

Spring 2007

## Career Paths of Female Superintendents in Georgia

Sheryl Wiggins Davis

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# CAREER PATHS OF FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS IN GEORGIA

by

SHERYL WIGGINS DAVIS

(Under the Direction of Walter Polka)

## ABSTRACT

Women continue to be underrepresented in the role as superintendent across the nation. Although the number of females attaining the superintendency has risen over the last decade there is little research as to why there is a gap in the number of females in leadership classes and the number represented in the superintendency. This was a mixed-method design gathering quantitative and qualitative data of females in public schools in Georgia as superintendents. Twenty-seven of the thirty-six women superintendents in Georgia responded to the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency. The barrier receiving the highest mean (3.27) was conflicting demands of career and family. The strategy for success receiving the highest mean (4.62) was developing a political “know-how”. Five of the female superintendents responding to the survey participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interviews yielded insight into the actual experiences of the females in superintendency positions. All female superintendents interviewed reported being satisfied with their jobs, and all agreed they would make the decision to seek the superintendency again. Each of the females interviewed expressed a strong support system; all five had mentors that encouraged them along the way. Their focus was to do what is best for children and expressed their desire to focus on getting the job done. All stated that power is shared; by empowering others you gain better insight.

INDEX WORDS: Female Superintendents, Career Paths, Barriers, Succession, Loneliness, Glass Ceiling,

CAREER PATHS OF FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS IN GEORGIA

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2007

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CAREER PATHS OF FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS IN GEORGIA

by

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Electronic Version Approved:  
May 2007

## DEDICATION

In recognition for his love, support, and continued patience, I hereby dedicate this dissertation to my husband Terry Wilson Davis. He is my inspiration and soul mate. He is the reason I am what I am today. Without his love and support I would never have begun a college career much less pursued a doctorate. I love how you love me. Thanks dear.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for your guidance in my life. Thanks for providing me with so many people in my life that helped me succeed in attaining my doctorate degree.

To my husband Terry Davis, you have always supported me in everything I have wanted to do. You were with me when I began this journey through education and you have continued right by my side to the end. Your love, patience, and can do attitude are three attributes I cherish most in our relationship. Thank you for being my husband, friend, and greatest supporter.

To my daughters, Brittney and Jourdain Davis, you have listened so many times to my trials and joys of going through college. You both were my guinea pigs so many times. You have so willingly given of your time to help me attain my degree. As you both are now experiencing your own journey through college; I pray that I can be there to support you as you have me.

To my comrades of the “Brunswick Four” Carole Strickland (my sister), Rob Owens, and Kelly Sigman; the trips were fun and I know without a doubt that I would not have come this far had it not been for our friendship and support through all our crazy times together. I will never forget the stories that were told and placed “in the vault”.

Thank you Dr. Polka, (for answering your cell phone all those many times I needed answers) Dr. Arthur, and Dr. Gornto thank you for your guidance and suggestions in completing this dissertation. This study would never have been completed without your steady encouragement.



To my friends Michelle Hall and Margaret Thomas thanks for watching my students when I had to leave early for class. You both have supported me and encouraged me by asking questions about how things were going. Thanks for your support.

A special thanks is extended to my editor Cathy Eaton and my helper Patty Jones for all the last minute details you helped me complete.

Last but not least, thank you, Daddy (M. T. Wiggins), for being the supportive person that you are. You have called many times and have always encouraged me to keep up the fight.

Family and friends are life's greatest gift and I have been blessed by my Lord Jesus Christ to have such wonderful people in my life. The support and belief in me from the greatest people on earth has helped me accomplish this goal. This chapter now ends and a new journey waits.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### General Introduction

The Superintendent's role is crucial in twenty-first century school district leadership and is beneficial for school systems to know something about the females and males that will furnish that leadership (Chapman, 2001). According to Chapman the gender of school administrators is a subject of considerable debate in many studies.

A historical analysis of leadership roles of women in education reveals that some females traditionally held the office of superintendent (Alston, 2005). According to Alston, in the year 1910 females accounted for 8.9% of all superintendents and by 1930 had increased to 10.9%.

By the early 1990s females accounted for 6.5% of all superintendents and by the year 2000 that number increased to 13.2% (Brunner 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner 2000). Even though the percentage of female superintendents nearly doubled during the 1990s, 87% of superintendents are still male (Glass, 2000). There are 15,000 superintendents nationally, yet only 2,000 are females (Alston, 2005). Alston also notes that a number of factors accounted for the decline of females in the superintendency: desegregation of public schools and culturally entrenched gender and race biases. The presence and status of females in the work force increased dramatically since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; however, there are still concerns about the proportional absence of females in higher management ranks (Alston).

To gather the most-up-to-date, comprehensive information on females and the superintendency, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA)

commissioned a nationwide study of females in the superintendency and females in central office positions in February 2005 (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). The age of the superintendents in the 2005 study is comparable to the 2000 study: 70% of superintendents responded with the average age of 55 or younger. Grogan and Brunner also stated that the job search for both genders is similar: 72% of females and 73% of males secured the job of superintendency within a year of beginning the job search. However, according to Grogan and Brunner females have not traditionally been considered serious contenders for the superintendency.

Although females constitute 75% of the educational work force and are awarded over half of advanced administrative degrees, fewer than 15% of superintendents are female (Skrla, Scott, & Benestante, 2001). According to Skrla et al. understanding females in the administrator pipeline, career and succession patterns, and barriers to females serving as superintendents is pivotal in improving the representation of females in the superintendency. How best to devise a career path that will lead to the superintendency is a question open to differing opinions (Hayes, 2001).

### *Career Paths*

According to the study by Glass (2000) 50% of female superintendents report the route to the superintendency included the traditional teacher/principal/central-office roles. Some females, like the male counterparts moved from teacher to principal to superintendent. Another group of females bypassed the principal role, going from teaching to central office to the superintendency (Glass). Female superintendents, on the average, spend a longer time in the classroom than male superintendents (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Glass notes that females are achieving the doctorate at comparable rates



to male candidates but, only 10% of these females are opting to pursue the superintendency. Chapman (2001), states that the possession of a doctoral degree appears to be an important factor in the entry of females and minorities to the superintendency. Despite policies that address equal opportunities for employment, females continue to represent the minority in leadership positions (Brunner, 2000).

### *Barriers*

The superintendency is overwhelmingly populated by men, in particular white men, and is uniquely constructed as a male leadership partnership (Skrla, Scott, & Benestante, 2001). According to (Skrla et al.) when females assume power and authority, females are expected to behave in ways that are counter productive to socially accepted norms. Equity among female and male superintendents is an area that causes considerable debates; for example, men are more likely than females to receive five year rather than three year employment contracts (Brunner & Bjork, 2001). According to Brunner and Bjork, male superintendents average about four more years experience in the superintendency than females. Grogan (2000) notes that paying particular attention on how females experience the superintendency can lead to a better understanding of the position of superintendent as well as the role of females in occupying the position of superintendent. According to Grogan, aspiring female superintendents believe, if consideration is to be given for the superintendency, then there is a need to establish competencies stereotypically associated with the masculine leadership behaviors.

The feminine leadership styles are not better or worse than the traditional male-oriented ones, they are just different (Trinidad & Normore, 2005). Trinidad and Normore note that female leadership behaviors and male leadership behaviors are different in

comparison. Neither approach is either right or wrong; however, male and females may be coming from different perspectives and unless these differences are understood, the likelihood of a cooperative work force is not likely (Trinidad & Normore). According to (Grogan & Brunner, 2005) the study by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is prompting outsiders as well as insiders to conduct further studies to determine why there are so few females in the top position when the majority of educators are females while females comprise at least half of the students in educational leadership programs.

#### Statement of the Problem

Based on research, college Education Leadership programs across the nation are now predominately populated with females as students and females are gaining the skills necessary for leadership positions. The role of the superintendent is still considered a white male position even though females continue to outnumber males in leadership classes as well as in teaching positions. There are barriers that females face; however, there are also strategies that will enable females to develop behaviors that will lead to the reverse discrimination in the hiring of women for the highest level in educational administration, that of the Superintendent. Trends suggest that more females are being hired for the position of superintendent, and the gap is narrowing; however, based on research, the reduction in this gap is not substantial.

There are policies that address equal opportunities for employment; however, females continue to represent the minority in leadership positions. Feminine leadership behaviors are not better or worse than the traditional male-oriented leadership behaviors; however, the behaviors are definitively different. Practices in terms of equitable hiring for females

is an area to be explored and analyzed because of the high number of females in the leadership preparation programs and the predicted vacancies within the near future.

Knowing that females are represented in college leadership classes more than males, will allow for additional subjects to question. Females do not continue to seek the higher level positions in education. Paying particular attention to the unique experiences females face in occupying the role of Superintendent can lead to a better understanding of the position. Previous studies focused on gender bias, and being descriptive in style do not show, in detail, issues capitalizing on problems females face in obtaining the superintendency. Further research will assist in providing information on career choices female superintendents make in the path to the superintendency.

Therefore, the researcher proposed to study career paths of females who serve as public school superintendents in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school year.

### Research Questions

#### *Overarching Question*

What are the typical career paths and barriers to female leaders pursuing the superintendency in Georgia?

#### *Subquestions*

- (1) What formal academic preparation experiences do female superintendents in Georgia possess?
- (2) What support systems are in place for female superintendents in Georgia?
- (3) What strategies for advancement did female superintendents employ in their pre-superintendency careers?

- (4) What barriers do female superintendents experience in their paths to the superintendency and what strategies are employed to address the perceived barriers?

#### Conceptual Framework

The relationship between female superintendents and barriers as well as career paths can be conceptualized at a fairly general level depicted in Figure 1, as a three stage relationship where a set of factors impact and influence the position of superintendent.

The parameters can be categorized into three groups:

- Females who have obtained the job of superintendent.
- Barriers that females have experienced and the relationship of those barriers to females obtaining the job of superintendent.
- Career paths females in the state of Georgia have chosen in order to be successful in the Superintendency position.

Developing a better appreciation of the importance of these parameters will enable a more informed understanding of the relationship between female superintendents, barriers, and the career paths chosen by participants in this research study.

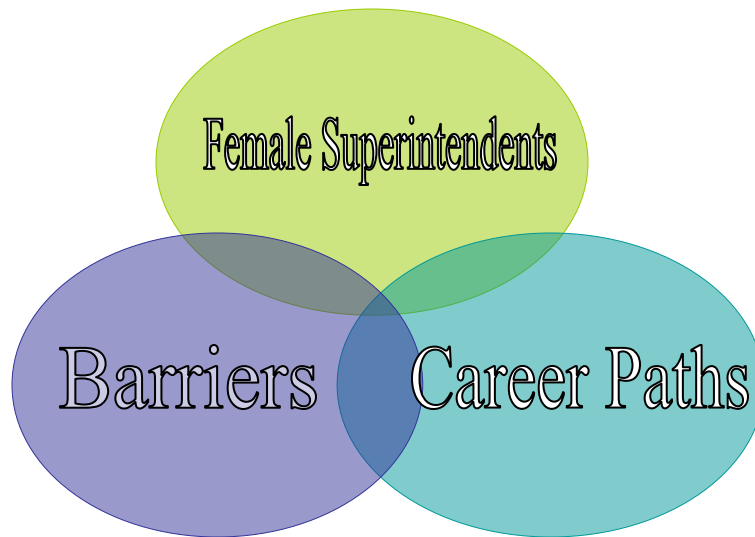


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Career Paths of Successful Female Superintendents in Georgia

#### Significance of the Study

Females continue to be under-represented in the highest position held by educators, that of the superintendent. There are currently more females in college classrooms obtaining higher degrees. Females have not traditionally been sought after as contenders for the job of superintendent. Statistically, women hold 18% of the jobs as superintendent nationwide. Researchers have conducted studies which indicate an increase in females as superintendents however that increase is not representative of the population of females in education.

In education women represent 75% of the teaching force and are outnumbered by males in the higher positions such as principals, and central office personnel. By

examining the barriers women have experienced in the quest for the top educational positions, patterns were identified to assist females in the pursuit of the superintendency.

Determining why some females in Georgia have been successful in achieving the superintendency while others have been unsuccessful is a prerequisite to understanding and achieving a reversal of the misrepresentation of females in educational administration. Knowing the different career paths females choose in obtaining the position of superintendent will be important to this researcher as an aspiring educational leader. This study considered the issue of incorporating into the school of education a new component that will encourage those females entering the educational arena to think of future options that will pave the path to education leadership.

The number of women in the superintendency may change dramatically as current superintendents retire and opportunities open for women to advance on the administrative ladder. Providing research as to the career paths female superintendents chose on the way to the top administrative positions will provide additional information for those seeking to advance in the career of education.

Laws passed to eliminate discrimination has been beneficial to females seeking administrative positions; however, these laws and efforts put forth by women still have not provided a substantial increase in the percentage of women holding the superintendency when compared to the number of women qualified to hold the job of superintendent. Women in general, continue to represent the minority in educational administration and further research will substantiate the policies for Affirmative Action and Title IX.

### Limitations

The limitations of this study are as follows:

- (1) This study was limited to only female superintendents in Georgia, their career paths, and their perceptions of barriers and did not reflect perceptions of superintendents outside this study.

### Procedures

In this study, the researcher examined what barriers are present as well as the paths females have chosen in order to obtain the office of superintendent. A review of the literature provided information on female superintendents and their career choices from teacher, principal, and superintendent to teacher, central office, and superintendent; however, there was limited research on the career paths of successful female superintendents in Georgia.

### *Design*

The design of this study incorporated a mixed-method of data collection. The quantitative approach provided a broad overview of general information. Quantitative data was collected through the use of a questionnaire on women securing the superintendency. Due to the limited number of female superintendents in Georgia, 100% participation was sought. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to provide descriptive statistics. The SPSS software was utilized by the researcher to generate decision-making information quickly; the results were analyzed to uncover key facts, patterns and trends. Findings from this study were analyzed and lead to an understanding of unique encounters female superintendents in Georgia have experienced in the journey to becoming a superintendent.

The qualitative method of design was used to identify and describe the complexity of issues females experience in gaining the superintendency. The purpose of this type of interviewing was to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share (Marshall and Rossman, 2000). Semi-structured in-depth interviews from six to eight interested respondents were selected from the responses on the questionnaire. The researcher was careful to select two rural, two suburban, and two urban female superintendents in Georgia to provide qualitative data for this study.

Demographic data that was collected from the 36 superintendents included the following: marital status, academic preparation, number of years experience as a superintendent, career paths and succession, age in which the participant first acquired the job of superintendent, number of times the participants applied for the position of superintendent before obtaining the position.

#### *Population and Participants*

The participants involved in this study were selected from the state of Georgia. There were 36 female superintendents that maintained the position as superintendent during the 2066-2007 academic year and these 36 superintendents were the targeted population. Five of the 36 female superintendents agreed to be interviewed.

#### *Data Collection*

The researcher conducted this study through the use of a questionnaire and interview process. The questionnaire was mailed with a self addressed stamped envelope for participants to return the completed questionnaire. A letter describing the intent of the questionnaire was included. Confidentiality was stressed. For those participants that consent to participate in the interview process an interview time and date was decided.



The researcher notified the participants that the conversation will be recorded for future analysis of the questions answered. Upon verification, the transcribed interviews were written in narrative form.

### *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data was analyzed using the SPSS software to provide descriptive statistics. According to Borg, Gall and Gall (2004) descriptive research helps to describe characteristics of the phenomenon being studied. Borg, Gall, and Gall also maintain quantitative research is all about measuring relationships between variables and the correlations involved. The qualitative data was analyzed through grounded theory approach to understand emerging trends and patterns to explore new and existing theories. The qualitative data analysis involved organizing what will be seen, heard, and read to see what makes sense from what was learned in the interview process (Glesne, 2006).

### Definition of Terms

Affirmative Action: Positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of education, business, and employment to which they have been historically excluded (Fullinwider, 2000).

Career Path: Positions a superintendent held in a school district after being a classroom teacher (Pipkin, 2002).

Succession Patterns: The last position held immediately before being appointed to the superintendent's position (Pipkin).

Title IX: Prohibition against discrimination. No person in the United States shall be discriminated against on the bases of sex (Fullinwider, 2000).

Under Representation: A disparity between the percentage of participants in a category based on its proportion of the defined population and the actual percentage that exists (Pipkin).

### Summary

Females constitute 75% of the educational work force and are awarded over half the advanced degrees in educational administration. In the year 1990 there were 6.5% of females in the nation holding the job of superintendent; by 2005 there were 18%. The doctoral degree is an important factor for the entry of females to the Superintendency. Females are achieving the doctorate level comparable to males however, only 10% of these females opt to earn the position of superintendent. Despite policies that address equal opportunities for employment females continue to represent the minority in leadership positions. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is prompting researchers to conduct further studies to determine why there are so few women in the top position when the majority of educators are females and females comprise at least half of the students in the educational leadership programs.

College programs across the nation are now predominately occupied with female students and females are gaining skills necessary for leadership positions; however, the role of the superintendent is still considered a white male position. Trends suggest that more females are being hired for the position of superintendent and the gap is narrowing however, based on research the gap is not substantial. Paying particular attention to the unique experiences females face in occupying the role of superintendent can lead to a better understanding of the position. The purpose of this research therefore is to study

career paths of females who serve as public school superintendents in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school year.

Statistically women hold 18% of the jobs as superintendent nation wide as of 2005. Examining barriers women have experienced in the quest for the top educational positions will identify patterns that will assist other females in the pursuit of the superintendency. Knowing the different career paths females choose in obtaining the position of superintendent in Georgia will be important to this researcher as a future educational leader. This research study will contribute further to the knowledge base in educational classes for those who want to become educational leaders in the future. Women continue to represent the minority in educational administration and the additional research will substantiate the policies for Affirmative Action and Title IX.

The design of this study followed the mixed method of data collection. The use of a questionnaire as well as interviews was developed to collect data from the existing 36 female superintendents in Georgia and supplemented by the in-depth data from a sample of eight respondents agreeing to be interviewed. The research data was collected through a descriptive analysis of data collected through the questionnaire as well as the use of interviews that was taped and then transcribed. To verify accuracy the researcher sent a written analysis to each participant to review and made changes if necessary. The transcribed interviews were then written in narrative form. The data was analyzed through the use of grounded theory to understand emerging trends, patterns, and to explore new and existing theories

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Leadership is not something that one does to people, nor is it a manner of behaving toward people: it is working with other people to achieve goals set within the organization (Owens, 2001). Leadership is defined as an interpersonal influence, exercised in situations and directed, through communication toward the attainment of a specified goal (Johns & Moser, 2001).

Grogan (2000) notes, the superintendency job expectations have attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners over the past 40 years. Grogan also states against the background of school reform efforts an interest in the superintendent's role began to emerge. According to McCabe (2002) women are preparing themselves to be school leaders, it is of interest to explore the position of superintendent of schools as a career goal for women administrators. (Brunner & Bjork, 2001; Grogan, 2000) concur in abstaining from being overly optimistic at the gains females have made over the past decade in attaining the role of superintendent. Tallerico & Blount (2004) maintain females have not yet attained, or ever sustained over time equitable representation in school administration.

As women find themselves in the position of leadership especially in the role of superintendent of schools, it is very apparent to women that they are outnumbered by males (Brunner, 2000). Brunner also states that when half of the students in educational administration classes are females there are obvious questions about gender inequality and why there are so few women in the superintendency. Although representation of

females in all levels of school administration is increasing over time, patterns of representation indicate that little significant progress is being made in the more senior positions of assistant and associate superintendent, and superintendent (Bjork, 2001)

Individualization, isolation, and loneliness that pervade the work lives of women superintendents are barriers females are often contend in work place Skrla (2000). According to Skrla, loneliness, isolated struggles against inequality are the requirements and cost of success in the profession of superintendent. Thoughts after a long day by a new superintendent Conrad:

Lonely.....  
 Ostracized. Why? Because I'm an  
 Outsider and a woman?  
 New to most people in the community  
 Excellence, they said, Focus on academic excellence.  
 Lead and we will follow"  
 Yes, I have led and I am very lonely.

Skrla notes the isolation female superintendent's experience is a result of culture pressure to "de-feminize" women in order for females to prove themselves as professionals.

Loder (2005) maintains pervasive discrimination in hiring and promoting, lack of sponsoring and mentoring, and the "good old boy network" are barriers to women superintendents According to Peterson and Short (2001) one of the greatest challenges to education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be to reinvent, reshape, and transform educational institutions. Few individuals would deny the fact that the area of school leadership and policy implementation is increasingly more complex as school superintendents face opposing forces and as women meet these challenges the responsibility and rewards will be significant (Peterson & Short, 2001).

Pipkin (2002) notes by examining both the barriers as well as the support systems females have experienced in the quest for top educational administration positions, patterns will develop that will assist other females in the pursuit of the superintendency. Understanding what strategies have been successful in helping female superintendents obtain the position of superintendent will be beneficial to other females who aspire to become educational leaders (Pipkin). Although encouragement and support of females appear to have increased, individual acts by boards of education members have not altered organizational practices essential in changing the male-dominated system of superintendent Bjork (2000). In the same way that the U.S. society constructed the superintendency as male, it also created a package of norms about femininity and female behavior Skrla (2000).

#### Leadership-Style Bias

In the studies conducted by (Gardiner and Tiggermann 1999; Engen, Leeden, & Willemsen 2001) in order for women in male-dominated organizations to be seen as successful leaders, women may face pressure to adopt a more masculine leadership style. Gardiner and Tiggermann contend there are definite gender stereotypes of leadership styles. The stereotypical masculine leader emphasizes achievement of organizational goals; where as the stereotypical feminine leader emphasizes people and relationships (Gardiner & Tiggermann, 1999).

In Gardiner's and Tiggermann's (1999) study 126 participants agreed to be involved in the study and were mailed questionnaires, with 108 being returned. Male and female leaders were asked to rate how often each engaged in certain leadership behaviors. Leaders described as transformational often create a vision and have a more

interpersonally oriented style, charismatic and democratic which is characteristic of feminine leadership styles (Feinberg, Ostroff, & Burke 2005; Engen, Leeden, & Willemsen, 2001). Gardiner's and Tiggermann's study contended the interpersonal style of women is less in male-dominated organizations than in female dominated organizations. Skrla (2000) contends there is a need to learn more on how women leaders construct identities in inequitable circumstances such as those found in the superintendency. Skrla also contends seeking to understand how inequalities are developed when women leaders interact and negotiate with male superintendents or other leaders will uncover new and different practices for leadership preparation programs.

#### Role Conflict

Women in the upper divisions of administration, such as the superintendency and principalship, find that the situations are similar to the positions women hold in the corporate world (Eckman, 2004). In the school year of 1999 and 2000, approximately 13% of superintendents were women (Brunner, 2000). According to Brunner, when women find themselves in the position of superintendent of schools, it is immediately apparent that the greatest numbers of colleagues in the superintendency are men.

In the study by Brunner (2000), research was conducted to pursue the perceptions of women superintendents. To address the myth often heard that successful women do not experience bias or are unwilling to discuss if there are any biases in the area of women superintendents was examined (Brunner). Brunner also maintains women are faced with barriers that men do not often encounter.

In the study conducted by (Brunner, 2000), 12 women superintendents were examined to focus on how these women overcame or worked around the experiences of inequality

within the constraints of the superintendency position. Brunner notes sometimes beliefs and actions that are natural for men superintendents were unnatural for women because of the gender-specific expectations of our culture. Brunner also notes most texts about the superintendency are written for and about male role expectations.

In the study conducted by Pipkin (2002) the barrier that received the highest mean score was female exclusion from the “buddy system” or the “Good Old Boy Network.” According to Pipkin females must be better qualified than males in order to attain top level administrative positions. Pipkin also notes the predominance of male candidates for administrative positions is a barrier for females seeking to attain the job of superintendent. Grogan (2000) notes women have fewer mentors and females receive less encouragement to seek higher levels of administration. Pipkin (2002) reports female entry into educational administration positions are often facilitated by men who promoted them.

#### Gender Comparisons

According to (Grogan, 2000), if gender is used as a category for analysis to help understand the superintendency better, then there is a need to draw on the experiences of women in the superintendency positions. In the study conducted by (Tallerico, 2000), Tallerico found ample evidence of gender stereotyping. According to Tallerico some school board members questioned female candidates competencies on discipline, budget, and if the females candidates were tough enough to get the job done. Tallerico maintains that gender biases still exist on school boards. Grogan notes in many situations the fact that women bring traditionally approved feminine qualities to leadership is often seen to reinforce a less than desirable stereotype.



Tallerico (2000) is a qualitative study that consisted of 75 research interviewees. The participants were interviewed to gain information on the recruitment and screening of the participants' last superintendent searches and the selection process (Tallerico). Tallerico notes from the study three elements in the hiring process can limit the advancement of women in the superintendency. These elements include (a) how "best qualified" is defined, (b) stereotyping and other cultural dynamics that are evident and (c) the role of "good chemistry" in determining interview success (Tallerico). Tallerico also notes current practices in terms of equity for females needs to be explored and analyzed because high numbers of vacancies are predicted in the future and the leadership preparation programs which are considered as pathways toward the superintendency are occupied by women.

Pipkin (2002) notes the belief in women needing to be better qualified than men to attain top level administrative positions continues to be a barrier female's face. Expectations for women superintendents include getting the job done without appearing to be dominating or in charge (Brunner, 2000). According to Brunner, getting the job done fulfilled the role-related expectations; lack of dominance meets the gender-related expectations. Pipkin (2002) notes that female superintendents indicated that there is a bias towards females in certain roles and that key members of the school system thought children were safer with a male in charge. When leadership is defined in more masculine terms as strictly task oriented, the tendency for men to emerge as leaders strengthens (Ridgeway, 2001).

Women do aspire to the superintendency and also work to fulfill the aspirations of obtaining the position of superintendent (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). In a study conducted

by Grogan and Brunner 58 percent of women compared to 24 percent of men held undergraduate degrees in education. Nearly 40 percent of male superintendents have five or fewer years' experience in the classroom (Grogan & Brunner). Grogan and Brunner contend woman as well as men like being superintendents, and the majority says if they were to experience their careers over again they would do the same. Seventy-four percent of women compared to sixty-seven percent of men say they would choose the same profession, and significantly more women superintendents than men describe the job as fulfilling.

According to Grogan and Brunner (2005) as more women serve as superintendents in more districts, school boards may consider women superintendents less an anomaly, especially as women take on their second and third superintendencies. School boards are beginning to view women with backgrounds in curriculum and instruction as attractive candidates (Grogan and Brunner). According to Skrla (2000) the need for conversation among and about female superintendents to increase in volume and to widen in scope is necessary so neither females nor the education profession will remain silent. Determining why some females are successful in achieving the goal of superintendency while others seem to elude this goal is a prerequisite to reversing the under representation of females in educational administration (Pipkin, 2002).

### Family Life

According to Loder (2005) the uneven burden of household responsibilities women so often shoulder is a major barrier in the advancement of females to school superintendents. Loder notes the overwhelming responsibility for managing work-family conflicts falls largely on female administrators. Noddings (2003) notes work-family

conflicts pose a formidable barrier to the access of the superintendency for female's in the hiring and promotion process. Loder contends the American workplace and home are in desperate need of another gender revolution if women are to gain equality in educational administration.

Pipkin (2002) maintains the majority of female superintendents in Georgia 77.4% reported being married. Pipkin notes the ability for females to relocate as a result from personal commitment was a notable barrier. Overall, women have not been successful in offsetting the increasing responsibility in the workplace with the decreasing obligations on the home front (Loder, 2005). Grogan and Brunner (2005) note nurturing a family has long been considered at odds with effectively performing the duties of the superintendency. As both female and male superintendents contend with the issue of raising a family it is encouraging to note that this undertaking does not disqualify females for the superintendency (Grogan & Brunner).

#### Glass Ceiling

According to Glass (2000) women superintendents perceive some restrictive forces working against them in being hired by boards of education. Glass also contends that women have a less-developed mentoring system compared to males and this is important since mentors many times act as go-betweens for superintendent candidates. Grogan and Brunner (2005) note the male superintendents agree that school boards tend to view women as incapable of managing a school district. Grogan and Brunner contend state-funded yearlong superintendency internships will allow many women administrators to gain a closer view of the position. According to Glass financial incentives could be given to school districts that hire women or minorities as superintendents.

### Career Paths and Succession Patterns

According to Pipkin (2002) the literature does not reveal one clear path to the superintendency. In the study conducted by Pipkin, 83.9% of the female superintendents in Georgia had central office experience before advancing to the position of superintendent. According to Glass (2000) there is not a traditional path for women attaining the role of superintendent; however, 72% of superintendents in 1999 had experience as a building level administrator.

Glass (2000) notes superintendents are not frequently hired from within. In contrast, Pipkin notes of the six female superintendents interviewed, three were reported as being promoted from within the system in which they were employed. Pipkin maintains these three superintendents had been asked or encouraged to apply for the position of superintendent.

Grogan (2000) claims women seek to use the superintendency to influence greater change in the education of the students within a district. Pipkin (2002) also notes the female superintendents in Georgia identified with the satisfaction of making a difference in the community and future.

Grogan & Brunner (2005) note female superintendents are preceded and succeeded by male superintendents. Pipkin (2002) found five of the six female superintendents interviewed from Georgia were preceded by male superintendents. Grogan & Brunner maintain superintendents are likely to be appointed from outside the district than promoted from within, although men are twice as likely as females to be appointed from outside. The larger the district the better the chance of being hired from inside is noted by Grogan & Brunner.

Grogan & Brunner (2005) report female superintendents are in more professional development activities concerning the curriculum and instruction area. Seventy-three percent of females to thirty-nine percent of males participate in Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development activities (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Glass (2000) note school boards are viewing females with backgrounds in curriculum and instruction as desirable candidates. Historically, females obtain positions focusing on instructional leadership and supervision while men prefer the management positions (Pipkin, 2002).

### Strategies for Success

Women scholars are making significant empirical contributions to the understanding of female experiences in aspiring to the superintendency and leading school districts (Bjork, 2000). Bjork notes common attributes of women leaders confirm the notion that women approach school leadership differently than men and female characteristics tend to correspond to emerging demands for school reform. Pipkin (2002) notes females that want to attain the position of superintendent can clearly benefit from the insights and wisdom of other successful female superintendents.

According to Grogan & Brunner (2005) the difference among men and women superintendents are more pronounced when preparation for advancement is considered. Significantly more female superintendents than men hold undergraduate degrees in education: 58% of women compared to 24% of males. Grogan & Brunner also note female's academic preparation for the position of superintendent is more current: 47% of females earned higher degrees in the past ten years compared to 36% of males.

In the study conducted by Grogan & Brunner (2005) female superintendents report more professional development in the area of curriculum and instruction. Grogan & Brunner note both male and female superintendents cite interest in and focus on curriculum as beneficial for advancing career opportunities for women. The importance of mentors and role models is a strategy cited throughout the literature (Pipkin, 2002). The ability to maintain organizational relationships, interpersonal skills, and responsiveness to community groups are important in advancing women's careers in the superintendency (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Pipkin notes there are three factors essential for females in the acquisition of superintendent: (a) having a positive self image as a leader; (b) having others view you as a leader; and (c) maintaining a wide range of professional experience in education culminating in an assistant superintendency.

Grogan (2000) notes when alternative approaches to leadership are perceived in the context of females and deemed effective in producing great results for children, then the female way of leading is highly regarded. In the study conducted by Grogan and Brunner (2005) the majority of female superintendents report that the boards hired them to be educational leaders rather than managers, and many reported the reason they were hired was their ability to be instructional leaders. Grogan and Brunner also note females who are familiar with elementary schools are more knowledgeable about the fundamental instructional issues of literacy. Early education experience gives superintendents more knowledge in working with diverse communities of parents and other caretakers who are involved in school activities than at any other level (Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

### Implications for Females

According to Grogan and Brunner (2005) school boards are viewing women with backgrounds in curriculum and instruction as a viable candidates for the superintendency. Females are emerging as community builders, grounded in the knowledge of curriculum and instruction and are prepared to maintain the course in leading school districts across the country (Grogan & Brunner). Pipkin (2002) school reform efforts call for a new kind of leadership and this leadership will be expected to support innovative approaches in providing accountability to schools across the districts.

According to Grogan and Brunner (2005) women superintendents and women central-office administrators need to network. The superintendency is a lonely, highly public profession that can be severely stressful without adequate relief approaches. According to Houston (2002) the mission of public school leaders is to help students create a future where democracy is preserved and the ideas of the nation are moved forward. Houston maintains part of the responsibility of current superintendents will be to summon the next generation to duty. For female superintendents this is a wonderful challenge and an amazing gift to receive (Houston).

### Summary

There is still a discrepancy between the number of female superintendents and male superintendents in educational administration; as females struggle to break into a traditionally male-dominated profession they continue to be under represented in public school superintendencies (Pipkin, 2002). Pipkin notes the literature findings reveal that females continue to find discriminatory practices in place when it comes to attaining the position of superintendent.

The research of literature continues to point towards the importance of support systems, mentors, and role models for females (Pipkin, 2002). Pipkin notes barriers identified in the literature include gender issues, family issues, and experiences with bias in hiring. There continues to be issues relating to the male dominance in educational administration which hinders the success of women in obtaining the superintendency (Skrla, 2000).

Females tend to spend more time in the classroom than men and therefore enter the educational administration at a later stage in their careers (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). According to Skrla (2000) females also are responsible more for family obligations which require additional demands on time.

Findings in the literature on the way females lead, as well as the way females perceive leadership suggest that females focus on the process and relationships (Grogan, 2000). Grogan notes women have strong instructional backgrounds, a focus on curriculum, and a focus on student growth and achievement.

Research of the literature provides conclusions on how programs might be restructured for continuation of professional development of educational leaders (Glass, 2000). As females gain access to the superintendency and are viewed by others as effective leaders the role of females in administration will be better understood



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes an overview of the purpose with the research questions, a description of the research design, instruments, and the procedures used to collect the data. A description of the population and the method used was analyzed. The purpose of this study was to develop a profile of females who serve as public school superintendents in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school year. A mixed method of data collection and analysis was used.

Qualitative data was collected through the use of a questionnaire on perceptions and barriers impacting females in securing the position of superintendent. The data was analyzed using the SPSS to provide descriptive statistics.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to serve as a method of collection for the qualitative data. This qualitative data was analyzed through grounded theory approach to understand emerging trends and patterns to explore new and existing theories. The qualitative data analysis involved organizing what was seen, heard, and read to makes sense from what was learned.

#### Research Questions

##### *Overarching Question*

What are the typical career paths and barriers to female leaders pursuing the superintendency in Georgia?

##### *Sub Questions*

- (1) What formal academic preparation experiences do female superintendents in Georgia possess?

- (2) What support systems are in place for female superintendents in Georgia?
- (3) What strategies for advancement did female superintendents employ in their pre-superintendency careers?
- (4) What perceived barriers do female superintendents experience in their paths to the superintendency and what strategies are employed to address the barriers?

### Research Design

The design of this study incorporated a mixed-method of data collection. The quantitative approach provided a broad overview of general information. Quantitative data was collected through the use of a questionnaire completed by female superintendents in the state of Georgia. Due to the limited number of female superintendents in Georgia, 100% participation was sought. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to provide descriptive statistics. The SPSS software was utilized by the researcher to generate information quickly; the results were analyzed to uncover key facts, patterns and trends. Findings from this study were analyzed and lead to an understanding of unique encounters female superintendents in Georgia have experienced in the journey to becoming a superintendent. The quantitative data is presented in table form to correlate the quantitative items to the research questions, items on the questionnaire, and the review of literature.

Glesne (2006) defines quantitative research methods as being designed with intentions of making generalizations about some social phenomena, creating predictions concerning those phenomena, and provide causal explanations. Glesne also notes in quantitative research that a conceptual framework directs the research process and forms parameters

within which the research is conducted. Gall, Borg, and Gall (2004) cited two advantages for using the quantitative methodology with the usage of the questionnaire:

questionnaires required less time to collect data and the cost is lower. Gall et.al concedes however that the questionnaire does not probe into a respondent's deepest thoughts, feelings or opinions.

Glesne (2006) recommends the qualitative inquiry when initial curiosities for research come from real-world observations, emerging from the interaction of the researcher's direct experiences with respondents. According to Glesne, qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to conceptualize issues in a particular socio-cultural environment to transform or change social conditions. Marshall and Rossman (2000) contend qualitative research is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena and draws on multiple methods of inquiry.

According to Glense (2006), an interview will give the researcher the opportunity to learn more about what the researcher can not see by survey and explore alternative explanations of what is seen and heard to understand perceptions and attitudes toward a topic. Glense cites that qualitative inquiry is a search that leads into others' lives, the discipline, the practice and the research; there is no way to be sure of what will be found but true research does not end; instead, it points the way for yet another search.

This researcher sought to develop a narrative description of the female superintendents in Georgia. The experiences of female superintendents in Georgia for the 2006-2007 school year was analyzed through the detailed descriptions of the participants involved.

## Instrumentation

Pipkin (2002) obtained permission to use the questionnaire developed by Dr. Betty Dulac on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting Women Securing the Superintendency for her 2002 dissertation study. Permission has been granted to use the adapted instrument employed by Dr. Pipkin. This instrument was used to survey the female superintendents in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school year.

The questionnaire adapted by Pipkin (2002) consists of 14 questions addressing the personal and professional characteristics of women superintendents. Included in the questionnaire are two sections with 21 statements to determine perceptions of barriers and strategies of women to attaining the superintendency. The five point Likert scale was appropriate for collecting information on the perceptions females superintendents have in obtaining the superintendency (Pipkin). The responses were tabulated with the numerical value of 1 meaning not a barrier to the numerical values of 5 meaning significant barrier. The same scale was utilized to establish the perception of successful and highly successful.

The questionnaire that was utilized the Chronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was used to establish the reliability and validity of the instrument (Pipkin, 2002). According to Pipkin, to establish content validity, the questionnaire was submitted to two experts in the area of females in educational leadership. Pipkin also notes the questionnaire was submitted to a statistician at Boston College to be analyzed.

Dr. Pipkin has given permission for this researcher to use the modified version of the questionnaire instrument for this dissertation. This researcher was the fourth generation to utilize this questionnaire in a study on female superintendents. A copy of the permission

is included in the appendix section. A copy of the revised instrument The Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency is included in the Appendices.

A semi-structured interview process was incorporated for this study based on the review of the literature. The opportunity to learn more about what is not seen and can be explored with alternative explanations of what is seen is the special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry (Glesne, 2006). Glesne also notes the semi-structured interview technique is beneficial in rendering reasonably standard data across participants; however, the semi-structured process acquires data in a greater depth than the structured interviewing process. Permission has been granted to use the interview questions used in the Pipkin study. A national panel of experts analyzed the interview questions to determine content validity and to offer suggestions for improvement (Pipkin, 2002). A pilot study was conducted by Pipkin to verify reliability and validity. A copy of this permission is included in the Appendix. The interview questions are listed in the Appendices.

#### Procedures

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) the researcher mailed a cover letter along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope including the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency to each female superintendent in Georgia. The researcher identified all of the female superintendents serving in Georgia school districts in the year 2006-2007. The cover letter assured confidentiality along with an explanation of the study.

To establish a response pattern the return envelopes were coded. The cover letter provided information encouraging each participant to complete the questionnaire and to return the questionnaire in the envelope provided. To ensure confidentiality, after the questionnaire is removed the envelope was destroyed. A follow up postcard was mailed to those participants that did not respond within a three week time period. The cover letter is included in the Appendices.

According to Pipkin (2002) the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) is an integrated system of computer program for analyzing, managing, and displaying data. The SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data from the questionnaire to determine the frequency distributions of participant's responses in each category to find the central tendency for each barrier as well as strategies used in obtaining the superintendency. After the questionnaire, was completed the participants were asked if they were willing to take part in an in-depth interview. The researcher sought to attain a minimum of five participants that consented to be interviewed.

### Participants

The population that was considered in collecting data from the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency were the thirty-six (36) female superintendents currently employed in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school year. The names of each female superintendent were obtained through the Georgia School Superintendents Association website. The researcher sought to have 100% participation.

Seven superintendents that consented to be interviewed from the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the

Superintendency were identified from the response to the questionnaire that pertains to the interviewing process. The researcher randomly selected five participants from a variety of regions and different size school systems within the state of Georgia. A table was created to display demographic information for each superintendent interviewed. Pseudonyms were given for each of the five female superintendents interviewed to protect their confidentiality.

#### Method of Analysis

The SPSS software was utilized to analyze the data collected. A frequency distribution was established to summarize the data from the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency. Glense (2006) states frequency distributions help in identifying patterns and that the numbers assist in shaping a more specific hypothesis about attitudes.

Measures of central tendency will be incorporated to describe the frequency distribution for the items on the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency. The mean score of each item on the questionnaire was used to provide a descriptive profile of the female superintendents in Georgia.

Five female superintendents in Georgia were identified to participate in a semi-structured, in-depth interview. The interview was audio-taped and transcribed then destroyed. The transcripts were analyzed to identify themes, patterns, ideas, that were reported in narrative form.

## Summary

This chapter includes a restatement of the research question, the research design, instrumentation, procedures, participants, and methods of analysis. This study involves a mixed-method of study using both quantitative and qualitative data. The participants in this study were selected from the thirty-six female superintendents in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school year. The Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency utilized by Pipkin was used to survey the female superintendents. A frequency distribution was used to summarize the data from the questionnaire. The researcher also conducted a semi-structured interview with the female superintendents that respond to the questionnaire and agreed to be interviewed. The transcribed audio-taped interviews were analyzed to reflect on the actual interpretations of perceptions of barriers and strategies of the female superintendents in Georgia and then destroyed.



## CHAPTER IV

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to develop a narrative profile of women who were serving as public school superintendents in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school term. The study was a mixed-method design using both quantitative as well as qualitative data. The quantitative data was obtained through the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency completed by 27 of the 36 women superintendents (75%) in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school term. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with five of the superintendents who responded to the questionnaires yielded qualitative data.

#### Research Questions

##### *Overarching Question*

What are the typical career paths and barriers to female leaders pursuing the superintendency in Georgia?

##### *Sub Questions*

- (1) What formal academic preparation experiences do female superintendents in Georgia possess?
- (2) What support systems are in place for female superintendents in Georgia?
- (3) What strategies for advancement did female superintendents employ in their pre-superintendency careers?
- (4) What perceived barriers do female superintendents experience in their paths to the superintendency, and what strategies are employed to address the barriers?

This chapter reports the results of the data analysis from the questionnaire as well as the interviews that were conducted. The data from the questionnaires were organized as follows: biographical and demographic characteristics, formal academic preparation, career paths and succession patterns, barriers to advancement and strategies for success. The information resulting from the interviews was organized around the themes and patterns identified in the interviews with the female superintendents: marital status, academic preparation, career paths and succession patterns, barriers, support systems and mentors, advantages in being a female in the superintendency, strategies for advancement, confidence, loneliness, power, and job satisfaction.

### Quantitative

#### *Biographical and Demographic Characteristics*

The typical female superintendent in Georgia is white (92.6 %) with an average age of 50-59 (66.7%). She is married (85.2%) with no school aged children in K-12 grades (81.5 %). As far as having extended family in the area, she (66.7 %) reported having family in the area in which she holds the superintendency. The highest average of those serving in a district with 3,000- 4,999 students is (29.6 %). Of those reporting (40.7 %) were between the ages of 40-49 when they began serving their first position as superintendency and (40.7%) also were between the ages of 50-59 when they first served as superintendent. From this group surveyed (63.0%) has been in the position of superintendent between one and four years. The highest degree earned is a doctorate (51.9%) yet only (25.9%) participated in the Georgia Superintendent Professional Development Program.

Eighteen (66.7%) of the 27 female respondents were between the ages of 50-59. (See Table 1). Five (18.5%) were 60 or above with four (14.8%) reporting being between the ages of 40-49. Of the females reporting there were no superintendents younger than 40.

Table 1

*Age of Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Age	Frequency	Percent
40-49	4	14.8
50-59	18	66.7
60 or older	5	18.5

N = 27.

Of the twenty-seven females that reported, twenty-three (85.2%) are married with three (11.1%) being divorced and one (3.7%) being single. (See Table 2).

Table 2

*Marital Status of Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	1	3.7
Married	23	85.2
Divorced	3	11.1

N = 27.

There are a high percentage of the twenty-seven female superintendents who had no children in school K-12 (81.5%). (See Table 3).

Table 3

*Number of School Age Children of Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Number of Children in K-12 Schools	Frequency	Percent
0	22	81.5%
1	2	7.4%
2	3	11.1%
3	0	0.0%
4 or more	0	0.0%

N = 27

Two (7.4%) reported having one child in K-12 schools and three (11.1%) reported having two children in school. There were six (22.2%) that reported having no children. (See Table 4). Two (7.4%) female superintendents reported having children between the ages of 5 and 12. Three (11.1%) had children between the ages of 13 and 19. Sixteen (59.3%) have children that are 20 or above.

Table 4

*Age of Female Superintendents' Youngest Child*

Age of Youngest Child	Frequency	Percent
No Children	6	22.2%
Under 5	0	0.0%
5-12	2	7.4%
13-19	3	11.1%
20 or older	16	59.3%

---

N = 27.

Twenty-five (92.6%) of the female superintendents responding were white. (See Table 5). Two (7.4%) superintendents are African American. There were no other ethnic groups responding to the survey.

Table 5

*Racial/Ethnic Origin of Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Racial/Ethnic Origin	Frequency	Percent
Black, not Hispanic origin	2	7.4%
White, not Hispanic origin	25	92.6%

---

N = 27.

Eighteen (66.7%) of the twenty-seven superintendents reported having extended family in the immediate area in which they were serving as superintendent. (See Table 6).

Nine (33.3%) did not have extended family in the area in which they served as superintendent.

Table 6

*Female Superintendents in Georgia with Extended Family in Immediate Area*

Extended family in immediate area	Frequency	Percent
Yes	18	66.7%
No	9	33.3%

N = 27

The largest percent of females eight, (29.6%) hold positions as superintendent in school districts with 3,000-4,999 students. (See Table 7). Six superintendents (22.2%) reported the number of students in their districts as being between 1,000 -2,999. Five (18.5%) surveyed reported being employed in districts with 5,000-9,999 students. Five different superintendents also reported being employed with 10,000-24,999 students in their school district. One (3.7%) reported having 600-999 students. One superintendent responded to having 25,000-49,999 students and one responded to having 50,000 or more in the district in which she was superintendent.

Table 7

*Number of Students in Female Superintendents' School District*

Number of students in district	Frequency	Percent
600-999	1	3.7%
1,000-2,999	6	22.2%
3,000-4,999	8	29.6%
5,000-9,999	5	18.5%
10,000-24,999	5	18.5%
25,000-49,999	1	3.7%
50,000+	1	3.7%

N = 27.

There were two age groups 40-49 and 50-59 that had equal number of female superintendents who held their first superintendency. Eleven (40.7%) in each age group responded to getting their first job as superintendent in these two categories. One (3.7%) responded to being 30-39 and one responded to being 60 or over when they became superintendents. (See Table 8).

Table 8

*Age When Female Superintendents in Georgia First Attained the Superintendency*

Age at first superintendency	Frequency	Percent
30-39	1	3.7%
40-49	11	40.7%
50-59	11	40.7%
60+	1	3.7%

N = 24. Three superintendents did not respond to this question.

There were two categories that had equal portions in longest superintendency held. Thirteen (48.1%) reported they had held a position as superintendent for 1-4 years and 5-8 years. One (3.7%) reported to being superintendent for less than one year. (See Table 9).

Table 9

*Number of Years Female Superintendents in Georgia Have held Current Position*

Number in present position	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	1	3.7%
1-4 years	16	59.3%
5-8 years	10	37.0%
9 or more years	0	0.0%

N = 27



Similarly, seventeen (63.0%) of the respondents reported that they had currently been in their positions between one and four years. (See Table 10). Ten (37.0%) had been in their current positions for five to eight years. At the time of this study, none of the respondents reported holding their positions nine or more years

Table 10

*Length of Longest Superintendency Held by Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Length of longest superintendency	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	1	3.7%
1-4 years	13	48.1%
5-8 years	13	48.1%
9 or more years	0	0.0%

N = 27.

Twenty-three (85.2%) of the superintendents responded they have served as superintendent for one district. (See Table 11). Three (11.1%) have held two superintendent positions and one (3.7%) reported holding three positions as superintendent.

Table 11

*Number of Superintendencies Held by Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Number of Superintendencies held, including the present one	Frequency	Percent
1	23	85.2%
2	3	11.1%
3	1	3.7%
4	0	0.0%

N = 27.

*Formal Academic Preparation*

From this questionnaire 27 of the 36 superintendents surveyed fourteen (51.9) had a doctorate degree. (See Table 12).

Table 12

*Highest Degree Earned by Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Highest degree earned	Frequency	Percent
Specialist	13	48.1%
Doctorate	14	51.9%

N = 27.

Thirteen (48.1%) had a specialist degree. No one reported having just a master's degree. Seven (25.9%) responded they had participated in the Georgia Superintendents'

Professional Development Program (SPDP). (See Table 13). Twenty responded they had not participated.

Table 13

*Number of Female Superintendents Who Participated in Superintendents Professional Development Program*

Participated in SPDP	Frequency	Percents
Yes	7	25.9%
No	20	74.1%

N = 27.

*Career Paths and Succession Patterns*

The career path for this study involves the positions the female superintendents held in a school district before becoming superintendent. (See Table 14). Ten (40%) of the respondents reported being assistant principals before becoming superintendent. Thirteen (52%) reported having held the position of principal before becoming superintendent. Not all of the respondents who reported to have held the position of principal identified the school level; however two (.074%) of the 27 superintendents reported being principals of pre K -2 schools. Three (12.0%) reported being Title I directors. Seven (28.0%) reported serving as curriculum director at the central office and fifteen (60.0%) had been assistant superintendent.

Table 14

*Career Paths of Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Position	Frequency	Percent
Assistant Principal	10	40.0%
Principal	13	52.0%
Title 1 Director	3	12.0%
Consultant with State DOE	4	16.0%
Curriculum Director	7	28.0%
Assistant Superintendent	15	60.0%

N=27

The succession pattern for this study refers to the last position held immediately before attaining the job of superintendent. (See Table 15). Six (22.2%) reported holding the position of principal before attaining the superintendency. Two identified being principal of pre K-2 and one identified being principal at the high school level, three did not identify a school level. Immediately before attaining the superintendency, six (22.2%) served in the central office positions other than that of the assistant superintendent; four were curriculum directors and two were Title I directors. Of the 27 female superintendents who responded to the questionnaire, fifteen (55.6%) held the position as assistant, associate, or deputy superintendent before attaining the superintendency.

Table 15

*Succession Patterns of Female Superintendents in Georgia*

Position	Frequency	Percent
Principal	6	22.2%
Central Office	6	22.2%
Assistant Superintendent	15	55.6%

N = 27.

*Barriers to Advancement*

On the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency, participants were asked to respond to the Likert scale questionnaire that best described their perceptions of possible barriers females face when attempting to attain the superintendency. The Likert scale contained number from 1 representing not a barrier to 5 which represented a major barrier. There was a list of twenty-one barriers listed on the questionnaire. Three of the questions received an overall mean above 3.0 indicating a major barrier. In response to barriers, the overall means are reported in Table 16 in the form of percentages. The table shows a range of 1.96 to 3.27.

The three barriers receiving the highest mean score for this study were conflicting demands of career and family (3.27), existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs (3.18), lack of political know-how (3.07). The next two highest scores for barriers were exclusion from informal socialization process of “good ole boy network” (2.96) and gender bias in screening and selection process (2.92).

The barriers receiving the lowest mean scores from this questionnaire were childhood socialization to “proper” roles for men and women (1.96), inappropriate career path experiences (2.14), lack of motivation to compete for top jobs (2.19), overt sex discrimination (2.24), and potential colleagues’ insubordination in working for a female boss (2.38).

Table 16

*Georgia Female Superintendents’ Perception of Barriers to Advancement*

Barrier	N	Mean	SD
Conflicting demands of career and family	27	3.27	1.28
Existence of the “buddy system” in which men prefer men to jobs.	27	3.18	1.41
Lack of political “know how”.	27	3.07	1.32
Lack of acceptance by male administrators and staff.	27	2.96	1.39
Gender bias in screening and selection process	27	2.92	1.49
Lack of a strong women’s network similar to the “Good Ole Boy network”.	27	2.84	1.56
The belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions.	27	2.84	1.64
The predominance of male candidates for administrative positions.	27	2.81	1.21
Lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment.	27	2.77	1.52
Doubt by those in a hiring position of women’s long term career commitment.	27	2.57	1.20

Table 16 (*continued*)

<i>Georgia Female Superintendents' Perception of Barriers to Advancement</i>			
Barrier	N	Mean	SD
Lack of acceptance by female administrators and staff.	27	2.50	1.24
Lack of acceptance by male administrators and staff.	27	2.46	1.30
Lack of a mentor.	27	2.44	1.36
Covert sex discrimination.	27	2.44	1.57
Lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs.	27	2.42	1.27
The belief that women do not make good administrators.	27	2.37	1.27
Potential colleagues' insubordination in working for a female boss.	27	2.38	1.32
Overt sex discrimination.	27	2.24	1.09
Lack of motivation to compete for jobs.	27	2.19	1.26
Inappropriate career path experiences.	27	2.14	0.98
Childhood socialization to "proper" roles for men and women.	27	1.96	1.01
<u>Note.</u> 1 = Not a Major Barrier      5 = A Major Barrier			

*Strategies for Advancement*

On the Questionnaire on perceptions of Barriers Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency, the respondents were asked to give their opinion on a Likert scale that best represented their perceptions of the 18 strategies that relate to women securing the superintendency. The scale ranged from number 1 representing a strategy that was not

deemed successful to the number 5 representing a highly successful strategy for advancement. The means for strategies for advancement are listed in Table 17 in order from the highest to the lowest mean. Eleven of the 18 strategies received an overall mean of 4.0 or higher. The means for strategies have a range of 2.07 to 4.62.

The top ten most effective strategies for females in attaining the superintendency were developing a political know-how ( 4.62), developing a strong self concept (4.55), learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for a position (4.51), obtaining the support of family (4.44), attending workshops to improve professional skills (4.29), learning coping skills (4.29), enhancing interviewing skills (4.25), gaining access to community power (4.18), and increase visibility in professional circles (4.18).

Following the results of this survey, the five least successful strategies for female superintendents were invoking affirmative action and Title IX (1.20), utilizing a women's network similar to the "good ole boy's" network (3.03), adopting a female role model (3.48), learning how to deal with sex discrimination (3.48), and learning strategies of successful women in other fields (3.77).



Table 17

<i>Georgia Female Superintendents' Perceptions of Strategies for Advancement</i>			
Strategies	N	Mean	SD
Developing a political "know-how"	27	4.62	.741
Developing a strong self-concept	27	4.55	.577
Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for a position.	27	4.51	.700
Obtaining the support of family.	27	4.44	.847
Attending workshops to improve professional skills.	27	4.29	.868
Learning coping skills.	27	4.29	.823
Enhancing interviewing skills.	27	4.25	.655
Gaining access to community power.	27	4.19	.800
Preparing an effective resume.	27	4.18	.962
Increasing visibility in professional circles	27	4.18	.786
Obtaining a doctorate.	27	4.0	.877
Enlisting in a mentor.	27	4.0	.733
Increasing flexibility to relocate.	27	3.96	.939
Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.	27	3.77	.974
Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.	27	3.55	1.12
Adopting a female role model.	27	3.48	1.01
Utilizing a women's network similar to the "good ole boy's network".	27	3.30	1.09
Invoking affirmative action and Title IX.	27	2.07	1.20

Note. 1 = Not a Successful Strategy.      5= Highly Successful Strategy

## Qualitative

The data were analyzed from the interviews of the five female superintendents that yielded patterns and themes. The qualitative data are presented in the following order: marital status, academic preparation, career paths and succession patterns, perceptions of barriers, advantages in being a female in the role of superintendency, strategies for advancement, confidence, loneliness, power, and job satisfaction.

### *Marital Status*

Three of the five superintendents were married. One was never married and one was divorced. Two of the husbands had jobs in other states and were waiting for retirement before joining their wives in Georgia. Biographical and demographic information for the interviewed superintendents is listed in Table 18.

Table 18

*Demographics for Interviewed Superintendents*

Superintendent	1	2	3	4	5
Number of students in district	3,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	5,000-9,999	25,000-49,999	50,000+
Racial/Ethnic Origin	White	White	White	White	White
Number of years in present position	5-8	5-8	1-4	5-8	1-4
Longest Superintendency held	5-8	5-8	5-8	5-8	5-8
Number of Superintendencies	1	1	2	1	2
Age	50-59	50-59	50-59	60+	50-59
Age at first Superintendency	40-49	50-59	40-49	40-49	40-49
Highest degree earned	Doctorate	Doctorate	Doctorate	Specialist	Doctorate
Superintendents Professional Development program	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

*Academic Preparation*

One female superintendent interviewed reported participating in the Superintendents Professional Development Program (SPDP). Heidi Clare reported, “I went to a few of the classes when I was assistant superintendent.” “I never did complete them all.” (February 12, 2007, p. 4). Four of the five female superintendents who were interviewed reported earning their doctorate. The other female had a specialist degree.

*Career Paths and Succession Patterns*

The average length of being a classroom teacher for the five female superintendents was 15 years. The range for the five female superintendents' was eight years to nineteen years in the classroom.

All five of the female superintendents interviewed had been principals. Rhoda Boone went from the superintendency in one state back into the classroom as a teacher and then on to the superintendency in another state. Rhoda Boone reported, "Every person in the board office should at some point be recycled back into the classroom to understand how times and children change." (March 6, 2007, p. 9). All five female superintendents had been assistant superintendents before becoming a superintendent. Penny Wise reported acting as the interim superintendent of the school system of which she was now superintendent. (March 9, 2007, p. 11).

*Support Systems*

The five female superintendents reported having the existence of a support system. Two of the five females interviewed reported receiving extensive support from fellow teachers and community members to vying for the job as superintendent. Heidi Clare reported having the superintendent of the county become her mentor and encouraged her to get her leadership degree. She felt that being in administration was one way "of giving back to the community" (February 12, 2007 p. 2).

Penny Wise, who is superintendent of an urban school district, cited a group of women as her greatest support group. "We call our group "chicks in charge", we are all females who are high standing CEO's, and we get together once a month and talk about how to move our community forward" (March 9, 2007, p.11). Mrs. Wise recalled that

they formed this group because of the threats she received having taken the position of superintendent in that county.

Rhoda Boone the superintendent in a suburban school district reported having two members of the Board of Education as part of her support system. Rhoda Boone reported her staff as being her “greatest supporters” (March 6, 2007, p. 8).

### *Barriers to Success*

Four of the five female superintendents reported having experienced some type of barrier on the way to the superintendency. Heidi Clare reported experiencing age as a barrier. She was thirty years old and most of the teachers in her county were older than she was when she first became principal. (February 12, 2007, p.2). Claire Annette did not feel as if she faced any barriers she reported “barriers are in a person’s mind, if you think people are going to react a certain way towards a male or female’s leadership style, they probably will.” (February 12, 2007, p. 5).

### *Advantages in Being a Woman in the Superintendency*

When asked if there were any advantages in being a woman in the pursuit of the superintendency, each of the female superintendents had a different response. “People wouldn’t take their gloves off as quickly” reported Heidi Clare to being asked about any advantages. (February 12, 2007, p.2). She also stated “One of my early memories as a principal, I had someone call and just raise heck; he said, “Oh I’ll just be right up there,” so I said come on. Well I happened to be pregnant at the time; I can still see the look on his face when I stood up and I was pregnant and he said “I’m sorry, I ... didn’t mean to upset you,” and I thought how strange...” (February 12, 2007, p.2).

Claire Annette the superintendent from a rural school district, responded, “I try not to think of things as being about gender, I do know there probably has been some situations because perhaps someone has been gentle or kind or someone has tried to intimidate because I am female” (February 12, 2007, p.5).

Penny Wise, the superintendent from an urban school district, replied, “I think there are a lot. I think women can be more perceptive and use their intuition well, we also have a reputation of being hard workers, and we will get the job done. Females have the advantage of teaching for longer time periods than our male counter parts, so we know more concerning curriculum” (March 9, 2007, p.12).

Cindi Light, the superintendent who is employed in one of the larger districts, responded, “There are advantages in some ways to being female but I do not look at situations and think people are treating me any differently simply because I happen to be female. I believe females react with a knowledge base in curriculum and make decisions about what is good for children” (March 9, 2007, p.14).

### *Strategies for Advancement*

Four of the five female superintendents responded that there were barriers and verbalized strategies they had employed to attain their goals for superintendency. Heidi Clare responded, “When I became superintendent, I really think, by then, I had proven myself as a leader. When I became superintendent, we were broke. We did some real tough stuff the first few years, cut our supplement by fifty percent for just one year. But, when you’re broke, you’re broke and tough decisions have to be made, but I had already proved myself as a leader and that alone helped me advance and make those decisions.” (February 12, 2007, p.6).

Rhoda Boone and Cindi Light had the same response, “Self confidence... never give up... have goals... be very prepared...” (March 6, 2007, p. 9). Cindi Light responded having a “strong sense of who I am” as a strategy for her to overcome barriers (March 9, 2007, p.13). Rhoda Boone also responded, “Try to take opportunities when they come along, always build credibility... (p.10).

Penny Wise expressed the need to have a technical self confidence. She has a strong belief in the system. She stated, “Have a strong belief system about what this work is and to hold to that belief about children to a high standard. My guiding light really is: Are we doing what is best for the kids?” (March 9, 2007, p.12).

### *Confidence*

When interviewing these five female superintendents one thing that was evident in each interview was that all these women were confident, high achieving individuals, who are knowledgeable and have background knowledge of what it takes to get a job done. Each recognized the strength they had inside and drew on that strength when the time came for them to seek the superintendency.

When asked if there were specific experiences they lacked when moving into the superintendency, three believed they had the skills necessary in getting the job done. Claire Annette responded, “I am thankful for all the different jobs I’ve held before becoming superintendent. Those experiences have certainly helped me. It didn’t take me long to really get in there and understand the nitty gritty of finance. It is just a matter of if you’re not responsible for it, it is hard to know everything you need to know. But once you become responsible you’d better learn it and you’d better know it” (February 12, 2007, 0.5).

Penny Wise responded, “I had a good foundation in capital work, but it is different when you’re superintendent but I had to learn a lot in terms of what the superintendent is responsible for and I have studied and gotten much better about it. I probably had the least experience in finance but I made it my business to learn finance. We are considered one of the best financially managed districts in the state” (March 9, 2007,p.12).

### *Loneliness*

All of the female superintendents expressed a feeling of loneliness at times in the position of superintendent. Heidi Claire states, “Being lonely is just part of it. You have to make a lot of decisions many people may not like” (February 12, 2007, p.2). As long as she made decisions that balanced the needs of the school with the needs of the children with what the community will or will not support she was okay with the loneliness.

Claire Annette responded, “Yes, I feel lonely as a superintendent. There are going to be times when it is just you, no matter how dependable and great your staff is. I feel a lot of support. I feel I can go to anyone and ask them to do anything for the school system and it would get done. But there are times when I have to make hard decisions and no one can make them for me. Every time you make a decision as a superintendent you put rocks in your pocket, some rocks are big and some rocks are little. I don’t care what the decision is, you put rocks in your pocket and once you put those rocks in your pocket you can’t take them out, so you need to know how big those rocks are” (February 12, 2007,p.6).

Penny Wise expressed a feeling of loneliness. She felt the loneliness of keeping a distance from your subordinates. She responded, “You can’t really ever, and shouldn’t let anyone see you’re sick or weak. You can’t ever let anyone see that you’re weak or it is



like a bloodbath” ( March 6, 2007, p.10). Likewise Cindi Light expressed, “Yeah, its lonely at the top, there is so much you have to keep to yourself and not let others see” (March 9, 2007, p.15).

### *Power*

When asked to define power, Heidi Claire responded, “It is shared, expect what you expect. There is a certain amount of leadership or authority that I need to maintain but most likely people near the problems know a lot more about the issue than I do” (February 12, 2007, p.3). “It would be rare for me to say, “Because I said so” (p. 3).

Claire Annette had the same sentiment concerning power, “It is not about how much power you have. It is about how you use power; just don’t lose focus of why you’re in a job and that is for the school system and ultimately for the students” (February 12, 2007, p.6).

Rhoda Boone responded, “Power can corrupt, so don’t misuse power, but I think power is almost like empowering other people. Using power is an opportunity, use resources around you that are common within an organization that helps people to be successful” (March 6, 2007, p.9).

Penny Wise defines power, “You have a lot of power and authority just by the position you are in. You have a lot of power just by the title and you have a lot of influence on others” (March 9, 2007 p. 13). Cindi Light agreed, “Use power in a way to achieve great and wonderful things for boys and girls; and it can’t be about self, what it is going to get me as an individual. That is a great thing about power, to make a difference in children’s lives,” (March 9, 2007, p. 15).

*Job Satisfaction*

Each of the five female superintendents expressed a strong sense of satisfaction in her role as superintendent. All felt they have made a difference in the lives of the students as well as the community and school system. Each felt that they had a lot to offer and knew they would do it all over again if they were only asked.

Heidi Clare (February 12, 2007, p.3) expressed, "I love my job. It has definitely been worth it; I love it. I feel like I have made a difference in my school system. It is a fun job; you get to meet a lot of different people. I enjoy it. You have to remember to keep a balance between work and home, especially being a female. It is a good job, but you've got to keep a balance."

According to Claire Annette (February 12, 2007, p. 6) "Yes, I would, I would do it all over again. I really have loved all of my jobs in education. I think when someone truly loves what they are doing it is such a blessing because I guess there are a lot of people that have a job and I guess that is what it is, a job. I do not look at what I do as a job. I don't really even look at it as a career. I look at it as a cause; it has been good for me, and I hope I've been good for the cause."

Rhoda Boone (March 6, 2007, p. 10) expressed great satisfaction in seeing the changes she has made and the National recognitions her district has achieved after becoming superintendent of her school district. She stated, "Yes I love it. I have had wonderful opportunities and met a lot of wonderful people in Georgia. I love the people here and the charm of southern living. I would definitely do it all over again."

Penny Wise (March 9, 2007, p. 13) expressed the desire that she only wished she had "started earlier" in her career advancing towards the superintendency. She is an

advocate for other females wanting to advance in the ranks of administration. She will promote females and believes in networking. She stated, "I think being humble in this work is really important, and, yes, I would do it over again."

Cindi Light (March 9, 2007, p. 16) expressed "I would definitely do it again. I have enjoyed the trip. I want to come to work. I enjoy meeting the different people that I get to see on a daily basis. It is a great job."

### Summary

Chapter four offered a brief overview of the purpose of this study and the research questions. Analysis of the data reported from the questionnaire and interviews was given. Based on the information from the biographical and demographical information obtained the typical female superintendent in Georgia was portrayed.

Tables were integrated to provide the biographical and demographic information from the questionnaire. The overall means for barriers to females' success in attaining the superintendency were included using the range and tabulated from highest to lowest form. Three of the barriers received an overall mean greater than 3.0 which indicates the female superintendent did identify these as barriers. Twelve of the eighteen strategies were identified as effective for female superintendents receiving a mean score of 4.0 or better. The strategies are listed from the highest to lowest mean in tabular form.

The female superintendents interviewed verbalized advantages and barriers in being a female in a male dominated organization. All five of the females interviewed exhibited great strength and self-confidence. They were confident in their ability to lead and expressed a strong sense of satisfaction in the job they held. True to the literature,

they all expressed a collaboration model of leadership and defined power as being shared with others.

Although there are disagreements on what barriers are evident and what hinders a female's advancement in leadership, all agreed that females need to help promote other females and there needs to be a better networking of females in order to accomplish more in terms of advancement. These females are strong individuals and will not evade responsibility just because they happen to be women.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter V presents a summary of the findings, an analysis of the research findings, discussion of research findings, implications for women seeking the superintendency, conclusions, and recommendations for further study. The discussion of research findings included barriers, strategies, mentors and support systems, career paths and succession patterns, focus of female superintendents, definitions of power, job satisfaction, advantages in being a female in the superintendency, and strategies for advancement.

#### Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to develop a narrative profile of females who were serving as public school superintendents in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school year. The study was a mixed-method design of data collection. Quantitative data were collected from participants who responded to the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Superintendents. The questionnaire is included in Appendix B. Twenty-Seven of the thirty-six female superintendents returned the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were generated using SPSS. Five female superintendents participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed to develop themes and patterns of female superintendents in Georgia.

The analysis of the data resulted in the following findings: The standard female superintendent in Georgia is white (92.6 %) with an average age between 50-59 (66.7%). She is married (85.2%) with no school aged children in K-12 grades (81.5 %). As far as having extended family in the area she (66.7 %) reported having family in the area in

which she held the superintendency. The highest average of those serving in a district with 3,000- 4,999 students is (29.6 %). The respondents (40.7 %) were between the ages of 40-49 when they began serving their first position as superintendent and (40.7%) also were between the ages of 50-59 when they first served as superintendent. The group responded that (63.0%) had been in the position of superintendent between one and four years. The highest degree earned is a doctorate (51.9%) yet only (25.9%) participated in the Georgia Superintendent Professional Development Program.

Three of the questions concerning barriers received an overall mean above 3.0 indicating there was a barrier; the barrier receiving the highest mean score in this study was conflicting demands of career and family (3.27). This was followed by the existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs (3.18), to lack of political “know how” (3.07). Additional barriers listed by respondents from the questionnaire are included in Appendix F.

The barriers receiving the lowest mean scores were childhood socialization to “proper” roles for men and women (1.96), inappropriate career path experiences (2.14), lack of motivation to compete for top jobs (2.19), overt sex discrimination (2.24), and potential colleagues’ insubordination in working for a female boss (2.38).

On the Questionnaire on perceptions of Barriers Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency, the respondents were asked to give their opinions on a Likert scale that best represented their perceptions of the 18 strategies that relate to women is securing the superintendency. The scale ranged from number 1 representing a strategy that was not deemed successful to the number 5 representing a highly successful strategy for advancement.

The top ten most effective strategies for females in attaining the superintendency were developing a political know-how ( 4.62), developing a strong self concept (4.55), learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for a position (4.51), obtaining the support of family (4.44), attending workshops to improve professional skills (4.29), learning coping skills (4.29), enhancing interviewing skills (4.25), gaining access to community power (4.18), and increase visibility in professional circles (4.18).

The five least successful strategies for female superintendents were invoking affirmative action and Title IX (1.20), utilizing a women's network similar to the "good ole boy's" network (3.03), adopting a female role model (3.48), learning how to deal with sex discrimination (3.48), and learning strategies of successful women in other fields (3.77).

### Discussion of Research Findings

#### *Barriers*

Conflicting demands of career and family was the highest ranking barrier identified by female superintendents in Georgia (3.27). Similarly, Noder (2003) cited work-family conflicts pose a formidable barrier to the access of the superintendency for female's in the hiring and promotional process. Heidi Clare stated in the interview, "Balancing your time is an important aspect of being successful with the job and home. I know that there were many things I missed because I did not balance my time to include my children." (February 12, 2007, p. 3). This concurs with Grogan & Brunner (2005) research in which nurturing a family has long been considered at odds with effectively performing the duties of the superintendency. Penny Wise responded "Well, what I tell people is that this is not a job, it's a way of life. They (her family) have had to adjust to this more than I

have because I am out doing it, and they are at home. It takes its toll, but my husband is very supportive of that.” (March 9, 2007,p.12).

In the same context, the existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs was the second highest mean for barriers. Grogan & Brunner (2005) note female superintendents are preceded and succeeded by male superintendents. Rhoda Boone was recommended by the former superintendent who was a male. Grogan and Brunner also contend that male superintendents agree that school boards tend to view women as incapable of managing a school district. Heidi Clare and Rhoda Boone had male mentors who encouraged them to seek administrative jobs. Heidi Clare, states that the male superintendent called her into his office and encouraged her to stay with their county because “there are some things that you can do in this county and we really want you to stay with us.” (February 12, 2007,p.1). Rhoda Boone was the first female of two counties to serve in those counties as superintendent. She states “I was female, democrat, and Presbyterian and I thought I didn’t stand a chance but I did. The teachers and the community came together and asked the board to stop their search and that they would like for me to do the job.” (March 6, 2007, p.8). Three of the five superintendents interviewed for this study were recruited or asked to apply for the superintendency they now occupy. Pipkin (2002) notes female entry into educational administration positions are often facilitated by men who promoted them.

The Lack of political “know-how” (3.07) was the third ranking barrier for female superintendents in Georgia. Tallericco (2000) notes three elements in the hiring process that can limit the advancement of women in the superintendency. These elements include (a) how “best qualified” is defined, (b) stereotyping and (c) the role of “good chemistry”



in determining interview success. Rhoda Booke stated that females have to constantly prove themselves competent, and are often second guessed while male counterparts appear to work less and disregard facts and show favorites.” (March 6, 2007, p. 8.). The five female superintendents interviewed revealed that four had earned a doctorate. However, only two had participated in the Superintendents Professional Development Program, intended to train educational leaders in Georgia for the superintendency.

In contrast to the study conducted by Brunner(2000) that as women find themselves in the position of leadership especially in the role of superintendent of schools, it is very apparent that they are outnumbered by males, the female respondents in this study ranked the predominance of male candidates for administrative positions as only the eighth greatest barrier. Consistent with Peterson & Short (2001) the greatest challenges to education will be to reinvent, reshape, and transform educational institutions. Three of the five female superintendent respondents identified themselves as “change agents”. Rhoda Booke stated that she was hired specifically to bring about change. “We had personnel situations, and we had become accustomed to some practices that were very poor practices.” (March 6, 2007, p. 8). Penny Wise noted where the male counterparts were concerned, she was not worried because she felt “Women can be more perceptive and use their intuition well; we also have the reputation of being thorough hard workers, and we’ll stick to it.” (March 9, 2007, p.12).

In relation to the review of literature in which women were less likely to relocate than men in order to attain the superintendency, the females in this study found females lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment as the

ninth greatest barrier (2.77). Two of the female superintendents responding to this survey reported their husbands were employed in another state and were close to retirement so they commuted between states. Penny Wise responded that she had to “Tell them (The board of education) I was resigning from the school system. That was probably the hardest thing I ever did because I worked the whole time in that county to be that person.” She was interviewing for a job as assistant superintendent, her husband had a career change and her family had to move to North Carolina.

Only two of the five female superintendents reported being married. Although their husbands had not retired they still maintained two homes and commuted from state to state for the advancement of both careers. Penny Wise reported “Women should start their careers early and younger, learn the breath of this work, you need to know a lot of these things to be successful, you have to know a lot about the business world, and this is a quarter billion dollar business we run here so I think there is a whole business piece women need to learn.” (March 9,2007, p.12). This relates to the literature as Grogan & Brunner (2005) note as both female and male superintendents contend with the issue of raising a family, it is encouraging to note that this undertaking does not disqualify females for the superintendency.

Tallerico (2000) found ample evidence of gender stereotyping. According to Tallerico, some school board members questioned female candidates competencies on discipline, budget, and if female candidates were tough to get the job done. Rhoda Booke responded, “I think there are perceptions that women are more emotional but what I have found in my 38 years, when ever I have ever gone to

deal with conflict in personnel, I would say mostly 95% of men are more emotional, and actually have cried rather than females (March 6, 2007, p.9). Penny Wise reported “Well you experience bias every day as in terms of being a woman. I have been to asked “Why does a woman think she can do this mans job?” (March 9, 2007, p.11). Claire Annette responded “I don’t think of any huge barriers when you ask me that but, then again, I didn’t have any barriers in my mind, I look at it as I’m a person, this is my job, and I want to have that job so I don’t think there are any huge barriers out there (February 12, 2007, p.5).

### *Strategies for Success*

Based on responses to the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency, the strategy ranked as most important in seeking the superintendency was developing a political “know-how” (4.62). According Brunner (2000) women held themselves responsible for becoming the type of communicators that are needed in the role of superintendent. One respondent listed learning strategies of successful men in other fields as a strategy for success. Cindi Light reported having knowledge of how progress will be achieved and communicating the expectations to school boards and members of the community is crucial (March 9, 2007, p.14).

Developing a strong self-concept (4.55) was ranked as a successful strategy for female’s success in attaining the superintendency. All five respondents exhibited self-confidence in their ability to lead. Rhoda Booke expressed, “I thought I could make a big difference” (March 6, 2007, p. 8). Cindi Light maintains, “Having a strong self-confidence and a high self-esteem is an important factor in being

successful as a superintendent” (March 9, 2007, p.14). Heidi Clare responded, “I feel like I can make a difference in my school system” when she decided to apply for her first job as superintendent in her county (February 12, 2007, p. 2). Pipkin (2002) notes that there are three factors essential for females in the acquisition of superintendent: (a) having a positive self image as a leader; (b) having others view you as a leader and (c) maintaining a range of professional experience in education.

Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for a position was the third highest ranked strategy for success in this study. Penny Wise reported, “I had to learn a lot in terms of what the superintendent is responsible for but I have studied and gotten much better about it. I had to make sure I knew everything about what I was doing... (March 9, 2007, p. 12). Grogan & Brunner (2005) note the ability to maintain organizational relationships, interpersonal skills, and responsiveness to community groups are important in advancing female careers in the superintendency. Cindi Light reported “You have to know nearly every facet of the superintendency and the related issues. Knowledge of the various departments and school district is crucial.”

Invoking affirmative Action and Title IX (2.07) was listed as the least successful strategy for success. Claire Annette reported, “I believe one’s competency and ability to work with other people and listen is more valuable than leaning on affirmative action and Title IX.”

According to Grogan & Brunner (2005) the difference between men and women superintendents are more pronounced when preparation for advancement is

considered. Significantly more female superintendents than men hold undergraduate degrees in education. The female superintendents in Georgia obtaining a doctorate were (51.9%). The other female superintendents in Georgia responded having a specialist degree (48.1%).

The majority (66.7%) of the superintendents in Georgia were fifty to fifty-nine years of age when they attained their first superintendency. This concurs with the literature that females tend to spend more time in the classroom than men and enter the educational administration at a later stage in their careers (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Three of the superintendents expressed remorse that they did not begin their careers as superintendents earlier in their careers.

#### *Mentors and Support Systems*

Enlisting a mentor (4.0) ranked as number eleven as being a successful strategy for advancement of female superintendents in Georgia. The mean of 4.0 does show some significance and supports the literature in which females express a need for mentors. Grogan & Brunner (2005) note the ability to maintain organizational relationships, interpersonal skills, and responsiveness to community groups as important in advancing women's careers in the superintendency. All five of the female superintendents interviewed named mentors who helped them advance their careers.

According to Grogan & Brunner (2005), women superintendents and women central-office administrators need to network. Three of the five female superintendents mentioned male mentors who helped in advancing their careers. Claire Annette did have a female mentor and described her in this way, "I think my

greatest mentor was my principal at the high school in which I taught. It was a huge campus. I think she was my greatest mentor. She was the most inspiring of all people. She was wise and gave good counseling” (February 12, 2007, p.5). Rhoda Boone and Cindi Light mentioned male board members as advisers. Penny Wise responded when asked if she had a mentor, “No, I really didn’t.”

According to Bjork (2000), although encouragement and support of females appear to have increased, individual acts by boards of education members have not altered organizational practices essential in changing the male-dominated system. In contrast to the literature, two of the female superintendents reported having great support from their board members which were predominately male. Rhoda Boone responded, “I have male members on the board that support me in my decisions, they are fair, honest and open” (March 6, 2007, p. 8). Glass (2000) notes male superintendents agree that school boards tend to view women as incapable of managing a school district.

According to Skrla (2000) the need for women to become more outspoken about females in the superintendency needs to increase in volume and widen in scope so that neither females nor the profession of superintendent will remain silent in advancing females. Most of the superintendents interviewed did not verbalize that a female helped them advance in administration. Penny Wise spoke of the group of high ranking CEO’s that contacted her and supported her when things got tough in her advancement to the superintendency. “There were people out there who made comments, “Why does she think she can do a man’s job?” (March 9, 2007, p. 11).

*Career Paths and Succession Patterns*

There is not one clear path to the superintendency described in the literature. In this study 22.2% reported being in a central office position and 55.6% reported attaining the position of Assistant Superintendent before obtaining the superintendency. Grogan & Brunner (2005) state that school boards are viewing women with backgrounds in curriculum and instruction as viable candidates for the superintendency. Grogan & Brunner also contend females are emerging as community builders, grounded in knowledge and are prepared to maintain the course in leading school districts across the nation.

Glass (2000) maintains superintendents were frequently not hired from within. Three of the five female superintendents were promoted from within the system in which they were employed; two had attended school in the very community in which they were now the superintendents. Two others had relocated to assume the position of superintendent; one had begun as an assistant superintendent and then was promoted to interim superintendent. Penny Wise states, “ I interviewed for assistant superintendent and got the job the day after the interview I spent 2 years doing that and the superintendent decided to leave and the board asked me to be the superintendent and I did apply for that and 6 months later I was selected” (March 9, 2007, p.11).

Grogan & Brunner (2005) report female superintendents are preceded and succeeded by male superintendents. Likewise, all five female superintendents reported having male superintendents in the district before they were hired. Rhoda Booke reported, “At that particular time, there were no women superintendents;

Knoxville was the only one and it was 100 miles away. I was the first woman superintendent there, and the first one here. So it was interesting” (March 6, 2007, p.8).

### *Definition of Power*

Grogan (2000) notes that females focus on the process and relationships in leadership style and in how they define power. Each of the five female superintendents expressed power as being shared, empowering others. Heidi Clare acknowledged, “We are a collaborative school system; it is easier to manage with a smaller system. Power is shared” ( February 12, 2007, p. 3).

Claire Annette (February 12, 2007, p. 6) articulated her background of how she perceived power, “Remember that you are the superintendent so there is not a power struggle or anything. What I mean by that is sometimes people, typically people who are first year superintendents, are not first year administrators and are stepping into a job that a lot of people perceive as powerful. In this job a person can lose sight of how to approach things or use that perceived power. My point is you do not have to show people you have power by flexing your muscles so to speak, but show people you have power by doing your job. It is not how much power you have. It is about how you use the power, just don’t lose focus of why you’re in a job and that is for the school system and ultimately the students” (February12, 2007, p. 6).

Rhoda Boone and Cindi Light agree that power can corrupt so don’t misuse power. Rhoda Boone had this to say about power, “Using power is an opportunity, use resources around you that are common, with an organization that helps people



to be successful. Use power to achieve great and wonderful things.. it can't be about what you want as an individual" (March 6, 2007, p. 9).

### *Job Satisfaction*

Individualization, isolation, and loneliness that pervade the work lives of women superintendents are barriers females often contend with in the work place Skrla (2000). The superintendents in this study all expressed a feeling of loneliness. Rhoda Boone expressed loneliness, "The job itself can be lonely, but you are so busy you probably don't even notice it. It is lonely at the top, but you can never let them see you sweat" (March 6, 2007, p. 10). According to Skrla loneliness, and isolated struggles against inequality are the requirements and cost of success in the profession of superintendent.

According to Grogan & Brunner women do aspire to the superintendency and also work to fulfill those aspirations of attaining the position of superintendent. The five female superintendents interviewed overwhelmingly expressed their satisfaction in getting the job done. Rhoda Boone responded, "It is the best job, I love it. I have had a wonderful experience and would do it all over again (March 6, 2007, p.10). Grogan & Brunner (2005) contend women, as well as men, like being superintendent, and the majority says if they were to experience their careers over again, they would do the same.

Grogan & Brunner (2005) contend seventy-four percent of women compared to sixty-seven percent of males say they would choose the same profession, and significantly more women superintendents than men describe the job as fulfilling. Cindi Light stated, "What makes me enjoy this job the most is seeing the

difference I have made, not only in the lives of the students but the community as well” (March 9, 2007, p. 14).

#### *Advantages of Being a Woman*

Grogan (2000) notes when alternative approaches are utilized in leadership and perceived in the context of females and deemed effective in creating great results, then the leadership styles of females is highly regarded. Consistent with the findings in the review of literature, the five females interviewed recognized advantages in being a woman. Each expressed the self confidence it took to get the job done. The communication and interpersonal skills often associated with women was evident in all five of the female superintendents interviewed. Rhoda Booke made this comment, “Put academic first and then everything else will work out. Forget about being popular with private interest groups. Start out like you can hold out” (March 6, 2007, p. 9).

Pipkin (2002) noted females that want to attain the position of superintendent can clearly benefit from the insights and wisdom of other successful superintendents. Penny Wise (March 6, 2007, p.9) stated, “Be honest, forthright, don’t use anything like tears. I’ve known women who have used flirting and tears as being women and that bothers me. I wish females would not do that. According to Rhoda Booke females need the support of other females. “It is a mind set of people that there should be a male as an administrator.” (March 6, 2007,p.5).

#### *Strategies for Advancement*

According to Brunner (2000) women held themselves responsible for becoming the type of communicator needed in order to become successful as a

superintendent; even when they had to learn extra skills because of their gender. Likewise the female superintendents in this study ranked developing a political “know-how” (4.62) as the number one strategy for success in attaining the superintendency.

The participants also expressed the importance of gaining as much knowledge about the position as possible before attaining the position of superintendent. Claire Annette replied, “I am thankful for all the different jobs I’ve held before becoming superintendent; those experiences have certainly helped me” (February 12, 2007, p.). Rhoda Boone and Penny Wise participated in the Superintendents Professional Development Program. Rhoda Boone acknowledged that being a member of professional organizations creates a “larger network” for females in the superintendency (March 6, 2007, p. 9).

According to Grogan & Brunner (2005) as more females serve as superintendents in more districts, school boards may consider female superintendents less an anomaly. Likewise, in this study the five females interviewed were articulate, competent, and confident. Many had accomplished goals in obtaining best practices for their districts. Two of the districts had received national recognition for the accomplishments completed during their tenure. Heidi Clare told of having to make the huge decision to cut the local supplement in half because they had no money with which to operate the schools. Each female knew they were making a difference in their tenure as superintendent of their school district.

## Implications

There are clear implications in the findings of this study for females who aspire to become superintendents. Twenty-seven of the current 36 female superintendents serving in Georgia perceived 12 of the 18 strategies for success as being significant for advancement to the superintendency. Females who choose to pursue the superintendency can use these strategies to attain the top positions in school districts. Also, strategies for success and advice from both the females who were interviewed and those responding to the questionnaire were given in addition to those listed on the survey and will be included in Appendix G.

Pipkin (2002) notes the importance of mentors and role models as a strategy in attaining the superintendency. Likewise, women seeking the superintendency need to develop a strong self concept and self- esteem. As Rhoda Booke states, “Start out like you can hold out” (March 6, 2007, p. 9). Her mother gave her that advice and she says, “it is the greatest advise I have ever received” (p.9).

Females seeking the superintendency must be well informed about the position they want to obtain. Penny Wise states, “Women should start their careers early and younger, learn the breath of this work. You need to know a lot of things to be successful. You have to know a lot about the business world” (March 9, 2007, p.12).

## Conclusions

The typical career path of female superintendents in Georgia consisted of advancing from the classroom to assistant principal, principal, central office, and then superintendent.

Approximately 52% of the twenty-seven female superintendents in Georgia held a doctorate degree. Only (25.9%) had participated in the Georgia Superintendent Professional Development Program.

As more females enter the high ranking jobs in a male oriented organization, they are seeking out support systems in order to reach those goals. The support systems have been family, co-workers and other females, so that females can gain equality in educational administration.

Many of the female superintendents obtained their goals late in their careers, yet they do not see that as a barrier. They are confident, self-reliant, competent individuals who will accept a challenge and “stick to it”. It is evident that these women achieved their positions not because they are females but because they were worthy of the position.

Grogan (2000) claims women seek to use the superintendency to influence greater change in the education of the students in the district. This was so true of the females who responded to the questionnaire and those who were interviewed. The five female superintendents interviewed all expressed the desire to do what was best for their students and community.

The top five strategies employed for advancement to the superintendency consisted of developing a political know-how, developing a strong self concept, learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for a position, obtaining the support of family, and attending workshops to improve professional skills.

The female superintendents in Georgia did identify major barriers in obtaining the superintendency. The top barrier was conflicting demands of career and family with a mean of 3.27. Women have the burden of household responsibilities to shoulder and must manage the conflict of work and family.

Women have the experience from their backgrounds as classroom teachers and their tenure as central office personnel to break the glass ceiling in educational administration. As demands for accountability in instruction as well as curriculum increase, school boards are noticing the value of female leadership styles.

#### Recommendations

Three recommendations for further research include

A study of females in educational administration leadership classes who want to be superintendents and their career paths in obtaining that goal. So many females are in educational leadership classes; however, few choose to gain access to the superintendency.

A study on organizations that promote females in higher CEO positions would be beneficial to find if they are actually gaining access to higher ranking jobs in education.

A study of both male and females and their career paths to reaching the goal of superintendent would be beneficial in looking at the difference in number of years each spend in the classroom. Studies have been conducted on males in the superintendency but little research has been done on their career paths.

### Recommendations for Implementation

University programs must begin early in the education courses in identifying all aspects of educational jobs. Females need to be told early in their pursuit of education that there is more to education than teaching in the classroom. Females can make a difference in administration positions that concerns students, the community, and the school.

To encourage networking among female superintendents, leaders in the community need to be encouraged setting up funds or scholarships so that females can be interns and receive on the job experience in top level positions in education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION TO USE QUESTIONNAIRE

Envelope-to: sdavis@glynn.k12.ga.us  
 X-ASG-Debug-ID: 1173471267-2a1000170000-1glNLI  
 X-Barracuda-URL: <http://10.15.0.14:8000/cgi-bin/mark.cgi>  
 X-Barracuda-Connect: mail.hgresa.org[67.32.12.11]  
 X-Barracuda-Start-Time: 1173471267  
 From: "Charlotte Pipkin" <cpipkin@hgresa.org>  
 To: <sdavis@glynn.k12.ga.us>  
 X-ASG-Orig-Subj: Permission  
 Subject: Permission  
 Date: Fri, 9 Mar 2007 15:06:09 -0500  
 X-Mailer: Microsoft Office Outlook 11  
 X-Barracuda-Bayes: INNOCENT GLOBAL 0.0000 1.0000 -2.0210  
 X-Barracuda-Virus-Scanned: by Barracuda Spam Firewall at glynn.k12.ga.us  
 X-Barracuda-Spam-Score: -1.76  
 X-Barracuda-Spam-Status: No, SCORE=-1.76 using global scores of TAG\_LEVEL=2.0  
 QUARANTINE\_LEVEL=1000.0 KILL\_LEVEL=3.0 tests=HTML\_FONT\_BIG,  
 HTML\_MESSAGE  
 X-Barracuda-Spam-Report: Code version 3.1, rules version 3.1.10795

Rule breakdown below

pts	rule name	description
0.00	HTML_MESSAGE	BODY: HTML included in message
0.26	HTML_FONT_BIG	BODY: HTML tag for a big font size

I, Charlotte Pipkin, hereby grant consent to Sheryl Davis, a doctoral student, to use the questionnaire used in my dissertation *A Descriptive Analysis of Women Public School Superintendents in Georgia, 2002*.

Charlotte H. Pipkin

Executive Director  
 Heart of Georgia RESA  
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APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES ON  
WOMEN SECURING THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing  
the Superintendency

Modified by Dr. Charlotte Pipkin  
2001

BIOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please circle the most appropriate answer.

1. Age
  - a. Under 25 years
  - b. 25-29
  - c. 30-39
  - d. 40-49
  - e. 50-59
  - f. 60+
2. Marital Status
  - a. Single
  - b. Married
  - c. Widowed
  - d. Divorced
3. Number of children in school K-12
  - a. 0
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4 or more
4. Age of youngest child
  - a. No children
  - b. Under 5 years
  - c. 5-12
  - d. 13-19
  - e. 20+
5. Highest degree earned
  - a. Bachelor's
  - b. Master's
  - c. Specialist's
  - d. Doctorate
6. Racial/Ethnic Origin
  - a. American Indian/Alaskan Native
  - b. Asian or Pacific Islander
  - c. Hispanic
  - d. Black, not Hispanic origin
  - e. White, not Hispanic origin



7. Number of students in district employed
  - a. 1-299
  - b. 300-599
  - c. 600-999
  - d. 1,000-2,999
  - e. 3,000-4,999
  - f. 5,000-9,999
  - g. 10,000-24,999
  - h. 25,000-49,999
  - i. 50,000+
8. Number of years in present position
  - a. Less than one year
  - b. 1-4 years
  - c. 5-8 years
  - d. 9 or more
9. Longest superintendency held
  - a. Less than one year
  - b. 1-4 years
  - c. 5-8 years
  - d. 9 or more years
10. Number of superintendents held including present one
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4 or more
11. Extended family in immediate area
  - a. Yes      b. No
12. Did you complete the Superintendents' Professional Development Program?
  - a. Yes      b. No
13. Age at first superintendency?
  - a. Under 25 years
  - b. 25-29
  - c. 30-39
  - d. 40-49
  - e. 50-59
  - f. 60+
14. List all positions you have held beginning with your first position after teaching

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## PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS

Please circle the number on the scale that best describes your perception of the possible barriers women must contend with when attempting to secure the superintendency.

	<b>Not A Barrier</b>		<b>A Barrier</b>		
15. Conflicting demands of career and family	1	2	3	4	5
16. Lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment.	1	2	3	4	5
17. The belief that women do not make good administrators.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Inappropriate career path experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Childhood socialization to “proper” roles for men and women	1	2	3	4	5
20. The predominance of male candidates for administrative positions.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Lack of a mentor.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Doubt by those in a hiring position of women’s long term career commitment.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Gender bias in screening and selection process.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Ole Boy Network”	1	2	3	4	5
27. Lack of acceptance by male administrators and staff.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Lack of acceptance by female administrator and staff.	1	2	3	4	5

29. Lack of political “know-how”.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Lack of motivation to compete for top jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
31. The belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Lack of a strong women’s network similar to the “Good Ole Boy Network”.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Covert sex discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Overt sex discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Potential colleagues’ insubordination in working for a female boss.	1	2	3	4	5

Please site other barriers that you perceive to impact on women securing the superintendency.

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#### PERCEPTION OF STRATEGIES

Please circle the number on the scale that best represents your perception of each strategy as it relates to women securing the superintendency.

	Not Successful			Highly Successful	
36. Increasing visibility in professional circles.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Obtaining a doctorate.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Preparing an effective resume.	1	2	3	4	5

39. Utilizing a women’s network similar to the “good ole boy’s network”.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Enhancing interviewing skills.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Gaining access to community power.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Enlisting in a mentor.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Obtaining the support of family.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Learning coping skills to deal with co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Developing a strong self-concept.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for a position.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Attending workshops to improve professional skills.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Invoking affirmative action and Title IX.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Increasing flexibility to relocate.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5
51. Adopting a female role model.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Developing a political “know-how”.	1	2	3	4	5
53. Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.	1	2	3	4	5

Please site other strategies that you perceive to be successful to women in securing the superintendency.

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Are you willing to participate in an in-depth interview (approximately two hours)?

Yes                      No

Thank you for your time and effort in completing this survey.

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your personal background.
 

Married	Number of children
Ages of children	Your birth order
  
2. Tell me about our educational background and how you got to the position in your administrative career.
 

Academic preparation	Years of teaching experience
Succession	Administrative positions held
Number of superintendencies	Length of superintendencies
  
3. When did you first know you wanted to be a superintendent?
  
4. Did you actively seek the superintendency on your own initiative?  
Did you formally apply or were you transferred internally?
  
5. Have you relocated to accept superintendency?  
Did that create a personal hardship for you?
  
6. Do you have a support system in place?
  
7. Were there administrators who influenced you in any way?
  
8. Did you have a mentor before you became a superintendent? Tell me about him/her.  
Do you have mentor now?
  
9. Do barriers that exclude women from the superintendency exist? Did you personally encounter barriers?
  
10. Were there specific areas in which you felt you lacked experience when you attained your first superintendency? i.e. budgeting, facilities, personnel, curriculum and instruction?
  
11. What strategies did you use to overcome barriers you encountered?
  
12. Can you identify any advantages of being a woman-either in your pursuit of the superintendency or in the role itself?
  
13. What experiences made the superintendency more accessible for you?
  
14. To what professional organizations do you belong?
  
15. Do you have home and family responsibilities? How do you balance the responsibilities of home and family with your responsibilities of superintendent?

16. If you could give any advise to a female who aspires to become a superintendent what would it be and why?
17. If you could give any advise to first time superintendents what would it be and why?
18. Define power as you use it in your position.
19. What gives you satisfaction as a superintendent?
20. Do you feel a sense of loneliness in your position?
21. Has it been worth it? Would you do it again?

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL



Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-681-5465		Administrative Annex
		P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-681-0719	Ovsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Sheryl Davis  
1196 Emanuel Ch. Road  
Brunswick, GA-31523

**CC:** Dr. Walter Polka  
P.O. Box-8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** January 5, 2007

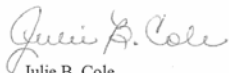
**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H07104**, and titled "**Career Paths of Female Superintendents**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole  
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

APPENDIX E  
COVER LETTER

January, 2007

Dear Superintendent;

My name is Sheryl Davis. I am a graduate student enrolled in the doctoral program at Georgia Southern University. I am interested in the career paths and strategies for success experienced by female superintendents in Georgia. I believe the lack of research in this area is one factor contributing to the under representation of females in the superintendency. Furthermore, a better understanding of the women who occupy the superintendency in Georgia may be beneficial to women who aspire to become superintendents.

This letter is to request your assistance in collecting data to analyze this situation. There are a limited number of women superintendents in Georgia and I am striving for 100% participation. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached questionnaire and place it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. Completion and return of the questionnaire will indicate permission to use the information you provide in the study. Included in the questionnaire is a place to indicate your willingness to participate in a two-hour in-depth interview. Participation in the interview will indicate permission to use the information in the study.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential. All of the questionnaires are identical. In order to identify which superintendents are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, the return envelopes have the name of your school system.

However, the envelopes and questionnaires will be separated to ensure confidentiality. No one will be able to identify your responses from those of other participants. The study will be most useful if you respond to every item on the questionnaire; however, you may choose not to answer one or more of the questions. Likewise, the information provided in the interviews will be treated with confidentiality to insure anonymity. Although the study will be most useful if you respond to every question during the interview, you may choose not to answer one or more of the questions. Furthermore, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you would like a copy of the study's results, please contact me and I will be happy to send you a copy when the study is complete.

If you have any questions about this research project, please call me Sheryl Davis at (912) 265-3007. If you should have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, you should call the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-5465.

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in studying this phenomenon. The results should be of interest to female superintendents and beneficial to females who aspire to the superintendency.

Respectfully,

Sheryl Davis  
Glynn County Schools

APPENDIX F

OTHER BARRIERS NAMED BY RESPONDENTS

### Other Barriers Listed by Respondents

“The knowledge and competency on instructional leadership”

“Political situational leadership”

“Flexibility to relocate”

“Communication and listening skills are essential. Participatory leadership a requisite skill-Autocratic people are short term.”

“Barriers that exist for women we bring upon ourselves. We must be our own advocates and not look for excuses.”

“The greatest barrier is the constant attempt to micromanage by a board regardless of gender. The women have to constantly prove themselves competent.”

“Females are second guessed too often while their male counterparts appear to work less, disregard facts and show favorites.”

APPENDIX G

OTHER STRATEGIES NAMED BY RESPONDENTS

### Other Strategies Named by Respondents

“You have to know every facet of the superintendency and related issues”

“Knowledge of the various departments’ workings is crucial”

“Demonstrate a work ethic”

“Have successful performances in multiple roles”

“Learn strategies of successful men in other fields”