

I AM A CHAMELEON IN PEARLS:
HOW THREE SELECT FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS PERCEIVE THEIR
PROFESSIONAL LIVES

A Record of Study

by

CATHERINE AGNES RYAN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August 2012

Major Subject: Education Administration

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Gwen Webb-Hasan Virginia Collier
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ABSTRACT

I Am a Chameleon in Pearls: How Three Select Female Superintendents Perceive Their
Professional Lives.

(August 2012)

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The public school superintendent is the least progressive position in education at integrating women and balancing the scales of equitable representation. Statistical data indicates there are far fewer females than males serving as superintendents. Current statistics show women make up: 1) over 70 percent of all public school educators; 2) nearly half of all principals; and 3) almost 60 percent of all central office administrators. Yet today, female superintendents in our nation total only 20 percent.

Despite the perceived oppression of the marginalized, gender study research on women in the superintendent/ Chief Financial Officer (CFO) position is limited and built on a narrowly focused foundation. Most of the work on this topic has been done to study the barriers women encounter when attempting to become a public school administrator, rather than to explore their role as a modern day superintendent/ CFO. The purpose of this qualitative study will be to build on prior research, which has only begun to expose the qualitative and narrative aspects of research, and delve into the daily professional lives of

three female superintendents. The study further explored their experiences as a female superintendent/ CFO in a male dominated profession.

The findings of the study support that it is time to remove the institutional and personal stillness and allow women to share their stories concerning the barriers they encountered in attaining the superintendency, as well as how they continue to overcome barriers in the active role of superintendent/ CFO. The benefit of this study will be to serve as a vessel for these pioneering females to show that their perceptions and lives as a female superintendent are stories worth sharing.

DEDICATION

I am forever grateful to the many people who provided support and encouragement during this record of study, and I personally thank you for the impact you have made on my life. However, no two stand out in my mind more than my parents. I dedicate this record of study to my father and mother who instilled the importance of education in me, and for providing me the needed support (and often times nagging) to meet this goal. Without their encouragement, belief and confidence in me, this milestone in my life would have never happened.

Mom and Dad, the faith you have in me is far more than what I have for myself. Thank you for the countless times you prayed for me and for my journey as a person and a professional. You taught me from the beginning to dream big and live large. Though I was not always the polite southern young lady you hoped for, I know you two are the president and vice president of my fan club. I cannot thank you enough for believing in me and for taking out a second, and probably third, mortgage on your house to pay for my undergraduate schooling. You were, and still remain to this day, my heroes. Though it is not a degree from Notre Dame, I know you will still show everyone at church what your baby girl, the doctor, accomplished. I even think you may grow a soft spot in your heart for my beloved Aggies. God truly blessed me with both of you as parents. My cup overflows.

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I also want to extend my sincere gratitude to the three ladies who were brave enough to step forward and share their amazing experiences as a female superintendent/CFO. Thank you for reminding me of what a remarkable profession we serve. More than you will ever know, I appreciate the impact you have made on my life, as well as the lives of so many others. When I grow up I hope to be just like you.

Lastly, I want to thank my husband and family. Though it may sound crazy, I learned the most from them. They taught me to never give up on a dream and to aspire to my greatness. I know each of you is proud of me in your own way. Thank you for our journey; for without it, I would not be the confident woman I am today.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The role of the public school superintendent/ Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is complex and varies from district to district. Effective superintendents of schools must be well acquainted with financial, operational and political leadership, as well as equipped with skills in leading improvement for teaching and learning (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Today's school superintendents work more than ever in a complex, multifaceted environment full of difficulty (Patterson, 2007). Much like a juggler, school superintendent/ CFOs must balance budgets, community members, school boards, administrative teams and teachers, not to mention their own personal obligations. Who are these jugglers of so many demands?

Superintendents are the Chief Executive/ Financial Officer of public school districts, and just as in the corporate world, most of these positions are held by men. According to Tallerico (2000), the superintendency in public schools is primarily a male-dominated profession. The average description of a superintendent is a married, middle aged, White male who for the most part, shares common values and opinions (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

Unlike the classrooms of our schools, the superintendent position is the least progressive at integrating women and balancing the scales of equitable representation

(Tallerico, 2000). Often referred to as a gender stratified executive position (Bjork, 1999), the superintendency is a complex political position in which men are 40 times more likely than their female counterparts to advance from teaching to the top leadership position in the school district (Skrla, 1999). Current research shows women make up: 1) over 70 percent of all public school educators (85 percent of elementary and 56 percent of secondary teachers); 2) nearly half of all principals (52 percent elementary and 22 percent of secondary principals); and 3) almost 60 percent of all central office administrators (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Institute of Educational Sciences, 2007). Yet at the beginning of 2000, women comprised only 13.2 percent of the nation's superintendent positions (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). By 2007, the number of female superintendents increased to 20 percent; as where it still remains today (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2007; Porterfield, 2011; American Association of School Administrators, 2011). The latest statistics in Texas mirror a similar trend with 214 of the state's 1,144 superintendents being female, or 19 percent (Content Providers, LLC, 2011; Texas Education Agency, 2011). Although both national and state statistics reveal minor growth, women are still slow to make headway and continue to be vastly underrepresented in the role of public school superintendent/ CFO.

During the first few decades of the 1900s, women experienced some success in acquiring superintendent positions in the United States. This time in history appeared to be the beginning of a promising journey in administrative and superintendent roles for women. According to Blount (1998), women held 28 percent of the nation's county superintendent positions in the 1930s. Significantly, this is 8% higher than the current

statistic (Porterfield, 2011; American Association of School Administrators, 2011). In spite of the fact that the Office of Civil Rights has prohibited discrimination based on sex since 1964 (Title VII, Section 86.51, OCR, US Department of Health and Human Services) a severe gender based discrepancy continues to subsist in the public school superintendency.

In 1909, after her appointment as the first woman superintendent of the Chicago public schools, Ella Flagg Young stated:

(Superintendency) is a woman's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greater part of the work and yet be denied leadership. As the first woman to be placed in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show critics and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man. (as cited in Shakeshaft, 1989, p.18)

However, one hundred years later no significant change to women's presence in the superintendency has occurred (Blount, 1998). Ideally, women's presence in the superintendency should closely correspond to the presence of women in education overall (McGovern-Robinett & Ovando, 2003).

Blount (1998) further concluded that between 1873 and the turn of the century, the teaching profession became and remained women's work while men dominated the administrative positions. Furthermore, Blount (1998) suggests that these socially constructed gender roles have been maintained for well over a century in spite of volumes of research documenting the existence of a disparity. As a result, a statistically representative number of women serving as public school superintendent/ CFO remain the rare exception rather than the norm.

Statement of the Problem

Statistical data and percentages indicate there are far fewer females in the superintendent/ CFO position than their male counterparts. It is hypothesized that women are being underutilized as public school superintendents/CFOs. In order to understand the perceived reasons for the underutilization of females as public school superintendents/ CFOs, it is necessary to first understand the apparent barriers which exist for women who aspire to this administrative position.

According to Bell (1988), women are overlooked for superintendent positions based on gender or as a result of a stereotypically constructed role of the superintendent called “maleness.” Bell (1988) explains:

Given a general cultural preference for male leaders in our society the tradition of male leadership in schools, and the predominantly male membership of school boards, the most persuasive characteristic a candidate for superintendent could possess seems to be maleness. Maleness signifies to board members shared language and experiences, predictability, connection with the power structure, and leadership that satisfies stereotyped preferences. (p. 50)

Whether male or female, superintendents must learn the social and professional norms of this unique position. However, unlike their male counterparts, females must go a step further and learn how to balance femininity and masculinity. In short, they must learn the intricacies of “maleness.”

In addition to navigating the inherent tensions of the socially constructed superintendency, women appear to face a myriad of barriers when trying to access the position. According to Kimmel (1993), one component of this discrimination can be accredited to the societal perceptions that women take care of the children and men take care of the business. It seems evident that equal representation in the superintendency

does not exist. Women who pursue the superintendency might come to the conclusion they are operating in a system plagued with both societal and inherent barriers.

Regardless of the types of perceived barriers, the underrepresentation of females in the superintendent/ CFO profession is undeniable. Where women find themselves within the organizational structure is extremely important for upward mobility (Skrla, 2000). Theories exist that may help shed light on the gender discrepancy. Some theorists claim the barriers females encounter in seeking the public school superintendency include:

- omission from the *Good Old Boy Network*;
- minimal encouragement to move to this position;
- limited professional mentorship;
- constrained access / limited mobility;
- lack of financial savvy (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Miller, Washington, & Fiene, 2006; Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

Omission from the *Good Old Boy Network*

Omission from the *Good Old Boy Network* refers to an invisible network of males and male dominated attitudes. As explained by Shakeshaft (1999), the good old boy network is a phenomena designed to promote men in order to keep women from attaining certain social or professional positions. Moody (1983) suggests the superintendency is not immune to this arrangement and has long been perceived as a private club with access controlled by a structure of “old boy” networks. According to Moody (1983), the “old boy” network appears to serve as an informal alliance among

men to promote one another to top positions. Hill and Ragland (1995) write that, “Men act as gatekeepers, in which deals are often made and agreements cut before many women know the positions are available. The good old boy network exists so strongly in many school districts that many men can tell you their number in line to the superintendency” (Hill & Ragland, 1995, p.11).

Minimal Encouragement to Move to This Position

Additionally, Shakeshaft (1999) claims that another barrier which exists for women is the lack of encouragement to pursue the superintendency position. Women feel no support for wanting to balance their role of mothering and partnering with the professional role of being a superintendent. Grogan (1996) claims that without balance these discourses will collide at times and result in a sense of fragmentation. It is at this pivotal time women need encouragement to persevere. Due to the minimal words of encouragement, women most often feel alone or as if they are the only one in this type of administrative quandary (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Often, due to the perceived loneliness and lack of support, some women choose to avoid embarking on this field or leave the field shortly after entering it.

Limited Professional Mentorship

Another barrier faced by women is the limited access to sponsorship and mentors. It seems quality mentorship programs that focus both on the female in the profession and the female as a person are virtually nonexistent (Gilmour & Kinsella, 2008). Even though it is found mentoring can enhance a person’s success in a job

position, worthwhile mentoring that cultivates females in top administrative roles is hard to find.

Constrained Access / Limited Mobility

Although today's society is considered to be highly mobile, many women claim mobility as an obstacle for entering the superintendent's arena. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) report mobility is a bigger obstacle for women than for their male counterparts. They found married women most often elect not to move in order to protect their husband's current career, ensure more stability for their children and to maintain an extended support network. Most married or coupled women do not want to partake in a commuter relationship and will maintain a current non-superintendency position rather than live apart.

Lack of Financial Savvy

Current research shows women perceive themselves to lack financial literacy and are alarmed to voice a concern for their limited financial sophistication (Bernard, 2010). Many females feel they lack the rudimentary understanding of financial basics, investment know-how and budget construction/ dissemination details. This lack of knowledge has serious and multiple implications. First, it can deter female educators who are already concerned by multiple burdens of the top administrative role from entering the arena. Furthermore, a veteran female administrator may look at the financial obstacles as too ominous to handle and return to a different avenue in her professional career.

Giving these barriers associated with being a chief financial officer further validity, academic research shows that women have far less confidence than men when it comes to managing their finances-- even women who have high-powered careers, lofty titles and decent salaries (Petach, 2009). And if it is not a lack of confidence preventing women from getting savvy about money-management, it is often a shortage of time or interest (Bernard, 2010).

Not all women lack financial skills, of course, and many may simply lack time. Studies show that women do not find money and investing as interesting as men do (Kambil, 2010). Women also prefer to learn about money in person or in groups with others in their situation (collaborative learning), as opposed independently researching the matter (Kambil, 2010). Despite the avenue for learning, one thing remains clear-- if women want to be successful in today's administrative arena, they must become astute chief financial officers and fully understand the complexities of the financial game and all it encompasses.

Other Barriers

Still, other researchers depict another barrier that women face when aspiring to the superintendency as the *glass ceiling*; an unacknowledged discriminatory barrier that prevents women from rising to higher positions of power and responsibility within an organization (Glass, 2000; Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001; Ottawa Business Journal Staff, 2009). However, Eagly and Carli (2007) proposed that rather than one barrier (glass ceiling), a "labyrinth" is a more fitting depiction of the barriers women face. The authors argued that women do not face one final impenetrable barrier

to the superintendency but rather a series of complex challenges throughout their careers that ultimately precludes them from the position.

Another stumbling feature for women is that the superintendency is not taking advantage of the unique features a female can bring to the position. Rather than focusing on the positive aspects of females, negative concerns are often showcased. One such concern for women is their age and limited prior experience in an administrative position (Glass, 2000). For the most part, women are appointed to their first administrative position later in life than men. According to Glass (2000), men generally begin their administrative experience at or around the age of 30 whereas females typically enter the administrative arena a decade later in life. Where women spend an average of fifteen plus years in the classroom before seeking an administrative position, their male counterparts spend less than half that time (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). The traditional resume of most aspiring superintendents is one that showcases an individual who has moved from the classroom to campus level administrator followed by a stint of central office experience. Following this traditional path places many women in their early 50s looking for their first superintendent position. At an age when many are preparing for retirement, school trustees are often apprehensive to offer a new career with this type of individual (Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

Of the many factors implicated in the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency, another alarming dynamic is the hesitancy of school boards to hire female superintendents (Glass, 2000). Bourisaw and Dana (2006) explained this as the “gatekeepers” to the superintendency; school boards alone determine who has access to

the position. According to Bourisaw and Dana (2006), women are often omitted from the interview process by school boards and never given the opportunity to compete head-to-head against their male counterparts. Bell (1988) argues that some school board trustees are not ready for women to serve in the role of superintendent because they worry about the woman's ability to be the sole leader of a school district. Pierce (1974) used the term microaggression to explain this subtle form of discrimination.

Microaggression can be defined as automatic actions of disregard from conscious or unconscious attitudes which convey insensitivity for a person's identity (Pierce, 1974; Sue, et. al., 2007).

Glass (2000) found consistent findings when researching the question, "Where are all the women superintendents?" The findings of his study revealed:

- Women are not in positions that normally lead to the superintendent chair; thus taking it years longer to reach the superintendency.
- Due to personal life situations, women are not entering superintendent preparation programs at the same young age as men.
- Women place personal reasons (marriage, family) before career which delays one's pace to the superintendency.
- Women enter the field of education to serve as teachers. They stay in the teaching role far longer than their male counterparts.
- Women enter the administrative profession too late in their professional career.

While the array of barriers listed above have been examined in the literature, it is still unclear how, despite these overwhelming obstacles, women achieve and succeed in

the superintendent/ CFO's chair. Furthermore, past research has not fully exposed the qualitative voice of the pioneering women who have, with the existence of great barriers, successfully attained the position of superintendent and continue to remain successful in today's redefined role of superintendent/ CFO. The personal accounts of obtaining the superintendency as a female and maintaining the position of superintendent/ CFO are still deficient in current research. In order for research to be enhanced in this area, more thorough qualitative studies of the professional lives of successful female superintendents/ CFOs must be chronicled.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Women's studies sociologist and feminist theorist, Dorothy E. Smith wrote:

Let us be clear that we are not talking about prejudice or sexism as a particular bias against women or as a negative stereotype of women. We are talking about the consequences of women's exclusion from the full share in the making of what becomes treated as our culture. We are talking about the consequences of silence, an absence, and non-presence. What is there spoken, sung, written, made emblematic in art-and treated as general, universal, unrelated to a particular position or a particular sex as its source and standpoint, is in fact partial, limited, located in a particular position and permeated by special interest and concerns. (as cited in Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 151)

Feminist theory can be defined as the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse; it aims to understand the nature of gender inequality (Brabeck & Brown, 1997). It is a theory that examines women's social roles and lived experiences. While providing a critique of social relations, feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights, interests and issues (Pollock, 2001).

Showalter (1988) described the development of feminist theory as having a number of phases: 1) feminist critique, 2) gynocritics, and 3) gender theory.

Feminist Critique

In the first phase, feminist critique is defined as the process of examination. This is the phase where the researcher examines or inspects the ideologies behind literary phenomena.

Gynocritics

In the second phase, gynocritics, the researcher produces textual meaning and gives a framework for the analysis of women's literature to develop new models based on the study of female experiences. Gynocritics studies literature written about females, by females, whose ideology is to integrate the female experience into literary research (Grogen & Kreiswirth, 1997).

Gender Theory

Showalter's third and final phase is called gender theory. This is where the ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system are explored. Gender theory is the analysis of social and cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity, not the actuality of being male or female. It investigates the definitions and meanings that society has put on these terms.

The feminist perspective has also been employed by many researchers to frame and comprehend the experiences of women in educational leadership (Young & Skrla, 2003). Feminist theory can be described as a theory which aims to expose and understand the nature of gender inequality (Smith, 1999). According to Smith (1999),

feminist research is the distinction between unmasking the world as we experience it and the world as we want to know it. Smith (1999) further elaborates that mainstream sociology has not touched on real women's experiences in male dominated areas. Research needs actual representation, not just a consciousness of it.

Anderson and Collins (2004) further support the notion of feminist research by claiming women are often an outsider group looking in. If women are going to be a true part of the "in", then research must expose this lacking voice. Anderson and Collins (2004) support the earlier works of Gilligan (1993) who maintained for far too long women have been treated like men in professional situations, and it is time for a different voice to be heard.

The generation and production of knowledge has been an important part of feminist theory. Yet, knowledge is only the beginning. It is time to not only expose women's methods of attaining knowledge, but to reveal the actual knowledge women possess as well. Feminist research must continue to dispel society's patriarchy views of females and to expel the matriarchal views from the actual woman.

The researcher's qualitative study, approached from the feminist perspective and supported with path analytical interviews (describe and explain), as well as naturalistic observations, sought to explore the notion that women have, for far too long, been marginalized because of their gender. A feminist perspective is a central part of research on women in educational administration (Shakeshaft, 1989). By gaining a greater understanding of the gender discrepancy within the superintendency, educational communities will have the opportunity to eliminate such inequalities. This study

hypothesized the belief that equality and equity for females, who have been intentionally or unintentionally omitted from reaching the position of superintendent/ CFO, is valued and desired. Critical examination of the causes for the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency from a feminist perspective was paired with the personal stories and experiences of female superintendents. In this sense, the unique experiences of women superintendents were highlighted in the context of objective research. The study and the researcher embraced appropriate ways women, who serve as a superintendent/ CFO, could share their personal accounts of how they perceive their professional lives and their overall careers.

Purpose of the Study

Quantitative data clearly shows that women are underrepresented in the superintendency (Glass & Franceshini, 2007). In addition to the numerical descriptions of women in the superintendency, there is a significant amount of research listing the barriers they encounter in attaining the position (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Miller, Washington, & Fiene, 2006; Grogan & Brunner, 2005). While it is important to understand the nature of the barriers, it would also be helpful to examine how, despite the underrepresentation, women overcome these barriers to and within the superintendency. It is further necessary to research and analyze how women are redefining themselves as school district's chief financial officers.

The study of women in the superintendency only began 20 years ago (Grogan, 2003). Edmunds (2008) reported, "Although there is a growing body of research on female superintendents, there is still a paucity of information on how female

superintendents lead” (p. 2). In response to this paucity, Katz (2006) argued that a greater body of research needs to be conducted with women to learn how they access, maintain and thrive in their positions. Therefore, a need exists for qualitative research to explore women’s true experiences with perceived barriers to and within today’s redefined role of superintendent/ CFO.

Gender studies on women in administrative roles is limited and built on a narrowly focused foundation (Bjork, 2000). Most of the research on this topic has been done to unveil the barriers women encounter when attempting to become a public school superintendent. The purpose of this qualitative study is to build on previous research, which has been limited primarily to describing the barriers and obstacles (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Miller, Washington, & Fiene, 2006; Grogan & Brunner, 2005). This study contributes to current research findings by exploring whether women superintendents/ CFOs acknowledge that barriers exist, and if so, how they define, explain and overcome today’s barriers as both superintendent and chief financial officer. Furthermore, this study delves into the daily professional lives of three female superintendents in the state of Texas and seeks to place their personal stories and experiences into the context of gender barriers to and within an active superintendency.

Using a feminist research perspective, this qualitative study examines the research and testimonies of three female superintendents/ CFOs in the state of Texas and challenges the dominant perception that men lead and women teach (McGovern-Robinett & Ovando, 2003). Brunner (2002) concludes that there is “more value added than lost to the superintendency discourse” (p.239) when research is focused on women.

It is the aim of this study to contribute descriptions of current successful practices being utilized by female superintendents/ CFOs who are making conscious efforts to overcome barriers that have been placed in their professional path. This study further explores the following recurrent themes in the existing literature on barriers to women becoming superintendents/ CFOs:

- omission from the *Good Old Boy Network*;
- minimal encouragement to move to this position;
- limited professional mentorship;
- constrained access / limited mobility;
- lack of financial savvy (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Miller, Washington, & Fiene, 2006; Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

By gaining a greater understanding of the existence of gender inequality within the superintendency, educational communities will have the opportunity to eliminate these inequalities in the public school sector. Thus supporting the belief that, “once we have a significant body of work investigating how women are faring in the role as superintendent; we can help to dispel the idea that if women aren’t in the position in large numbers, they must not be able to do the job” (Katz, 2005, p.2).

It is important for past and present female superintendents to relay their personal accounts as a method to help overhaul the barriers for other women who aspire to this position. Literature describes barriers such as the glass ceiling, search consultants and school boards, career paths, unique features for females and the lack of mentoring programs (Glass, 2000; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). It is imperative to seek methods to

understand how women have successfully overcome these barriers. By giving a voice to their stories, the experiences of these pioneering women can be a powerful tool for women who aspire to the same position. The personal testimonies of the barriers encountered and combated by these veterans will help to better prepare the next generation of females who seek this top educational position. Additionally, this study will serve as a vessel for these pioneering women to show that though small in numbers, they can be large in impact.

Significance of the Study

There exists a need to determine why the untapped resources of women leaders, both educational and financial, are not being utilized fully in the Texas public school superintendency. Education deserves the benefit of the diverse perspectives and experiences that different kinds of educators can bring to school administration (Tripses, 2004). There is obviously talent and potential among the teaching ranks of which the majority are women. This pool of talent should be tapped equally and equitably by our profession in seeking leaders of our educational institutions (Tallerico, 2000). Rather than oppressing the marginalized, it is beyond time to create equitable access to and within the superintendency. It is time to remove the institutional and professional barriers, and allow women to define themselves and share in the full access to all professional discourse.

Research Questions

The specific questions to be addressed in this study include:

1. In encountering past and modern-day barriers and overcoming said obstacles, how do three select female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas perceive their professional lives and the overall profession?
2. What are the unexposed stories of three select female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas?

To address these research questions and explore the barriers, and the overcoming of said obstacles, to the superintendency as identified through the eyes and lives of three female superintendents in the state of Texas, this qualitative study made use of a path-analytic (describe and explain) interview approach and naturalistic observations.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of terms used in this study are provided below to make available for the reader an understanding of how the terms are used for the purposes of this study.

1. Barrier: Any factor or obstacle that hinders career advancement to the next level in administration or management (Shakeshaft, 1998).
2. Career Paths: Jobs which superintendents have before becoming superintendents.
3. Chief Financial Officer: The corporate executive having financial authority to make appropriations and authorize expenditures for a firm. One who is responsible for overseeing the financial activities of an entire company.
4. Educational Leader, Educational Administrator/ Administration: Traditional and formal public school leadership positions like assistant principal, principal and superintendent.

5. Equality: Rights, treatments, quantities or value equal to all others in a specific group.
6. Equity: Actions, treatment of others or a general condition characterized by justice, fairness and impartiality.
7. Gatekeeper: This term can be the school boards themselves or other professional search firms hired by school boards to search and recruit candidates for the superintendency (Chase & Bell, 1990; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).
8. Gender Bias: The social and cultural constructions of society in the United States that cause the society to have different beliefs about the abilities and accepted roles of men and women. Gender bias encompasses the inequalities of social practices for males and females (Rhode, 2003; Ridgeway, 2001).
9. Glass Ceiling: An unacknowledged discriminatory barrier that prevents women from rising to positions of power and responsibility, as within a corporation (Glass, 2000; Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001; Ottawa Business Journal Staff, 2009).
10. Good Old Boy Network: The informal system of networking between men whereby they help each other get to the top of an organization (Rhode, 2003).
11. Mentor: A person whose functions are to make introductions or to train a person to move effectively through the system; to provide guidance and knowledge (Gilmour & Kinsella, 2008).

12. Perception: The impressions and feelings of the participant that become part of the data to be used in attempting to understand a setting (Patton, 1990).
13. Recruiting and Hiring Practices: The procedures that are followed by hiring firms, school boards and districts when hiring new superintendents.
14. Superintendent and Superintendency: The traditional and formal role of the leader of a public school district with kindergarten through twelfth grade education; serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the school district (McAdams, 2004).
15. Underrepresentation: To contain a disproportionately small number of representatives of something or someone; to present as smaller, less widespread or less important than it actually is.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations refer to research bias and research methodology that may compromise the findings of the study. Limitations cannot and should not be controlled by the researcher. The following limitations may be applied to this study:

1. Unlike quantitative research which is logical, systematic, replicable and empirical; qualitative research approaches involve assumptions rather than precise conclusions. More concerned with understanding *what* is happening than *how* it is happening, qualitative research employs no controls while attempting to understand the entire environment.
2. Qualitative research is not understood well by classical researchers.

3. Qualitative findings are often due to chance and can be perceived as subjective in nature.
4. Subjectivity in qualitative research can lead to procedural problems.
5. Ambiguities, which are inherent in the research of humans, can be difficult to shoehorn into a finite number of classifications.
6. Qualitative findings are often more difficult to extend to a wider population with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analysis.
7. The effect of the observer in the environment on the actions of the subjects.

It is the assumption that the participants offered honest answers and display genuine actions throughout this research study. However, the presence of the observer may have altered normal behavior to a degree; triangulated data was used to minimize the impact of this occurrence.

Design Controls of the Study

Basic design controls serve as the foundation for establishing research. Some design controls are inherent characteristics of a study and cannot be changed. Still other basic design controls are selected or determined by the researcher (e.g., subjects who will be studied, number to be studied and location of the study). Selecting appropriate values or characteristics for these basic design controls is essential to achieve a safe, effective and context sensitive design. The following design controls may be apparent in this study:

1. The study reviewed only women superintendents/ CFOs in the state of Texas, limiting the generalizability of the results to this state. Furthermore, the study did not include female superintendents/ CFOs from private schools.
2. The focus of the study was primarily on specific areas that affect women's progression to and within the superintendency, not all phenomena that prevent women from becoming superintendents/ CFOs.
3. The sample homogenous characteristics of participants may have also limited the study. The participants were present and/or former female superintendents/ CFOs in the state of Texas.
4. Though the sample size was limited, the study did not attempt to generalize that the findings from these three participants represent or speak for all female superintendents/ CFOs.
5. Personally serving as a school superintendent/ CFO and female researcher while studying female superintendents may be considered by some as a monocular view control. However, it should be noted that for years, researchers have studied their own gender groups and professional affiliations as well and assigned objective outcomes to their findings.

Researcher's Perceived Summary of Chapters

Chapter I

In this chapter, the problem is defined and the purpose of the study is explored. The problem is two-fold. First, women face a barrage of barriers when attempting to obtain and maintain a superintendent/ CFO position and second, women are

underrepresented in the superintendency position. The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide an authentic contribution to the literature on how select female superintendents/ CFOs perceive their professional lives and their overall careers. Furthermore, Chapter I consists of the standardized format for showcasing the introduction, research problem, background information, theoretical framework, purpose of the study, significance of the study, the research questions, a description of unique terms associated with the study, limitations and design controls of the study.

Chapter II

Chapter II presents a review of the related literature focusing on the barriers and obstacles females encounter on their path to the superintendency and the role, historical and contemporary, of the female superintendent/ CFO. This chapter also expands on the literature findings which address successful strategies for overcoming the perceived barriers.

Chapter III

Chapter III provides a description of the research design and methodology used in this study. The qualitative research methodology was used because of the nature of the study. Chapter III further details the design of study, method of study, selection of participants, instrumentation and data collection protocol, survey structure, potential interview and observation design, as well as the analysis of informational findings format.

Chapter IV

Chapter IV delineates the results of the study by using rich descriptions of the experiences shared by each participant. The stories of the women who participated, including a description of their background, career paths and experiences in becoming a superintendent/ CFO and thereafter was discussed in this chapter.

Chapter V

The last chapter, Chapter V, offers conclusions based on the lived experiences of the selected participants. Finally, findings, implications and suggestions for further research were described.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Early 1900s Chicago Public School's Superintendent, Ella Flagg Young, stated:

Women are destined to rule the schools of every city...In the near future we will have more women than men in the executive charge of the vast educational system. It is a woman's natural field, and she is no longer to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership. It will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show critics and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man. (Glass, 2000)

It is no secret that women outnumber men in the public school teaching field as well as in educational graduate school programs. Despite Ella Flagg Young's dream, women are still vastly underrepresented in the role of superintendent. A magnitude of research shows the disproportionate representation of females to males in this area. The research even documents a number of reasons why women are underrepresented. However, the research does not always explain how, against the odds, some women do become superintendents/ CFO's and highly successful ones at that.

The literature review provides a historical examination, along with a description of the current state of women in education. It describes the barriers and obstacles which have shaped the reality that males dominate leadership positions in education. Following a historical overview of the barriers to women in education and educational leadership, the review of literature focuses on the contemporary barriers women must

combat. These barriers were selected for the study because of their repeated appearance in the literature and because each one can occur while obtaining and/or possessing the position of superintendent/ CFO. The later part of the chapter presents, according to research findings, an overview of successful strategies used to overcome barriers and obstacles. Chapter II concludes with a summation of the superintendency position in the twenty-first century.

A Historical Perspective of the Barriers Faced by Women

Hill and Ragland (1995) state, “As a necessary step to achieve success, the baggage of the past must be examined to find individual and gender-specific ways to progress” (p. 7). A number of different models can be found in the literature that explains how barriers to women in educational administration originated.

According to Tallerico and Blount (2004), men dominated the teaching profession from the colonial times until the early twentieth century. It was not until the late 1800s that the male/female ratios of teachers were nearly balanced, progressing in the early 1900s to where women held 70% of all teaching positions. The peak for females in education emerged in 1920, with 86% of all school positions held by women (Blount, 1998). The pendulum of school teaching had finally shifted from a man’s role to a woman’s profession. Historians call this the “feminization of teaching.” During this early time, the feminization force did transcend into numerous school administrative positions. In fact, there was a time in the early twentieth century when women were the majority of leaders in small, rural school districts (Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

However, between 1920 and 1970, several events contributed to the reduction in

representation of women administrators. The reduction of females can be attributed to a lack of: 1) strong women's movements after the passing of the nineteenth amendment granting women's suffrage; 2) school consolidation, that increased the number of large school districts; and/or 3) the focus of leadership and management studies on men (Schmuck, 1996). Marshall (2000), as well as Brunner and Grogan (2007), note that during the late 1960s and early 1970s, researchers sought answers to explain the lack of women in administrative roles and theorized that many women did not want to go against the established norms of the time. During this time, it was feared that females who went against the societal driven "woman's place" stereotype would be portrayed as one who was a maverick of social norms or even worse, a rebel of her gender (Dawley, Hoffman, & Smith, 2004).

Estler (1975) described a like philosophy as the woman's place model, a model that historically assumed that men and women were taught to perceive their roles as distinct and different. In the early and mid-1900s, society did not encourage young females to pursue the role of career planner; especially a career of long hours that would take the wife and mother away from her household obligations. Women were told their place was at home raising the children (Sharp & Walter, 2004; Loder, 2005).

Other theories hypothesized that due to the feminization of teaching, some local and state officials created the domain of school administration, a realm reserved from the beginning for men. Men were then seen as the authority figures, controlling the labors of women just as fathers and husbands had done in the home (Blount, 1998). As male administrators assumed more control in education, male teachers felt less comfortable

doing women's work and either left teaching or found ways to enter the predominately male world of administration. This did not in itself cause the demise of women in administration. The aftermath of World War II had a devastating impact on the proportion of women in educational administration. The G.I. Bill of Rights provided grants for scholastic expenses, creating an influx of men entering the superintendent position. Many veterans used the G.I. Bill funds to obtain administrative credentials and thus respectable salaries. Not only had men been enticed into education, they had also been tracked into leadership positions at the expense of women's opportunities, often with federal government support (Blount, 1998). This created a backlash against women and a rigid realignment of gender roles in schools, from which there has been little recovery to the present.

With the turn of the 20th century, female integration into the superintendency began to increase significantly, from about 9% in 1910 to a high of 28% in 1930. During the decades to follow, however, the role became extremely segregated by sex, with female representation reaching an all-time low of 3% in 1970 (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). After 1970 a more promising trend emerged. In 1970 only one woman held a state superintendency; whereas in 1998, there was evidence of a 32% increase, with seventeen women holding the position (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). These two researchers believed that advances made during the civil rights initiatives set the stage for the increase in female superintendents. Furthermore, women in the workplace were significantly affected by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 which established the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. The commission found that prejudice against

minorities and women was the greatest barrier to their advancement. Although laws now exist to protect women from discrimination as they move through the layers of education, the data does not support that there has been much progress over the years since these laws were enacted. In 2003, women constituted 46.6% of the U.S. workforce but only held 10% of the senior management positions in Fortune 500 companies (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). Although there has been a slight increase in the number of women serving in the positions of school leadership, the overall profile for female superintendents/ CFOs during the past century shows very little growth (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

The data presented above indicates that historically there have been a disproportionately low number of female superintendents in relation to the teaching force. Blount (1998) suggests that numbers must also be associated with the meanings people attach to their actions in order to capture an accurate understanding of the statistical findings. Moreover, Blount (1998) contends that numbers are used as a political weapon in the field of education. Therefore, they must be understood as a part of the context and language of the time rather than as ends in themselves.

Contemporary Barriers and Obstacles

To fully understand the superintendency and the dominant barriers for women within it, a brief review of the major contemporary barriers and obstacles women face is imperative. Moreover, this section will provide a perspective on how the perceived barriers and obstacles affect a woman and her struggles with gender discrepancy within the superintendent arena.

Gender Disparity

The disparity between men and women in the superintendency is paradoxical; the field of education is dominated by women serving as teachers, elementary principals and central office administrators, while the superintendency is dominated by men (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Institute of Educational Sciences, 2007). The absence of women in the highest position of a school district is unquestionably a concern for females seeking the superintendency. Education benefits from the diverse perspectives and experiences that different kinds of educators can bring to school administration. Children should see both genders in the top leadership role. The inequalities in the achievement of men versus women should not be ignored (Tallerico, 2000).

Women comprise 51% of the total population in the United States. It would therefore be practical to assume women should also comprise 51% of the positions of each educational category, including the superintendent position (Shakeshaft, 1998). However, studies indicate 13% - 20% of superintendent positions are held by women and over 70% of public educators are women (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Porterfield, 2011; Institute of Educational Sciences, 2007). According to these statistics women are overrepresented in teaching and underrepresented in top administration (Shakeshaft, 1998; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Porterfield, 2011).

A large body of research exists about the barriers and obstacles that prevent women from entering the realm of educational administration. According to Hess (2002) and Bourisaw and Dana (2006), one such barrier is the underutilization of females as practicing leaders; because for the past seventy years, this role has been a

male dominated arena. As noted by Irby and Brown (1998), “It is important that women’s current poor representation in formal school leadership not be perceived as an inherent condition of the institution but rather as the result of social interaction that has unfolded in specific historical contexts.”

Shakeshaft (1989) separates the barriers women face versus their male counterparts into two forms: internal and external. Internal barriers are personal and must be overcome by intrinsic change, while external barriers require change at the social and institutional level. According to Shakeshaft (1989), most often it is not the intrinsic qualities that a woman possesses, but rather the external barriers that prevent her from achieving in educational administration. External barriers like recruitment and selection practices favor the hiring of men and ensure that men are more likely than women to become educational leaders (Tallerico, 2000; Miller, Washington, & Fiene, 2006). Additional obstacles identified by Grogan and Brunner (2005) include the balance of professional and personal life. The dissonance between professional and personal life often creates challenge for women leaders. Women face preconceived negative beliefs from employers and society about their ability to manage the responsibilities of both home and family while being an effective administrator, a question most likely not faced by men (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Even though much of the literature on successful administrators is written *by* White males *about* White males, there is some research in existence that explores the contemporary barriers faced by females.

Glass Ceiling

In light of the historical fact that women held more leadership positions in the early 1900s than their counterparts do today, many theorists attempted to find the events or reasons causing the tide to reverse. One possible answer to the question of why such disproportionate figures exist in female representation is the glass ceiling theory (Glass, 2000). The term glass ceiling refers to the invisible factors, more than overt discrimination, that prevent women from advancing to public school leadership positions such as the superintendency (Eagley & Carli, 2007). According to Meyerson and Fletcher (2000), the glass ceiling has prevented the rise of women in educational leadership to the pinnacle position and continues to keep a large percentage of women just below this level. Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) expand this with evidence of a glass ceiling within the organizational structure of the superintendency. They suggest:

It's not solely the ceiling that's holding women back, it's the whole structure of the organization in which we work; the foundation, the beams, the walls, the very air. The barriers to advancement are not just above women, they are all around them... we must ferret out the hidden barriers to equity and effectiveness one by one. (p. 136)

In one study, women in mid-level leadership positions claimed the greatest obstacle to permeating the glass ceiling was "the systematic devaluation of women in our society" (Clark, Caffarella, & Ingram, 1999, p. 66). It is even speculated by some females that women who break through the glass ceiling will have a more difficult time succeeding in the position than their male colleagues (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001). It is considered unlikely that the glass ceiling barrier will go away easily, even though the job performance of women is most often equal to or in some

instances, greater than that of men (Giele & Stebbins, 2003). The United States and other industrial countries appear to be achieving gender equity in lower management fields. However, the equality stops at this lower level. The proportional distribution of men and women in elite leadership positions, such as the superintendency, indicates male dominance (Carli & Eagly, 2001).

Career Paths

Aside from barriers and obstacles that exist on the road to the superintendent's chair, chosen career paths can also impede the career opportunities of women. The American Association of School Administrators (2002) published the results of *The 2000 Study of the American School Superintendency*, in which 297 of the participants were women. Findings of the study provided insight into the underrepresentation of female superintendents. According to Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000), the study indicated the following:

- Women are not in professional positions that lead to the superintendency.
- Women lack superintendent credentials.
- Women are not interested in fiscal management.
- Many women lack interest in the superintendency role.
- School boards are reluctant to change their views on hiring women.
- Women enter education just to teach.
- Women enter their first administrative role later in their professional careers.

Glass (2000) investigated two major differences between male and female educators desiring to seek the superintendency. First, women are discouraged from

preparing for the superintendency and second, school boards will not hire them. While there seems to be a certain amount of anecdotal logic to these two factors, they are not completely supported by research (Glass, 2000). A woman's path to educational administration is often unplanned and serendipitous (Dawley, Hoffman, & Smith, 2004). By contrast, many men enter the profession knowing they will teach for a few years and then move upward into an administrative position (Young & McLeod, 2001). Hiring firms and school boards agree the rise to superintendency from the position of high school principal is the easiest route (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Tallerico, 2000). The infrequency of women in high school principalships again limits the number of women being considered for superintendent positions (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Brunner and Grogan (2007) found a common path among women superintendents; the path taken by many women is one that starts as a classroom teacher and is then interrupted for family reasons. When the woman returns to her profession, she again finds herself in a campus level position, which may then be followed by a principalship or specialized director position. Next, the woman may embark on the role of assistant superintendent and possibly conclude with the superintendency. Among women, the common factor in the career path to the superintendency is its interruption. This supports statistics that show women enter the superintendency with more years of campus level experience and fewer years of central office practice. Unlike women, men follow a track to the superintendency that does not include interrupting their career paths from teacher, principal, central office employee to superintendent (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Forty-three percent of women superintendents start their teaching career in elementary schools where teachers have less access to activities leading to administrative positions. For example, elementary schools offer minimal department head positions and fewer assistant principal positions than secondary schools (Gilmour & Kinsella, 2008). Future studies on the career path of women to the superintendency should explore successful routes for women who aspire to the superintendency (McDade & Drake, 2001).

Job Demands

Polnick, Reed, Funk, and Edmonson (2004) noted female superintendents are unique in the way they approach leadership, in their daily interactions, in the priorities that guide their actions, in the perceptions of them by others and in the satisfaction they derive from their work. According to Polnick, Reed, Funk, and Edmonson (2004), female leaders often devote a great deal of time to:

- creating a vision for their professional environment that will make a difference;
- establishing time in their schedule to cultivate relationships;
- building partnerships with community members on diverse levels.

Also, female administrators often devote their time to organizational planning efforts and strategic planning rather than networking or politicking (Embry, Padgett, & Caldwell, 2008).

No matter the gender of the superintendent, no one will dispute that this professional role is a time consuming job that is both physically and mentally demanding. Grogan (2003) stated:

The contemporary superintendent of public schools has few maps to guide his or her negotiation of an increasingly unpredictable environment. Ambiguous messages from a variety of public force the superintendent to be both a politically astute entrepreneur and an expert educator. (p. 117)

Grogan (2003) points out superintendents of today and tomorrow need increased expertise, knowledge, human relations and political skills. These skills are not new but with the increased attention on testing, school improvement and accountability, these skills are essential for survival (Grogan, 2003). Grogan (2003) further states:

The superintendent must be an astute politician but the focus of his or her efforts in the public arena should be on forming coalitions and garnering resources to accomplish district goals and objectives. The superintendent should be an ethical and considerate problem-solver, one who has the interest of the children utmost in his or her own mind at all times. He or she is not encouraged to put his or her own family needs first. For this reason among others, women are still absent from the position. (p. 16)

Women report as superintendents they pay a personal price when it comes to balancing their professional and personal lives (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) state the personal price women pay is greater because the superintendent career model is designed for men and the homemaker/ caretaker role is designed for women.

In a study of women's career paths in the Northwest, Wolverton and MacDonald (2004) found potential female applicants are "finding that they can be involved at the district level but avoid the pitfalls and hassles of the superintendency by taking central administrative positions" (p. 8). Superintendents must be effective managers to handle the stress and conflicts that arise in the superintendent's office (Daalen, Willemsen, & Sanders, 2006). Even though both men and women find the role of superintendent to be a stressful position, men are more likely to derive satisfaction from the job (Glass, Bjork,

& Brunner, 2000). Men appear to have the ability to focus on the global aspects of a situation while downplaying the small issues of concern; whereas women will contemplate and focus on all the small strands of one issue until a possible remedy has been sought. The ability to balance global and finite thinking, while making effective decisions, is essential for the successful superintendent.

Lack of Political Savvy within the *Good Old Boy* Network

Hill and Ragland (1995) explored new understandings and possibilities for women in educational administration. In their study, women were selected who had started their educational careers in the classroom, then moved to the principalship position, then to the superintendent position, and then even onto the state and national level. Hill and Ragland (1995) found that despite promising demographic statistics and opportunities to secure positions in educational leadership, women continued to be hampered by contemporary barriers. The first barrier preventing women from moving forward in administrative positions is described as the lack of political savvy. Hill and Ragland (1995) states:

Men act as gatekeepers, in which deals are often made and agreements cut before many women know the positions are available. The “good old boy” network exists so strongly in many school districts that many men can tell you their number in line to the superintendency. (p. 11)

Hess (2002) suggests a solution to the lack of political savvy demonstrated by female administrators. In order for a woman to be a successful administrator, Hess claims, she must go beyond the standards of politics and break through the mind-forged shackles of self doubt. Women must apply strategies that work both in natural, familiar settings as well as strategies they are not normally accustomed to managing.

Potential female superintendents must also realize the overt and covert power of the recruitment and hiring practices. School boards, for the most part, manage the search process for superintendents (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). However, professional search firms are often contracted by school boards to facilitate the process. Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) cite that both formal and informal screening processes of candidates by school boards and search firms favor men. Men are reported to be hired for personal characteristics such as (tact, charisma and connectedness), for their potential as change agents and their administrative leadership skills. Women are believed to be hired for personal characteristics such as (honesty, sincerity and truthfulness), for their potential to facilitate curriculum change and their instructional leadership skills. Interestingly, networks which support one gender over another, can help one obtain a position as superintendent (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Though one must remember the Good Old Boy network is larger and older than its female counterpart's.

Tallerico (2000) explains that the complex and unwritten process of these networks makes becoming a superintendent difficult for those who are not connected to the network, most often women. These unwritten rules involve headhunters and school board members:

- defining quality in terms of hierarchies of particular job titles;
- stereotyping by gender;
- complacency about acting affirmatively;
- hyper-valuing feelings of comfort and interpersonal chemistry with the successful candidate (Tallerico, 2000).

Conversely, this process combined with social and cultural gender biases serves as a barrier that prevents more women than men from becoming superintendents.

Lack of Quality Mentoring Programs

Gilmour and Kinsella (2008) cite the lack of quality mentoring programs as another contemporary barrier. Even though it is found that mentoring can enhance a person's success in a particular job, worthwhile mentoring that cultivates females in top administrative roles is hard to find. In the absence of mentoring, women frequently report feeling alone or as if they are the only one in this type of administrative position. As a result of this perception, some women choose to avoid embarking on this field or leave the field shortly after entering it.

A cause for concern was discovered in the research by Dana and Bourisaw (2006). They found that females may have a more difficult time working with mentors who are of the same sex. These researchers found women to be non-supportive of other women. They also found that women were accustomed and conditioned to work under the direction and leadership of men; they are not accustomed to performing work that meets the expectation of a woman CEO (p. 161). It is not uncommon for women to sabotage other women. The term for this phenomenon has been described as horizontal violence (Freire, 1970, as cited in Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). This describes the "curious behavior of members of oppressed groups who lash out at their own peers in response to oppression instead of attacking their oppressors," (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 169). It seems that low self-esteem can create a system where women attack other women in order to reduce the pain or discomfort of feeling devalued.

Despite the possible obstacles, mentoring programs can assist the aspiring superintendent by providing motivation, support, sharing experiences, making recommendations, promoting growth, acting as a good listener and helping establish strong formal and informal networks (Shakeshaft, 1989). Tallerico (2000) found that female candidates who were successful in obtaining one or more superintendencies attended to and developed multiple connections throughout regional, state-wide and national networks of experienced administrators and search consultants. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) also reported that women who aspire to increasingly stronger and more influential leadership positions can find pathways to reaching the goal considerably strengthened when they establish a strong and influential mentoring network.

Constrained Access/ Limited Mobility

Even though today's society is considered to be a mobile one, many women claim mobility as an obstacle for entering the arena of superintendent positions. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) report mobility is a bigger obstacle for women than men. They found married women most often elect not to move in order to protect their husband's current career, ensure more stability for their children's schooling and to maintain support from extended family. Often, single women are apprehensive about moving to a new community because of the unknown factors of safety, child care and the social perceptions of being single.

Relocation is still considered by 88% of female superintendents as one of the major barriers for women aspiring to the superintendency (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). To accommodate this, though slow in momentum, commuter marriages have become

more common. Twenty percent of female superintendents report making this change in their lifestyle to assume the position (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). One superintendent described the job as migrant work, packing up every few years to move to a distant community and going through the resettlement process all over again (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Limited mobility and role of spouse and parent continue to be bigger barriers for women than for men (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

A successful female superintendent must be willing and able to follow the dictates of her career path rather than the dictates of social norms. According to Cialdini and Trost (1998), social norms “are standards that are understood by members of a group, and that guide or constrain behavior without the force of law.” These norms are “descriptive” and “injunctive” (p. 151). Descriptive social norms define beliefs about what other people do; and injunctive social norms define what other people think *ought* to be done (Cialdini & Trost, 1998, p. 151). These norms are powerful influences on behavior, particularly behavior that goes against the grain of historical social norms, such as a female living apart from her spouse and family for job related purposes. Rather than battling the guilt of deviating from this social norm, many females choose to stay at home rather than relocate and separate from the family for career advancement.

Managing the Professional and Personal Components

Professional Development

Research indicates that most women do not take the traditional path to the superintendency. For many, the path is self-created, made within a context of complex personal and professional choices (Lowery & Harris, 2000; Brunner, 2007). Whatever

the chosen path, the setting of clear and specific goals early in the career is a component for success (Osga, 2005). Literature related to women and leadership suggests it is critical for women to see themselves in the role of leader (Osga, 2005) and develop a clearly defined plan of how to acquire the leadership position. According to Dawley, Hoffman, and Smith (2004), specific objectives expressed by female superintendents reveal three important components for women who are ready to apply for a superintendent position: 1) positive self-image, see oneself as the leader; 2) communicate a plan for effective leadership; and 3) showcase a wide range of professional experiences and how they relate to the superintendency. Furthermore, a female must visualize herself as a superintendent before anyone else can realize it. This idea was referred to by Moire and Wilson (1996) as *seeing is believing*; a process where one accumulates the self-confidence to seek the role of superintendent.

According to Ryan and Terzian (2009), most women enter the field of teaching committed to it for their entire professional career. Initially, few women focus on a job beyond the classroom walls. It is not until after a first college degree and years of teaching in the classroom that women start to consider a professional role outside of the classroom. Using the self-confidence they have in the classroom and channeling it into becoming a superintendent can be a valuable practice (Dawley, Hoffman, & Smith, 2004). Women must take their professional experiences gained in the classroom and use those tools to create themselves as a highly effective superintendent.

In order to be an effective superintendent, one must bridge the gap between classrooms and board rooms. A superintendent must help boards and communities focus

on instruction, proper programs for student success and decipher test scores and data.

Finally, women superintendents must never forget their origins. According to Ryan and Terzian (2009), they must use past educational experiences as a “memory bank” from which to draw remembered experiences to help manage issues and problems faced in the superintendent position.

Personal Development

Finally, women must know who they are as a person. Embry, Padgett, and Caldwell, (2008) applies a constructivist approach, popular in education today, to the self-exploration of women leaders by emphasizing the need for women to focus on identity. Vaughan and Pankake (2005) compared the leadership styles of male and female administrators and discovered each have different styles and identity. Females adopt a more democratic and participative sense of ideals compared to the autocratic or directive ones of males (Vaughan & Pankake, 2005). McGovern-Robinett and Ovando (2003) captured the experiences of women and found the following themes of leadership to be evident:

- collaborative communities developed through open doors and open ears;
- emotional investment and nurturing reap returns;
- instruction must prevail;
- children must be the focus of schools.

Downey, Papageorgiou, and Stough (2006) have noted that leaders who employ a feminine leadership model utilize an “emotional lens” as well as a “rational data lens” to function in the role of problem solver, decision maker and relationship manager.

Vaughan and Pankake (2005) labeled all leaders who encourage participation, collaboration and shared ownership as transformational or interactive leaders. These interactive leaders promote enthusiasm and confidence of others about their work by empowering them to act on their own in a risk-free environment.

Brunner (2000) used the experiences of several female superintendents to provide insight into a set of principles found most important for women superintendents to possess. Using a metaphor scenario, Brunner (2000) described these seven principles as: 1) knowing the battleground or context; 2) discarding what is not necessary; 3) choosing battles; 4) taking risks; 5) seeking retreat; 6) compressing time; and 7) exercising power. Brunner (2000) identified from the stories three other character traits possessed by effective women leaders. These traits included the ability to laugh at oneself, the ability to possess patience without worry, and the ability to be creative with improvisation. In stark contrast to male leadership styles, this form of leadership does not align with the preconceived expectations of the role of a superintendent. So are Brunner's ideas in isolation for today's superintendent? Grogan (1996) supported the same philosophy by stating:

It is my firm belief that school districts could benefit greatly from alternative approaches to leadership... if the diversity of values, attitudes, and perspectives currently being voiced in the public schools continues to challenge educators, only those leaders who are collaborative and who care deeply about children will be able to respond adequately. (p. 163)

Recognizing these contemporary barriers to success and providing women with effective ways to overcome them are important steps in increasing the number of women who will seek to hold top administrative positions. According to Coleman (2003), the

future role of superintendents will be to utilize necessary tools to overcome the barriers. Aspiring female superintendents must take a hard look at these complex issues, and develop a systemic approach to problem solving and call for educational leaders to “move away from traditional, hierarchical, control-and-command philosophies” that are pervasive in many school organizations of today (Wesson & Grady, 1994, p. 413). Shareholders must think with open minds about the new concepts and directions of this ever-progressing profession.

Strategies to Overcome Perceived Barriers

As research has noted, numerous barriers, both historical and present day, face women who aspire to become superintendents. Despite these barriers essential factors can assist women in becoming a district’s top educational leader. According to Coleman (2003) and Kowalski, Peterson, and Fusarelli (2006), the essential factors in overcoming these barriers on the quest to become a superintendent are as follows: 1) powerful motivation; 2) successful career-family configurations; 3) guidance of mentors and spouses; and 4) extraordinary perseverance.

In addition to these essential factors, Coleman (2003) identifies the following strategies for success:

- Know the environment and its educational/ administrative needs.
- Keep an optimistic attitude about the future.
- Have a clear focus of career and professional goals.
- Be able to detect the “right chemistry” with the employing shareholders.
- Observe successful superintendents, both male and female.

- Understand stereotypes and how to free oneself from their constraints.

Know the Feminist Perspective

Research supports the perspective that aspiring female superintendents should not shy away from the woman's perspective. In the early eighties, Gilligan (1993) began a movement to examine the feminine perspective by calling into question the moral development theory of Lawrence Kohlberg, the stage theories of Erik Erikson and Jean Piaget and the work of Sigmund Freud. Gilligan demonstrated these theories were developed on research done almost entirely on men. Gilligan (1993) used the exclusion of the female voice to create her own ideas on development theory by including the woman's perspective. In the field of educational administration, Oplakta (2001) mirrored Gilligan's example and developed a summary of leadership traits that are based on the experiences of women as educational leaders. Oplakta (2001) used five words to describe the feminist perspectives of leadership: collaboration, caring, power-sharing, democratic and visionary. These words were given definitions based on practices that arose from women's experiences in leadership positions.

Know One's Leadership Style

Another key component in overcoming today's barriers is to know one's leadership style. According to Grogan and Brunner (2005), many successful women use interactive leadership, practice transformational leadership, provide inclusion and nurture their environment. Preferred leadership behaviors observed in females by Dana and Bourisaw (2006) include the need for consensus, consideration of others' feelings in the work environment and the connectedness of relationships to people. Some

researchers (Johnson, 1994; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006) also believe socialization enhances certain behaviors which in turn can impact a person's leadership potential for success. For example, while girls have been encouraged to take turns, boys have been motivated to compete and win. Dawley, Hoffman, and Smith (2004) also described considerable differences in the way men and women reach a decision. They found females generally utilize an inclusive, participatory style which comes from a result of socialization while men gravitate to the polar opposite style. It is important for women to realize this participatory style may fulfill the needs of a group but may not be valued as a desired characteristic of top management.

Associate with Mentorship Programs

To combat a sense of isolation, it is important for leaders to capitalize on collaborative, teamwork and participatory management. Women in the superintendent role must seek mentors in their lives, not only professional mentors, but also professor mentors in doctoral programs, on-the-job administrative mentors, as well as personal mentors that feed the heart and soul (Johnson, et. al., 2002; Daalen, Willemsen, & Sanders, 2006). Mentors can provide varied types of support for today's educational leaders. Professor mentors acknowledge women's intellectual and leadership abilities, encourage female participants to complete doctoral programs, link them with networks and other contacts, and give them opportunities to explore another aspect of higher education (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Administrative mentors acknowledge women's leadership abilities and give them challenging administrative responsibilities with guidance and support. These mentors help the novice superintendent gain critical

administrative experience and though often challenging, they show the inexperienced superintendent that she can do the job (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

The essential nature of professional and personal mentoring is increasingly recognized. Initiatives to foster mentoring are being started by individuals and small peer groups as well as the state of Texas. The Texas Association of School Administrators now requires all new superintendents in the state to go through a mentorship program with a veteran superintendent for a minimum of one year. Coleman (2003) claims mentorships allow for the mentee to gain a broader understanding of one's place in the profession, as well as one's role within the culture.

Superintendency in the 21st Century

Grogan (1996) studied 27 women who aspired to be superintendents and asked them what made them believe they had the potential to be superintendents. Grogan's findings confirmed that women who aspired to be superintendents held feminist or alternative approaches to leadership. The women in Grogan's study acknowledged that while white male gender theory existed in educational administration, they believed there was a place for other viewpoints. The study also noted that they perceived a more tolerant attitude towards women as professional administrators first and as females second. It was not that their gender was invisible; it was just not a glaring issue. Further, the women felt they had confidence in their ability to find ways around inhibiting situations and were not likely to succumb to discouragement (Grogan, 1996).

With the challenging demands of the 21st century, a call for more flexible organizational structure and leadership styles will be needed (Edwards, 2005). In this

new organizational structure, leadership will be valued over management, and the qualities of collaboration, consensus-building and empowerment will be emphasized (Lowery & Harris, 2000). Oplakta (2001) stated the superintendent can no longer act as the sole educational authority, but rather as an influential educational leader whose authority is grounded in expertise and reaffirmed by constituents' respect and trust. In the complicated world of public education, there are increasing demands for new thinking and new leaders.

What will these new leaders be like? Ward (1997) and Latemore (2001) predict the 21st century leaders will have a healthy respect for others and a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. They will work in a less hierarchical organization and will be comfortable with empowerment of others (Lo, 1997). The 21st century superintendent will have strong skills in motivation and an appreciation for diversity.

Berry (1997) stated the leaders in the 21st century will be using testing and evaluation procedures that measure not only the ability to recall basic facts, but also their ability to problem-solve and think critically. The curricula will deal with complex issues confronting technical and pluralistic societies. School leaders and students will be learning to work and live in an "international and interdependent world" (Seitz & Pepiton, 1996). The 21st century leaders will need to be excellent managers of resources, budgets/ finances and strategic plans. They will be information brokers and intuitive decision makers. Tomorrow's leaders must have the skills of writing, listening and persuasive speaking (Berry, 1997).

Also, the 21st century leader will be in tune with other state and national agencies

and with business and industry (Edwards, 2005). They will form collaborative efforts, will think holistically, and will be aware that all social institutions and corporations are interconnected. Edwards (2005) goes on to predict they will be futurists who use state-of-the-art forecasting, monitoring and scanning technologies and who model intuition and creativity. According to Hoyle (1989), “education pathfinders” will lead their schools, states and nation by keeping one foot in the present for stability and one foot in the future for possibility.

As the ways of thinking about leadership shifts, so must the actions of our leaders (Cummings, 2005). “Systemic reform emphasizes team-building, interconnectedness, group problem solving and shared decision making concepts and skills often associated with female leadership” (Anderson, 1993, p. 14). In corporate America, women lead in new and different ways, ways that are nonhierarchical, cooperative and collaborative (Leadership & Change, 2007). Embry, Padgett, and Caldwell (2008) refer to the concept of “women’s leadership style” as being *transformational*: open, trusting, compassionate, understanding and supportive of continuous learning. Shakeshaft stated that women administrators more often are guided by what Gilligan described as, “an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the real, and recognizable trouble of this world” (Gilligan in Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 195). As driving leaders in the 21st century, women should also remain cognoscente of the traditional forms of leadership such as stressing subordination and chain of commands because if we forget the past, it is often easily repeated (Latemore, 2001).

A leader in the 21st century must practice forward thinking and develop a

leadership style that may seem unconventional to many. This new leader must also create environments at the center of the organization that reach out for a more inclusive and shared ownership in decision making (Ward, 1997). Clearly stated, women must shed the mask of conformity and lead with a burning passion to do what is best for their educational organization. Now is the time for females to lead and succeed.

Final Thoughts

Let's us admit it. We women are building a motherhood; each with her own plot of soil eked from a night of dreams, a day of work. We are spreading this soil in larger and larger circles, slowly, slowly. One day it will be a continuous land.... This world is being made from our lives, our cries, our laughter, and our bones. It is a world worth making, a world worth living in, a world in which there is prevailing and decent wild sanity.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With the Wolves*

This review of literature related to women in educational leadership and the superintendency reveals the truths about the beliefs, strengths, obstacles, styles, and attitudes of females in the demanding and often difficult role of school superintendent. While males continue to dominate leadership in education, it is the hope that women will continue to make advancements in the position of superintendent. In spite of the complex and challenging environments in which all superintendents operate, female superintendents can lead and succeed. By using the female voice and showcasing relevant research, women can realize the superintendent's job is one of reality. Despite the obstacles that still remain in this field, women can effectively manage school systems. With the optimism of more women entering the field and sharing their stories of hope and success one can see, even though this process is a marathon, as opposed to a sprint, it is a race worth running.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the design and methodology of the study will be presented. It will consist of four overarching sections: 1) the design study, 2) the selection of the samples (participants), 3) instrumentation and data collection procedures, and 4) the data analysis procedures. The overarching sections are complemented with supporting sections: 1) introduction, 2) timeline, and 3) summary.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to build on the works of the past, which have been limited primarily to describing the barriers females encounter in the realm of the public school superintendency position. Furthermore, the study will examine whether women superintendents/ CFOs acknowledge that barriers exist and, if so, how they define, explain and overcome today's barriers as both superintendent and CFO. The study explored recurrent barriers in the existing literature women face in the superintendency. The specific questions addressed in this study include:

1. In encountering past and modern-day barriers and overcoming said obstacles, how do three select female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas perceive their professional lives and the overall profession?
2. What are the unexposed stories of three select female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas?

Design of the Study

Supported by Marshall and Rossman (2006), qualitative researchers take an interest in natural settings rather than laboratories, and foster the philosophy of being grounded in an authentic environment. Like Marshall and Rossman (2006), the researcher of this study is also intrigued by the social interactions expressed in daily life and by the participants themselves who attribute to these interactions. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was used in this study because it attempted to “study social behavior by interpreting its subjective meaning as found in the intentions of individuals” (Schultz, 1967, p. 11). One of the aims of this study was to interpret the actions of individuals in the social world and the ways in which individuals give meaning to social phenomena. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to enter the participant’s world to derive meaning from observed experiences and behaviors rather than to only test a hypothesis. This approach was appropriate in examining how the women interacted with the barriers and obstacles faced in acquiring and sustaining the superintendency/ CFO position.

Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness, as part of a particular context, and the interactions there (Patton, 1985). Qualitative research strives for depth of understanding; it allows an investigator to observe the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. Qualitative research does not attempt to predict what may happen, but to understand the nature of the setting; “what their lives are like, what is going on for them, what their meanings are” (Patton, 1985, p. 1).

Yin (2008) explained the strength of the quantitative study method as one that clarifies the study's purpose, implementation and results. He further stated that a qualitative study is an empirical inquiry which explores a contemporary phenomenon within its own context by using multiple sources of evidence. The boundaries between the phenomenon and the context often are not clearly evident.

Schein (1985) stated the need for using this type of design and methodology in research as a way to explore a phenomenon within its context. He explained that organizations have cultures and as long as the researcher comes from within that background, he/she will be able to understand much of what happens in the culture. However, since cultures are often unconscious and taken for granted by the insider, they cannot be thoroughly studied through methods such as questionnaires alone. To ascertain underlying assumptions, the researcher must interview and observe, then work out the assumptions with insiders who are willing to attempt to bring their assumptions to the surface (Becker et al., 2005).

The purpose of qualitative research is joint exploration between the researcher and selected individuals who are within an organization. The researcher is able to discuss what has been experienced through careful listening, observing and avoiding misinterpretations. The insider brings assumptions to awareness by being in a position to explain certain events and can correct interpretations of the researcher, who is essentially the outsider (Schein, 1985).

Studies involving qualitative research provide a logical means to understand the "top of the head" phenomena that Staw (1983) prescribed for determining why people do

what they do. The telling of one's perceptions and the social interaction with the researcher significantly reduces ambiguity in the data. The analysis of unfolding data often leads to new insights for the respondent as well as the inquirer (Schandt, 2007).

Selection of the Samples (Participants)

This study chose to engage three female superintendents/ CFOs from Texas. It gave voice to the female superintendents/ CFOs through questioning, interviewing, observing and reporting their stories. Marshall and Rossman (1995) observed that members of groups who have been oppressed are attracted to the epistemology of qualitative methods. The attraction is due to the increasing evidence that effective data documentation and analysis of cultures and histories of people can be an effective tool in the search for the advancement of social change. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to utilize the epistemology of qualitative methods, which can maximize the researcher's ability to hear the shared stories and lived experiences of the three female superintendents/ CFOs.

The initial planning for this study focused on the selection of the research samples and sites. To allow for optimal understanding of the problem, the researcher chose to focus on three female superintendents/ CFOs in the state of Texas. Purposeful sampling included the following criteria: 1) the participants must have been named as a Superintendent of the Year finalists or winner as determined by the Texas Association of School Administrators' criteria and 2) the participants must currently be or have been a female superintendent/ CFO in Texas for a minimum of five years. Further controls were set to the greatest degree possible, including the following variables: 1) all came

from different geographical locations in the state of Texas and 2) if research found, more than one race was selected as well.

The participants were identified through their reputation and the input from directors of educational service centers. Once the names were derived, the candidates were called and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. Confidentiality was explained and ensured, as was the research problem and questions. After approval was granted, a consent form was delivered and signed.

It was predicted the average number of days to be spent with each participant would be three or more. Initial and follow-up interviews with each participant, site visitations and general observations required the multiple day presence. All interviews and other data collection arrangements were made by the researcher with the superintendent/ CFO's consent.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures

Marshall and Rossman (1995) pointed to techniques that are critical procedures for collecting qualitative data: 1) questioning, 2) in-depth interviewing, 3) observation, and 4) document review. Most qualitative research studies in education utilize questioning, observation, interviews, or a combination of the above as all or part of the data collection procedures. Each critical procedure is discussed in further detail, as well as the initial meeting/ informed consent and interview participation process.

Initial Meeting / Informed Consent

Texas female superintendents were contacted through the assistance of the Texas Association of School Boards and local Education Service Center field service agents.

Upon consent, the entry interview was scheduled with each of the selected superintendents. At the entry interview, the procedure for data collection was discussed and the consent form (Appendix A) was signed. Copies of all the necessary hand-outs were provided for the superintendent/ CFO participant; as well as a cover letter of introduction with the superintendent perception questionnaire (Appendix B), and the interview protocol letter with the case study sample questions (Appendix C).

Before the perception questionnaire (Appendix B) was given to the participant, a signed consent form (Appendix A) was obtained and a verbal explanation of the study was provided. The consent form included the following information:

- principal investigator's information;
- introduction and purpose of the research;
- expectations of the participant;
- discussion of the possible risks involved;
- possible benefits of the study;
- participation withdraw;
- confidentiality claims;
- contact information;
- permission to audio tape.

Female Superintendent/ CFO Questionnaire (Questioning)

Based on the review of literature and research questions, an initial perception questionnaire (Appendix B) was constructed. The overarching theme of the questionnaire was to address two topics: 1) perceived barriers and 2) perceived

successful strategies. A background information category was also included to provide the researcher with significant information regarding the respondents' personal and professional lives. The three respondents were asked to rate the questions using a Likert scale, a scale used to measure attitudinal perceptions and viewpoints. Barriers were identified on a 1 to 4 rating scale with: 1) no barrier, 2) perceived barrier, 3) persistent barrier, and 4) obstructing barrier. Again, a Likert 1 to 4 rating scale was used to measure the attitudes of perceived successful strategies being identified as: 1) not a successful strategy, 2) modest successful strategy, 3) average successful strategy, and 4) essential successful strategy.

The researcher established content validity by surveying the three female superintendents/ CFOs in the same manner and format. Each participant was asked to return the perception questionnaire prior to the first interview, thus allowing the data collected to provide a profile for the three female superintendents/ CFOs as well as assist the researcher with additional questions to examine in the interview process.

Interviewer Preparation

Daley (2009) asserted that prior to the interview it is essential for the researcher to become familiar with the subject and the subject's setting or a scenario similar to the actual one. This researcher established readiness by administering the perception questionnaire and conducting the structured interviews on one pilot female superintendent/ CFO.

The pilot study also proved instrumental in clarifying organizational procedures that potentially could have affected the quality of the data collection. The researcher's

present experience as a female superintendent in Texas helped to enhance understanding of the settings and information received. These experiences were further facilitated by establishing a rapport that contributed to the ease in questioning.

A key factor in ensuring the validity of results from interviews is the preparation of the human instrument for research. Yin (2008) suggested an investigator plan intensive training sessions, develop and refine an effective interview process and conduct a pilot study. He also noted a list of commonly required skills the researcher should possess while conducting valuable interviews:

1. Have the ability to ask good questions.
2. Be a good listener.
3. Be adaptive and flexible.
4. Have a firm grasp of the issue being studied.
5. Be unbiased by preconceived notations.

In-Depth Interviewing

According to Patton (1990), the interviewing of people is used by researchers to fill in the gaps from the things that are omitted or absent in observations alone. As a researcher, one cannot truly observe feelings, thoughts and intentions; the researcher has to ask people questions about these abstract objectives. In this study, the researcher utilized a person-to-person interview design in order to create an environment that encouraged the participants to share their stories. This type of interview can be defined as a conversation with purpose (Patton, 2002). By using the conversation with purpose

interview design, the researcher hoped to elicit the authentic narratives of the women's experiences in the superintendent/ CFO position.

Zuckerman (2005) posited that one of the most significant sources of case study information is the interview. The interviews in this study were open-ended, in-depth interviews in which the researcher asked each participant for facts, as well as for the respondent's opinions and insights, about events and occurrences. The open-ended interview format provided for more opportunities to gain information as respondents provided more career exposing information. Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) observed that flexibility during the interview process enables the researcher to explore contextual information, which provides for an emergent dimension in a study. All interviews were conducted in a manner that allowed the respondents to fully describe their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the barriers and successful strategies she encountered in her own professional life. Even though the primary questions were open-ended, other probe questions were used to follow-up on areas of particular interest that were perceived as relevant to the researcher and research questions.

Interviews were scheduled during times that were convenient for the superintendent/ CFO participants. This was before school, during school hours, after school and on weekends. Interviews were audio tape recorded and as predicted, each interview lasted two or more hours. The interview questions were developed from the review of literature. The questions were to be complementary to the variables on the perception questionnaire. Interviewees were asked to express opinions rather than simply provide responses to questions. Daley (2009) noted that the more respondents

are given the opportunity to discuss their insights into certain situations, the more the role may be considered one of an informant rather than a respondent.

Yin (2008) warned that interviews should always be regarded as verbal reports only. As a result, they are subject to the problem of bias, poor recall and inaccurate articulation. For this reason, the researcher elected to use other data sources such as questionnaire feedback, field observations, notes, document and transcript review, member checks and follow-up interviews.

Observations

The Webster Dictionary defines observation as “paying attention: the attentative watching of somebody or something; the careful observing and recording of something that is happening.” Observational research is the surveillance and recording of a subject in a systematic way to establish knowledge (Skaggs, 2001).

In addition to interviewing, this qualitative study used the data gathering technique posited by Cushing in the 1800s and Margaret Mead in the early to mid 1900s called participant observation. Participant observation has been widely used to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals (such as a religious, occupational, sub-cultural) and their practices through an intensive involvement with people in their natural environment (Jorgensen, 1989). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) point out that observational research involves formulating a thoughtful and well-understood relationship between the researcher and the research participants. In observational research, it is the researcher’s role to record interactions and behaviors as objectively as possible using a variety of inquiry tools. The researcher must also behave

in a consistent manner so as not to cause significant changes in the environment which is being observed. Although observers in (neutral) observations do not participate in the event they are studying, they still need to be aware of any presumptions they may hold that would influence their findings, as well as what influence the act of observing the participants may have on their behavior (Jorgensen, 1989). The goal of observational research should always be to capture the embodied knowledge-- tacit, nonscientific knowledge-- that cannot be uncovered in surveys and questionnaires alone. To that end, observational researchers can focus their attention on the minute details that can often be overlooked (Amabile, 1996). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the advantages to using observations in one's research are:

- results are not defined by the design of the method;
- the results are supported by verifiable evidence;
- research is done in context;
- embodied knowledge is uncovered;
- problems which the subjects have developed "workarounds" are uncovered.

Since the phenomena of interest should not be purely historical, some relevant behaviors and environmental conditions were also of interest to the researcher. In this study, the researcher made field visits to the case study sites and conducted direct observations in the participants' natural setting. A minimum of two observations lasting two or more hours were conducted. It was the researcher's aim to observe the participant in her natural work setting, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of her

natural habits and interactions with the superintendency. It was perceived that these observations would serve as another source of evidence in this study and would add new dimensions for understanding the context and the phenomenon being researched.

Einstein said:

It is nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instructions have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; ... It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty. (as cited in Amabile, 1996, p.3)

With Einstein's guiding words, the researcher made it her sense of duty to inquire rather than coerce.

Document Review

The reviewing of documents should play an explicit role in any case study data collection process. Systematic searches for relevant documents should be important in any data collection plan (Harrison & Freeman, 1999; & Yin, 2008). The most important use of documents is to corroborate and expand evidence from other sources. Therefore, document review was relevant to this case study. The primary documents that extended this study were personal memos or other public correspondence, agendas and summaries of interviews/ meetings/ evaluations with the board of trustees, and newspaper accounts showcasing the superintendent/ CFO participant.

Data Analysis Procedures

Guba and Lincoln (1985) stated that qualitative methods are the preferred methodology for the study of complex human and organizational interactions.

Zuckerman (2005) asserted that when methods such as interviews and observations are

used, the researcher employs implied, as well as propositional knowledge to affix meaning to the observed verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

The process of data analysis is an ongoing process that occurs in stages and for various purposes. Data analysis in the field begins during single interviews and proceeds from interview to interview and day to day at a given site. The process or cycle is continued in the search for relevant information and documents. During the process of data collection and analyses, the purposes are to guide subsequent data collection, then to organize data from which grounded theory may develop.

The enormous amount of data accumulated through case study research makes the analysis of the data a complex process. The researcher must be able to “organize, manage and retrieve the most meaningful bits of the data” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 26). Therefore, a labeling (coding) system must be utilized to make data meaningful. This means that the data must be organized in a way that creates manageable categories for analysis. Although the most intensive period of data analysis usually occurs in the later stages, data analysis is an ongoing part of the research (Patton, 2002). In this study, managing, sorting and interpreting occurred throughout the following data collection stages: the superintendent’s initial meeting, the questionnaire, one-on-one structured interviews, the field observations and the document reviews.

Data saturation was achieved by gathering personal narratives through the interview process, observing the superintendents/ CFOs in their natural work environment and investigating pictures and documents. Saturation was also achieved because the participants were observed on different times and in different settings.

Different settings included her office, her conference room and/or the district's physical plant. The research was concluded when findings and answers become repetitive.

Preliminary analysis of the data began after each contact with the participants. The researcher transferred the field notes and transcribed the interview tapes to the computer. The researcher numbered all interview transcript pages by lines and pages so they could be referenced in the case study and analysis cycle. The perceived process included reading through every interview transcript and making notes of possible categories and themes. The second reading of the data involved grouping all the first-round notes and making preliminary categories that evolved from the data. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the incorporation of *a priori* categories hinders the genesis of categories customized to the data and can promote selection over analysis. The researcher followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidelines on developing categories more inductively. These two theorists recommend allowing the information or data bits to come together into temporary categories so the researcher can then decipher its relevancy to the topic. In essence, the data determines the categories rather than the categories driving the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim the researcher should use acquired information to compare the categories, integrate the categories, delimit the theory and then write the theory. By using an inductive process rather than a deductive process, the researcher is better able to bring into the research an understanding of the conclusion based on premises. In this manner, the initial specific assumptions become more generalized.

For the third round of reading through the data, the researcher used data displays. Data displays are the organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking. Data displays also serve as an organizing tool to assist the researcher with the arrangement of relevant data into meaningful categories. Because humans are not strong processors of substantial amounts of information, displays such as matrices, graphs, networks and charts are used to navigate and to draw valid conclusions from the data (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998). All of the data sources were placed vertically, down the left side of the matrix, and all of the categories that emerged from each data source were placed horizontally.

In the fourth phase of the data reduction, the matrices were examined thoroughly, and similar and redundant categories were collapsed in an effort to make the data more manageable and communicative. A second site matrix was then created with almost half the original number of categories in the third phase of data reduction. The case study reports and responses to the research questions (Chapter IV) were then written in detailed description from these matrices and supported with data from the perception questionnaire.

Trustworthiness

One of the final steps of analysis was conclusion drawing and verification, as well as a thorough review of credibility and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is the ability to persuade an audience that the results of a study are important, relevant and worth paying attention to (Yin, 1994; Riege, 2003). This was accomplished by providing multiple sources to support the results and data. In this study, the information

gathered from the participants was unique to each of their experiences as they perceived them. Personal accounts and stories were supported with documentation. In order to protect the identity of each participant, the researcher assigned a set of pseudonym initials to the individual and all other personally identifiable information.

Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation. According to Glesne (1999), triangulation is the use of multiple data-collection methods, multiple sources and multiple theoretical perspectives. Trustworthiness was achieved through such measures as transcription of recorded interviews, data saturation, direct observation and research reflexivity. Additionally, member checks were used to increase the validity of the data. Member checks, also known as informant feedback or respondent validation, are techniques whereby the researcher uses the participants as a means for checking the accuracy and validity of the study's findings (Byrne, 2001). Member checks can be done during the interview process, at the conclusion of the study, or both. The use of member checks also serves as a catalyst for developing better authenticity of the work (Byrne, 2001). Member checks were used by the researcher to ensure each superintendent/ CFO in the study was guaranteed the opportunity to review, correct and/or omit any of their given information. It also allowed each superintendent/ CFO to confirm the validity of their voice-- their story. Through a partnership with each participant, the researcher intended to create a climate of honest exchange. Through member checks, sharing of the transcripts and interaction with the participant, a full construction of the participating superintendent/ CFO's story was achieved.

Transferability

The construct of transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be applied to other situations. Transferability also pertains to the study's generalizability--investigating and designing reliable observations. Generalizability in turn determines the reliability (reproducibility) of a study. Through the applied use of triangulation, this study is able to better insure its generalizability and transferability. Each case study report was written and reviewed with attention to the emerging categories and sub-categories, as well as the authenticity of each. The detailed description of each case study will provide the reader with validated information and confidence of transferability of this particular study.

Timeline

The first three chapters of this record of study were written as part of the requirements for the proposal hearing. Immediately following the completion of the proposal hearing process, required documents were sent to the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Since this proposed research study met the "expedited" definition, it was the hope of the researcher to have approval from the IRB in one month. During the waiting period, the researcher continued to add to and finalize her review of literature (Chapter II). After approval from the IRB, the process of selecting the participants then followed. The initial meeting, consent signing, and questionnaire dissemination was completed by the beginning of April 2011. During mid-April, the perception questionnaire responses were reviewed and the superintendent/CFO participant interview questions updated. In the latter part of April and all of May,

the interviews and observations began with each of the participants. Final interviews and observations were concluded in June and early July. During July and August 2011, the analysis of data and the writing of Chapter IV commenced. Upon the completion of the writing of Chapter IV, the findings and conclusions, Chapter V was derived; thus allowing the research to be defended in the fall of 2011.

Summary

This study incorporated the use of four interview data sources: questionnaire, interviews, extensive observations and field note/ document review. Furthermore, the purpose of this multi-participant case study was to expand the knowledge base in the areas of perceived barriers for aspiring female superintendents/ CFOs and how those perceived barriers can be overcome as a result of the implementation of successful strategies. In particular, it is the researcher's goal to expose the proactive processes female shareholders can utilize in becoming and maintaining their role as a modern day public school superintendent/ CFO.

The apparent strength of this approach was the ability to deal with a variety of evidence-- questionnaire, interviews, observations and field note/ document review. Of particular interest was comparing and contrasting differences in the evidence obtained, and then to formulate authentic accounts of each participant's lived experiences in achieving and succeeding as a female superintendent/ CFO in the state of Texas.

Further insight into the data collected and analyzed is provided in the succeeding chapters. A description of the cases is contained in Chapter IV. The interpretation of the data in relation to the research questions and the theory is presented in Chapter V.

Summarization and conclusions of the study, with implications for further research, is also stated in the final chapters.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA: FIELD STUDY CASES

Introduction

The primary purpose of Chapter IV is to explain the data gathered from the interviews, observations and documents. The secondary purpose of the chapter is to better recognize that women can overcome barriers to the superintendency and that the obstacles which stand in the way can be triumphantly surpassed. In this qualitative study, three female superintendents/ CFOs shared their experiences in detailed description. They allowed the interviewer to journey with them as they accounted their own personal perceptions and viewpoints of being a female superintendent/ CFO in the state of Texas. This study sought to elicit the voice of each female superintendent/ CFO and to learn their individual stories about the barriers which stood before them and how they overcame the barriers.

Part I of the research study began with taking the information from the initial part of the perception questionnaire (Appendix B, Pt. I) and creating a thumbnail sketch of each selected participant, their community/district and the key issues of each locality. The thumbnail sketch introduced each participant in a format that included their current leadership position along with a description of each participant's personal history. The second fold of this process was to solicit responses to a survey questionnaire (Appendix B, Pt. II and III). The responses to the initial survey instrument enabled the researcher to construct questions for the initial and follow-up interviews. The survey responses

further allowed the researcher to develop a road map of inquiry for soliciting personal testimonies from each participant.

Part II sought to present the themes which emerged through the women's responses in the initial interviews. In Part II, the interviews were semi-structured and conducted using an interview guide. During each initial interview, background inquiries and questions about barriers to and during the superintendency were asked. Specific questions also addressed the superintendent's role as chief financial officer. Responses to open-ended questions were used to further develop individual subject matter. Furthermore, informal conversations, observations and interviewer's reflection notes were examined for significant factors. Detailed demographic information, profiles, and emerging themes were gathered from the conversations as well as an analysis of the interview sessions. The women who participated in the study recounted many different stories when they talked about becoming and being a superintendent/CFO. Each one had unique feelings about themselves, both as a woman and a leader. Though their stories had some common threads, each one was as unique as the owner of the story.

Part II also lead the researcher to follow-up with each participant and ask individualized clarifying questions, especially as they related to overcoming the perceived barriers and obstacles that stood before them. During this phase of the study, other individuals and documents associated with the superintendent/ CFO were also analyzed. A tapestry of other themes emerged in this portion of the study, including some commonalities and differences in professional and personal characteristics of the women superintendents and their climb up the career ladder. Part II concluded with

interpretation conveyance of the voices of each participant. It was the researcher's intent to honor each participant's time, passion, commitment and dedication to the superintendency profession. This study assures that the three stories are representative of the interviewee's personal experiences and are not intended to be the standard for all female superintendents in Texas. If so, that would deem these accounts to be generic rather than unique as the individuals who represent the stories. In other words, these stories belong to them and are not meant to be used as generalizations that represent all female superintendents/ CFOs.

In adhering to the ethics of social science research, pseudonyms are used throughout the text in reference to the identifying information of the interview respondents. This process gives greater anonymity and identity protection.

Part I: Findings of the Superintendent/ CFO Initial Perception Questionnaire

Introducing the Participants and Their Community/ Participants at a Glance

Table I introduces each participant in a summative format. The table characterizes each participant's personal information in an „at-a-glance“ fashion. The purpose of Table I is to allow the reader a quick glimpse and comparison of each of the three participants. One can compare and contrast each participant's background information. The information in Table I ranges from the participant's age, years of service, personal data, and educational background, as well as district facts.

Table 1
Background Information

Name	Age Range	Years in Ed./ Supt.	Marital Status	Live w/ Husband	Children/ At Home	Race/ Ethnicity	Highest Degree	# Dist. As Supt.	# of Students	Geog. Location
VIV	Over 60	44 / 16	M2 times	full-time	Yes/ 0	Anglo	Ph.D.	1	13,000	Ctrl. Tx.
ABC	Over 60	45 / 14	M1 time	full-time	Yes/ 0	Anglo	Ph.D.	3	8,000	West Tx.
JWE	40 – 49	22 / 8	M2 times	part-time	Step/ 0	Anglo	Ed.D.	2	2,000	East Tx.

The Hometown Hero

The study's first participant is a lovely lady who has proven you can work your whole career in one town and in one school district. She was born there, educated there, works there and will proudly die there as well. She is this town, and the town is her. Favorite Motto: There's no place like home.

VIV spoke with poise and charm as she talked about her background, family and pursuit of the superintendency. She also spoke about growing up in a house full of educators. VIV recalls:

I remember one birthday when all I wanted was a blackboard like the one in my father's classroom. I prayed I would get one so I could teach my dolls and dog properly. Not only did I get a blackboard that year I also received my very own teacher's desk. It was in that instant I was hooked; I knew I would be a teacher. My dolls and dogs were convinced of it too.

So what began in her bedroom with her dolls and dog has lead to a 44 year career in education. She speaks of her decades in education and how she deliberately planned and prepared for each step:

As far as public education goes, I've done it all. I've taught at each level in public schools. I served as a principal and central office administrator, and for the past sixteen years, as a superintendent. I guess I am the stereotypical definition of the route traveled to the top... except I did it all in *my* hometown.

VIV talked at length about her hometown and how she could never have imagined leaving it. "The town of BC is a community that has always been committed to raising children to become successful. This is all I know-- raising children to become successful." Though BC has changed a bit over the years it has never lost its core values. The town of BC continues today to be committed to raising successful children.

Though heavily committed to BC, VIV loves her family. She has been married twice, the first time to her high school sweetheart and the second time to the town's physician. VIV reflects, "We share and love for six children and eight grandchildren. Yes, all live close to BC; except my youngest son who lives in Hollywood. I hold out when his acting career ends he will come back home."

As a quiet and overly humble individual, she thinks her experiences and maturity have facilitated her ability to make a great superintendent/CFO. She is quick to applaud those who taught her the real definition of success. According to VIV, "Success is not money or power, rather it is the ability to *find* the money and *ignite* the power in others so they can accomplish their dreams." She goes on to say:

I am a raving fan of Stephen Covey and a groupie of Ken Blanchard. I embrace being a servant in education. I am here to serve first and lead second. As trite as it may sound this is the key to my own personal and professional success. I

guess it's worked out well; after all I have been in the same place for multiple decades. Not many in this profession can say that.

District Description

The town of BC is located along the I-35 corridor. One side of the town surrenders to the hustle and bustle of Texas's most well traveled thoroughfare. The opposite side of the town nestles up to one of Texas's largest recreational lakes. The first indicator that one is entering the town of BC is the splash of school colors which paints the town. There is no missing the mascot pride this town possesses; even the street signs are school colors and have the school mascot adorned on them. The town appears to have a variety of socioeconomic classes. Trailer parks are evident as well as intimate gated communities with million dollar homes. The town of approximately fifteen thousand citizens serves as a residence for small industry as well as some commercial properties. The primary employer in this town is definitely the school district, though, many drive to the neighboring city for employment in the rich medical field.

The school district possesses one 5A high school and has no intentions of ever having a second. This is a town of unity, and the citizens do not want to see the creation of a second high school. For the most part, residents choose to live in this community so their children can receive a great education and attend schools that are focused on rich academics and preparing children for college. Though not a town of extreme privilege, it is obvious the citizens would do anything for the school district. Mascot pride is alive and well in BC.

The Texas Matriarch

One of the oldest superintendents in the state, her roots in Texas education are as deep as the tap root of the mighty oak tree. She has made it in the man's world of work and even left a female footprint (stileto heel print) for others to follow.

Favorite Motto: I've seen it all, done it all, and lived to tell about it.

At first sight, there is no mistake ABC knows her role inside and out. Though her physical demeanor is petite, she can easily fill a room with her knowledge and energy. Dressed in corporate attire and classic jewelry, her hair is styled in a manner that provokes professionalism. Her most noticeable features are her eyes. They gaze upon visitors with warmth and sincerity, yet one can tell they have seen it all. ABC is like a vintage automobile; classic and graceful on the outside, but strong enough under the hood to survive any challenge thrown her way. ABC has mastered the ability to wear many different hats and conquer the complexities of situational leadership. She has an uncanny ability to show one side to her inner circle and a different side to outside shareholders. Neither persona appears to be fake in representation, but rather finely tuned to provide for the needs of the group and the present situation. When asked about this ABC states:

I am a chameleon in pearls. I have been at this so long I can see the needs of others before they even see them. If I do not adjust for the situation and facilitate others to do the same, accomplishment of goals can be delayed or derailed. I think this is one of my strongest leadership traits-- my ability to adapt to the needs of others. I am not a pushover, just one who is wise enough to know that changing and adapting for others' needs is inevitable.

ABC is very hands-on. Not in a way that comes across as micromanaging or intrusive, but rather in a helpful style, a style that was shown to her by her father in her

own upbringing. To catch this veteran off guard, for it is well known that she has been interviewed countless times, the researcher first asked her to elaborate on her hands-on approach by discussing any of the concrete objects in her office. Her perplexed look showed this was a request she was not expecting. Quickly she rose from her seat and walked around her office. She came back, not with large district procedure manuals or the district finance report, but rather with three simple pictures. The first one was a picture of fifty or so students sitting on an ancient Mayan ruin in Belize. She told of the travels she took with the high school students to Belize to assist the University of Texas with an authentic archeological dig. She said the reason she chose that picture was because “as a leader, one must personally take others by the hand and lead them to the top of a mountain and teach them to dream.” She said she had done that with these poor, rural high school students. She had shown them the top of the mountain and taught them to dream.

The second picture was one of her with six other adults. The photograph was a picture of the recipients of the Robert Wood Johnson Fellowship Award. She explained it was a national honor given to individuals who were making a difference in their society. She continued to explain she always knew she was a good leader in Texas, but this award showed her that she was making an impact in Texas which was recognized at the national level.

Her third picture was the smallest, but one she considered the most important. It was a picture of her, her husband of more than 40 years, her two children with their spouses and her four grandchildren. She looked with her piercing brown eyes and said,

“This is what it is all about. I can show you more awards and lots of important materials, but at the end of the day, if I am not a good wife, mother and grandmother, I will not be a good superintendent.” In her unique way, she showed through those pictures that one must lead by taking the hand of others and exposing them to passion, conviction, purpose and heart. These are the perceived qualities which make her a successful superintendent.

District Description

Even though this superintendent has served all across this great state, she has been in her most recent district for the past six years. The district of AS is located among the sprawling flatlands of West Texas. One must drive miles through an abyss of vacant roads to reach this West Texas utopia. One does not happen upon this part of Texas, rather traveling here takes planning and a full tank of gasoline. This district, one of Texas’ largest, sprawls over a part of Texas that is now brimming with businesses and families, not because of location or prosperity, but because of the desire of its past citizens who wished to create a new frontier for Texans.

The economy and population in this area has seen its ups and downs. In this area, one must work for their fruits. A hard day’s work is not always rewarded, but it is always expected. This philosophy is also evident in the school system. Hard work is expected from both its employees and its students.

Though this is one of Texas’ largest school districts, it still manages to have a small town feel. When one walks the halls of the two high schools, five middle schools and 20 plus elementary schools, they are met with multiple hellos and welcomes. The

superintendent is not just a name or person who sits in an office downtown, but rather a person who is more often found in a classroom with kids or a meeting with teachers.

There's a New Sheriff in Town and She Wears Heels

Full of spunk and vinegar, she's going to get it done or die trying. She is the first female superintendent in this district, and she may be the last. She is out to show what women in the twenty-first century can accomplish.

Favorite Motto: Why leave just a mark on education when you can paint the entire wall?

Full of energy Ritalin could not slow down, this gregarious individual is out to conquer the world of education. Up before the crack of dawn each day, JWE goes on her morning three-mile "stomp." She explains, "This is my time to talk to the pine trees of East Texas. I converse with them, curse at them and sometimes even cry beneath them. After my stomp I am ready to conquer the day."

Though she loves the field of education her experience as a child in Texas public schools was the opposite. JWE recounts, "School was an awful place for me. It was not until third grade when a veteran teacher finally told my parents; there is something wrong with her. I don't know what it is. This child cannot read-- she cannot spell-- but she can do anything verbally." Shortly after this conversation with her parents she received the news that changed her life. JWE recalls:

I think back thirty somewhat years ago when I was diagnosed with a new disorder called dyslexia, my family had no idea what it was. Dyslexia back then was a mystery, not the socially popular term it is today. Doctors and educational experts were just beginning to research this new disability so I became one of the first lab rats for this disorder. I remember spending two summers at Scottish Rite Hospital. When my friends were home swimming and playing softball I was

relearning how to crawl, walk a beam, touch floating balls and of course read and write. I hated education and all it represented.

She vowed then she would not allow this to happen to other children.

Though the scars were deep, her parents refused to give up on her and her abilities. When the system would force her into remedial classes it would be her father who would remind her to dream big. When she would fail a class because the teacher did not know how to work with this type of learning disability it would be her mother who would re-teach her and tell her all of her hard work would one day pay-off and nothing worth achieving comes easy. When the diagnostician told her parents she would never go to college it was her own will to prove this lady wrong. She would not stop until she had obtained every degree: high school diploma, Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate.

She laughs and claims that she still lives with this philosophy. She became a teacher at twenty-one, a principal at twenty-six and a superintendent at thirty-five; a position she has served in for eight years. When asked what next she did not hesitate to answer, "That's easy, United States Secretary of Education. But not until I fix all of Texas first." Somehow I believe her.

She is just as much a maverick in her personal life as she is in her professional one. She is on her second husband, though they do not live together during the week. He owns a business and it is too far away from the town where she serves as superintendent. JWE claims:

It's great, I can work as late as I want and not worry about the man wanting supper on the table. We catch up on the weekends and it works for us. Though I must admit I'm not sure I could do it if I had children. In my eyes I have the best

of both, a full-time career that I love and a part-time husband who deeply respects me and my professional choices.

District Description

Nestled behind the “pine curtain” of East Texas rests the PL school district; with the town’s population of five thousand this is a county seat committed to preserving its past while preparing for the future. Though these citizens would rather drive thirty miles to the closest Wal-Mart than have one inhabit Main Street, they are passionate about a school district that excels in progressive measures. Though the district only serves two thousand students it is considered the big brother to its neighbors. One unique feature of this district is its rich natural resources. The land provides a wealth of lignite coal which is used by the power plants of the area. One cannot drive through this community without seeing its greatest population, gas wells. Again, these wells supply an abundant wealth to a hard working middle class community. The PL school district is one the Texas Education Agency classifies as property wealthy. They are a district who must give over sixty percent of their tax collections to the state’s educational finance system.

Though progressive with its economic standings PL is not as welcoming of new individuals; for this is a town of multigenerational families. If one does relocate to PL they are quickly labeled as a “Move In” (MI). Half jokingly and half serious, MIs are told they can vote after living there for ten or more years. Happy with the way things have always been, PL is careful to try to balance some progressiveness in its educational system. This is evident with the approval of a relatively new female superintendent and a female county judge. The jury is still out on whether or not there will ever be a second in either category.

Perceived Barriers Women Must Contend With

The findings discussed in this section were derived from the data collected through a questionnaire on perceptions of barriers and successful strategies impacting women securing and serving as a superintendent/ CFO. The instrument was described in the previous chapter. In Part II of the questionnaire (Appendix B, Pt. II) a total of 17 multiple choice questions addressed the degree to which a woman must contend with a perceived barrier. The respondents were asked to indicate their perception of barriers using the Likert scale ranging from “1” no barrier to “4” obstructing barrier. The proportions referenced in Table 2 are sums of all cells and represent the prominence for the perceived barrier.

Table 2 indicates all questions have some degree of a barrier perception except for VIV’s reply to Question #3 *Lack of ability to relocate*. She indicated this as no barrier. Items # 1, 2, 3, 10, 13, 15, and 16 all received one or more responses as a perceived barrier. The overwhelming majority of the participant’s replies fell into the persistent barrier category with 25 overall replies and five questions in this category being unanimous by all three participants. The participants agreed that items # 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 were all perceived as a persistent barrier. The final category, obstructing barrier, received 15 overall replies with two questions being unanimous. The correlations observed in this questionnaire summary indicate that the two most obstructing barriers to women becoming and/or remaining a superintendent/ CFOs are Question #6 *Limited professional mentors* and Question #11 *Societal norms of ‘proper’ roles for men and women*.

Table 2
Perceived Barriers Women Must Contend With

Perceived Barriers Questions	No Barrier	Perceived Barrier	Persistent Barrier	Obstructing Barrier
1. Demanding life situations		ABC	VIV	JWE
2. Conflicting personal demands		ABC	JWE VIV	
3. Lack of ability to relocate	VIV	ABC		JWE
4. Omission from the "Good Old Boy" Network			ABC JWE VIV	
5. Lack of encouragement to pursue superintendency			ABC JWE VIV	
6. Limited professional mentors				ABC JWE VIV
7. Constrained access to training and dev.			ABC JWE VIV	
8. Obstacles from the "Glass Ceiling Theory"			ABC JWE VIV	
9. Too many complex challenges			ABC JWE VIV	
10. Age and prior experience		ABC VIV		JWE
11. Societal norms of 'proper' roles for men & women				ABC JWE VIV
12. Gender bias (sch. bd., per. dept, search firms)			JWE	ABC VIV
13. Prof. search firm's role in selection process		JWE VIV		ABC
14. Perceived knowledge of CFO position			ABC VIV	JWE
15. Lack of knowledge within the political realm		ABC	VIV	JWE
16. Lack of encouragement by female counterparts		ABC JWE	VIV	
17. Inability to advance personal education/degrees			ABC VIV	JWE

Essential Strategies for Female Superintendents/ CFOs

The second part of the perception questionnaire (Appendix B, Pt. II) asked 18 specific questions related to the perceived successful strategies the female superintendents/ CFOs believed are prominent in attaining and maintaining the superintendent/ CFO position. The respondents were once again asked to indicate their perception of successful strategies using the Likert scale ranging from “1” not a successful strategy to “4” essential successful strategy. The data was then compiled and illustrated in a frequency distribution table as follows:

The analysis of Table 3 revealed that most of the replies were perceived as an average or essential successful strategy. Out of the 18 questions none of the replies fell into the “Not a successful strategy” category. The results of the questionnaire also showed that the three participants were in majority agreement by indicating only three single replies to the “Modest successful strategy” category. Again, indicating that the results were either an average or essential successful strategy.

In coding the replies by the three female participants several commonalities evolved. The importance of external support (Question # 2, 3, and 4) as well as the value of internal security (Question # 5, 10 and 11) prevailed as essential successful strategies by all three participants. The three participants also agreed that Question #13 *Professional knowledge and savvy of the Texas Public School Finance System* and Question #15 *Obtain a doctorate degree* are essential successful strategies.

Table 3
Essential Strategies for Female Superintendents/ CFOs

Essential Strategies Questions	Not a successful strategy	Modest successful strategy	Average successful strategy	Essential successful strategy
1. Powerful extrinsic motivation			ABC JWE	VIV
2. Successful career-family configuration				ABC JWE VIV
3. Supportive spouse				ABC JWE VIV
4. Guidance of professional mentor(s)				ABC JWE VIV
5. Intrinsic perseverance				ABC JWE VIV
6. Participate in professional organizations			ABC JWE VIV	
7. Clear focus of career and professional goals			ABC	JWE VIV
8. Observe successful superintendents/ CFOs (male & female)			ABC JWE	VIV
9. Understand gender stereotypes			ABC JWE VIV	
10. Establish strong leadership traits				ABC JWE VIV
11. Understand one's leadership style				ABC JWE VIV
12. Showcase a wide range of professional experiences			ABC VIV	JWE
13. Professional knowledge and savvy of the Texas Public School Finance System				ABC JWE VIV
14. Increase visibility in professional circles		VIV	ABC JWE	
15. Obtain a doctorate degree				ABC JWE VIV
16. Enlisting a female sponsor (served as a supt./ CFO)			JWE	ABC VIV
17. Increasing flexibility to relocate		VIV	ABC	JWE
18. Establish relationships with professional search firms		VIV	ABC JWE	

In regards to the final fill in the blank Question #18 *Greatest barrier you have encountered* (Appendix B, Sect. II) and Question #19 *Most essential strategy* (Appendix B, Sect. III) the respondents seemed more likely to state a few words rather than elaborate on an answer. Though the questions were meant to be addressed separately the brief answers share a common theme which revolved around oneself and personal expectations of holding one to a higher standard. Briefly stated, the respondents all share a keen ownership in self-responsibility when it comes to conquering barriers and implementing successful strategies. These two questions, along with other common replies to the multiple choice questions, are addressed at a deeper level in the interview portion of the research process (Part II: Emerging Themes).

Part II: Emerging Themes

Each participant shared her perceptions of how barriers and obstacles affected, and still affect, her as a female superintendent/CFO. Each participant had a unique way of relating her journey with both the general research questions and the detailed interview questions. In their own perceptions, how did barriers and obstacles affect their ability to obtain and maintain their role as a female superintendent/CFO? Part III focuses on the following emerging themes: 1) entry and longevity as a female superintendent/CFO; 2) female qualities and characteristics; 3) barriers and obstacles encountered; 4) the new demands of a school CFO; and 5) overcoming the barriers. Relevant examples and quotes are shared from the study of the participants as they talked about the experiences, or lack thereof, that impacted their perception of the effects of barriers and obstacles on their superintendency. In most cases, direct quotes are used

so that the narratives are alive with the ladies' voices. Relaying accounts about the road less traveled is the first of the emergent themes, followed by four others. Chapter IV concludes with two final sections: the participant's final words of wisdom and the overall summary of accounts.

The Road Less Traveled (Entry and Longevity)

McDade and Drake (2001) found a common path among women superintendents; the path taken by many women is one that starts as a classroom teacher and is then interrupted for family reasons. When the woman returns to her profession, she again finds herself in a campus level position, which then may be followed by a principalship or specified director position. Next, the woman may embark on the role of assistant superintendent and possibly conclude with the superintendency. The common factor is that the path to the superintendency is often interrupted, which supports with statistics that show women enter the superintendency with more years of campus level experience and fewer years of central office practice. Unlike women, men follow a track to the superintendency which does not include interrupting their career paths from teacher, principal, central office employee to superintendent (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

The three interviewees were asked to talk about any particular traits, characteristics or themes that emerge as women superintendents/CFOs and why they aspired to this position. Each participant's path to the superintendency had similarities, yet each journey was as unique as the individual. ABC recalls:

It is odd; the jobs I have taken are the ones I haven't tried to get and the ones I thought I wanted alluded me. Why is that? I don't know. I guess these are the

jobs God wanted me to have. It is funny how the pattern of my life is like this. I now know I am the one who was supposed to come here. The headhunter said in all of his superintendent searches this was the one he worked hardest to convince the person that they were the one. I'm not proud of this; why is that the case? You always hear that when it's right, you know it. I guess I needed some convincing of that.

ABC goes on to share:

I am fortunate I have not experienced gender bias from any school boards during the interview and hiring process but I have experienced it from some of the search firms in the state. I am sad about this and do not want to dwell on the negative but it does exist and I do not know how to fix it for other females. They just need to be aware that the good old boy system is still alive in this arena.

Most women do not take the traditional male "carved" path to the superintendency, and for many, the path they take is self-created, made within a context of complex and professional choices (Morie & Wilson, 1996). Literature related to female leaders suggests it is critical for women to "see themselves in the role of leader" (Blackmore, 1999). She must visualize it. This idea was referred to by Morie and Wilson (1996) as "seeing is believing"; a process of one accumulating the confidence to seek the role of superintendent. VIV refers easily to her own journey as a superintendent. VIV states:

One would think since I was from BC, the transition to the superintendent's chair would have been an easy one. Actually, the opposite was my stark reality. Even though I never perceived my gender to be a liability, others in fact did. It took years for some to realize my gender was not an issue and for them to see me as I saw myself; VIV the girl who grew up in BC and is the superintendent of BC. That's all, nothing more, nothing less.

When I close my eyes this is what I see. I am supposed to be here in this chair. I am not sure for how much longer but for right now I know this is my purpose. Everyone must find their purpose and then place themselves in that position. What is hard is finding your purpose in life. Being a superintendent is mine; I can't picture myself doing anything else; I would be astray.

JWE's story told a different tale. JWE related that she did not experience any gender negativity while obtaining her first superintendent job. "Through the interview process, I felt like an equal candidate; the process was very professional." It was not until the contract and salary negotiations took place that the bias became evident. JWE explains:

I thought all was perfect. I had just landed the perfect job and it wasn't two minutes later I witnessed my first account of gender bias. We were in closed session and the board was discussing my salary. One of the trustees said, "We don't need to pay JWE that much because we know her husband is doing really well with his business." I was shocked and speechless, and if you know me you would be amazed that anything can render me speechless. I gathered my composure the best I could and respectfully stated that just because my husband runs a very successful business is no reason to pay me less. I plan to run this district successfully and deserve proper compensation for that. I thought my heart was going to explode and I would be fired before I even got a chance to start. Luckily, they didn't fire me and agreed to a fair compensation, a little low, but fair enough.

In JWE's second experience she related that she did not experience gender bias from the male board members but rather from the female trustees. JWE recalls:

I knew if I was offered this job I would take it, even though it meant living apart from my husband during the week. I wanted the board to know this upfront so I told them in my second interview. The men on the board were fine with it but I could see the females were not. One even went so far as to ask me why I would want to live apart from my husband. She wanted to know who would care for him, cook for the family and protect me during the week in my empty house. I remember her saying, "Won't you be scared all alone?" I assured her, and the other trustees, this was something my husband and I had discussed and he was in full support of my decision. I also told them I was not scared to be alone because my husband had trained me well in how to handle a handgun. That comment just about did one of the female trustees in; the men grinned. One said, "I think she can handle this district." Surprisingly, I received a 7 – 0 vote and got the job.

To Make a Difference One Must Be Different (Qualities and Characteristics)

A common thread all three women shared was the awareness they were a bit different from others in their thinking, actions and approach to their professional role. ABC states, “If you are going to be good at this job, you better be confident and believe in yourself; you better have a strong sense of self because everyone else is going to question you and your decisions on a near daily basis. If you do not believe in yourself, no one else will.”

The women in this study noted that being a female in a male-dominated profession takes a unique personality. One must have the ability to conquer the magnitude of stereotypes which exists. Women are often perceived as too weak or not assertive enough to do the job, yet when a woman shows her strength or assertiveness she is labeled unfeminine, outspoken or worse. JWE said, “It is not just the men who label us this way. It often times is other women as well. Instead of saying she is strong or a great leader, they get out the machete and prepare to cut us down. It’s hard to ignore, but that is exactly what you have to do; ignore.”

VIV also talked about her beliefs regarding the personality of a female superintendent:

I have been at this for so long and have seen it for years. Women are perceived differently than their male counterparts. We have to work harder, be stronger and exude confidence at all times. We cannot let the cracks show. Insecurities must be checked at the door. A woman must know how to develop both a personal and professional competence and confidence. You must be able to draw on your own positive self-image to overcome the obstacles. No one is going to do it for you; that is what you must do for yourself and for others. Never forget your strengths, you may question them from time to time but never forget them; for they are what make you unique.

Findings from the research also showed a female superintendent/CFO must be an astute politician, forming coalitions and garnering resources to accomplish district goals and objectives. A superintendent should be an ethical and considerate problem-solver, one who has the interest of the children utmost in mind at all times. Morie and Wilson's 1996 study revealed three important components for women to possess: 1) positive self-image, see oneself as the leader; 2) the knack to communicate a plan for effective leadership; and 3) the ability to showcase a wide range of professional experiences and how they relate to the superintendency.

Specific professional and personal characteristics which enable the three participants to see their own success are crystallized. ABC states:

My core values are a passion for excellence and the belief that no part of an organization ought to be favored over another. This drives my core. All must be championed equally. My core is based on equality and excellence. This was taught to me at a young age. Human relationships are essential, too. I love people, their stories, what makes them an individual. I look for ways to enjoy people, and I look for ways to enjoy this job-- this profession. I want to enjoy, not just tolerate. My greatest enjoyment is my ability to create new relationships. I want to teach this to others and show them how to enjoy their job. My strengths are in this area.

JWE states it this way:

Some theorist, I don't remember who, said we should be confident in expressing our accomplishments. You better talk it, and live it, or it will never be said about you; unless you write your own eulogy. I hope, as a female superintendent, I have given optimism to people who don't think they deserve it. Everyone deserves it. I want to help each person ignite their passion no matter what their ball and chain are. They just need an adult or leader who will champion them. We can't lose sight of this. Even in the toughest of times, I try not to, and I am proud of this.

VIV views herself in a similar manner. Whether a result of nature or nurture, or a combination of both, VIV is a tenacious woman. VIV contributes her uniqueness in

part to her powerful personal motivation. Over the years, she has developed both personal and professional confidence. Her positive self-image enables her to draw on inner strength to overcome obstacles and tackle the demands of the superintendency. Failure has never been an option for this superintendent; for when she fails, she has failed those around her. She thinks in terms of success and mastery of goals. VIV believes, “If you think it you will become it for life.” Overall, she attributes her longevity in the field to believing she is in the place where God has planted her. She knows she is the most capable person for the position. “If not, God would not have planted me here for so many decades” (VIV).

The successful superintendent/ CFO knows the importance of politics and the importance of external forces. She is able to employ intuitiveness in acquiring new knowledge that allows her to make bridges rather than valleys between the school and the negative factors. She has a keen awareness of her community’s culture and the games that are often played. Knowing the politics of the superintendency position allows her to devise strategies to ensure accomplishment of her goals and vision. She is an active member of the community’s political organizations. She belongs to the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, and serves on various charities and community boards. According to ABC, “My role is not just on campuses or in my district alone, but in the community as well. By establishing networks and relationships, more can be done for my students.” It is also an advantage to know how one’s personality plays with key shareholders in the community. JWE believes, “It’s a networking game out there, don’t ever forget that.” Being visible within the community allows all three participants to

keep a pulse on possible obstacles. Meeting the obstacles while they are small can reduce the chances of them growing into large barriers. A female superintendent can never take her eyes off of the game. “It is a 24/7 job... no it is a 24/7 way of life” (ABC).

The Hills and Valleys of It All (Barriers and Obstacles)

According to Hoyle (1989), in order to be a successful superintendent in the 21st century, it is necessary to be in tune with other state and national agencies. In short, one must know the political side of the game and how a superintendent/ CFO fits into the game. Barriers in the 21st century will come in many different shapes and forms. Educational pathfinders lead their schools through these obstacles by keeping one foot in the present and one foot in the future (Hoyle, 1989). Battling the pitfalls in today’s profession will involve a leadership style that is forward thinking and out-of-the box to many (Grogan, 1996). VIV states it well:

Barriers are inevitable in this profession. You will face them daily. By the time they get to you, several others have tried to solve them and failed. As superintendent, you get the big, bad barriers that no one else can handle. How you handle them is what separates the good superintendents from the great ones.

Each participant was asked to relay stories about negative challenges she has faced in her career. ABC characterizes outside politics as one of her greatest negative challenges. ABC claims:

Outside politics continues to be my greatest challenge. For me, it is an adult who has made a poor choice and is taking away my focus from the school system. It kills me to see when adults are hurting children and don’t keep the needs of our kids at the forefront. In my last community, the KKK’s ugliness to my minority teachers and citizens was a huge barrier for me; it almost killed me... literally. Nothing like death threat phone calls in the middle of the night or dead animals on your doorstep to make you question your professional choices. In that

community there was, and probably still is, a hateful, awful barrier between political and social subgroups. They are mad at each other and do not like each other, to the point the KKK still dresses in their white hoods and rallies. It has nothing to do with school, yet it had everything to do with my role and my job. You may not think other people's barriers are important, but they can dictate your life. We didn't learn this in any EDAD class. When I tried to deal with this, I often felt I was spinning my wheels or even making the situation worse. So many told me, including some of my board trustees, to let sleeping dogs lie. This is not how I was raised. The thought of not helping my schools move forward made me physically ill. God knows I tried. It wasn't until my board president had me over for dinner and *accidentally* had his KKK robe in sight that I knew I had to leave this district. It devastates me to this day that I walked out on people who needed me. The barrier won; I failed them. I know this isn't the typical barrier you might think of... it is man's inhumanity towards each other. I wish I had the solution to this one. I will go to my grave with regret. Next question, please.

Another key component in overcoming today's challenges is to know one's leadership style. According to Shakeshaft (1998), many successful women use interactive leadership, practice transformational leadership, provide inclusion and nurture their environment. Some researchers (Gilligan, 1993; Johnson, 1994) also believe socialization enhances certain behaviors which in turn can impact a person's leadership potential for success. According to VIV, "Barriers can paralyze a district if you don't address them, and then that paralyzes you. Whether you like it or not, you have to address them."

VIV goes on to recount one of her greatest barriers as a female superintendent.

VIV claims:

Even though I do not like to consume myself with the thoughts of inequitable barriers, I know they exist for females in this profession; all you have to do is look to your left and your right and you will more than likely see a male in both directions. I remember when I publically announced I wanted the opportunity to serve in the BCISD superintendent position. I expected my announcement to be received with cheers of confidence, not the silence of shock. Even though I had been very successful in my positions with BCISD, they initially took pause with

the idea of naming me their next superintendent. I guess no matter how good of a job I had done the thought that a man was supposed to be in the top administrative position was still prevalent. The 1990s were a different time than now and I knew I would have to change the public perception of this position or make them an offer that they could not turn down. I chose the latter. During the interview process, which for me was probably set up as a courtesy, I showed them that no one else could do the job that I would do for them. I left no doubt in their mind of my ability. The only doubt that lingered was me being a female. I knew I would have to pull out all my ammunition in my final interview, and that is exactly what I did. I told the board of trustees I would take the position on a one year contract, and if they were not pleased with my performance I would voluntarily resign the position.

I look back on that move and reflect, "What was I thinking?" It's not that the move was so extreme; it's that I thought I could not get the job unless I lowered their responsibility for me. I would never recommend this course of action to anyone. I am angered at my tactic. I devalued my own worth. I should have insisted on a multi-year contract and told them I was worth every day and every dollar on it. I will always wonder if they would have hired me had I not made them that offer. Women in this profession, or any profession, must never compromise their self worth. It took me a long time to realize I was worth way more than the course of action I chose. In the long run, everything turned out well. I got a multi-year contract the very next year and have never been denied it or a raise since. Yes, I am pleased with this accomplishment, yet I will always wonder-- what if.

According to Hill and Ragland (1995), there are several models for viewing barriers such as organizational, psychological and gender dominance. According to the three women in the study, most of their barriers they face as a superintendent fall into the psychological model. JWE felt that age played a role in the difficulties she faced when becoming a superintendent for the first time. She was not the first female superintendent in that district, and felt that the gender barrier was already partly overcome for her. JWE tells her story:

Age was far more of a barrier for me than my gender in my first school district. I think a lot of that was due to the fact that I wasn't the first woman superintendent in that district. In fact, I was the fourth one. Go and study Texas and see how many districts have had four female superintendents and I bet you will find very

few. So I do not feel that district classified gender as an overt or covert barrier. What was a barrier for me was my age. I remember someone saying, “What do you mean; she’s not even forty years old. She’s not ready for this job and all of its demands.” It was okay to be one of the youngest principals ever hired in Texas, that didn’t bother people at all, but hire someone younger than forty for the superintendent’s position (a female to boot) and watch people squirm! As I think back on this, I really don’t think it had a thing to do with my actual age. It was all about a sense of security we get from a preconceived image. Essentially, it was a look they wanted, a few wrinkles and some grey hair. They wanted maturity and wisdom to sit in the big leather chair. Youth scared them, it was unfamiliar. I had to convince them youth was not a liability, but an asset. I had to change the visual in their mind of what they thought the superintendent should look like, grey hair and all, and affirm to them that a total brunette could do the job. Boy if they could see me now, almost ten years later, they could get the grey they wished for.

Although JWE joked about dying her hair grey, without her persistence and confidence she doubts she would have been able to overcome this barrier. Though age may be seen as a barrier to some, JWE looked at it as a challenge she was able to overcome. JWE’s body language changed immediately as she began to tear up. She stated that her greatest challenge as a superintendent had nothing to do with being a superintendent, but it happened on her watch as both a leader of an intimately small school district and as a stepmother. JWE recounts:

The day started off just like every other day, me screaming at my stepson to get out of bed and to hurry to school. He informed me that SLC, his girlfriend, was going to pick him up since his truck had been taken away from him as punishment. I told him that if they were late to school I would kill both of them. (Pause) Wow, what an awful statement to say. (Long pause) I went on to school and after a short amount of time I heard sirens... and then more sirens. I didn’t think much about it until I got the call from my husband. He told me that SLC had been in a wreck and I needed to get there quick. I dropped everything and followed the sirens, I didn’t even know where I was going and then I saw the commotion; emergency vehicles everywhere a helicopter landing in a field and onlookers gathering. I knew it was bad. I made my way to the police chief who stopped me and wouldn’t let me get to her truck. He told me it was awful, Sara and her younger brother and sister had all been thrown from the truck and most likely none were going to make it. I threw up on the spot. I remember thinking

this wasn't happening!! I broke away and ran, I regret that to this day for what I saw will remain burned in my brain forever. All of a sudden I thought about my stepson, he was probably still waiting for her to come and pick him up. I was wrong; minutes later he too arrived at the scene and collapsed in my arms. How in the world were we going to get through this one? As you can imagine the trip to the hospital and then morgue was a nightmare. SLC's parents were our dear friends and I remember her mom falling in my arms and begging me to get them back. A few hours later I left the hospital and went back to my tiny school district. As you can imagine the rumors were rampant. Everyone was looking to me for guidance and wisdom. How in the world would I be able to pull it together for them when I was a mess inside? I will never forget going around to every classroom and personally telling each teacher the tragic news. I remember hugging kids and praying with kids; because that is what you do in a small district where everyone is related to each other-- you pray. The world stopped on that day and pretty much for that week-- that month. After the funeral and memorials I realized that we all had to move on and it was up to me to get the school moving forward again. Step by step we did it. Even though I was still a mess inside and my stepson was in a state of grief and guilt; you see he called SLC back that morning and told her to hurry or JWE would kill them if they were late to school. Wow, words are so powerful! This event changed me both personally and professionally... forever. I have never been the same since-- I only hope I am a bit better and stronger.

This was one obstacle that had nothing to do with being a superintendent and yet everything to do with being a leader. It taught me you can't pick and choose when you want to serve in this role. When you commit to the role it becomes you, and you become it, in the good times and in the bad.

To this day I hate the words that I said. I try to be more careful with them because they really can be the last ones. I try to control the things I can and let go of the things I can't. It's hard because I'm a control freak.

I know this is a strange barrier to mention and probably not what you are looking for but it is the single most important event in my professional career. It changed me the most and impacted me more than anyone will ever know. You see, *I* was my greatest barrier and obstacle. I learned that no one controls me, but me. I could either be my own wall or I could be my own bridge; eventually I chose bridge.

Serving As Chief Financial Officer (The New Demands of a School CFO)

A few weeks later I returned for a follow-up with each participant. This time I was more focused on their perceptions and role of serving as their district's chief

financial officer. According to Mitchell (2011), nearly two out of every three individuals in an undergraduate and graduate program are female, and in 2010, for the first time, more women than men in the United States received doctoral degrees. With these figures supporting women, why are females holding back from the public school and corporate/ financial sector?

Previously, it was difficult for women to enter the industry. Qualified women were insufficient in numbers, and of those qualified, few wanted to take on the added responsibility and stress of top management. Women saw the role of top management as exclusive rather than inclusive; a place where the few women who entered often exited. With these entrenched beliefs, a paucity of female CFOs became evident, and in many cases still continues today.

In a recent count of women holding CFO positions at the nation's largest companies, statistics show that almost nothing has changed in recent years. There are currently 44 female CFOs among the Fortune 500 companies, the same number as counted in 2009, but a slight improvement over the 38 counted in 2008 (Stuart, 2010). What are the prospects for women to break the Fortune 500 ten percent barrier? What are the prospects that ABC will not be the only female superintendent/ CFO in her region? Hope still remains that the numbers will climb in coming years; albeit not dramatically.

When the three participants were asked to describe qualities a superintendent/ CFO should possess the answers were not surprising. According to VIV:

A school financial leader must have high integrity, sharp vision for her district and be technically meticulous. She must rely on the leadership skills that come

naturally to her and are now a necessity for her district to thrive. I can tell by your face you want my answer. You know as well as I, it is our strength; the strength that allows us to be a strong mother, a strong wife, a strong woman. We must draw on that strength, the one that burns in our belly. A woman knows how to use that strength to create a consensus building and collaborative environment. A woman's strength can diffuse a frightened school board trustee, inspire the troops, and calm her own self during these uncontrollable times. A woman's strength will motivate, educate and challenge. Her strength is exactly what is needed right now; all we have to do is muster our own strength.

JWE echoes the sentiment by stating, "A public school CFO must have a keen awareness of entrepreneurial education. It is not enough to have an awareness of public school finance. You must live it, eat it and breathe it. I'm concerned this will detract our gender rather than attract them."

ABC contributes to the research conversation by stating:

Our role is changing. It is more and more about the dollars and cents of it all rather than curriculum and education. Women must realize this and have the ability to change with these new needs-- these new times. It is now more critical than ever that a woman be able to self-assess. She must know her strengths and weaknesses and use her strengths to no avail. If not, she will soon resign, or worse, be terminated. Sadly, I have seen the beginnings of both in recent months. (Pause) I've even had the fleeting thought a time or two myself.

In the follow-up interview, all three women shared enormous candor on the role of today's public school CFO. They shared their beliefs, their fears and their souls.

JWE reveals:

I've always believed in myself as a superintendent. I believe in my core, my causes, my ability to make mistakes and my ability to learn from them. I am very persuasive and proud of my ability to problem solve. I carry a strong confidence, learned from watching my father, but try not to be too cocky, learned from watching my mother. I love to take risks and color outside the lines; these are my strongest attributes. But right now it takes every ounce of my being to get up and come to work. Don't get me wrong, I love being a superintendent; I just hate where the job is going. All I think about is the bottom line-- how much will it cost, do we have the money, how much will the state cut of our funds, and shit... how many more good people will I have to lay-off?

In the past months I have cut two million dollars from next year's operating budget. I have abolished our 403B matching program, eliminated employee travel, frozen salaries, cut stipends, furloughed at-will employee workdays, and yes, laid off nine good employees. I repulse myself. I'm not well. All of this is eating away at my stomach. I should purchase stock in Mylanta. I don't eat, I barely sleep, and my restroom functions belong in a horror film. Terminating good people is the worst thing I have done in my role. To look at each one in the eye and tell them they no longer have a job with PL is torture. They cry, they curse, and they stop breathing for a moment. I can't do anything to comfort them; I just gave them the worst news of their life. I didn't sign up for this. This is not why I became a superintendent/ CFO. I used to love the numbers part of my role. I proudly called myself a "numbers nerd." I have no pride left; I can barely look at myself. I can't fix it or these nine individuals. I worry...constantly worry. I hate me and I hate what the state of Texas is doing to public education. I can't fix it and I always fix everything. Dear Lord, I can't fix it-- excuse me. (She leaves the room).

It took me a few days to get over this last interview. The emotions were raw and real. Would VIV's words reverberate what had already been said or would she have a different perspective? VIV somberly explains:

According to my grim calculations, my district will be broke in four years. According to the state budget cut projections, BC will deplete our fund balance in four short years. This is not due to wasteful spending or excessive employment standings, but due to the fact that our current operating budget is so lean I cannot find anymore to cut. I mean do I cut the theatre program, the FFA program or the athletic program? This year we sent students to the state level of competition in all areas. They brought home championship medals, state titles and received scholarships. How do you cut these amazing programs? I believe you don't. Therefore, I am driving my school district off of a cliff in four years. When I relayed this information to my board of trustees, they just looked at me and said, "VIV you always worry. We pay you to worry, and you always work it out and you will work this one out, too." I pray they are correct, but fearful they are not. So I am preparing to buckle up and drive this big yellow school bus right off the cliff.

ABC's perspective is no more optimistic than her counterparts. In a tense tone she claims:

All my business manager and I do is crunch numbers and look at different financial scenarios. I have a secret wall I call the "war wall." It has posted my

entire budget cutting ideas. It has employees listed in order that we will terminate them. I don't even call them by name anymore. They are now a number to me. How awful is that? Hello, number seven. How are you? How is your family? Oh, you have a name and your family members have names, and all I do now is call you number seven.

She shows me the war wall and then leads me back to her office couch. ABC riffles through her desk for a moment and comes back with several papers and news articles.

She states:

Lately, I have read countless articles on public school finance coming from the powers that be in Austin and determined it was time for me to reply. (She shows me her writings, as well as a few articles she has collected from some of her colleagues and summarizes them). In my opinion, these articles are meant to divert our attention from the problem at hand. They are meant for me to hate the war wall and ignite internal bickering in our local systems. The articles smear the hard work of public schools and make us out to be the wasteful spenders of local tax payer dollars. My war wall is evidence that our district is not spending in a wasteful manner. They blame the schools for cutting teacher jobs. They are trying to turn our own supporters against us and force them to doubt our decisions as CFOs. The articles argue that while teachers are the ones who educate our children, schools are carelessly cutting their jobs.

I have no issue with auditing our systems; just do not pit one group of workers against another by insinuating they are not as important. All are important. As I have said before, there is room for improving public education and there has been fluff in certain areas, and it should be cut. Austin needs to remember cutting is a painful process, and as we have all seen in the news and here locally, it affects lives.

As far as being this district's CFO, my best weapon right now is prayer. Not so much prayer for my district, but for the heads of our state who will make the final financial decisions we all have to live or die with.

Though these three women are very confident in themselves and believe in what they are doing as a superintendent, the researcher could easily see that the role of CFO tells a different story. The women still view themselves as being task-masters, change agents and risk takers. Yet, in the quietness of each one's pauses, the researcher saw a

glimpse of uncertainty. However, the researcher also has no doubt that these three incredible women will pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and continue to pursue greatness... no matter what the state throws at them.

The Flip Side of the Coin (Overcoming the Barriers)

Though no secret formula was ever revealed and no magic pill was prescribed, each of the participants, in her own right, had figured out their own process to overcoming barriers in her professional role. The ways each one described overcoming their barriers was rather personal, even a bit exposing, and yet the processes have allowed the three ladies to be highly successful in the profession. Simply stated, each participant gives reference to one of the following attributes as a way she was able to overcome barriers. These ways of overcoming included: 1) a strong sense of self, 2) supportive relations, 3) never giving up, and 4) determination to be the best.

A Strong Sense of Self and Supportive Relations

All three women attributed part of their success to others. All three gave praise to their support system. Some talked about an intimate family support system, and another talked about her professional support system. No matter who the deliverer of the support was, all three were provided with both emotional and practical support. JWE lamented:

When becoming a superintendent in a male-dominated profession the female better have a really strong family unit and a family with a great sense of humor. I've experienced both in my time. My first marriage ended because I chose graduate school and the principalship over a Volvo station wagon and babies. Having to go through a divorce because you chose the job takes a real toll on your beliefs. Fortunately, my second husband has been my greatest champion and supporter. As I said earlier, we live apart during the week and it works for us. I know that I can lean on him and draw strength from him whenever I need

it. He is also quick to give me his conservative Rush Limbaugh opinions... some I even listen to. All he asks for in return is for me to do my best and to go to the stupid NASCAR race with him once a year. Pretty fair trade-off if you ask me.

VIV beams as she shares about her supportive family. She explains:

I have the best husband. He is the ultimate supporter. With each push he gives, I gain confidence. He has allowed me to live the life that I always dreamed of. You see, my husband is a very successful physician, and I am very fortunate that I do not have to work. I choose to work; it fills my cup. What has allowed my cup to overflow is the daily support I receive from my husband and my family. I am blessed. I am also wise enough to know that I could never have been this successful without their support.

ABC talks of a different support system. She feels that she has been successful combating her contemporary barriers by surrounding herself with a great network system. Her main support systems are the professional mentors she has had the opportunity to work with over the years. She expresses that it was not always easy to find quality mentors, especially at first. She knows first-hand that worthwhile mentoring, that cultivates females in top administrative roles, can be difficult to find. ABC admits that she, too, felt alone and isolated without mentors. Due to the perceived loneliness and lack of support, some women choose to avoid embarking on this field or leave the field shortly after entering it. She asserts this is one of the reasons she moved to this region of Texas. ABC states, "I knew I would be the only female superintendent in the region, and I wanted to show females in this area that it can be done, and done well. So my husband and I packed our worldly belongings for our Wild West adventure. I've never looked back." ABC gives thanks to her many mentors that have help mold and shape her as a professional.

Other than Papaw, my father, I tip my hat to Dr. JH. He deals with emotional intelligence and has really stretched my thinking. I love a mentor who doesn't

affirm what I am currently doing but rather one that forces me to stretch and grow in my undiscovered areas. Those are the professional mentors I have sought out over the years. I draw on them. They are like my therapists. There is no doubt you are a role model in this job. That is one reason you are picked for this job. I look at what I want to model, and try to find influential people to help me better those characteristics. Dr. JH has done that the most for me. Papaw did it for me when he was alive. Right now, I want to be a great leader for my district, and I do that with the support of mentors. So many are scared to ask for help, but I see it as a key component to my success. Without a positive network to keep me up I would probably have run from this a long time ago. (ABC)
 Women in the superintendent role must give themselves permission to have

mentors in their lives; not just professional mentors, but personal mentors as well, that feed the heart and soul (Morie & Wilson, 1996). Mentors can provide varied types of support for today's educational leaders. Mentors acknowledge women's leadership abilities and give them guidance and support to face the many challenges of their profession.

Never Giving Up and Determination to Be the Best

The participants' personal belief systems are a significant component in their success as a superintendent/ CFO. According to ABC, a successful leader must have excellence at her core. Modeling excellence for others is one of her leadership strategies. She has a vision of being a model and contributor of excellence for her employees and students. This self view provides her with the commitment and tenacity to make a difference and to accomplish her goals.

VIV explains that a successful leader must have the ability to draw on her own inner strength. Her personal belief system is one of passion and persistency. VIV believes motivation and drive enable one to develop quality leadership characteristics.

She also states a successful leader never stops learning. Intuitiveness for acquiring new knowledge must always be evident.

JWE concludes the conversation on this topic by saying:

A successful female superintendent is first and foremost a champion of children. A superintendent must have the desire to show students the excellent qualities they possess. To this day I still believe this. I have just expanded it to include not only all of my students, but all of my employees and the community of learning I am associated with as well. The reason I went into education in the first place was to make a difference in kid's lives. As a superintendent I still do that, and hopefully so much more.

Final Words of Wisdom

This section focuses on information provided by the participants related to the legacy each would leave as superintendent/ CFO. The purpose of this section was to allow the participants the opportunity to have their final say regarding their experiences as a female and a superintendent/ CFO. Drawing to a close, each participant was asked, "When you retire and sit in your rocking chair what do you want to be remembered for and what final pearls of wisdom do you wish to share?" VIV reflectively replies:

I want to be remembered as a great person, not just a good superintendent who was devoted to serving others first. Of course, my ego wants to be remembered as someone who made a difference, touched other's lives and made BC a better district. If I had to summarize my tenure myself, I would say I am a professional who cares about children and people enough to fight hard for them and always go the extra mile. The advice I would leave for those who will follow me is simple; don't do it unless you are passionate about it. You won't love every day as a superintendent because the job is hard and sometimes next to impossible. So if you are going to pursue it, make sure it is your life's passion. If you have passion for the job, it will bring you great bounty.

JWE provides these final words:

I'm not a rocking chair kind of person. Maybe it's because I am not near the age of retirement. I have so much more to offer and to receive. I'm not ready to think about the finality of it all. I have not accomplished all of my goals yet. At least that's the excuse I will share with you. Perhaps I don't think about it

because I fear that I will not be remembered. I know my picture will go up on a wall and my name will be on a plaque or even a building, even though I personally think that is stupid, I just hope I am not the only female picture hanging on the wall or the only female name on a building in that particular community. I really don't care if they remember me, I just want them to remember the changes and growth the district(s) experienced during that crazy lady's tenure. Yes, I guess I want to be remembered as the crazy lady who shook things up and made districts a better place for their shareholders. That's more than enough for me.

I know I should sound intellectual when sharing this response but I have never really considered myself an intellectual, rather a practical person. So, I would have to say GO FOR IT! Don't be afraid of the unknown; don't be afraid of the obstacles and barriers, just go for it... full steam ahead. As silly as it sounds, drive it like you stole it! Let them see your passion, your drive, your determination and your dedication. With these qualities you can't go wrong.

ABC stresses:

I really want to be remembered as a force devoted to improving mankind. I want to be remembered as one who made possibilities a reality for others and for myself. I am most proud of all the possibilities I have helped turn into realities for my students and my employees. I may not be remembered by the masses, but the ones who do remember me, I hope it is with a warmth and love. I hope they say she made a positive difference in my life and taught me to do the same for others.

As far as lessons I can leave for those to follow-- keep your priorities in proper alignment; faith, family and then your professional career. It is so easy to reverse the order, and the times I did, I regret. Keep your spiritual life at the forefront. Pray daily. It is good to have a partner you can share the highs and lows with. You will be tempted to put your family on the back burner-- don't. You are the only wife and mother they have. Take that job seriously. It will feed them and balance you. Have mentors in your professional life that nurture you and give you a good kick when you need one. I call them my council, and they give me the courage to achieve to new heights. Always prepare for the position, and know that your morals will be tested daily. Hold fast and remain strong. I do the job as if Papaw, my father, was in the room watching me.

At the conclusion of the final interview I asked each participant what was next

for their professional career. ABC rolled in laughter and said:

This is my final swan song. I will retire in a few years from AS. It will then be time to experience my husband and family whole-heartedly. I know I will cry on

the first day of school when I am not there to greet everyone. I will just make sure I am on the top of a pyramid or at the bottom of the Grand Canyon on that day. This has been a wonderful profession for me. It has allowed me to be successful and impact lives. I will write the final pages of this last chapter and then ride off in the sunset. I just plan to ride off in a vintage convertible, with my husband driving and my hair blowing in the wind.

VIV's statement parallels ABC's, yet she plans to finish her career where it all started, in BC. VIV claims:

I will never pursue another superintendent position anywhere else. I have been asked numerous times but that has never been my calling. I started here, and this is where it will end. That may be in a few weeks, a few months or a few years. I have no calendar or timeline. I just know it will be right here in BC.

JWE speaks a different tone:

I know I will leave my current district in a few years. I have so much more I want to do professionally. I have loved my time so far and I can't wait to see what the future has in store for me. Whether it's Texas or on the national level I'm up for the challenge. I want to show respect and gratitude for the females who have come before me and I feel I owe it to all of them to take the journey of possibilities even further for the next generation of females. You know we still haven't had a female in the oval office. (She grins a sly grin).

Overall Summary of Accounts

The purpose of this study was to identify through qualitative inquiry the personal stories of three outstanding female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas. The intention was to share the voice and journey of the three superintendents/ CFOs as they relayed their personal accounts and perceptions of being a female superintendent in a male-dominated profession. In Chapter IV, the research with the Texas female superintendents/ CFOs was presented with detailed descriptions of each administrator and her responses to the three general research focus questions. Special attention was given to the major themes which emerged from the analysis of the data findings which included: 1) entry and

longevity as a female superintendent/CFO; 2) female qualities and characteristics; 3) barriers and obstacles encountered; 4) the new demands of a school CFO; and 5) overcoming the barriers. These salient themes were illustrated with excerpts from the narratives of the interview sessions and time spent with each lady. The themes were explored and reported using specific interview quotes and supporting research. Chapter V presents conclusions based on the lived experiences of the selected participants as well as sharing the findings, implications and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Statistical data indicates there are far fewer females in the superintendent/ CFO position than their male counterparts. A significant problem is that females continue to be underutilized in this key educational role. To understand the perceived reasons for the underutilization of females as public school superintendents/ CFOs, it is necessary to first understand the apparent barriers which exist, both within the gender and within the social organization.

From the general research on barriers females encounter on the road to the superintendency, there is a consensus that a high level of commitment from the individual and the social organization is both positive and desirable for optimum success. One strategy for aspiring leaders, desiring to obtain the role of the superintendency, would be to explore methods, which facilitate optimum achievement of both.

One topic that has not been fully analyzed is the process of socialization through which female superintendents develop and maintain high levels of professional commitment to themselves, their families and to their professional community. Van Maanen (1976) advanced a theory of organizational socialization that is useful for understanding processes that lead to increasing one's level of successful outcomes. Organizational socialization was defined by Van Maanen (1976) as the interactive

process by which a person determines the values, norms and required behaviors that allow one to function as a member of a particular organization.

Organizational socialization refers minimally to the manner in which an individual is taught and learns the behaviors that are customary and desirable, and which behaviors are not desirable in a professional setting (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The process appears in many forms, ranging from brief, self-guided, trial and error processes to elaborate ones requiring lengthy preparation periods of education and learning, succeeded by extensive official apprenticeships.

This organizational socialization process results in the individual learning a cultural perspective that can be used to deal with job obtainment and professional longevity. The outcome also involves a person learning an organizational situation and acting within it with common-sense beliefs, principles and understandings (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Van Maanen (1976) described this dynamic process as a continuous one throughout an individual's career with the organization or profession.

At its best, organizational socialization is the matching of individual and organizational goals. It is aimed at assuring that the individual's values, attitudes, behaviors and motives are congruent with the organizations. Therefore, the purpose of socialization is to provide an individual with the knowledge and motivation to identify defined roles (barriers), self-assess with the roles (barriers) and perform successfully with the defined roles (barriers).

Van Mannen (1976) emphasized that all organizations maintain, to greater or lesser degrees, a core of expectations about acceptable attitudes and characteristics of

their members, none more prevalent than the organization's leader. The more pervasive this normative system is, the more critical the process. The normative system is based on the organization's mission, beliefs and ideology, which serves the multi-faceted role of linking the organization to broader purposes and strengthening the member's alignment to the organization by reference to a common belief. Therefore, a significant goal of the organizational socialization process is to increase the member's understanding of the normative system's needs and perceived attitudes and to keenly understand how the member's assets can contribute to the enhancement, and eventually the success, of both the member *and* the organization.

The primary purpose of this study was to expand the knowledge base in the areas of perceived barriers faced by females who obtain the role of public school superintendent/ CFO. In particular, it was designed to isolate the barriers and examine them from two standpoints: 1) barriers self created by her own choices and/or her actions and 2) barriers which are created for the female by the external social organization. To allow for optimal understanding of the problem, the researcher chose to focus on three veteran female superintendents/ CFOs in the state of Texas. Each was chosen for the in-depth, naturalistic study based on her outstanding reputation as a superintendent/CFO and her professional accolades bestowed by the Texas Association of School Administrators. The participants were also selected due to their continued success in their current profession, as well as their willingness to share descriptive accounts of their own personal testimonies as a female superintendent/ CFO. The stories expressed in this research study are real and represent the true thoughts and feelings of each participant.

Second, the research design was also formulated to contribute descriptions of current successful practices being utilized by the three female superintendents/ CFOs. The study also sought to ascertain the commitment each participant has to her various social organizations (school, community and profession) as well as to her beliefs. It was the study's mission to gain a deeper cognitive understanding of the practices and philosophies the three females used in their experiences as a successful female superintendent/ CFO.

Although there were varied responses to the researcher's questions, there were patterns and similarities between the three that emerged in the final data analysis. The following categories emerged as prevailing topics in obtaining, maintaining and successfully achieving in the role of superintendent/ CFO: 1) entry and longevity as a female superintendent/ CFO; 2) female qualities and characteristics; 3) barriers and obstacles encountered; 4) the new demands of a school CFO; and 5) strategies used for overcoming the barriers. The results of the study provide readers with individual accounts of successful practices the three female superintendents used to obtain and maintain their position as a superintendent/ CFO.

Two research questions guided the qualitative study:

1. In encountering past and modern-day barriers and overcoming said obstacles, how do three select female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas perceive their professional lives and the overall profession?
2. What are the unexposed stories of three select female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas?

Procedures

A qualitative research approach, which allowed the researcher to study social behaviors and interpret the subjective meanings found in the individual interactions, was utilized. This type of approach allowed the researcher to enter the participant's environment and derive meaning from her descriptions of experiences and behaviors. This approach was beneficial in examining how the three women interacted with the barriers and obstacles faced in acquiring and sustaining the superintendent/ CFO position.

Female superintendents/ CFOs from different parts of Texas were targeted as potential study participants. The pool of potential participants was then chosen from meaningful, selected sources. First, the participants must have been named as a superintendent of the year finalist or winner as determined by the Texas Association of School Administrators' criteria. This was the primary source for obtaining the candidates who could meet the abstract definition of obtaining "professional success." The second criteria, which was used to locate women with tenure and experience in the profession, was to set a minimum of five years experience on the subject participant. Each participant must have served a minimum of five years as a superintendent/ CFO. Further controls were used to the greatest degree. Candidates from different geographical locations in the state of Texas were found. Once the names were derived, the candidates were called and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. Of the five called, three gave verbal consent, and two declined, for various reasons. Even though a racial diversity was not achieved, the three women's personalities, upbringing

and life's missions were diverse and unique. When the researcher confirmed the three participants, confidentiality was explained and ensured, as was the research problem and questions. After approval was granted, a consent form was delivered and signed.

The actual research portion of the study began shortly thereafter. It was estimated that the time needed for initial interviews, site visitations and general observations for each participant would be three or more days. Interviews, site visits and observations were conducted after arrangements and the participants granted permission.

At the entry interview, the procedure for data collection was discussed and the consent form was signed. Copies of all necessary handouts were provided, as well as a cover letter of introduction, the superintendent perception questionnaire, the interview protocol letter and the case study sample questions. After the participants completed the perception questionnaire, the researcher then used the information to compile a profile of the three female superintendents/ CFOs. The perception questionnaire also assisted the researcher in developing further interview questions, which tied specifically to the research topic, and questions.

Once the final construction of the interview questions was complete, the researcher utilized a person-to-person interview design. This design was utilized to help create an environment that encouraged the participants to candidly share their stories and opinions. It remained the researcher's primary intent to capture authentic narratives of the women's experiences in the superintendent/ CFO position. The interviewees were more than gracious in sharing their thoughts, feelings and experiences about the barriers and successful strategies each one encountered in her professional life. The "rawness"

of the responses by the interviewees helped the researcher immensely by allowing her to create a diary of authentic reaction, both for herself and for others who will review the research.

In addition to interviewing the three participants, the researcher conducted on-site observations. Again, the intent of the researcher was to observe and record natural interactions and behaviors between the participant and her social organization. Mastering the goal of observational research and capturing the natural interactions proved difficult at first, yet later became a valuable tool for gaining additional information about the participant. Each participant was observed two or three times in her natural work setting. Day-to-day work, district and community meetings, school board meetings and interactions on various campuses were also observed. The researcher ended this phase once a comprehensive picture was obtained of each superintendent/ CFO participant.

Document review was also relevant in this research study by expanding the evidence from other sources. Documents that proved to be beneficial were personal memos, public correspondence, meeting agendas and summaries, as well as newspaper articles, and even one personal journal. All of these documents provided additional data concerning how the three participants conducted their professional lives.

Data collection was produced from the administration of the perception questionnaire, interviews, observations, researcher field notes and document reviews. From the raw data of case study records, categories, patterns, similarities and differences emerged that shaped the study's reports and the final discussion and analysis.

Data analysis was comprehensive and exhaustive. Perception questionnaire responses were collapsed from four responses (no barrier, perceived barrier, persistent barrier and obstructing barrier, as well as not a successful strategy, modest successful strategy, average successful strategy and essential successful strategy) per item to two responses (barrier and not a barrier, as well as successful strategy and not a successful strategy) per item. Tables were created to illustrate the categories, allowing item-by-item results to show as well. The instruments included data to confirm the degree of each individual's belief in the value of the question's topic.

Lengthy interview transcripts and field notes were read first for familiarity; second for creating preliminary categories, themes and patterns; third for developing data displays (dynamics matrices) from collapsing preliminary categories in the individual interviewee data; and fourth for further collapsing data to create categories for each of the case studies. The dynamics matrices and perception questionnaire were then used as guides to write the individual case study reports found in Chapter IV and the Discussions and Implications in this chapter.

Pilot testing, multiple research participants, attention to the tenets of ethics and reciprocity to the participants were also used to strengthen the study.

Discussions

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings of this study, embodied in the qualitative case study reports, and the analysis of the data derived by answering the research questions. The interpretation of the findings and the recommendations are discussed from a feminist perspective and categorized according to common and

recurring themes which emerged throughout the course of the study. The discussion centers itself around the two prevailing research questions:

1. In encountering past and modern-day barriers and overcoming said obstacles, how do three select female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas perceive their professional lives and the overall profession?
2. What are the unexposed stories of three select female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas?

These two questions provided focus for the data analysis as well as serving as a framework for showcasing the women's experiences in relation to barriers and obstacles faced in obtaining and maintaining the role of public school superintendent/ CFO. The findings of this study indicate there are both overt and covert barriers which exist while pursuing and serving in the superintendent/ CFO position. Additionally, the findings indicate that women can, with conscious effort and tactics, become successful contributors to this male-dominated profession.

The Women's Perceptions on Encountering Past and Modern-Day Barriers in Their Professional Lives.

The results of this study indicate a unique main barrier for women seeking to obtain the public school superintendency/ CFO position. According to all three participants, breaking through the traditional male / W.A.S.P. mold and redefining the look and image of the superintendent/ CFO is a prevailing barrier.

Consistent with research, the women in this study agree that the superintendency is still a male-dominated position with masculine expectations that have been developed

by the men who occupy the position and reinforced by the social organization. The masculine expectations that define this position have been accepted by society and by the men who occupy the position. Since the social organization (society) expects the superintendent/ CFO to behave in the realm of the masculine expectations, women often times experience discrimination when they serve in a superintendent/ CFO position. Though the women in this study relay their own personal gender discrimination has been more subtle, it is still a prevailing barrier with which each must manage and adjust. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) explain, “Sexism is a barrier for women who aspire to become CEOs of school districts because people respond to women on the basis of sex-role stereotypes” (p.17). In order to propose change in the image of the superintendent, it is important for women to understand that gender discrimination does exist and develop a personal plan for combating the discrimination. Furthermore, women must commit to the cause of redefining the archaic definition of the traditional male superintendent/ CFO and help to build a gender neutral platform. More specifically, women must develop an awareness of gender barriers and assist themselves, and other females, in navigating these barriers. Though research in the earlier part of this century showcased the silence women had towards this topic, all agree it is beyond time for women to challenge themselves and voice their experiences (Young & Skrla, 2003; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). VIV noted:

As females, we are incline to only share the positive so everyone around us feels better. We were taught at a young age to keep the negative deep rooted inside and only showcase the encouraging aspect of things. As my mother would say, “No one likes a „Negative Nelly“; be positive and stand up straight.” I guess that is what I have done all my life-- shown the positive and stood up straight. That way everyone thought things were perfect. I never really allowed myself to think

of the negative or to really assess that preconceived discrimination was really happening to me. Now that I look back on it, I realize I, too, was a victim of this barrier. I guess I just didn't want to fully admit it.

Each of the women in this study slowly admitted they had experienced difficulties in their professional position and believed some of these difficulties occurred as a result of their gender, or as a result to not living in direct alignment with the male-defined stereotypical role. JWE noted:

God love my neighbor, Mrs. AWF. She is a 75 year old widow and I know she watches my house with binoculars and a time log. I have no doubt she records when I come in at night. Heaven forbid if someone comes to my house. She probably Googles their license plate to see who they are. Living apart from my husband drives her crazy. If I stay in town for one weekend and do not see my husband she will comment on it when we *meet* each other at the mailbox. I know she would never do this if I were male. She just can't believe I choose to live this way. I know part of it is her grief and part of it is her belief that the woman should be home taking care of the man and the family. That one just never worked for me. I wasn't cut from that "June Cleaver" cloth. All I can do is continue to show Mrs. AWF, and everyone else, that a woman and her marriage can survive even when you don't sleep with your spouse every night. Trust me, it makes the nights when you do sleep together even more special.

I know many describe the superintendent/ CFO role as migrant work, moving every three or so years and this may be one caveat that scares women from entering the profession. I don't want to be thought of as a migrant superintendent but rather a pioneering one. I want to show other females, as well as myself, that one can have a healthy marriage and live apart during the week. Women do not have to constrain themselves to one geographical area unless it is their true choice. It is okay to live separate even though your neighbor doesn't like it. Maybe this is my contribution to redefining the traditional role.

ABC shared with poise her discomfort with gender discrimination and her strong commitment to overcome it. ABC claimed, "I really feel my experiences with gender discrimination helped me further create a sense of awareness for who I am and who they are. I just looked at them as part of the journey. All journeys have bumps in the road; it's what you do when you get to the bump that defines you." ABC relayed that she did

not want to be a member of the Good Old Boy Network, she wants to be the president of it. Dana & Bourisaw (2006) found that breaking into the Good Old Boy Network was a positive factor in acquiring the superintendency. Therefore, it would make sense that exclusion from the network would be a prohibitive factor for those aspiring to the position. Even though the Good Old Boy Network continues to be a barrier and the boys still seem to rule, it does not have to remain this dominant. ABC believes:

Even though the Good Old Boy Network still rules it does not mean I can't continue my efforts to broaden or even redefine the rules. As a veteran female superintendent, I will continue to rewrite the rules for both men and women to follow. When anger sets in, I will continue to turn it into determination to overcome this barrier and others. I will continue to chisel away the current image of a superintendent/ CFO and replace it with a more gender neutral one. I will be happy when society sees that a woman knows just as much about curriculum and instruction as they do about finance and construction. I will continue my quest to dilute and eventually abolish gender discrimination within the superintendency.

While it is apparent that gender discrimination is still a concerning factor in the superintendency, it appears women are learning to overcome some of these issues by their willingness to acknowledge, share and define their personal experiences with the barrier. While women's acknowledgement of these gender barriers is important, they need to support, understand and advocate for re-defined roles of the superintendent position. The day must end as Bolman and Deal (2003) describe, "that women more than men must walk a tightrope of conflicting expectations" (p.347).

The answers to this research question suggest women experience conflicts between gender and the social organization of the superintendency. Therefore, it is important for women to understand the root causes that have created and sustained the barriers and gender discrimination they experience. By acknowledging the root causes

of barriers, women can help transform the definition of public school superintendent/ CFO. Gone is the day that women should feel the need to create an alter-ego. Rather, women should focus on creating a “natural self” professional identity. While the women in this study do not perceive themselves to have an alter-ego, they have in fact admitted to adjusting their natural self to better fit into the male dominated profession. In other words, they have learned how to successfully assimilate into the man’s world and create a successful niche for themselves.

Even though it appeared at first the participants had suppressed their barrier stories, they knew exactly the words to use to share their experiences. Though the experiences were very personal and emotional, it was evident the women knew others, as well as themselves, could benefit from their experiences. Though painful at times, their acknowledgement of barriers, predetermined roles and social organization obstacles helped them to challenge and overcome these barriers. Women aspiring to the superintendency must use these stories, remain aware of these barriers and know that the superintendency is still under construction in regards to identity transformation. It is also critical that the female superintendent/ CFO stories continue to be shared so that others can be attentive of the importance of overcoming gender barriers and redefining today’s preconceived definition of the superintendency.

The Women’s Perceptions on Overcoming Said Obstacles in Their Professional Lives.

Though each woman in the study was distinctive in her role of superintendent/ CFO, it was clearly evident all three participants shared the belief that collaborative leadership is a more natural leadership style than any other. According to Banks (1995),

“Men focus on achieving success in tasks while women seek interpersonal success; women put more energy into creating a positive group effort; men focus on displaying recognizable leader behavior.” VIV shared:

I thoroughly enjoy working in a team-like environment. I work hard to create just that. I am a person who feeds off of other's energy and hopefully others feed off of mine. I know how to bring out the talents of others when working together. It can't be about me, it has to be about the team, the students and the district.

When I keep my focus aligned with this philosophy, we are almost always successful. When I started implementing this type of leadership approach, many thought I was weak and could not do the job on my own. They construed it as I needed help, rather than realizing my confidence was secure enough to work with others and showcase their talents rather than just my own. Since this has been modeled by my team and me for years, it is now just a natural part of the fabric of my district. You will see the students, teachers and even the school board practice participative leadership. It's just who we are-- it's what makes us all successful.

VIV spoke about how involving her shareholders (staff, teachers, parents, students, community and the school board) in the decision-making process is what has allowed her to combat numerous barriers and obstacles. VIV claims:

There is power in numbers. I am much stronger at my job when I work with others than when I work alone. Do not get me wrong, I am secure enough to stand alone in my thoughts and beliefs; I just prefer to unite to fight rather than enter a battle as a single soldier. I look at it as my duty to rally the troops, give them the ammunition they need to win the war, and then to combat the forces right alongside with them.

VIV wants to be remembered as a collaborator, one who was approachable and preferred working with others rather than alone. She hopes this is a philosophy and practice that will remain in her district long after she is gone. According to VIV:

There are countless theorists who have studied participative leadership, and one of my favorites is a theorist named Patterson. Patterson sums it up best, “Leadership is about influencing people to achieve mutually agreed upon goals.

It is about getting others to believe in the cause, and to work together as a team to accomplish the goal.” Perhaps I am more of an influencer than a leader.

The other women mirrored VIV’s sentiments and talked confidently about their leadership style. ABC talked about her leadership style with her board of trustees. She noted:

I am a firm believer in the “team of eight” approach. When I came to my current school district, I could immediately tell this was not a practiced philosophy. They were very much a board of seven individuals focused on their own personal agendas and not what was best for the district as a whole. I knew I had my work cut out for me. If I was going to be successful here, I had to make them successful at working as a unified team. If not, the barriers I faced, as well as the barriers the district faced, would never be overcome. I started small. We, as a team, developed new goals and objectives for the school district. This way everyone had a voice and some ownership in the district’s new identity. From there we gained momentum and started tackling the district’s problems (barriers) as a united force.

My advice for others is to find your leadership style and confidently understand it, and then develop it to your fullest potential. I have met many mentors of the collaborative style, no one more than Dr. SN. She was my model and one of my mentors. She helped me realize how crucial it was to know one’s self. She made me understand that half of my service is to reach out *to* others, and the other half is to solve my school district’s problems *through* others. To know one’s leadership style and how that style can enhance, or sadly, even erode a school district is vital. This job is filled with unpredictability; unexpected moments are the norm, and you must be prepared to lead no matter what the circumstance. Many times the superintendent only has one shot to get it right. I know when I collaborate with others, and then react, I get it right.

Transformational leaders are skilled in management patterns that inspire increased worker performance by encouraging all points of view (Langford, 1995). According to Langford, it is the leader who effectively aids in facilitating agreement between opposing viewpoints to develop a practice for solving problems. Needs, values and goals of the entire party must be recognized. It is the leader’s role to ensure all voices are heard. The leader must collaborate, create ownership, establish trust and

carry out the journey to solve the problem. The leader serves as a multifaceted member of the team.

JWE addressed her response this way:

Women must recognize who they are as a leader. They must accept they are in charge of not only a school district, but most likely a multi-million dollar company. It is up to the superintendent/ CFO to lead with self-assurance and to gain the confidence of those she is leading. By challenging the barriers one faces, by developing a leadership style that is successful, by choosing and becoming a leader of her craft, and by following the example of others who have come before and been successful, a female superintendent can cultivate a culture that is successful for others as well as successful for herself. It is my goal to be the best leader for my school district and to outwardly model my leadership style for others. I like to create an energy of synergy.

I *enjoy* collaborating with others when dealing with a problem. I *thrive* on collaborating with the barrier, though. As they say, keep your friends close and your enemies closer. My friends are my administrative team and my school board. My enemy is the barrier, obstacle or problem that is standing in my way. In my school district, we do not ignore the problem in hopes that it will just disappear; instead, I surround my team and myself around the problem. We attack the problem, and in most cases, successfully solve the problem. This approach has not only made my district stronger, it has made me a stronger leader as well. I can truly see the difference.

According to Langford (1995), conclusions show that many, though not all, women professionals remain unaware of their professional leadership style. Women often times deny themselves the right to establish who they want to be as a leader. Many women shy away from leadership and choose to stay in the support role, rather than realizing that they can become a supportive leader. Because many women in education are not aware of the power and importance of role models in leadership, new thinking is required.

The Women's Perceptions on the Overall Profession.

Van Maanen (1976) contends that the purpose of socialization is to provide an individual with the knowledge and motivation to perform a defined role in one's profession. Van Maanen (1976) also believed a tool to assist with the socialization process is one's ability to create one's own individualized support plan. According to Van Maanen (1976), an individualized support plan is designed to: 1) equip individuals to successfully manage intense learning experiences; 2) fulfill the mission of professional well being; and 3) motivate one through personal and professional processes.

Strategies of a support plan are aimed at assuring that the individual's values, attitudes, behaviors and motives are congruent with the mission of the organization. In short, an individual's purpose and plan must align with the needs and goals of the social organization. Part of the individualized support plan deals with maintaining a personal climate which educates and motivates one to remain committed to organizational success. Caveats of the support plan are designed to continuously give the individual a positive mindset that they can obtain and maintain success. Van Maanen (1976) stated that social experiences, which are capable of changing people predominantly, occur in primary relationships, which are valued by the individual. The three interviewees summarized this by claiming female administrators, especially those serving in the superintendent/ CFO position, must get to know oneself and their organization on a personal level.

The interviewees elaborated that along with positive primary relationships, socialization with the organization's climate and culture must be a priority. A superintendent/ CFO must leave her office and experience the daily life of the organization's trenches. The superintendent/ CFO must also socialize with shareholders to create an environment based on goal commitment. The socialization process must be an interactive process by which the individual determines the values, norms and required behaviors that allow her to function as a successful superintendent/ CFO. Generally speaking, one must be willing to learn the ropes, or the social knowledge skills, to assume the organization's top role. When a superintendent/ CFO is directly linked to the organization's vision and mission, success is more likely to be achieved.

Other measures to employ are the active participation in self-awareness activities. The purposes of self-awareness activities are two-fold. First, one must become intimately aware of her own strengths and needs in order to grow. Additionally, individual and organizational strengths and needs change, and therefore must be analyzed regularly. Second, the effectiveness of the leader's personality and the environment's persona must complement each other. Furthermore, the superintendent/ CFO must continually remain aware of how her own abilities work in conjunction with the strengths and needs of the organization.

These three successful female superintendents/ CFOs enjoyed, and even looked forward to, growing in their own self-awareness. By knowing oneself on a deeper level, both as a person and as a professional, one becomes more confident in one's own abilities and more knowledgeable about the benefits of healthy social interaction.

Other correlates to maintain longevity as a modern day superintendent/ CFO focus on the intent to maintain and nurture a highly committed individual. Based on the findings of this research, as well as the contributions of the three females interviewed, the following are other specific recommendations for women aspiring to have a successful career as a public school superintendent/ CFO:

1. It is not always just *what* you know but *who* you know as well. Create a cocoon of positive and influential masters of the craft who can assist you personally and professionally. A network is the interconnection of individuals who are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as a professional relationship. Mentors are often referred to as people whose functions are to make introductions or to train a person to move effectively through a system. A mentor provides guidance and knowledge (Gilmour & Kinsella, 2008). Surround yourself with proper networks and mentors.
2. Know thyself. Create a plan to navigate the discourses of personal and professional self. Aspiring females must be able to adopt a postmodern feminist perspective to redefine the socially constructed plan. According to Van Maanen (1976) it is necessary to be well in tune with oneself before one can successfully orchestrate the complexities of a social organization.
3. Be a life-long learner. Continually self assess and bolster areas that need redevelopment. All three interviewees suggest that women traditionally have had to be better educated than their male counterparts. Pursue professional

development opportunities; never stop studying the craft. The position of superintendent/ CFO is continually evolving, and the challenges are becoming more and more complex. Gut instinct is not enough; one must be equipped with a sound heart as well as an erudite mind. This will assist the individual with lasting the course of time. Never stop learning.

4. Do your homework and have a defined plan. Know what is ahead of you. Know the job, the district and the community that you wish to join. Along with this, prepare an efficient resume and vita that highlights your talents and experiences. Showcase how you are the missing link for the organization's needs. Over-prepare for the interview and evaluation processes; leave the trustees thinking you know their district, and its needs, better than they know them.
5. Believe and achieve. Have confidence in your abilities. Train for the position. Obtain building level and central office administrative experience, and do not forget; it is marathon, not a sprint. Strategically plan your career moves. Challenge yourself to acquire a doctorate. Be a master of the craft and of the scholarly process. Perceive yourself as a strong leader who can take on the monumental role of superintendent/ CFO.
6. Take pride in yourself. Remain dedicated to what is valuable in life. Never take your eyes off of what *really* matters. Do not compromise or lower your standards. At the end of the day be proud of the person (professional and personal) you have become.

Implications

The most overarching position in a public school district is that of superintendent/ CFO. The position has been, and still remains, dominated by men. Males have captivated the superintendent/ CFO position since its inception during the late 1800s. The position was introduced to Texas in 1866, yet the first female superintendent in our state was not selected until 1918 (Texas Education Agency, 1954). Though the needs of public education have changed, the equitable representation of females to males in the superintendent/ CFO realm has shown little transformation, with only two out of every ten superintendents/ CFOs being a woman.

There has been a magnitude of research describing the barriers and obstacles females face in seeking the superintendency. Yet until recently, there has been a lack of research conducted about women who attained the position. Clearly, research has only begun to explore the real experiences and core concepts needed to obtain and maintain the superintendent/ CFO position.

The intent of this study was to contribute specifically to the research on women in the superintendency/ CFO position, and to introduce to the aspiring community of females those who have come before and designed a path for success. The research did not want to only show the road map, but to travel down the path with the women and breathe life into their journey. The final mission of the research was to excavate the shared professional characteristics of the three women. Though it was the initial intent of the researcher to present a concise prescription for others to follow, this was not what

the research unveiled. Rather, the findings proved to be far more intrinsic and abstract than prescriptive and tangible.

Van Maanen's concepts on organizational socialization ultimately became the aligning factor with the theoretical framework of this study. His work contributed time honored knowledge regarding the necessity for individuals to connect on many different levels with the organization's social components. Van Maanen (1976) maintained that organizational socialization, at its best, is the matching of individual and organizational goals. It is aimed at assuring the individual's values, attitudes, behaviors and motives are congruent with the mission of the organization. Therefore, the concept of organizational socialization, as it relates to this record of study, became an overarching theme. With the knowledge of Van Maanen's theory, female superintendents/ CFOs can empower themselves to better perform and withstand the test of time.

This study contributed descriptions of current applied practices being utilized by three highly successful female superintendents/ CFOs in Texas. These women are making conscious efforts to socialize themselves and their community for the express purpose of cultivating commitment to the success of their school organization. The study also contributed knowledge about the practices highly effective female superintendents use to plan, develop, obtain and maintain their role as a female superintendent/ CFO. The participants followed the premise of Eagly and Carli (2007) who suggest that effective leadership is a process.

In this regard, the research concludes that longevity in the public school superintendent/ CFO position is promoted by authentic socialization processes and is

strengthened if these socialization processes are designed and implemented by a superintendent/ CFO who is dedicated to themselves and their district. In this regard, commitment to one's professional success was shown to be promoted by the following socialization processes:

1. Formal and informal personal awareness; know your own strengths and areas which need development.
2. Know the needs of others who are in the group.
3. Build a climate that nurtures yourself and the needs of others.
4. Constantly connect; stay united with the needs (positive and negative) of the district.
5. Never stop growing; stay in perpetual motion of learning and defining who you are as a public school superintendent/ CFO.
6. Believe in yourself and stay on course.

Recommendations for Future Study

This qualitative study followed the path of three successful female superintendents/ CFOs in the state of Texas. Data was collected for several months during the spring and summer of 2011. Because the study was limited to three participants, the conclusions were also limited. Therefore, findings from this study revealed other areas that need to be further investigated. The following are recommendations for expansion of future research:

1. A replication study showcasing more females who are willing to give voice and share their stories of being a female superintendent/ CFO in today's public schools.
2. Broaden this study's research focus of perceived barriers and successful strategies to females who practice the profession in other states.
3. Add another dimension for further investigation which includes incorporating females from broader ethnic/ minority backgrounds and cultures to see if they share a common experience.
4. Include a longitudinal study on several female superintendents/ CFOs who use various support plans including the organizational socialization processes. The study could measure the long-term effects on female superintendents/ CFOs of implementing such support plans in their administrative practice.
5. Compare and contrast highly successful (veteran) female superintendents with ones who left the profession in the early stages of their career. Reference to see if those who left the profession in the early stages replicated the successful strategies implemented by the veterans.
6. Conduct a "mixed-professional" study of female CEOs/ CFOs in professions other than the public school superintendency.

Conclusions

This study explored women's perceptions of the barriers they encountered along with successful strategies utilized in attaining and maintaining the position of public school superintendent/ CFO. Both females aspiring to the position and those who wish

to maintain a tenured career in the position can utilize the shared stories and showcased findings. The three female respondents had many suggestions for successful strategies which should be considered by aspiring females, as well as those who are looking for tactics to continue in the profession. This study's findings can also assist preparation programs in educating and preparing women for the entry into a male-dominated profession. Even though women have made progress in overcoming some of the barriers faced in the superintendent/ CFO position the expedition is still not complete.

Therefore, continued research and education on postmodern feminist perspectives and organizational socialization remains vital. ABC states:

The steps taken before cannot be allowed to have been walked in vein; it is up to us in the position now, and our sisters who will come in the future, to continue the quest for equity and equality. Changing the identity of this dear position is far from complete. As Gloria Steinem said, "I have met brave women who are exploring the outer edge of human possibility, with no history to guide them, and with the courage to make themselves vulnerable." As we study ourselves... our gender... our profession we must begin to realize how little is really known. This is not the end... it is only the beginning.

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Press.

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

I Am a Chameleon in Pearls: How Three Select Female Superintendents Perceive Their Professional Lives

Certification of Informed Consent

Principal Investigator: Catherine Agnes Ryan, Texas A&M School of Education
Doctorial Student

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying the barriers women encounter and overcome when attempting to become a public school superintendent/ CFO. The purpose of this qualitative study is to build on the works of past researchers and showcase the rich tapestry of stories of how females, despite the barriers and obstacles, have not only achieved the role of a school district's chief administrator but succeed in a male-dominated profession as a superintendent/CFO in Texas. You were selected to be a possible participant because of your contributions and lessons learned in regards to this field of study.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Meet with the researcher in an initial interview.
- Agree to schedule and participate in interviews/ observation sessions.
- Use your professional story to share your lived experiences regarding your tenure as a Texas female superintendent/ CFO.
- Provide clarification of gathered research information.

This study will take three or more meetings lasting two or more hours each visit. At the entry interview the procedures for data collection will be discussed as well as all copies of forms will be provided. You will be given a questionnaire to fill out and return prior to the formal interview. At the formal interview in-depth questions will be asked. The intent of the researcher is to gain information about the respondent's opinions and insights as they relate to the research topic. Interviewees will be asked to provide elaborative opinions to the open-ended questions rather than general responses to each question. With consent of the participant the researcher will make field visits to the case study site and conduct direct observations. Documents will be reviewed on the

participant as well. The primary documents that may be extended to this study are personal memos or other public correspondence, agendas and summaries of interviews/ meetings/ evaluations with the board of trustees and newspaper accounts showcasing the superintendent participant. Meetings will be conducted in the participant's office or preferred location.

With permission parts of interviews and observations may be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

The possible benefits of participation are to show aspiring female superintendents/ CFOs that women can not only achieve the role of public school superintendent/ CFO they can succeed in the role as well. The researcher is also hopeful you will gain personal satisfaction in knowing you helped to further research in this critical field.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential and will be maintained by the researcher. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher, Catherine (Katie) A. Ryan, will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you may be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the researcher, Catherine (Katie) A. Ryan, will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for three years and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact:

Dr. Gwen Webb-Hasan, gwebbj@tamu.edu

Texas A&M University

511 Harrington Tower

College Station, Texas 77843

(979) 845 2716

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related

problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

_____ I agree to be audio recorded.

_____ I do not want to be audio recorded.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX B

Female Superintendent/ CFO Perception Questionnaire

Dear Superintendent/ CFO,

Thank you for taking a few minutes to respond to the following questions regarding your perceptions as a female superintendent. The questionnaire is broken into three parts. This questionnaire should take no more than 20 minutes to complete and your answers will remain confidential.

Please complete and submit the questionnaire prior to our first formal interview. You can either mail your completed questionnaire in the provided self-addressed envelope or you can complete the questionnaire on-line at www.surveymonkey.com.

If you wish to contact me for any reason please feel free to do so.

Catherine Agnes Ryan
katie.ryan@fairfield.k12.tx.us
cell phone- (903) 879 0807
mobile phone- (903) 879 0705
fax number- (903) 389 7050
mailing address:
512 PR 1280
Fairfield, Texas 75840

Thank you again for your participation,
Catherine Agnes Ryan
Doctorial Student
Texas A&M University

Part I: Background Information

1. What is your age
 - a. 30-39
 - b. 40-49
 - c. 50-59
 - d. 60 or over
2. Number of years in education
 - a. 10 years or less
 - b. 11-19 years
 - c. 20-25 years
 - d. 25 or more years
3. Number of years as a superintendent/ CFO
 - a. 1-5 years
 - b. 6-10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. 15 or more years
4. Marital status
 - a. Single
 - b. Married
 - c. Divorced or Separated
 - d. Widowed
5. If married or in a partnered relationship do you
 - a. Live with significant other full-time
 - b. Live with significant other part-time
 - c. Live alone
6. Number of children
 - a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4 or more

7. Age of your youngest child
- a. No children
 - b. Under 5 years of age
 - c. 5-12
 - d. 13-18
 - e. 19 or above
8. Racial/Ethnic Origin
- a. Native American
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Black/Non-Hispanic
 - e. White/Non-Hispanic
 - f. Multi-Racial
9. Highest Degree Earned
- a. Bachelor's
 - b. Master's
 - c. Doctorate
10. What positions did you hold prior to being a superintendent/ CFO
Circle all that apply
- a. Teacher
 - b. Campus Principal (Level(s)_____)
 - c. Central Administration
 - d. Assistant Superintendent
 - e. Other: _____
11. How many districts have you served as superintendent/ CFO
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4 or more

12. How were you hired for your current position

- a. From within
- b. Friend/colleague recommended
- c. Professional Search Firm (list firm _____)
- d. Sought position yourself
- e. Other: _____

13. Classification of current school district

- a. A
- b. AA
- c. AAA
- d. AAAA
- e. AAAAA

14. Type of school district

- a. Rural
- b. Suburban
- c. Urban
- d. Metroplex

15. What Region Service Center is your school district affiliated
Education Service Center Region _____

16. What geographical area of Texas do you reside

- a. North
- b. South
- c. East
- d. West
- e. Central

THIS COMPLETES PART I.

Part II: Perceived Barriers Women Must Contend With

1. Demanding Life Situations
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
2. Conflicting personal demands (family, husband, children)
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
3. Lack of ability to relocate
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
4. Omission from the “Good Old Boy Network”
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
5. Lack of encouragement to pursue superintendency as a career
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
6. Limited professional mentors
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier

7. Constrained access to formal and informal training and development
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
8. Obstacles from the “Glass Ceiling Theory”
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
9. Too many complex challenges
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
10. Age and prior experience
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
11. Societal norms of „proper“ roles for men and women
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
12. Gender bias (board members, personnel depts., professional search firms)
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier

13. Professional search firm's role in selection process
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
14. Perceived knowledge of Chief Financial Officer position
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
15. Lack of knowledge and understanding within the political realm
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
16. Lack of encouragement by female counterparts
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
17. Inability or constraints to advance personal education (Masters, Supt. Cert., Doctorate)
 - a. No barrier
 - b. Perceived barrier
 - c. Persistent barrier
 - d. Obstructing barrier
18. Please cite the greatest barrier you have encountered

THIS COMPLETES PART II.

Part III: Essential Strategies for Female Superintendents/ CFOs

1. Powerful extrinsic motivation
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
2. Successful career-family configuration
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
3. Supportive spouse
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
4. Guidance of professional mentor(s)
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
5. Intrinsic perseverance
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
6. Participate in professional organizations
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy

7. Have a clear focus of career and professional goals
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
8. Observe successful superintendents/ CFOs (male and female)
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
9. Understand gender stereotypes
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
10. Establish strong leadership traits
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
11. Understand one's leadership style
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
12. Showcase a wide range of professional experiences
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy

13. Professional knowledge and savvy of the Texas Public School Finance System
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
14. Increase visibility in professional circles
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
15. Obtain a doctorate degree
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
16. Enlisting a female sponsor who has served as a superintendent/ CFO
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
17. Increasing flexibility to relocate
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy
18. Establish relationships with professional search firms
 - a. Not a successful strategy
 - b. Modest successful strategy
 - c. Average successful strategy
 - d. Essential successful strategy

19. What do you perceive to be the most essential strategy for an aspiring female superintendent/ CFO?

THIS COMPLETES PART III.

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Dear Superintendent/ CFO,

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on the perceptions of Texas female superintendents/ CFOs of how perceived barriers and obstacles affected each participant in obtaining and maintaining the role of Texas public school superintendent/ CFO. The researcher will be interviewing three Texas female superintendents/ CFOs who successfully lead or have led a school district. Each woman has been identified as a strong leader with vision and purpose with at least five years of superintendent experience and has been named as a Superintendent of the Year finalists or winner by the Texas Association of School Administrators.

The goal of this qualitative study is to collect in-depth, responsive data that will be used to produce a narrative story that shares the voices of the women participants and their lived experiences as a Texas female superintendent/ CFO. It is not the intent to mourn over the barriers and obstacles faced but rather to celebrate the triumphant overcoming of said barriers. This study will be a celebration of those who have proceeded and a gift for those to come in the future. These interview questions and your responses will assist me as I seek to give your perceptions voice as you allow me to enter your professional world and journey with you in the telling of your story.

Respectfully,
Catherine Agnes Ryan
Doctorial Student
Texas A&M University

General Information

1. Tell me a little about yourself?
 - Where did you grow up
 - What are your educational experiences K-12 through college
 - Why did you enter the field of education
 - What is your working/teaching history
 - Describe your administrative experiences prior to the superintendency
 - Why did you decide to enter into the superintendency
2. What or who do you consider to be the most important influence in your personal and professional life? How has this shaped you as a superintendent/ CFO?
3. Did you face any barriers or obstacles from your current employer, friends or family when you decided to begin the journey to become a superintendent/ CFO?

Preparation for the Superintendent/ CFO Position

1. How did your formal preparation program prepare you for the superintendency? CFO?
2. What do you think most prepared you to become a superintendent? CFO?
3. What do you think is essential for all females to know when preparing to enter this journey?
4. Talk about what was your largest obstacle in your preparation process?

Obtaining the Superintendent/ CFO Position

1. How many applications did you complete prior to your first superintendency?
2. How many interviews did you have before you obtained your first superintendent/ CFO position?
3. Tell me about your entry to the superintendent/ CFO's chair? What was the journey like for you?
4. If you have applied for or worked in other districts as superintendent/ CFO how were the processes different?

5. Initially, do you prefer to work with a search firm or with a school board?
6. Share with me the biggest surprise/barrier you encountered when trying to obtain a superintendent/ CFO's position?
7. Do you believe barriers and obstacles exist for women that do not exist for men when trying to obtain a superintendent/ CFO position? If so, what are they?

In the Role as Superintendent/ CFO

1. How would you describe the role of the superintendent/ CFO in your district?
2. Share with me your top three professional goals as a superintendent/ CFO?
3. What are your school district's goals?
4. Have you faced any negative challenges in your job? If so, can you elaborate on this?
5. Have you faced any negative challenges as a female superintendent/ CFO? If so, can you elaborate on the challenge?
6. Are there any disappointments for you in this position? If so, please explain.
7. Describe any specific professional and/or personal characteristics which enable you to maintain success in this top position?
8. Would you characterize yourself as a successful superintendent? CFO? If so, why/ why not?
9. Talk to me about things that stand in your way of obtaining complete success?
10. What keeps you in the role as superintendent/ CFO?
11. How do you renew and rejuvenate in other words sharpen your saw?

Superintendent/ CFO Leadership Style

1. Can you describe for me your leadership style?
2. Under your direction what accomplishment are you most proud of?

3. What is a typical workday like in the day and life of Dr. _____?
4. What guides your decision-making process?
5. In your eyes describe a successful superintendent? CFO?
6. In your own words how would you define leadership?
7. What is your greatest strength as a superintendent? CFO?
8. Do you have a top targeted area of professional growth for yourself? If so, can you describe it?
9. Are you a risk taker and if so describe why you consider yourself to be one?
10. Is motivation of others important to you and if so, how do you motivate others?
11. Do you think gender matters in the superintendent/ CFO position?
12. Give an example of a time when you felt you were looked at as a woman rather than as a professional leader.
 - How did you feel?
 - Were you able to preserve the situation?

Female Superintendents/ CFOs: Advice for the Next Generation

1. What do you think about mentoring programs for superintendents/ CFOs? Do you feel mentoring programs are important for aspiring female superintendents/ CFOs?
2. What 2 or 3 characteristics are essential for a female superintendent/ CFO to possess?
3. What strategies must aspiring female superintendents/ CFOs use to overcome current day barriers and obstacles?
4. In your opinion how can disproportionate representation between genders be alleviated within the superintendency in Texas?

5. When you retire what would you want people to say regarding your tenure as superintendent/ CFO?
6. If you had to live your professional life over again what would you change? Why would you do it differently?

Additional Comments

1. Do you have anything else you would like to add?
2. Additional clarifying questions...

VITA

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Education: B.S., Elementary Education and Special Education, University of
Mary Hardin-Baylor, 1989
M.S., Educational Administration, Tarleton State University, 1996