

WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR ENTRY INTO THE  
VOCATIONAL SUPERINTENDENCY

By

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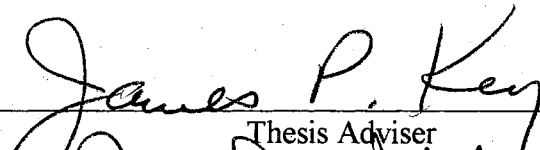
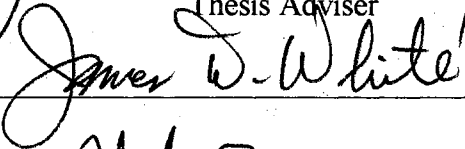

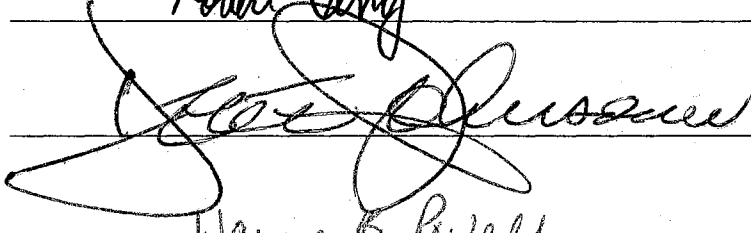
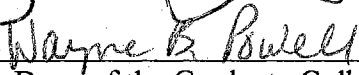
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Women nurture learners; men run schools (Loomis & Wild, 1978). It has been that way for the past 100 years, and yet despite the numerous sex discrimination laws such as Title IX, Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1972, and affirmative action legislation, women are still sorely under-represented in educational administration.

As schools enter the twenty-first century, it is ironic that not much has changed in relation to whom still educates our children and who still makes the decisions in our school systems. Although women over the last century have increased in numbers in the paid labor force as a whole and have secured lower level positions in predominantly male oriented professions, little change has been made in the advancement of women in the higher echelons of the work force.

The field of educational administration specifically has even shown a decrease in women administrators and supervisory positions. There has only been one period in the twentieth century in which women held the majority of the principalships. In 1928, 55 percent of the elementary principalships were held by women. During that same period, however, women held less than 8 percent of the secondary principalships and only 1.6 percent of the district superintendencies (Shakeshaft, 1989).



Tomnsen, 1993). Vocational education suffers from a similar lack of female representation in positions of power. Couch (1981) found that female vocational administrators were under-represented even in the area where they enjoyed the most representation, home economics. Currently in Oklahoma, out of 29 vocational superintendents, five are women; and of the 33 vocational site director/coordinator positions, eight are women. Women may have come a long way in some fields, but school administration has not been one of them.

There is a continuous need for more laudatory information about women who have successfully managed to break through the barriers and advance to top line positions. This study examined the strategies that practicing female vocational superintendents used to gain entry into the vocational superintendency.

### Statement of the Problem

Men and women gain entry into the superintendency through a variety of strategies. Because of the limited number of superintendent positions and few women representing these line positions, it is important to study the strategies women have used to gain successful entry into the vocational superintendency. By studying successful practicing women administrators in the field of vocational administration, women who aspire to be vocational superintendents will enhance their opportunities in obtaining this top line position.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather specific information concerning selected strategies used by female vocational superintendents to gain successful entry into the vocational superintendency.

## Objectives and Questions Guiding the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To describe practicing female vocational superintendents.
  - Demographically how are they alike and how are they different?
2. To describe practicing female vocational superintendents' career paths.
  - What career paths did each study participant take prior to becoming a superintendent?
  - Was attainment of the position of superintendent a planned endeavor?
3. To describe female vocational superintendents' perceptions about the superintendency.
  - What perceptions do practicing female administrators have about the superintendency?
4. To describe the strategies female vocational superintendents used to gain successful entry into the superintendency.
  - What encourages entry into the superintendency?
  - What discourages entry into administration?
  - What factors enhance or inhibit entry into the superintendency?

5. To acquire information from successful practicing female vocational superintendents to guide aspiring women superintendents.

- What recommendations can practicing female vocational superintendents offer to those who aspire to the vocational superintendency?

### Scope of the Study

The scope of this study consisted of female superintendents in area vocational-technical schools in a midwestern state.

### Limitations

For the purposes of this study the following limitations were identified:

1. The population was limited to the number of practicing women vocational superintendents in one midwestern state.
2. There are limitations concerning the long interview method of data collection. The scope is limited due to the in-depth, comprehensive data gathering approaches required (Key, 1977, p.122).
3. The study is only generalizable to female vocational superintendents in this one midwestern state.

### Delimitations

1. Respondents represented a variety of geographical regions located in this one midwestern state.

2. The use of a two-part questionnaire helped to reduce some of the problems inherent in the long interview process, specifically researcher bias.

### Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following definitions were used:

**Aspiring** - Describes individuals desiring to attain an administrative position such as superintendent and who also have the required credentials or are in pursuit of credentials.

**Career Paths** - An individual's work history of positions leading to a particular position such as superintendent. (e.g. teacher-counselor-assistant secondary principal-secondary principal-assistant/associate superintendent-superintendent)

**Line Position** - Administrative positions that lead to the superintendency. These positions include assistant secondary principal, secondary principal, secondary director, assistant/associate superintendent.

**Mentor** - An individual who has acquired a top line position such as superintendent and becomes an advocate to other aspiring individuals wanting to gain a similar position.

**Staff Administrative Positions** - Administrative positions that do not typically lead to the superintendency. These positions include coordinator, supervisor, specialist, and director.

**Strategies** - Deliberate efforts to over-prepare, plan, and train for a position such as the superintendency.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to gather specific information from practicing female vocational superintendents about the strategies they used to gain successful entry into the vocational superintendency. Specifically, this study will generate strategies that aspiring women superintendents can use to obtain a vocational superintendent position. Additionally, based on the advice of the female practicing superintendents, this study will serve as a guide to help aspiring women superintendents plan for the vocational superintendency. This chapter, Review of Literature, presents the theoretical framework for the study and it also presents a discussion of selected literature related to the study.

#### Historical Perspective

Women in education did not appear until the late eighteenth century. Before this time, men were the teachers. When women were allowed to start teaching, it was on a very limited basis. Only the very young children were taught by women. Instruction only took place during the summer months since women had no formal education.

Between 1820 and 1830, men started to leave the teaching field in order to seek higher paying jobs as a result of the growth in business and industry. This left few desirable males to fill the vacant positions. School boards wanted the literate, middle-class

men, who were leaving the teaching profession behind for more lucrative opportunities, to teach their children. Because of the shortage of men, women began to be hired to fill these vacancies.

It was about this same time that the teaching profession was being slated as a "woman's natural profession" by Catherine Beecher and Emma Willard. The work of these two women promoted the entrance of women into the educational field. Their crusade to include women in the teaching profession was based on the premise that women could prepare themselves for the work of marriage and motherhood (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Despite the low pay and unfavorable treatment, women flocked to teaching. Their male counterparts became the masters and principals while women served as their assistants. It was concluded that since men had to provide for their families, their pay was greater than a woman's since she would have her family or husband to take care of her needs.

From the period of 1830 through the 1900's women steadily continued to enter the teaching profession, and by 1900, 70.1 percent of the teachers in the United States were women. Women entered the twentieth century dominating the teaching profession. Women also started to assume roles of leadership in the areas of teachers' unions and women's rights groups.

As schools continued to reorganize from the one-room concept, so did the structure of one teacher assuming all the duties. The administrative hierarchy was evolving to set the stage for a formal chain of command. The transformation of Quincy Grammar School in 1870 became the model by which American Schools and districts

would organize their educational system. The Quincy Grammar School concept became known as the two-tiered system in which women were the teachers and men were the principals and superintendents. This scientific management and hierarchy of roles led to the male dominance of these positions since the belief was that women were better followers and men were better leaders (Tyack & Strober, 1981).

Hierarchical organization of schools and the male chauvinism of the larger society fit as hand to glove. The system required subordination; women were generally subordinate to men; the employment of women as teachers thus augmented the authority of the largely male administrative leadership. (Tyack, 1974, p.60)

In addition to this patriarchal pedagogy, women's administrative styles were seen as inconsistent with the effective functions of schools. Women learned democratic and egalitarian styles of decision making through their women's associations and the National Congress of Mothers (now known as Parent Teacher Associations -PTA). These styles were at odds with the authoritarian approach used by men who had backgrounds in the military and not in education (Burstyn, 1980; Shakeshaft, 1987).

Women teachers began to fight back at the bureaucratic and authoritarian approaches that stifled their professional abilities to teach and make decisions necessary to meet school goals. Children's needs were not considered. Teachers were being treated as factory workers and were told what to do instead of having the autonomy to lead and proceed forth with the educational needs of the children and school goals (Callahan, 1962).

Despite the backlash, male dominated bureaucracy continued. Women were being restricted by the system in order to keep them in their place. Hansot and Tyack noted

that since the 1880's men have consistently held administrative positions in which "power, pay, and prestige were greatest"; positions in which they supervised other adult males as opposed to females and children; jobs that were linked with the nonschool world; and jobs that were defined as managerial rather than instructional (1981, p. 80).

Between 1820 and 1900 only a few women held administrative positions. The majority of these women however, founded the schools they were directing, while a few managed public schools. But, by the twentieth century and for thirty years after, women started to find administrative posts in the elementary principalships, county superintendent positions, and a few formal management positions. Ella Young, in 1909, became the first woman superintendent of a major city - Chicago. Her activism in leading political rallies against the authoritarian approaches of her male counterparts helped to open doors for women in administration. The 1900-1930's have been coined the "golden age" for women in school administration (Hansot & Tyack, 1981). But, women only achieved modest success during this time. According to Shakeshaft (1987), this "golden age" is not supported by statistics and did not have a significant impact on women in power administrative positions. In fact, women have never dominated school administration in the sense of formal management.

Looking at the number of women in administration, Shakeshaft showed that men have consistently dominated all positions in administration except in the early days of elementary school principalships. Furthermore, elementary principalships at this time were low-paying, low-status, and low-power positions as compared to the higher paying secondary principalships and district superintendencies held by men. The impact of the feminist movement and women teacher associations brought to light during this time



important issues such as equal pay for male and female teachers and the participation of women in school administration. With women already a large part of the educational work force, the feminist groups started their push for women management in school administration. It was the power of these feminist groups that led to Ella Flagg Young winning the superintendency in Chicago.

Although these strong feminist groups gave support and helped women gain administrative positions, it must be pointed out that men did not seek most of the positions women were obtaining. By the 1930's, the gains women had made were not maintained and the feminist groups grew weak as the depression hit and women were forced to quit their volunteer work to help their husbands make financial ends meet. World Wars I and II also helped to diminish the women's movement.

By the 1950's and 1960's postwar opportunities for men flourished due to the GI Bill. Male teachers increased while male advocates declared women had reigned long enough in our schools and men needed to take control of our educational system. Women faced a serious setback during this period. Women were at home with their families fulfilling the male sentiment of women knowing their place. Once again the male dominated institution controlled the work force and opportunities for women (Shakeshaft, 1987).

The 1970's and 1980's were also bleak years for women administrators. There were more women in administration in 1905 than in 1980 (Shakeshaft, 1987). Despite the legal mandates put in place to give women equality in the workplace, Porat (as cited in Ginn, 1989) reported as late as 1985 that since these legal mandates were implemented in

1964 and 1972, women administrators have steadily declined from 28% to 11% in the United States. Currently in Oklahoma, as reported by the State Department of Education (1997), only 7% of public school superintendents are women while 16% are vocational superintendents.

### Female Administrators as Effective Leaders

"The principal is directly involved in every aspect of the school's operation, and is thus the primary figure in determining the school's quality and character" (NAESP-III, 1996, p. 7). Women administrators have consistently demonstrated this kind of effective leadership from the start. In fact, Shakeshaft (1987) found that female administrators display many of the characteristics that result in effective schools. Tibbets (1980) reported that women are better principals than men because they demonstrate a greater ability to work with others, maintain better discipline, and display a more democratic leadership style and superior teaching expertise. Women administrators guide others to create a culture for learning that focuses on increasing student achievement and achieving program goals.

Sweeny (1982) found that effective principals are visible, play an integral part in instructional decisions, including coordinating instructional programs and monitoring and evaluating student progress, assure an orderly climate for learning, and set and communicate goals and expectations. Shakeshaft (1987) found that female administrators create an administration that parallels the characteristics associated with effective schools and those of effective principals as indicated by Sweeny. Female administrators emphasize relationships with others, focus on teaching and learning, build community through

participatory management, and provide support for teachers. Women exhibit a more democratic style that encourages inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness and tend to have closely knit schools that have high expectations for both students and staff.

Historically women have exhibited this kind of leadership since as early as the 1800's. Women learned to be effective leaders through the feminist organizations founded to promote women in school administration. The National Congress of Mothers, (now known as PTA) specifically taught women democratic leadership skills and the egalitarian style of decisionmaking. Men on the other hand had been trained in military fashion and practiced authoritarian leadership that emphasized procedures and rigid control structures.

### Intervention Strategies

There have been a number of federally funded projects and organizations established to intervene on behalf of women. These intervention efforts have been specifically designed to increase the representation of women in educational administration through formal and informal training at institutes and assessment centers.

LEAD (Leadership in Educational Administration Development) Centers were set up nationwide by the U.S. Department of Education to specifically address the under-representation of women and other minorities in educational administration. Typically the kinds of activities that are being promoted include:

- Creating or supporting existing networks of minorities and women administrators.
- Sponsoring special training opportunities, such as conferences and seminars.
- Providing funds to encourage women and minorities to participate in inservice training activities and stipends or scholarships for preservice preparation.
- Identifying mentors to assign to new or potential administrators.
- Providing internships for certified minority and female administrators.

- Recruiting teachers into administrative training programs.
- Sponsoring workshops for school board members and superintendents to encourage them to hire minority and women administrators.
- Maintaining data banks of certified administrators and making them available to districts, which have openings.
- Publishing newsletters to disseminate information of particular interest to women and minorities in administrative positions (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Dec. 1992, p. 166).

Shakeshaft (1987) has advocated FLAME (Female Leadership for Administrative Management in Education) as one of the most successful programs in terms of administrative placement. FLAME reported that most of the interns in the program were offered jobs at the end of the field experiences and two FLAME participants wrote grant proposals that resulted in jobs for themselves (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1992, p.166). Additional federal organizations providing information, financial assistance, and administrative courses and workshops to encourage women to enter administration include: Minnesota's Women in School Administration (WISA); A Project of Internships, Certification Equity Leadership, and Support (ICES); and Sex Equity in Educational Leadership (SEEL) (Shakeshaft, 1985).

Networking strategies have also been used to increase women's entry into educational administration. Men have longed used this informal system to make the contacts needed to advance their careers. Women, however, have had limited contacts or networks due to their longer classroom tenures and the nature of their isolation in the classroom. The "Old Boys" network as described by Schmuck (1986) is an unconscious, informal, and private channel exclusively for men. Men have used this informal network to gain access to advancement in the job market. Women are having to learn to create their own networks and support systems which must include men since they

have the experience and status that control the power in the educational social systems. Networks can provide women the professional companionship, support, and ventilation needed to reinforce their administrative aspirations (Shakeshaft, 1985).

Gray (1983) reports the effectiveness of equality workshops conducted by the Oklahoma State Department of Vocational education in an attempt to increase awareness of sex role stereotyping and sex-bias. It was hoped the workshops would result in lasting attitudinal changes; however, when tested six months after the workshops, attitudes had regressed. Gray (1983) concluded:

Workshops addressing the question of sex equity then, deal with values rooted in an individual's religion, culture, family, environment, past experiences, and even political views. A two-day workshop cannot do much in changing attitudes that are 20 years in the making, but it can create an awareness of some of the problems that sex bias and sex stereotyping can create (p. 58).

Schmuck, Charters, and Carlson (1981) reported that the Sex Equity in Educational Leadership (SEEL) Project sought to change (1) individual attitudes, behaviors and understandings, (2) organizational policies and practices, and (3) local school district hiring practices in Oregon. The results of the study indicated that more women were indeed hired during the 1977-1978 school year in Oregon, but the majority of new women administrators were hired for token jobs that were female appropriate.

Gail Stephens, deputy executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, asserts that it is up to women to advance their own careers (Rist, 1991). Stephens advises the best intervention strategy for women is to get the most and best training they can find and look for talented leaders who are already in the field and find

opportunities to work with them. Serving on committees or task forces, are excellent ways to network with these individuals.

Becoming involved in professional meetings and organizations are also important strategies Stephens says - both to bring women in contact with leaders in the field and to develop their own professional status. Stephens also suggest that women need to move from districts that block advancement for women. Stephens, herself, moved five times from one district to another, to advance through the administrative steps to the superintendency (Rist, 1991).

Women have to open their own doors into the administrative ranks by using intervention strategies in some way to help them overcome the barriers and obstacles that tend to block their paths. Women who are serious about obtaining the superintendency will need to be proactive and accept that they will have to make changes in the way they seek these power positions.

### Career Paths

Women who want to become superintendents will need to set up a career path that will involve line experience. Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) suggest that starting at the assistant principalship at the secondary level appears to be the best choice for aspiring women superintendents. The only problem with this career path is that few women are hired for these positions. A few staff positions might lead to the principalship such as recruiter, program director or consultant, and public relations coordinator; but, women need to be aware that these positions do not typically lead to the principalship. In fact, many women already hold many of these positions and are trapped (Pigford & Tonnsen,

1993). Another precarious path is the elementary principalship. It is not a management position that leads to the superintendency. One might consider this choice for experience; but, preparation for elevation should be planned and carefully executed. An assistant secondary principalship or secondary director's job might be the next step for elementary principals. The key is to be selective and have a plan to move up and on. Experience is essential, but beware of dead ends warns Pigford & Tonnsen (1993).

McDade and Drake (1982) found in a study of career paths of women superintendents that women followed one of six possible patterns in their pursuit to the superintendency.

1. The largest group of women superintendents (36 percent) followed an uninterrupted course from teaching to counseling to assistant principal, principal, director of elementary or secondary education, assistant superintendent, and finally superintendent. This path to the superintendency follows line positions and was more often attained within the same generally small school district.

2. Approximately 24 percent proceeded on a non-interrupted course through one or more specialized positions, such as special education or federal program directorships, and then the superintendency.

3. Another 12 percent of the women superintendents had one or more interruptions in their careers as a result of family responsibilities; but, had proceeded through direct line positions to the superintendency.

4. Eight percent of women superintendents had family interruptions in their careers, but had attained the superintendency through one or more specialization positions.

5. Fewer women, (6 percent), followed the career path that had been interrupted for reasons other than family, but progressed through line positions nonetheless.

6. Specialization positions account for 13 percent of the paths to the superintendency after interruptions for non-family reasons.

Hill and Ragland (1995) found in their study of 35 women educational administrators that no particular sequence of career path patterns emerged. All the administrators had started as classroom teachers. After that point, their career paths were diverse and charted no similarities at how each of them arrived at her present positions.

According to Hill and Ragland (1995) the women who achieved superintendent positions listed the following career paths (after teaching) as their stepping stones to the top.

- Counselor-assistant principal-principal-superintendent
- Doctoral fellow-elementary principal-high school principal-superintendent
- Special education teacher-counselor-director of special education-superintendent
- Noneducation job-research associate/college instructor-assistant principal-director of curriculum-principal-assistant/associate superintendent-superintendent

Paddock (1981) in her study "Male and Female Career Paths in School Administration" found that women hold staff positions and generally do not move into line positions of secondary principal, assistant/associate superintendent, or superintendent.

When they do, their career paths become more like men in similar positions. According to Paddock (1981) men followed one of the subsequent paths to the superintendency.



- Elementary teacher-elementary principal-supervisor-assistant/associate superintendent-superintendent
- Elementary teacher-coach-assistant secondary principal-supervisor or secondary principal-assistant/associate superintendent-superintendent
- Secondary teacher-coach or band director-assistant secondary principal-supervisor or secondary principal-assistant/associate superintendent-superintendent
- Secondary teacher-elementary principal-supervisor-assistant/associate superintendent-superintendent

Women on the other hand followed one of the paths below, which did not lead to the superintendency.

- Elementary teacher-elementary principal or specialist-supervisor
- Secondary teacher-specialist-supervisor

Gaertner (1981) documented three mobility paths, two of which lead to the superintendency. The first path is from specialist to administrator of instruction (also called supervisor) to assistant superintendent to superintendent. Ortiz (1982) and Gaertner (1981) found that the majority of administrators who complete this path are men. Gaertner also concluded that women on this path generally stop at administrator of instruction.

The second path was the least followed route to the superintendency for women. This path moves from the assistant secondary principal to secondary principal to assistant/associate superintendent to superintendent. Women rarely achieve the superintendency in this manner.

The third path taken by most women and seldom led to the superintendency was assistant elementary principal to elementary principal. This path led to elementary superintendencies in elementary districts but, more often than not a man is put in that position.

Stockard (1984) concludes that the only similarity between men's and women's career paths is the end result of attaining the superintendency. Shakeshaft (1987) suggest there are three major views as to why there are such difference between men and women's career paths. The first two - women lack aspiration and sex discrimination that cause a myriad of barriers to keep women out. The third perspective suggests women are not victims and have control of their lives. Women see the bigger picture of having both achievement and affiliation. Many women choose not to enter the superintendency because of the personal costs and sacrifices. Women then choose career paths that will allow them both a quality work life as well as a quality personal life.

### School Boards That Hire

### Women Superintendents

“Although 96 percent of school superintendents are male, presumably appointed by “typical” school boards, and 4 percent are female, women are gaining in school board memberships and school boards may be hiring more women as superintendents” (Chase & Bell, 1990; Freeman, Underwood, & Fortune, 1991; Lockett, Underwood & Fortune, 1987a; Marshall & Heller, 1983; Shakeshaft, 1987; Shapiro, 1984). A study by Marietti and Stout (1994) found that 70% of female superintendents (29 boards out of 62 districts

surveyed), had female-majority boards and about 70 percent of the female superintendents were hired by male-majority boards. The following table shows the distributions.

	<u>Female-Majority Boards</u>	<u>Male-Majority Boards</u>
Hired Female	20	42
Hired Male	9	43

Since male-majority boards were dominant in this sample, they consequently hired more females. The Marietti and Stout study (1994) paralleled the findings of Cunningham and Henteges (1982) and Luckett, Underwood, and Fortune (1987b), in that two-thirds of all board members were male.

Several characteristics have been identified about boards that hire women.

Marietti and Stout (1994) found that boards that hire women consist of members who are older, have a higher status, and are better educated. These school boards govern more (K-8) districts, are more cosmopolitan, and have a high number of females in administrative positions in the district. Additionally, boards that hire female superintendents are more likely to be female-majority and operate in contexts in which females are perceived as occupying positions of importance in the community and in other school districts.

Male-majority boards that hired women were found to hire women following the employment of a male superintendent. They tended to hire males following a female superintendent and generally looked inside the district for the candidate. Male-majority boards that hired women also tended to report the existence of female superintendents in nearby districts. In contrast, male-majority boards that hired males were gender specific, in that they chose males exclusively. They were also the least likely to report female

administrators were increasing in the district, but the most likely to report decreases in female administrators.

The Maretti and Stout study (1994) have important implications for aspiring women superintendents. The most important being that the opportunity for women to advance may very well lie with first increasing the representativeness of women on school boards.

### Summary

Researchers have documented that the under-representation of women in educational administration has been gender-biased since women entered the educational field in the late eighteenth century. Despite the research that has documented women's abilities to be effective leaders, women are still under-represented as the twenty-first century approaches. Demographic studies, studies of career paths, intervention strategies, and socialization processes have all been theoretical bases used to improve women's opportunities to obtain administrative leadership roles. Research based on strategies used by successful, practicing, female vocational superintendents allowed for a more inclusive lens that may provide a means for aspiring female vocational superintendents to attain the vocational superintendency. Given the research base, the aim of this study is to increase the representation of women at the vocational superintendency level by illuminating what works, instead of what is known.

## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN AND CONDUCT OF THE STUDY

In this chapter the procedures used to conduct this study were described. They were determined by the purpose and objectives outlined in Chapter I. The following tasks were accomplished in order to collect and analyze data pertaining to the purpose and objectives:

1. Determine the study population.
2. Design instruments for data collection.
3. Develop a procedure for effective data collection.
4. Select methods for data analysis of the data.

#### Study Population

The population for this study consisted of female practicing vocational superintendents from Area Vocational Technical Schools in one midwestern state. The female superintendents were surveyed and interviewed with the goal of obtaining information to fulfill the purpose and the objectives of the study. A list of these superintendents was obtained from the State Department of Vo-Tech. Names, addresses, phone numbers, and work sites of (5) female superintendents were contained in this list. Although the list yielded only (5) participants, McCracken (1988) maintains that "less is

more . . . it is more important to work longer, and with greater care, with a few people than more superficially with many of them” (p. 17). Qualitative research does not work with groups that represent some part of the larger world, instead it offers an opportunity to glimpse the complicated character, organization, and logic of culture (McCracken, 1988).

### Procedure for Data Collection

To obtain demographic and career information from the female vocational superintendents, instruments had to be developed. In the development of the instruments, related literature and instruments used from previous studies were reviewed. Several questions from studies conducted by Quinn (1989) and Workman (1992) were adopted.

### Questionnaire Development

A two-part questionnaire was devised to secure the initial information pertaining to the objectives of this study. Section I contained (13) items related to demographics (objective one). Section II contained (28) total items related to three objectives of the study. Seven questions sought to determine the career paths of the practicing female vocational superintendents (objective two). Six questions pertained to the superintendents' perceptions of their job (objective three). Fourteen questions were included to identify strategies female superintendents used to gain the position of vocational superintendency (objective four).

## Interview Protocol

In addition to the initial instrument, an interview protocol was developed in order to conduct the long interview which served as the primary data collection method. Seven "grand tour" questions were developed as advised by McCracken (1988). Each "grand tour" question was followed by planned prompt questions in order to facilitate the interview and retrieve more detailed and in-depth information from the interviewees. Questions were written based on the two general principles of questionnaire construction for qualitative interviewing. The first begins with the recognition that the objective of the qualitative interview is to allow respondents to tell their own stories in their own terms and, secondly, questions should be phrased in a general and nondirective manner so that in no instance may a question supply the terms of the answer it solicits (McCracken, 1988, p. 34). Careful consideration was also given to the order of the questions.

The interview protocol fulfilled the fifth objective of generating advice for aspiring women vocational superintendents as well as providing in-depth information and details needed to complete the study. The interview protocol also allowed for clarification of responses obtained in the initial questionnaire. A copy of the protocol may be found in Appendix B.

## Collection of Data

The final form of the first instrument to be used in this study was completed on December 9, 1997. By this time the instrument had been critiqued by several colleagues

and professors in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and 4-H Youth Development and the College of Education, pilot-tested with several administrators who were not a part of the study population, and approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board. A copy of the instrument may be found in Appendix A. Federal regulations and Oklahoma State University policy require review and approval of all research studies that involve human subjects before investigators can begin their research. The Oklahoma State University Office of University Research Services and the IRB conduct this review to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in biomedical and behavioral research. In compliance with the aforementioned policy, this study received the proper surveillance and was granted permission to continue under approval numbers OSU AG 98-002 (Appendix C).

The first questionnaire was mailed December 15, 1997. This time frame was selected to have responses returned in time to analyze before the Midwinter Vocational Conference held January 23 and 24, 1998. It was believed that analyzing the data from the first questionnaire would provide important information to include in the interview protocol for the long interview process.

The use of interviews as the primary data collection method was selected study to keep the emphasis on the perspectives of those involved and to allow participants to speak for themselves directly and freely on their own terms. Marshall and Rossman (1989) noted the strengths of interviewing as a data collection method. They found that interviews unfold a wide variety of information and allow for immediate follow-up questions and clarification when necessary. McCracken (1988) stated, "The long



interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (p. 9).

Interviews were scheduled for each female vocational superintendent. Two superintendents were scheduled for interview during the Midwinter Vocational Conference since both lived in distant locations of the state and both would be attending the conference. The remaining three superintendents were located in central locations that allowed for a more flexible interview schedule. A semi-structured format was used to conduct the interviews. This format was useful for describing and verifying participant’s perceptions and allowed a natural progression of the interview. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.

### Analysis of Data

A five-stage analysis process as outlined by McCracken (1988) was used for the design of the study. This five-stage process followed the induction method of moving from the particular to the general. In the beginning stage of analysis, inferences were made from individual details of the interview transcript and with each successive stage moved toward a more general observation. This progression created an audit trail that identified the reflection and analysis processes used to give the study reliability (McCracken, 1988).

The first stage of analysis sorted details using inferences to form an observation. How these details were related to the other parts of the text were not important at this juncture. The second stage contained three steps. The observation formed in the first stage was extended to go beyond the particular details until the possibilities and

assumptions were more fully developed. These observations were then related back to the transcript for further examination to determine whether any relationships existed. The observations were then examined one in relation to the other. This included any similarities and contradictions.

The third stage focused on observations and away from the transcript. Observations were then examined for interconnected relationships of the second-level. The transcript at this point was used only for reference to either verify or discourage other developing possibilities. The fourth stage winnowed and narrowed down the formulated observations to expose the general themes of the study. Redundant passages and comments were eliminated. All of the themes used in the study were identified during this stage. The fifth and final stage reviewed the themes identified in stage four to bring them together for the presentation of findings.

### Reliability

To achieve reliability, this study used reliability checks as identified by Kirk and Miller (1986). Using the five-stage process of analysis produced a recorded audit trail of the successive stages of reflections and analyses used throughout the study. A “paper trail” was created from the very beginning of the data-collecting phase. Instruments, interview tapes, and interview transcripts were all included in addition to the verbatim quotations from the interview transcripts and records of the successive stages of analysis.

## Credibility

As a common education administrator aspiring to the vocational superintendency, it is important for readers to know this researcher's interest and purpose underlying this study. Knowing the researcher's biases upfront lends credibility and establishes trustworthiness (Krefting, 1991).

To further ensure credibility, this study used Bunge's (1961) "symptoms of truth" (McCracken, 1988). Unlike quantitative studies that can be replicated for confirmation, qualitative studies have no realistic opportunity to achieve credibility in this manner. Therefore, the explanation of qualitative data must exhibit the following conditions to be credible.

*It must be exact, so that no unnecessary ambiguity exists.*

The first condition was achieved by using direct quotes from the interviewees. In this manner exactness of the explanations was possible.

*It must be economical, so that it forces the reader to make the minimum number of assumptions and still explain the data.*

The second condition, economy, was accomplished by making only those assumptions that were necessary to explain the data. Assumptions were based on the direct quotes from the interviewees.

*It must be mutually consistent, so that no assertion contradicts another.*

Mutual consistency was maintained by examining themes for interrelationships. Redundant themes were eliminated. Emerging themes were carefully observed for contradictory information before organizing them with themes that had already been identified.

*It must be externally consistent, so that it confirms to what is independently known about the subject matter.*

External consistency was based on the principle of reflection “Does this conform to what I otherwise think about cultural and social phenomena” (McCracken, 1988, p. 51)? External consistency in a qualitative study is heavily reliant upon the discrimination of the researcher. Aware that data can be construed differently and not conform to a researcher’s paradigm; this researcher cautiously and judiciously used this principle.

*It must be unified, so that assertions are organized in a manner that subsumes the specific within the general, unifying where possible, discriminating when necessary.*

The unity of this study was organized by explanations that were interrelated and connected. Explanations were based on a set of structured ideas, not on a continuous chain of assumptions.

*It must be powerful, so that it explains as much of the data as possible without sacrificing accuracy.*

The power of this study was achieved by comprehensive explanation of the data based on the objectives of the study. Undue specificity and complicated explanations were omitted.

*It must be fertile, so that it suggests new ideas and opportunities for insight.* (McCracken, 1988, p. 50).

This study used an inductive lens that allowed for the examination of not only the particulars, but the general principles outside the context of the study. In this way, the explanations used in this study could be measured for “goodness” or clarity and provide other avenues for research opportunities.

## Transferability

Qualitative research is meant to offer explanations that allow the researcher and its readers to go “back stage” and take a glimpse of the assumptions that are hidden from view. It is not intended to capture issues of distribution and generalization. “It tells what people think and do, not how many of them think and do it” (McCracken, 1988, p. 49). Therefore, this study elected to follow the true spirit of qualitative research in that the information is intended to be transferred by the reader to apply to his or her own situation. Generalizability in a study such as this is not absolute even though the entire population was used. For a study which acknowledged multiple realities, the traditional method of generalizability was no longer thought to be an appropriate extension of the data, although it did give the study the external consistency required by Bunge’s (1961) “symptoms of truth.”

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies women superintendents used to gain access to the vocational superintendency. Qualitative methods allowed the examination through the lenses of perceptions, assumptions, and beliefs of practicing women vocational superintendents.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the specific information received from female Area Vocational Technical Education Superintendents in one midwestern state about the strategies they used to gain successful entry into the vocational superintendency.

The data collected in this study were secured from a variety of data resources. The first was demographic and career data from a questionnaire sent to each female vocational superintendent. The questionnaire contained both choice and written responses. Additional data were collected as the result of on-site interviews conducted with each of the female vocational superintendents. This chapter presents the data collected from both the questionnaire and long interviews.

#### Personal and Career Demographics

The first and second objectives of this study were to describe female vocational superintendents demographic profiles and career paths. Through the use of the questionnaire instrument, the following descriptive information was obtained about female vocational superintendents in one midwestern state.

These women were mature, experienced administrators. The mean age of the female vocational superintendents in this population was 50 years of age. All of the women had less than ten years classroom experience with the exception of one superintendent, who had 8 years of secondary classroom experience and 4 years in the university setting. Teaching areas included English Literature, Home Economics, Physical Education, Mathematics, Marketing and Business Education, and Counseling. All of the women were certified in secondary education or had a K-12 certificate. The mean age at which these female superintendents acquired their first administrative experience was 36 years of age. The female superintendents had an average of 15 years of administrative experience, ranging from assistant elementary principal, assistant high school principal, high school principal, coordinator and director of vo-tech programs, assistant superintendent in both common and vocational education, and an elected county superintendent position.

All of the female vocational superintendents had been a vocational superintendent 5 years or less, with 2 years being the most common length of experience. Three of the five female superintendents were located in large metropolitan districts, while the remaining two were located in progressive, smaller districts near university towns. Each of the female superintendents held a doctorate degree in educational administration, vocational education, or adult and higher education, with the exception of one. Caucasians represented four of the female vocational superintendents, while one listed Native American as her ethnicity.

All of the female superintendents were married. Each of the female superintendents married spouses who had a master's or doctoral degree. Spouses were

all reported as strongly approving of their wives' careers. Currently, four of the five female superintendents are married, with two children of college age or older being the most common. Three had experienced a divorce sometime during their educational career.

The birth order of the female superintendents revealed that four of the five superintendents were first born with one other sibling. Each of the superintendents came from families who were educated. Both mother and father were high school graduates with an average of two years of college. One female superintendent reported her mother had a bachelor's degree, while her father attended school only through the eighth grade. Three of the female superintendents reported having immediate family members involved in educational careers. The family members were elementary teachers, vocational teachers and counselors, or school board members.

### Abridgement

From the questionnaire data, demographic characteristics of female vocational superintendents revealed several similarities. A profile emerged which included similarities in age (50 years old), years of teaching or classroom experience (less than 10 years), years in administration (an average of 15 years), certification (all secondary), degrees held (doctorate), ethnicity (Caucasian), marital status (married), number of children (two), and birth order (first-born).

Overall, the profile of superintendents paralleled the profiles found in earlier studies of female administrators, excluding marital status (Gupton & Slick, In Irby & Brown, 1995, Schuster & Foote, 1990, Glass, 1992, Shakeshaft, 1989, Pope, 1982,



Frasher & Others, 1982). The females in this study were more likely to be married than were female administrators described in earlier studies.

### Questionnaire Responses Describing Female Superintendents' Perceptions about the Superintendency

Objective three of this study stated: "Describe female vocational superintendents' perceptions about the superintendency." From superintendents' written replies to the questions on the questionnaire, written information about perceptions of the superintendency was obtained. It reflected perceived strengths and skills that promoted entry into the superintendency.

#### Perceived Strengths for the Superintendency

All of the female superintendents described their abilities to work hard and communicate effectively as strengths that helped them gain entry into the superintendency. Willingness to do more than was expected in previous jobs created a reputation for these female administrators as being highly capable leaders who focused on the tasks of the jobs, which in turn, netted important visible results.

The art of managing many projects at once and being able to make tough decisions were also identified by the superintendents as areas of strength that have led them to be successful vocational superintendents. As one superintendent stated, "I operationalize rather than emotionalize. Being able to get to the root of a problem and make the best possible decision based on what is best for the organization and clientele is central to

solving problems and making good decisions, however tough they may be. Staying focused on what is best for the organization and its clientele is how I keep our school moving forward and from slipping into that status quo mentality.”

Other strengths described by the superintendents that have helped them gain entry into the superintendency included a sense of humor, networks within the profession, good “track records,” a strong vocational philosophy, a willingness to learn and change, and straight-forwardness.

### Perceived Skills for the Superintendency

According to all five female vocational superintendents, perceived skills needed for the superintendency were people and communication skills. The ability to interact with a variety of people and personalities, as perceived by these superintendents, is essential to building relationships and community within the organization. In order to build morale and unify the organization, the superintendent must be highly visible and accessible to many different groups of people. From faculty, staff, students, patrons, board members, legislators, to colleagues, “Superintendents have to be able to go into any group and fit,” observed one superintendent.

In addition to interactive people skills, communication was seen as an integral part of being successful with various groups. “If you know how to read people, you know how to communicate with them,” stated one superintendent. She believes you sell yourself, your organization, whatever it may be, by knowing your audience and planning information strategically that will draw them in from start to finish. Good communication skills affect every facet of the superintendency. These skills establish a foundation of trust

and integrity in which the superintendent can build and form supportive relationships for the good of the organization.

### Abridgement

Perceived strengths and skills that gained entry into the vocational superintendency, according to the female superintendents in this study, were good people and communication skills, the ability to work diligently, and to go beyond the scope of the job. The skills and strengths emphasized in this study coincided with jobs that are highly service-oriented. Successful female vocational superintendents have the ability to communicate the vision of their organizations in ways which promote trusting and supportive people-centered relationships.

### Questionnaire Responses Describing Strategies

#### Used to Gain Entry into the Superintendency

Objective four of this study was to describe strategies that female superintendents used to gain entry into the vocational superintendency. Superintendents reported the following strategies that led to successful entry into the vocational superintendency: selected career paths, mentors, credentials and preparation, and school boards.

### Career Paths

Two of the female superintendents started their careers in the vocational field and steadily climbed through the ranks to their present positions. The other three superintendents started their careers in common education; and, either crossed over into

the vocational arena, or as in one superintendent's case, both the comprehensive and vocational schools were integrated under one school board, district, and superintendent.

The following career paths depict the direction each female vocational superintendent took to get to her present position:

Vocational Business and Marketing Teacher/College Professor/ Vocational Curriculum Specialist/Vocational Curriculum and Media Coordinator/Vocational Director/Vocational Assistant Superintendent/Vocational Superintendent.

Vocational Home Economics Teacher/Vocational Counselor/Vocational Coordinator of Student Services/High School Counselor/High School Assistant Principal/Vocational Assistant Superintendent/Vocational Interim Superintendent/Vocational Superintendent.

High School Teacher/Graduate Assistant/College Associate Director of Development/Assistant High School Principal/High School Principal/Public School Superintendent/Elected County Superintendent/Vocational Superintendent.

Elementary – Secondary Teacher/Elementary – Secondary Counselor/Elementary Assistant Principal/Vocational Coordinator/Vocational Director/Vocational Assistant Superintendent/Vocational Superintendent.

Secondary Teacher/Secondary Assistant Principal/Assistant Superintendent/Curriculum Director – Coordinator/Assistant Superintendent/Public School and Vocational Superintendent.

Two of the superintendents took sabbatical leaves from their teaching careers to pursue doctoral degrees, and one took a maternity leave.

### Mentors

Three of the female superintendents reported they had male superintendents as mentors who helped them enter the field of administration. One male university professor was also listed, in addition to the male superintendents, as a mentor. The superintendents credited their mentors with giving them their first administrative posts and allowing them

the freedom to grow and mature as leaders. Superintendents reported that their mentors introduced them to “the network” of people in, and out of administration, that helped them advance their careers.

Two superintendents reported they did not have mentors at the time they were entering administration; but, they had friends who informed them about positions or encouraged them to enter the vocational arena.

Each of the superintendents indicated that she believed that mentors were important. It was recommended that aspiring superintendents, especially female, find a mentor to help talk them through the possible opportunities and guide them in the right direction. All of the superintendents reported that they are currently mentoring several female colleagues.

### Preparation and Credentials

Four of the five superintendents have doctoral degrees, either in educational administration, vocational administration, or adult education. All of the superintendents reported that even after they obtained their doctoral degrees, they had to return to earn additional hours of vocational administration education to be certified for the vocational superintendency.

One superintendent who does not have her doctoral degree reported having the equivalent of three master’s degrees and does not feel she has been hampered by her decision not to pursue the doctorate. All five superintendents had initial secondary degrees, with one having a K-12 certificate. With the exception of one, each

superintendent had administrative experience at the secondary level, which they feel contributed to their path to the superintendency.

Unique to the other superintendents, one of the superintendents did not follow the traditional path to the superintendency. Her administrative experience began as an assistant principal at the elementary level, which led to a vocational coordinator/director position. She obtained her secondary administrative experience through vo-tech, which led to the vocational superintendency.

### Vocational School Boards

Three of the women superintendents followed male incumbents, which was viewed as a positive factor for these women. Recent studies (Marietti & Stout, 1994) show that women superintendent applicants were more likely to be hired if their predecessors were male. This phenomenon occurs if the school has a male-majority board. The three women superintendents indicated that, in their circumstance, there was a male majority board, a male had previously occupied the superintendency, and one other factor they feel played a part in their employment was that the vacant superintendencies were in large urban school districts, which has also been identified as a characteristic of boards that hire women (Marietti & Stout, 1994).

### Abridgement

Superintendents reported following a traditional line path to the vocational superintendency with a few untraditional detours. Mentors or influential others played important roles in opening the doors into administration through employment and

introducing them to “the network” needed to advance their careers. Doctoral degrees, proper certification, secondary administrative experience, and school boards were also important factors used to gain entry into the superintendency.

### Results of Long Interviews

Interviews served as the primary data source for the study. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis.

### Population Profiles

For purposes of identification throughout the study, fictitious names were assigned to the superintendents.

Connie is in her early 50's and has 21 years of both common education and vocational administrative experience. She is the superintendent of a large urban district.

Sharon who is in her late 40's and has 13 years of both common education and vocational administrative experience is the superintendent of a large urban district.

Donna is in her early 50's and has 14 years of vocational administrative experience. She also is the superintendent of a large urban district.

Marlene is in her late 40's and has 15 years of both common education and vocational administrative experience. She is superintendent of a large rural district.

Janice is in her late 40's and has 13 years of both common education and vocational administrative experience. She is superintendent of a large rural district also.

## Interview Perceptions about Female Vocational Superintendents

Perceptions about female vocational superintendents centered around three categories: representation of women in the vocational superintendency, strategies of entry into the vocational superintendency, and barriers to entry into the vocational administration.

### Representation of Women in the Vocational Superintendency

The group of women at the vocational superintendent level was seen as slowly growing, according to the female superintendents interviewed. Donna said that she could remember when there were no women at the superintendent's level several years ago, and now there are five. Several years ago Marlene said she had not considered becoming a vocational superintendent because there were no women superintendents at that time. For a woman to break into the ranks of the "prima -donna's" of the "good old boys" network was unthinkable.

Janice commented that her particular school has become known as "Fem-Tech" in the vocational circles. The previous superintendent was female with a female assistant and currently Janice has two female assistants. Janice rationalized her hiring of women for positions because they have been the best applicants. "Women are good at balancing 14 different things at once, they know how to read people, and they are good communicators. Women are "workerbees", they know how to roll up their sleeves and get the job done. I



hire someone who is willing to work, who can do the job, and if that happens to be a female, so be it.”

All of the superintendents agreed there is still a paucity of female superintendents even though the numbers have grown. All agreed that women are very well represented at the director level and traditional female positions such as: central administration, media, and curriculum and instruction. Donna pointed out that three superintendents would be retiring this year and males would fill all three positions. Donna further explained that vocational education has been more of a male dominated area than most other educational fields because of the focus on the hard trade areas, business, and industry; therefore, there will be more male representation. Women have only recently begun to get involved in these specialized areas and apply for management and administrative positions in the vocational arena.

Connie made the point that aspiring female vocational superintendents stand a better chance of obtaining a superintendent's job in the larger vo-techs located in urban or metropolitan areas or in small cosmopolitan communities where there are higher numbers of degreed residents. “It would be earth shattering in the small rural vo-techs because many of their programs are heavy agriculture, heavy mechanical, and heavy industrial programs. They probably have some office and computer things and some health things, but usually the small vo-techs do not have more than 8-10 programs and they tend to be manufacturing, tend to be heavy industry, and they tend to be “good old boy” boards with “good old boy” superintendents. That does not mean that they are not good superintendents, it just probably has never occurred to them that a female could be a superintendent.” Connie said she has also found the small rural vo-techs have the most

number of male assistants. "They are clearly more comfortable in working with a male board, a male superintendent, and male assistants, but you don't hear those vo-techs being called "Male-Tech" or "Testosterone Tech" The most common structure found in vo-techs in this one midwestern state does support the male superintendent/male assistant combination rather than the alternative female superintendent/male or female assistant.

Sharon stated, "If the restroom line is any indication of the representation of women in the vocational superintendency, I can tell you there is no waiting." Sharon surmised that women were representing the superintendency very well, not in quantity, but quality. She still sees credibility gaps between men and women and indicated that women perhaps make things harder than they have to be, but feels the expectations for women are greater than those for men and therefore could explain that phenomenon. "When a female makes a mistake or fails in some way, it is a bigger snowball than it should be."

### Abridgement

Interview perceptions about the representation of female vocational superintendents revealed that women are slowly and gradually breaking into the formidable ranks of the vocational superintendency. While numbers are low, it is an increase from just ten years ago when only one woman out of twenty-nine districts represented the vocational superintendency. Larger vo-tech districts were viewed as the most promising institutions for prospective female vocational superintendents. Male domination of the trades and business and industry was perceived to account for the majority of male superintendents and assistants in vocational education. Female

representation in the vocational superintendency was perceived to increase as the number of women increase in the vocational trades' areas.

### Interview Perceptions about the Strategies of Entry into the Vocational Superintendency

Female vocational superintendents described three basic groups of strategies used to enter the superintendency: mentors and influential contacts, credentials and certification, and experience and preparation.

#### Mentors and Influential Contacts

Janice revealed that her first thought of becoming a vocational superintendent began when a former male colleague, who was in the vocational circle, called her while she was still in a common education administrative position. He told her about a job in vo-tech that was in close proximity to her and that she should apply. Janice applied for the position and received the job. "It was the best decision I could have made. For the longest time I didn't even dream of being a superintendent, I thought. . . there is no way I could do that. What I have found, was that I have never had a job that lends itself more to my personality or what I consider my strengths as where I am right now." Even though the job Janice received at that time was a counseling type position, it eventually led to a supervisory position, the decision to work on her doctoral degree, and to pursue more lucrative jobs in vocational administration. "I applied for an assistant superintendent's job even though it meant moving away from my husband, to give me experience and more of

an opportunity should a vocational superintendency open up and the way things have worked out, . . . I love what I do, I'm having a ball."

Sharon recalled three male mentors who helped her both indirectly and directly reach the superintendency. When Sharon decided to go back to school for her administrative credentials she asked advice from her current superintendent. "He had visited my classroom and allowed me to try new and innovative things with the curriculum and I really had a respect for him. I don't think he really ever knew I used him as a mentor and I don't know if he ever played a part in any of the positions I held, but I watched him from afar and learned from him."

Sharon's ascent up the ladder was unique, compared to most women or men for that matter. After receiving her credentials she was hired as an assistant secondary principal in her district. She then applied for a curriculum and instruction position at another district and when she interviewed, learned the superintendent was a brother of her current superintendent. Sharon received the job and learned later that her first teaching job yielded yet another relationship with these brothers. The superintendent in the district, in which she first taught, was a brother-in-law of the other two superintendents. ". . . . I don't know if any of these things were connected, but two of these gentlemen were my mentors." The superintendent Sharon worked for as an assistant superintendent allowed her to create her job and have the autonomy she needed to make curriculum decisions for the district. Sharon explained that for this reason she credited him as a mentor. However, he also made her life miserable. He was crude and criticized her when he did not like something she did. "He would dress you down in front of anyone; he didn't care. He called me stupid in front of several principals when we were thinking of changing the

curriculum in one of our subject areas, he made fun of my chest size in front of a whole crowd of male superintendents at a conference; he was rough and loud in every sense of the word. He was smart though and knew when to back off when he didn't know what he was doing. He praised me when things went well and let me take the credit. He toughened me up.”

Sharon's third mentor, also a superintendent, brought her on board six months before he had a position open, so she could have a job in that district. He also recommended Sharon for the superintendent position when he left to go to another school. Sharon related that all three men had given her the opportunity to grow and have the freedom to make decisions whether they were successful or not. They let her be the expert.

Connie also attributed her first administrative experience to a male mentor. She related that because of his insight and constant interest in the law (affirmative action), he hired her to be the first secondary administrator in his district. Connie also stated that she became acquainted with influential people who could help her. Before being hired as an administrator she worked in the graduate department of a college and came to know people who “mattered.” “Networks are important, but they are never big enough. You have to keep building that bridge.”

Donna indicated that her mentor, like Sharon's, allowed her to make most of the decisions, attend meetings, and take over most of the duties as an assistant vocational superintendent. Donna shared that her mentor had three daughters and it had been her experience that the men most supportive of women, were men who had daughters. “They

want the most for their daughters, . . . they don't want to see their daughters have barriers or can't do what a man can do."

Marlene did not have a mentor, but she stated that her superintendent encouraged her to get her superintendent's certificate before he left. "He told me I would make a great superintendent, but that I needed a doctorate. Another male colleague told me I needed the doctorate because I was a woman and they wouldn't just hire a woman without a doctorate. I needed to hurry before I was too old or they wouldn't hire me because then, I would be too old," Marlene related.

All of the women superintendents recommended that aspiring superintendents get a mentor and let others know where they want to go. Janice and Donna both worried that women negate their own opportunities for advancement because of what Donna termed, "a scarcity mentality," created by women unwilling to share, promote, or help other women, for fear that there may not be enough to go around. Donna assured there was enough to go around and that women can only be successful when other women around them are successful. ". . . Only when women begin to share and help one another, and understand there is plenty to go around, will females benefit and start occupying a larger percentage of the top management positions such as the vocational superintendency." Janice warned, "Women need to get smart, quit clawing and scratching, and start promoting one another."

### Credentials and Certification

The doctoral degree overwhelmingly was perceived as a necessity for entering the vocational superintendency, especially for women. Even though the majority of the

male vocational superintendents do not hold doctoral degrees in the midwestern state of this study, four out of the five female vocational superintendents hold a doctoral degree and see it as a prerequisite. Connie commented, "You have to make yourself stand out from the other applicants. The doctorate gives you that leverage."

Women entering a male dominated arena such as the vocational superintendency need something extra, according to these superintendents. In their opinion the doctorate lends expertise and credibility, which is paramount for women. Donna added that in addition to the doctorate, having the necessary certification for the vocational superintendency further diminishes the reasons a board could use to justify for not hiring. She pointed out that many vocational superintendents have been hired without the certification but are given a time frame to complete it; however, women would be prudent to have their credentials in order before hand.

### Experience and Preparation

Each of the female vocational superintendents has had a variety of experiences that have prepared them, foundationally, for the superintendency. Broad-based programs that included curriculum, evaluation, counseling, and directorships gave the superintendents the understanding and philosophical bases they needed to help promote and move their schools beyond the status quo.

Marlene took classes in auto mechanics and carpentry to learn more about them, and give her some basic knowledge about how these programs operated. Marlene also described herself as a "tomboy" who doesn't mind working on cars or building something. "I just don't back off things because they are men things." She also related that some of

the jobs she held before becoming a vocational superintendent were considered more “male-role” jobs, which gave her valuable experiences she needed.

Donna cited her experience as assistant vocational superintendent as being the most valuable to her. “I was able to get a good flavor of what the job of superintendent entailed and the expectations required for the superintendency.” Donna also commented that she had held six to eight titles before becoming assistant vocational superintendent and indicated that she knew organizationally how programs should operate and what they should look like.

The experience Connie brought with her to the vocational superintendency was very broad and more elite. She had been a superintendent in a common school as well as an elected superintendent of a large metropolitan area. She was very well known and had documented her expertise through professional journals, literature, and televised forums on broad topics of education.

Sharon’s expertise in curriculum gave her valuable experience and helped her to land two assistant superintendent positions. Her knowledge of curriculum implementation allowed her the opportunity to speak and present to board members, which made her very visible to the board. The board offered Sharon the superintendency when the current superintendent left. “They did not even post the position, they just asked me to take it,” she boasted.

Janice noted that her move from common education to vocational education gave her the experience she needed to open her own doors to the vocational superintendency. Janice had never intended to move higher than the supervisory position in which she was secure; but, she began to work on her doctorate and began to think



about the higher echelons of vocational administration. Janice cited that her experience as a vocational assistant superintendent led her to what she has coined the “Wizard of Oz” perception. “For the longest time I thought ‘I can’t do that, but when you draw the curtain back, there is nothing there. Anybody can do it.’ Janice added, “One has to be willing to put in the time and be able to make hard decisions in order to be effective, but as far as the job being unobtainable . . . women need to go for it. . . . There is no big secret about being a vocational superintendent. You just have to work hard and this is where women win at this. They know how to be workerbees.”

### Abridgement

Interview perceptions about the strategies of entry into the vocational superintendency revealed that mentors and influential others were important components to entering the vocational superintendency. The need for more female mentoring was indicated by all of the female superintendents. Credentials, experience, and preparation were also deemed important factors when preparing for the superintendency. Women wanting to enter the vocational superintendency were advised to have more preparation, more credentials, and a broad experience base to be competitive with aspiring male vocational superintendents.

## Interview Perceptions about Barriers into the Vocational Superintendency

Female vocational superintendents described three basic groups of barriers to the vocational superintendency: male dominated profession, long distance jobs, and family constraints.

### Male Dominated Profession

Each of the female vocational superintendents followed a male incumbent into the superintendency, except for one. All of the female superintendents indicated that vocational education is perceived as a male profession because few women have the expertise or certification in the hard trades' areas. However, as Connie pointed out, several top state vocational leaders do not have a heavy industry background, but come from a marketing platform, like many women in the vocational arena. Connie also theorized that another reason why so few women represent the vocational superintendency is because women do not prepare beyond the classroom because their area in vocational education is so specialized. "It would require an awful lot for these women to get out of their specialized fields."

Janice proposed that men try to make the superintendency look like a financial nightmare to women and make it seem harder than it is. "If you can balance a checkbook and keep a household going, while balancing 14 other things, you can be a vocational superintendent. If men try to make you think it is more than that, they are just blowing smoke."

Lack of financial experience was expressed by all of the superintendents in comparison to their male counterparts, but all of the female vocational superintendents indicated the budget and financial aspects of the job have not been a problem for them. Although three of the female superintendents have a financial director, they all play a very active role in the financial matters of their respective schools.

There are more small rural vo-techs than large metropolitan vo-techs in this midwestern state. As Connie indicated earlier, men outnumber women both in the superintendency and assistant superintendency. Connie related that the school boards of the smaller vo-techs are not looking for a woman vocational superintendent when the emphasis tends to be heavy agriculture or heavy manufacturing. Men still dominate these schools and with fewer large schools available, the superintendency becomes even narrower for women.

### Long Distance Jobs

One of the barriers described by Janice, is that she has had to move 180 miles away from her home and her husband to acquire a vocational assistant superintendent job. Although it has led to the superintendency and a recent three-year contract, nevertheless she has had to sacrifice in order to reach her goal. Her husband could not relocate with her since he had three more years before retirement.

Donna also has a long distance marriage. She and her husband commute on the weekends. Connie, although not married, had to relocate and pull up her supportive roots to take the vocational superintendency. She indicated that she was very well known and respected in her former community. "I thought that would spillover to my current

position. I really felt like I was starting from scratch again. No one knew me. They had no idea about the following and recognition I had,” Connie confessed.

Sharon moved twice before she landed her superintendency. Although her moves were around the metropolitan areas, she did have to uproot her family for the superintendency. Marlene did not have to move away to get the vocational superintendency, but she did have to change jobs several times before being hired for the superintendency. In fact, she had to leave vocational education altogether before she obtained the vocational superintendency.

None of the superintendents expressed regrets for their decision to relocate in order to accept the vocational superintendency. As Janice stated, “Adversity always lends itself to something greater.” All of the female vocational superintendents accepted their positions as a way to continue challenging their leadership skills and creating quality learning environments.

#### Family Constraints

Each of the superintendents commented that to some degree, family constraints were indeed a sacrifice for them personally. Marlene gave up her doctorate in order to be home with her son when he became ill. Donna had to leave her three-year old son to attend school to get her doctorate. Janice did not even consider the superintendency while she had small children at home. Sharon missed special events in which her daughters were involved because of her duties as superintendent. Connie chose a career instead of having children, something she says she now regrets.

Each of these women have experienced the guilt and sacrifice the superintendency transcends. Although these instances did not externally provide a barrier into the vocational superintendency, they did provide an internal emotional conflict between family and the superintendency.

### Abridgement

Barriers described by the female vocational superintendents centered around male domination, long distance jobs, and family constraints.

Male domination in vocational education was seen as a barrier since most of the vo-techs are located in small, rural areas, where male superintendents and assistant superintendents prevail. Long distance jobs and/or relocation, although not a barrier has become a sacrifice. These women commented that many women could not move or relocate and this could prove to be a barrier for many other aspiring women superintendents as well. Job demands and families were not always compatible for these female vocational superintendents. Internal conflicts were described as personal barriers for these superintendents.

### Analyses and Interpretation of Data

To examine women's strategies of entry into the vocational superintendency, this research was designed to probe beyond what is known and encompass what works. In this way, it may be possible to discover or dispel strategies, which could result in more females obtaining the vocational superintendency positions.

The data analysis strategy used in this study was induction, which moves from specifics to generalities. Induction “. . . goes beyond the bounds of particulars but to all other similar particulars” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.113). Advice for aspiring female vocational superintendents completes this chapter.

### Data Analysis

In this study, two themes emerged about the strategies women superintendents used to gain entry into the vocational superintendency: self-initiative efforts and self-promotion efforts. The data revealed that these five women vocational superintendents have used strategies they have formed to promote entry into vocational superintendency. They also revealed specific advice for other aspiring female vocational superintendents. The perceptions ascribed in these self-initiated efforts and self-promotion efforts may help more women advance to the vocational superintendency. Excerpts from the data presented in this chapter were used to show the relationship between the data categories and the themes that emerged as a result of the analysis.

### Self-Initiative Efforts

The first theme that emerged from the data was self-initiative efforts. Each of the five women interviewed shared common characteristics even though their personalities were different. Although many of the women did not plan specifically for the vocational superintendency, they did plan to advance their careers by working on their master's or doctoral degrees. They knew they wanted to do more than teach. Although they enjoyed teaching, they wanted to lead. As Connie explained, “I wanted to affect education beyond

the classroom. As a superintendent, I can do more for students, although I work with them less.” Janice explained, “I wanted to see, in my lifetime, if I could be in charge of a school . . . that what was permeated, was the quality of instruction.”

These women all wanted to impact change in education, through the abilities and talents they had displayed in the classroom, but on a broader scale. These women are strong willed and determined in their beliefs. Each described herself as a hard worker, doing more than was required; whether it was teaching, chairing a committee, or taking on difficult jobs to gain experience.

Each of these women strategically planned her career in order to reach the leadership goal she sought. Aware of the fact that not many women held top administrative positions, these five women concentrated on what they could do well and expanded their expertise. Their gender was never considered a barrier for them, rather an asset. They used what Janice said women do best, and that is, “Hard work and good old ingenuity.” The focus was not on the superintendency, but on being the best in their field. Each of these women commented that she had confidence in her abilities and believed in herself. Developing good track records and promoting quality programs gained each of these women the visibility and recognition that helped her enter the vocational superintendency.

These women experienced traditional barriers such as gender and “the good old boys network.” As Janice stated, “You can’t let things like that limit you. They are only barriers if you let them be.” Connie related that she knew the competition was tough right from the beginning and if she was going to be a contender she had to learn to be smart and use her abilities to make her the best candidate. She told how she researched jobs and

then prepared reports to take to interviews that show that she would be useful to the employer. Connie's technique has landed her three highly competitive superintendent positions.

Donna related that she really did not know what a barrier was. "...What's a barrier, I mean - I've worked hard. I've spent a lot of years in the profession. I've done a lot of preparation. I left my son when he was three to get my doctorate. I went back to college to get another 20 hours for administrative certification... I feel I have worked very, very hard to get where I am." Donna further related that she did not feel as if anybody has ever tried to hold her back. "I applied 16 years ago when I first came to this district, but I've never applied since. The board asked me both times to be the deputy superintendent and the superintendent."

It is evident that these five women vocational superintendents have advanced their own careers through self-initiative efforts based on hard work and preparation. They have opened their own doors and endured many hardships in their quest to become leaders. Barriers may have been present, but for these women, a keen sense of direction and a focus on quality kept their attention on what they knew they could do and not on what could limit them. A strong sense of self and commitment helped these women climb the ladder one rung at a time.

### Abridgement

Self-initiative efforts to advance to the vocational superintendency allowed these five women to concentrate on their talents and abilities to make a difference in the quality of programs in vocational education. A desire to impact change through effective



leadership challenged these women to become experts in their field. By working on their doctoral degrees, gaining experience through various titles throughout both common and vocational education, and developing track records that promoted expertise and quality, these women charted their own course to the vocational superintendency.

Through recognition of their hard work, these women developed reputations as dynamic leaders. Recognizing barriers, but refusing to limit their aspirations, these women strategically planned their careers around their strengths and took charge of their futures. These women opened their own doors and made their goals a reality.

### Self-Promotion Efforts

The second theme to emerge from the data was self-promotion efforts. The five women superintendents in this study did not waste time or energy on the fact very few women represented the top administrative positions in vocational education. What they did do was take responsibility for their desire for leadership. Through self-promotion efforts, these women effectively marketed their expertise and leadership abilities. Prudent strategies to promote themselves to the vocational superintendency have earned these women superintendents five of the most elite school districts in this one midwestern state.

Connie described how she developed her expertise in areas where she could present staff development workshops. She became a visible and reliable source for other educators to use as a model. "I would be asked to speak by other principals or educators because I was seen as a leader in the area I was presenting." As a result, Connie began to document her expertise and staff development presentations. She also began to realize

that if she were going to stand out from the rest of the crowd, she had to have something more. She began to write about her expertise and experiences and submit them for publication in professional education journals and as newspaper editorials. She then culminated an anthology of her articles and publications and had it printed. A collection of 17 articles cleverly designed, ready to submit with a well written and documented resume has definitely helped Connie to stand out from other equally qualified applicants. Connie also developed an interview protocol that has helped her win three highly competitive positions, including the vocational superintendency. Her protocol has been published in a leading educational administration journal and Connie presents workshops for other aspiring administrators who want to learn how to effectively interview and present themselves both on paper and in person. Connie's technique is simple yet effective. Four main components are necessary: a "HOT" resume, that can be pulled together within 24 hours that documents every speech, presentation, workshop, committee, certification, etc. Keep a cool composure and really listen during the interview in order to understand if the job is really what you want and to later ask important and relevant questions. Promote anything that is "extra, extra, extra." Have a strong close to the interview. Connie explained that a strong close is as important as a strong opening or first impression. Punch lines or clever anecdotes are ways Connie likes to close her interviews. Humor is important and a great way to relieve tension in the interview for both parties. She also related that it is a clever way to reassure the search committee that this is the person for the job. Humor can help alleviate some concerns the committee has as well. This is especially true for women applicants. "What I like to end with is a clever little verse that always make the committee laugh and makes my point at the same time. I tell them you

know this reminds me of a Valentine card my husband once gave me. On the outside it says, 'Honey, you're the answer to my prayers,' and when you open it up it says, 'You aren't exactly what I prayed for, but you must be the answer.' Then I tell them, I know I'm probably not what you prayed for, but I am the answer and I just want to let you know, I can do the job." Connie continued, "This always gets me a 'Well, shake my hand little lady, that was a good one.' You can tell that it is going to stick with them and they will probably go home and tell their wives. You have to have that little something extra."

Marlene took a whole different approach when she described how she boldly went into the new vocational superintendent's office and matter of factually told him, "I have the knowledge, I have the experience, I know the district, I know the kids, and every single administrator in this school's district. You need me as your assistant superintendent." Marlene was hired. Her expertise in both common and vocational education gave her the valuable leverage she needed to advance her career. Her decision to take an aggressive approach to the assistant superintendency was a very well-planned and calculated decision rather than a gutsy move. Marlene knew this new superintendent was in an unstable environment and that his vulnerability was clearly evident when he learned of the problems this vo-tech had. She used timing, expertise, and pressure to self-promote her abilities, strength, and stability that this new superintendent knew he needed. The ultimate payoff for Marlene came when she was promoted to be the new vocational superintendent within that same school year she was hired to be the assistant.

Sharon related how her expertise gained the recognition of a superintendent who would later bring her aboard as an assistant superintendent and then later recommend her for the post of the new superintendent upon his resignation from the district. Sharon

admitted that she had originally turned down a request from this gentleman to work for this district. Only one year later, she asked him for a job. Her expertise and self-promotion skills gave her the leverage she needed to persuade this superintendent to create a position for her six months before he had a position opened. In Sharon's case this talented male leader was looking for someone who possessed expertise in an area he did not. Sharon's visibility, through workshops and presentations, landed her a position based on her expertise. The power of excellent training and preparation lends many opportunities to find work in progressive and quality districts or professional organizations for one who is goal-oriented and proficient.

Self-promotion skills, as indicated by these women, are an important resource which women need to develop. Connie surmised, "If you don't promote yourself and make yourself visible, nobody else will do it for you. It's like the old Joe Namath thing, you've just got to fake it, flaunt it, and if you don't have it, make people think you do."

It is obvious that these women were not only talented, but also shrewd promoters. They did not wait for someone to open the door for them, they took the self-initiative as identified in the first theme and self-promoted their talents and skills through a variety of strategies that successfully rewarded them with the vocational superintendency. Self-promotion efforts to advance to the vocational superintendency allowed these five women to proactively plan strategies to deliberately bring others' attention to their expertise and leadership abilities. Using a marketing approach to a "pressured sell" has successfully advanced these women to top line positions. Consciously preparing and developing expertise along with carefully documented resumes and professional publications can effectively separate the boys from the girls. Timing, quality, networks,

self-confidence, and visibility are all key components to an effective self-promotion campaign. Women who want to lead from the top positions must advance their own careers and learn to be consummate marketers.

### Summary

Chapter IV used an inductive process to identify the two major themes that emerged from the written survey responses and interview data. Chapter V contains a summary, recommendations, implications, and commentary.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND COMMENTARY

#### Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather specific information concerning selected strategies used by female vocational superintendents to gain successful entry into the vocational superintendency.

#### Data Needs and Sources

Data that described successful women's strategies into the vocational superintendency were needed. In addition, demographic information about successful women vocational superintendents was needed to describe the process for attaining administrative positions. The population for this study consisted of all five female vocational superintendents in one midwestern state. Long interviews were conducted after the initial demographic survey had been completed.

### Data Collection

To address questions posed in this study, two data collection strategies were used.

1. A survey instrument provided the initial source of information. It was mailed to each of the women vocational superintendents in the state. The instrument was used to collect demographic information and the first four objectives of the study.

2. Long interviews served as the primary data collection method. Interviews clarified responses obtained in the initial questionnaire, fulfilled the fifth objective generating advice for other aspiring women vocational superintendents and provided the in-depth information needed to complete the study.

### Data Analyses and Interpretation

An inductive qualitative research design was used. Induction moves from specifics to generalizations and allows for flexibility within the research design. Three categories were formed from the interviewees' responses about the strategies used to gain entry into the vocational superintendency.

#### Summary Demographic Information

Demographic characteristics of female vocational superintendents revealed several similarities. A profile emerged which included similarities in age (50 years old), years of teaching or classroom experience (less than 10 years), years in administration (an average of 15 years), certificates (all secondary), degrees held (doctorate), ethnicity (Caucasian), marital status (married), number of children (two), and birth order (first-born).

## Summary of the Data

The interviews were conducted to reveal in-depth information about the strategies women vocational superintendents used to gain entry into the vocational superintendency and generated advice for other aspiring women vocational superintendents. Emerging clusters of responses gathered from the interviews were identified and grouped into three categories: representation of women in the vocational superintendency, strategies of entry into the vocational superintendency, and barriers to entry into the vocational superintendency.

### Representation of Women in the

### Vocational Superintendency

Interview perceptions about the representation of female vocational superintendents revealed that women are slowly and gradually breaking into the formidable ranks of the vocational superintendency. While numbers are low, it is an increase from just ten years ago when only one woman out of twenty-nine districts represented the vocational superintendency. Larger vo-tech districts were viewed as the most promising institutions for prospective female vocational superintendents. Male domination of the trades and business and industry was perceived to account for the majority of male superintendents and assistants in vocational education. Female representation in the vocational superintendency was perceived to increase as the number of women increase in the vocational trades' areas.



## Strategies of Entry Into the Vocational

### Superintendency

Interview perceptions about the strategies of entry into the vocational superintendency revealed that mentors and influential others were important components to entering the vocational superintendency. The need for more female mentoring was indicated by all of the female superintendents. Credentials, experience, and preparation were also deemed as important factors when preparing for the superintendency. Women wanting to enter the vocational superintendency need to have more preparation, more credentials, and a broad experience base to be considered equal with other aspiring male vocational superintendents.

### Barriers Into the Vocational Superintendency

Barriers described by the female vocational superintendents centered around male domination, long distance jobs, and family constraints.

Male domination in vocational administration was seen as a barrier since most of the vo-techs are located in small rural areas, where male superintendents and assistant superintendents prevail.

In order to obtain a superintendent's position, these women superintendents either had to move or live apart from their spouses. Although these women sacrificed a move to eliminate this barrier, many aspiring women may not have the opportunity to relocate.

Job demands and family constraints were not always compatible for these female vocational superintendents. Internal conflicts were described as personal barriers for these superintendents.

### Summary of Analysis

As a result of the induction analysis, two themes emerged that were seen as successful strategies of entry into the vocational superintendency: self-initiative efforts and self-promotion efforts. These strategies focused on hard work, preparation, sense of direction, a focus on quality, a strong sense of self, commitment, expertise, issues of marketing, networks, self confidence, visibility, and timing.

### Recommendations

Objective five of this study sought to acquire information from successful practicing female vocational superintendents to guide aspiring women superintendents. The following recommendations stem from the advice given by each of the five female vocational superintendents and the analysis of the data.

#### Recommendation #1

Develop Expertise. Develop areas of expertise that can be incorporated over a broad spectrum such as both common and vocational education. Areas such as technology, policy development, curriculum, or grant writing are all excellent areas and have many avenues that can be taken. Repetition makes for proficiency in any of these areas.

## Recommendation #2

Gain Experience. Women who have had a broad experience base have a foundation of how vocational education organizationally should work and operate. Gaining experience through professional organizations, chairing or serving on committees are also excellent ways to gain not only experience, but exposure as well. Be willing to try new and innovative methods that will give new insights and understanding of the different branches of the vocational arena. Be prepared to change job titles often and be willing to relocate.

## Recommendation #3

Attain Professional Credentials and Preparation. Earning a doctoral degree can lend credibility and professionalism for aspiring female superintendents. Having the proper credentials and certifications is also beneficial when vying for a superintendent position. Being prepared ahead of time strengthens and promotes one's professional appearance.

## Recommendation #4

Self-Promote. Let others know about aspirations and goals. Polish and update resumes, keeping careful documentation of all committees, presentations, publications, boards or organizations on which served, and workshops or seminars attended. Have confidence and apply for positions that lead to more lucrative positions such as the assistant superintendency or superintendency.

### Recommendation #5

Self-Initiate. Take the initiative to advance one's self. Leaving it up to others to decide one's advancement will surely make for a long and frustrating wait. Learning to be responsible for one's progress will ensure proper motivation and direction. Find creative ways around barriers and learn from others' experiences. Be proactive.

### Recommendation #6

Create Perception. Focus on areas of strengths. Most of the women superintendents indicated they did not have all of the skills needed to be a vocational superintendent. In fact, many times there are applicants who may be better qualified or skilled; but, having self-confidence, proper credentials, self-promotion skills, networks, and a sense of self can create a perception that the ideal candidate is right in front of them.

### Recommendation #7

Face Doubts and Apprehensions. All of the women superintendents admitted they had doubts and apprehensions, but they knew their strengths and trusted themselves to do the right things. They found people who could help them in the areas in which they were weak. The bottom line for these women was the quality the institutions provided for its clientele and students. With this as their primary objective, they established their platform from this basis and built their administrative agenda. All of the women expressed this was their area of strength---not finance, or politics.

### Recommendation #8

A Mentor or Influential Other. Find mentors who are leaders that will help open networks and keep an eye out for possible opportunities. Find opportunities to work with leaders and learn from them. If possible look for internships that will provide valuable learning experiences and opportunities for leaders to see workmanship.

### Implications and Commentary

The power of your ambition depends wholly on the vigor of the determination behind it. What you accomplish will depend on the amount of live energy, enthusiasm, and willpower you put into your efforts to achieve.

(Randy Marsh)

As the twenty-first century approaches, women are still faced with the challenge of breaking into the ranks of formal management in educational administration, specifically the vocational superintendency. Despite a wealth of research which spans a quarter of a century and sex discrimination laws, women are still fighting the gender war for top line positions. The few women who have successfully managed to overcome the barriers and advance to the top, offer the most promising solutions to this age-old problem. What they can teach other aspiring women administrators where research and legislation have failed, auspiciously lies in the perception of what is known versus what works. While women must understand what is known, how they apply that information will determine their paths to the top.

The reality is that the parity between men and women is not equal. For women to be competitive in a male-oriented profession, compensation skills must be utilized, like it or not. To move forward and upward is to understand that women must have more ---

more credentials, more education, more broad-based experience, be willing to work longer and harder than their male counterparts, and learn to overcome a biased society. In addition, women must learn to discard their own perceptions and paradigms that hold them back from aggressively pursuing their goals and aspirations as leaders. Women must learn from their male counterparts the art of collaborating and helping one another climb the ladder. The time has come for women to learn to use other women's successes as platforms upon which to build their own power structures and establish themselves as credible leaders. Undermining each others efforts only destroys the foundation women leaders have worked so hard to create.

As Burell and Morgan (1979) have suggested, women administrators, aspiring or practicing, are their own theorists, capable of shaping reality to include, rather than exclude them. Women cannot wait for success to come to them, they have to make it happen. No longer can women sit back and allow themselves to become the "Stepford Wives" of the educational system. Women must be their own change agents, learning to self-promote and take charge of their own careers. At a time when education needs powerful leaders who are talented and visionary, women have the opportunity to step forward and rescue education from its status quo mentality. This call for women to shape their own realities and vigorously pursue their aspirations has implications for further research, theory, and practice.

The twenty-first century has the magnitude to open closed doors, break down class ceilings, and literally raise the roof for women administrators. It is time for women to make leadership opportunities happen by taking the initiative to enforce enacted laws and legislation as well as publicly denouncing the barriers that limit them. Women must

become advocates for other women and develop a strong coalition to advance women to top administrative positions. Education is in need of more than just a few good men, it needs powerful women leaders who have expertise and vision as well. For history to repeat itself would surely devastate the talent and abilities of many great women and impede the advancement of society as a whole.

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**APPENDIXES**

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTERS, CONSENT FORM  
AND QUESTIONNAIRE

December 15, 1997

Dear Colleague:

Enclosed you will find a brief questionnaire. This questionnaire is an important part of a research project on women's strategies of entry into the vocational superintendency. Your input is of vital importance to this project. Please take a moment to complete the instrument and send it back to me either in the postage paid envelope included for your convenience or fax it to 405/262-8479.

I appreciate your willingness to take a few minutes from your hectic schedule to help with this project. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Lisa Horn, Principal  
Lincoln Elementary School  
El Reno, OK

LH/kp

January, 15, 1998

Dear Colleague:

Recently I mailed you a questionnaire as part of my research study on women's strategies for entry into the vocational superintendency. I have not received a reply from you. Time is of the essence since I am trying to analyze the returned questionnaires before the Midwinter Vocational Conference where I will interview you per our telephone conversation on \_\_\_\_\_. Won't you take a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and mail it back to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope or fax it to 405/262-8449.

Your reply is vital to my research. I appreciate your cooperation in mailing or faxing the questionnaire back to me so that I may analyze the data before our interview on \_\_\_\_\_. Please include your name on the questionnaire so that I know I have reached you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lisa Horn, Principal  
Lincoln Elementary School  
El Reno, OK

LH/kp



## CONSENT FORM

“I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Lisa Horn, or associates/assistants of her choosing, to perform the following treatment or procedure(s).”

1. Subject will fill out a demographic and career information questionnaire followed up by a personal interview conducted by the researcher. The interview will consist of seven in-depth questions pertaining to the subject's career, strategies they used to enter the vocational superintendency, and perceptions of the superintendency.
2. Interviews will be set up for (1) hour sessions. It is anticipated that only one session will be needed per subject. However, if further clarification is needed additional times may be scheduled to further interview the subject.
3. The confidentiality of the subject(s) will be ensured by identifying them with fictitious names throughout the study. Identification of the state the study was conducted, will be identified in the study as “one mid-western state.” Questionnaires, tapes, and transcripts will be kept in a locked desk drawer at the residence of the researcher. The only other people to have access to the questionnaires, tapes, and transcripts will be the committee members who serve on the researcher's graduate study committee. (Dr. James P. Key, Dr. Robert Terry, Dr. James White – AGED Department, and Dr. Deke Johnson – EAHED) At the completion of the study all questionnaires, tapes, and transcripts will be destroyed.
4. The subject(s) will experience minimal risk.
5. The benefits of this study will be many for other aspiring women vocational superintendents. Research indicates that the more laudatory information that can be made available from successful practicing female administrators will increase the opportunities for other aspiring female leaders to gain entry into the field of educational administration. The subject(s) are the pioneers who will open the doors for other talented women leaders. The subject(s) are also a unique group and will have the opportunity to add to the research that is lacking in vocational administration, especially where women are concerned.

“This is done in part of an investigation entitled “Women's Strategies for Entry Into the Vocational Superintendency.”

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director.”

I may contact Lisa Horn, at (405) 262-1941 or (405) 325-5630. I may also contact Gay Clarkson, IRB Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Director

WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR ENTRY  
INTO THE VOCATIONAL SUPERINTENDENCY

Part I: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Race \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Birth Order : I was number \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ child/ren.
  
4. I have \_\_\_\_\_ younger sisters. I have \_\_\_\_\_ older sisters.  
I have \_\_\_\_\_ older brothers. I have \_\_\_\_\_ younger brothers.
  
5. What is your marital status?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Single \_\_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed  
\_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_ Separated
  
6. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. If married, what is the highest level of education obtained by:
  - A. Spouse/former spouse \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Father/father figure \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. Mother/Mother figure \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Do you have any family members involved in education or administration currently or in the past? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  
  
What are or were their titles? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
9. If married, what do you think is the attitude of your spouse toward your work?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Strongly approves \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproves  
\_\_\_\_\_ Approves \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly disapproves  
\_\_\_\_\_ No opinion

10. If widowed or divorced, how do you think your spouse felt about your work when you entered the field of education?

\_\_\_\_\_ Strongly approves      \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproves  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Approved              \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly disapproved  
 \_\_\_\_\_ No opinion

11. What was the size of your high school graduating class? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the population of your primary residence as a child? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What is the enrollment of your school? \_\_\_\_\_

## Part II: CAREER INFORMATION

Please fill in the blanks.

1. What is the highest degree you have obtained \_\_\_\_\_ and major field?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years of classroom experience do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years of administrative experience do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
4. At what age did you get your first administrative post? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What was your title just prior to your current position?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Were you employed by the same district prior to your current position? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What administrative certificates do you hold?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Did you plan for the superintendency?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No
9. Did you have a mentor (or sponsor) to help promote your career?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

10. If yes, what was the title and gender of this mentor?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. When you interviewed for your current position, what was the composition of the selection committee?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Both men and women  
\_\_\_\_\_ Men only  
\_\_\_\_\_ Women only
12. What was the incumbent of your current position?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Man  
\_\_\_\_\_ Woman
13. Are you currently enrolled in any degree program?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
14. If yes, what program are you enrolled in and where? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. In seeking to enter administration, did you encounter any barriers to your entry?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
16. Have you encountered any barriers to your advancement in administration?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
17. What parts of administration do you stress?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. What is the most enjoyable part of being superintendent? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. What is the biggest headache of being a superintendent? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. Why did you want to become an administrator? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. What paths have you taken to get you to your current position? (e.g. teacher/counselor/director/assistant principal/principal/superintendent)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
22. Did you have any interruptions in your educational career?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, what were these interruptions?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
23. Did you attend any aspiring administrator preparation programs?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
24. If yes, what were the names of these programs and what organization put them on?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
25. Do you feel these programs helped you in your advancement in administration?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
26. If yes, in what ways did these programs help you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

27. What skills do you look for when hiring an administrator or director? \_\_\_\_\_

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28. What strengths do you have that helped you to gain entry into the superintendency? \_\_\_\_\_

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**APPENDIX B**

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**



WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR ENTRY  
INTO THE VOCATIONAL SUPERINTENDENCY

Part III: QUALITATIVE LONG INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Grand Tour

How do you feel women are represented in the vocational superintendency?

Planned Prompt

Is this the way you have always felt about it?  
What caused you to change your mind?

Grand Tour

What factors do you feel enhance entry into the vocational superintendency?

Planned Prompt

What encourages entry into the vocational superintendency?

Grand Tour

What factors inhibit women's entry into the superintendency?

Planned Prompt

What discourages entry into the superintendency?

Grand Tour

4. (Ask if subject responded yes on question # 15 on the first questionnaire.) Describe what difficulties you encountered in entering administration.

OR

(Ask if subject responded no on question # 15 on the first questionnaire.) Describe your experiences you encountered entering administration.

Grand Tour

5. (Ask if subject responded yes on question # 16 on the first questionnaire.) Describe the difficulties you experienced in attempting to advance in administration.

OR

(Ask if subject responded no on question # 16 on the first questionnaire.) Describe your experiences as you advanced in administration.

Grand Tour

6. What strategies did you use to gain entry into the vocational superintendency?

Planned Prompt

Do strategies differ for men and women entering the vocational superintendency? Explain.

Grand Tour

7. What advice do you have for aspiring female vocational superintendents?

Thank you for your time. This concludes our interview.

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: January 7, 1998

IRB #: AG-98-022

**Proposal Title: WOMEN'S STRATEGIES OF ENTRY INTO THE VOCATIONAL SUPERINTENDENCY**

**Principal Investigator(s):** James P. Key, Lisa Ann Horn

**Reviewed and Processed as:** Expedited

**Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):** Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.

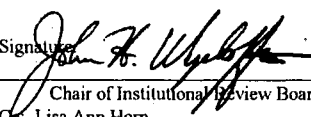
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

---

**Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:**

Signature

  
Chair of Institutional Review Board

Cc: Lisa Ann Horn

Date: January 14, 1998

VITA <sup>2</sup>

Lisa Ann Horn

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

**Thesis: WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR ENTRY INTO THE VOCATIONAL SUPERINTENDENCY**

**Major Field: Agricultural Education**

**Biographical:**

**Personal Data:** Born in Springfield, Missouri, May 22, 1963, the daughter of William W. and Zina M. Rose. Married on June 12, 1981 to Stanley James Horn, Children: Stanley "Austin" and William "Carson."

**Education:** Graduated from Yukon High School, Yukon, Oklahoma in May, 1981; received Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, Oklahoma in 1984; received Master of Education in Educational Administration from Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, Oklahoma in 1988; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 1998.

**Professional Experience:** Elementary Education Teacher, Yukon Public Schools, 1984-1993; Principal, Webster Elementary School, El Reno Public Schools, 1993-1995; Principal, Lincoln Elementary School, El Reno Public Schools, 1995-1998.

**Professional Activities:** District Representative for Oklahoma Association Elementary School Principals, 1997-1998; Presenter for CCOSA and OAESP Summer Conference, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1998; Canadian County Leadership Member Class V, 1996-1997; Presenter for CCOSA New Teachers Assistant Program, Woodward and Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1996-

1997; National Principal's Academy Fellow, 1996-1997; New Principal Academy, 1993-1995; Central Elementary Teacher of the Year, Yukon Public Schools, 1991-1992; Yukon Public Schools Teacher of the Year Nominee, 1991-1992.

Professional Organizations: Cooperative Council of Oklahoma School Administrators; National Association of Elementary School Principals; Oklahoma Association School Curriculum and Development; Oklahoma Association Elementary School Principals; Delta Kappa Gamma.