BARRIERS WOMEN FACE WHILE SEEKING AND SERVING IN THE POSITION OF

SUPERINTENDENT IN CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband and my two beautiful children, who continued to support me throughout the entire process and had patience with me as I wrote and completed the study. I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my stepmother and sister Kristen, who continued to encourage me to keep working on my dissertation and were always there to support me. I want to thank my mother-in-law for being there to assist with taking care of the family when I was taking my classes at night. Finally, this dissertation is also dedicated to my father, who has continued to support and mentor me as I develop my leadership skills to strive for the top leadership position: superintendent.

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Abstract

Women continue to be greatly underrepresented in the school superintendency. Today, only 24.1% of superintendent positions are held by women—a slight increase from 13.2% in 2000 (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010). This study explored the barriers that women in California face when seeking and serving in the capacity of superintendent. Studying the barriers that women have encountered when aspiring to the superintendent position may better prepare other women for the top leadership position in public schools.

The research questions used to guide the study were: What barriers do women encounter while seeking and serving in the position of superintendent? How do women utilize support systems while aspiring to and serving in the position of superintendent? How do women perceive support systems' ability to enable women to overcome barriers? And, how do women use social networks while serving in the position of superintendent?

The methodology for this study was a mixed-method design. There were quantitative and qualitative data collected and analyzed. Surveys were sent to 26 female superintendents in California public school districts. From the surveys returned, purposeful sampling was used to select five female superintendents from Southern California public schools for one-on-one interviews.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The role of superintendent is a challenging and complex leadership position in public schools. The superintendent must be knowledgeable in many areas, such as finance, operations, curriculum, leadership, and human resources. In addition, superintendents must be equipped with skills in teaching and learning (Dana & Bourisaw 2006). Today, this position is held mostly by men, and women in the superintendent's position continue to be vastly under-represented in public school systems (Gupton, 2009). Understanding the barriers that women face, and why more women are not seeking and serving in this top leadership position is necessary (Bjork, 2000; Glass, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Reis, Young, & Jury, 1999).

There are a number of identified barriers that women encounter when seeking and serving in the position of superintendent. Career paths are noted as possibly being a barrier to women. Glass (2000) has suggested that women spend more time in the teaching profession; women average seven to 10 years teaching compared to men, who spend an average of five to six years teaching before moving up to district-level positions. Most teachers are women, 72%, and are entering the field of administration later than men, which causes them to not move up as quickly to chief executive officer positions such as the superintendency (Gupton, 2009). In addition, women are not positioned well to lead to superintendency positions, because the majority of female teachers instruct in elementary schools versus secondary schools (Glass, 2000; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004). Approximately 75% of superintendents did not teach at the elementary level, and those who did enter the superintendency mostly come from the secondary level (Glass, 2000).

The completion of higher education continues to be a barrier for some women. Today there are more women entering higher education, however, many are not completing the appropriate coursework in universities that support entrance into the field of superintendent (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Glass, 2000; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Meier & Wilkins, 2002; Trower & Chait, 2002). Women constitute approximately 60% of graduate programs, but only about 10% of women are in doctoral programs where they can earn a superintendency credential along with their educational specialty or doctoral degree (Glass 2000; Gupton 2009). Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones (2010) concluded that women who wish to enter the field of superintendency need to earn their doctoral degree to build credibility. Women need to continue to develop skills and their learning to advance to higher levels in administration (Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Gupton, 2009).

Another barrier inhibiting women from advancing to the superintendency is the lack of a support system. In a survey of 118 female superintendents, 67.2% stated that females have less developed mentoring systems, which causes females to have less in-district mobility opportunities to move to the superintendency (Sharp et al., 2004). Women administrators tend to have a less defined network of colleagues from whom they can seek professional advice (Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Sharp et al., 2004). Women continue to be less likely to be mentored, encouraged to seek higher levels in the profession, and exposed to female role models to support them in moving up the career ladder (Yedidia & Bickel, 2001).

The establishment of social networks within organizations has supported men in moving to higher levels of administration and has hindered women's ability to achieve organizational advancement (Brown, 2005; Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Oakley, 2000). Men have more

opportunities to know the right people and more access to sponsorship and promotions, whereas women may be excluded from these types of opportunities and resources (Brown, 2005).

It is difficult for women to enter professional networks that women chief executive officers stress are important to attaining elite positions. Women are excluded from the "Good Old Boys' Networks," which in turn curtails their success (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Wallin, 2005). The "Good Old Boys' Networks" continue to remain strong social networks that are slow to change and slow to support women (Oakley, 2000). Cech and Blair-Loy (2010) documented that over 59.9% of women felt that their advancement to elite positions was restricted by their limited access to social networks and mentorships. Less developed mentoring systems for women as compared to men has profound effects on women's ability to advance to superintendency, as mentors often act as go-between for superintendent candidates and school boards (Glass, 2000).

Educational organizations lack adequate leadership development programs that mentor and support women to seek higher positions. Leadership programs provide the education on how to move through the systems and provide networks in and outside of the organization (Helfat, Harris, & Wolfson, 2006). Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones (2010) concluded that there is a need to provide women mentors for women seeking the position of superintendent to support them in overcoming barriers and to offer advice on career advancement. Women mentors for women managers are crucial in business settings as they offer support by providing resources on how to navigate organizational systems to attain elite positions, and provide legitimacy for women's leadership (Brown, 2005; Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Shin, 2012; Yedidia & Bickel, 2001).

Finding a balance between the responsibilities of family and pursuing and/or leading a school district as superintendent continues to be a challenge for women. In a series of studies by Brown (2005), Gupton (2009), Pandian and Jesurajan (2011), and Yedidia and Bickel (2001), women in top positions stated that the most difficult barrier was juggling both parenting and professional obligations related to superintendency. Gupton (2009) stated that women must be prepared to handle the demands of the job and the stress it can have on the family network. The combination of work and family can affect a women's chance to pursue and achieve higher administrative positions (Wallin, 2005). Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones (2010) stated that it is critical that women do not sacrifice family to pursue the career of superintendency, and that they learn how to balance family and work to ensure success. Promoting women who also have family responsibilities to top executive positions can be supported if work organizations would allow more flexible work schedules, child-care assistance, and temporary leaves (Helfat et al., 2006).

The job of the superintendent is unattractive to some women due to issues of mobility, which can disrupt the family system, and women not wanting to be away from the family. In a survey of 118 female superintendents, 68.8% stated that they did not have the support from their family and/or peers to continue to pursue superintendency due to the geographic mobility (Sharp et al., 2004). Glass (2000), in a study of 297 women superintendents, showed that superintendents are not usually hired from within and have, on average, three superintendencies during their career. Due to most superintendents not being hired from within the organization, females who are hired as superintendents may be faced with having to do up to four moves during their careers, which can create problems for the family (Glass, 2000).

Women are faced with gender-structural barriers and feel the need to prove their worth and work harder in top executive roles in a society where others see these positions mostly filled by men (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Gupton, 2009). Sharp et al. (2004) documented that 57.6% of women superintendents feel that superintendency is a male-dominated field. Women state that they must work harder, longer, and are held to a higher standard than men to receive the same recognition and respect from others within the organization (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Yedidia & Bickel, 2001). Even though women may excel at these higher standards, those who have displayed the same level of competent work as men have experienced people in the organization disliking and/or distrusting them (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010). Oakley (2000) stated that women have been subjected to more competency testing in upper-level positions than their male counterparts, behavior that has been seen as an attempt to keep the upper ranks more male-dominated.

In a study conducted by Yedidia and Bickel (2001) of 34 senior executive women, the women stated that they faced gender-structural barriers, feeling they had to work harder when others questioned their dedication to the organization when they made a decision to have a child. Female administrators with children have stated that they believe they are seen as less capable of performing their administrative duties (Wallin, 2005). Continuing to feel that they need to prove their level of dedication to their job, female superintendents have been placed in smaller school districts as they were not seen as capable of running large school districts (Sharp et al., 2004).

In addition to feeling that they must work harder, women can experience instances of inappropriate sexual behavior and talk, and disrespect—attitudes that present a barrier for entering elite positions. Yedidia and Bickel (2001) found that out of 34 top chairs in an organization, 22 felt that women experienced lack of recognition and respect among faculty

members where they worked. In male-dominated corporations, women have felt that their inputs and voices are stifled (Oakley, 2000).

Administrative women have had to adapt their behavior to allow others to feel comfortable with their status in the organization in a male-dominated profession. Top executives stated that if women are assertive the way men often are then they are viewed as disrespectful and out of order (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Gupton, 2009; Yedidia & Bickel, 2001). Women experience a barrier of "double-bind" (Oakley, 2000) in leadership positions as they are expected to be more powerful and authoritative, like men, but by doing so can be perceived as rude and disrespectful (Oakley, 2000).

Even though the Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits unequal pay for equal work, women continue to experience the barrier of being paid less, receiving fewer perks at every level of most organizations (Meier & Wilkins, 2002; Oakley, 2000; Shin, 2012). "In 1997, the average compensation for female United States managers at all levels of management was 69.2 cents per dollar compared with their male counterparts" (Oakley, 2000, p. 324). A study of 7,711 top female and male executives indicated that male executives in top firms received greater compensation, $1,443,607, than female executives, $1,018,107; this was 42% less than men for similar work (Shin, 2012). In their study of 4,103 superintendents, Meier and Wilkins (2002) showed that male superintendents who possessed a doctorate degree received a 6% increase in salary, whereas women superintendents who possessed the same degree only received a 4% salary increase. In addition, women superintendents who replace male superintendents are paid on average 5.5% less in salary (Meier & Wilkins, 2002).

Women superintendents stated that several restrictive forces worked against them when boards were hiring them. Eighty-two percent of women superintendents indicated that school

boards did not view them as strong managers (Glass, 2000). In addition, 61% of women

superintendents felt that a glass ceiling already existed in school management, which lessened

their chances of being hired by school boards (Glass, 2000).

Another reason why school boards are not hiring more women is that they place a strong

emphasis on fiscal management. Glass (2000) stated that of the 297 women superintendents in

the study, only a third had experience in budget and finance, whereas the majority had

experience with instruction. In addition, 76% of women superintendents felt that school boards

did not see them as capable of handling district finances. Even though boards of education state

that instructional leaders are important, they emphasize the importance of hiring only leaders that

have experience with fiscal management (Glass, 2000).

Gender bias has played a significant role in the hiring processes (Growe & Montgomery,

2000; Reis et al., 1999; Wallin, 2005). A survey conducted of human resource managers found

that corporations are not creating diversity initiatives or policies that lessen the barriers for

women to obtain higher levels of management (Oakley, 2000). Yedidia and Bickel (2001) stated

that women have been asked to interview as a "token" response by search firms to support the

increase in the interviewee pool with no intention of hiring. In addition, due to the type of

questions they were asked during interviews, female interview candidates have experienced

search committees not believing that they are viable candidates. When Yedidia and Bickel

(2001) interviewed a female candidate, she stated that the search committee asked her if she was

sure that this type of job was right for her life and if it was right for her. In addition, when Helfat

et al. (2006) examined top executive positions, they discovered that several firms had hired

women as a "token" status and that 50% of the firms had zero women as top executives. Wallin

(2005) stated that the inequitable practice of not hiring women for secondary principalships was

due to school boards' subscribing to the stereotype that women cannot handle the demands of the job. Most superintendents come from secondary settings, and school boards that lack understanding of the need to hire women for top leadership positions have limited women's ability to obtain higher salaries and enter the world of the superintendency (Wallin, 2005).

Background of the Problem

Today there is an increase in the number of women holding top leadership positions, such as superintendency, but women still must learn to function in a male-dominated leadership culture. In 1909, Ella Flagg Young was hired as the first female superintendent in Chicago (Blount, 1998). Ms. Young believed that women were meant to lead and "rule" schools throughout the world (Blount, p. 1, 1998). In 1910, the percentage of women superintendents increased to 9% (Blount, 1998). During the 1920s, feminist groups were encouraging and endorsing women to have more rights, and in 1930 women superintendents had increased to 11% (Bjork, 2000). However, due to an increase in prejudice toward women leading schools, 1950 saw a decrease in women superintendents to 9% (Bjork, 2000).

Unfortunately, 21 years later, in 1971 the United States experienced another decline in women holding the superintendent position—to 1.3% (Bjork, 2000). The perception during this time was that women could not manage a large school, much less a school district (Sharp et al., 2004). The percentage of women superintendents continued to be less than 10%, until 1990, when it doubled from 6.6% to 13.2% in 2000 (Glass, 2000; Sharp et al., 2004). Although the latest statistic is 24.1% for women holding the superintendent position, this number has only slightly increased and doubled from the 1930s (Kowalski et al., 2010). Even though the numbers of women have increased in a historically male-dominated field of superintendency, these low

numbers still leave school districts with an under-representation of women in the top leadership position in public schools.

In the 2000 American Association of School Administrators (AASA) 10-year examination of the superintendency, women only accounted for 13.2% of the 2,262 superintendents who responded to the 90-item survey (Glass, 2000). In 2010, the "American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study" was completed, and the percentage of women superintendents increased from 13.2% in 2000 to 24.1% (Kowalski et al., 2010). Despite a 10.9% increase in women attaining the superintendency in a 10-year period, barriers still exist, and the question remains as to why approximately 76% of the 15,000 school districts in the United States are being led by men and not women.

Statement of the Problem

The aim of this study is to explore the barriers that women in California face when seeking and serving in the capacity of superintendent. It is critical to understand and analyze the barriers that women face when pursuing the superintendent position to further support more women in seeking to fill the highest position in public schools.

Research studies have explored the reasons why the superintendency—the highest leadership position in public schools—is more often held by men than women (Glass, 2000; Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Sharp et al., 2004). In teaching preschool to 12th grade, women continue to receive little encouragement to seek top leadership positions, while men are supported to enter upper administration, including the position of superintendent (Growe & Montgomery, 2000). In the United States, women comprise approximately 65% of teachers and 43% of principals but only 13.2% of the nation's superintendents (Alston, 2005). Women continue to be largely unrepresented in the

superintendency. Because 75% of teachers in the United States are women, and the first position on the road to the superintendency is teaching, it should be expected that more women hold the position of superintendent (Katz, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the barriers that women have encountered when seeking and serving in the superintendent position in order to inform and encourage more women to pursue this leadership position. Understanding the barriers that women have faced when aspiring to the superintendent position may better equip other women to seek and secure the top leadership position in public schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What barriers do women encounter while seeking and serving in the position of superintendent?

2. How do women utilize support systems while aspiring to/serving in the position of superintendent?

3. How do women perceive support systems' ability to enable women to overcome barriers?

4. How do women use social networks while serving in the position of superintendent?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to enhance the body of research on women pursuing superintendent positions and to examine the barriers they face when they are "struggling to break into a traditionally male-dominated profession" (Grogan & Brunner, 2005, p. 1). In addition, my

hope is that responding to the research questions in this study will support and encourage more women leaders to aspire to the superintendency. From their study of 723 superintendents and 472 central-office administrators from around the United States, Grogan and Brunner (2005) concluded that it is critical that women leaders seek networks and mentors that will support their journey to the world of superintendent, and continue to maintain these relationships as they take the lead in the top leadership position in public schools.

Today, demands placed on superintendents continue to grow, and fewer women want to remain in the positions (Harris, 2007; Houston, 2001). It is urgent that research that supports women in these positions continues to be conducted. Lowery and Harris (2000) documented that despite the challenges of the job of superintendency, women are competent and able to attain success and meet the needs of the demanding position.

Assumptions of the Study

The study assumes that the women superintendents surveyed and interviewed believe—like the researcher—that there should be equal representation of women in the position of superintendent. The female superintendents who participated in this study are representative of female superintendents in public school districts in the State of California. The female superintendents interviewed and surveyed each faced barriers while pursuing and serving in the superintendent position. The study assumes that the participants answered both the survey and interview questions without purposeful bias.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited to women superintendents who currently held a superintendent position for two years or more. Because the study reviewed only women leading or having led school districts in California of 2,500 to 70,000 students, it limited the generalizability of the

results to the state. In addition, limitations were present in the time allotted and the small sample of women superintendents self-reporting data.

The delimitations of the study were limited to three areas: the gender of superintendents (women), the geographic region (California), and the number of superintendents surveyed and interviewed.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined as follows:

Curriculum: courses offered by an educational institution (Curriculum, n.d.).

Double-bind: a behavioral norm that produces a situation in which a woman cannot win no matter what she does (Oakley, 2000).

Glass ceiling: a transparent barrier that prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder (Oakley, 2000).

Good Old Boy: describes an informal system of networking between men whereby they assist each other to get to the top of an organization (Sharp et al., 2004).

Human resources: a department within an organization that deals with the people that work within the organization (Human Resources, n.d.).

Secondary: grades 7 through 12 in public schools (Glass, 2000).

Social Identity Theory: a method within social psychology of describing people when it is important to distinguish among varying levels or types of identity (Wallin, 2005).

Superintendent and superintendency: the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the school district (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts,1996).

Token response: a term used to describe when women are invited to participate in an interview but not intended to be selected (Yedidia & Bickel, 2001).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is an overview of the study and explains why it is important to conduct the research on this topic. Further, chapter one describes the background and context from which the problem results. Chapter two provides a review of the literature that is up-to-date and relates to the research questions. The chapter concludes by providing comments on the literature review and discusses why there is a need to support the study of this topic. Chapter three is the methods section, which restates the purpose of the study and the research questions. The rationale for the type of method used, both quantitative and qualitative, will be discussed. Chapter four is an analysis of the data collected from the surveys and interviews. Finally, chapter five concludes the study by providing a discussion of the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research on the study of women superintendents.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

At one point, research predicted that as more women held leadership positions, such as principalships, assistant superintendencies, and superintendencies, there would be an expectation that society would see even more women become superintendents (Meier & Wilkins, 2002). However, this phenomenon has not been seen in studies and across the nation. This section will provide a review of the existing literature as it relates to women in the top leadership position in public school: superintendent. Research on female superintendent demographics will be discussed. In addition, there will be a focus on the barriers that women encounter when seeking and serving in the superintendent position as well as how women utilize support systems while aspiring and serving in the position. Next, will be a review of how women use social networks while serving in the position of superintendent; finally, a theoretical perspective will be discussed.

Women in Leadership Positions: Demographics

Women in school leadership positions continue to increase yearly, however women still do not hold administrative positions in proportion to their numbers in teaching or in proportion to those who hold an administrative credential. According to the US Department of Education (2007–2008), women still are not proportionally represented in elementary and secondary levels or in the superintendency (see Table 1). The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a school district is achieved more often by men than by women.

Table 1

Women in Public Schools, by Job Title and Levels, 2007–2008 (Percentage)

Position	Elementary	Secondary	All
Teacher	84.8	59.3	75.9
Principal	58.9	28.5	50.3
Superintendent	N/A	N/A	21.7

Statistics show that more women have assumed the role of superintendent in the United States since 1982, and there have been more female superintendents in California (31%) than in the United States overall (24.1%) (Kowalski et al., 2010). Several researchers have concluded that female superintendents enter the field later than men, are older, and have more likely earned their doctorate degree than men (Gupton, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2010; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010). It is evident that the representation of women in the superintendency continues to be negligible, and at the average annual increase of 0.7 percent, it will take another 77 years for women to be proportionally represented in the top leadership position in public schools (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010).

Barriers

Women continue to face barriers when seeking and entering the field of superintendent, and they realize that having competency, good interpersonal skills, and strong work ethics are not all that is required to succeed (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Even though school administration programs enroll more women than men, the data continues to show that there remain a low number of women employed as superintendents (see Table 1). These low statistics for female superintendents indicate that "aspiration is not the issue; opportunity is" (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 108). Barriers to females' advancement, not competence, are of primary concern when it

comes to increasing the numbers of women in the superintendent position (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Kowalski et al., 2010).

The Glass Ceiling

Glass ceilings have been systematically constructed as a consequence of individuals' cultural attitudes, behaviors, and practices. Glass ceilings refer to invisible and/or artificial barriers that prevent women from advancing past a certain level (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeria, 2002). The term "glass ceiling" was coined in 1980 to describe the subtle barriers that inhibit the advancement of women (Naff, 1994). This "invisible barrier," the glass ceiling, has been difficult to eradicate through legislation. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was amended in 1991, was passed into legislation to prohibit discrimination in all employment matters (Bell et al., 2002). The Civil Rights Act of 1991 later created the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission to run a study and prepare recommendations concerning (a) artificial barriers that were inhibiting the advancement of women; and (b) supporting the increase of opportunities and development experiences of women to foster their advancement to management and higher levels of authority in business (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1991). As a result of the study, the commission concluded the following:

- Single White women faced prejudice, and it was the greatest barrier to their advancement in the executive ranks.

- Glass ceilings reject able-bodied individuals who come from diverse backgrounds that businesses need to compete successfully in top leadership of corporations.

- There are three levels of barriers: societal barriers, internal barriers, and governmental barriers. (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006)

Even though legislation has been enacted to provide access for women to enter higher positions in the workforce, research continues to show that women in educational leadership continue to confront a glass ceiling, and that men are outnumbering them in the top positions, such as superintendent (Bell et al., 2002; Bjork, 2000; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Gender

Women continue to struggle for gender equity as it relates to the superintendency. Whether female superintendents are striving to acquire preparation, advance their leadership skills, enter into administration, or serve as a school administrator, gender continues to be an ever-present barrier (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). In public schools in the United States, women continue to outnumber men in the teaching workforce, and men dominate nearly all leadership positions (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

In 2006, Glass reported that 28% of female superintendents indicated that they felt gender discrimination by school boards as well as the presence of a glass ceiling (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). And, indeed, studies have shown that school boards hire more men than women, and pay them a lower salary for superintendency (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Gupton, 2009; Kowalski, 2010; Sharp et al., 2004). These studies have revealed that the inequities of women in the highest position of a school district are of grave concern for females seeking the superintendency. School boards need to become more aware of these factors as they relate to women entering the superintendency and need to become more proactive in providing equitable access to all potential candidates.

Society has become aware that gender differences influence leadership. Bolman and Deal (2011) have reported that stereotypes associate leadership with maleness, and women encounter discrimination in leadership positions. Women are expected to do better than their

male counterparts to be considered for higher levels of leadership positions (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Career Paths

Women continue to face challenges as they navigate to the superintendency. Several research studies have analyzed the career paths of women to superintendency, and have examined the potential barriers to this top leadership position (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Glass, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Sharp et al., 2004). Brunner and Grogan (2007) reported that the most popular path to the superintendency is from teacher, principal, and then to a position at the district office. However, in their study, 49% of respondents followed a different path to superintendent whereby 17% were teacher, central office administrator, and then superintendent; and 16% followed the path of teacher, principal, and then superintendent (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). The most common experience reported for women superintendents is the principalship at the elementary level (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Glass, 2000). These statistical figures reinforce the idea that women do not have to follow norms established by male superintendents in order to reach the top leadership position in public schools.

Male superintendents follow different career paths to the superintendency than women. Approximately 70% of male superintendents come from secondary school administration (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). In the 2010 American Association of School Administrators (AASA) study, only 29.8% of female superintendents possessed experience with secondary school administration. The increase in the number of female superintendents entering secondary school administration has increased from the 2000 AASA study, which was 18% (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000). However, in the 2010 AASA study, men possessing secondary experience were at 54.5% (Kowalski et al., 2010). Fewer women apply and are hired for high school principal

positions, yet this position continues to be the number one position from which one ascends to the superintendency (Sharp et al., 2004). Having prior secondary administrative experience is highly desirable by school board members when considering candidates for superintendency (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). This preference may contribute to why many women are not being afforded the opportunity to reach the superintendency.

Higher Education

Accessing an education program of high quality to attain a doctorate degree may be a barrier for some women. Many women must learn how to organize their lives to handle the challenges of work, family, and attending school, which can be a significant challenge for them attaining a doctorate degree to support them to the superintendent position (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Research has shown that female superintendents who possess a doctorate degree build creditability among their peers (Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010). More female superintendents are seeking a doctorate degree. The 2000 AASA study reported that 56.8% of females and 43.7% of males held a doctorate (Glass et al., 2000). Further, in the 2010 AASA study, females declined slightly to 52.1% and male superintendents to 42.1%. Since 2006, women have continued to dominate with higher numbers of completion of doctorate degrees than men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010). Unfortunately, even though women continue to outnumber men with doctorate degrees, they are still under-represented in the superintendency.

Family

Commitments, responsibilities of family, and aspiring as a superintendent have been a major contributor to women not entering the field of superintendency (Glass, 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2010). Women must find a balance between family and their career when seeking to enter the field of superintendent. A study by Grogan and Brunner (2005),

showed that 35% of women have continued to hold the superintendent position while raising children under the age of 20. This report also indicated that more spouses or partners were willing to support the family by taking on more family responsibilities while the wife held the position of superintendent (Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

Grogan and Brunner (2005) stated that there was one profound casualty for women superintendents: their marriages. Unfortunately, in their study, many women stated that divorce was a lifestyle change made to adapt to the demands of the superintendency (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). In the 2010 AASA study, there were 8.8% women superintendents divorced as compared to 3.7% men (Kowalski et al., 2010). It is important that women continue to remember that their family is a significant element to their success as a superintendent. Several women leaders have identified their husband and family as key agents that influence them to continue to pursue and seek high levels of leadership positions such as superintendent (Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010).

Support Systems

The superintendency may be a lonely and highly public profession that can be very stressful if women do not have adequate support systems in place. The literature on the multiple barriers that women superintendents encounter is more abundant than literature with strategies for overcoming the barriers. Female superintendents need to find ways to integrate support systems into their career: "It sure is a visible job-definitely the eye of the hurricane on many days. We need more support as we start out in the field instead of trial by fire, especially women" (Grogan & Brunner, 2005, p. 6). Due to the small number of female superintendents in the field, females need advocates, both while aspiring to the position and while serving in it (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Many women superintendents state that the main support they

received from their family and mentors was essential to their success (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006;

Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Gupton, 2009). Grogan and Brunner (2005) stated that married female

superintendents viewed their spouse as key to their success as a superintendent. "My husband

increased his assistance and support so I could be a successful superintendent" (Grogan &

Brunner, 2005, p. 5).

Mentoring Systems

Women tend to have less developed mentoring systems, which can be detrimental to

providing in-district mobility opportunities for women aspiring to be a superintendent (Sharp et

al., 2004). To overcome the barrier of less developed mentoring systems, Dana and Bourisaw

(2006) stated that novice female superintendents need to seek out mentorship from a successful

superintendent in another district or a successful retired superintendent. It is important that

women superintendents have one or more mentor since each mentor has his or her own strengths

and set of informative experiences (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Growe & Montgomery, 2000;

Gupton, 2009). Female superintendents reported that mentors were seen as a tool for overcoming

barriers, and for advice while serving in the position (Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010).

Strategies of Support

In a study by Gupton (2009), several female superintendents reported strategies to

support women while aspiring and serving in the superintendent position:

- Always be prepared and organized

- Persevere and excel in your work

- Be honest

- Always believe in yourself

- Be firm, strong, and fair

- Learn coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family

- Develop a strong self-concept

- Listen to others and show genuine interest and concern

- Communicate well with others

- Establish both professional and personal support systems

- Maintain strong supportive personal relationships with family

Support systems have been difficult for researchers to study due to their nature of informality. However, studies have shown that women superintendents are encouraged to develop support systems to assist them while serving in the role of superintendent (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Glass, 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2010; Sharp et al., 2004).

Social Networks

Social networks assist women who aspire to the superintendent position, and support them during their tenure as superintendent. Research studies have found that women who aspire to strengthen their social networks are more successful as they moved up the ranks to superintendent (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Gupton, 2009; Sharp, 2004). Symes and Sharpe (2005) reported that 60% to 80% of all jobs are found by way of networking; thus they strongly encourage female superintendents to network extensively. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) stated that women must be cautious and participate in social networks that would not place them in any exclusionary practice that would cause conflict with colleagues. The 2010 AASA study reported minimal differences between male (35.1%) and female (37.7%) superintendents' involvement in professional organizations (Kowalski et al., 2010).

A study by Tallerico (2000) reported that females were more successful in attaining one or more superintendencies due to the ability to develop multiple connections throughout regional, statewide, and national networks of experienced administrators, professional associates, and search firms. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) stated that females who stay in close contact with search firm personnel, keeping them informed and up-to-date on their leadership experience and accomplishments, will support them in their pursuit and maintenance of success in the superintendent position.

Social networks provide opportunities for women superintendents to establish relationships and connections with other women and men who are superintendents. In addition, social networks deliver opportunities for women to discuss challenges and develop strategies to overcome barriers (Sharp et al., 2004). Further, social networks develop women superintendents' expertise to enhance their leadership qualities and market their own strengths (Kowalski et al., 2010). The percent of women superintendents (88%) who were members of the AASA was almost identical to the membership of men superintendents (92.8%) in 2010 (Kowalski et al., 2010). However, women had a higher percentage of membership in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 66.1% compared to 43.9% for men (Kowalski et al., 2010). The superintendents in the 2010 AASA study stated that the influences of these state organizations were significant in their work, and that they strengthened the networks that female and male superintendents accessed (Kowalski et al., 2010).

Theories

The number of females entering top-level positions, such as superintendent, continues to increase, however, the hiring of female superintendents in school districts has not eradicated the gender imbalance wherein top-ranking male superintendents still outnumber female

professionals across the nation. Two prevailing theories are applied to document the issues relating to the insufficient number of women in the superintendent position: Gatekeeping Theory and Social Capital Theory.

Gatekeeping Theory

The theory of gatekeeping is important to examine when understanding why few women occupy the highest position in public schools. Gatekeepers determine what can become an individual's reality (Shoemaker, 1991). The power that one has to control the flow of information and/or access to resources is a major lever in the control of a person's life (Shoemaker, 1991). Gatekeeping is a process that determines people's lives and affects their social reality (Shoemaker, 1991).

Lewin's (1951) model on gatekeeping implies that there are people, events, or situations that control the gates and determine what may pass and/or what is blocked. In addition, Lewin (1951) has stated that with the gates controlling access to sections within an organization, it is clear that forces are at work throughout each section. These forces work positively and/or negatively and decide what is allowed to pass. In addition, force is an important concept in the Gatekeeping Theory because stronger forces are more likely to inhibit and/or allow access through the gate (Shoemaker, 1991).

Shoemaker's (1991) and Lewin's (1951) work on the Gatekeeping Theory sheds light on how "gates" and "gatekeepers" control the success levels of women aspiring to the superintendent position. The gates seem to open wider for some women and not for others, thus supporting the Gatekeeping Theory.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory examines the influences of gender in professional organizations and on the structural nature of social capital (Suseno, Pinnington, & Gardner, 2007). Social capital is described as a social structure rooted within an individual's social relationships, and represents the individual's access to resources (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001; Suseno et al., 2007). In addition, social capital allows for the achievement of certain outcomes that may be difficult to achieve outside the social structure (Suseno et al., 2007).

Within social capital theory, there are two network structures that influence the extent to which a person's social capital with his or her professional colleagues affects the person's income attainment and position in the hierarchical structure of the organization. The two network structures are the centrality of the individual in terms of his or her work relationships within his or her organization, and the nonredundancy among the individual's professional contacts (Seibert et al., 2001; Suseno et al., 2007).

The first network structure examines the individual's location in the network as it either enhances or constrains his/her access to certain resources (Seibert et al., 2001; Suseno et al., 2007). Coleman (1990) has stated that "having positions rather than persons as elements of the structure has provided one form of social capital that can maintain stability in the face of instability of individuals" (p. 320). When an individual's structural position in a network is centrally located, the person has access to resources that can benefit him or her (Seibert et al., 2001). One way that individuals can centrally structure themselves within their organization is to increase their formal and informal networks with other professionals. This can be accomplished within their own organization and outside, such as becoming a member of outside associations (Monge & Contractor, 2003; Suseno et al., 2007). Building these types of networks supports

one's reputation and reaps benefits that may influence the centrality of their own network (Suseno et al., 2007). An individual with a high degree of centrality is connected to many resources and has ties to informal and formal networks. The central structure that the individual has created potentially allows the individual to benefit professionally, such moving up in the hierarchical structure within the organization and possibly earning a higher income (Suseno et al., 2007).

The second network structure within the social capital theory—nonredundancy among professional contacts—states that individuals need to learn how communication operates and to work with their connections within an organization to affect their income attainment and position within the organization (Monge & Contractor, 2003; Suseno et al., 2007). The individual needs to learn within and outside his or her professional organization who talks to whom, and who does not talk with whom. This communication pattern entails verbal as well as written and visual communication (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Learning communication networks enables one to receive benefits from informal and formal networks, and to gain valuable information and knowledge to support oneself within one's organization (Suseno et al., 2007). Possessing a wide range of nonredundant ties provides a person with valuable access to resources, information, status, and support (Monge & Contractor, 2003).

The Gatekeeping Theory and Social Capital Theory are lenses through which to interpret findings as to why so few women hold the superintendent position across the nation. These two theories reveal that women must be aware of the constraints and barriers that may inhibit them from entering the superintendency, and that they must learn how to navigate the system by incorporating support systems and social networks within their profession that serve their effort to attain the superintendency.

Conclusion

Despite the disconcerting statistics and perceived barriers, women have succeeded in becoming public school superintendents. Even though the gender gap is clearly widespread, women continue to make strides in closing this gap that has existed for generations. According to the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) 2010 study, the percentage of female superintendents has increased since the 2000 study. In 2000, there were 13.2% female superintendents, and in 2010 there were a reported 24.1% (Kowalski et al., 2010). To support the interpretation of the gap, a significant body of literature reinforces that there are barriers that women face when moving up the hierarchical ladder to the superintendency and while they are holding the superintendent position (Bjork, 2000; Blount, 1998; Brunner, & Grogan, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2010).

This review of the literature revealed several barriers that work against woman advancing to the superintendency. The Civil Rights Act of 1991, which established the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, signified that prejudice against women does, indeed, exist and is a significant barrier to the advancement of women (Bell et al., 2002). Although research supports that women are increasing in numbers to the superintendency, there must be continued research about ways to support organizations and people to lift the glass ceiling.

Gender equity continues to challenge women in leadership positions. It is important that children, staff, and community members receive the benefits of the diverse perspectives and experiences of both genders in public schools. As stated in the 2010 AASA study, males, on average, became novice superintendents at an earlier age than female superintendents. More than half (56.3%) of males attained the position by the age of 45, and they were four times as likely as women to be a novice superintendent before the age of 36 (Kowalski et al., 2010). There is an

ethical and moral obligation to ensure that equal opportunity in the attainment of the superintendency for men and women is attained (Dana, & Bourisaw, 2006).

Even though the literature shows that school board members prefer to hire administrators for the superintendency who have a secondary background, women must continue to learn how to navigate the career path to the superintendency even if they do not possess this type of background. It is evident that school board members prefer leaders with a secondary background as the data has shown that 17% of male superintendents have been a high school principal prior to the superintendency, as opposed to 5.6% for females (Kowalski et al., 2010). Hiring firms and school boards agree that leaders who held a position as a high school principal rise to the superintendency faster (Glass et al., 2000).

More women superintendents are focused on attaining their doctoral degree, and strive to overcome barriers when achieving this degree (Glass et al., 2000). In addition, the family network is a key component in the success for women superintendents as they continue to find the balance between work and family (Glass, 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Gupton and Slick's (1996) study validated how women struggle to manage family, work, and also graduate work:

> My husband and I have been married for 20 years and have one 13-yr-old son. I have stayed up late to do chores and study or gotten up early to avoid letting my career requirements encroach on family time . . . I've balanced for many years. (p. 37)

Decisions about higher education, family, and work greatly influence the female superintendent's career (Bell et al., 2002; Blount, 1998).

There is a dearth of studies that focus on how female superintendents utilize support systems to steer their way through the world of superintendency. It is reported that female superintendents use support systems by seeing the value of relationships with others, and greatly

utilize families, colleagues, and mentors to support their work (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). To increase the number of female superintendents entering the field, there needs to be more studies reporting on how to support female educators in establishing support systems to navigate the field of superintendency.

The study of female superintendents using social networks to strengthen and reinforce their work still appears to be less developed than studies of barriers they face (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010). It is important that there are more studies describing how social networks can illustrate the dynamic nature of various kinds of social interactions across and within groups to support female superintendents to understand the potential strength that social networks can bring to their own organizations (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Kowalski et al., 2010).

Finally, as a new era begins in which more women are entering the superintendency than ever before, women need to be supported and encouraged to enter the top leadership positions of public schools. Today, several women superintendents possess successful leadership skills and understand the value of collaboration and communication to lead our public schools (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Statement of Problem

Approximately 72% of women serve in the teacher workforce (Gupton, 2009), yet there are only 24.1% of women serving in the superintendent position (Kowalski et al., 2010). The role of superintendent is a challenging and complex leadership position in public schools. The superintendent must be knowledgeable in areas such as finance, operations, curriculum, leadership, and human resources. In addition, superintendents must be equipped with skills in teaching and learning (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Understanding the barriers that women face and why more women are not seeking and serving in this top leadership position is necessary (Bjork, 2000; Glass, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Reis et al., 1999).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the barriers that women have encountered when seeking and serving in the superintendent position in order to inform and encourage more women to pursue this leadership position. By understanding the barriers that other women have faced, women aspiring to the superintendent position may be better equipped for the top leadership position in public schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What barriers do women encounter while seeking and serving in the position of superintendent?

2. How do women utilize support systems while aspiring to/serving in the position of superintendent?

3. How do women perceive support systems' ability to enable women to overcome barriers?

4. How do women use social networks while serving in the position of superintendent?

Selection of the Population

The researcher interviewed and surveyed female superintendents to better understand the barriers that impede women from entering and serving in the superintendent position. Gaining this knowledge from the interviews and surveys will support more women in learning how to navigate the educational system to enable them to pursue the highest position in public schools: superintendent.

Participants in this study were 26 female superintendents currently serving in California public schools during the year 2014–2015 school year. Information on which female superintendents to select for the survey and interview was retrieved from the California Department of Education website. During the selection of the participants, some names were not easily discerned as male or female, and the researcher made telephone calls and/or used the Internet to identify the superintendent's gender. The survey and interview participants were female superintendents serving in public school districts ranging from 2,500 to 70,000 students. Table 2 shows the survey and interview criteria for the female superintendents.

Table 2

Survey and Interview Selection Criteria of Female Superintendents

Survey	Interview
Years of experience: 2 years or more	Years of experience: 2 years or more
Serving in public school district with student population from 2,500 to 70,000	Serving in public school district with student population from 2,500 to 70,000
Serving in California	Serving in California

To conduct this study, the researcher used convenience sampling, as the researcher wanted to interview and survey female superintendents from public school districts. Convenience sampling supported the study because the researcher was very limited on the number of respondents the researcher could seek for an interview as the researcher was aware of the dearth of female superintendents in California (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In addition, the researcher was purposeful with the sampling as the study needed to contain female superintendents, and the researcher utilized purposeful sampling because it is used when unique attributes are needed for an interview (Merriam, 2009). Because the researcher's focus was on female superintendents overall—regardless of race or color—the interview participants selected represented varied racial/ethnic backgrounds and had 2 or more years of experience. Five female superintendents from California public school districts were selected to be interviewed.

Design Summary

For this study, it was important to conduct a qualitative and quantitative research study so that the researcher was able to interact with the participants in their natural setting and interpret how the participants made sense of their world and their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Further, the mixed-method approach that was conducted enabled the researcher to produce results and to support evidence to address the research questions (Maxwell, 2013).

This study has been centered on Merriam's (2009) and Creswell's (2009) steps on conducting a research study. The study focused on the research problem and purpose of the study in Chapter one, and a review of the literature in Chapter two. Chapter three addresses the manner in which the data was collected; Chapters four and five emphasize analyzing, interpreting, and reporting the data.

Methodology

The methodology included quantitative data from surveys using a questionnaire and qualitative data from open-ended interview questions that were obtained from female superintendents in Southern California public schools. When developing the interview protocol, the researcher used a semistructured interview to have the protocol less structured to be able to utilize the questions with flexibility depending upon how the interviewees responded (Merriam, 2009). In addition to understanding the barriers that female superintendents may encounter, the researcher interviewed and surveyed female superintendents to understand how they used support systems while seeking and attaining the position of superintendent. Further, female superintendents were interviewed and surveyed to understand the influence of social networks and how this influence played an integral role in supporting women's success in the position of superintendent. All four research questions were addressed in both the interview and survey questions, which utilized qualitative and quantitative designs.

Mixed Method

To ensure that there was internal validity in the research study, a mixed-method approach of triangulating the data was used to check for consistency of findings among survey data, interview data, and the extensive literature review. In addition to employing these three

areas of findings, Gatekeeping and Social Capital Theories were utilized to connect the findings within these larger perspectives.

Instrumentation and Protocols

Qualitative Instrument

Qualitative data were gathered through the use of interviews, and the interview questions were written to ensure that they targeted the research questions. The interview protocol consists of 10 questions (see Appendix A). Within the 10 questions, there are additional follow-up questions in numbers six, seven, and eight. Probes or follow-up questions are important to include in the interview process when information may need to be clarified (Merriam, 2009). The researcher decided to use interviews for the study to capture the data by conducting face-to-face and telephone interviews. The interviews were open-ended and semistructured, and interview notes were taken during the process (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative Instrument

The quantitative data gathered for this study were gathered via a survey. The survey had four parts with a total of 35 questions (see Appendix B). All of the questions in the survey focused on the four research questions. Part I of the survey centered on the female superintendent's demographic information; Parts II and III focused on research question number one; and Part IV targeted research questions two, three, and four. All of the questions in the survey were written as closed questions. The researcher made sure that the questions would be meaningful to the respondents; standard language rules were incorporated; and the use of biased words and phrases was avoided (Fink, 2009). In addition, the survey was designed to incorporate a 5-point Likert-type scale in Parts II and III—"not a major barrier" to "major barrier." In Part IV the following descriptors were used: "no," "probably not/rarely," "maybe/occasionally,"

"likely/almost always," and "yes/always." The survey instrument was accessible to 26 female superintendents in California public schools by utilizing SurveyMonkey. The survey designed for this study was created to provide the researcher numeric descriptions of the attitudes and/or opinions of the female superintendents (Creswell, 2009).

Data Collection

Creswell's (2009) and Merriam's (2009) data collection steps were followed when conducting the research for this study; they are: (a) locate the individual and/or site; (b) follow steps to gain access and create a relationship; (c) purposefully sampling; (d) collect the data; (e) record the information; (f) solve any field issues that may have occurred; and (g) store the data. To collect the quantitative data, surveys were accessible to 26 female superintendents in California public schools using the aforementioned selection criteria. A cover letter accompanied the survey and stated the purpose of the study (see Appendix C).

To collect the qualitative data, interviews were conducted with five of the female superintendents who indicated that they would participate in an in-depth interview. As mentioned in the previous sections, purposeful sampling was used in the selection of interview participants who met the selection criteria in order to best answer the research questions and address the purpose of the study. It is critically important that prior consent is given to the researcher to conduct the interview so that the interviewees know that their answers will be strictly confidential (Bogden & Biklen, 2007).

Each of the female superintendents the researcher interviewed was asked a month ahead of time as to what day and time would be convenient for her. It is important to provide interviewees enough notice and allow them to select their time to support their being comfortable with the interview process (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Finally, the researcher made sure to

emphasize to the interviewees that the researcher would be tape recording as well as taking notes during the interview. The researcher asked the subjects if they minded being tape-recorded during the interview; interviewees should be asked this question to support their comfort during the interview process (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Each of the interviews took approximately 45 minutes to complete. Follow-up phone calls were made, as necessary, to clarify any pertinent information needed to target the research questions. All of the interviews were transcribed and reviewed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

This study utilized a mixed-method approach, incorporating both the quantitative data from the surveys and the qualitative data from the interviews. All of the items in the survey and interview protocols were directly linked to the research questions. The research questions guided the data analysis for this study.

After the collection of the data from the surveys and the interviews, the researcher wrote separate reports documenting the findings from each of the data sources. All of the responses in the interviews and surveys were transcribed and coded. An analysis was developed from the information supplied by the participants (Creswell, 2009). Utilizing a process of concurrent triangulation (see Figure A), the researcher compared the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data to the findings in the review of literature in order to determine convergence, divergence, or a combination of both for the findings (Creswell, 2009). Gatekeeping Theory and Social Capital Theory were applied as a method of linking the findings within these larger perspectives. The researcher ensured that the confidentiality of each participant was preserved throughout the entire process.
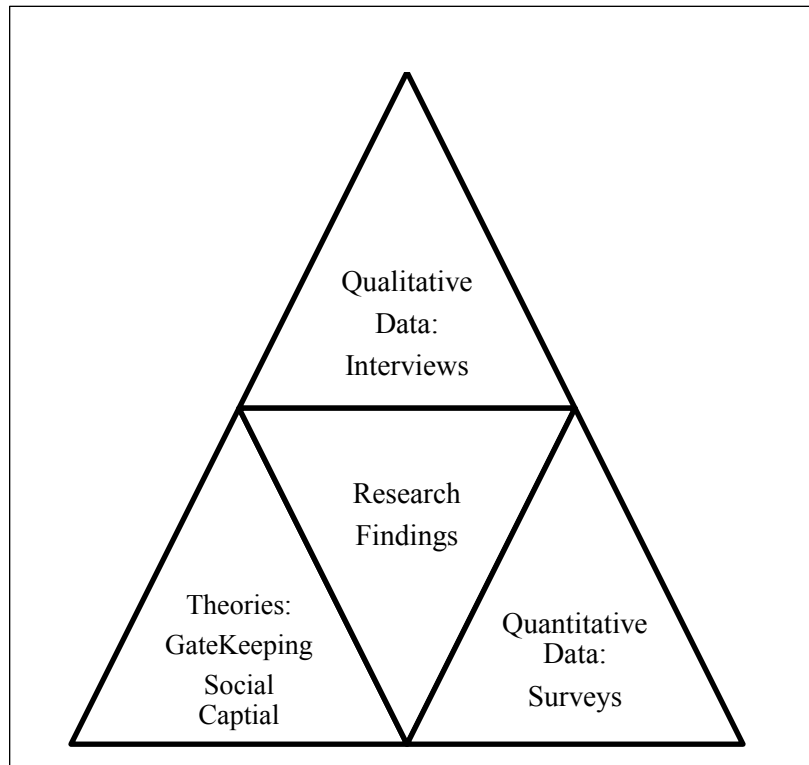
Figure 1. Triangulation of the data.

Validity and Reliability

Throughout the study, the researcher made every effort to ensure strong validity and

reliability. The researcher followed Patton's (2002) belief that a study be carried out with

"intellectual rigor, professional integrity, and methodological competence" (p. 570). There were

multiple steps followed to promote validity and reliability throughout the study, such as:

triangulation of the data, member checking, adequate time spent collecting the data, researcher

self-reflecting on any assumptions, worldviews and/or biases, peer review, audit trail, and

purposefully seeking variation in the sample selection (Merriam, 2009).

Summary

This study used a mixed-method approach, quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from interviews. The data collected from female superintendents in California public school were analyzed to target the four research questions: barriers that women encounter while seeking and serving in the position of superintendent; how women utilize support systems while aspiring to and serving in the position; how women perceive support systems in ways that enable them to overcome barriers; and how women use social networks while serving in the position of superintendent. These findings have been presented in Chapter four, with a discussion of the findings in Chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Background

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected from the study, which aimed to explore the barriers that women in California face when seeking and serving in the capacity of superintendent. Women's understanding of the barriers that other women have encountered when aspiring to and serving in the superintendent position may better prepare them for the top leadership position in public schools. Although the latest statistic is 24.1% for women holding the superintendent position, this number has only slightly doubled from the 1930s (Kowalski et al., 2010).

Quantitative data was collected from a survey using electronic questionnaires that were distributed to 26 female superintendents in California public school districts with student populations ranging from 2,500 to 70,000. The female superintendents must have served a minimum of 2 years to be surveyed. Twenty-six out of 67 surveys were answered using the electronic questionnaire, providing a response rate of 39.0%.

Qualitative data was gathered using one-on-one interviews with five female superintendents in Southern California public schools with the same criteria as the superintendents who were surveyed. Of the respondents from the surveys, five superintendents were selected and interviewed. The five superintendents who were interviewed are referred to as Superintendents A–E. The researcher made sure that the confidentiality of each superintendent was preserved throughout the entire process.

When conducting this research, a semistructured approach was used during the interviews, which consisted of 10 questions on the interview protocol. The semistructured protocol allowed the researcher the flexibility to probe and ask additional follow-up questions as

needed. The interview protocol that was established captured behaviors and feelings that could not be observed (Merriam, 2009).

A mixed-method data approach was conducted using data from the surveys and interviews. The data were then interpreted and analyzed using the process of triangulation in which multiple sources of information were applied to support the findings. All of the data collected were maintained and protected for confidentiality, especially age, race/ethnicity, marital status, and the number of children for each of the superintendents surveyed and/or interviewed.

Demographics of Survey and Interview Participants

Age of Female Superintendents

Of the 26 female superintendents who responded to the electronic questionnaires, 100% were between the ages of 40 and 60, with 18 of the 26 (69.23%) being between the ages of 50 and 59. The data from this survey closely align with the findings from the 2010 Decennial Study on American School Superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2010). In 2010, the majority of female superintendents were between the ages of 51 and 60, with 29.2% between the ages 51 and 55 and 31.8% between the ages of 56 and 60 (Kowalski et al., 2010). As shown in Table 3, very few female superintendents were between 40 and 49 years of age, with zero below 40, and most above 50 years of age.

Table 3

Age of Female Superintendents

| | Female Superintendents | |
| | n = 26 | |
Age	Frequency	%
Less than 30	0	0
30–39	0	0
40–49	6	23.08
50–59	18	69.23
60 or over	2	7.69

Marital Status and Race/Ethnicity

Table 4 shows the results of the 26 female superintendents' marital status, data that closely align with the results from the 2010 Decennial Study on American School Superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2010). Of the 26 respondents in the study, 76.92% were married, 15.38% divorced or separated, 7.69% single, 0% widowed, and 0% partnered. The 2010 Decennial Study indicated that 81.8% of female superintendents were married, 8.8% divorced, 0.5% separated, 6.6% single, and 2.3% widowed (Kowalski et al., 2010). The 2010 Decennial Study did not research the number of female superintendents who were partnered. The status of married, divorced or separated, and single closely aligns with the research from Kowalski et al. (2010).

Table 4

Marital Status

	Female Superintendents, n = 26	
Marital Status	Frequency	%
Married	20	76.92
Widowed	0	0
Divorced or Separated	4	15.38
Partnered	0	0
Single	2	7.69

Research has shown that the race/ethnicity of superintendents has been predominately White (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Grogan, & Brunner, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2010). Even though research did not distinguish between male and female superintendent's race/ethnicity, this study closely aligned to the current research as 73.08% of female superintendents reported White/non-Hispanic. Table 5 shows the findings for the race/ethnicity of the 26 female superintendents.

Table 5

Race/Ethnicity of Female Superintendents

	Female Superintendents, n = 26	
Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	%
Native American	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	3.85
Hispanic	5	19.25
Black/non-Hispanic	1	3.85
White/non-Hispanic	19	73.08
Multi-Racial	0	0

Number of Children

Several research studies have shown that women who enter the world of the

superintendency need to find a balance between family and career (Glass, 2000; Glass &

Franceschini, 2007; Grogan & Brunner, 2005). As shown in Table 6, 10 of the 26

superintendents had two children. The second highest number of children reported by the

superintendents was zero. Eight of the 26 reported not having any children. Gupton (2009) and

Pandian and Jesurajan (2011) found in their research that women in top leadership positions have

encountered several barriers when trying to handle both parenting and career as a superintendent.

These findings may be why some women chose not to have children as they moved up the ranks

in administration.

Table 6

Number of Children

| | Female Superintendents | |
| | n = 26 | |
Number of Children	Frequency	%
0	8	30.77
1	4	15.38
2	10	38.46
3	1	3.85
4 or more	3	11.54

Professional Preparation

Women superintendents have continued to dominate in higher numbers of completion of

doctorate degrees than men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010). As reflected in the 2010 AASA study

and in this study, most of the female superintendents possessed a doctorate degree. Shown in

Table 7, of the 26 female superintendents surveyed, 18 (69.23%) held a doctorate degree, which

is higher compared both to 45.3% of males and to female superintendents nationally (Kowalski et al., 2010). It is interesting to note that one superintendent among the 26 superintendents surveyed did not hold either a master's or a doctorate degree.

Table 7

Highest Degree Earned

| | Female Superintendents | |
| | n = 26 | |
Highest Degree Earned	Frequency	%
BA or BS	1	3.85
Master's	7	26.92
Doctorate	18	69.23

Career History and Development

According to the research, the most common entry position for females in education was at the elementary school level as a classroom teacher (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2010). All five of the superintendents who were interviewed began their career as an elementary teacher and held this position the longest of all the positions held:

Superintendent A: I was a regular education teacher for 12 years, and I then became a resource teacher for two years.

Superintendent B: I was in Chicago public schools for 10 years as a classroom teacher in elementary education and then I moved to Chino Unified School District where I was a middle school teacher and then back to elementary for four years.

Superintendent C: I was a classroom teacher in various grade levels with various duties for 15 years.
Superintendent D: I was an elementary teacher for eight years at various grade levels.

Superintendent E: I started in this district 35 years ago, and I started as an elementary teacher for 16 years.

The results from the 26 female superintendents surveyed indicated that a majority of the superintendents—14 out of 26 (58.33%)—had spent the bulk of their time teaching in elementary grades. Nine respondents reported that they came from the secondary level, and one respondent from the business sector.

Studies have shown that when women climb the career ladder to the superintendency, they have spent more time in education than their male counterparts. Males, on average, become superintendents at an earlier stage in their career than females (Kowalski et al., 2010). As indicated in Table 8, 11 of the 26 superintendents surveyed were in education for 26 or more years prior to becoming a superintendent. It has been found that women tend to remain in the education field longer as a teacher and/or other district office position before becoming a superintendent due to the responsibility of raising a family (Helfat et al., 2006).

Table 8

Number of Years in Education Prior to Becoming a Superintendent

Female Superintendents		
n = 26		
Number of Years	Frequency	%
8 years or fewer	0	0.00
9–15 years	1	3.85
16–20 years	6	23.08
21–25 years	8	30.77
26 years or more	11	42.31

The 2010 AASA study found that the most common district-level position entry for females who later became superintendents was as a district-level director and/or coordinator

(Kowalski et al., 2010). The findings from the five interviews displayed a similar pattern. The following were the entry district-level positions for the five female superintendents interviewed:

Superintendent A: Director of Elementary Education

Superintendent B: Coordinator of Special Programs

Superintendent C: Staff Development Coordinator

Superintendent D: Director of Student Support Services

Superintendent E: Special Projects Coordinator

Although the majority of the female superintendents surveyed spent most of their time in elementary education, the results from the survey show that 14 of the 26 superintendents were, at the time of this study, superintendents in unified school districts where they were gaining secondary school administration experience, as opposed to 12 female superintendents who oversaw elementary school districts. The data from the survey show a pattern similar to the results in the 2010 AASA study, in which 29.8% of female superintendents possessed experience with secondary school administration as compared to only 18% in the 2000 AASA study (Glass et al, 2000; Kowalski et al., 2010).

Research Questions

The findings in this study have been guided by the following research questions:

1. What barriers do women encounter while seeking and serving in the position of superintendent?

2. How do women utilize support systems while aspiring to/serving in the position of superintendent?

3. How do women perceive support systems' ability to enable women to overcome barriers?

4. How do women use social networks while serving in the position of superintendent?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the barriers that women have encountered when aspiring to and serving in the superintendent position. Recognizing and knowing the barriers that women have faced when pursuing the position of superintendent may better prepare other women for the highest position in public schools.

Coding of Data

To conduct data analysis to answer the research questions, the researcher had to consolidate, reduce, and interpret what the participants stated in the interviews as well as answered on the survey questions (Merriam, 2009). As recommended in Maxwell (2013), the first step that the researcher took in the qualitative analysis was to reread the interview transcripts, and listen to the interview tape. As the researcher completed each of these steps, the researcher reviewed memos taken during the interview and developed categories for the data. The researcher looked for recurring themes in the data to align with the research questions (Merriam, 2009). When the researcher reviewed the interviews, codes were assigned to pieces of the data that supported the research questions to begin to construct categories. According to Merriam (2009), this process of assigning the codes is referred to as "open coding."

After reviewing all of the interview data as well as the data from the survey results, the researcher finalized categories and subcategories and coded the information. Each of the categories had multiple subcategories. As the researcher reviewed the subcategories, connections were made to the literature review, and the researcher saw some of the same themes from the data as have been documented in research studies. After all the data were formally coded, formal

analysis was conducted to extrapolate the findings from the study that were directly tied to the research questions.

Findings

According to Merriam (2009), after creating the categories and coding the data, it is important to speculate how the data is interrelated and to move toward an explanation of the data's meaning as they pertain to the research questions. The data analysis that follows is from the study, which aimed to examine the barriers that women have encountered when seeking and serving in the superintendent position. The data gathered from the interviews and survey questions of the 26 female superintendents were analyzed in an attempt to answer the research questions.

Research Question #1

What Barriers Do Women Encounter While Seeking and Serving in the Position of Superintendent?

Barriers While Seeking

Women have faced several barriers when seeking superintendent positions, and they realize that having experience, good interpersonal skills, and firm morals and principles are not all that is required to be successful (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). The 26 female superintendents surveyed answered questions on a Likert scale that best described possible barriers that females must contend with while aspiring to the superintendent position. The five superintendents that were interviewed also indicated whether they experienced any barriers while pursuing this position.

As shown in Table 9, the most significant barrier reported on the survey by 12 of the 26 superintendents (46.15%) was the "Good Old Boys' Network." Superintendent C stated in the

interview that the "Good Old Boys' Network" was a major barrier for her when she tried to

pursue the superintendency:

> You know, small school districts have the "Good Old Boys' Network" often times and
> the path had been laid for somebody else to get the position. In so much that they made
> this other person the assistant superintendent just prior to the superintendent leaving to
> make the path a clearer road for him.

Table 9

Barriers that Women Face While Seeking: Good Old Boys' Network

To What Extent a Barrier	Female Superintendents n = 26 Number of Respondents	%
Major Barrier	4	15.38
Significant Barrier	8	30.77
Modest Barrier	5	19.23
Minor Barrier	4	15.38
Not a Major Barrier	5	19.23

Reported in Table 10, the second highest barrier reported on the survey was "delaying

career for family." Ten of the 26 superintendents (38.46%) indicated this was a barrier for them.

Several research studies reported that family commitments and obligations were acting as

barriers and were restricting access for women as they aspire to the superintendent position

(Glass, 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2010).

Table 10

Barriers that Women Face While Seeking: Delaying Career for Family

| | Female Superintendents | |
| | n = 26 | |
To What Extent a Barrier	Number of Respondents	%
Major Barrier	3	11.54
Significant Barrier	7	26.92
Modest Barrier	7	26.92
Minor Barrier	1	3.85
Not a Major Barrier	8	30.77

The research from the 2010 Decennial Study showed that 118 out of 430 female superintendents indicated that the absence of a mentor who is an administrator was a barrier as they aspired to the superintendent position (Kowalski et al., 2010). This finding aligned with the results from the survey that demonstrated that mentorship is important for women as they pursue the superintendent position. Nine out of 26 superintendents (34.61%) reported "lack of a mentor" as being a barrier to their pursuit to the superintendency.

Female superintendents not having a doctoral degree and discrimination based on gender were reported as the fourth highest barriers for women. Each of these two barriers was selected by six of the respondents, tying them at 23.07%. Even though it has been reported in the 2010 AASA study that more women possess a doctoral degree than men, 52.1% as compared to 42.1% (Kowalski et al., 2010), this issue continues to be an area of concern for women. Research continues to show that discrimination based on gender is a barrier for women as they pursue the superintendent position (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Superintendent D confirmed the research on

gender discrimination when she stated: "I was the first women superintendent in my district so certainly being a female while pursuing this position was a barrier for me. For some reason, I was looked upon as not being able to handle the position." Women continue to face challenges related to gender equity in seeking this top leadership position in public schools.

The areas that were reported on the survey as not being major barriers for women as they were seeking the superintendent positions were:

- "Not encouraged by peers and/or family to pursue the superintendent position" 15 out of 26, 57.69%.

- "Hiring practices of boards and search firms," 11 out of 26, 42.31%.

The finding of hiring practices as not being a major barrier for women in this study who mostly possess elementary experience is of interest because the research has shown that school board members prefer to hire superintendents with secondary backgrounds, and that most of the superintendents hired are male and come up the rank from being a high school principal (Kowalski et al., 2010).

Two of the superintendents from the interviews found that the hiring practices of their boards were a barrier. Superintendent D stated that because she was hired from within the district and had only worked in her district her entire career that experience was seen as a barrier to a few board members when she was applying to the position:

> I was the hometown girl, literally, you know born and raised here. So in many ways, that was probably an advantage, but in other ways a barrier because the reality is that people from the outside sometimes look, for a lack of a better word, more attractive to board members. They look more exciting than those that are right there at your doorstep.

Superintendent E mentioned during the interview that her board was a definite barrier for her when she was seeking the position: "For this position here, the barrier, getting the job almost hurt me. The board deliberated about me, they weren't sure I could be tough enough."

Barriers While Serving

There were several barriers that the 26 female superintendents from the survey faced while serving in the superintendent position. As shown in Table 11, the major barrier female superintendents reported on the surveys was "superintendent position traditionally seen as being held by a man versus a woman." Of the 26 superintendents, 11 (42.31%) reported this issue as a major/significant barrier.

Table 11

Barriers that Women Face While Serving: Superintendent Position Traditionally Seen as Being Held by a Man Versus a Woman

| | Female Superintendents | |
| | n = 26 | |
To What Extent a Barrier	Number of Respondents	%
Major Barrier	3	11.54
Significant Barrier	8	30.77
Modest Barrier	5	19.23
Minor Barrier	2	7.69
Not a Major Barrier	8	30.77

The second highest barrier on the survey was "lack of a mentor." Nine superintendents, 34.61%, reported lacking a mentor as a barrier, a situation reported as a significant barrier to women aspiring to the superintendent position. Research has shown that women tend not to develop their mentoring systems as well as men, which can create barriers for them during their careers (Sharp et al., 2004).

The third highest barrier reported on the survey was "lack of support system," which was selected by eight of the 26 respondents, 30.77%. The survey defined support systems as "an individual or individuals who provide a person with emotional support and are not under the

auspices of an organization." Research has shown that not having a support system in place from

a spouse or family members can be an obstacle to the superintendency for females (Dabney-

Lieras, 2009).

"Lack of social networking" was the fourth highest barrier reported on the survey by six

of the 26 superintendents (23.07%). Superintendent E reported during her interview that she did

not have much time for social networking, which was a barrier for her: "There is a lot of time

spent on social networking. You know, I did not know how important it was to get involved. I

am not a political person." The survey results indicated that five, 19.23%, of the 26 female

superintendents reported that they felt discrimination based on gender during their tenure. This

was the fifth highest barrier reported. Discrimination based on gender was indicated as a barrier

for three of the five superintendents interviewed. They stated that they felt gender discrimination

by the board and community members while serving in the position. The following were

reported by three superintendents:

> Superintendent B: I was the first woman and minority in my district ever hired as
> superintendent. I sort of broke two ceilings: the glass one and the bamboo one. I think
> people are looking very carefully at my leadership because of the fact that I am the first
> woman and a minority, and I feel like I have to work harder than my predecessors on
> making the grade.

> Superintendent D: The whole gender thing was a barrier in my earlier years. I remember
> a board member saying to me, "We need you to be the boss." And I remember saying
> something like, "Tell me one thing that I haven't done that you need. That what you're
> really saying is you need me to stamp my feet and act mad." But she couldn't identify
> anything that she really felt like I hadn't taken on. But I think the she perceived me not
> being the boss because I followed someone who was definitely the boss.

> Superintendent E: I had one board member that had trouble with a woman being a
> superintendent. I think he has come to respect me and realize that I can do the tough
> work. But it was really hard for him to realize that I could.

The results from the surveys and the interviews show a pattern with the research on gender

discrimination. Several studies have demonstrated that school boards hire more men than

women, and female superintendents continue to feel the presence of the glass ceiling as they lead

public schools (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Gupton, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2010; Sharp et al.,

2004).

Three scales that were reported by 11 out of the 26 superintendents as not being a major

barrier were:

- "Women viewed by staff as not being able to lead organization"

- "Your personal level of assertiveness"

- "Women are seen as lacking skills in budgeting and finance"

These findings do not align as well as with the research, as Cech and Blair-Loy (2010) stated that

women superintendents have experienced people in their organization disliking and/or distrusting

them. Research has shown that women in top positions who are viewed as being too assertive by

men are also seen as rude and disrespectful (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Gupton, 2009; Oakley,

2000). Further, school board members have viewed women superintendents as not

knowledgeable enough to manage district budgets (Glass, 2000).

Research Question #2

How do Women Utilize Support Systems While Aspiring to/Serving in the Position of

*Superintendent***?**

The superintendents surveyed and interviewed were asked about support systems

assisting their leadership when aspiring to and serving in the position of superintendent.

Support Systems While Aspiring to the Superintendent Position

Because there are a small number of female superintendents in the field, females need

support systems while aspiring to the position of superintendent (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). The

five female superintendents who were interviewed stated that their support systems were very

influential in their lives as they pursued the position:

> Superintendent A: It is very important to have a strong family support system, particularly if you have children, young children. I also have the support of my husband, who did all the after school activities, the grocery shopping, that sort of thing, because when I had nighttime events, that precluded me from being home.
>
> Superintendent B: I am fortunate since I come from a family of seven, and they saw me as ambitious and loved my job. When the superintendency came up and I started talking about it with several people and family, they just assumed that it was a natural fit for me, and I came across almost no resistance while seeking it. I am a single mother and when I was pursuing my career in my district, I was also completing my doctorate and enrolling my son in kindergarten. I never thought my son or anyone in my family thought that those would be hindrances in my life. Somehow we all manage in some way to get through those challenges.
>
> Superintendent C: Everyone said absolutely, go out there and go for it. My support systems, and that's peers at work that had become close friends and my family were kind of like there's no reason why you shouldn't get it, and just really cheered me on.
>
> Superintendent D: My husband is my support system. He hears a lot. He is always there for me.

Unfortunately, Superintendent E's answers regarding support systems also brought out another

statistic that reveals the experience of superintendents, divorce. Grogan and Brunner (2005)

reported that several women superintendents divorced as a lifestyle change to adapt to the

demands of superintendency. During the interview, Superintendent E stated:

> My father would say to me, you can do anything you want to. My father was very supportive. My husband was not so supportive, I think that is probably the piece that hurt our marriage, was that I was becoming more successful. When you get into these positions, you put a lot of hours in, and it can damage a relationship if you don't have the right partner that is committed to the relationship.

Of the 26 female superintendents surveyed, 19 of the 26 (73.07%), reported that their

support systems were important in achieving their superintendent position. The results from the

survey as well as the statements by the five superintendents support the research that states

having one or more mentors and/or support systems is essential for females as they seek the

superintendent position (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Bjork (2000) stated that educational

administrators enter the world of educational administration through the encouragement of peer

support and mentors.

Support Systems While Serving in the Superintendent Position

Female superintendents must seek ways to incorporate support systems throughout their

administrative career (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Sixteen out of 26, (61.54%), female

superintendents reported that when they had professional concerns, they would seek advice from

their support system.

Each of the five females interviewed stated that they had a support system in their lives

that greatly contributed to their success as a superintendent. Superintendent A stated, "Yes, yes,

my family and very close friends that don't work in the school system serve as a support system

to me." Family was also mentioned as an important support system for Superintendents B and D.

"My son is my support system, along with his wife, and my family who is still with me," replied

Superintendent B. There was emphasis in Superintendent D's responses as she stated,

"Absolutely, absolutely, my husband in a daily basis is my support system."

Support systems were also important to Superintendents C's and E's responses; however,

they did not emphasize family as the center of support as compared to the other three

superintendents. Superintendent C emphasized:

> The superintendency feels like being in isolation. You know you have your cabinet level
> peers that you can share information. However there are times that I cannot share
> information with them, and then I rely on fellow superintendents in the local area to seek
> support and bounce ideas off of, to just vent with, and to commiserate with, because
> they're the only ones that really understand.

Superintendent E stated that colleagues were the people she trusted for support. "I have two

superintendents that I can pick up the phone and talk to anytime about a question, that I respect,

and I think that's really important to have that." Further, Superintendent E mentioned, "I have a

director here that I have known for 25 years that I can trust. I know people say don't talk to

anybody within your staff, and I don't believe that." A common thread among the five

superintendents that is also supported in research is the importance of having more than one

mentor for support as one can acquire different skill sets from each support system (Brunner &

Grogan, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Research Question #3

How Do Women Perceive Support Systems' Ability to Enable Women to Overcome Barriers?

Women superintendents must have more than one mentor and/or support system to assist

them while taking the lead in public schools. Each mentor has distinct strengths and weaknesses,

and by having more than one mentor in place, the leader is able to know where to seek support

when needed based on these different areas of expertise (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). As

Superintendent B stated:

> There are great benefits of support systems. When I started my position the teachers'
> union was irate and was going to go on strike. I immediately called my staff and
> superintendents from nearby for support. I strategized with them, and we were able to
> work on an agreement to come to terms on a contract. Without my support system in
> place, I do not think that we would have come to an agreement."

It was noted by Superintendent C that women need to be cautious as they use their support

systems, and that not all support systems have the best intentions. Superintendent C stated:

> A woman has to be careful with support systems. Not all support systems are there to
> support you. Some people are not honest and are unethical and want your job. It is a
> learning curve that I have gone through but it is not a bad thing. I've just had to learn how
> to navigate those waters and truly find my support systems that support me.

From the survey, 21 out of 25 (84.00%) female superintendents (one superintendent did

not respond to this question) reported that support systems were beneficial to their success as a

superintendent. This question received the highest ranking of all support system questions asked

in the survey. Research has concluded that it is important to develop valuable and supportive

relationships with individuals whom the superintendent looks up to as a mentor and source of

support (Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010). This is an essential strategy that

women superintendents need to continue to strive for as a means of support in breaking the glass

ceiling.

Research Question #4

How Do Women Use Social Networks While Serving in the Position of Superintendent?

Types of Social Networks to Support Leadership

Social networks, individuals who provide a person with emotional support and are under

the auspices of an organization, are utilized by female superintendents on a daily and monthly

basis. Some of the social networks mentioned during the interviews as being supportive to their

leadership were the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), California

Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA), and University of Southern

California's Dean's Superintendents Advisory Group (DSAG). Not only were these

organizations mentioned, but also Superintendent B stated that social media is an important

vehicle to use while social networking: "I believe in using social media to network. I tweet and I

am on Facebook. I am also on LinkedIn."

Social Networks Supporting Women in Leadership

Social networks have been used to assist women who seek the superintendent position.

Research studies have found that women who aspire to strengthen their social networks are more

successful as they move up the ranks to superintendent (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Gupton, 2009;

Sharp, 2004). All five superintendents interviewed, as well as 13 of the 26 (50.00%) surveyed,

stated that they believed social networks were important for support in achieving the

superintendent position. Superintendent A stated that social networks were support systems for

her while achieving the position, as she was able to meet other people in the same field and could

call them up and ask for advice as needed. In addition, she stated that CALSA had been

extremely instrumental in her life:

> I participated in CALSA in the mentoring program. The program allowed me to discover myself and that I had the skill sets that would allow me to become a superintendent. It was never a career goal for me, but my mentor put this career on my radar. I thought that all I wanted to be was a principal and this mentor told me that I could go even beyond that!

Social networks also support women during their tenure as superintendent. As can be

seen in Table 12, eight of the 26 superintendents, 30.77%, surveyed felt that social networks

were beneficial to their success as a superintendent.

Table 12

Social Network Beneficial to Success of Superintendent

	Female Superintendents	
	n = 26	
Social network is beneficial to	Frequency	%
my success as superintendent		
Yes/Always	8	30.77
Likely/Almost Always	7	26.92
Maybe/Occasionally	5	19.23
Probably Not/Rarely	3	11.54
No	3	11.54

Social networks afford opportunities for women to discuss issues and develop strategies to

overcome challenges and support them in their leadership (Sharp et al., 2004). Superintendents

C, D, and E mentioned that ACSA was a very important social network in their lives.

Superintendent C stated:

> ACSA does a very good job supporting superintendents. Once a month, ACSA provides a
> lunch for us to get together. This is positive for me. I have the opportunity to hear what
> other districts are doing and I get to vent if needed. It is really good support for us.

Superintendent D stated that ACSA was critical in her life and that the superintendents' group

that met in Monterey every winter was instrumental in her life. She also mentioned the ACSA

once-a-month meeting that took place for area superintendents to get together and share ideas.

Superintendent E stated that she did not see the value of ACSA at first until fellow

superintendents in her area pushed her to attend meetings. Now, Superintendent E stated:

> I used to not have time for social networks like ACSA, but now I see the importance of them. I think it is important to build relationships and this can be done there. ACSA is also there for you if you need legal support. There was a time in my career where I had to call them for advice. They are there for legal support if it is needed.

Social Networks Important for Women Superintendents

A study by Tallerico (2000) reported that females were more successful in attaining one or more superintendencies due to the ability to develop multiple connections throughout regional, statewide, and national networks of experienced administrators, professional associates, and search firms. Thirteen of the 26 superintendents surveyed, 50%, reported that they sought professional advice from their social networks. Superintendent C stated that social networks were a tool: "Social networks are there to help you learn how to navigate through the superintendent world. They are there to support you with advice and help you in times of great stress, especially when you need to find another job." Superintendent D reported that women definitely need to seek support from their social network. She stated:

> The job is difficult, and I don't want to stereotype women, but generally, women need more support. During the severe budget cuts, I remembered saying to my male colleagues, "I am not sleeping" and the men in the group looked at me like I was crazy. I told them that I was not sleeping because people are losing their jobs. I was looking at them in their eyes, and I know that they can't make their mortgage payments. My fellow colleagues in ACSA supported me through this. So without social networks to help you through those really tough times, it is difficult to lead.

Superintendent E stated that it is a lonely position in the school district and you need to have your social network in place for assistance. She expressed that there are times when you need to call for assistance, "Just to have a conversation, possibly about finding another job." She stated that they are there to assist you in developing a perspective that you may not have thought of regarding the situation you are experiencing.

From the interviews and the survey results, it was evident that social networks provided opportunities for women superintendents, establishing relationships and connections with other

superintendents. In addition, social networks benefitted women superintendents by providing

moral support, collaboration with colleagues in and out of their area, legal support, and up-to-

date on events in their profession.

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Ancillary Findings: Recommendations to Women

Aspiring to the Superintendent Position

</div>

As part of the study, the five superintendents interviewed were asked if there were any

recommendations and/or advice they could provide to women seeking the superintendent

position in the future. It is important for women to learn these invaluable lessons from women

already seated at the top leadership position in public schools. To increase the number of female

superintendents in the public school system, it is critical that women continue to "break the glass

ceiling," and receive support and guidance as they enter the superintendency.

Importance of Relationships

Studies have reported that women view relational leadership with others in a horizontal

rather than a hierarchical sense. Women leaders accomplish their goals with and through others

and understand that relational leadership is about empowering everyone in the organization

(Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010). Both Superintendent B and C stressed the importance of

relationships. Superintendent B mentioned that she knew there was a need in her community to

build and strengthen women leaders. She felt that there was a connection needed for women to

get together and network. In her words:

> I started a Women's Leadership Network in my region four years ago. We bring women
> together from all over our local area and have breakfast once a month. The first time that
> I sent out an invitation to women to come and join, we had over 100 women show up for
> the first meeting. There is a hunger for women to be connected in leadership. The women
> come to talk, share ideas, and inspire one another. One female leader stated, "I'm not
> here to aspire to something else higher, I'm here to connect with other women so that I
> can just debrief, take a pause from my crazy world that we all love, but just to connect
> with somebody else and just learn from each other."

Superintendent C stated that she had been successful because she has remained "true to herself."

In addition, Superintendent C expressed the importance of building relationships:

> I'm still all about working with people to come to the right answer for the district and not just saying, "Well I am the boss and that is why we are going to do it." I don't think anyone wins in that situation. It is about relationships and nurturing them.

Finding Balance—Importance of Family

Research has shown that the responsibilities of family have been a contributor to why there are not as many women in top leadership positions (Glass 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2010). Two of the five superintendents interviewed stressed the importance of finding balance between family and their career. Superintendent D asserted the importance that women rely on their personal circle of friends and family to find the balance necessary to being successful in the career of superintendency. Further, she stated:

> Make sure that the job is not the only definition of who you are. Find Balance. It is critical for women in leadership. There are responsibilities and roles that come with family and this job, and so it can be completely overwhelming. There are times that I just go find a quiet place to sit. I went the other day and sat in a parking lot for 30 minutes just being quiet, in silence, just to reflect. Then I told myself I was ready again to move forward.

Superintendent B expressed that it is about balance. Further she emphasized, "You just simply make it work. When you go home, it is family time. You need to shut the door and remember your family life." Today, it is evident that more spouses and/or partners are willing to support the family as the mother/wife continues up the chain of command to lead public schools (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010).

Mentorship

Research has shown that women need to seek out mentorships to support their success as superintendent (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Sharp et al., 2004). During the interviews, Superintendent D stated that it is important for the females, in her words, to "find a mentor.

Choose outstanding people to surround you; this is critical. I can't imagine doing this job without the right people next to me to mentor and support me." Female superintendents continue to view mentors as supports and tools to triumph over barriers that continue to impede women from entering the world of superintendency (Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010).

Final Words of Advice: Nurturing and Time

Two areas focused on by three of the five superintendents interviewed were the importance of being caring and nurturing and the importance of "time" when making decisions. Female superintendents are aware that the way they handle their aggressive behavior is viewed by some as disrespectful and rude. Superintendent C emphasized that it is important that female superintendents feel that they can be blunt and to the point while carrying the message in a nurturing and caring manner. She further stated, "Don't think that you have to be a jerk to get your point across because you are a woman. I believe that I have been successful because I remained true to myself." Superintendent D also stated the importance of being nurturing to those around you:

> I would never say to get a thick skin because I certainly don't believe that is the way to lead. I always think that if I had a thick skin, I should not be here. I would say to find ways to remain emotionally healthy in really, really tough times. Always care about those around you.

"It is important to nurture your female side while you are in the superintendent position," was expressed by Superintendent A. She further stated that:

> We have a male and female side to us. We sometimes start to look at things from a male perspective, so to speak, or we develop a thick skin as we are looking at issues and we are solving one thing and moving to the next. We have to make sure that we keep in touch with our feminine side because that caring and nurturing that we have on the other side, is what is needed in the superintendency because you are dealing with people. People are our main resources that we need to support and care for.

Although women may feel that they must be more powerful and authoritative, like men, research

continues to show that women can be successful while being caring and nurturing (Dana &

Bourisaw, 2006; Oakley, 2000).

Dana and Bourisaw (2006) provided advice to women pursuing the superintendency,

stating that it is important that they make the right decisions and use self-control because

students are relying on their advocacy and service to make the right decisions on behalf of the

common good. Superintendent E spent time discussing the importance of time and how valuable

it is to a leader when making decisions. She stated:

> You have to go slow to go fast in a district. I always sleep overnight before I make any
> kind of decision that greatly affects the organization. I had a situation where a teacher
> came to work intoxicated, and I could have made the decision to fire her. But I needed to
> think about this decision. I did not keep anything "under the carpet." I was upfront with
> my Board. Personnel asked me what we were going to do, I told them to wait until
> tomorrow. The next day, we got the teacher help. I needed to look at her as an individual.
> It is important to gather the facts and the data before you make a fast decision.

Time is a critical component that women leaders need to focus on. They must remember that

tough decisions that support the organization can always be made the next day.

Important Skill Sets to Possess to Support Future Women to the Superintendency

To further understand what competencies women should possess as they aspire to the

superintendent position, the five superintendents interviewed were asked to reflect on what

important skill sets they believed led them to the superintendency. According to Superintendent

A, it is important to "be an active listener, collaborator, and find the best in people. It is

important to have the skills to work with Human Resources to figure out the best fit for people in

the organization." Superintendent B stated that she would narrow it down to one item:

relationships. She expressed the importance of building relationships regardless of what title she

held as a leader. She focused on how she moved up the system to superintendency and at the

same time focused on relationships. She mentioned:

> The relationships that I build are not only with the people in the schools and at the district office, but also in the community. I value being part of the community. We serve five separate cities. So this means I have to be in the community creating connections that can support in creating programs and services to support the children in the school district.

Superintendent C expressed the importance of having the ability to bring people together. She

also stated:

> I think listening to people and working with them for a common purpose is important skill set to have. I am all about teamwork and working together. Also I feel that it is important to have common sense. This is probably my greatest asset.

Interpersonal skills, being one who can build trust and confidence in people, was the most

important skill set to possess, according to Superintendent D. She also stated the importance of

being able to communicate effectively, as it shows how much you care about the organization. In

addition, she reported, "It is important to not just build relationships, but also enhance others to

be the very best that they can be through the developments of relationships. It is important to

recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate others." Finally, Superintendent E's comments on which

important skill sets to possess summarized those of the other four superintendents. She

explained:

> Being a collaborator is being a team player. People need to trust you. You need to work well with your community. You need to be visionary, resourceful and someone who is soft and caring, however, can be really tough when needed. You have to have balance. You have to have the skills to fire people when needed and stay focused on what is right for the kids, what is right for the schools, and know at the end of the day you have made the right decisions.

The skill sets needed to be successful as a superintendent were accentuated in Gupton's (2009)

research, which found that women need to be honest, firm, fair, listen to others, communicate

well, and maintain strong relationships.

Summary

This chapter reported the findings from 26 female superintendents surveyed as well as five female superintendents interviewed from Southern California public schools. The results from this study indicated that women continue to face barriers as they aspire to and serve in the superintendent position. As indicated in the results, the strongest barrier female superintendents continue to face while serving in the position is that individuals view the superintendent position as being held more often by men than women. This finding aligns closely with the Gatekeeping Theory (Shoemaker, 1991), in that some individuals continue to determine which women have access to higher levels of leadership and which do not.

Further, the female superintendents in the research reported that social networking and communication were strong traits to incorporate in one's leadership style to support their leadership while aspiring and serving in the superintendent position. These findings authenticate Social Capital Theory in that it is important for individuals to structure their network to ensure that they have resources to enhance their leadership (Monge & Contractor, 2003; Siebert et al., 2001). In addition, Social Capital Theory states that individuals must learn how communication works within their networks to support attainment and position in organizations (Monge & Contractor, 2003; Suseno et al., 2007). The research and theories support that women need to continue to be effective communicators to continue their journey to the superintendency.

Chapter five will be a discussion of the research, further conclusions. and implications of the research. Finally, recommendations for future research will be reported.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Today, women continue to face challenges as they strive to ascend and serve in the superintendent position in California public schools. This position remains mostly filled by men and is vastly under-represented by women (Gupton, 2009). Research has shown that there are a number of identified barriers that women encounter when pursuing and serving the superintendent position (Bjork, 2000; Glass, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2010; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Reis et al., 1999).

According to research, some of the barriers that women have experienced while aspiring and serving in the superintendent position are gender equity, navigating the educational system and career paths, pursuing higher education, family commitments, lack of support and mentoring systems, and social networks (Bjork, 2000; Glass, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Reis et al., 1999). The significance of this study is to further support the body of research on women pursuing superintendent positions, and to explore the barriers that they continue to face when they are working toward the top leadership position in public schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the barriers that women have faced when seeking and serving in the superintendent position. It is important to understand these barriers so that women are better prepared for the CEO position in public schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What barriers do women encounter while seeking and serving in the position of superintendent?

2. How do women utilize support systems while aspiring to/serving in the position of superintendent?

3. How do women perceive support systems' ability to enable women to overcome barriers?

4. How do women use social networks while serving in the position of superintendent?

Methodology

A mixed-method approach was conducted for this study. Quantitative data were collected from a survey that was distributed to 26 female superintendents in California public school districts serving student populations ranging from 2,500 to 70,000. Qualitative data were retrieved from five female superintendents who were surveyed by the means of interviews. A semistructured approach was used during the interviews, which contained 10 questions on the interview protocol. All of the data were interpreted and analyzed using the process of triangulation, whereby various sources of information were used to support the findings.

Results and Findings

The findings in this study are based on the data that were collected and analyzed. This section will interpret the combined results of the quantitative and qualitative data and link the findings back to the literature.

Research Question #1

What Barriers do Women Encounter While Seeking and Serving in the Position of

Superintendent?

Barriers While Seeking

The strongest themes that emerged as to which barriers women face while seeking the

superintendent position were "Good Old Boys' Network" and "delaying career for family." Both

of these themes were supported by the research as restricting access for women as they pursue

the position of superintendency (Glass, 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al.,

2010).

Women continue to be excluded from the "Good Old Boys' Network," which in turn

impedes their success while aspiring to the superintendent position (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010;

Wallin, 2005). The "Good Old Boys' Network" remains a strong social network that is

deliberately slow in changing and supporting women (Oakley, 2000).

Research has continued to show that women struggle to balance managing both parenting

and professional obligations related to the superintendency (Gupton, 2009; Lane-Washington &

Wilson-Jones, 2010). Women must be prepared to handle the demands of the superintendent

position as well as supporting and raising a family (Wallin, 2005).

Barriers While Serving

The significant themes that emerged as being barriers for women as they serve in the

superintendent position were the "superintendent position traditionally seen as being held by a

man versus a woman" and "lack of a mentor." Both of these findings have been supported by

research (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Sharp et al., 2004).

Cech and Blair-Loy (2010) have reported that society views the superintendent position as being filled by mostly men. Sharp et al. (2004) and Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones (2010) found that females have less developed mentoring systems and a less defined network of colleagues from whom to receive professional advice while serving in the superintendent position.

Research Question #2

How do Women Utilize Support Systems While Aspiring to/Serving in the Position of Superintendent?

Support Systems While Aspiring to the Superintendent Position

The major theme that appeared for women as their most significant support system as they aspired to the superintendent position was the support of their family. Support systems are critical for women as they advance to top positions in public schools (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones (2010) reported that women should not sacrifice their family as they pursue the career of superintendency, and that family can be one of their strongest support systems. Research supports that there are spouses and partners willing to support their wives as they aspire to the superintendent position by taking on more family responsibilities (Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

Support Systems While Serving in the Superintendent Position

Family was also a main theme for the superintendents who were interviewed as well as surveyed as being a noteworthy support to them as they served in the superintendent position. In addition, the superintendents reported that even though they had their family as their major support system, other close friends and/or colleagues were part of their support system and had great influence on their success while serving in the superintendent position. A study by Gupton

(2009) reported that women were encouraged to keep their family and close friends there to support them as they serve in top leadership positions. In addition, Dana and Bourisaw (2006) found that women need to seek support from their colleagues and other successful superintendents to strengthen their own leadership.

Research Question #3

How Do Women Perceive Support Systems' Ability to Enable Women to Overcome Barriers?

Female superintendents in the study overwhelmingly agreed (84.00%) that support systems were highly beneficial for overcoming barriers and greatly supported their success as superintendent. This was a significant theme for the female superintendents who were interviewed as well surveyed. Ensher and Murphy (2005) have confirmed this finding in their own research, asserting that it is important that female superintendents foster cherished and supportive relationships with people to continue to strengthen and develop their own leadership while serving in the superintendent position.

Research Question #4

How Do Women Use Social Networks While Serving in the Position of Superintendent?

In the study, the female superintendents reported that they use social networks in a variety of ways to support their leadership. The majority of the superintendents stated that ACSA and CALSA were important social networks. Research has shown that women who continue to strengthen their social networks are more successful as they move up the ladder to the superintendency (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Gupton, 2009; Sharp, 2004).

The women in the study reported that ACSA had developed networks that support superintendents by providing time for them to come together to discuss challenges, issues, and successes to strengthen their leadership. Further, the female superintendents reported that social

networks enhance a women's leadership in the superintendent position by providing them opportunities to establish relationships and connections with other superintendents.

Ancillary Findings: Recommendations to Women

Aspiring to the Superintendent Position

In addition to the four research questions that guided the study, the five interviews that were conducted provided additional information that offered women further recommendations and/or advice as they entered and/or served in the superintendent position.

Importance of Relationships

The importance of relationships was a significant theme that emerged from the responses. The female superintendents emphasized the importance of connecting with the community in which they worked, their colleagues, and those whom they supervised. Research supports this finding by stating that women accomplish their goals by understanding that relational leadership is about empowering others in the organization, and that this type of leadership greatly supports the superintendent in accomplishing her goals (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010).

Nurturing and Time

Having the skill sets to be caring and nurturing was cited as very important for women to remember as they lead in the superintendent position. Female superintendents stated that women do not need to be aggressive to make their point, and that it is important to remember that they can carry their message in a caring and meaningful way to their community and to those they supervise. The research also supported this recommendation by stating that women may feel the need to be more authoritative at times, but that they can do this by still being caring and nurturing (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Oakley, 2000).

The importance of "time" was a strong theme in the recommendations. Leaders must monitor time-related issues carefully before making decisions to ensure that it is in the best interest of the children and the community they serve. Research confirms this advice by stating that women superintendents need to monitor self-discipline when making decisions as they are children's advocates, and are there to make the correct decisions on behalf of the common good (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Implications of the Study

This study contributes to research regarding barriers that continue to create challenges for women as they seek and/or serve in the superintendent position. Findings from this study aligned with the research, further suggesting implications for practice that will support increasing the number of women superintendents.

Career Paths and Mentorships

To increase the number of women superintendents, women must be recruited in educational administration and supported through mentorship programs that place women in positions that will lead to the superintendency. As stated by Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011), higher education, professional associations, and graduate programs need to develop a culture of mentoring women to strive toward higher levels of leadership. In addition, leaders in educational institutions must be more proactive with encouraging mentorship for women as they climb the ladder to advanced levels of authority (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). Research has shown that there should be a focus on women who are below the glass ceiling to support them to higher levels of leadership (Clark, Caffarella, & Ingram, 1999).

Because one of the major barriers experienced by the women superintendents in this study was the "Good Old Boys' Network," efforts must be made by well-known social

networks—such as ACSA, CALSA, and Phi Delta Kappa—to support women by preparing them to enter leadership roles that are currently dominated by males. These social networks can assist women in developing a strong self-concept, and support them as they move up the ranks to superintendency.

Support Systems—Family and Friends

Balancing the superintendency and the demands of being a wife and mother has been shown to be one of the top barriers as to why women enter the field late in their career. It is important that women continue to seek support from their family as they ascend and serve the top position in public schools. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) found in their research that it is very difficult for married women to hold the superintendent position without the support of their spouses and children. Because the superintendent position is a very public position to hold in most school districts, it is important that families are made aware of the stressors and demands of the job so as to support the wives and mothers in the position (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Brunner (2012) stated that it is important that women also seek support from their friends as they ascend to advanced levels of authority. Maintaining relationships outside of work greatly benefits a woman's leadership. In addition, friends support women leaders by reminding them that they need to do activities together that support a less stressful environment, such as exercising and having relaxing evenings together (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

It is important that as women leaders attend conferences and are at the workplace, they are reminded of the importance of family and friends, and are encouraged to make these relationships a top priority in their lives. Women need to continue to seek support from their family and friends to assist and understand the demands that the superintendency can place on them as leaders.

It is important that women superintendents are offered opportunities to listen to other successful female superintendents on how they have learned how to navigate the superintendency and maintain solid foundations with family and friends. By listening to the journeys and experiences that other successful women leaders have had, women will find sources of support as they enter the field of superintendency. Colleges and universities can be invaluable resources for women in leadership by providing this type of venue for women leaders.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study surveyed 26 female superintendents and interviewed five female superintendents in the State of California. Findings from this study revealed additional areas that need to be further explored. The following are recommendations for future research:

1. Further explore the nature of support systems for female superintendents.

2. Strengthen the research on organizations that are supporting the eradication of the glass ceiling for women leaders.

3. Expand the research on mentorship programs for women leaders.

4. Further investigate the causes of the gender disparity in the superintendency.

5. Further research the gender make-up of school boards and their hiring practices.

6. Conduct a study of preparation programs in colleges and universities to assess how women are being supported and prepared to enter the superintendency.

Concluding Remarks

This study has demonstrated that even though the numbers of women superintendents are slowly increasing, women continue to face barriers that impede them from reaching the top leadership position in public schools. Throughout this study, women's perceptions of barriers

they faced while aspiring to and/or serving in the position were explored as well as successful strategies they utilized while serving in the position.

Some of the key lessons learned from the 26 female superintendents surveyed as well as the five female superintendents interviewed were that it is important that women are made aware of the significant challenges they may face when aspiring and/or serving in the position of superintendent. By knowing the challenges ahead of time, women are able to navigate the system more effectively, and will be able to overcome the barriers to support their leadership and begin to end the under-representation of women in superintendent positions. In addition, female superintendents need to have strong support systems in place. Also key to their success in this top position is mentorship in public schools, and colleges, universities, and associations such as ACSA and CALSA can greatly support the increase and success of women in the superintendent position.

This study also presented the urgency for a stronger focus on eliminating the glass ceiling and ensuring that the "Good Old Boys' Network" is supporting and assisting the advancement of women to the superintendent position. It is critically important to be aware that even though the number of women entering the superintendency continues to increase, it is not enough when the average annual increase is only 0.7 percent. At this rate, it will take an additional 77 years for women to be proportionally represented in the superintendency (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010).

Because the barriers are real and do exist for women who are seeking and serving in the superintendent position, women continue to obtain support and strive for this honored position in public schools. Women leaders need to persist in their journey to the superintendent position and must continue to surmount barriers they may encounter, so that one day, studies such as this one

will not be necessary, and the public will see that women are equal leaders to men in leading our

public schools.

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Appendix A
Interview Cover Sheet: Female Superintendents

Name of Researcher:

Date of Interview:

Name of Interviewee:

City:

Authorizer's Phone Number:

Authorizer's Email Address:

Interview start time:

Interview end time:

Introduction

My name is Catherine Kawaguchi, and I am a researcher at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education. I am conducting a study on female superintendents and examining the barriers that women in California face when seeking and serving in the capacity of superintendent. It is critical to understand and analyze the barriers that women face when pursuing the superintendent position to further support more women in pursuing the highest position in public schools.

During this interview, I hope to learn more about your experiences when seeking and serving in the position of superintendent. I am particularly interested in learning about barriers you may have encountered, support systems that you utilized, and the use of social networks.

The information that you provide will hopefully serve to support more women to aspire to the superintendent position.

I want to assure you that your comments will be strictly confidential. I will not identify you, or your organization, by name. I would like to tape record this interview in order to capture information that I may have missed. Would this be okay to do?

The interview should take approximately 45 minutes.

Thank you for your time.

Interview Protocol:

1. Please describe your career path to the superintendency. Which positions did you hold and for how long?

2. Reflecting on your career, what important skill sets do you believe have led you to the superintendency?

3. Have you received any training (e.g. education, academies) that has contributed to your success as superintendent?

4. Were there any barriers, personal and/or professional, that you may have experienced while you were <u>seeking</u> the superintendent position?

5. Were there any barriers, personal and/or professional, that you may have experienced while you were <u>serving</u> in the superintendent position?

6. How were support systems, if any, used to assist you in pursuing the position?
    A. Please talk to me about the benefits of these support systems.

7. How were support systems, if any, used to assist you while <u>serving</u> in the superintendent position?
    B. Please talk to me about the benefits of these support systems.

8. How are social networks, if any, used in your profession?
    A. Were the social networks supportive to your leadership?
    B. Were the social networks ever an obstacle to your leadership?
    C. Do you feel that women need to seek out social networks to support their leadership while serving as superintendent? Why or why not?

9. What recommendations and/or advice can you provide future women who may be seeking and/or aspiring to the superintendent position?

10. Are there any other comments that you would like to add that would support this study?

Appendix B
Female Superintendent Survey

Part I: Demographic Information

Please circle the most appropriate answer.

1. What is your age?
  a. Under 30
  b. 30-39
  c. 40-49
  d. 50-59
  e. 60 or over
	2. What is your marital Status?
	  a. Single
	  b. Married
	  c. Widowed
	  d. Divorced or separated
	  e. Partnered

3. What is the number of Children that you have?
  a. 0
  b. 1
  c. 2
  d. 3
  e. 4 or more
	4. What racial/ethnic group best represents how you identify yourself?
	  a. Native American
	  b. Asian/Pacific Islander
	  c. Hispanic
	  d. Black/non-Hispanic
	  e. White, non-Hispanic
	  f. Multi-racial

5. What is the highest degree that you have earned?
  a. BA or BS
  b. Master's
  c. Doctorate
	6. What type of school district do you currently work at?
	  a. Unified
	  b. High School
	  c. Elementary

7. In what area is your district in?
  a. Urban
  b. Rural
  c. Suburban
	8. What is the ADA of your district?
	  a. Less than 2,000
	  b. 2,100-4,000
	  c. 4,100-9,000
	  d. 9,100-20,000
	  e. 20,100-30,000
	  f. 30,100-50,000
	  g. 50,100-70,000

9. What is the number of years in education prior to becoming superintendent?
  a. 8 years or less
  b. 9-15 years
  c. 16-20 years
  d. 21-25 years
  e. 26 years or more
	10. From which of the following did you obtain your first superintendent position?
	  a. Hired from within the same district
	  b. Hired outside the district

	11. What is your educational background primarily in? a. Elementary b. Secondary c. Business d. Human Resources e. Other_____	12. At what age did you obtain your first superintendent position? a. 35 or younger b. 36-40 years c. 41-45 years d. 46-50 years e. 51-55 years f. 56 years or older
	13. How many years have you have served as superintendent in your <u>current</u> position: _____	14. How many <u>total years</u> you have served as superintendent in your career: _____

Part II: Barriers <u>aspiring</u> to the Superintendency

Q. 15. Please fill in the bubble on the scale that best describes possible barriers that women must contend with when <u>aspiring</u> to the superintendent position.

	Question	Not a Major Barrier	Minor Barrier	Modest Barrier	Significant Barrier	Major Barrier
1.	Not encouraged by peers and/or family to pursue the superintendent position.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Delayed career for family.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Discrimination based on gender.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The "Good Old Boys' Network" promotes men over women	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Hiring practices of board and search firms.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Lack of doctoral degree	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Lack of a mentor	1	2	3	4	5

Part III: Barriers <u>while</u> Serving the Superintendency

Q. 16. Please fill in the bubble on the scale that best describes possible barriers that women must contend with when <u>serving</u> in the superintendent position.

Definition:

- **Support System: An individual or individuals who provide a person with emotional support and are not under the auspices of an organization.**
- **Social Network: An individual or individuals who provide a person with emotional support and are under the auspices of an organization.**

	Question	Not a Major Barrier	Minor Barrier	Modest Barrier	Significant Barrier	Major Barrier
1.	Discrimination based on gender.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2.	Women are seen as lacking skills in budgeting and finance.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3.	Your personal level of assertiveness.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4.	Lack of social networking.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5.	Lack of support system.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6.	Women viewed by staff as not being able to lead organization	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7.	Superintendent position traditionally seen as being held by a man vs a woman	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8.	Lack of a mentor	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Part IV: Support Systems and Social Networks

Q. 17. Please fill in the bubble that best describes how women utilize support systems and/or social networks while attaining and serving in the superintendent position.

Definition:

- **Support System: An individual or individuals who provide a person with emotional support and are not under the auspices of an organization.**
- **Social Network: An individual or individuals who provide a person with emotional support and are under the auspices of an organization.**

	Question	No	Probably Not/Rarely	Maybe/ Occasionally	Likely/Almost Always	Yes/ Always
1.	When I have professional concerns, I seek advice from my support system.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	When I have professional concerns, I seek advice from my social network.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I feel that my social network was important in achieving my superintendent position.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I feel that my support system was important in achieving my superintendent position.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My social network is beneficial to my success as superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My support system is beneficial to my success as superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C
General Recruitment Email Cover Letter

Dear (Name),

My name is Catherine Kawaguchi, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Rossier School of Education at University of Southern California. I am conducting a research study as part of my dissertation, which examines the barriers that women have encountered when seeking and serving the superintendent position. You are cordially invited to participate in the study. If you agree, you are invited to complete an online survey that contains multiple choice questions.

The online survey is anticipated to take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Depending on your responses to the survey and your availability, you may be asked to be interviewed via Skype or in-person. The interview is voluntary, and anticipated to last approximately 45 minutes and may be audio-taped.

Participate in this study is completely voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential at all times during and after the study.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me via phone or email:

-Cell Phone: 805-208-5126

-Email: ckawaguc@usc.edu

Thank you for your participation,

Catherine Kawaguchi

University of Southern California

You may access the survey at the following link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/femalesuperintendents