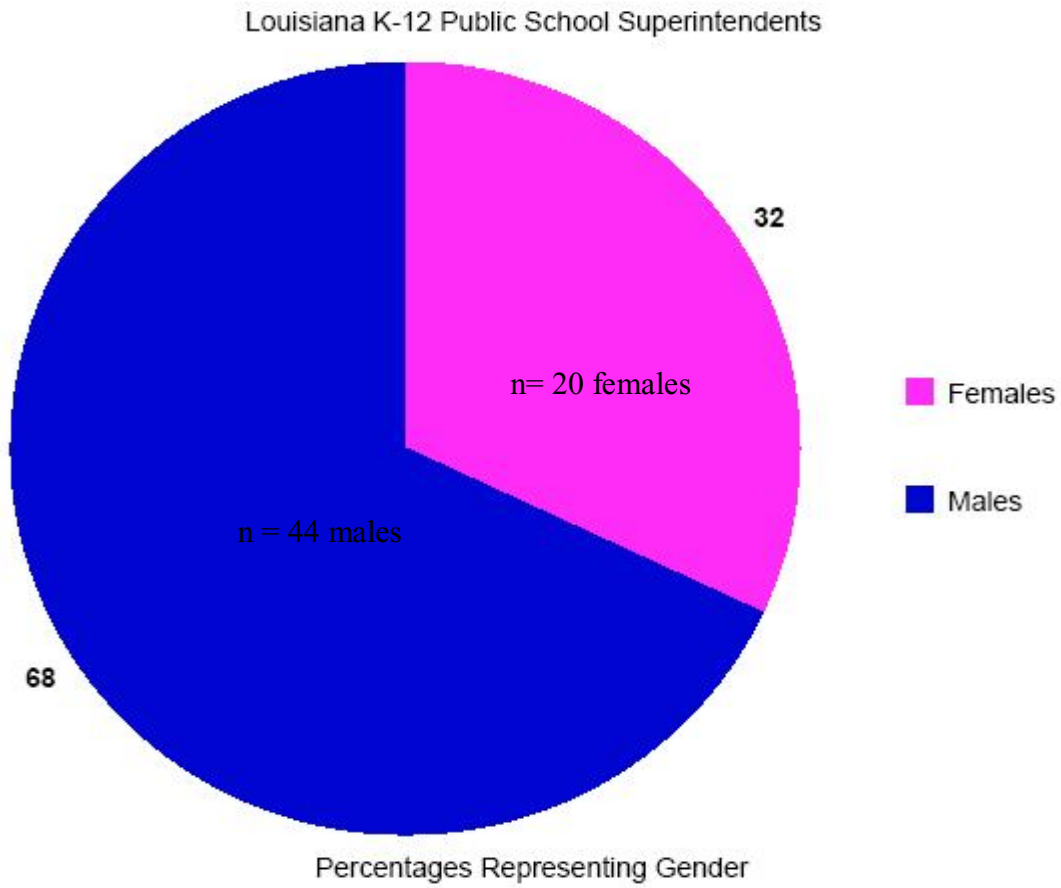


Figure 1. Gender graphic representation.

Louisiana K-12 Public School Superintendents

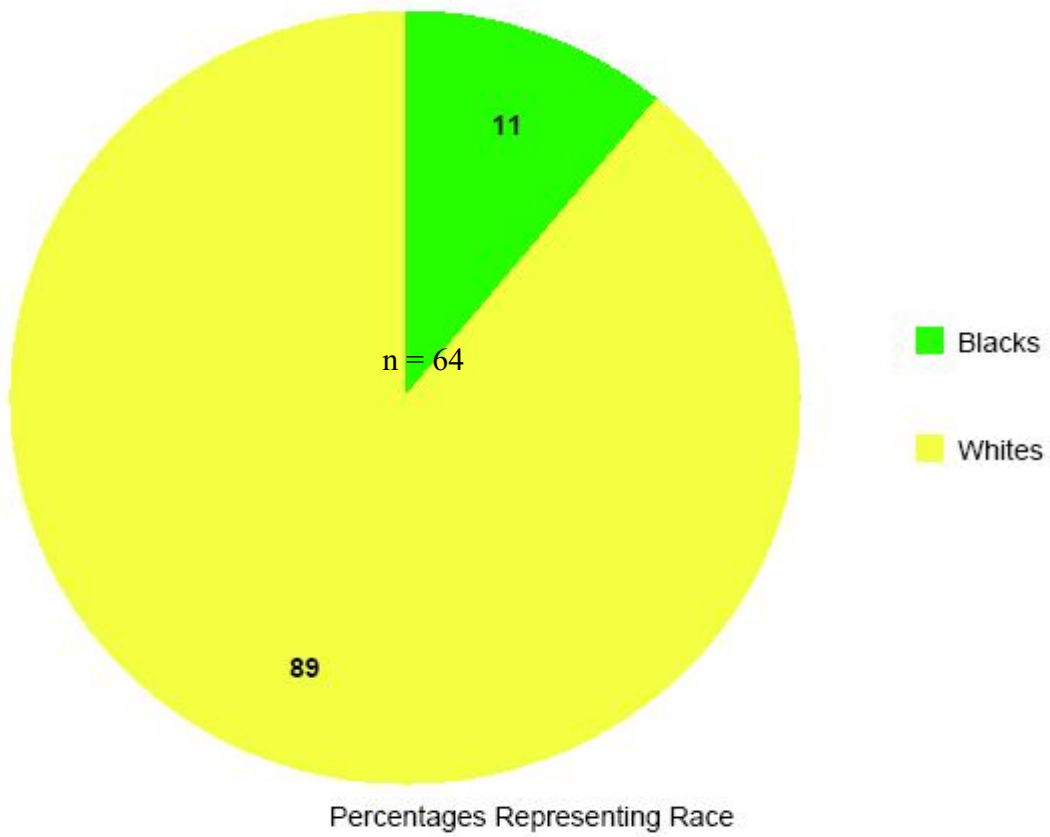


Figure 2. Race graphic representation.

Summary

According to Bolman and Deal (2003), it was only recently that research and writing begun focusing on women leaders. The assumption of the past was that leadership was strictly for men (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Choi and Hon's (2000) study characterized women according to the following qualities: empathy, passivity, nurturance, shyness, being very sympathetic and highly-strung, and men as rational, competitive, confident, independent, aggressive and hostile, the historical traits of true leaders. Because of the characterization of women, their leadership qualities are not recognized or taken seriously. However, research has shown some progress for women, despite the disparities and inequalities between the genders. According to the literature, women encounter numerous barriers, but remedies must be made to address these barriers or this century will continue seeing women through traditional lenses and continue measuring them against ideals that only serve men. This study, utilizing the qualitative critical ethnographic approach along with the feminist standpoint theory and Black feminist thought, explores the experiences of women in the state of Louisiana through feminine lenses. This study also documents the perceptions of each participant regarding the under-representation of women in this position.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter contains a description of the research methodology and procedures used for this study regarding the experiences, struggles, challenges of the participants and their perception of why there is a disproportionate number of women teachers when compared to the number of women serving as k-12 public school superintendents in the state of Louisiana. Special focus was also given to the *a priori* themes regarding their career paths and the under-representation of k-12 public school women superintendents in this state. The utilization of qualitative research methods and procedures was suitable for the purpose of this study. This chapter discusses specific qualitative study methods and procedures.

In qualitative studies, the primary instrument of data collection and analysis is the researcher, particularly when utilizing interviews and reporting their experiences (Creswell, 1994). It seemed appropriate to utilize the epistemology of qualitative methods to hear the voices of these women superintendents. Gordon (1990) observed that members of groups who had been silenced and oppressed are attracted to epistemology of qualitative methods because of increasing evidence that effective data analysis and documentation of cultures can be effective tools in the search for the advancement of social change. Qualitative inductive approach with descriptive methods of data collection was utilized to guide the data collection and assisted in investigating the purpose of this study. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What barriers, if any, did the participant face when aspiring to the k-12 public school superintendency?
2. How was the participant able to ascend to the superintendency in light of barriers?

3. What professional support did the participant receive that contributed to her success?
4. What are the participant's thoughts relating to the under-representation of women superintendents?

Researcher as Instrument

The researcher can have a significant impact on the study's findings and outcomes (Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As the researcher may have inherent bias, it is common for the researcher to disclose any personal interest or biases that he/she may bring to the process. As a lifelong public school educator, I have been fortunate to work in various diverse and challenging schools in different positions such as paraprofessional (teacher's aide), classroom teacher, and a principal on every level in the public school system.

Because I aspire to one day become a superintendent in a k-12 public school system, I know I must conduct the findings of this study in a way that readers are assured of the study's credibility, authenticity, and transferability. I truly expect in the next three to five years to obtain a k-12 public school superintendency position in the state of Louisiana. My personal aspiration may be unintentionally biased in my interpretations of the experiences shared by the participants of this study. To combat researcher bias, I engaged in several peer debriefings with committee members of the University of New Orleans (UNO) cohort, Dr. Nancy B. Shepard and Dr. Gwendelyn Duhon. Peer debriefs ultimate purpose is to enhance credibility, or truth value, of a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, my University of New Orleans (UNO) committee chairperson continuously reviewed my results. My goal is to gain and share credible insights about issues pertinent to women in obtaining a k-12 public school superintendent position.

Research Design

The research methodology for this study was qualitative. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative research is “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (p.17). The authors also indicated that the analysis in this type of research involves a “nonmathematical analytic procedure that results in findings that are derived from the data gathered by a variety of means” (p.18). According to Hakim (2000), qualitative research is primarily concerned with allowing participants the opportunity to share their unique accounts or views. It details participants’ descriptions, attitudes, motivations, beliefs, perceptions, and feelings. Qualitative data are found in real-world situations in natural, non-manipulated settings (Creswell, 1998). To ensure that the acquiring of data was of real-world situations in natural, non-manipulated settings, the researcher agreed to meet with each of the participants in their natural environment, their workplace. Qualitative research methodology was identified as appropriate for this study because of the nature of the study, the setting, the forms for gathering data, and the researcher’s personal interest in equity for women who seek the highest leadership position in education, the k-12 public school superintendency. In addition, the use of qualitative research method allowed participants to offer their accounts in their own words, describing their attitudes, beliefs, motivation, views, perceptions and feelings (Hakim, 2000).

Merriam (1988) identified assumptions that undergird qualitative research. Merriam described the assumptions as follow:

Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities that the world is not an objective thing out there, but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs

rather than facts form the basis of perception. Research is exploratory, inductive and it emphasizes processes rather than ends. In this paradigm, there are no predetermined hypotheses, treatments or restrictions on the end product. One does not manipulate the variables or administer a treatment. What one does is observe, intuit, sense what is occurring in a natural setting-hence the term, naturalistic inquiry (p.17).

Merriam's (1988) assumptions undergirding qualitative research were highly considered in this exploratory study. The research questions were utilized to frame this study regarding the experiences of Louisiana women superintendents and their perception regarding the disproportionate ratio of women as teachers and the ratio of women who have obtained the k-12 public school superintendency in this state. The qualitative methods of data collection and analysis allowed the researcher to gather the necessary data allowing an indepth understanding of the experiences, struggles, and barriers of women who sought the k-12 public school or superintendent's position and document their perception of why women are under-represented in this position. This research design employed interviews of selected women superintendents along with observations in their natural setting. In addition to the field notes from the interviews, the interviews were also taped to make sure that their exact words were considered.

Essential to this qualitative study was the utilization of feminist standpoint theory, and Black feminist standpoint theory which is also called Black feminist thought. All are used together as a system to produce a rich, vigorous, holistic description of why there is a disproportionate number of women as classroom teachers compared to the number of k-12 public school women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. Therefore, this study involved three White k-12 public school women superintendents and two Black k-12 public school superintendents in the state of Louisiana.

Sampling Procedures

This study employed convenience sampling which sometimes called opportunity sampling. According to Gay and Airasian (1999), convenience sampling is used in exploratory research where the researcher is interested in getting an approximation of truth. It involves a sample drawn from a population which is close. The sample population is selected basically because it is readily available and convenient. Several important considerations for researchers using this method include: a) Are there controls within the research design or experiment which can serve to lessen the impact of a non-random convenience sample, thereby using the results will be more representative of the population; b) Is there good reason to believe that a particular convenience sample would or should respond or behave differently than a random sample from the same population; and c) Is the question being asked by the research one that can adequately be answered using a convenience sample.

Convenience sampling is often a preferred option to other methods of sampling because it allows an experimenter to pilot-test an experiment with minimal resources and time. It is also relatively inexpensive and allows the researcher to get a gross estimate of the results. Its disadvantages are as follows:

- The sample is not an accurate representation of the population.
- The findings from this sample are less definitive.
- Results have to be extrapolated in order to fine tune them.
- It is completely unstructured approach.

The Louisiana State Directory verified that 20 superintendents in the state of Louisiana are women. All possible participants received an email which included a scanned copy of the approval form from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a letter of introduction which included

a brief description of the research project (see Appendix A), a consent form (see Appendix B) and a copy of a survey (see Appendix C). Each of the 20 possible participants was allowed ten days to email their consent form and their survey back to the researcher. Six of the 20 Louisiana k-12 public school superintendents responded to the email within ten days and volunteered to serve as participants for this study.. A second email was sent out to other possible participants that did not reply to the first email sent by the researcher. There were no other responses to the researcher's second email. Five of the six k-12 public school superintendents were purposely selected to represent the population for this study. These women were conveniently selected based on seniority, race/ethnicity, availability, interest, willingness to participate and proximity to the researcher. Three of the participants selected were White and two were Black. At the time of the study there were only two Black women serving as k-12 public school superintendents in the state of Louisiana. Both of the Black participants were selected to make sure that their voices were heard.

To avoid any type of deception, the researcher informed possible participants of the entire study. Subjects were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point in the process. The study did not involve any discernable risk to the participants. The researcher encouraged each selected participant to engage in on-going member checks to review and clarify constructions developed by her. Member checks and peer debriefing occurred after completion of transcribing data received from each interview. For members' check, the transcribed data from each participant's interview was emailed to the participants. The researcher provided an opportunity to revise participants' data to their satisfaction. None of the participants emailed a request for changes to be made to the transcribed data from their original interviews which the researcher understood to be a confirmation that the data was accurate and acceptable.

Description of Participants

At the time of the study, the target population for this study was 20 women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. The sample size of this study is 25% or five of the total number of women superintendents currently employed in one of the 64 parishes in the state of Louisiana. The survey utilized in this study consisted of questions relating to personal information such as: race, ethnicity, highest degree earned, and the positions held in the education profession. Again, 20 Louisiana k-12 women superintendents were emailed surveys, and out of 20 emailed surveys, six were returned to the researcher. Of the six received surveys, five were purposely selected based on seniority, race/ethnicity, availability, interest, and willingness to participate; again, three of the five were White and two were Black.

Both of the Black women superintendents were selected to share their experiences as Black women serving in the superintendency capacity. The surveys revealed that all five of the women superintendents had worked in education for more than 21 years. The number of schools comprising their districts ranged from 13 to 77. The ages of the superintendents ranged from 55 to 59, and the age of the youngest superintendent was within the 43 to 48 year old range. The highest degree held by the participants was a Doctorate Degree in education; the second highest was a Master's +30.

The personal interviews revealed that three of the participants were employed as superintendents for more than one year, but less than five; and the other two participants had served between six to ten years as superintendents in the same district. All of the women superintendents were still serving in their first assigned position as a k-12 public school superintendent. The most common career path for the women superintendents in this study was classroom teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal, Supervisor and Director. Two of the

participants had not begun in the education system as teachers. Their degrees were in business and they had begun their careers working in the finance or in the business department of the school system. Only one of the participants had been employed as an Assistant Superintendent.

Negotiating Entry

A letter of introduction was sent to all 20 women superintendents (see Appendix A). The letter also indicated that all written and recorded information relating to the survey and the personal interview would be kept on file for three years in a locked file cabinet. In order to actually communicate with the participants, it was imperative to form a favorable rapport with each of the participant's personal secretaries. All five of the selected women superintendents were telephoned to set up a time and place for the interview. Their secretaries were the ones who set up the interviewing time, place, and date and emailed the information to me. They were also the ones that communicated with me by telephone. None of the participants was from the Calcasieu Parish School District where I am employed.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

Maintaining confidentiality is vital to any study (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 2002). Anonymity is necessary to address privacy and confidentiality concerns, particularly where the collection results are so small that reporting them could potentially reveal a participant's identity (Patton, 2002). Participants' names, specific work sites, and all identifying information were kept confidential. All data obtained from responses were coded to protect respondents' identities. Names and addresses were secured, protected and accessible to no one but the researcher. Pseudonyms were used in place of respondents' and their school district names. When direct quotes were used, pseudonyms were used to identify participants.

Data Collection

For this study, the researcher collected data through surveys, semi-structured face-to-face interviews and observations. The introduction stage included an emailed letter of introduction (see Appendix A), a consent form (see Appendix B), and survey (see Appendix C). The survey consisted of questions relating to personal information and ten days was allowed for the emailed return of the survey and consent form. Only six out of twenty possible participants returned the survey and consent form. Again, a second email was sent to the remaining 14 possible participants; there was no response. All data from the returned surveys was compiled before selecting and interviewing.

Interview

Among the various data collection techniques, interviews can be considered the best way to obtain the information necessary for a study (Merriam, 1998). Rubin and Rubin (1995) recommend interviews using guided conversation to allow the researcher to capture the participants' perspectives. McCracken (1988) suggests that the interview format employs prompts or probes to give structure to the interview and allow participants to relate their own experiences.

Interviews were conducted from October 27, 2008 to December 6, 2009 in the office of each participant, which ensured privacy. The researcher accommodated scheduling needs for each participant. The events, beliefs, and the perceptions of these women superintendents helped to shape the phenomenon being explored. For the purpose of triangulation the researcher utilized other sources of data such as audio-taped interviews, recorded field notes and documented non-verbal cues observed during the interviews.

The researcher designed an Administrative Conversational Interview Guide (see Appendix E). According to Creswell (1994), an interview protocol is a form designed by the researcher that contains instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and a space so that the researcher can document responses from the interviewee. Creswell (1998) stated that interview guides ensure good use of limited interview time. They can make interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and comprehensive. The guide ensured that the same information was obtained from each person. The interview guide helped to keep interactions focused. The interviewer was free to probe and explore within predetermined areas of inquiry. Interview guides can be modified over time to focus attention on important areas that excluded questions that were unproductive (Creswell, 1998). To ensure good use of limited interview time, I used an interview guide.

The interview guide for this study was designed by the researcher and consisted of the following five main categories relating to women and the superintendency: 1) general information; 2) career preparation; 3) encountered challenges; 4) lived experiences; and 5) and the participant's perception of the under-representation of women superintendents, particularly in the state of Louisiana. Handwritten notes were also taken by the researcher. The researcher paid careful attention to what was said in order to make certain notations without distracting the interviewee. In addition, taking notes assisted the researcher in documenting important statements or gestures, and other non-verbal cues made during the interview. The researcher utilized the interview protocol checklist to make sure all data has been gathered (see Appendix F).

In order to prevent the possibility of postponements, cancellations or schedule conflicts, the researcher scheduled the interviews at least two weeks in advance. The interviews were

conducted with each selected participant at separate times and locations to acquire an understanding of their educational backgrounds, career paths, encountered barriers and perceptions regarding the under-representation of women superintendents. The longest interview lasted 1 hour and 8 minutes; the shortest interview lasted for 49 minutes. All interviews were conducted on the agreed dates and time. There were no cancellations.

Observation

Observations as defined by Marshall and Rossman (1989), are “the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting that has been chosen for study” (p. 79), and can range from a very structured to an unstructured form. Field notes of the observations were written and consisted of a written account of observations, conversations, experiences, and descriptions of the participants and the events. Each superintendent allowed me to conduct walk-throughs throughout their office and administrative building. From the walk-throughs, I was able to observe the operation of how the superintendents conduct their daily business, especially with parents and staff. Different leadership styles and organizational structure were noted and discussed in chapter four. Also, I was also able to attend two of the participants’ board meetings which gave opportunity to observe operation and see how well they were supported by their district board members.

Another participant in this study had broken her foot. She was not able to move around, so she carried out most of her duties by telephone and delegated what she could not. She allowed me to conduct a walk-through with her secretary. I was able to meet her entire staff and observed them working. Everyone was so polite and explained their duties to me. From conversation and observation, it was evident that all were sincere about what they do and the work continued even though the boss was confined. The last participant was an elected president

of a state association of school superintendents. I was able to do a walk-through with her and observe her planning for a superintendent's meeting in Baton Rouge. This walk-through was in reference to the planning of a state-wide conference that she was preparing. She prepared an agenda which was tied in to information received from the Louisiana superintendents regarding concerns and other important information. She was very serious regarding her position and even though she was not paid to do so, she was honored.

Complementary Data Gathering Techniques

In order to gather additional data, several other strategies and techniques were employed for this study. The purpose of these techniques was to enhance the collection and interpretation of the data. The use of the Louisiana Department of Education website along with tape recording, field notes, and non-verbal cues was also used in the gathering of data for this study.

Recordings

A tape recorder was used to tape interviews with the participants. The researcher discussed tape recording with each participant. Each participant was asked to sign a permission to tape form (see Appendix D) before the interviews began. Tape recording has many advantages, such as assuring completeness, providing the opportunity to review as often as necessary, and assuring that full understanding of what was stated by the participants has been achieved. Tape recording interviews provided the researcher an opportunity to later review nonverbal cues such as voice pitches and pauses, as well material for reliability checks. The transcriptions were reviewed and corrected by the researcher. All tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet for at least three years. After three years, all tapes will be destroyed.

Field Notes

The main reason for field notes was to compose a written document of the observations, dialogue, experiences, and descriptions of the participants and the events that affected them directly or indirectly (Creswell, 2002). The field notes served the purpose of recording certain feelings, and thoughts about the investigation, as well as a place to record follow-up interview sessions that will be scheduled with the participants. All field notes were kept in one notebook. This notebook consisted of the interview records and observations that were made during the taped interviews with the participants. Following each observation or interview, the researcher transcribed all field notes. All field notes will also be stored in a locked file cabinet for at least three years. After three years, all field notes will be destroyed.

Non-verbal Cues

Non-verbal cues were noted in this study. The cues included body movements (kinetics), spatial relationships (proxemics), use of time as in pacing, probing, and pausing (chronemics), volume, voice quality, accent and inflectional patterns (paralinguistics), and touching (haptics) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher also obtained information through non-verbal signs during the observation. The researcher asked additional questions during the interviews to gain a clearer understanding of certain nonverbal cues. These non-verbal cues were documented in the field notes and used to help the researcher to determine the participants' actual thoughts or feelings about certain topics and/or questions.

Instrumentation

To gather data for this study, the researcher utilized a survey regarding the participants' demographic profile (see Appendix C); an Administrative Conversational Interview Guide (see

Appendix E); and an Interview Protocol Checklist (see Appendix F). Other strategies were used to assist the researcher in data gathering.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The process of building trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry is critical (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Indicators of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In order to enhance trustworthiness and credibility, the researcher used an audit trail that reflects triangulation of the data with surveys, interviews, observations, and recorded field notes. This procedure helped the researcher preserve the data in an understandable and retrievable form. In an effort to meet ethical standards, the researcher assured all participants privacy, confidentiality, and inclusiveness.

Dependability, which is the naturalist's substitute for reliability, can be demonstrated by "taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 299). To establish dependability, the researcher observed two of the participants' board meetings, did walk-throughs at the participants' place of employment, and examined all field records for accuracy, and to substantiate them.

Confirmability, or objectivity, was utilized during the data collection and analysis phases to verify and construct meanings that may be important to enhance what was already known about women superintendents and perceived barriers that may be encountered. To demonstrate confirmability, the researcher maintained a record of the inquiry process, copies of each taped interview, notes from interviews, and hard copies of all transcriptions.

To combat bias and prejudice, the researcher enlisted the support of two college professors that reside in Lake Charles, Louisiana, as well as members of a cohort of the University of New Orleans' doctoral candidates. After transcribing all data from each interview,

the researcher utilized peer debriefing technique with the members of the cohort and the two college professors. In the beginning, debriefing was done on a weekly basis with members of the cohort. During that time, the cohort helped to clarify a need for this study. They also assisted with discussing assumptions regarding women being under-represented as superintendents and identified the researcher's stance. Afterwards, the cohort read the chapters and monitored to make sure the study was free from possible biases by the researcher. The two college professors would read through the study after each chapter was completed; they would also point out possible biases. The researcher depended on the strengths of these peer debriefers to compensate for deficiencies.

The researcher designed an original Administrative Interview Guide to interview each possible participant (see Appendix E). The researcher had the guide reviewed by the University of New Orleans' committee chairperson to assure clarity. In addition, the University of New Orleans' committee chairperson also proofread each chapter of the dissertation, provided direction and offered suggestions on the findings of this study. Using these strategies helped strengthen the credibility of this study.

Member Checking

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. It is a process, which involves participants in verifying data collected through and resulting from the interviews. Member checks are data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions that are tested with members or participants of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that there were multiple benefits of member checking, either formal or informal. One of its many benefits is its provision of assessing intentionality. Other benefits consist of providing all participants an opportunity to share additional information,

correct errors and interpretations, and to evaluate the overall adequacy of the researcher's interpretation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Member checks occurred after completion of transcribing data received from each interview. In December 2008, all participants were emailed a copy of their transcripts to review. After making modifications suggested by the University of New Orleans' committee, a second member's check was again emailed to the participants on April 14, 2009. The researcher provided a second opportunity to revise participants' data to their satisfaction. None of the participants emailed a request for any changes. The researcher made a telephone call regarding changes to the participants office and after consulting with the superintendents, 2 of the 5 participants' secretary stated everything was fine. There was no response from the other three participants so the researcher presumed that the transcriptions were accurate

Transferability

Transferability has been recommended as the qualitative counterpart to external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study further explained that "If there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make the application elsewhere; the original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do know" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 298). In other words, though the researcher sought only to describe one specific situation and make of that particular situation for the participants of the study, the reader of the research report could apply the findings of the research to similar situations in which he or she is involved. However, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, the transferability depends upon the situation to which the reader applies the findings of this study. The researcher hopes that women and men who aspire for the k-12 superintendency are able to transfer the findings of this study to assist them in obtaining this

position. The researcher also hopes that the findings are transferred to board members and other employees enlightening them of practices that may be unfair to women who are seeking leadership positions.

Lastly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined naturalistic inquiry as an observation technique that involves observing subjects in their natural environment. They indicated that “the naturalistic cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether a transfer can be contemplated as a possibility”. (p.316)

All interviews for this study were completed in the women superintendents’ office allowing the researcher to observe the participants in their natural work environment. Non-verbal cues allowed the readers to transfer the provided descriptions to reach their own conclusion about the findings.

Data Analysis

According to Marshall and Roseman (1989), it is not possible to understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which participants interpret their thoughts, emotions, and behavior. This research study was grounded in the assumption that features of this social environment are constructed as interpretations by individuals and that these interpretations tend to be temporary and situational. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) asserted that qualitative research is multi-purpose in its focus, and involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Furthermore, qualitative methods enabled the researcher to process the meaning of the events of their personal and professional lives.

For this study, analysis began with the reading of each interview numerous times. Second, each of the participant’s taped interview was reviewed and compared to the participant’s

field noted from their interview. This was done numerous times as well. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), categorical aggregation involved the collection of instances from the field notes, taped interviews, and observations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that categorization can be accomplished most efficiently when categories are identified in such a way that “they are internally as homogeneous as possible and externally as heterogeneous as possible” (p 349). Third, the information for each participant was transcribed and typed verbatim. Fourth, details and themes were identified from the typed transcripts. Fifth, patterns between two or more categories were also identified. Direct interpretations involved ascribing meaning to single instances in each of the participants’ transcriptions. Sixth, a thematic analysis was conducted across all transcripts which is considered a cross-case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Special focus was given to the *a priori* themes regarding their career paths, experiences, and their perceptions of why women are under-represented as k-12 public school women superintendents in this state. When concluding the interpretations of the study’s data, naturalistic generalization were presented by the researcher (Creswell, 1998). The data for this study was transcribed, verified through comparison, and categorized.

Summary

This chapter discussed the qualitative methodology utilized for this study, and the steps and procedures to complete this study. The employment of this qualitative research methodology was not only due to the nature of the study and the setting, but also the researcher’s personal interest in equity for women. The gathering of data was based on real world situations at the participants’ place of employment. Data were descriptive and took the form of interviews, observations, surveys and field notes. Participants discussed their accounts in their own words

describing their attitudes, beliefs, motivation, views, perceptions and feelings (Hakim, 2000).

The next chapter, Chapter IV, included the results of this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter four provides a critical analysis of the data regarding the under-representation of Louisiana k-12 public school women superintendents which is based on the disproportionate number of women teachers and the number of women serving in a superintendent's capacity. This chapter provides a view of reality based on the experiences of five k-12 public school women superintendents serving in the state of Louisiana. Essential to the study was the utilization of the feminist standpoint theory and Black feminist thought. In this study, the culture would be these five k-12 Louisiana public school women superintendents. Feminist standpoint theory and Black feminist thought are critical theories utilized in this study to empower the oppress to improve their situation.

The purpose of this study is to examine the career paths, experiences, and struggles of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana and document their perceptions of why women who obtain the majority percentages as classroom teachers are not obtaining positions as k-12 public school superintendents at the same rate. Chapter four presents the perception of these five women superintendents regarding this under-representation. To fulfill the purpose of this study, these five k-12 Louisiana public school women superintendents broke their silence so that they could voice their personal career related experiences, struggles, and/or barriers which may have oppressed other women from obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency. This study also filled a gap in the literature by explicitly focusing on these five k-12 Louisiana public school women superintendents who are currently serving in that capacity and the findings based on their personal career experiences, and/or encountered barriers. The information in this section was

based strictly on the study's research questions and discussed in the same order as written. The questions are: 1) What barriers did the participant face when aspiring to the k-12 public school superintendency; 2) how was the participant able to ascend to the superintendency in light of the perceived barriers; 3) what professional support did the participant receive that contributed to her successes; 4) what are the participant's thoughts relating to the under-representation of women superintendents?

The findings of the study are presented as common themes identified during data analysis. Using the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998), recurring themes were grouped and organized into four broad categories. Accordingly, barriers the participants face when aspiring for the k-12 public school superintendency included gender discrimination, racism, sexism, and ageism. Strategies participants used to ascend to the superintendency in light of barriers included faith, effective leadership, effective communication skills and the power of negotiation. Professional support the participants received that contributed to their success included support of board members, support of mentors, support of family, and the support of peers. The participants' perception regarding the under-representation of women superintendents in Louisiana included traditional obligations, women's lack of preparation and certification, women's lack of confidence, society's stereotypical attitudes, and women's lack of business savvy.

The women, who participated in this study, as the women in Grogan's 1996 study, represented a diversity of background, knowledge, and experiences. The participants were selected according to seniority, race/ethnicity, availability, interest, their willingness to participate in this study and proximity to the researcher. In order to convey accurately the voices of each participant and ensure trustworthiness of my interpretations of their narratives, I labored

intensely in composing this chapter to honor each participant's time, passion, commitment, and dedication to their positions and the children that they serve. This section of the chapter begins with a portrait of the participants verifying their feminine identity.

Women Identity

The women in this study were women of power. They sought to find power in the external market place which were their careers. Their careers provided them with an identity, power and fulfillment. According to Friedan (1963), women historically sought their fulfillment and identity through husbands and their children. Hayes and Flannery (2000) defined "gendered identity" (p.64) as one's initial learning that take place within the home and the community; this early learning is acknowledged as societal expectation for males and females; gender identity is perhaps what keep women from acquiring the k-12 public school superintendent positions, a position considered a man's position.

The feminist philosophy is a belief that women are not fully developed as human beings unless their identity needs are met through school and work (Friedan, 1963). According to Friedan (1963), women who stayed at home and cared for the husband and family felt they were not able to become all that they could become and therefore, they were not able to have their own identity. In the 1960's, Betty Friedan, a feminist writer, wrote "The Feminine Mystique." Her book embraced what women wanted which were equal rights and equal pay. Women believed their identity was determined by what they personally accomplished through education and a career. She believed that women's development was at a child-like state, passive and dependent. In Friedan's (1963) book entitle the "*Feminine Mystique*," she wrote:

In a sense that goes beyond any one woman's life, I think this is the crisis of women growing up – a turning point from an immaturity that has been called femininity to full human identity. I think women had to suffer this crisis *of identity*....and have to suffer it today, simply to become fully human (p. 79).

According to bell hooks (1984), Black women have had their identity socialized out of existence and are rarely recognized as a group separate and distinct from Black men or as the present part of a larger group “woman” in this culture (p.7). The women in this study, Black and White, identity was everything about them. Their identity was portrayed in their education, career path, and their experiences which is what Friedan (1963) acknowledged as an identity that promoted self-actualization and happiness.

Portrait of Five Women Superintendents

The identity of the participants in this study and the district they serve has been masked through the use of pseudonyms. The information provided in the participants’ portrait were based on information that the participants provided in their surveys, the researcher’s observations, and the participants’ interviews. The participants’ data from the survey along with their stories were constructed as reflections of the women’s experiences regarding their levels of education, years of experiences, ethnicity and their education career path from the beginning to the present. The order in which the information was presented was of no relevance and the content of the text deviates from the order of the actual interview questions.

Survey of Louisiana women superintendents

Beginning with the survey, table 3 displays all data gathered from the participants regarding their ages, level of education, years of experiences and their ethnicity. Three of the women superintendents were White or Caucasian and two were African Americans. All of the participants had at least 20 years of experience in an education setting and varying degrees of superintendency experience. The superintendency experience ranged from a first-year superintendent to a veteran of 7 years. The women superintendents ranged in age from mid 40s to late 60s and all five of these women were married. Four of these women had children and all

had earned advanced degrees. Specifically, one had earned a Master’s in education; two of the women earned a Doctor of Education (Eanizedd.D.) degree; and two earned a MA+30 degree. All of the women had earned an advanced degree in the state of Louisiana and four of the participants had earned advance degrees while they were employed as full time administrators. Only one woman stated that she had been a parttime graduate assistant at a university where she was able to work on her advanced degree. These women had acknowledged Friedan’s (1963) feminist philosophy regarding women identity needs and were considered women who were fully developed human beings. These women participants had impressive careers and were highly educated which showed that their identity needs had been completed.

Table 4

Louisiana Women Superintendents Survey Data

Participants	Average Age Range	Level of Education	Years In Education	Ethnicity
Alexandra	55-59	Master + 30	21 or More	White
Elizabeth	55-59	Ed.D	21 or More	White
Mary	55-59	Ed.D	21 or More	White
Isabella	55-59	Master	21 or More	Black
Victoria	43-48	Master + 30	21 or More	Black

District Profile

The participants in this study were employed as k-12 public school superintendents in high profile/complexed school districts in Louisiana. One of the superintendents was born and raised in the district where she served as superintendent. One of the superintendents was from the East Coast of the United States. One of the superintendents spent her entire career in the same school district. All of the participants' school districts were located either in the North and/or Southeast areas of the state of Louisiana serving populations that ranged in size from 6,000 to 46,000 students. The largest school district had a total of 90 schools and 6300 full time employees. Consequently, the smallest school district had a total of 14 schools, one alternative school, and one marine institute, and 413 full time employees. The target population for this study were twenty Louisiana women superintendents or thirty two percent of the sixty four k-12 public superintendents in this state. For this study, the sample size included twenty five percent or five of the total number of women superintendents currently employed in one of the sixty four parishes in the state of Louisiana.

Career Paths of Louisiana Women Superintendents

The career paths of the five k-12 public school women superintendents in this study were displayed in table 4. These women took pride in telling their stories regarding their career choice which included for most of them, becoming a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, supervisor, director and then to the k-12 public school superintendency, the highest position in the public education school system. The participants also discussed their long term influences as well as short term influences and all expressed their love for children. By listening to their background and career influences, the participants' career paths became more vivid especially in regards to their career choice, where their careers had begun and how they had

gotten where they are at this present time. To begin this section, the first discussion related to the participants selecting a career in education from the beginning to finality which was the k-12 public school superintendency.

Each of the participants shared an interesting story of how education became their major choice as a lifetime career. In regards to career choice, one of the participants shared: "I felt that being in the school system in the education program was the area that I was most interested in. I cared about the people that were in it. I cared about the children and it seemed like a really good fit." A second participant stated: "I had terrific elementary teachers which was my greatest influence." A third participant noted: "I wanted to be a teacher even as a child. That was always an important plan in my life. I really love children and I love the idea of working with them."

Two of the participants had not begun their career as classroom teachers. Even though one of the participants had not begun her career in the classroom as a teacher, she was employed in an education setting. She shared her experience: "I just really enjoyed working in public education and seeing the benefits we make in a child's life." The second participant who also had not begun her career in the classroom shared what sparked her interest in education. She stated: "My mother is a teacher and all of my aunts are teachers; the love of children and just seeing them succeed was just overwhelming." All of the participants, regardless of how their careers had begun career was influenced by their love for children. The participants in this study acknowledged that others had made a tremendous influential impact on their decisions to become educators which was the beginning of a lifelong career that led them to the k-12 public school superintendency.

In regards to the participants becoming administrators, out of five women participants, only one stated: "I'll be perfectly honest with you. I became an administrator quite by accident."

A second participant shared: “I was prompted by my supervisor to consider administration.”

Another participant had gone from teacher to guidance counselor. She stated: “When I moved from being a classroom teacher to a guidance counselor, I served as guidance counselor for 8 years. It was a real awakening to the overall school program.” Her interest for administration was sparked at that moment. She began wanting to do and know about every facet of the school system.

Another particular participant shared her story and stated: “I felt like I could help in planning a total school program and in working with the total program, I can help all of the components fit together to reach excellence.” Another participant explained: “I didn’t really consider administration until I had been teaching for a few years. So after being nudged a few times, I decided why not give it a try and I absolutely love it.” All of these women had very unique reasons for seeking an administrator’s position and all were successful at obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency.

In regards to the participants obtaining the highest educational position in school districts, the k-12 public school superintendency, one of the participants stated that she had never thought about becoming an administrator. But she became an administrator by taking classes that were offered. She explained in her interview:

I’ll be perfectly honest with you. I became an administrator quite by accident. I was working on a Master’s and I was taking all classes offered. The classes that they offered for electives were all administrator classes, so I took what was offered. When I finished my degree, I had certification in administration which was quite by accident and I didn’t even know about it. So I had no plans to ever become an administrator. I thought I’d spend my life in the classroom.

A second participant in this study shared a conversation that she had with peers regarding administration. She stated:

They said “do you ever want to be an administrator?” I told them that I didn’t have any plans and they said well you couldn’t be anyway. You’re an outsider; you haven’t coached; and you don’t have a pickup. Well I said I understand about the outsider. I understand about coaches being promoted, but what about the pickup? They said you have to go to Central Office to pick up supplies so you have to have a pickup, and you are still an outsider.

Being a football and/or basketball coach or a coach of some other sports has been a traditional step to administration for many providing entry points and leading to the superintendency (Glass, 2000).

Another participant had a career path that began in a top position which was considered nontraditional because traditionally the careers of k-12 public school superintendents began as classroom teachers. In her interview she shared:

My second job was a position in the school system in the Finance Department. My next position was the Director of Finance. Then the superintendent came in and promoted me to an Associate Superintendent.

A second participant also experienced a nontraditional career path to the k-12 public school superintendency. She stated in her interview:

Well my degree is in Computer Science. I did not come to the education system through the normal route. I actually began working at the school board office in the personnel department working on the personnel main frame. I had a love for children and I actually began teaching special education. I was a principal at a middle school, assistant principal at a lower elementary school. I worked at central office as a supervisor of personnel.

All of the women participants stated that they were asked by their board members who were majority men to apply for the k-12 public school superintendency; they also shared that they received extreme support from their board members throughout their tenure. One of the participants discussed her story regarding support from board members. She shared her experience:

When the board asked me to consider the interim position because the superintendent was leaving and they hadn't found a superintendent yet, I said I'll do it for interim, but it's not my desire to be superintendent. And so they invested in a superintendent search. I put my name in, then, I took it out. I put it in again at the urging of other principals. They said "you got to do this for us; we need you" and I said "well I don't know if I want to do this". And at the last minute, I took my name out again because I didn't want the board to just settle on the easy way out. But because they could not find a *better candidate* from around the state, after doing a national search which was what the community had pushed for, they asked me again to consider the superintendency.

Another participant shared in her interview: "The majority of the running of the district, I was doing. So why not get paid; why not have the position." Both of these participants were highly positioned in the education system when they acquired the k-12 public school superintendency.

Table 5

Career Paths of Louisiana Women Superintendents

Participants	Teacher	Assistant Principal	Principal	Supervisor	Director	Superintendent
Alexandra	*		*	*	*	*
Elizabeth	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mary	*		*			*
Isabella					*	*
Victoria	*	*	*	*		*

Observations of the Women Participants in Action

I observed one of the participant's procedures for handling complaints made by parents. This allowed me to observe how well superintendents support their principals and still maintain trust and respect from parents and/or people of the community. The observation included the superintendent handling a complaint from a parent regarding a teacher that she wanted dismissed from her position. From the conversation, the parent believed that her child was being mistreated. After the superintendent listened patiently to the parent and her concerns, I heard the superintendent state to the parent ***“Have you spoken to the principal? My advice to you is to make an appointment to meet with the principal and if you are not satisfied with the principal's actions, please come and visit with me.”*** After the conversation with the parent, the participant discussed her school district's protocol procedure for all parents who have immediate school related concerns.

She shared:

I could deal with people all day that take the proper channels to get a problem solved: they should go to the teacher, to the principal, to the counselor, and child welfare before they come to see me. Then I can really solve something. My time is mostly filled with solving problems without proper channel, but it's good that my secretary asks, “Did you talk to the principal.” A lot of people just want to talk to the superintendent; and so that's not a problem. But a lot of my time is spent investigating something that could have been investigated on campus or child welfare, before it even gets to me so I can make better and quicker decisions. I end up putting parents off for 2 to 3 days until I can find the information to give an answer to their problem or concern. But if they had gone through the proper channels, by the time it would get to me, I would already have gathered the data and can make the proper decision and give them their answer. I still have to talk to the principal. I feel that is very important. One of my responsibilities is not only to support the board, but to definitely support my principals.

Being a principal myself, I felt that the procedure for parental concerns was very adequate and extremely supporting to both, the parent and the principal. From personal experience, many times superintendents don't know what is going on in the schools and they

time to fully investigate the situation and at the same time respecting the principal as the leader of the school. In one sense it's evident that the superintendent was not a micromanager of schools. In another essence, the superintendent did not feel that it was her duty but the principal's duty to handle his/her own problems. Whatever the reason, the superintendent did promote a protocol procedure.

I also observed two of the participants' board meetings in their school district. My interest was in regards to viewing these women superintendents' leadership skills along with their relationship with board members, especially since they repeatedly stated that their board members wanted them to apply for the superintendency. In June, 2009, I attended a school board meeting in one of the participant's school district. The meeting began promptly at 6:30 pm. The board room was very crowded with only standing room available. Not knowing what to expect, I was able to observe a meeting to dismiss a principal and I was very curious of how the board felt about the superintendent's decision especially since the principal was White, the superintendent was Black, and the majority board members were White as well. The meeting consisted of many parents, students, and teachers. Some of the students carried signs in support of the principal. Teachers that attended were very complimentary of the principal. They continuously stated: ***"She is an excellent principal and she has done so much for that school."*** No one at the meeting seemed to know why the principal was being dismissed, but many seemed to be very displeased. Even though there seem to be a lot of confused individuals in the board meeting, the media continued interviewing some of the attendees. I was even questioned by others and I was not a member of the community. However, the participant walked in professionally and sat with confidence to conduct business. Even though there seemed to be a lot of tension and some of the

teachers were saying “*She needs to leave,*” the superintendent remained focused and continued conducting her business.

The first part of the meeting began with a prayer and pledge; it was open to the community and lasted approximately one hour and forty minutes. The principal was not discussed at that time. Afterwards, the meeting became a closed session where the superintendent made her courageous recommendation to not renew the contract of one of her principals. No one knew what had been stated, but she received a vote of 13 to 0. Only one board member abstained stating that his abstinence was for personal reasons that would be considered a conflict of interest. The vote showed that the superintendent was well supported by her board members and also that the board members had confidence in her and her decisions. This superintendent was well organized and effective in presenting her defense to the board to get their support regarding her decision and the principal. Again, no one spoke openly about why this female principal was being dismissed from her position. After doing further research, there were several findings: 1) the principal had requested a closed meeting; 2) she had been written up at least four times for not promoting the district’s policies that particular board meeting, I heard several parents and teachers yell aggressively to the board members, “*We will remember all of you at the polls.*” Their comments showed that they disagreed with the recommendation made by the superintendent and the vote of the board members. The negative comments from people of the community revealed that the community felt that their representatives, the board members, were not did not represent them nor were the board members honoring the wishes of the people who had elected them.

In October, 2009, I revisited the second participant’s school district and had an opportunity to attend her board meeting. When I entered, everyone was seated including the

superintendent. The superintendent was making an announcement to the board members regarding the ranking of their school district's test scores against other districts in the state of Louisiana. She had the floor and utilized some of that time to brag on their graduation ranking in which their district had placed #1 in the state for two years. Board members were excited, and began clapping. Several of the board members stated yelled "*good job and congratulations.*"

Both of the observed participants were to be commended as true leaders. They were very confident in what they were presenting, organized, and well prepared to answer all questions from board members. Only one of the participants I felt based on observation had disappointed a group in her community by making a decision that at the time was very unpopular, but she had done her job. Making unpopular decisions is a large part of the superintendent's job whether the superintendent is a man or woman, decisions must be made.

One of the participants in this study had broken her foot. She was not able to move around, but she was able to delegate and continue to run her office. For example, she took most of the complaints by telephone and handled them by telephone. Whether it was bus transportation, problem with teachers, teachers with problems, or principals with problems, she was able to handle most problems by telephone and delegate what she could not. Also, everyone knew to inform her of the outcomes and call her if needed after delegating.

The last participant was an elected president of a state association of school superintendents. I was able to observe her planning for a superintendent's meeting in Baton Rouge. Her agenda was tied in to information received from the Louisiana superintendents which included concerns as well. She even had a speaker to address certain issues. What I liked about her planning was that she had sent emails to everyone asking for input. She included everyone's concerns and stated to me how it was important to include everyone. She also

planned refreshments and her agenda was typed by her secretary. She took her position seriously even though she was not paid to do so. I could tell that it was a large task, but she seemed very pleased. As stated in one of the participant's interview:

Just because they (women) are not men doesn't mean they can't be good superintendents. Women superintendents have to be a little bit better just because they are women, dotting every "I" and crossing every "t".

Being a good superintendent means being able to do whatever is needed to enhance your school district. Whether it's making unpopular decisions or popular decisions, some decisions will be supported by board members and people of the community and some decisions will be criticized by some or all. Even though one of the board members had excused himself from voting in my first visit, from observation, both superintendents were well supported by their board members.

Leadership Skills

From observation, it was noted that the superintendents were very caring and nurturing which seemed unique. According to Issacson's (1998) study, women superintendents were known for their socialization skills, promoting a caring and nurturing leadership style. Other leadership skills observed included: empowerment, open communication, and shared decision-making which is similar to Greenfield, (1994) findings of a great leader.

Encountered Barriers

According to the participants, women face barriers that worked to exclude them from obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency. These barriers blocked women from leadership positions. An *a priori theme* identified for this section included encountered barriers.

Emergent themes that derived from the interviews of the participants regarding barriers

included: a) gender discrimination, b) racism, c) sexism, and d) ageism. Table 6 displays the barriers encountered by the participants.

Table 6

Encountered Barriers of Louisiana Women Superintendents

Participants	Gender Discrimination	Racism	Sexism	Ageism
Alexandra	*		*	
Elizabeth				
Mary	*		*	
Isabella	*	*	*	
Victoria	*	*	*	*

Gender Discrimination against career women

Four of the five women participants in this study argued that just being a female was a barrier. In one of the participant’s interview, she willingly discussed how she was actually encouraged to apply for a particular position and when it became known that she was pregnant, the attitude of the person that had encouraged her to apply had changed towards her being promoted. She was turned down for a promotion simply because she had become pregnant and she knew the reason, but she did not challenged the decision. She shared her experience:

When I was expecting my first child, I was tapped to be a gifted and talented teacher and actually I was looking forward to that. But when it became known that I was expecting a

child, I was told well you're not the one we need for this position because you're going to have a child and you're probably going to leave us. So we don't want you in that position; so you'll go back to your classroom. And that's kind of the way things were and I believed I understood, so I accepted it.

A second participant discussed the limited career choices for women during her time.

Glass's (2000) study verified the limitation of careers for women. Glass (2000) stated that along with nursing, teaching was long represented as a career for women. Even though women did not have many careers to choose from, this participant's heart was already leaning towards the education field. She shared:

Well to tell you the truth, when I graduated from high school there were only three fields that women were channeled into: nursing, secretarial, and education. Of those three, I felt that I was very interested in working with children. I was interested in maintaining the location where I was from. I had planned to live here forever. I felt that being in the school system in the education program was the area that I was most interested in. I cared about the people that were in it. I cared about the children and it seemed like a really good fit.

Today many women are acquiring positions other than nursing, secretarial and as classroom teachers. Some are actually acquiring the k-12 public school superintendency. But even though some are obtaining this position, there is still an under-representation of women in the ranks of the American public school superintendency. Since the 1970's, attempts have been made to account for the continued domination of the public school superintendency by men; but even though research has moved away from traditional paradigms, barriers remain in existence for women and the superintendency.

Racism (a form of discrimination)

Another barrier identified in this study was racism. Both of the Black women participants noted that they were victims of both gender discrimination and racism. This is what Johnson (2006) called a double whammy. Both discussed racism outside of the context of their immediate job. Racism and gender discrimination are the type barriers that widen the gap for

Black qualified women who wish to obtain the k-12 public school superintendency position.

Only one of the Black participants detailed her experience regarding racism, but both noted that race has always been an issue. Because racism is considered to be a hidden barrier, no one wants to actually acknowledged its existence and both of the Black participants in this study minimized its presence in their immediate capacity and in their discussion. For example, one of the Black participants shared her first experience with racism as a barrier in her interview. She conferred that barriers began for her when she chose a career in a “dominate male, dominate white profession.”

She shared:

When I first graduated, the business sector was the kind of profession where there was not a large population of women. There were also even fewer in the business sector that were African American. So, I had the barriers to deal with in a dominate male, dominate white profession, most of my career.

Not one time did this participant acknowledge that she had experienced racism in her present position as k-12 public school superintendent. The participant did say that the community was against her because she was not an educator, meaning that she did not have a degree in education nor was she ever a teacher. But racism could also have been a factor.

The second Black participant shared what she believed were the thoughts of her peers that had also applied for the k-12 superintendency. Because of what she believed were their thoughts, she stated: “I had actually grown up with their folks and now their thoughts are “here emerged this younger lady and she is going to take over and get the job that we had not been offered.” Contrary to her failure to openly regard her peers as having racist attitudes or to regard racism as a factor, her poignant remark indicates that this participant has accepted racist attitudes as a common factor and/or she has learned to either ignore racism or she has learned to just cope

with it. However, because there has never been a Black superintendent in her district, male nor female, she believes that racism is in existence.

Sexism

A third barrier identified in this study was sexism. hooks noted that sexism is perpetuated by “institutional and social structures; by the individuals who dominate, exploit, or oppress; by victims themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo.” Collins (1994) stated that sexism is rooted in attitudes, beliefs, and actions are interwoven through the fabric of American society. In regards to sexism, one of the women superintendent’s experiences strongly related to what is considered sexist oppression; that experience demonstrates that the concept of sexist oppression still existed in the 21st century. Again when this participant shared “when it became known that I was expecting a child, I was told “well you are not the one we need for this position because you’re going to have a child” proved that her district was upholding the belief that women with children are not reliable.

A second participant shared her experience of sexist oppression when she applied for a principalship and receive recommendation for the principal’s position by her male superintendent. She stated: “even though he recommended me, he openly stated that he didn’t believe that women should be principals” which implied that he actually believed that principals should be men and also that women should not be positioned as superintendents. Women not only experienced external beliefs regarding their abilities, they also experience internal oppression as well. Some women believe because of external beliefs, they are not important or as capable as men are. Therefore, some women don’t attempt to become involved in male dominated activities or apply for positions that are considered male positions. As Johnson

(2001) stated, “they (women) were conditioned to believe that the position of superintendent should be obtained by men.”

Ageism (a form of reverse discrimination)

One of the Black participants noted that when she had applied for the k-12 public school superintendency some of her peers were not comfortable with her age. In her interview, she stated what she believed others were saying about her. She shared: “here emmerged this younger lady and she is going to take over and get the job that we had not been offered.” She also acknowledged that the assistant superintendent had been one of her principals when she had taught in the classroom. He had also applied for the same superintendent position. However, this particular participant received the superintendency and she was the youngest female superintendent in the state of Louisiana. After receiving the position knowing that others were not happy with the decision, she explained: “I did my interview and several older people did apply with more experience than I had in the school system. But they did not have the experience working in all different areas of finance, personnel, and legal issues.”

Age discrimination, a set of beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values, is used to describe discrimination against older people, old age, and the aging process. Age discrimination normally consists of actions taken to deny or limit opportunities on the basis of age which occurs on a personal and institutional level (Calasanti & Slevin, 2006). Manuel’s (2001) study found that women who were successful in obtaining the superintendency were much older which contradicts the age of this particular participant who was the youngest applicant. Even though this participant identified ageism as a barrier, ageism actually was a barrier for her, but she was able to surmount it and she was awarded the superintendent position. Therefore, for this study, ageism is the opposite of its original meaning because what this participant considered

discrimination could be acknowledged as reverse discrimination by others. Especially since this particular participant was the youngest of all others that applied and all of the participants in this study.

Ascending in light of Barriers

Even though these women had encountered barriers, they were still able to acquire their leadership positions. The women participants in this study noted strategies that assisted them in obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency. All of the participants in this study claim that they applied for the k-12 public school superintendency because they were requested to do so from board members, peers, and community members to lead the k-12 public school system in their school district. One of the participants shared: “I was doing the job anyway and the other person was getting the money; the board knew that I was doing all the work, so it was pretty easy. In fact when the superintendant was placed on leave, the board requested that I become the interim superintendent.” All of the participants also agreed that they were able to ascend to the k-12 public school superintendency because of their effective leadership skills, good communication, and effective negotiation skills. A *priori theme* identified for this section of the chapter was ascending in light of barriers. From the information provided from the interviews of all five women superintendents regarding the participants’ ability to obtain the superintendency in spite of barriers, *emergent themes* derived. The emergent themes included faith, effective leadership, effective communication and the power of negotiation. Table seven displays the strategies utilized by the participants.

Table 7

Ascending to the superintendency in light of barriers

Participants	Faith	Effective Leadership	Effective Communication	Power of Negotiation
Alexandra		*	*	*
Elizabeth	*	*	*	*
Mary		*	*	*
Isabella	*	*	*	*
Victoria			*	*

Faith

In regards to how these participants were able to acquire their leadership positions in spite of encountered barriers, two of the five women participants immediately gave their glory to “God.” For example, one of the participants shared: ***“It was God and just knowing how to deal with people.”*** Table five displays the strategies identified by the participants. Throughout the interview, all of the participants continued to share that their board members as well as peers and community members requested that they apply for the superintendency. One of the women superintendents stated:

When the board asked me to consider the interim position because the superintendent was leaving and they hadn’t found a superintendent yet, I said I’ll do it for interim, but it’s not my desire to be superintendent. And so they invested in a superintendent search. I put my name in, then, I took it out. I put it in again at the urging of other principals. They said, *“you got to do this for us; we need you”* and I said *“well I don’t know if I want to do*

this”. And at the last minute, I took my name out again because I didn’t want the board to just settle on the easy way out. But because they could not find a better candidate from around the state, after doing a national search which was what the community had pushed for, they asked me again to consider the superintendency.

What was ironic about her statement was that this participant spoke as if she was supported by everyone to become the new k-12 public school superintendent; but as she continued, it was noted that a search for a candidate for the superintendency was done and only when they were not able to find anyone was she actually selected. She also shared a statement that showed that the community was not in her favor as well. She noted:

The fact that my background was business and not education was a barrier; so there was a very strong outcry in the community and from those in the school system to the educators that were education certified. The challenged was whether or not this was the right thing for their school system which was to hire a person who did not have an education certification.

Effective Leadership

Strategies that assisted these women in obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency were good leadership skills and good communication skills; the participants believed the above strategies actually promoted job related success. She discussed the importance for following their policy and procedures which promoted protocol and gave her an opportunity to get feedback from the principal as well before she would intervene and meet with parents. One of the participants shared her protocol procedures:

My secretary asks, did you talk to the principal? But if they (parents) had gone through the proper channels, by the time it would get to me, I would already have gathered the data and can make the proper decision and give them their answer. I still have to talk to the principal. I feel that is very important.

Power of Negotiation in gaining the job

Another strategy shared was learning to negotiate; it was considered necessary because of the entailments of the job. Learning to negotiate was also was considered important for working

with board members to successfully acquire needed materials, equipment, and the implementation for new programs in the school system; they also found that knowing how to negotiate for the superintendent's salary may be necessary. Two of the women superintendents agreed that salary negotiating was definitely important for new superintendents. Even though none of the participants had to go through the actual process of negotiating for salaries, they recommended that before new superintendents signed their first contract, they hire an attorney for contract assistance. Regarding negotiation, several of the participants shared reasons why negotiation was important. Two of the particular participants focused on contract negotiation, especially for new k-12 public school superintendents. For example, one of the participants stated:

Always have an attorney. You pretty much have in mind what you want but for your first negotiation you need to have an attorney there. Make sure when you go to negotiate for your contract that you have asked for a copy of the school system's policy and procedure manual. In particular, if there are personnel issues you may end up in a district where you are not from and there are some districts that have policies that you may have to wait a year before going on vacations; they will not automatically give you that. You really have to work out all the details.

A second participant acknowledged:

I would just ask them to investigate what school superintendents had done and if it was salary or if it was another problem, I would get an attorney for them to do some footwork. I just wouldn't have time to do that and I would certainly get someone that's experience in that area.

Two other participants focused on the importance of knowing how to negotiate with board members. One of the two participants discussed negotiation regarding hiring employees without any complications from board members. The second participant's interest in negotiating was in regards to meeting needs. The first participant shared:

You do learn to negotiate because I feel that you have to learn to work with the board. You have to really be open with your board members because one of the hardest things is personnel. When its time to make your selections with personnel, its very difficult for the

boards not to be involved. I think negotiation has a lot to do in the area where you have to bring in employees. Also there are some curriculum issues you have to negotiate for you know. Superintendents have to do a great deal of talking and negotiating with parents because when you're doing things like expelling students and discipline the schools, parents come to you and you have to be able to work with them and negotiate.

The other participant explained:

We have had to do some negotiating. Although you can't give everybody what they want, maybe you can give them a part of what they want. You can show them a path to get their needs met in a way that will be rewarding for them; so working with board members is just an extension of working with people, listening to them, hearing what their needs are and finding a way that they can fulfill their needs and work together for the good of the children.

However, since most of the deals regarding promotional positions are made by men and on the golf courses or at men's social gatherings (Hill and Ragland, 1995), women are not able to negotiate for promotional positions like men.

Effective Communication

All of these participants believed that they were able to ascend into the position of the k-12 public school superintendency because they were very open and honest with all of their board members. Effective communication was their number one strategy that was acknowledged by four of the women participants regarding career success. The participants noted that it was important for all board members to be equally acknowledged by the superintendent and by doing the participants believed they were able to accomplish their goals for their school district. Several of the participants offered the following advice to others regarding the importance of communication and the k-12 public school superintendency.

One of the participants stated:

Communicate, communicate, communicate; can't say it enough. Everybody needs to know everything. I have learned that it is so very important that when you have information to share it unless it is specific to a specific district; every board member deserves to know that information. I make it a point to communicate information with

everybody. Telephoning takes a lot of time when you are communicating with everybody by phone, but that's important; that is very important and that's essential. There is just so much information that they need to be aware of so they can be and feel a part of the total program.

A second participant shared:

I really try to use communication with all of them [board members]. Now you have to meet with the board president. I try to be very careful and I make sure they all know what's going on. If I'm trying to work with something, I try to keep them all informed rather than 2 or 3 of them informed. Try to make them all feel like they are equally important. I'm not leaning toward some board members rather than other board members.

A third participant shared:

I make a lot of phone calls to [board members] them individually; go visit them, ask them to come and visit me, drink a cup of coffee, and work one on one. I don't want to be shot down a lot, so I want to have an idea ahead of time what their thoughts or feelings are.

Each of the participants was able to describe in their interview the importance of being able to effectively communicate with board members. Even though their reasons were somewhat different, all of them strongly believe that being able to effectively communicate promoted success and career enhancement.

Professional Support

Professional support the women participants received from others contributed to their successes and assisted them in overcoming barriers. A *Priori theme* acknowledged in this section of the study was professional support. *Emergent themes* regarding professional support were: a) support of peers, b) support of board members, c) support of mentors, and d) family support. One of the participant stated: "I had no plans to ever become an administrator. I thought I'd spend my life in the classroom. And again, the Lord had other plans." Table 8 displays the types of support noted from the women participants in this study.

Table 8

Professional support participants received that contributed to their success.

Participants	Support of Peers	Support of Board Members	Support of Mentors	Family Support
Alexandra	*	*	*	*
Elizabeth	*	*	*	*
Mary	*	*	*	*
Isabella	*	*	*	*
Victoria	*		*	*

Support of Peers

Support of peers was noted in the interviews of the participants, but it was not noted in the literature. For this study, peers would be all of the people that had worked with these women in one capacity or another. Peers would include their work friends and support groups within the school district. Participants acknowledged peers as being great supporters especially since having the top position in the school system could be as one of the participants stated, “Lonely at the top.” One of the other participants shared her story regarding peers. She stated:

Because I had worked closely with peers, I think they were really supportive when I went in and then I think the central office was supportive; the other administrators were supportive of my role and I think that’s one reason why I feel like I’ve been successful.

Another participant shared her story regarding the support of peers. She explained: “I forged a lot of good relationships with principals across the parish.” One of the other

participants discussed how sometimes the superintendency position is lonely at the top. But she stated: “I don’t think its loneliness because I lack support. I have a great support system in this office and our school board members support me as well.” For whatever reason, these participants found White male peers to be an asset to their career.

Support of Board Members

All of these women were very grateful to their board members, their mentors, principals and supervisors, who they acknowledged as playing a large role in enhancing their career. Black women participants were very grateful to their board members who they felt were fair and non-discriminating especially since the majority of their board members were White. They were estatic about being allowed the opportunity to become k-12 public school superintendents and the fact that they received tremendous support along the way. All of them did assure me that they were asked by their board members to apply. For example, one of the participants stated:

They (board members) said you [the participant] got to do this for us; we need you and I said well I don’t know if I want to do this. They asked me again to consider the superintendency.

A second participant shared: “A lot of the board members wanted me to be the superintendent, so they asked me to apply.” A third participant acknowledged that the second time she applied, a board member who was against hiring women came to her and stated that he was very impressed with her interview. She explained: “He was going to support me fully. Some of the other board members told me that as well. So I got the job and that was 10 years ago.” Attending the board meeting of the participant who dismissed the principal and the participant who was able to recommend policy changes gave me an opportunity to observe the support the superintendent received from their board members. From observation, the received support enhanced the confidence level of the women superintendents.

Support of Mentors

Mentoring was described in this study as connecting on an emotional level with the person being mentored while assisting that person with the physical, emotional and logistical aspects of leadership (Gardiner et al., 2000). Mentoring was identified as a strong support system for women was also identified in the literature. Allen et al.'s (1995) study referenced mentoring, as a strong strategy for career advancements. All of the women participants stated that their mentors were White men. One of the participants shared how her mentors had played an important role in helping her to become successful: She shared:

Certainly I would say that having a really good background and a lot of good mentors helped me to be successful. A second participant shared: "I've always had good mentors in my life growing up and I saw the difference mentors made with me and my life. Also just knowing someone really cared that I became successful was important to me."

Another participant shared:

I had some wonderful mentors; a principal that I had worked with was very encouraging, he was able to give me guidance. Actually I was the assistant principal for that principal. He was also able to inspire me to do bigger things. Uh he trusted me and that was very rewarding. He trusted me and he would give me increasing duties, increasingly difficult duties; he would let me try new programs and work with different groups of people. As I said he was very inspiring; he encouraged me and helped me to see that I had compatibilities. He really inspired me to reach even higher.

Family Support

Four of the principals acknowledged that having family support was imperative which promoted them to be more effective in their positions which allowed them to be successful. For example, one of the women superintendents discussed the role that her family played in her

I don't think this is something that's not easy to do unless you have a very supportive family. My husband has been very supportive; he's still wondering why I'm retiring. But it has been a challenge because there are certain things you have to do at home. I have a husband who has stuck with me and has helped with duties at home. So I have family inside the home and outside the home who continue to encourage me.

A second participant shared: “My mother is a teacher, all my aunts are teachers.” As stated above, one of the participants shared how having mentors in her life made a difference. She stated: “So I’ve always had good mentors in my life growing up and I saw the difference mentors made with me and my life. Also just knowing someone really cared that I became successful was important to me.”

Participants’ Perception Regarding the Under-representation of Women

Table 9 displays six emergent themes based on the *a priori* theme, participants’ perceptions regarding the under-representation of women as k-12 public school superintendents in the state of Louisiana. The six *emergent themes* that derived from the interviews of the participants regarding the under-representation of Louisiana k-12 women superintendents included: a) the effects of traditional obligations; b) lack of appropriate preparation and/or certification; c) women’s lack of confidence; d) society’s stereotypical attitudes; e) women’s lack of business savvy; and f) the comradery of men. Relevant examples and quotes are shared from the five women participants based on their experiences which promoted their perception regarding this under-representation. The words utilized in this study are alive and realistic from the participants’ own voices.

Table 9

Perception of Under-representation of Louisiana Women Superintendents

Participants	Traditional Obligations	Women's Lack of Preparation/Certification	Women's Lack of Confidence	Society's Stereotypical Attitudes	Women's Lack of Business Savvy	Comradery of Men
Alexandra	*	*	*		*	*
Elizabeth		*	*		*	*
Mary				*		
Isabella	*			*		*
Victoria	*			*		*

Effects of Traditional Obligations

Some women are still upholding traditional obligations of what has been defined by society as the values of a traditional family. According to Popenoe (1993), the traditional family of the 1950's consisted of a father and mother and throughout history motherhood was the major expected role of women. Today, sexism still prevents many talented women for completing college and seeking careers. Regarding women applying for the superindency, one of the participants courageously shared:

It may go back to the traditional obligations of women. I think women still feel a great responsibility for the family and for the home; they feel so great an obligation that they're not sure that they could share that time with this very demanding job. For that person that feels that they can't give their all, I respect that. They may have children at home.

Another participant adamantly contributed:

It may go back to the traditional obligations of women. I think women still feel a great responsibility for the family and for the home; they feel so great an obligation that they're not sure that they could share that time with this very demanding job.

A third participant anxiously contributed during the interview: "I think the demand is pretty rough; we have to take care of the family and that's always a great deal of pressure."

Another participant decided that the concept of the American dream played a larger role for men than women. She acknowledged: "This is the culture of America; women are supposed to be the mom, take care of the children, take care of the home; take care of the men. I mean that has not changed a lot and so I think that's a culture thing."

Women's Lack of Appropriate Preparation & Certification

In this study, one of the participants acknowledged that during her time, career choices were limited for women. This participant shared: "During my time the career choices included nursing, secretarial, and education and she chose a career in education."

From the interviews of the five women participants, three of these women, from their personal observation, acknowledged that some women just didn't want to go back to school. Because the k-12 public school superintendency requires at least a Master's degree or higher, women who don't wish to further their education beyond a BA or BS degree, are not able to pursue this position.

Women's Lack of Confidence

Regarding women's lack of confidence, one of the participants stated: "I think women were afraid of being denied. I had to learn that in administration and it does hurt. Nobody wants to be rejected. When asked why women were not reaching parity with men in regards to the k-12 public school superintendency, the participants in this study made continuous reference to

how men are seen as the ones who could and should lead regarding women as being incapable of leading. For example, when Isabella acquired the position as k-12 public school superintendent, she stated:

I had the barriers to deal with in a dominant male, dominant white profession, most of my career. So, I had those challenges and so taking the one on as superintendent being one of the few Black women superintendents in this country and not to mention the very few that's in this state has been a challenge. Since I became superintendent my do ability has been challenged along with being able to cope with the long hours that the superintendent has to spend on the job has been challenging.

One of the participants recalled hearing one of her board members who had been on the board for several years state: "Huh, even a woman applied." Like really a woman." These are the type of negative statements that made women feel inadequate and led them to not have confidence in their themselves and their abilities.

Society's Stereotypical Attitudes

According to White (1950), the stereotyping identification was created by the majority placing value on males. One of the participants statement confirmed today's existence of stereotypical attitudes of society regarding the career choice and gender. She stated in her interview: "I had the barriers to deal with in a dominate male, dominate white profession, most of my career."

One of the participants argued that traditionalism still exist even today regarding women and their place in society promoting stereotypical attitudes. According to this participant, stereotypical attitudes may cause some women to be afraid to try knowing that they may not be accepted because they are women. She shared:

This is the culture of America; women are supposed to be the mom, take care of the children, take care of the home; take care of the men. I mean that has not changed a lot. And so I think that's a culture thing. I think women were afraid of being denied. I had to learn that in administration and it does hurt. Nobody wants to be rejected. I have been rejected especially in the business world.

When discussing the society's stereotypical attitudes toward women, the word "politics" came into play. For this study, politics is defined as having the power to determine promotional gains for women seeking leadership positions. All of the participants agreed that they were not familiar with politics and that politics was not good for education. One particular participant admitted that politics was "rapid" and named related areas that were affected by politics. For example, another participant argued that the hiring practices for women were politically different than the hiring practices for men and men were favored. Even though this particular participant believed that the hiring practices for women are not the same for women as they are for men, she did agree that the hiring practices were better now than before. However, because women are not golf players and men are, she believed that leadership positions will continue to be given to men. When she was asked about hiring practices in her school district, she stated:

I would say, and I'm speaking for this parish, it is identical. The only thing different is that most of the people making the final decision are mostly men. I think there's a built in comradely sometimes between a male candidate and a male interviewer. So I think that might come into play sometimes.

Another participant argued that women who were able to acquire the k-12 public school superintendency must be successful so that board members would be willing to hire other women in that capacity. She urgently responded to the question regarding hiring practices in her district. She shared in her interview:

I would say in this parish since I was very successful, another woman would have every opportunity to get in. I think it just depends on who sets the path. If it's a woman who gets the position, it's not because she's a woman and it's not because she was or wasn't a good leader. The first ones that get in have to pave the way for the next person. One woman that's successful can pave the way for a lot of women in the future.

A third participant was very adamant about the differences in the hiring practices of men and women. She believed that board members would hire a man in a leadership capacity before even considering a qualified woman. She argued:

I believe it's different between the hiring of men and women in any leadership capacity. I believe that happens. It's not as bad as it use to be, but I also believe it's not as obvious to others if questions are changed or if they do things differently. Many women don't play golf so they are not able to negotiate for positions before the opportunity is provided to or for men.

Even though one of the participants believed that her school district had made a difference in the hiring of men and women, she did note that a difference in the hiring practices of men and women were in existence and board members were very political. By allowing the interview process to be fair for both men and women, she argued that it made a difference for her parish. She explained her hiring process in her interview and the expectations of some board members:

Some board members feel like now it's my turn. We don't use that policy. I have a rubric that we have developed. The first part was developed to consider the education level and the number of years experience for the position they applied for along with their leadership abilities and communication abilities. I also question other qualities they may have. I develop the questions that I want to ask them. The entire interview committee includes two other individuals and usually it's the personnel director that sits in on every interview and the other person is the supervisor that's in charge of that school; the board members also sit to the side of the room. I do all the interviewing myself. The public is also invited. Everything stated is script; I'll also ask the board members if they have any questions for the applicants. After everything that is said, I'll ask the interviewer for some closing remarks. After the interview process is complete, each person interviewing goes to score their rubric; then later that day we meet, along with the assistant principal. By law we have to go and talk to the faculty; but we come back and individually score them together. Once that's done and I see who my top two or three candidates are, then I will personally go and call around and do several personal checking on my own to different people. After that, that particular decision is solely mine. It's all about being open and fair, and keeping the politics out.

Another participant did not agree that women should be hired because they were women and that women may not always be the best highly qualified candidate for the k-12 public school

superintendency. This participant was also adamant about her belief which she shared in her interview:

I think the most highly qualified person should get the job. We need to deal with quality. It doesn't need to be the gender based or race based. It needs to be the most qualified person gets the job which is what I push and promote with my staff. But I tell them where we can try to keep the balance with race and gender. If we have two people and their qualifications are equal, whether it's gender or race, it's necessary to have diversity in the organization. But when qualifications are less, I'm not going to lower my standards. We will just continue working on diversity, unless it's something that can be easily worked on.

One particular participant believed that women are not being recognized for their accomplishments and success. She acknowledged that just being a woman automatically excused women from being a definite candidate for the k-12 public school superintendency. This participant stated: "I think as far as women are concerned, board members really need to see women and look at their accomplishments as opposed to there is a woman sitting in the seat. However, another participant agreed that women are being equally acknowledged as well as men are and in regards of this issue she stated:

I just think women are to be considered equally. I don't think we should look at having more women. I think we should look at hiring the best person for the job. It doesn't matter if it's male or female.

Another participant acknowledged that women are not being mentored by other successful women and that was something she felt that women need to do to help each other. She explained: "We need to look for those women who aspire to move up and those women who are talented; we need to reach back and grab their hands and move them along and encourage them to move on up." Thoughts were shared by a second participant regarding the hiring of women and men in the past. She acknowledged that women face a disadvantage when applying against men for leadership positions. Even though the participant conveyed that women are at a disadvantage but are advancing, they also acknowledged that the chances for other women to

become superintendents may be slim basically because women still have to face a board that is made up of majority men. In her interview she explained:

I think in the past there were definitely a disadvantage and a mind set that it should be a man. At this point I feel the next person would be a man or if it's a woman, it wouldn't make a difference because I've been here for ten years.

Women's Lack of Business Savvy

Lack of Business savvy was the last perception shared by the participants in this study regarding the under-representation. In this study, two of the women had business backgrounds and they still experienced the affects of stereotypical attitudes even though both were qualified to run a business in which the school system is considered to be. Even though one of the participants noted that women are considered to not be business savvy, she strongly believed that the school system is a business and should be ran as a business. She was very adamant about her position and shared:

There is always the idea with men that women do not have the business savvy to be a CEO because that's pretty much what we are. In this parish we are one of the largest businesses here and of course that's always something you have to deal with. They still believe it's a man's world; it's a man's world.

A second participant that also held a degree in business did not acknowledge the school system as a business, but she shared her story of why she was not employed in the business sector. She explained:

When I first graduated, the business sector was the kind of profession where there was not a large population of women. There were also even fewer in the business sector that were African American. So, I had barriers to deal with in a dominate male, dominate white profession.

Comradery of Men

From the interviews of these five participants, three of the interviewees seem to state that it was more than the lack of business savvy that kept women from obtaining the k-12 public school superintendency. One of the participants noted: “men just feel that they are suppose to support other men and that men share a form of comradery where they believe that it is their duty to support each other.” Another shared: “I think in many professions, men are considered to be the leaders, for whatever reason and society still believes that men are supposed to be the cult driver. It’s the culture.” Another participant stated: “I strongly believed that if the board was made up of mostly men, a man would most certainly receive the position.” A fourth participant shared: “They (society) still believe it’s a man’s world; it’s a man’s world.”

Summary

Overall, this chapter presented the women voices as they responded to the purpose of this study which was to share their experiences as k-12 public school superintendents as they respond to the resistant discourse of gender inequity in an educational position that is dominated by men. These women superintendents projected the persona of well-educated, caring, and confident professionals. They were among a select group of women superintendents in the state who were confident and secure about who they were in their communities and in their professional settings. In addition, they were similarly comfortable with their gender and roles as both an authoritarian and a team member. These women were well structured in their professional lives and their home lives. They were able to survive regardless of stereotypical attitudes of some and the continuous demands of parents, the community, staff, and their personal families.

This study was dedicated to the identification and the description of the personal and professional career path experiences of women superintendents serving in high profile/complex school districts in Louisiana. General commonalities amid the superintendents included ethnicity, education experience, mentors, advanced degrees, and memberships in organizations. Some of the common behaviors among the five feminist superintendents were turning barriers into opportunities, building and maintaining relationships, mentors, and networking. To determine the emergent patterns and themes that were described in the five interviews of this research study, the response data were organized based on the central research question and subquestions regarding their perception of the under-representation of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. This chapter also documented the recommendations made by the participants regarding others who aspire to become k-12 public school superintendents.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The title of this dissertation is *The Career Paths, Successes and Challenges of K-12 Public School Women Superintendents in the State of Louisiana*. According to AASA (2007), women comprise 70 to 75% of the teaching positions in the nation, but women are under-represented as k-12 public school women superintendents. The state of Louisiana exceeds the number of women representing the k-12 public school superintendency, but the ratio of male to female superintendents does not match the ratio of male to female teachers. From a critical standpoint, the researcher sought to advocate for the emancipation of groups marginalized in society (Thomas, 1993). In this particular study, my argument is for the equality of women in regards to the k-12 public school superintendency position. The utilization of the elements of feminist standpoint theory, and Black feminist thought provided an opportunity for me to attempt to identify biases, if any, and to identify ways to improve oppressed situations for women who aspire to obtain this leadership position. Feminist standpoint theory provided opportunity to identify systems of oppression and privilege for women; and the Black feminist thought provided a productive venue to study the effects of race and gender on the positioning of Black women as k-12 public school superintendents.

Although this study focused on five Louisiana women superintendents who were identified through convenience sampling, one should not assume that the experiences and/or perceptions of these five women would be the same for other women who serve, or women who have served or women who aspire to serve as k-12 public school superintendents. Again, learning about being a female superintendent from women who currently serve in this capacity

allowed opportunity for me to capture, without prejudice, their perceptions regarding the disproportionate number of women teachers and women superintendents in this state when compared to the number of men teachers and men serving as k-12 public school superintendents in the state of Louisiana. In addition, their experiences would be utilized to fill a void in the literature relating to women leaders in education.

This section of the study summarized the data gathered from the research questions utilized to guide this study. Consistent with the research questions, data for this study was organized into four broad categories: 1) barriers the participants face when aspiring for the k-12 public school superintendency included gender discrimination, racism, sexism, and ageism; 2) strategies participants used to ascend to the superintendency in light of barriers included faith, effective leadership, effective communication skills; and the power of negotiation; 3) professional support the participants received that contributed to their success included support of board members, support of mentors, support of family, and the support of peers; and 4) the participants' perception regarding the under-representation of women superintendents in Louisiana included traditional obligations, women's lack of preparation and certification, women's lack of confidence, society's stereotypical attitudes, and women's lack of business savvy.

Encountered Barriers

In regards to the participants' perception of the under-representation of k-12 women superintendents in Louisiana, barriers whether traditional or nontraditional had an enormous impact on women's attitude towards obtaining and/or preparing for top educational leadership positions. Four of the five participants provided a wealth of information regarding barriers and

their personal experiences. Barriers discussed included gender discrimination, racism, sexism, and ageism.

Gender Discrimination

The literature acknowledged that there were limited historical career choices for women. The choices were secretarial, nursing and teaching (Glass, 2000). One of the participants shared her story on gender discrimination where she was turned down for a promotion and told that their reason for not choosing her was because of her pregnancy. A second participant shared the career choices she had to choose from during her time which were synonymous to Glass's (2000) study; she chose education. From the literature, three notions were introduced as promoting gender discrimination. First, the literature identified the effect of gendered identities on women and their career choices. Manuel's (2001) study noted that because of early teachings of women, they were conditioned to believe that certain positions were for women, certain positions were for men and the k-12 superintendency was considered a man's position. Because of the notion that the k-12 public school superintendency was a man's position, many women refrain from applying. Second, the literature acknowledged that many women chose to not seek curriculums in hard sciences, engineering, law, and medicine (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). They surmised the differences in curricular choices promoted barriers that kept women within the expectations of society. Third, was the questioning of women's ability to be effective when serving in certain leadership positions? One of the participants stated in her interview, "They questioned my do-ability." In her situation, the questioning of her do-ability was not actually institutionalized. It was actually the people of the communities that the system served. She had parents that questioned because she had not been an actual educator. The problem was her background rather than her ability to fulfill the duties of the k-12 public school superintendents.

Tallerico's (2000) study was basically institutionalized discrimination. Several negative comments were identified towards women who seek leadership positions such as: "Can she do discipline? Can she do budgets? The study also noted that male bosses not only believed that women were not capable of doing a job that was considered for men, they also believed that women should make less pay. This discriminative attitude was also verified in the statement, "Do we have to pay her as much as the male contender?" (Tallerico, p. 32). All of these statements enhanced opportunity for women to be discriminated against especially because they desired leadership positions that society considered to be male positions. But with the participant, discrimination was more outsiders that, from the challenge, believed that school systems should be ran by a person with a degree in education. Her do-ability challenge is similar to the challenge that the Louisiana state superintendent faces. He also has a business degree and background, but he still received his high level leadership position and so did she indicating that there is some societal change.

Only one of the five women participants stated that she had not experienced any barriers during her career. This participant was not convincing because throughout her interview, she shared that she was not able to make job related changes with some of the employees that she had positioned. She suggested that certain laws and policies made by the board prevented her from doing what she knew was best for the district. By being prevented from making effective decisions, it was obvious that this superintendent had encountered a barrier otherwise she would not have spoken with such disappointment in her voice. It was obvious that the changes would have made a difference. It was as if she was saying "if they had listened to me, there would not have been problems." But she did not actually state those words which were an assumption on

my part and that assumption was based on how she carefully chose her words in regards to the issue.

Racism

The Black women in this study did not discuss racism in detail as a factor which indicated that they either accepted racism as a commonplace or they had developed skills to cope with racism. The literature noted that women of color do face the double whammy of race and gender (Johnson, 2006) which kept many Black women from advancing. But Johnson's (2006) study also noted that some Black women believed that their race and gender served as an asset at a certain time in history, especially regarding employment. The literature acknowledges numerous legislations that were established during the 1970s to the 1980s to assist women in the labor market, such as Title VII, Title IX, and the Equal Pay Act (Gunderson, Hyatt & Slinn, 2002). However, the Equal Pay Act which promoted diversity and equity granted Blacks equal opportunities and Affirmative action initiatives, a political pressure of the civil rights movement, initiated equal employment for Blacks (Ransom & Megdal, 1993). But even though Black women were treated differently and worked harder, the percentage of Black women superintendents is still under-represented. Their under-representation is against White men, White women, and even against Black men. But some, like the Black participants in this study, are able to assume victory. Also, because racism was not deeply discusses, it was evident that the Black participants did not want to believe that they had gotten their position because of their race nor their gender. They were proud to share with me that they had earned faithfully their positions.

Sexism

Kramaroe and Treichler (1985) defined sexism as “behavior, policy language, or other actions of men and women which expresses an institutionalized, systematic, comprehensive, or consistent view that women are inferior” (p. 6). Again, one of the women superintendents spoke openly of her sexist experience in which she was pregnant and overlooked for a promotion. It was evident that her sexist experience was related to a mandated maternity leave with benefits. The concept of the traditional family seem to highly promote this sexist oppression when dealing with women and careers; hooks (1984) study agreed. If women are to be kept from advancing career wise because of traditional expectations, then why should women pursue careers and what makes this world a man’s world? A second participant argued that “women are supposed to be the mom, take care of the children, take care of the home and take care of the men.” Where does it state that men can’t do the same?

One of the other participant’s experienced sexist comments in regards to her ability to be an effective leader and her capability to fulfill the duties of an administrator. The literature noted that men share negative comments about women simply because they were women (Ingersoll, 1995), especially when they pursued leadership positions (Tallerico, 2000). Negative comments promote negative thoughts; women began disbelieving in themselves. These comments also cause a feeling of defeat. Women become less interested in leadership positions because these positions are heavily male dominated (Tallerico, 2000).

This doubt and feeling of defeat also contributed to women’s inability to climb the corporate ladder (Grunig, et al., 2001). As Tedrow’s (1999) study confirmed, women must be true to themselves about their abilities so that their chances of becoming successful in obtaining leadership positions can increase. Women who aspire and don’t try have not acknowledged the

fact that they are capable of doing the job. But the participants in this study have moved beyond that doubt and are actually doing the job.

Ageism

One of the Black participants stated that she had experienced a barrier which she acknowledged as ageism, a reversal of the actual meaning of age discrimination. In the literature it was noted that women who were promoted to the superintendency were much older than men who served in the same capacity (Manuel, 2001). However, this particular participant was much younger and somewhat less experience than her peers who had also applied for the superintendency. Because of this participant's experience, Manuel's (2001) study is somewhat contradictory because the literature does not support the participant's experience of age discrimination. She did receive the position; therefore, she did not experience a barrier. The literature stated that Black women acknowledged race and gender as an asset (Johnson, 2006). For this participant, age was an asset as well, especially in this situation. However, a nationwide study of k-12 women superintendents would have to be completed to confirm this particular participant's experience regarding women, age, and women acquiring the highest educational district's position.

Ascending in light of barriers

The women participants in this study were very talented and were recognized throughout their career by their school district, peers, and members of the community for their successes, their capabilities, and contributions. One of the participants had gone from principal straight to the superintendency. She had refused a central office position. All of the others had worked in central office before receiving the superintendency position. When questioned about how these participants were able to become k-12 public superintendents in spite of barriers, the participants

introduced strategies that they found very effective which included faith, effective leadership, effective communication skills; and the power of negotiation;

Faith

Faith was acknowledged by two of the participants as a strong religious strategy that placed them in the superintendent position; they were more than happy to give the glory to God. Women were not acquiring this position even though they had the necessary credentials for the k-12 public school superintendency. Therefore their aspirations were not aimed towards the superintendency. Faith was not identified or acknowledged in the literature as a strategy to promote success for women who aspire for the k-12 public school superintendency. But it was refreshing to note that this particular strategy was non-political.

Effective Leadership

According to Tedrow's (1999) findings, women utilized their energies to survive or fit into the male context rather than to practice and refine their own ways of leading; women and their skills were considered secondary to men and the skills of men. According to Hill and Raglend (1995), women not only lack political shrewdness, they are also programmed to take secondary roles. As stated earlier, Genzen's (1993) study determined that women superintendents held a high degree of self assurance and were generally transformational leaders. I found the participants to be self assured about their abilities even if society considers women secondary to men. They applied for the superintendency and they received it. They made sure that they worked very hard to fulfill the duties of the position. Greenfield's (1994) study spoke of generative leadership among women superintendents which evolves from a transformational leader. Because these women were caring, nurturing and worked extremely hard to make a difference for the children, their leadership abilities would be considered transformational.

Issacson's (1998) study revealed that socialization skills such as caring and nurturing made women leadership skills unique and these women are unique and should be commended for what they do. Other values that were observed included: empowerment of others through collaborative efforts, an open communication, shared decision-making and conflict prevention (Greenfield, 1994). These are the values stated by Greenfield (1994) and Genzen (1993) that make women great leaders. These are also the values I observed in the participants. As leaders, they can be characterized as "effective leaders" with unique characteristics.

Effective Communication

All of the participants gave immediate recognition and respect to having effective communication skills especially with parents, board members, the people of the community, and their district employees. Communication and the power of negotiation was strongly noted by all of the participants as one of the major keys to career success. They explained that communication skills was a strategy that was strongly utilized when they were classroom teachers. Learning communication skills as teachers prepared them to become great communicators as administrators, central office personnel and as k-12 public school superintendents. The literature does not state specifically about communication skills of women, but the literature did discuss the men and their social clubs. This social club allowed men to communicate effectively because of the deals that were cut during that time. The literature also boast about how men received positions and women were left out. Women were left out of the social clubs; women were left out of the deal cutting; women were left out of the loop of being notified of open positions. So how are women able to complete?

Power of Negotiation

All of the participants identified negotiation as an important strategy for working with board members to successfully acquire needed materials, equipment, and the implementation for new programs in the school system. If we look at the fact that women were left out of the loop of knowing when and what positions are to become available, how can they negotiate for leadership positions? Not being able to negotiate like men places women where they are not able to compete. The participants did not discuss job related negotiations. They did discuss salary negotiation which occurs after landing the superintendency. None of the participants in this study shared that they had to negotiate for salaries. They mainly spoke of negotiations that were beneficial to their entire school district.

Professional Support

In the literature, Young and McLeod (2001) acknowledged that women need support and they must also see and interact with other women in leadership positions. Professional support the participants received that contributed to their success were support of board members, support of mentors, support of family, and support of peers.

Support of Board Members

All of the participants stated that they were well supported by their board members which allowed them to implement programs that better enhanced their educational program. In their interviews, the participants reported that men support men; men form a comradery; it's a man's world. This seems to contradict the statement that they were well supported by their board members. Their board members may support the women because of their duty to support their district or because they positioned these women, it would be too obvious if they did not support them. Either way, board members are elected by the people. Board members take an

oath to do their duties which is to enhance their district. Their reasons for supporting these women could be because they had selected these women to be superintendents; their support was beneficial to the school district as a whole; and/or beneficial to the board members, especially the ones that wanted to be re-elected to their position.

Support of Mentors

Four of the participants also acknowledge the received support from mentors who were mostly men and people that they were employed under or who was once their supervisor. Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000) stated, “women must learn from other women’s voices and experiences” (p.29). But the women in this study continuously revealed that their assistance or learning was from men. According to the literature, mentoring is very important to women who aspire to attain the k-12 public school superintendency (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000).

Brunner and Grogan (2007) study found that many women who aspire for the superintendency are mentored by men. One of the participants acknowledged that women need to be mentored by other women which is something she vowed to begin doing, but she also acknowledged that women were not being mentored by other women in leadership positions.

Hill and Ragland’s (1995) study also observed that women are not mentoring other women and identified in their study that the absence of women mentors for women who aspired for the superintendency is considered a second contemporary barrier against women. However, the literature shows that many women do not care to hire other women. Therefore, the data for Hill and Ragland’s (1995) study may show that men are more willing to support aspiring women, but the number of women superintendents have not reached parity with the number of men superintendents. The literature also shows that the state of Louisiana has 64 school districts and

out of those districts 56 of the superintendents are White and eight are Black. Twenty of the sixty-four k-12 public school superintendents are identified as women. To determine if women leaders are now mentoring other women who aspire for leadership positions and/or whether mentoring makes a difference in the number of women superintendents, further research would have to be conducted nationwide or with more than one state with women serving as k-12 public school superintendents.

Support of family

As far as support from the family, all of the participants were married, but only four of the participants had children which added responsibilities. Having children has been identified as an area of concern when employed as a k-12 superintendents; because of family obligations, some women have deterred from this position. Even though the participants in this study were mothers and wives, they were able to fulfill the duties of the superintendency and the time requirement to fulfill the duties of the position. The participants found family discussions to warrant family decisions and support from their families which permitted freedom to do their job and to promote extreme success. Women were taught by their parents to be caregivers, nurturers, model mothers, and wives (Hayes and Flannery, 2000). They were also taught by their mothers to cook, clean, and care for children. Therefore family issues took precedence over career decisions for some women. It was evident that these participants were serious about their career and wanted something more for themselves than just being mom and wife. However they did want their family to make the decision with them, buy in, and support them. None of the participants stated that their husbands were against them taking the superintendency position, but it would have been interesting if they had disagreed especially to examine the next step before defeat.

Support of Peers

All of the participants acknowledged that their peers had provided extreme support. In the literature, several studies acknowledged sponsoring, mentoring, and internships as strong strategies of support for women (Allen, Jacobson, and Lomotey, 1995; Logan, 1999; Gardiner et al., 2000). Peers were not actually mentioned in the literature, however a need was found for alternate support systems that were not of the educational organization (Gardiner's et al study, 2000). Again, the participants' peers are the people that had worked with them in one capacity or another within the school district. These women spoke of many peers and they believed they were surrounded by support, a wealth of peers.

Internships were discussed in the literature. It was identified in the study as a strong strategy for assisting women with career advancement (Logan, 1999), but internships were never mentioned by the participants. However, internships were noted in their discussions, especially when the participants identified their immediate supervisors as mentors. They were given opportunity to learn and do many tasks other than their assigned duties. They were interning without discussion. A study may be needed to determine whether internships would be an asset for women who aspire to obtain the k-12 public school superintendency or any other leadership position.

Participants' Perception Regarding the Under-representation of Women

Thoughts regarding the under-representation of women superintendents included: 1) traditional obligations; 2) women's lack of preparation and certification; 3) women's lack of confidence; 4) women's lack of business savvy and 5) the comradery of men. The data received in this study from the women participants was based only on their perceptions regarding the under-representation of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. Other women

superintendents' perceptions regarding the under-representation of women superintendents may not be the same as the participants in this particularly study.

Traditional Obligations

In regards to the participants' perception of the under-representation of women superintendents, traditional obligation was first to be addressed. Three of the participants in this study believed that since women were responsible for taking care of the family, they did not have the time to deal with the numerous duties of a superintendent which would keep them from their family obligations. They noted that some women were unsure about being able to do both with success.

When looking back at history and the formal education for girls, the education for girls had been secondary to the education of boys (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Education in the past only convinced women to make adjustments to their role as housewives and mothers instead of teaching them to use their intelligence creatively in a career (Friedan, 1963). According to the literature, by the end of the 19th century, the number of girls/women being educated increased and women began attending women's colleges and other universities and by 1980s, 49 to 53 percent of college students were women. Sadker & Sadker's (1994) study noted that women were encouraged to major in subjects like education and the differences in curricular choices for men and women revealed a barrier against women.

Even though women achieved equal rights in the workplace, according to Friedan (1963), many women of the 50's and 60's major goal was marriage. So even though women are able to prepare themselves for the superintendency, according to the participants in this study, traditional roles of women are still in existence and are well accepted by many women of today.

Women's lack of preparation and certification

The participants acknowledged the lack of preparation and certification as a reason why the number of women as k-12 public school superintendents is limited. The minimum qualifications for a superintendent in the state of Louisiana include: 1) a valid Educational Leader Certificate; 2) five years of successful administration or management experiences in education at the level of principal or above; and 3) a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education (Louisiana Department of Education). From the participants' personal observation, some women were reluctant to go back to school to earn the necessary certification needed to be positioned as a superintendent. They believed some women either could not afford the tuition or they just weren't interested. Relating to traditionalism, many women wanted to be just wives and mothers because this is what they were taught by their mothers. They could have come from a happy family with a mother and father where the other was home and wanted the same setting for them and their children. This could also have refrained women from furthering their education and pursuing positions of power that monopolized an enormous amount of time.

Women's lack of confidence

Friedan (1963), in her second chapter, also acknowledged that women lacked confidence in themselves and that women felt inferior to men. She attributed women's feeling of inferiority to the way television portrayed the ideal happy wife. The participants acknowledged that women lacked confidence in themselves. Because society has acknowledged certain jobs for women and certain jobs for men, some women don't attempt to secure leadership positions. This lack of confidence may be strongly related to how historically men dominated the superintendent position as well as society's attitude towards women and family; society's attitude towards

women and leadership positions and the stereotyping of women were also contributors to women and their lack of confidence. Tallerico's (2000) study revealed stereotyping as one of the major barriers that prevented women from obtaining any type of position in a leadership capacity. Even though the women in this study were able to obtain a superintendent position, two of them acknowledged faith as promoting the power to overcome all barriers which allowed them to enter a position that society considers to be for men only.

Lack of business savvy

The participants identified the lack of business savvy as a reason why there is an under-representation of women superintendents. Hill and Ragland's (1995) study agreed that women lacked political shrewdness, and that men are more politically inclined. Therefore, men are more able to negotiate deals for positions (Hill & Ragland, 1995). The participants noted that society believes women are incapable of relating to business. But two of the women in this study had business backgrounds and even though they were business inclined, there were still concerns from the community and the school system regarding their abilities to run a business as large as an education system. However the literature does agree that women are inadequate when it came down to business. Women are not allowed to socialize in men organizations or social clubs.

Again, the only type of negotiating noted in the study for women was after they had become superintendents; the negotiations that they were involved in was for the enhancement of their school districts. Negotiation in the literature was to obtain promotional positions (Hill & Ragland, 1995). But negotiation discussed by the participants was only to enlighten new superintendents regarding their contracts. Even though the women in this study were successful k-12 public school superintendents, which meant that it was evident that these women were business savvy, their doability was still challenged.

Comradery of Men

The last perception identified in this study claimed that board members are the selection committee that hire school district superintendents. First, the participants noted that the majority board members are men and they believed that men share a form of comradery where they select and support men only; men have a tendency to lean more towards the hiring of men instead of women. These women believed that men believed that they must hire men in leadership capacities simply because they are men. Historically, men were the ones to head the household; this promoted society's belief that men are the ones that should lead.

Second, women in this study were not a part of the good ole boy network which Hill and Ragland's (1995) study of women superintendents confirmed as a group of men that kept women from possessing a number in line to the superintendency simply because they are more familiar with positions before they are announced. The literature revealed in Hill and Ragland's (1995) study that deals for positions were cut by men on golf courses and/or during male social gatherings; women are not allowed to attend, therefore men received positions before they are known to women (Hill & Ragland, 1995). Many times it seems as if the same actions are still in existence. What was ironic was that these five women had beaten the odds. They were able to receive the position even though they were they part of the good ole boy network. Also, they were able to surpass a board that is comprised of majority men. Houston's (1996) study noted that no matter what gender the leader is, the superintendency will call for strengths identified as feminine giving women a natural edge. Therefore, in the future, more women may be selected to the career of k-12 public school superintendents.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a summary of the key findings based on data collected from five feminist k-12 public school women superintendents regarding the under-representation of women employed as women superintendents when compared to the number of women serving as classroom teachers. The reason for embarking on this particular research was to identify reasons why the ratio of male to female teachers does not match the ratio of male to female k-12 public school superintendents in Louisiana. As the researcher, it is my duty to make inferences based on the data provided.

The researcher must be able to derive logical conclusions from premises known or assumed to be true. From the evidence, I have derived at two conclusions. First, from the perspectives of the actual participants in this study regarding the under-representation of women superintendents in k-12 public school superintendency, women can sometimes control their own destiny in regards to the superintendent position or any other leadership position. Women must apply themselves, further their education, complete the superintendency examination, receive the superintendent's certification or endorsement and disregard society's belief that the k-12 public school superintendency is a position for men only. One concern was that the number of women serving as district board members . The number of Black board members was also a major concern because the number of Black board members were extremely less than White women and White men board members. This would be a definite concern for Black women who may be the best candidate, but denied because of their race and gender. Even Black men had better opportunities than Black Women who were at the bottom of the totem pole for employment and many other societal issues.

In regards to their perceptions of the under-representation of women superintendents, all of the participants conveyed that they truly believe that the person selected for the k-12 superintendency position should be hired based on: 1) ability; 2) being the most highly qualified candidate; and 3) being the best person for the position. Even though they strive for gender equity, they refuse to say that women should be chosen for certain leadership positions because they were women; they believed that women must work extremely hard to be the best candidate applying, especially because of barriers and prejudice against women. Men support men.

Second, in some instances it was obvious that these women may be “Living in Denial.” First, all of the women in this study believed that the board members really wanted them to apply for the k-12 public school superintendent. All of them continuously stated: “*they wanted me.*” . One of the participants stated “they needed me” and she did not mind sharing why. She knew her district was knocking on bankruptcy’s door. But she applied, got the position, and did what she could to save it; she was successful. In her situation, she knew she was needed and she knew the difference between being needed and being wanted. But she still insisted as well the others that she was wanted.

It seemed as if they were convinced that their board members were seeing them as equal candidates. One of the women superintendents was honest about differences, discrimination, sexist attitudes and she acknowledged “we’re not there yet.” As Manuel (2001) revealed in his study, women always spend more years in the classroom than men when receiving promotions such as the k-12 public school superintendency. Data revealed that four of the five women were over fifty years of age. Not only were these women older than men who were selected for this position, research shows that women normally don’t do as many years in that particular position (Manuel, 2001). The youngest participant is the only one in the study that is still in position.

Could this be because she was much younger and she has years before retiring? Three of the 5 participants in this study retired from the system in the year of 2009; all three women superintendents were replaced by men. Maybe by selecting women at a late age could be beneficial to board members. They may feel that these women would not serve long and they have opportunity to select a man. Also by selecting women may also serve the district and suffice the discrimination laws as well.

These women actually believed that they have paved the way for other women, but after three of these women retired, not one of them was replaced by a woman. Men were chosen to be the successor of these retired women participants; the men selected to take these women participants place had either served under them or they were selected from within the community. Only one was replaced from someone outside of the state. From investigation, it was definite that the men candidates had fewer years and less experience than the women they succeeded. Being near retirement could have been a major factor for board members to make an offer for the superintendency. But this does not go against the fact that they were the most qualified. It only provides a suggestion to why these women were selected for this position especially after reasons were noted in the literature to why women were not receiving this position. They knew that these women would not remain in the superintendent position for a long period of time.

Some of the participants' interviews promoted reasons of suspension. For example, one of the participant's district was subjected to an initiative to invest in a superintendent search was done before she was selected. This showed that this participant was selected by board members after they were not able to find the perfect candidate. The participant explained the particulars in her interview:

And so they (board members) invested in a superintendent search. I put my name in, then, I took it out. I put it in again at the urging of other principals. They said “you got to do this for us; we need you” and I said “well I don’t know if I want to do this”. And at the last minute, I took my name out again because I didn’t want the board to just settle on the easy way out. But because they could not find a better candidate from around the state, after doing a national search which was what the community had pushed for, they asked me again to consider the superintendency.

Also, school districts could have used these women who were near retirement to prove that their school system provided equal opportunity for all and the district’s board members who were majority men were not prejudice against women. Again, it would be refreshing if these women participants were chosen because they were the “best” candidates. As one of the participants shared:

“I think the most highly qualified person should get the job. We need to deal with quality. It doesn’t need to be gender based or race based. It needs to be the most qualified person gets the job which is what I push and promote with my staff.”

The data provided by the participants continued to promote the belief that either these participants are in total denial about being the best candidate for this position or they are not living in the real world. The world we have discussed throughout the literature and from the participants’ interviews suggest that it is still stereotypical; society is still stereotypical. Remembering the words based on society’s ideal leader, “men are the ones who should lead.” It is very odd to see women in this position; the percentages are not equal by gender, but they are balanced by society’s definition of careers based on gender. Will the number of women teachers ever become proportionate to the number of women superintendents? Studies on women superintendents may need to be done by decade to see whether the numbers increase or decrease. But based on the percentages of today, it’s not likely to happen.

In studying the available research and reviewing the data for this study, it was obvious that little was known about k-12 public school women superintendents and that in some instances

women are still being seen through traditional lenses and measured against ideals that have historically served men. However, today some women are breaking the “glass ceiling” and are being placed in line positions that can advance them to the k-12 public school superintendency regardless of traditionalism.

As the researcher, it is not justifiable for me to say that societal’s negative attitude towards women being positioned in certain leadership positions is the same negative attitude that all men have regarding women and certain leadership positions. From what I have learned from this research study is that a traditional sexist attitude towards women and their abilities still exist, but some women are beating the odds. Even though this sexist attitude has been verified and noted in some men, it has also been noted in some women as well. Some women in leadership positions, whether Black or White, still uphold society’s belief and would rather hire men than women. But as the number of women attaining the superintendency certification continues to grow, more women will commence the struggle and obtain this position.

The findings of this study contributes to existing literature in revealing the ways in which societal perceptions of women as leaders serve to maintain the gendered status quo between male and female k-12 public school superintendents. Barriers of fear, historically promoted gender stereotypes of women as leaders and beliefs regarding women abilities to do jobs that are believed to be for men. The women in this study for whatever reason were able to successfully obtain the position and the duties of the k-12 public school superintendent as well as take care of the family. Understanding how these women were able to do so, validate the fact that these women are tremendous leaders and warrant a foundation for future research.

Limitations of the Study

All studies have limitations, and it is up to the researcher to identify them (Glesne, 1999; Hakim, 2000; Patton, 2002). For this study, the role of the researcher may be considered a limitation. Being a woman principal who aspires to one day be a k-12 public school superintendent, concerns about gender bias may be heightened. Twenty k-12 public school women superintendents were identified in the state of Louisiana. Out of the twenty, only five were interviewed in this study. The next limitation of this study is that the study does not speak for all k-12 public school women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. However, the study is a representation of the experiences and challenges that five k-12 public school women superintendents have encountered. Last, only k-12 public school women superintendents were studied to substantially contribute to the body of literature pertaining to k-12 public school women superintendents in the south. The conclusion from this study may have implications for a better understanding regarding the under-representation of k-12 public school women superintendents in other regions of the country as well as states bordering Louisiana.

Implications

From the results of the study emerged several implications from the research. The first implication of the research is that all genders and races must have an enlightened worldview of the k-12 public school superintendency. Candidates must be willing to fully prepare themselves for the k-12 public school superintendency by furthering their education and obtaining experiences that can showcase their capabilities and their effectiveness to district hiring committees.

The second implication of the research is that school districts must identify reasons why a larger number of African American women who have the superintendent's endorsement are not

procuring positions as superintendents. Concerted efforts may be needed to assist African American women in identifying and utilizing strategies that can promote success. A third implication of this study is for districts to identify and implement programs that will provide more support for women who seek the superintendency. Hiring committees must promote equal opportunity for all candidates who aspire the k-12 public school superintendency. The fourth implication of the research is that school boards must implement more mentoring, networking, and internships programs for women who aspire for the superintendency. These programs can assist in building learning environments for all women who desire to accomplish the duties assigned for k-12 public school superintendency. The fifth and final implication of the research is that women who are successful leaders must become willing mentors for other women who aspire for leadership positions.

Recommendations for Future Practices

1. School districts must develop a networking system with surrounding colleges and universities to design mentoring programs and internships programs for women who aspire for the k-12 public school superintendency position..
2. Explore surrounding state's school district's selection process for the k-12 public school superintendency and compare their selection process to a school district in Louisiana selection process. What opportunities do women in other states have that assist them in being selected to the k-12 public school superintendency position?
3. Explore reward systems in bordering states of Louisiana. What incentives do they provide that may encourage women to enroll in administrator's preparation program.
4. Explore k-12 public school male superintendents' perception regarding the under-representation of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. Determine why

the number of women serving as classroom teachers are disproportionate to the number of women serving as k-12 public school superintendents. Compare your findings to this study.

5. Explore the number of women who are employed in staff or line positions. Discuss whether these line positions lead to the k-12 public school superintendency.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Do mentorship programs make an enormous difference for women who aspire for the k-12 public school superintendency?
2. How do women who aspire for the superintendency position feel about board members who are majority men? What do they feel are their chances to obtaining the superintendency?
3. Do discriminatory laws promote the decision to hire women as k-12 public school superintendents?
4. How do district hiring committees measure the effectiveness of women's abilities for the k-12 public school superintendent?
5. What qualifications should a board member have to make an effective selection of the highest education position in a district, the k-12 public school superintendency?

Recommendations from Women Participants

Passing the Torch

Before concluding the interviews based on the under-representation of k-12 public school women superintendents in Louisiana, the participants presented recommendations to others who aspire to become k-12 public school superintendents that they believed would be beneficial.

Their recommendations are as followed:

- 1) Before accepting a superintendent position make sure you know what sacrifices you are willing to make for the position.
- 2) Learn as much as you can particularly about personnel law, finance, all types of accounts and how the money is divided up. Know where the money is at all times.
- 3) Don't lower your standards for anyone. Make decisions that are right for children.
- 4) Be able to read in the newspaper things about you; some will be positive and some will be negative. Just know that what you are doing and the decisions you are making are best for the children.
- 5) Stay focused on student achievement.
- 6) Before seeking the position, get out and let people know who you are.
- 7) Work on different committees such as the Southern Association Committee.
- 8) Be a leader as a teacher, principal, and any/or other positions.
- 9) Work as much as possible with the curricular.
- 10) Try to know something about everything.
- 11) New superintendents receiving their first contract should seek the advice of an attorney.

Conclusions

This chapter began with a summary of the key findings based on data collected from five feminist k-12 public school women superintendents regarding the under-representation of women employed as women superintendents when compared to the number of women serving as classroom teachers. The reason for embarking on this particular research was to identify reasons why the ratio of male to female teachers does not match the ratio of male to female k-12 public school superintendents in Louisiana. As the researcher, it is my duty to make inferences based on the data provided. The researcher must be able to derive logical conclusions from premises

known or assumed to be true. From the evidence, I have derived at two conclusions. First, from the perspectives of the actual participants in this study regarding the under-representation of women superintendents in k-12 public school superintendency, women can sometimes control their own destiny in regards to the superintendent position or any other leadership position. Women must apply and not be intimidated; they must further their education beyond a BA; they must complete the superintendency examination to receive the superintendent's certification or endorsement; and they must disregard the belief that the k-12 public school superintendency is a position for men only. Society must update their thoughts to the 21st century and recognize women as "great leaders." By doing so, may alleviate the concern about the number of women serving as district board members and promote applicants to have a fair chance at obtaining this position. The number of Black board members which is a second major concern may also be alleviated and fair hiring practices may increase with tensity.

The feminist strive is not to be given a position because of gender; the strive is for gender equity with fair and equal opportunity based on the best candidate. Regardless of their perceptions of the under-representation of women superintendents, the participants conveyed that they truly believe that the person selected for the k-12 superintendency position should be hired based on: 1) ability; 2) being the most highly qualified candidate; and 3) being the best person for the position. Even though they strive for gender equity, they refuse to say that women should be chosen for certain leadership positions because they were women; they believed that women must work extremely hard to be the best candidate applying, especially because of barriers and prejudice against women. Men support men.

Second, in some instances I believed that these women were somewhat "Living in Denial." First, all of the women in this study believed that the board members really wanted

them to apply for the k-12 public school superintendent. All of them continuously stated: “*they wanted me.*” Because they believed that they were wanted, they shared reasons why. One of the participants stated “they needed me” and she did not mind sharing why. She shared:

I took over a school system with \$50,000 dollars in the bank which was to be utilized to operate an entire school district that had approximately 28 schools with over 1500 students. The previous superintendent who had been here two years had come in from outside; the board had a consultant firm come in that did not have any central office experience. There was so much unorganized chaos here at that time. So one of the biggest things I did first of all was to control and manage the budget. I also had to heal and mend the board. The board was having a lot of issues which caused fighting among each other and against the previous superintendant. All sorts of things like that were happening and of course the schools were just in this black hole. So, one of the things or the first thing I had to do was to manage the budget.

As far as being wanted by her district’s board members, she stated:

I was doing the job anyway and the other person was getting the money and I was sitting there and the board knew that I was doing all the work, so it was pretty easy. In fact when the superintendant was placed on leave, the board requested that I become the interim superintendent. The majority of the running of the district, I was doing. So why not get paid; why not have the position.

She applied, got the position, and did what she could to save it; she was successful. Her actions were somewhat heroic especially since she believed that she had saved her district from bankruptcy, saved salaries and continued to promote good test scores; she promoted a thriving school district. From the interview, it seemed as if they were convinced that their board members were seeing them as equal candidates. But one of the women superintendents was very honest and not afraid to share her recognition of differences, discrimination and sexist attitudes around her. She acknowledged “we’re not there yet.”

Manuel (2001) revealed in his study, women always spend more years in the classroom than men when receiving promotions such as the k-12 public school superintendency. Data revealed that four of the five women were over fifty years of age. Not only were these women older than men who were selected for this position, research shows that women normally don’t

do as many years in that particular position (Manuel). The youngest participant is the only one in the study that is still in position. Could this be because she was much younger and she has years before retiring? Three of the 5 participants in this study retired from the system in the year of 2009; all three women superintendents were replaced by men. From what I've heard from the participants and what I have read in the literature, there is a contradiction. Women in this study and women in the past are still being selected and carry the same characteristics which include timing, age, and retirement. Majority women superintendents are still being selected late in their years and remaining for short periods of time. Nothing has actually changed. Maybe this is a reason why they were selected. Their age and time may be beneficial to board members who want men. Board members realize that these women won't serve for a long period of time which gives them the opportunity to recruit men. Also by selecting women may keep the district in compliance with discrimination laws as well.

Other concerns of doubt regarding the participants being selected was based on information provided in their interviews. For example, one of the participants shared that her district had invested in a nationwide superintendent search before she was asked to become the new k-2 public school superintendent. Again, the participant explained the particulars in her interview:

Because they could not find a better candidate from around the state, after doing a national search which was what the community had pushed for, they asked me again to consider the superintendency.

This participant was actually considered by board members after they were not able to find their perfect candidate, she knew it and she was okay with their decision to search nationwide.

What's admirable about these women is that they actually want the best candidate to be the one to be hired as the k-12 public superintendency position. The literature states, "women

were apologetic when they received the position over men (Manuel, 2001) and basically many women believe that men should be hired. This participant was okay about being overlooked because she felt that the board members preferred a man, and she accepted it. She shared why she was okay:

“I think the most highly qualified person should get the job. We need to deal with quality. It doesn’t need to be gender based or race based. It needs to be the most qualified person gets the job which is what I push and promote with my staff.”

Also, certain facial expressions and pauses by the participants promoted me to believe that the participants did not want to discuss certain issues. I don’t believe that I wasn’t getting the whole story, especially on issues regarding barriers. They wanted to believe that they were selected because they were the best candidate for this position. The literature along with data from the participants’ interviews reveals that society and stereotypical attitudes still exist. For example, four of the five women participants in this study have retired; men were chosen to be their successor. Only one of the participants still remains in position and she was young in age when she had begun. Her age and story was the only one to go against the literature. She was young, Black, and able to advance to the superintendency over several White qualified men who had more leadership experience than she. The other participants’ successors had either served under these women or they were a part of the immediate community. Only one of the participants was replaced by a man who had resided in another state.

According to the Louisiana Department of Education (2007) report, today there are more than 46,000 classroom teachers, approximately 70 percent are women and 19 are k-12 public school women superintendents. The percentages of female superintendents may never be proportionate to the number of female teachers. Studies on women superintendents should be done by decade to see whether these percentages increase, decrease, or become proportionate to

the percentages of women serving as classroom teachers. Even though women are still being seen through traditional lenses and measured against ideals that have historically served men, some women are still breaking the “glass ceiling” and placed in line positions that can advance them to the k-12 public school superintendency.

As the researcher, it would not be justifiable for me to say that society’s attitude towards women who seek leadership positions is the same attitude that all men have regarding women and certain leadership positions. Again, these women were supported or mentored by men. For whatever reason, the participants were selected and it may be because they were the best and most qualified candidate. The findings of this study contributes to existing literature in revealing the ways in which societal perceptions of women as leaders serve to maintain the gendered status quo between male and female k-12 public school superintendents. Barriers of fear, historically promoted gender stereotypes of women as leaders and beliefs regarding women abilities to do jobs that are believed to be for men. The women in this study were able to successfully obtain the position and maintain the duties of the k-12 public school superintendent as well as take care of the family. Understanding how these women were able to do so validate that these women are tremendous leaders and their success warrants a foundation for future research.

References

- Allen, K., Jacobson, S., & Lommotey, K. (1995). African American women in educational administration: The importance of mentors and sponsors. *The Journal of Negro Education, 64*(4), 409-422.
- Alston, J. A. (1999). Climbing hills and mountains: Black women making it to the superintendency. In C.C. Brunner (Ed.) *Sacred dreams: Women and the superintendency*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- American Association of Administrators (1994). *The study of the American school superintendency – America's education leaders in a time of reform*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- American Association of School Administrators (2000). *Strategies: For School System Leaders on District-Level Change*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- American Association of School Administrators (2004). *Leading the Learning*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- American Association of School Administrators (2007). *Where Are All the Women Superintendents?* Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- American Association of University Women (2002). Pathways to Educational Leadership: Advancing Women as Principals and Superintendents. Retrieved from <http://www.aauw.org/7000/ef/pathwaysbd.html>
- Anderson, G. L. (1989). *Critical Ethnography in Education: Origins, Current Status, and New Directions*. Review of Educational Research. 59(3), 249-270.

- Andersen, M. L., (1994). *Thinking about women: Sociological perspectives on sex and gender* (Fourth edition). New York : MacMillan Publishing.
- Barrios, Vivian S. (2004). *Factors influencing the underrepresentation of women in the role of superintendency as perceived by selected school board members and superintendents of school districts in Region XX*. Education Service Center in Texas. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University.
- Best, Steven and Kahn, Richard. (1997). Trial by Fire: The SHAC7, Globalization and the Future of Democracy. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, vol. 2. No. 2.
- Bjork, L. (2000). Introduction: Women in the superintendency – Advances in research and theory. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36 (1), 5-17.
- Blount, J. (1993, April). *The genderization of the superintendency: A statistical portrait*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.
- Blount, J. (1998). *Destined to rule the schools: Women and the superintendency 1873-1995*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Bolman, L. G. and Deal, T. E., (2003). *Reframing Organization: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. 3rd. ed. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass.
- Brunner, C. C. (1999). Power, gender, and superintendents' selection. In C. Brunner (Ed.), *Secret dreams Women and the superintendency* (pp. 63-78). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brunner, C. C. (2000). Women superintendents. In T. Glass, L. Bjork, & C. Brunner (Eds.), *The study of the American school superintendency* (pp. 77-101). Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

- Brunner, C. and Grogan, M. (2007). *Leading School Systems: Uncommon Roads to Fulfillment*. Rowman and Littlefield Education. Lanham, MD. Scarecrow press.
- Byrd-Blake, M. (2000). Advancing Women in Leadership: Women Perspectives on Career Advancement. *Advancing Women Network*. Retrieved October 9, 2006
http://www.advancingwomen.com/awl/spring2004/BYRD_BLAKE.html
- Calasanti, Toni M. and Slavin, Kathleen F. (2006). *Age Matters: Realigning Feminist Thinking*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Campbell, J. L. (2003). *An Idea Whose Time Has Past: The Fair Hiring of Qualified Women As Superintendents In Suburban Schools*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Wisconsin-Stout.
- Canter, D., & Bernay, T. (1992). *Women in power the secrets of leadership*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Carspecken, P. F. & Apple, M. (1992). Critical qualitative research: Theory, methodology, and practice. In M. D. LeCompte, W. L. Millroy, & J. Preissl (Eds.). *The handbook of qualitative research in education* (pp. 507-553) San Diego: Academic Press.
- Chase, S. E. (1996). *Ambiguous empowerment: The work narratives of woman superintendents*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Chapman, C. H. (1997). *Becoming a superintendent: Challenges of school district leadership*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Choi, Y. & Hon, L.C. (2000). The Influence of Gender Composition in Powerful Positions on Public Relations Practitioner' Gender Related Perceptions. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 14*, 229-263.

- Collins, P. H. (1991). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of Empowerment*. New York, NY: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). *Quasi-experimentation: Design and Analysis issues*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Cooper, B. S., Fusarelli, L. D., & Carella, V. A. (2000). *Career crisis in the school superintendency: The results of a national survey*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research designs: Qualitative and Quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (2nd) edition*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. (3rd) edition*. New Jersey: Upper Saddle River
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundation of School Research*. London: Routledge.
- Cunningham, L. L. & Hentgens, J. (1982). *The American School Superintendency*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

- Cunanan, E. S. (1994). *A comparative career profile of 1985-1990 women and male graduates of educational administration programs from a Midwestern research university*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 374 539).
- Davis-Netzley, S. A. (1998). Women above the glass ceiling: Perceptions on corporate mobility and strategies for success. *Gender and Society, 12*(3), 339-359.
- De Beauvoir, S. (1953). *The second sex*. (H. M. Parshley, Trans.). New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, California. Sage.
- Dunn, D. (1997). *Workplace/women/s place: An anthology*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.
- Dunlap, D.M., & Schmuck, P.A. (1995). *Women leading in education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Eakle, S. (1995). Going where few women have gone. *Thrust for Educational Leadership, 24*(6), 16-21.
- Elkiss, H. (1994). Training women for union office. Breaking the glass ceiling. *Labor Studies Journal, 19*(2), 5-43. Retrieved February 8, 2000, from <http://ezproxy.royalroads.ca>
- Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science. (2000, August 9). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved July 11, 2007 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism=epistemology>).
- Flax, J. (1983). *Political, Philosophy and the Patriarchal Inconscious*. In Harding and Hintikka.
- Ford, J. (1975). *Paradigms and fairy tales*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (1993). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (2nd ed.). New : McGraw-Hill.
- Franklin, R. N. (2001). *North Carolina women and the boards that select them*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Friedan, Betty (1963). *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, p. (6).
- Gardiner, M. E. (2000). *Coloring Outside the Lines: Mentoring Women into School Leadership*. New York, NY: State of New York. Retrieved February 18, 2007, from <http://ezproxy.rovalroads.ca>
- Gardiner, M. E., Enomoto, E., & Grogan, M. (2000). *Coloring outside the lines: Mentoring women into school leadership*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Garfinkel, E. Z. (April, 1987). The administrative team, trust, and gender. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Wash\ington, D. C. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 281284)
- Gay, L. R & Airasian, P. (2000). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Genzen, H. K. (1993). *A study of leadership style, motivation, and job satisfaction of women public school superintendents on Ohio*. (Doctoral dissertation Kent State University, 1993). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 55(03), p. 431.
- Giugliano, E. F. (1995). Difference in career patterns between male and women public secondary school administrators in the state of New Jersey (Doctoral dissertation, Seton Hall University, 1995). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 57, 945.
- Glass Ceiling Commission (1995). *A solid investment: Making full use of the nation's human capital*. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office.

- Glass, T. (2000). *Where are all the women superintendents? The school administrator web edition*. American Association of School Administrators. Retrieved February 8, 2007 from http://www.aasa.org/publication/sa/2000_06/glass.htm.
- Glass, T. E., Bjork, L., & Brunner, C. C. (2000). *The study of the American school superintendency: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Gordon, B. (1990). The necessity of African-American epistemology for educational theory and practice. *Journal of Education*, 172(3), 88-106.
- Greenfield, L. J. (1994). *Strands of leadership from 38 women superintendents in Massachusetts, 1992: Creating a tapestry*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University School of Education, Massachusetts.
- Griffin, G. (1953). *Calling: Essays on teaching in the mother tongue*. Pasadena, CA: Trilogy.
- Grogan, M. (1994). *Aspiring to the superintendency in the public school system: Women's perspectives*. New Orleans, LA: Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 376607).
- Grogan, M. (1996). *Voices of women aspiring to the superintendency*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Grogan M. (1999). Equity/Equality Issues of Gender, Race, and Class. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(4), 518-537.

- Grogan M. (2000). Laying the groundwork for a preconception of the superintendency from feminist postmodern perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(1), 117-142.
- Grunig, L. Toth, E., & Hon, L. (2001). *Women in public relations: How gender influences practice*. New York: Guildford Press.
- Gunderson, M., Hyatt, D., & Slinn, S. (2002). *Employment Equity in Canada and the United States*. Totonto: ITP Nelson.
- Gupton, S. L. & Slick, G. A. (1996). *Highly successful women administrators: The inside stories of how they got there*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press Inc.
- Hakim C. (2000a). *Research design: successful designs for social and economic research* (2nd edition). New York: Routledge.
- Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E. , Tatham, R. L., & Black, W. C. (1998), *Multivariate Data Analysis* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
- Harding, S. (1986). *The science question in feminism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Harding, S. (1991). *Whose Scienc: Whose Knowledge?* New York, Routledge.
- Harding, S. (2003). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Research: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. New York, Routledge.
- Harding, S. (2004). Introduction. In S. Harding (ed.). *The feminist standpoint theory reader*. London, Routledge.
- Hartsock, N. (1983). The feminist standpoint: Developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism. In S. Harding & M. Hintikka (Eds.). *Discovering reality: Feminist Dondrecht: Reidel*.

- Hartsock, N. (2004). The feminist standpoint: Developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism. In S. Harding (Ed.), *The feminist standpoint theory reader* (p. 35-54). Routledge. (Original work published, 1983).
- Haslett, B. J., Geis, F. L., & Carter, M. R. (1992). *The organizational woman: Power and paradox*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Hayes, E. R. & Flannery, D. D. (2000). *Women's learning: The significance of gender in adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, Inc.
- Hill, M. S. & Ragland, J. C. (1995). *Women as educational leaders opening windows pushing ceilings*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content Analysis for the Social Science and Humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison – Wesley.
- Hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Boston: South End Press.
- Hooks, b. (1994). *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*. New York, Routledge.
- Hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for Everybody*. Boston: South End Press.
- Houston, P. (1996, November). *The 21st Century School Superintendent*. Keynote Address presented at the annual meeting of American Association School Administrators' Women's Leadership Conference, San Antonio, Texas.
- Houston, P. D. (2000). Not a great job but a wonderful calling. *AASA perspective online executive*. Retrieved May 10, 2006, from <http://www.aasa.org/>.
- Ingersoll, B. (1995, May). Glass Ceiling Commission issues initial report on women and minorities in Corporate America. *Pennsylvania Employment Law Letter*, 5(8). Retrieved from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

- Isaacson, J. (1998). The development of professional identity of women who obtain the superintendency. (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1998). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59, 0675.
- Johnson, Y. (May, 2006). *The Effects of Race and Gender in the Superintendency: Voices of African American Female Superintendents*. University of Texas at Austin.
- Keller, B. (November, 1999). Women superintendents: Few and far between. *Education Week*, 19(11), 1.
- Kennelly, Ivy (1999). That single mother element how white employers typify black women. *Gender and society*. 12: 168-192.
- Kincheloe, J. and McLaren, P. (2003). *Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research*. The Landscape of Qualitative Research. N. L. Denzin, Y. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kowalski, T., & Stouder, J. (1999). Female experiences related to becoming a superintendent. *Contemporary Education*, 70 (4), 32-48.
- Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus group: A practical guide for applied research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Lecompte, M. & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Lecompte, M. & Preissle, J., & Tesch, R. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research (2nd edition)*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Logan, J. P. (1999). An educational leadership challenge: *Refocusing gender equity strategies*. Retrieved May 10, 2006 from <http://aasa.org/publications/tap/2000summer/logan.htm>

- Louisiana Department of Education (2007). Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Retrieved October, 11, 2010 from <http://www.answers.com/topics/louisiana-department-of-education>
- Luk'acs, G. (1971). Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat. In Rodney Livingstone, *History and Class Consciousness*, (tr.), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lukas, Carrie, L. (2006). *The Politically Incorrect Guide™ to Women, Sex, and Feminism*. Washington, D.C.: Regener Publishing, Inc.
- Maines, D. (2001). *The faultline of consciousness: A view of interactionism in sociology*, Aldine De Gruyter, New York.
- Manuel, M. C. (2001). *Career pathways and perceived barriers of women superintendents*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Texas at El Paso.
- Marcia, J.E. (1993). The ego identity status approach to ego identity. In J.E. Marcia, A.S. Waterman, D.R. Matteson, S.L. Archer, & J.L. Orlofsky (Eds.), *Ego identity: A handbook for psychological research* (pp. 22-1) New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Marshall, C. & Roseman, G.B. (1989). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.
- Marx, K. (1964). *The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, New York, NY: International Publishers.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study application in education*. (Rev. ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

- Mertens, D. M. (1998). *Research Methods in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative and Qualitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merton, N. T. (2000, November). *Contextualizing the position of assistant principal*. Paper presented at the University Council for Educational Administration, annual meeting, Albuquerque, NM.
- Mertz, N. T. (November, 2000). Women in Urban School Administration. *Education Urban , HandbSociety*, 33(1), 44-59.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *An expanded sourcebook of qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Montenegro, X. (1993). *Women and racial minority representation in school administration*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Morrison, A., White, R., & Velsor, E. V. (1987). *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can women reach the top of America's corporation?* Addison Wesley, New York.
- National Center for Education Statistics (1994). *Public and private school principals: Are there too few women?* (Issue Brief). Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- National Education of Association. (2008). NEA luminaries: Ella Flag Young. Retrieved March 15, 2009, from <http://www.nea.org/aboutnea/efyoung.html>.
- Olsen, V. L. (2000). Feminism and qualitative research and into the millennium. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research* , 2nd ed., (pp. 215-255). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.
- Otten, L. A. (1993). *Woman's Rights and the Law*. Westport, CT: Praegar.

- Pajak, E. F., & Blaze, J. J. (1984). Teachers in bars: From professional to personal self. *Sociology of Education*, 57, 164-173.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Popenoe, David, August (1993). Family Decline 1960-1990; A Review and Appraisal. *Journal of Marriage and Family*; 55, 527-543.
- Powell, G. & Graves, L., (2003). *Women and Men in Management*. (3rd ed). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Radcliff, M. C. (1998). *Factors which influence second level, women administrators in Arizona to apply for superintendencies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University.
- Ransom, M. R. & Megdal, S. B. (1993). Sex differences in the academics labor market in the affirmative action era. *Economics of Education Review*, 12, 21-43.
- Riehl, C., & Byrd, M. (1997). Gender differences among new recruits to school administration: Cautionary notes to an optimistic tale. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 19(1), 45-64.
- Rimm, S. B. (1997). Underachievement syndrome: A national epidemic. In N. Colangelo and G. A. Davis (Eds.). *Handbook of gifted education* (2nd ed., pp. 416-434). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Rose, H. (1987). *Hand, Brain, and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural Sciences*, In Harding and O'Barr.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing the art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Rudolph, F. (1962). *The American college and university: A history*. New York: Knopf.
- Sadker, M. & Sadker, D. (1994). *Failing at fairness: How our schools cheat girls*. New York: Touchstone.
- Schacter, D. L. (1999). The seven sins of memory: Insights from psychology and cognitive neuroscience. *American Psychology*, 54, 182-203.
- Scherr, M. W. (1995). The glass ceiling reconsidered: Views from below. In Dunlap, I. M., & Schumuck, P. A. (Eds.). *Women leading in education* (pp. 313-323). New York: SUNY Press.
- Seelinger, K. L. (2000). *I'm Right There: Female Appalachian public school leaders: Remedy as resistance and rationale*. Panel presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Studies Association. Philadelphia, PA.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1989). *Women in educational administration*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1999). The struggle to create a more gender-inclusive profession. *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Skrla, L., Reyes, P., & Scheurich, J. (2000). Sexism, silence, and solutions: Women superintendents speak up and speak out. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(1), 44-75.
- Smith, D. (1974). Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology, *Sociological Inquiry*, 44, 7-13.
- Stake, R. E. (1994). Case Studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 236-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Starks, J. (2000). *Black feminist thought: History, theory, and reflection*. International Journal of Diversity and Synergy, 11(1), 1-3.
- Stone, Lynda (1994). *Education Feminist Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tallerico, M. (1999). *Accessing the superintendency: The unwritten rules*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Tallerico, M. (2000). Gaining access to the superintendency: Headhunting, gender, and color. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36 (1), 18-43.
- Tedrow, B. (1999). A qualitative study of women's experiences in community college leadership positions, *Community College Review*, 27(3), 1-19.
- Thomas, J. (1993). *Doing ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: p85
- Turner, D (2004). *Voices of Four African American and European American Women Principals and Their Leadership Styles in a Recognized Urban School District*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation Texas A & M University.
- Vail, K. (1999). Women at the top. *America School Board Journal*. Retrieved May 10, 2006, from http://www.asbj.com/199912/1299/cover_story.html
- Walder, B. (2000). *Career perspectives of women superintendents in the state of Arizona*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University.
- Walker, Alice (1983). *In search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Weber, M. (1947). *The Theory of Social Economic Organization*. (A.M. Henderson & Talcott Parsons, Trans.) NY: The Free Press.

Women's International Center Report (July, 1985). New Internationalist Publication, Ltd.

Toronto, Ontario. Retrieved November 10, 2010 from <http://rehydrate.org/facts/women-at-risk.htm>

Wrigley, B. J. (2002). Glass Ceiling? What Glass Ceiling? A Qualitative Study of How Women View the Glass Ceiling in Public Relations and Communications Management. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14, 27-55.

Wyatt, B. (1997). *Stolen women: Reclaiming our sexuality, taking back our lives*. New York: Wiley Books.

Young, M. D. & McLeod, S. (2001). Flukes, opportunities, and planned interventions: Factors affecting women's decisions to become school administrators. *Educational Administrations Quarterly*, 37, 462-502.

Yates, J. O. (May, 2005) *Women in Leadership Positions in Tennessee Public Schools: A Qualitative Study of Women Directors*. East Tennessee State University.

APPENDIX A

University of New Orleans

September 13, 2008

Dinah M. Robinson, Principal
John F. Kennedy Elementary School
Lake Charles, LA. 70601

Dear Potential Research Participant:

As a doctoral student, I am responsible for gaining extensive experience with the methods and procedures used to conduct independent research. In accordance with the requirements of the Institutional Review Board of the University of New Orleans, I am pleased to be conducting a research project based on the career paths of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. Specifically, I am interested in learning more about your experiences. By learning more about your experiences, I hope to inspire and motivate more women to apply for superintendent positions in public educational school systems. This information may be used to develop a model to enhance professional development, training, required courses, mentoring and reduce negative attitudes toward change.

You may be surprised to find that only a limited number of studies focusing on the career paths of women superintendents have been conducted. The major goal of this project is to provide an account of your experiences as a women candidate for the superintendency in your own words. If you are interested in participating, please respond to the survey attached to this letter, and email the completed survey back to me within ten days. Your participation in this project is totally voluntary. I will be contacting you by phone to set up a date and time for my visit.

I hope you will choose to be a part of this important work, and I look forward to an opportunity to talk with you as well. I believe that your experiences will make a valuable contribution to this research. You are welcome to contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding this project. Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to our visit.

Respectfully,

Dinah M. Robinson, M.A., Ed.S.
Doctoral Candidate,
University of New Orleans
Daytime: (337) 217-4760 Evenings: (337) 436-2013
E-Mail: dmobins@uno.edu

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM SAMPLE

1. **Title of Research Study**

THE CAREER PATHS, SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES OF FIVE WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS TO THE K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCY

2. **Project Director**

Dinah M. Robinson, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana 70148. I am an elementary principal at John F. Kennedy, which is located in Calcasieu Parish. Daytime: (337) 217-4760. Evening: (337) 436-2013. E-Mail: dinah.robinson@cpsb.org.

This research project is in partial fulfillment of course requirements, and under the supervision of Dr. Tammie M. Causey-Konaté, associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations, ED 174 Bicentennial Education Center, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148. Telephone: (504) 280- 6661 or (504) 280-6451. Email: tcausey@uno.edu.

3. **Purpose of this Research**

The purpose of this study is to explore, through qualitative critical ethnography, the career paths of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana, their successes, and encountered barriers to the k-12 public school superintendency. This study will also explore the participants' perceptions of why there is an under-representation of women in this position. This study will attempt to fill the void in the literature relating to the lived experiences of women superintendents. This study will be able to inform others about pertinent issues relating to obtaining a superintendent position and provide a clearer understanding of the women superintendents' successes, encountered barriers, and their perceptions on the under-representation of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. The outcome of this study as it relates to the women who have successfully obtained a superintendent position will provide aspiring women with information on leadership choices, knowledge, and direction for obtaining superintendent positions. The results of this study will also enlighten personnel supervisors, board members, universities, and school systems regarding hiring practices towards women who aspire for positions in leadership capacities.

4. **Procedures for this Research**

The researcher will do purposeful sampling of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana. This will be done by utilizing the Louisiana Directory, which lists the names of superintendents for all parishes. The researcher will email a letter of introduction (see Appendix A) which will include a brief description of the research project, and a survey (see Appendix B) to each possible participant. After allowing ten days for potential participants to complete the survey, the researcher will phone each to discuss the study, schedule dates and time to complete the interview. Before beginning the interview, the researcher will also ask the participants to sign a form giving permission to be audio taped (see Appendix D). The researcher will use the Administrative Conversational Interview Guide designed by the researcher (see Appendix E) which will include questions regarding the participants' career paths, successes, encountered barriers to the superintendency, and their perceptions of why qualified women are under-

represented as superintendents in the state of Louisiana. The participants and their districts will be given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

5. Potential Benefits to You or Others

The results of this study may be used to inform others that aspire to become superintendents, and inform Supervisors of personnel, board members, universities, and school systems of possible hiring practices that may need to be revisited. The results of this study will support the improvement of recruitment and the hiring practices of women in school districts where women are not obtaining superintendent positions.

6. Alternative Procedures

Participation is entirely voluntary and individuals may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence.

7. Protection of Confidentiality

Participants' names, specific work sites, and all identifying information will be kept confidential at all times. All data obtained from responses will be coded to protect anonymity. Names and addresses will be secured, protected and accessible to no one but the researcher. The possible participants and their districts will be given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. At the end of the third year, all data including names and districts will be shredded.

8. Signatures and Consent to Participate

I have been informed of all procedures, possible benefits, and potential risks involved in this investigation. By signing this form, I give my permission to participate in this study.

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Name of Participant (print)	Date
_____	_____	_____
Signature of Project Director	Name of Project Director (print)	Date

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

**Project Title: THE CAREER PATHS, SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES
OF
K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS
IN
THE STATE OF LOUISIANA**

Principal Investigator: Dinah M. Robinson under the direction of Dr. Tammie M. Causey-Konate': University of New Orleans.

The information collected will be solely for completing the dissertation research identified above as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D degree at the University of New Orleans. Please complete the provided form.

Name/Pseudonym (for this research) _____

Race/ethnicity:

- African American**
- Caucasian**
- Hispanic**
- Native American**
- Other**

Marital status? _____ Highest Degree Earned? _____

**Teaching Certification Area(s): _____, _____, _____
_____, _____, _____**

Positions held in education

- Certified Teacher** **Certified Counselor** **Principal** **Assistant Principal**
- Director** **Supervisor** **Assistant Superintendent** **Associate Superintendent**
- Superintendent** **Other** **Please Specify**

Total years in education _____, # of years as superintendent _____

Date hired as a superintendent _____.

APPENDIX D

Permission To Tape

Project Title: The Career Paths, Successes & Challenges of K-12 Public School Women Superintendents in the State of Louisiana.

Principal Investigator: Dinah M. Robinson under the direction of Dr. Tammie M. Causey-Konate' at the University of New Orleans.

The information taped will be solely for information to complete the dissertation research identified above as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph. D degree at the University of New Orleans. All information will be destroyed within three years.

SIGNATURE OF SUPERINTENDENT	DATE

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER	DATE

APPENDIX E

ADMINISTRATIVE CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Project: The Career Paths, Successes & Challenges of K-12 Public School Women
Superintendents in the State of Louisiana

Time of Interview: _____ Date: _____ Place: _____

Interviewer: _____ Interviewee _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

The purpose of this study is to explore, through qualitative methodology, the career paths of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana, their successes, struggles, and challenges to the k-12 public school superintendency. This study will also explore the participants' perceptions of why there is an under-representation of women in this position. The information collected will be solely for completing the dissertation research identified above as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D degree at the University of New Orleans. Participants' names, specific work sites, and all identifying information will be kept confidential at all times. All data obtained from responses will be coded to protect anonymity and after three years, all data including names and districts will be shredded.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What factors influenced you to enter the field of education?
2. What factors influenced your decision to enter administration?

PREPARATION TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY

3. What factors influenced you to seek the superintendency?
4. What factors and/or support contributed to your success as a superintendent? How?

ENCOUNTERED BARRIERS

5. What type of barriers did you face when pursuing the superintendency?
6. How did you learn to negotiate for the superintendency?
7. What strategies should be used when working with school boards?

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SUCCESS

8. Please share some of your significant contributions as a superintendent?
9. Based on your success, what recommendations would you offer to other women who aspire for the superintendency?
10. If you had to do it all over again, what would you like to change?

PERCEPTION OF UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS

11. What are your views on why more women are not obtaining the superintendent position in this state?
12. What do you believe makes the hiring of women superintendents in the state of Louisiana different from the hiring of women for any other administrative position in this state?
13. What changes, if any, do you feel are needed to reverse the hiring trend of women superintendents?
14. If you were conducting this interview, what other questions would you ask?

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol Checklist

Superintendent/Pseudonym _____ **Parish** _____

Dates Completed

Check if returned

Initial Contact by email ____

Mailed letter to explain process ____

Mailed copy of Informed consent ____

Mailed Interview survey ____

Mailed copy of IRB form ____

Follow up email ____

Transcribe Interview ____

Label & Archive notes ____

Send out thank you cards ____

Incorporate research in chapter 4 ____

**Send out research findings or executive
summary** ____

APPENDIX G

IRB APPROVAL

**University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans**

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Tammie Causey-Konate

Co-Investigator: Dinah Robinson

Date: September 26, 2008

Protocol Title: "The career paths, successes, and challenges of K-12 public school women superintendents in the state of Louisiana"

IRB#: 01Oct08

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101 category 2, due to the fact that any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Please note that anonymity means that it is impossible to link information to a particular person whereas confidentiality means that the link is known, but will be held in confidence. At times the two terms are used incorrectly or interchangeably in your application. From an IRB perspective, the difference is very important.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Vita

Dinah M. Robinson was born in Lake Charles Louisiana. She spent her earlier years in Los Angeles California. Moving to Louisiana, she attended public education, Sowela Tech, and McNeese University. From McNeese University, she earned a BA in English with a minor in Computer Literacy and Computer Science; a Master's in Education/Computer Technology; Master's +30 in Elementary & Secondary Principalship; a Specialist degree in Administration. She joined the University of New Orleans to pursue a Ph.D in Education Administration in 2005 and became a member of the Golden Key International Honor Society in 2009.

Ms. Robinson's career path in the Calcasieu Parish School System (Lake Charles) began as a Special Education paraprofessional, Special Education teacher, regular and magnet English Language Art's teacher. She became a middle school Assistant Principal in 2001 and a middle school Principal in 2002. As a classroom teacher, Ms. Robinson had the opportunity to teach all levels of English as well as Computer Science, Computer Literacy, Math, Physical and Environmental Science, Reading, Civics and Geography. During her teaching career, she was also positioned as a parish new teacher assessor and mentor, SAC's committee leader for administration, Upward Bound liaison, parish SHARE Editor, and a parish tech assistant.

As an elementary principal, middle school principal, and high school principal, Ms. Robinson has developed programs within the schools such as RISE (Raising Individuals Self Esteem), student to student tutoring program, Dial Homework program, Dinah M. Robinson +17 Club for students striving for Excellence (based on the Explore exam), Summer Educational Enrichment Program (SEEP), Founder of the Delta's DREAM Scholarship, 21st Century Lab, and Future Team Leaders (Faculty & staff). Her professional and civic affiliations include Louisiana Association of Educators, Calcasieu Association of Educators, National of Education

Association; Calcasieu Association of Principals (CAP); Louisiana Association of Principals (LAP), Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and National Association of University of Women (NAUW).

She received honors from serving on Superintendent Pasterok's Principal Advisory Board, State Presentation for Assistant Principals regarding Title I. programs, KPLC Class Act Award (1st Principal in the parish to win) and Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Robinson has written several Drew Grants, served on parish SAC's committee and the Louisiana state SAC's.

Her community service background includes serving as a board member for Condea Vista Community Action, Southwest Marine Institute, and the Southwest Louisiana Health Center. Ms. Robinson has also served on the Calcasieu Parish Southern Association Committee. She is a Eucharistic Minister, the Founder of the Delta's DREAM Scholarship, and Chair of the Foundation Committee for Delta Sigma Theta. Her hobbies include working with and for children; being a lifelong learner; working with computers, researching new educational strategies and programs, dancing, and exercising. Ms. Robinson resides in Westlake, Louisiana with her daughter.