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WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS:

THE EFFECTS OF GENDER ON LEADERSHIP

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WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS:
THE EFFECTS OF GENDER ON LEADERSHIP

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. I would like to thank my sons, Travis and Will Gammill. Your encouragement and support spurred me on when I felt like quitting. My parents, Dale and Sue McLoud, both taught me the importance of an education and modeled perseverance and hard work in your daily lives. My sisters, Erica and Cara, you were there to cheer me up and reassure me whenever I needed encouragement.   I have been blessed to have so many wonderful people in my life and all of you are a part of the reason that I was able to complete this task.

It is also dedicated to the many women educators that fight for their place as a district leader, especially the ones that were willing to share their stories for this research project. They have hope that their experiences will smooth the road for future women superintendents.

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ABSTRACT

The superintendency is one of the most heavily masculinized roles in American culture (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). It is documented that women are underrepresented in the position of superintendency. Approximately 20% of the superintendents are women with the percentage being much lower in some regions (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000; Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). Qualified women are having a difficult time getting an interview for the open positions, much less a position as a superintendent. There are a multitude of issues according to literature that stands in the way of women following the path toward administration. This study was conducted in order to examine one of the pieces that could contribute to the research about women and the way they lead.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the relationship between gender and the leadership styles utilized by women superintendents. This study primarily serves as an educative instrument by sharing the lived experiences of women superintendents. The interpretive paradigm, hermeneutic phenomenology, was selected because of the potential to generate new understandings of complex multidimensional human phenomena. Ten women superintendents who could illuminate the phenomena were interviewed and themes were pulled out to help answer the question if gender affects the leadership style that women use and if that contributes to their success as a leader.

A series of interviews, journal notes, audio-recordings, and transcriptions were used to collect the data for this interpretive phenomenological study. van Manen's (1990, 2014) phenomenological methodology provides an overlay with which to

understand the participants' existential lifeworlds. The research project used existing

themes of relationships, power, self-esteem with eleven common leadership theories to

explore the experiences of women superintendents.

The findings indicate that women continue to battle sexism to obtain and

maintain successful employment as district superintendent. Stakeholders continue to

believe and express opinions that women are not fiscally responsible or capable of

being the instructional leader of their local districts. Women are routinely questioned

privately and publicly about their qualifications and decisions. The significance of the

study calls for future research to enrich the understanding of how women have

navigated the challenges to successfully lead school districts. Additional voices of

women superintendents with experiences in a wide variety of setting need to be

conducted.

WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS

When the school board's in a tizzy over next year's budget facts,
The male superintendent says, "Let's vote another tax!"
But the board that hires a lady [sic] just might have a big bake sale
For the female superintendent is more clever than the male.

When the teachers start to picket and the newsmen come to call,
The man says, "What do I know? I just coach basketball!"
But the woman school official has right answers by the pail.
For the female superintendent is much smoother than the male.

If the students start a riot on the playground after noon,
A man will hang a sign out that says he'll "Be Back Soon!"
If you want to stop a food fight put a woman on the trail,
For the female superintendent is a lot tougher than the male.

State Aid has lost the check and the roof needs much repair—
The male in his office rants and raves in deepest dark despair!
But a woman superintendent knows that reason will prevail,
For the female superintendent is much cooler than the male.

Now if this has sounded sexist, you may indeed believe
That I have seen too many scenes from "Thelma and Louise,"
But there's one thing we must agree on, a fact that never fails—
The female superintendent is much prettier than the male!

So, goodbye to all of you, the Board of _____ ISD
It's been good, even though it's not all been a "Cup of Tea,"
Hats off to you, I wish you well in the new millennium
Just remember your female superintendent was the one that got things done!!!

-Anonymous Woman Superintendent

This poem is kept in the desk of one of the participants. When she is feeling

discouraged, she takes it out and reads it to remind herself that she is a competent

superintendent and that she will persist. She gave it to the researcher to share, but is

unsure of where it originated. For the purpose of this paper the adjective female is not

used as a noun except in the poem, which was not altered. Female is a scientific term

that refers to the sex of a species and woman refers specifically to human beings.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Education is crucial to a democratic society, and it has undeniably contributed to the development of the United States. Critical to achieving a sound educational system is the role of the school superintendent. The social, political, and economic roots of the role of superintendent can be traced back as far as the colonial period. As might be expected in a quickly changing modern world, the existing position of school superintendent is a complicated, often highly demanding role. Mixed messages from stakeholders, the media, and political venues place many demands on the men and women in any position of school leadership (Grogan, 2000).

Successful superintendents must be able to process the massive amounts of data required to maintain high academic standards, fiscal responsibility, employee accountability, and student safety, and they must balance these considerations with the human demands of parents, students, and other educators (Grogan, 2000). Public school superintendents are viewed as an important community leader because of the status of their position (Buchanan, 2013). School board members require superintendents to have people skills, moral responsibility, and strong instructional leadership skills. Everyone in the community expects access to the superintendent (Tobin, 2006). High-stakes testing state and federal mandates force the necessity of boards to seek out superintendents with strong instructional leadership skills to keep their district off of the list of failing schools (Palladino, Haar, Grady, &Perry 2007). Despite the high volume of data and the immense responsibility of the superintendent's

role, participation in organizations in the community and across the state can be the most difficult aspect of the position.

Superintendents must maintain positive working relationships with special interest groups, community groups, governmental entities, and the district faculty (Grogan, 2000). They must act as politicians who feel comfortable working in the public arena, negotiating and maneuvering through complicated mazes of requests and demands, attempting to provide the best possible outcomes for students in the district (Grogan, 2000). Larger districts are able to hire a multitude of people with different personalities and skills to fulfill all of the job requirements, but superintendents in smaller districts must develop the flexibility to handle multiple tasks and responsibilities, often on their own (Copeland, 2013). They frequently drive buses, coach athletic teams, and work on federal grant programs to fill in gaps and save precious financial resources within their districts. The requirement to handle all of these different aspects of the position makes the superintendent's role a challenging endeavor. The rural superintendent might wear the hat of a manager, communicator, custodian, and cook before the students arrive at school (Copeland, 2013).

The multiple day-to-day challenges and roles can make the superintendent's position demanding. In addition to the routine daily duties, superintendents also face deep conflicts with the demands placed on them by their stakeholders. For example, many parents want rigorous academic standards, as long as their children can maintain perfect grades and qualify for scholarships. Other parents are focused on the special needs or desires of their own children, to the exclusion of any interest in non-related academic programs. Women superintendents have the added weight of trying to prove

themselves to people in the community that have antiquated ideas about the abilities of women based on gender (Grogan, 2000). In light of these overlapping and intersecting roles and demands, this hermeneutic phenomenological study examines the unique position of women superintendent in school districts in the United States.

Administration in the United States

It goes without saying that across the United States, school districts struggle to attract and retain talented administrators. Decreasing numbers of qualified applicants, inadequate support systems, high levels of job-related stress, and the growing pressure of high-stakes testing and accountability requirements deter many educational leaders from entering into higher levels of responsibility (National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), 2001). Several studies have suggested that the primary reasons for the lack of interest include long hours, poor salaries that are not commensurate with responsibilities, increased demands for accountability, and an aging administrative workforce that is nearing retirement (Adams, 1999; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Normore, 2004). With the current political atmosphere attacking public schools and administrators specifically, many are concerned that U.S. schools soon will face a shortage of qualified leaders (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002).

A leadership crisis appears to be on the horizon, which will challenge the entire profession to think differently about school leadership and to consider who will fill leadership roles. A high superintendency turnover rate decreases the quality of U.S. education (Cooper et al., 2000). Despite a shrinking pool of applicants, the number of women in leadership positions has not increased (Blount, 1998; Brunner 2000; Cooper

et al., 2000; Glass 2000; Grogan, 2007; Shakeshaft, 1989). Women are an often-ignored resource that could reduce the impact of the impending shortage.

The superintendency is one of the most heavily masculinized roles in American culture (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). It is a well-documented fact that women are underrepresented in the position of superintendency. The percentage of women in the superintendency fails to reflect woman prevalence in the classroom; in fact, women hold less than 20% of lead positions (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000; Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). The dominant culture of educational administration is informed by white, male norms (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). With the extraordinary challenges that face our nation, we cannot continue to ignore the abilities and potential contributions that women can make in top leadership positions (Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

Women have held positions of administrative authority in various types of educational systems. Their level of involvement in public education has changed over time with the evolution of the political climate in the United States as a whole and with shifts in societal expectations and norms within specific communities. In the mid-1900s, women began to fill the classrooms as teachers, as men searched for better-paying jobs to support their families. Notably, as the proportion of women teachers in the classrooms grew, the percentage of women in the superintendent position did not increase. In the late 20th century and the early 21st century, more women started working in other administrative roles, such as principal positions, which are believed to be stepping-stones to the superintendency. Numerous leaders and researchers have forecasted that women could begin to occupy these positions, leading to more of them

ultimately becoming superintendents. However, these predictions have not come true (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Scherr, 1995; Schmuck, 1982). Women remain on the borders with outsider status in educational leadership (Gardiner et al., 2000; Tallerico, Poole, & Burstyn, 1993).

Aside from a few biographies of some especially notable women in America's school history, women administrators were largely unstudied until the late 20th century. The existing studies that use women as participants tend to include women at all administrative levels, and do not limit their study to the specific position of superintendent (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Tallerico, 2000). Bjork (2000) traced the historical phases of school leadership research regarding women. The first stage during the late 1960s reported census counts of woman school leaders. The 1970s stage resulted in reports of noteworthy women school leaders. The third stage dominated the 1980s and unearthed the factors of discrimination that prevented women's access to the top leadership positions. The final stage emerged in the 1990s and empowered women to identify their own perspectives as a means to study the experiences of women superintendents (Bjork, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Prior to this, educational research about public school administrators primarily studied white, men participants. It can be difficult to locate information disaggregated by gender, race, or ethnicity to support accurate research because, historically, researchers focused on white men and assumed that their findings applied to all other groups (Brunner, 2003; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kowalski & Brunner, 2005).

During the final stage, Irby and Brown (1994) defined the focus of superintendent research as a need to answer the question: "Where are the women in

their development and where do they need to be based on the literature?" (p. 2). Additional research by Skrobarcek and Stark (2002) suggest the final stage has yet to achieve closure and justified the need for ongoing research about the lived experiences of women school leaders (p.8). They explain that women have not been socialized to aspire to administrative positions or to prepare for them. School systems have historically been structured in ways that tend to exclude women from higher-level jobs. These complex systems are then situated in an overall male dominant society that then results in covert and overt forms of gender discrimination that limit women to subordinate positions (Skrobaracek &Stark, 2003). This adds to the difficulty in finding information specific to the role of the woman superintendent.

To understand the position of a woman public school superintendent, it is important to examine her position within the context of American societal gender norms, but also to take into account the additional challenges that she faces because of her gender, such as systemic misogynyism in school districts' hiring practices. Although this lack of attention to the role of women in educational leadership, especially the superintendency, began changing toward the end of the 20th century, research has continued to focus on the woman leader as if she were encased within a box separate from the establishment of public education. This is too simplistic a way to examine the role of any school leader, and it is important to add more contemporary women superintendents' narratives to the small numbers of stories about their lives and work (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). This study adds additional women voices to the conversation.

The Problem Statement

Women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, particularly in high school principalships and superintendencies, the positions that carry the most responsibility and influence and the highest salaries (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1999). From 1910 to 1950, women held between 9% and 11% of the total leadership positions. By 1970, the number had declined to 3% and grew only to 18% by early in the 21st century (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Glass, 2000). The most recent findings show that the nationwide percentage is up to 24% (Holland, 2011).

Many women who achieve the superintendency struggle in the role, in part because they face the dilemma of how to demonstrate their public persona. It is crucial to examine the lives and experiences of these women to understand how some of them obtained their positions and maintained them for at least five years (Brunner, 2003; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kowalski & Brunner, 2005). This information, in juxtaposition with an examination of the evolving leadership theories, provides the context for an inclusive view of women in the superintendency in public education in America.

Scholars have argued that gender-related factors often deter women from entering and maintaining school administrative roles and impede their advancement (Estler, 1975; Grady, 1992; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Marshal & Kasten, 1994; Valian, 1999). Gender-related factors include family commitments as well as societal expectations. Men continue to dominate the public school superintendency, despite the existence of many qualified women applicants. Women comprise the majority of professional employees in the field, contribute to a substantial growth of enrollment in

educational leadership classes, and display an increased interest in superintendents' roles (Cunana, 1994; Glass, 2000). Researchers propose many reasons for the disparity, including the limited research on women in the superintendency (Gardiner et al., 2000).

Purpose Statement

This hermeneutic phenomenological study explores the lived leadership experiences of 10 women superintendents who were hired and worked during a contemporary time period (2000-2015). This study seeks to answer how women's leadership styles affect their success as women superintendents. Its results make a contribution to the existing literature on women educational leaders and will play a role in ameliorating the dangers posed to the educational system by the shortage of superintendents. Understanding how their leadership style has affected other women's success in the role will enable women entering the superintendency to do so with a greater chance of avoiding the struggles of those who went before them.

Historical Context

Research conducted on women administrators was non-existent throughout most of the last century. The 21st century has seen an increase in the amount of research addressing women in educational leadership from the elementary level through higher education. Many of the studies that use women participants include women at all administrative levels rather than limiting participation to the specific position of superintendent (Tallerico, 2000). This compounds the difficulty of finding historical research that is specific to the role of the women superintendent. Although women comprise approximately 65% of the educational workforce and 72% of the teacher

positions, this percentage is not reflected in the superintendency (Glass, 2000; Newton, 2006).

Many researchers blame the uneven distribution on the structures in the educational system, societal norms, or on the women themselves. Women are viewed as being unassertive, lacking self-confidence, disliking power, or lacking enough ambition to aspire to the position (Tallerico & Bustyn, 1996; Newton 2006). Through interviews with current and past women superintendents, this study examines these assertions.

To comprehend an intact picture of the historical significance of women superintendents in American history, it is necessary to study women in historical context, and to overlay this information with what is known about the evolution of the American educational system, the transformation in the position of superintendent, and the political atmosphere of the United States, specifically with regard to women's rights. Combining this information with the limited material that has been gathered about the educational careers of specific women is the only way to create a more accurate description and understanding of the progression of women who have served as school superintendents. Callahan (1962) noted that, "To understand the school position of superintendent it is important to look at the position within the context of American society, that is to say, within the context of a mass, industrial-scientific, capitalistic, democratic society" (p. 2).

Colonial Period

Although the following historical review largely recounts a Eurocentric saga, women in general still have held marginal teaching and managerial or administrative roles. In early U.S. history, from the colonial period beginning in 1607 through the early

19th century, male educators provided most formal education to children. Jean-Jacques Rosseau (1712-1778) and other theorists influenced American education. Rosseau asserted that women did not need an education because it was counter-productive to their purpose. Women were to get married, be submissive, raise children, and supervise the household staff (Sapiro, 1986). For many children in the United States, education began when wealthy parents hired a schoolmaster to educate primarily young males (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Mattingly, 1975). As the term schoolmaster became a clearly defined role, white men, rather than women or persons of color, constituted the group socially approved to deliver educational services in the homes of the wealthy (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan; 2007). The next step toward public education began with local control through the reserved powers of the Tenth Amendment in 1791, which placed the responsibility for the establishment of public schools on the states.

Although some states acted to direct the course of public education, most delegated the authority to the school districts through local school boards (Callahan, 1962). As the population increased, the need for schoolmasters increased, but communities remained reluctant to hire women and people of color because these groups were thought to be less intelligent and because most of them had little or no formal education (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kowalski & Brunner 2005).

In the beginning of the development of public education in many of the smaller rural areas, farmers, surveyors, or other male seasonal workers sometimes filled the role of teachers in the classroom for a few months during the off-season to supplement their income from their regular employment. During the colonial period, school was sometimes in session for only a couple of months per year, and teaching was an easy

way for a seasonal worker to bring in extra income for his family. Many of the more educated young men worked as teachers in hopes of paving the way toward becoming a minister or attorney. Teaching provided additional financial resources and helped them in making social connections so they could advance into a more lucrative career (Oklahoma Educational Television Authority (OETA), 2011).

Impact of the American Revolutionary War

The advent of the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) gave women their first entry into the educational profession while the men were away defending the country (Bartling, 2013; Clinton, 1984; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Smith & Vaughn, 2000). Forced to manage homes and businesses during the war, women gained confidence and were unwilling to return to their former dependent status when the war was over (Bartling, 2013; Clinton, 1984). Popular rhetoric praised women's contributions to the patriotic cause, but voting continued to be restricted to white, property-owning males (Bartling, 2013; Clinton, 1984; Hymowitz & Weissmen, 1978; Rowbotham, 1973; Simmons, 1971). Extreme financial hardship provided a socially accepted rationale for women to enter the workforce. Adherents of the Republican Motherhood movement argued that mothers, as children's first teachers, required adequate education themselves so that they could educate their sons for their role in a Republican state (Bartling, 2013; Clinton, 1984; Kerber, 1974; Norton, 1980). This movement enhanced girls' and women's educational opportunities to some extent, but it remained clear that women continued to be regarded as intellectually inferior to men (Bartling, 2013; Clinton, 1984). Few people in those days conceived of an education for women that would extend beyond the home; however, the education field was one of

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the few positions that the populace considered to be an acceptable place for a woman (Bartling, 2013; Clinton, 1984).

By the early 19th century, white women gradually became accepted as classroom teachers (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kowalski & Brunner, 2005). In contrast, women of color often were forced to provide for their own educational pursuits (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Jackson, 1999). By 1900, as many as 20% of women teachers in the South were black, providing education for black children in schools specifically built for them (Blount 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

Common Schools

During the 1820s, common schools were established as free and open public institutions. These continued to gain momentum through the 1830s, and not enough schoolmasters could be found to staff the expansion. Because many of the more educated men were being recruited by industries that provided better pay, communities often had difficulty finding male teachers and turned to young, unmarried women to fill the empty classrooms (OETA, 2011). This began the feminization of the teaching profession (OETA, 2011). Common school advocates, such as Horace Mann, proposed that single, educated, white women leave the home and staff the ever-growing common schools. Mann was concerned about the shortage of teachers and believed that women were responding to their natural calling (Altenbaugh, 2004; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011). However, beyond social work and teaching, women were unable to pursue their education to any vocational purpose (Simmons, 1971).

Many reformers argued that women were by nature nurturing and maternal (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Smith & Vaughn, 2000). They also cited women's most

important qualification, femininity, as a natural asset for educating American youth. Rural communities also saw a financial benefit to hiring women teachers because they were paid only a third of what their male counterparts received (OETA, 2011). This allowed poor communities to provide educational services to their children more readily.

The Start of the Superintendency

The position of superintendency was established during this time. In 1837, the mayors of Buffalo, New York City, and Providence appointed the first superintendents of schools (Callahan, 1962). In New York City, before the superintendent role was established, the school board members were in total control of the school district. However, the city was scandalized by incidents involving the use of excessive force by schoolmasters who had administered corporal punishment so severely that children were injured. After this, it was decided that someone should be in charge to prevent abuses (Callahan, 1962). The city created the position of superintendent "to watch over the schools; to know the exact condition of every one, in all particulars; to bring the lagging forward" (Callahan, 1962, p. 62). Although the majority of the population was in agreement about the need for one person to lead the district, the superintendents were initially given very little power. Because the boards were accustomed to having full control, they were hesitant to relinquish their personal authority. They generally attempted to use the superintendent's power to advance their own personal agendas (Callahan, 1962). This power struggle between the superintendent and the local school board has continued unabated throughout American history.

Other urban areas soon followed suit. Territorial expansion and a rapid increase in population caused urban areas to flourish (Callahan, 1962). As urban schools grew, they required more teachers to educate the students. The developing complexity of the educational system and the increasing job requirements made it prudent for districts to appoint one person to be in charge (Callahan, 1962). Thus, more districts began hiring superintendents to fulfill the role of educational leadership.

In 1848, the first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. The 68 women and 32 men in attendance signed the Declaration of Sentiments, which outlined grievances and set the agenda for women's rights (Imbornoni, 2007). Increasing numbers of women began organizing politically and gathering support for the cause of equal rights. These issues directly affected women working in education, because teaching was woman's easiest route into the workplace, even though women continued to make less money than their male counterparts (Imabornoni, 2007).

School Improvement

Throughout American history, the expectations placed on the person serving as school superintendent revolved around societal demands. Initially, demands were for student safety and financial equity among school sites, although they varied from district to district, depending primarily on the community's expectations. As time passed and communication improved throughout the 20th century, community stakeholders became more educated about pedagogy, child development, and psychology and their expectations changed and expanded. In addition, educational competition developed among communities and states and even with other countries. Both of these developments caused parents and other educational stakeholders to

demand better conditions and services for their children (Callahan, 1962). School reformers such as Horace Mann, James Carter, Henry Barnard, and Catharine Beecher saw the need for better, more highly trained teachers. In this environment, normal schools were developed to provide formalized teacher training to the growing population of educators serving the increasing number of new schools (Altenbaugh, 2004; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011).

With the metamorphosis of the educational system came changes in the expectations for the person in charge. The push for transformation sometimes came from other countries. People interested in improving education began to visit school organizations overseas, searching for innovative ideas to implement in the United States. These ideas covered all aspects of the public school system, including administrative structures. In 1843, Mann praised a group of Prussian school inspectors for the high quality of education that had been developed in their country (Callahan, 1962). He compared their position to that of the deputy superintendents who operated at that time as the school leaders in the state of New York. Mann stated, "It is easy to see how efficient such a class of officers must have been in bringing up teachers to a high standard of qualifications at the beginning: and in creating, at last, a self-inspired, self-improving spirit, among them" (Callahan, 1962, p. 47). Superintendents of large districts in the United States began to seek more qualified teachers to meet the increasing demands of the local stakeholders.

Even though strides were being made to improve public education, the idea did not quickly catch on with all communities. By 1860, only 69 cities had organized a clearly defined high school course of instruction, and only 27 of those had

superintendents at the helm (Callahan, 1962). A more significant increase in the numbers of public schools and superintendents occurred after 1870, with the Civil War over. Harvard and Yale developed the first graduate programs, and education became more firmly entrenched as an American value. In 1866, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the National Women Suffrage Association to formally continue the fight for women's voting rights (Imbornoni, 2007). The territory of Wyoming in 1869 became the first place in the United States to give women the right to vote (Imbornoni, 2007). This provided a crucial boost in the number of women superintendents. During this time, the position of superintendent was generally an elected position, and women began to flex their voting power by electing women school superintendents (Cordier, 1988). The number of women superintendents increased as a reflection of this important change.

Women Make Progress

Some women moved up through the teaching ranks to the superintendency. During this time period, teaching was a strenuous occupation and at times very unpleasant. Teachers often had as many as 60 children of various ages and grade levels in a one-room schoolhouse. Although many women began teaching with the assumption that they would leave the profession when they married, a growing number of women felt a sense of empowerment and freedom that came with the financial rewards, however meager (OETA, 2011). These women would occasionally become dissatisfied with the leadership in place and seek administrative roles in which they could make a more significant impact on the lives of their students.

In 1862, The United States government initiated The Port Royal Experiment

with the intent of educating the children of 10,000 slaves who had been freed. The program's goals of literacy, economic independence, and civil rights were aimed at bringing the freedmen into white society. At the conclusion of the Civil War, men returning home sought positions with higher pay, leaving the job of educating these additional children to women (Cordier, 1988). Likewise, the end of the Great Plains Indian Wars resulted in additional children in need of education, primarily for the purpose of assimilation (Adams, 1995; Blount, 1998; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; OETA, 2011; Peterson & Vaughn-Roberson, 1986; Vaughn-Roberson, 1993, 2004).

All of these additional children needed teachers, which provided women with further opportunities. The confluence of these historical events gradually opened the door for an increasing number of women to enter the workforce in a socially accepted venue, the classroom. However, women in the administrative field remained a rarity (Cordier, 1988). The division between teaching and administration continued to develop, with administration being regarded as a male domain. Schools became bureaucratic institutions where, increasingly, women taught children under the direction of men, who were the leaders (Tyrack & Strober, 1980). Women who did find their way into leadership did so after proving themselves for long periods of time and fighting battles that their male counterparts did not encounter, and they typically did so at a lower pay rate than their male colleagues (Cordier, 1988).

In 1874, Phebe Sudlow became the first woman public school superintendent in the United States. She was unanimously selected by the Davenport (Iowa) Board of Education to be the new Superintendent of Davenport Schools. Prior to accepting the position, Sudlow had questions about the terms of employment, including a salary

significantly less than her male predecessor had earned in the position. She addressed the board: "Gentlemen, if you are cutting the salary because of my experience, I have nothing to say; but if you are doing this because I am a woman, I'll have nothing more to do with it" (Cordier, 1988, p. 87). Sudlow was given the higher salary. Although she won her battle with the board, this was a rare occurrence for a woman during this time since school boards believed that men needed the higher salaries to support their families.

During her tenure, Sudlow was very active politically in the education arena. In 1876, she was elected the first women president of the Iowa State Teachers Association (ISTA). In her inaugural address, she spoke of the importance of kindergarten, industrial and vocational education, proper classroom conditions, and the place of women in the educational system. Previously, it had been the custom for women members of the ISTA to request that a male member express his opinion or view for them because it was not deemed appropriate for women to address the group, but Sudlow's inaugural speech upended this norm (Cordier, 1988). In 1878, after a successful tenure, Sudlow left the superintendency when she was offered the position of English Language and Literature professor at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, becoming that university's first woman professor. She was hired at the full rank and salary, more than doubling her annual income in the public school system (Cordier, 1988).

Changes in the Superintendent Position

During the period from 1864 through 1910, the popular image of the superintendent was that of a scholarly educator, a teacher of teachers (Callahan, 1962).

However, this image changed as public education continued to expand and change. As the United States industrialized and the bureaucratic structure came to prevail in the corporate world, schools began to emulate their business practices (Cubberly, 1929). The position was viewed increasingly as a critical component of a district's success. In the early 1890s, after an extensive visit in Germany to study the country's educational system, Joseph Rice, a student of educational pedagogy, stated, "The office of superintendent is, in my opinion, one the importance of which cannot be overestimated. Indeed, in the study of the educational conditions in any given locality, the superintendent may be regarded as the central figure" (Callahan, 1962, p. 82).

Rice also noted that the superintendent worked in difficult conditions and rarely stayed in one location more than four or five years (Butler, 1990; Callahan, 1962). This was particularly true in smaller cities, where superintendents were likely to be removed from office for political reasons. To be successful in those days, superintendents had to strike the right balance between avoiding trendy frills and fads and being modern enough for the local patrons (Callahan, 1962). Superintendents frequently moved to other school districts in search of a higher wages. This constant turnover in leadership had a negative impact on school districts because they were continuously in transition, unable to reach any measure of stability or continuity in educational programs (Butler, 1990). A new superintendent would move into a district, replace staff in significant job positions, and implement drastic reform, only to be replaced by someone with conflicting ideas in a short time (Callahan, 1962).

In 1894, Burke Hinsdale, president of the National Educational Association, stated that superintendents were as influential as they are numerous and that, far beyond

any other class of persons of equal numbers, the superintendent directly shaped the

school's provision of public education (Callahan, 1962). The importance of the school

superintendent was continuing to increase as stakeholders came to view education as a

necessity for all young people, rather than a luxury for the wealthy few. Most people

familiar with public education, even in the early days of the superintendency,

understood the pivotal role that a superintendent played in the public school system

(Callahan, 1962).

More than any other single individual, the superintendent could influence the

quality of education that a child would receive (Callahan, 1962). The superintendent

either directly controlled the selection of curriculum or hired the people responsible for

the selection. The superintendent affected the climate and learning environment of the

school, represented the school directly to the public, and served as the only educator

who met regularly with the school board (Callahan, 1962). The school superintendent

served as the face of the district among community organizations, attending meetings,

giving presentations, and providing official public relations information to the various

stakeholders in the district.

Women Advance

By 1895, most cities had an organized public school with a superintendent in

charge. The United States Commissioner of Education reported that there were 1,551

superintendents in cities and towns with populations exceeding 4,000. By 1900, the

number of women superintendents had increased to 276 (Callahan, 1962). This

coincides with women being given the right to vote in 16 states between 1890 and 1918

(National Archives, 2013). Women helped increase the number of women superintendents by voting women into office.

In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was passed and signed, giving women the right to vote nationwide (Callahan, 1962). At this time, 85% of the nation's public school teachers were women, but a far smaller percentage of administrators were women, and their numbers typically decreased substantially with each higher level of authority (Vaughn & Liles, 1992). The *Journal of Education* noted that, "More than ninety-five percent of the teaching…is done by women, and more than ninety-five percent of the administration and leadership is by men" (Cordier; 1988; Fowler, 1903 p. 37). These statistics include all levels of administrative positions and are not exclusive to superintendents.

In 1922, 857 superintendents nationwide were women (Cordier, 1988). However, women who dared to venture into school politics did so with only mixed support from their colleagues, families, and community stakeholders. Despite a lack of support, some continued the struggle, making slow progress. Some areas were deemed more socially appropriate for women: They were more successful in obtaining positions such as county superintendent over a collection of small, rural schools, whereas the higher paid, urban positions belonged almost exclusively to men (Cordier, 1988). Women also were more likely to become superintendents in the West and other places considered undesirable by male candidates, and in areas where the position was elected by the populace as opposed to being appointed by a board (Cordier, 1988; Sabin, 1897).

In the larger school districts, which included high schools, students attended school for longer periods of time. This contributed to the need for an onsite

administrator to concentrate on curriculum development and student discipline. As the educational structures in urban areas expanded, the popular opinion was that a man should lead these complex organizations (Cordier, 1988).

Twentieth Century

In the early 1900s, especially in industrial areas, two driving factions bitterly disagreed about the intended purpose of public education. One side advocated for more practical coursework, such as mechanical drawing, German, and clay modeling – instruction intended to prepare children for labor positions. Representatives of business complained about these ornamental subjects, asserting that they caused an over-burdened curriculum, an over-extended budget, and over-crowded conditions. They preferred a basic curriculum focused on reading and mathematics (Smith, 1979).

Although women remained interested in leadership positions, their opponents countered that, "The most successful superintendent is male, Anglo-Saxon, middle-aged, Republican, intelligent, and a good student but not 'gifted'" (Wilson, 1980, p. 20). In 1908, two prominent educators predicted that the future of American education would depend largely on the *men* who held the office (Dutton & Snedden, 1908). "Nevertheless, Ella Flagg Young became the exception. In 1909, supported by suffragists, Young was elected as the first woman superintendent in Chicago" (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 115; Smith, 1979).

Young worked hard at improving conditions for teachers and students, attempting to raise certification requirements while increasing pay and providing better benefits. Smith noted that Young "developed a reputation as being cold, hard, severe, without sympathy, and even mannish among the less industrious and competent

teachers and principals whom she encountered" (1979, p. 43; "Mrs. Young," 1915).

Young did not have patience with educators who did not meet her high expectations.

Although she worked to increase the pay of teachers, she also worked to increase

education requirements and classroom expectations. Young, an integral part of the

educational debate concerning curriculum, left the position when a new superintendent

began to make drastic changes she could not support. She later took a teaching position

at a normal school, where she continued her own education while trying to improve the

skills of young people seeking to become educators (Smith, 1976). During this time,

school superintendents were similar in social status to lawyers, doctors, and ministers.

They were viewed as educational experts, and the position's appeal increased,

especially in larger cities (Kamler, 2009). These positions provided power, paid a

relatively high salary, and provided social benefits, making the position attractive even

though it was often mired in political debate.

> Young continued to support women teachers' efforts to equalize pay and
>
> improve conditions and choices for the students. Under her leadership,
>
> two-year vocational courses were made available to every high school
>
> student, and plans were made for a girls' vocational high school. Young
>
> believed that education was not only a natural endeavor for women but
>
> one in which they surpassed their male counterparts. (Blount, 2003;
>
> Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 215)

However, the school board began raising obstacles, sending all of her

recommendations to a committee for review in a move to thwart her attempts for school

reform. The committee frequently altered or completely ignored the recommendations,

going against Young's wishes for new administrative appointments or curriculum changes (Smith, 1979).

When Young refused to use a particular spelling book that certain board members supported because of their personal labor interests, things became particularly heated in the boardroom. Young became weary of the constant bickering and submitted her resignation (Smith, 1979). She told a newspaper reporter that she thought she "was the victim of political intrigue among board members" ("Mrs. Young," 1913; Smith, 1979).

Women's individual stories illuminate the historical significance of the plight of women in education. Their struggles exemplify the situations that educators battled regularly in offices and boardrooms across the nation. The years between 1900 and 1930 have been referred to as the "golden age" for women in school administration (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Tyack & Hanson, 1982). During the early part of the 20th century, the women's suffrage movement offered support to women seeking school leadership roles, and by 1930, women held 28% of the county superintendencies and 11% of all superintendencies (Blount 1999; Brunner & Grogan 2007).

Boy Problem/Women Peril

In the 1930s, two issues caused a reverse in women's gains in administrative positions: the so-called boy problem and the women peril. A decline in the achievement of boys and a drop in the percentage of men in the workforce alarmed some traditionalists, who warned that the patriarchal system was disintegrating. This concern incited a group of concerned men to actively recruit more men to the classroom to "restore patriarchal privileges in public life and recuperate the masculine society of

adolescent boys" (Johnson, 2008, p. 147). In 1938, a pamphlet titled *Teaching is a Man's Job* was published and circulated to recruit men into the education profession.

Although low teacher pay kept this movement from strongly affecting the proportion of women serving in the classrooms, the prevailing attitudes did make school boards uneasy about placing women in charge of districts. School board members were elected to their position, and members who wished to remain in office faced opposition when going against public opinion or disagreeing with the male leaders of the community. Following World War II, women vacated many administrative positions and were replaced by men returning from the war. The GI Bill provided training to men, and many selected the field of education as their course of study. Administration was a preferred choice because of the higher salaries (Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

Callahan noted that by 1925, "because of the weakness of his position in relation to the school board and the community, the superintendent of schools was extremely vulnerable to outside pressure and in order to survive he had to bow and scrape and please his masters" (1962, p. 34). America was becoming a business society, and the patrons wanted schools run in a businesslike way. Many school administrators relished the role of being the school executive (Callahan, 1962). As educational bureaucracies grew, the elected superintendent, supported heartily by newly enfranchised women voters, became a thing of the past.

Many believed that this was an overt plan to keep women out of leadership positions. Governors appointed state superintendents, and school boards hired their own district leaders. Not until the 1970s did the proportion of women superintendents creep above its previous all-time high of 10% in 1930 (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Shakeshaft,

1987). An additional concern was that the numbers of women applicants were declining, although the number of superintendencies was becoming more prevalent because of the growing number of districts hiring (Keene & Moore, 2008).

Social Issues Impact Public Education

Two major leadership shifts occurred after 1929. First, the role of the superintendent became more democratic. Previously, the superintendent's job had been similar to that of a business executive directing a complicated enterprise, but after 1929, the role gradually became more similar to that of a statesman, leading a school or district with input from teachers and principals (Callahan, 1962). There was increased collaboration because of the changes that were happening in the United States at the time. The Great Depression had hit the country, and schools were impacted financially. School districts were attempting to provide services by including all of the available resources possible (Callahan, 1962).

Beginning around 1945 and continuing throughout the mid-1950s, another shift occurred that turned the superintendent into an applied social scientist and educational realist (Callahan, 1962). A realist believes the job of schools is to teach students about the world. They favor a school dominated by subjects such as math and science. According to educational realists, the teacher would impart knowledge and their classrooms would be highly ordered and disciplined. With the Soviet launch of Sputnik, U.S. education suddenly drew criticism due to students' lack of scientific and mathematics preparedness (Cavanagh, 2007). Suddenly, superintendents were called upon to redress the balance of Cold War world power. Although Sputnik was an abrupt catalyst, more subtle influences also caused the superintendency to evolve into its

current state, with job roles that include scholarly leader, business manager, educational statesman, and social scientist (Callahan, 1962). The role of the superintendent was becoming increasingly complex, yet it remained an occupation that was viewed as best suited to men.

In the 1960s, economic demands shifted the position away from the educational scholar role and more toward the business executive role, with emphasis on the responsibility of maintaining fiscal resources efficiently (Callahan, 1962; Grogan, 2000). By 1965, the United States had approximately 14,000 public school superintendents (Callahan, 1962). Women were successful in their roles as classroom teachers and had gradually earned better wages, pensions, and tenure. Some were promoted to positions as principals of grammar schools and, in some smaller districts, even superintendents. Men, however, continued to dominate in the administrative arena, especially the superintendency.

Through the 1970s, the position of superintendent became increasingly political charged. School boards expected administrators to become actively involved in lobbying for increased funding for districts and better benefits for teachers (Grogan, 2000). At this time, boards also believed an autocratic style was necessary for effective leadership, and this opinion tended to benefit male administrators. Along with this belief, it was generally accepted that the person in charge should develop the institution's vision, possess charisma, while working to distance himself from the followers (Kezar, Carducci & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). In this environment, just 3% of superintendents were women in 1970, followed by a slow rise to 10% in 1998 (Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

Race and Gender

Part of the drop between 1930 and 1970 can be attributed to the implementation of specialized educational requirements that coincided with an era of low admittance rates of women into higher education programs (Blount, 1998; Davis & Samuleson, 1950; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Black women in the South had even more difficulty gaining access to higher education, which limited their chances for admittance into the necessary graduate programs (Hoffman, 2011; McCandless, 1999). The enactment of Title IX in 1972 led to the abolition of the low quotas established to limit the number of women who could enroll in advanced training programs. With the growth of the women's movement, women began to move into the superintendency at a more rapid pace (Shakeshaft 1989, 1999; Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

During the late twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, leadership theorists emphasized traditional women traits, such as listening, caring, and nurturing, as being vital for success. When contemporary men demonstrate this leadership style, they tend to be seen as successful, situational leaders. Yet women, worried about appearing too women or too weak, have often avoided this leadership style. Conversely, when grassroots decision-making fails and a male superintendent makes an executive decision to fire someone, for example, he is seen as "doing what a man must do." A woman in authority, making precisely the same decision, is seen as an out-of-control threat. And, especially if she is single, speculation can arise that she is a lesbian and a threat to children (Blount, 2003; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Peterson & Vaughn-Roberson, 1988;

Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). She is no longer the forgiving domestic

woman (already a suspect leader) that society expects her to be (Gammill &

Vaughn, 2011; Peterson & Vaughn-Roberson, 1988; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich,

2000).

Dress for Success

By the mid-1970s, society had begun to acknowledge that women were,

in fact, entering the workplace in managerial positions, but expected them to be

men in skirted suits. In the late 1970s, *The Woman's Dress for Success Book*

was published and became the go-to reference for many women who were

working in management positions. Written by John T. Malloy, the book was

based on research: "The idea is to use research data to manipulate the dress of an

individual to draw a favorable response from the people he or she meets" (1977,

p. 16). At that time, one-third of the master of business administration graduates

at the top American business schools were women, so Malloy predicted that

America should have a large number of women in the top positions within 10

years. He asserted that women who followed his wardrobe advice would

increase their chances of receiving one of the higher positions (Malloy, 1977).

Malloy further asserted that a woman should attempt to imitate a man to

deemphasize her femininity and enhance her authority. A skirted suit was the suggested

uniform for any woman who wanted to get ahead. He specifically stated that, "Leaders

of the feminist movement should wear it, because in order for the women's movement

to win, women must achieve equal status in their jobs" (Malloy, 1977, p. 37). It was not

possible to gain equal status and equal pay without a collective image equal to that of

men. The appropriate attire that he suggested also included a feminine fedora, shoulder-length hair, contrasting scarf, man-tailored blouse, below-the-knee skirt, natural-color pantyhose, and simple pumps. The color selections were also specifically addressed: Feminine colors such as pink and yellow should be avoided, as well as lower middle class colors such as purple and gold (Malloy, 1977). This outfit should be worn not only for business occasions, but also for after hours. Malloy cautioned women that if they dressed in a more feminine fashion during after-hours functions, they would lose the respect that they were seeking at their place of employment (Malloy, 1977).

Malloy also recommended specific accessories to demonstrate women's leadership capabilities: a gold or silver pen, a plain wristwatch, a leather attaché case with a dial lock, and canvas luggage with leather belting. For women searching for a husband, Malloy followed up with another book titled *Why Men Marry Some Women and Not Others: The Fascinating Research that Can Land You the Husband of Your Dreams.* These self-help books gave women tips to use to improve their chances of landing the ideal husband. Despite all the progress that had been made up to this point, women were still expected to settle down, get married, and have families.

Women were also being coached in how to behave in the workplace. Assertiveness training was offered for women interested in management positions, and women were being told to stand up for their rights in the workplace. During one training session, a woman asked what to do if her boss sent her for coffee. The response was, "If you have to tell your boss not to send you for coffee, you must have already told him nonverbally that you were ready to go" (Malloy, 1977, p. 26). The prevailing theory informed women that they would be viewed as leaders if they dressed and acted more

like men. If someone treated a woman manager poorly, it was because she had dressed

or acted incorrectly. If a woman was to be promoted into a leadership position, her

appearance and assertiveness were more important than her skills and expertise.

Glass Ceiling

School reform efforts in the 1980s caused renewed interest in the importance of

the role of superintendent (Burnham, 1989; Crowson & Morrison, 1987; Cuban, 1984;

Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Paulu, 1989; Grogan, 2000). During this time, additional

attention was devoted to women in or aspiring to leadership positions. *The Wall Street*

Journal wrote about the glass ceiling as a metaphor to describe the apparent barriers

that prevent women from reaching the top of the corporate hierarchy or other leadership

positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). Through the article,

the issue became better understood by mainstream America. The glass ceiling metaphor

describes a rigid barrier that is impenetrable by women, keeping them from advancing.

This overt barrier consisted of implicit rules and norms that would not allow them to

advance into administrative positions.

The glass obstruction used in the metaphor suggested that women were misled

into believing that opportunities for advancement were available, but at some point they

would hit the glass that was an absolute barrier that they were unable to penetrate

(Eagly & Carli, 2007). Many early feminist studies focused on the inequities that

existed in business and institutions of higher learning in an effort to combat the problem

(Blackmore, 1999; Kezar et al., 2006; Young & Skrla, 2003).

In 1991, the U.S. Congress acknowledged the glass ceiling and established a

commission to investigate the issue. During the investigation, employers freely admitted

that women were not their first choice for hiring. Their common concerns were that women had family responsibilities that could potentially cause them to miss work or crucial deadlines for assignments, costing the company money. Some employers also expressed the concern that clients would not feel comfortable working with women or minorities (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In addition, many feminist studies concluded that male characteristics had been the norm in leadership for so long that women experiences had been ignored (Kezar, 2002; Kezar et al., 2006). This means if women lead differently or are treated differently because of their gender, it has not been researched as to why that is occurring.

From the 1990s until the present, the job duties of the superintendent have focused on three essential characteristics: educational leadership, managerial leadership, and political leadership (Glass et al., 2000; Newton, 2006). These characteristics are still primarily viewed as male traits, and the duties are frequently described in masculine terms, because leadership roles are a social construct developed around the male experience (Enomoto, 2000). The superintendency originated in masculine theory, and that kind of thinking continues to guide the ideas that surround the position (Grogan, 2000).

The transference of male theory onto women causes confusion among women administrators about the appropriate leadership styles to implement when they hold leadership positions. They often believe that, to be successful, they must adopt masculine characteristics.

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Conclusion

Despite women's struggles over the years for equal access to the public school superintendency, women still are not equally represented in the position. They continue to be criticized for being too masculine or not masculine enough. In spite of that criticism many women have made positive contributions to the public school systems, but further research is needed in order to add additional women voices to the story. In short, the strands that contribute to the overall picture of women in leadership are many and complicated; societal expectations, whether merited or not, certainly play a role. The perceptions of the women themselves enter into it, along with political and economic conditions, family responsibilities, and a multitude of other factors. Contributing to the difficulties facing women entering the superintendency is the fact that the existing research is either exclusively from the male point of view, or too general to be of use to women entering the position of superintendent. This study will add one specific strand of women leadership to existing research to help complete the story. Specifically, the purpose of this research is to explore the impact that gender makes on the leadership style that women superintendents utilize during their tenure in the position.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework: The Golden Triangle as an Organizational Tool

Women superintendents' voices are faint within the body of literature about the superintendency. Due to the dearth of research this study borrows an interpretive lens explaining women's roles in organizations to help frame the work. A concept entitled The Golden Triangle and was designed by Hein, Murphy & Golant in an attempt to determine how women balance areas of their lives essential to overall happiness: power, relationships, and self-esteem (2003). This chapter explains and modifies the triangle to include leadership theory in the center, which provides a structure for explaining the conditions that affect women, either consciously or unconsciously, when they choose a leadership style.

The Golden Triangle diagram below is Heim et al.'s (2003) visual representation of a framework for exploring a woman's decision-making processes and the potential impacts of her decisions. Although it might seem that the three sides of the triangle – relationships, power, and self-esteem – are simplistic, each is multifaceted and comprised of several subthemes, making this combination an excellent organizational tool through which to organize the literature in this study. Each side and its various components, as described in this chapter, explain the major criteria influencing a given thought process (Heim et al., 2003). The leadership component in the middle, explained in numerous studies reviewed herein, is used to illustrate how women superintendents might adopt a leadership style based on outside influences in a given situation, or generically throughout their career.

It might be argued that the triangle does not represent an explicit feminist perspective. Feminism can be defined as, "a theory and/or movement concerned with advancing the position of women through such means as achievement of political, legal, or economic rights equal to those granted men" (Offen, 1988, p. 120). Hooks more recently stated (2000), "It is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. viii). There are many different categories of feminism including; social, multi-cultural, first-waive, second-wave, third-wave, classical, post-modern, womanist, Black Feminist, minimalist, humanistic, gynocentric, egalitarian, global, relational, existential, radical, Marxist, and socialist to name a few. Some of these positions operate congruent to each other and some are totally opposite of each other (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011). While the research certainly acknowledges women's trials and struggles to obtain and be successful in educational leadership roles it does not expressly exist to undermine the systemic nature of prejudice only to enlighten the reader about how the participants experiences life as superintendents.

Figure 1. Golden Triangle
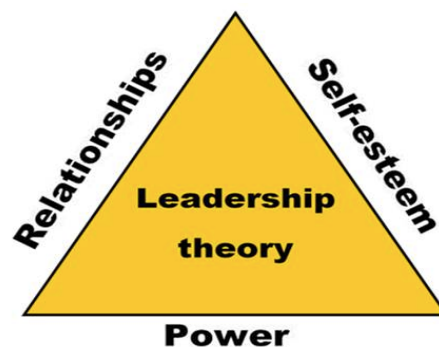
Figure 1. Adapted from Hein, P., Murphy, S., & Golant, S. K. (2003). In the company of women: Indirect aggression among women: Why we hurt each other and how to stop. New York: NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putman p. 21 by S. Gammill, 2016, Women superintendents: The effects of gender on leadership.

<center>**Relationships**</center>

Relationships are the connections that we have with other people (Heim et al., 2003). Family, friends, teachers, board members, community members, staff, and other administrators all demand pieces of a superintendent's time and energy. Balancing all of these relationships effectively is a difficult task for an administrator and occupies a considerable percentage of her work days. These connections require time and effort to maintain, and researchers have noted that women tend to have a difficult time constructing boundaries. They will often work additional hours each day in an attempt to keep everyone happy (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

Women's focus on relationships makes them more likely than men to develop collaborative decision-making and shared leadership teams. The feminine moral voice places more emphasis on protecting interpersonal relationships and taking care of other people (Gilligan, 1982). They are also more likely to feel personally betrayed when staff members disagree or leave for other employment (Heim et al., 2003). They are likely to dwell on such an incident for weeks because they expect loyalty from their co-workers and they do not understand when employees do not reciprocate loyalty.

Misunderstandings

Women do not necessarily understand the political atmosphere that exists within the school system. A clear example of this type of misunderstanding is the idea of insider status. To understand an organization and its rules for advancement, one must have insider status (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Men equate being an insider with being valued, heard, and kept in the communication loop with the superintendent and board members (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). But women misunderstand the political nature of

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being an insider, from the male point of view, because women tend to equate insider status with longevity within a specific organization (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). They often believe that because they have worked in one system for a long period of time, they are entitled to move up in the organization, based on the misconception that the district owes them for their long-term loyalty. Women are much less likely to switch districts than men, because they feel comfortable with familiar surroundings and established relationships (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). They also feel a sense of loyalty to the district, and they sometimes start believing that they are the only person who can do the job properly.

Due to similar misunderstandings, women who do apply for a position in another district might not do the research needed to properly prepare for a school board's questions about district finances (Grogan, 2002). School districts can be completely dissimilar, even when similar in size and geographical location. One community's needs and composition might be so different that even an experienced superintendent will be unsuccessful at implementing programs that worked in previous districts. Rural and urban district positions can be completely different from each other in many aspects, including size, organizational design, student demographics, fiscal resources, and stakeholder demands (Grogan, 2002). Women tend to rank being an educational leader as the most important criterion for effective superintendency, whereas a school board might be looking for someone who is financially savvy. Misreading the values important to the board and political hierarchy of the new district will inevitably cause conflict and hinder success in the new role, even after it is acquired (Grogan, 2002).

Power

Power is the ability to get things done, but many women consider it a taboo subject. Some women do not like to admit that they enjoy having power, and when it comes up in discussion, they tend to change the subject (Heim et al., 2003). Power and friendships do not mix well, and the majority of women prefer friendships.

Moreover, men and women are perceived differently when they wield power. When a man gives an order, he is often viewed as being powerful or commanding, both of which are generally deemed positive attributes. When a woman gives the same command, she is frequently viewed as bitchy, or at best, demanding. This puts women in the precarious position of trying to implement an agenda effectively while still maintaining desired relationships (Heim et al., 2003). Very few women feel comfortable making decisions that will put relationships in jeopardy.

In a 1959 study conducted at UCLA by psychologists French and Raven, the researchers identified six types of power – reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, referent, and associative – and found that men and women used these six types to varying degrees based on their personalities and the situation. Reward power is the ability to give something of perceived value to someone else (Heim et al., 2003). Some examples of rewards are money, promotions, gifts, or praise. Coercive power, on the other hand, is the ability to punish someone. It can be viewed as the opposite of the reward power. Coercive power can be exercised through a demotion at work, a fine, or criticism. Legitimate power is power given to a person by an organization through a title such as manager, vice-president, or director. Power derived from unique abilities or skills is known as expert power. Referent power is based on a person's affection for or

identification with another group. Associative power is granted based on whom a person knows or is associated with in various situations (Heim et al., 2003). Politics and power are realms that superintendents must successfully negotiate in order to fulfill their districts' needs (Brunner, 2007). Because women are so uncomfortable with the idea of possessing power, they frequently go out of their way to prove they are more prepared than their male counterparts.

Personality Traits

In the early 20th century, when the issue of women in leadership positions became more prominent in the public eye, and when women first began to hold positions of authority, some women coming into administrative positions asserted that feminine traits made women better suited than men for leadership roles, arguing that women were natural nurturers and would prepare citizens to take their place in the elite hierarchy (Smith & Vaughn, 2000). Women, in fact, have been identified as being more compassionate and collaborative in nature (Smith, 1979). When they first began entering positions of leadership, women were fearful that their hold on these new positions was tenuous at best, so they appealed to their feminine traits as justification. Some women were viewed as grandmotherly types, which seemed to make a woman superintendent more palatable to the board and community. This was especially true during times of war, when the women were not seen as taking over, but merely filling in until the men came home.

Although less overt in modern society, these ideas continue to marginalize the contributions that women make within the educational setting. Some women believe that in order to reach the very top, they must put aside their feminine traits if they want

to be viewed as effective (Bell, 1995; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). Educational leadership is a profession in which in which men and masculinity have set the standards for so long that women, as isolated members, are pressured to de-feminize or disaffiliate from other women in order to prove themselves as professionals (Bell, 1995; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). They often go out of their way to convince men that they are not like other women (Blackmore, 1993; Heim et al., 2003; Skrla et al., 2000). A candidate in one district explains why she avoids memberships in women's groups: "The best thing for women superintendents is to just fit in with the others [male superintendents]" (Tallerico, 2000, p. 100).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to the value one places on oneself. It is based on a series of factors: accomplishments, relationships, abilities, responsibility, and the individual person's interpretation of how one is perceived by others (Heim et al., 2003). The outward trappings of success do not guarantee a high degree of self-esteem. Many accomplished women who are admired by others still experience low self-esteem. A woman may be highly regarded in her career, but because of negative relationships with romantic partners or family members, she thinks poorly of herself. Women are more likely to talk negatively to themselves about perceived mistakes and are harder on themselves than men (Heim et al., 2003). Likewise, women place a high value on relationships at work, making them much more likely to suffer when interpersonal discord derails those relationships. (Gilligan, 1982; Little; 2014; Markus & Oyserman, 1989; Miller, 1986; Stewart & Lykes, 1985).

Women diminish their self-esteem through negative self-talk when they feel they have made a mistake, and they compound the problem by failing to give themselves proper credit for their successes (Heim et al., 2003). Some women suffer from the phenomenon of impostor syndrome – the feeling that, despite all achievements, they will be found to be a fraud. This affliction is more common among successful women: They feel as though they are faking their way through their accomplishments or that their achievements are the result of luck rather than skill. Ironically, the more education and professional skills women acquire, the less confident they feel (Bahn, 2014). Women generally attribute their accomplishments to outside factors and fail to take credit for hard work, determination, or perseverance (Heim et al., 2003). Men usually have the opposite tendencies: They take credit for their successes while blaming their failures on outside factors (Heim et al., 2003). Self-esteem issues often lead women to take alternate routes into administration, giving them a different background from their male counterparts. The characterization of women and girls' identities as weak and conflicted has many potential negative consequences.

As women progress through their education and careers, their feelings of inadequacy can build and affect everything from job applications and salary negotiations to job placement and tenure prospects (Bahn, 2014). Furthermore, the widespread belief that girls and women have low self-esteem and flawed self-concepts can set up negative expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies. When things go wrong, women often conclude that the problem is their self-concept and personality rather than their environment. In addition, the perception that women have weak identities and low

self-esteem can encourage the public to believe that women are unfit for positions of leadership and power (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2010).

Preparation for Superintendency

Women teachers who later become administrators tend to remain in their teaching positions for an average of 10 years longer than most men in the same situation (Lundeberg & Orienstein, 1991; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1987; Young & McLeod, 2001). Women who do move into administrative positions are much more likely to do so in an elementary setting, whereas men tend to move to the high school level (Prolaman, 1982; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Young & McLeod, 2001). The secondary level provides administrators with opportunities for serving on committees, managing activity funds budgets, and performing additional public relations opportunities that are not available to elementary principals (Marshal, 1985; Young & McLeod, 2001). For these reasons, the high school level is considered to be a direct line to the superintendency. Women are more likely to enter the superintendency by moving up through the central office, whereas men tend to rise up through building level administration (Pascopella, 2008). Women hold approximately 57% of central-office positions and 41% of the principal positions (American Educational Research Association (AERA), 1999).

Super-prepared and Super Woman

Women frequently delay their entry into administration for family reasons (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). They complete all the requirements for administrative certification, earn advanced degrees, and then wait until their children are grown before they choose to follow their personal aspirations (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Another cause for

women's delayed entry is their tendency to be super-prepared before applying (Spencer & Kochan, 2000). Prior to attempting to enter their first leadership position, most women complete their entire degree program, including all requirements for certification. Many women also wait until they are tapped for the position by someone in a position of higher authority, usually a man, rather than pursuing the position on their own (Edson, 1988; Hall & Klotz, 2001; Kamler, 2009; Katz, 2008; Keller, 1999; Pavan, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1987; Weatherly, 2011). This phenomenon can cause permanent delays in women's career advancement, because in many small or rural school districts, the men in higher authority tap young men, not women, for advancement (Brown & Irby, 1998).

Gender Norms

Many women admit to consciously adopting masculine personality characteristics because they are viewed as positive leadership traits (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Women who emulate a gender-neutral leadership style will not be successful (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Grogan, 1996; Lambert, 2002; Skrla, 2008). Gender is constructed within institutional and cultural contexts that produce multiple forms of masculinity (Connell, 1996). Because authority and decisiveness are also associated with leadership, it follows that men are often viewed more positively as leaders. The perception exists that men are more skilled at handling school disciplinary, political, and budgetary issues, especially at the high school and superintendent levels, because these are issues that require the kind of authority often attributed to males (Gwertz, 2006; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Logan, 1998; Marshall & Kasten, 1994; Skrla, 2000, 2001).

Gender norms are the expectations society holds for masculine and feminine behavior. These norms serve to delineate what are and are not considered appropriate behaviors for men and women, including their positions and behavior in work-related fields (Allan, 2005; Bem, 1993; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Kimmel, 2000). Gender norms are learned roles and behaviors, not genetically determined by gender, that are so ingrained in cultural beliefs that it can be difficult to remember that they are social constructs (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Valian (1999) referred to those norms as gender schemas, which are a set of implicit, or unconscious, hypotheses about gender differences. These gender schemas play central roles in shaping men and women's professional lives and have a profound impact on leadership in several ways. When men act with authority and decisiveness, they typically are viewed in a positive light, because these actions fall within the range of desirable behaviors society holds for males. Women behaving in the same way risk being seen as too mannish or are imagined to be lesbian (Lugg, 2003). "Leadership has been described as the capacity to be totally and utterly oneself, to be able to show up fully, to express oneself, and to share this self with an organization that one cares about and wants to influence" (Whyte, 2001, p. xiii). Moreover, when a woman attempts to be more masculine, this can inhibit her performance as a successful administrator if the behavior is not aligned with her true personality (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Bennis, 1989).

Internal and External Turmoil of Being a Woman Administrator

Women report that caregiving roles conflict with the time demands and work pressures associated with the superintendency (Glass et al., 2000). This conflict continues to be a source of turmoil for women superintendents (Mahitivanichcha &

Rorrer, 2006). These factors clearly are related to gender norms (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Women tend to delay entry into administration in part due to their caretaking roles, which in itself may negatively affect their advancement opportunities (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Evidently, it is still true that women's professional careers are tied to biology to a large degree (Miller, 1986). Riehl and Byrd found that, for women moving from teaching to administration, being married and having young children were factors that limited their career advancements (1997). Although some women in this situation deliberately choose not to pursue career advancement, for other women, it is not a choice but a constraint imposed on them.

Superintendents encounter diverse public forces that require them to attend various events and meetings. They often are expected at ceremonial events, community luncheons, and district extracurricular activities. They also are expected to meet personally with interest groups, parents, community figures, political officials, and other stakeholders (Grogan, 2000; Mahiticanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). This kind of work often is added on to one's regular schedule and, in many cases, takes place during evening or weekend hours.

Women administrators find themselves torn between enormous job demands and the family responsibilities that our society tells us are mainly women's duties (Grogan, 1999; Hoff, Menard, & Tuell, 2006; Johnson, 1996; Tallerico, 2000; Valian, 1999; Young & Mcleod, 2001). The result of the established gender norms is that women often lower their career expectations in order to meet family responsibilities (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). For this reason, many women superintendents report that they never planned on pursuing the position (Weatherly 2011; Young & Mcleod, 2001).

To be successful, superintendents must process a wide variety of data ranging, from test scores and accountability measures to student safety information (Grogan, 2000). The time pressures of the job affect male superintendents, but the pressure experienced by women superintendents is more extreme, given the demand of their personal roles and responsibilities (Brunner, 2000). Women engage in what is commonly referred to as the second shift (Hochschild, 1989), which describes the household responsibilities that women typically perform to keep their family lives running smoothly – responsibilities that women frequently feel are primarily theirs, even when other adults reside in the household.

Women also use compressing time to survive the time crisis of balancing work and family responsibilities (Brunner, 2000a). Compressing time, or multitasking, allows women to accomplish more than one task at a time. Although this and other coping strategies allow women to meet the demands of family and career, continuously maintaining this delicate balance is stressful. This may explain some of the decisions that women make, including the decision of whether to pursue (or remain in) an administrative position (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). Research supports the supposition that family responsibilities exert more stress on women than on men, thus constraining their career development in education administration (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Maienza, 1986; Riehl & Byrd, 1997).

Continued Gender Bias

Some states have implemented superintendent hiring policies that tend to favor male applicants. For example, they have waived or eliminated existing policies requiring teaching experience to increase access to the superintendency for business

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executives, military officers, and other non-educators with leadership experience. It must be noted that all of these groups are predominantly male (Grogan, 2000). These certification policies can provide additional access to males, while simultaneously limiting the access of women. These changes are similar to the credentialing requirements and graduate admissions policies that, around 1930, led to the precipitous decline in women's rates of participation among the ranks of superintendents (Blount, 1998; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Despite the universally low percentage of women actually represented in the superintendency, increasing numbers of women are returning to school to earn their administrative credentials (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Among teachers and students earning administrative degrees, women significantly outnumber men (Milstein & Associates, 1993; Murphy, 1993; Snyder, 1993). This indicates that, despite the demands of balancing career and family life, interest in advancement to leadership roles remains high among women.

Recruitment and Retention of Women

The use of recruitment language associated specifically with a particular gender may influence whether or not a potential applicant will apply for the position (Newton, 2006). Women are more likely to view the superintendency in terms of instructional leadership, in part because, compared to men, they spend significantly more time in the classroom prior to obtaining an administrative position (Fauth, 1984; Glass et al., 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Newton, 2006; Pitner, 1981; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999). Due to this phenomenon, women are more likely to be hired based on the strength of their expertise in instructional leadership (Glass et al., 2000). Yet the language used in

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position announcements tends to exclude women who have curriculum expertise (Newton, 2006).

Some gender scholars argue that emphasizing administrative experiences reinforces the notion that males are the ideal candidates for the superintendency (Skrla, 1999; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b; Newton, 2006). Skrla maintained that position announcements emphasizing managerial skills, budgeting, and expertise in maintaining the physical plant exclude women applications by perpetuating the idea that the role is masculine. Examining this issue is crucial to advancing the careers of potential women educators into the role of superintendency (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Women are not believed to be good at finances, but they can combat this misogynistic fallacy by becoming fluent in the language of budgeting (Gardiner et al., 2000; Glass, 2000). Additionally, the terms of superintendents' contracts can be marginalizing to women. Researchers in one study found that male superintendents were more likely than women to have extended contracts (Tallerico & O'Connell, 2011).

Leadership Theories

With a general understanding how women leaders, particularly women superintendents engage organizations like educational institutions this chapter turns to a discussion of specific leadership styles that may characterize their specific means of doing so. Leadership style is determined by values and beliefs about how people learn (Goldman, 1998). Current research indicates that women educational leaders perceive themselves as leaders, and are conscious of the tension between their gender and their power role (Coleman, 2005). Until recently, male leadership models were applied to all people in leadership positions. These models originated from male-dominated

environments, such as the military and the corporate world (Ardovini, Trautman, Brown, & Irby, 2010).

Leadership characteristics typically associated with feminine leadership styles have recently appeared in literature. The feminine style of leadership is generally characterized by more feminine quality soft skills and behaviors such as empathy, effective communication, and collaborative style environment (Kezar et al., 2006). However, until the last 40 years, no leadership theory had been put forth to accommodate these characteristics. The leadership theories taught and utilized in graduate classes generally originated from three different models, all of which are traditionally male-dominated (Ardovini et al., 2010). Leadership concepts from the military, political, and business worlds were borrowed and implemented in the educational realm, creating a male-oriented set of theories (Kezar et al., 2006). These leadership theories were constructed from studies of successful men and consequently designed around male characteristics (Skrla, 2000).

As women entered into leadership, the masculine-based, such as the autocratic style, theories were included in their training, with no regard to possible gender-related differences. However, the use of these models leads to problems for women in leadership positions, because they emphasize personality traits primarily possessed by men. They do not reflect today's best practices in leadership, nor do they promote what research indicates is best for children in schools. These male-centered leadership models are still commonly taught in university leadership programs, but they are not inclusive of all people or applicable to all learners (Irby, Brown, Duffy, & Trautman, 2000). In addition, they are not appropriate for all situations, and they construct barriers

to advancement by women and people of color. Leadership theorists today are questioning the dominant structures and models and proposing alternative models of leadership that de-center the long-accepted patriarchal values. The classic leadership role involves power over another, which has led to women's subordination and disempowerment. Alternative models reject the vertical position of authority and attempt to counter with models that promote group consensus (Jakobsh, 2012).

The male theories that dominate textbooks and are imbedded in coursework teach women that they must use these models if they desire to succeed. Men tend to be more task-oriented and take more risks. These theories were developed for white, heterosexual, Christian men who tend to be more assertive. They fail to teach women to seek out leadership models that are appropriate for them or to provide alternatives more suited to their natural tendencies. The theories promote stereotypical norms for organizational behavior and fail to give voice to all marginalized groups (Irby et al., 2000). Public education is supposed to be inclusive of all people regardless of gender. However, educational leadership begins the exclusion process in the very beginning by educating leaders using archaic models of leadership. Communicative and participatory leadership models are more aligned with women's leadership styles since they involve dialogue, nurturing, and problem solving (Jakobsh, 2012).

To fully understand any specific trend or movement in public school education, it is crucial to consider the historical context. Every change occurs in response to a social issue or public concern, such as industrialization or the women's rights movement. It is important to remember that evolving leadership policy, women's participation in education, and the fight for social reforms directly affected the

development of public education in the United States. By juxtaposing the impacts of past development in the educational system with the current experiences of women in the field, researchers can create a more complete picture of the situation.

In the late 20th century, leadership theorists developed new models specifically designed to be inclusive of all persons. This evolution in thinking is part of the historical context, but these newer theories are not necessarily included in the textbooks used in graduate-level administrative classes (Bjork, 2008). One potential reason for this is that many people still are not willing to discuss the issue of gender inequality and misogynies. However, examining all contributing factors, including developments in inclusive leadership theories, will provide a more comprehensive awareness of how and why the issue continues to be a problem, despite the claim that Americans provide equal rights for all people.

Over the last 20 years, a body of research has emerged to examine androcentric bias, gender barriers, and masculine values, as well as the expectations and culture that dominate the superintendency (Bjork, 2008; Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000a; Chase & Bell, 1994; Grogan, 2000; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Marshall, 1985; Shakeshaft, 1989; Skrla et al., 2000; Tallerico, 2000a; Young & Skrla, 2003). Women are interested in and qualified for the superintendency, but they encounter constraints that limit their choice of positions and slow their progress toward the superintendency (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). Despite the growing research, the picture remains incomplete, as indicated by the low percentages of women actually in the superintendency. If researchers and practitioners can gain a fuller understanding of how

women's chosen leadership styles affect their success in the position, we will have a more complete picture.

As noted, research on educational leadership has been conducted primarily on men in male-dominated organizations. These male leadership models have been applied to the superintendency regardless of the superintendent's gender. Many male-dominated agencies sponsored the development of the research studies that subsequently led to the advancement of the current leadership theories. The participants in the research studies were white, heterosexual, Christian males. Misogynist's language is often present, and the leader is defined in male terms (Irby et al., 2000). Educational theories developed from an androcentric framework result in imbalance that does not necessarily represent the women paradigm (Shakeshaft, 1989). Historically language use has come to be connected with either masculinity or femininity (Baxter, 2010).

Men and women are thought to speak differently and judged about their leadership capabilities based on their language. Women are valued for their contribution because of their feminine qualities. They are expected to take supportive and cooperative roles and for establishing relationships of personal respect and trust (Baxter, 2010). Speech styles and language usage that school boards typically seek during interviews for potential superintendent searches tend to be more masculine based. Men are viewed as rational, independent, competitive, and confrontational, while women are seen as more irrational, dependent, co-operative, passive, and conciliatory (Baxtor, 2010). Baxter asserts:

> Men use speech to command and control, to get access to the floor, and once there, to keep it. Men are likely to use language for display purposes, asserting

their dominance through verbosity, name-dropping, subtle or overt boasting, and

entertainment strategies such as jokes and anecdotes. Women on the other hand

are expected to listen and to be amused by men. On the whole, they are

expected to agree and support, not to interrupt, challenge, or question the

authority of men. Leadership language remains masculinized and the property

of males in current businesses. (p. 24)

Educational leadership research, when it mentions women at all, assumes that

women do not have the same career aspirations as men and that women who wish to

advance must behave like men. If research by women did not produce similar results,

their results were simply ignored (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Research on the issue of gender differences in educational leadership supports

the precepts that men are perceived to be more competent than women with regard to

leadership styles traditionally associated with men. Therefore, a successful organization

should understand leadership in terms of gender, recognizing that different styles can

make a positive contribution to organizational effectiveness (Burnes & Martin, 2010).

Henderson observed, "The major issue is not men versus women. Instead, it is fairness

for all workers regardless of their gender" (1994, p. 54). "Effective leadership behaviors

should be effective regardless of the gender of the leader" (Burnes & Martin, 2010, p.

30). Leaders should pick the style that fits their personality and circumstances most

effectively, rather than limiting themselves in their choices due to inadequate or

inappropriate information.

Women continue to face stereotypes and discrimination in school

administration. Shelter suggested that, "Superiors may rely more on gender stereotypes

and assumptions in describing and rating male and women leadership effectiveness and performance than on any other standard of effectiveness" (2002, p. 1). Women leaders often have felt the need to pattern their leadership styles on successful male leadership behaviors (Burns & Martin, 2010). Women are in a precarious position because they are devalued if they display feminine behaviors, such as being nurturing or collaborative, but are chided for exhibiting masculine behaviors, such as assertiveness (Stelter, 2002). Women are naturally socialized with skills in participative leadership, collaborative group management, and interpersonal relationships, whereas men's styles have been described as more goal-driven (Stelter, 2002). In the attempt to fully comprehend the characteristics that create a successful leadership experience within today's organizations, these gender issues are an important challenge for women leaders.

As women attempt to break through the glass ceiling or maneuver through the labyrinth, it is crucial that they continue to search for the leadership style that will work best for them. In everything from interpersonal relationships to social role expectations to differences in perception, men and women may indeed lead differently. They may also be followed differently based upon the leadership choices that they make (Burns & Martin, 2010). Rosenback and Taylor confirmed the need to consider gender issues as "an important challenge for leadership" (1998, p. 56). Using the masculine command-and-control style of managing is not the only way to succeed. In fact, for women, it is possibly the worst possible leadership choice (Burns & Martin, 2010).

Goodnight (2011) defined leadership as the interactive process that provides needed guidance and direction. Leadership involves three interacting dynamic elements: a leader, a follower or followers, and a situation. The leader's role is to

provide direction and support for their success, and ultimately the organization's

success (Goodnight, 2011). The leadership style consists of the leader's personality,

demeanor, and communication patterns as they guide others in an effort to meet

organizational goals (Hoyle, 2006). Leadership styles are numerous, and some leaders

manage successfully to merge two or more styles as they lead their organizations. The

section below examines several commonly cited styles and discusses how they

intertwine with the three sides of the Golden Triangle.

Autocratic Leadership

The most male-centric form of leadership is the autocratic style. The autocratic

leader thrives in a highly structured environment, such as bureaucratic and military

organizations. The autocratic leader has a well-defined and controlled disciplinary

process with an emphasis on punishments for people who do not comply with orders.

The leader determines the policies, procedures, rules, and goals of the organization and

controls the flow of information (Goodnight, 2011).

Autocratic leaders are rigid in their thinking and perceptions. They generally

believe that employees have minimal abilities and need close supervision and directions

to ensure compliance. Cooperation, collaboration, and team member achievement are

minimized in order to achieve the leader's goals. Autocratic leadership results in

minimal innovation for the organization, as well as stifled development of team

members. This type of leadership is generally the preferred style in the military, police

forces, and other organizations in which individuals may be in dangerous situations

(Goodnight, 2011). Other types of organizations may use this style if the leader does not

trust staff members to produce results on their own.

Authoritarian Leadership

Authoritarian leaders use control as the primary management strategy and, when necessary, will use coercive tactics to enforce rules. This type of leader emphasizes objectivity in the workplace and tends to be impervious to human issues, including those related to race or gender. The authoritarian leader operates under the belief that people must be closely supervised and forced to work and that staff members should be punished for lack of productivity. This type of leadership style generally operates using clear organizational charts with well-defined levels of authority and reporting processes (Hoyle, 2006).

Many school boards prefer this type of leadership to be used by their superintendent because they want a take-charge type of leader. As the primary focus in education turns more to high-stakes testing and test scores, the board views this type of leadership as the one that can force teachers to accomplish the district's goals. Excessive accountability requirements by legislators, school boards, and community stakeholders can easily lead to this type of leadership (Hoyle, 2012).

Command-and-Control Leadership

Another leadership style is termed command and control. This leader is a person who follows the rules and expects others to do the same. As the sole decision maker, he or she expects immediate compliance from all subordinates. This leader engages in top-down interaction, views himself as "The Boss," and is inflexible about deadlines. One drawback of this style is that it gives others little chance to debrief and learn how to develop their own leadership abilities (Blanken, 2013).

The command-and-control leadership style can be used successfully in certain types of circumstances. When safety or legal issues arise with little time for discussion, this style of leadership is appropriate. For instance, in critical situations involving financial issues, or when the entire organization is at risk, command-and-control leadership is often the best choice (Blanken, 2013).

Charismatic Leadership

People who attempt to influence others through the power of their personality use the charismatic leadership style (Blanken, 2013). This leader generally acts with energy, attempting to motivate others to move forward with district goals and spur others to action. Charismatic leaders can inspire great loyalty from their followers. However, the charismatic style is also associated with several drawbacks. Most obviously, if the leader leaves, the group and its projects may well flounder. In addition, charismatic leaders frequently believe in themselves more than they do the members of the team, which has a tendency to limit the development of team members. This can also lead the charismatic leader to overestimate his or her own abilities, which can result in catastrophe if the organization takes on too much risk (Blanken, 2013).

Democratic Leadership

Leaders who use democratic decision-making encourage group discussion and believe in decision-making through consensus (Woods, 2005). Policy development and decision-making are achieved through collaboration between the group and the leader. "Authority and power are shared and not confined to the top echelons" (Knezevich, 1984, p. 67). Democratic leaders might make the final decision, but they do so only

after carefully considering the input of the other group members. Usually, the leader follows the majority's wishes.

Democratic leaders are generally popular. They make members of the group feel included and promote teamwork and creativity. The foundation of democratic leadership is an open approach to shared knowledge. The democratic involvement improves staff engagement and self-esteem as well (Cheung & Cheng, 2002). Democratic leadership taps the ideas, creativity, and skills of all stakeholders, which can unbridle a greater capacity for organizational responsiveness and sustained improvement. The involvement of a variety of independent people will, on the whole, lead to better decision-making processes (Surrowiecki, 2004). Democratic styles of leadership enable schools to cope better with complexity and work intensification. Sharing the burdens of leadership and teaching can ameliorate increased demands on time and effort (Grace, 1995). Democratic leadership is a social phenomenon that is not reducible to the actions of a single person. Research shows that democratic leadership styles yields better results than many of the previously popular leadership styles (Eisenhardt, 1999; Surrowiecki, 2004; Woods, 2005). The democratic leadership model explicitly addresses the question of who does what and who should participate in leadership (Woods, 2005).

Although democratic leadership has been described as the most effective decision-making style, it does have its drawbacks. Reaching group consensus can be a slow process – sometimes cripplingly slow for a project on a short deadline. When every group member has a chance to be heard, discussion can last for a very long time. This can lead to frustration and sometimes even uncompleted projects (Woods, 2005).

Laissez-Faire Leadership

The *laissez-faire* concept, originally associated with mercantilism, refers to an economic system which functions best when the government does not interfere. The natural unfolding of events is expected to produce the best possible outcome for the benefit of the individual and, in turn, the community (Goodnight, 2011). *Laissez-faire* leaders know what is happening in the organization, but are not directly involved in it. They frequently monitor performance and give feedback, but they trust people to keep their word and complete tasks. This leadership style is effective when the team is skilled, experienced, self-directed, and able to use time and resources effectively and efficiently. The autonomy of team members can lead to very high levels of job satisfaction and high productivity when everyone is committed to their assignments and possesses a clear understanding of the intended results (Blanken, 2013).

Situational Leadership

The situational leader changes styles as necessary to meet the needs of the organization or of individual teachers (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). He or she attempts to adapt his or her behavior to the group's readiness to take on tasks independently. The situational leader will use both directing and supporting techniques in an attempt to empower and guide team members. This style appears to be simple in theory, but is extremely complicated in practice. Numerous variables must be considered when determining the appropriate leadership style to use. Cognitive complexity and psychological type are two variables that should be considered. The situational leadership style can be successful if the organization frequently changes team members, because the leaders are able to adapt behavior to team members'

personalities as necessary. However, this leadership style can be confusing to team members if the style changes unpredictably or too often (Blanken, 2013).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership can provide organizations with a road toward reform. Leaders using this style create an environment in which every person is empowered to fulfill his or her highest needs and become a contributing member of a productive learning community. Transformational leaders are servants to others, guiding them to create and embrace a vision for the organization. Hoyle asserted that this method helps create a belief system of integrity, a cause beyond oneself, diversity of thought, and inclusiveness for all races and genders (2012). Social justice is an important emerging movement frequently linked to this type of leadership style (Hoyle, 2012). Crucial to the success of the transformational leader is the recognition of the need to share power with all members of the organization (Furin, 2004). Transformational leadership is sometimes criticized for placing too much reliance on the top leader, who might be held up as the hero of the system, which can reinforce dependence on a dominant group of leaders (Woods, 2005, p. 1).

Invitational Leadership

The invitational leadership style is based on invitational theory, defined as a collection of assumptions that attempt to explain a specific phenomenon and gather people to realize their potential to address the phenomenon (Purkey, 1992). For example, if low test scores are the specific phenomenon being addressed in a district, the invitational leader will gather people with expertise to work together to combat the specific problem of low test scores. This leadership model blends leadership qualities,

values, and principles and involves stakeholders to meet the needs of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2002). Stillion and Siegel asserted that, "Invitational leaders work to establish an environment where workers are able to achieve their goals and potential while participating in the shared vision and mission of the group" (2005).

Invitational leaders must have four essential characteristics if they are to be successful in this leadership style: optimism that people have potential for growth; respect for each person as an individual possessing innate worth; trust in the ability and integrity of others; and intention, the decision to purposely act in a certain way to achieve and carry out a goal (Burns & Martin, 2010). The invitational leader strives to work with others to create a positive school culture by determining whether the organization's polices are too restrictive and confining. Frequently, policies squelch individuality and do not lend themselves to this type of leadership style.

Processes are a vital component of the invitational leadership model (Burns & Martin, 2010; Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Purkey, 1992; Purkey & Novak, 1996; Purkey & Siegel, 2003; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). In many school districts, the participation process is limited due to leadership issues. Leaders who make an effort to establish a successful school culture seem to be aware of the importance of inclusive leadership during the decision-making process (Burns & Martin, 2010).

Servant-Leadership

A person with a servant attitude is always searching and listening in an attempt to make things better. The modern era of servant leadership began with a paper, *The Servant as Leader,* written in 1970 by Robert Greenleaf, who claimed that, "The servant leader is servant first" (p. 7). It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve,

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followed by a conscious choice to seek a leadership position. For the servant who has

the innate capacity to be a builder, the greatest self-fulfillment will be met when he or

she can lead and build the organization where he or she works (Greenleaf, 1977). Grant

asserted that:

> Servant leaders are the beneficiaries of important contacts, information,
>
> and insights that make them more effective and productive in what they
>
> do, even though they spend a great deal of their time sharing what they
>
> learn and helping others through such things as career counseling,
>
> suggesting contacts, and recommending new ways of doing things. (2013,
>
> p. 18)

Servant leaders give freely to everyone involved in their organization (Grant,

2013). Some of the people interviewed in Grant's study acknowledged that this

leadership style makes them uncomfortable, because they are fearful that people will

view them as weak or naïve. One interviewee admitted that she had participated in a

leadership aptitude survey that identified professional strengths. The survey indicated

that kindness and compassion were her top two strengths, but she was hesitant to share

that information with anyone because she was concerned it would jeopardize her career

as an executive (Grant, 2013). Kindness and compassion are considered to be feminine

traits that do not fit within the masculine-driven leadership theories that most businesses

utilize.

Social Constructivism

In the 1980s new cultural theories of leadership provided the foundation for new

paradigms in leadership. The previous theories were based on a functionalist paradigm

that has generalizable qualities and predictable outcomes (Kezar et al., 2006). Major

changes in the leadership literature led to the rise of three new approaches. The social

constructivism, critical, and postmodern leadership paradigms share many similar

assumptions. People that support Social Constructivism's major assumptions are that

subjective experiences are important to how leadership emerges. Culture and context

have a significant effect on leadership and ever evolving concept that has changed over

time. The purpose of social constructivism's purpose is to interpret and understand what

people perceive about leadership and to help leaders in understanding how their

perspectives affect a leadership process (Kezar et al., 2006). Social interaction is

important in this framework and the research focuses on the interactions of the people

involved.

Critical Paradigms

Leadership has a history of oppression and therefore viewed with suspicion by

many groups because it is used as a means of maintain authority and control. Critical

paradigms are designed to serve a broader goal of social change, using new language

that empowers individuals and groups that have been historically marginalized. Critical

paradigm's purpose is to develop representations and strategies of leadership that are

empowering and create social change (Kezar et al., 2006).

Post Modern

Post modern's point of view is that leadership has been an expression of the will

to power, but is contingent upon human construction that is affected by local conditions,

history and the ambiguity and complexity of the human experience. Its purpose is to

examine whether it is merely the will to power and to explore whether certain complex

conditions can result in leadership. These changes in leadership paradigms also reflect the changing context of leadership. People that support these theories recognize that they do not fit into the strictest empirical research as the functionalist does because it does not predict behavior, but strives to improve understanding (Kezar et al., 2006). It is very hard to define and is used in a wide variety of areas of study including art, music, literature, and technology. The focus is more on ability of people to shape their existence rather than studying followers as victims of leaders. For this type of leadership to work the leaders must be clear about their mission.

Synergistic Leadership

Developed in 2000, the synergistic leadership theory is inclusive of the women leadership experience and leadership behaviors generally thought to be feminine (Ardovini et al., 2010). According to Ardovina et al.,(2010) women researchers developed the synergistic leadership theory utilizing a women sample and including the feminine perspective. This holistic leadership theory integrates four interconnected elements of leadership: organizational structures, leadership behaviors, external forces and beliefs, and attitudes and values.

This theory acknowledges that women contribute unique leadership skills that might be different from the traditional male leadership behaviors but that are nonetheless valuable. In today's global economy, skills such as communication, collaboration, and the ability to develop networks and relationships are necessary and highly valued (Brown & Irby, 2003). These skills have previously been associated with feminine attributes, and were not taught in the androcentric leadership models.

Although successful leaders are able to demonstrate and utilize various styles to

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be effective in their jobs, ranging from autocratic to collaborative, this leadership model attempts to ensure that both sides of the continuum are presented and valued. People who lead complex educational organizations successfully must possess a multitude of skills and abilities in order to provide learning environments that help students become adults who can compete in the global market (Irby, Brown, Duffy, & Trautman, 2000).

Team Models

In the early 2000s supporters of team models believe that certain leadership trains such as integrity are important. Team models emerged from feminist research and might be categorized under the social and cultural paradigms (Kezar et al., 2006) Team relational leadership is a newer approach that was brought about from criticisms of modern organizations that are rigid and lacking in innovation. Studies of women and cross-cultural leaders show that these groups demonstrate a preference for collective work. A review of studies of women leaders revealed that leadership is defined as a collective and collaborative process focused on relationships and networks. All members of the teams are equal and deserve respect even though they might be different. The differences are valued as a positive addition and as an advantage (Kezar et al., 2006)

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

A gradual shift from top-down authoritarianism to more inclusive styles has had a major impact on America's schools. These changes in leadership styles have created a more adaptive system that has been enriched by new perspectives (Kezar et al.,2006). During this ongoing transformation, the leader must be cautious to ensure that no voices are excluded and that equity and justice are maintained for all participants (Hoyle,

<div align="center">66</div>

2012). It is important that leaders are culturally intelligent and able to understand the perspective of those from different genders, races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds (Kezar et al., 2006). Scholars have begun to examine the ethical foundations of new approaches to leadership. The ethic of care has been applied to the development of a moral foundation for leadership (Kezar et al, 2006; Nodding, 1984; Pellicer, 2003).

Women administrators frequently must walk a tightrope between the desires of the school board, the needs of the educational organization, and their own natural propensity for a particular leadership style. A woman candidate might not be hired as superintendent if she cannot convince the school board that she has the power to control teachers and staff, but on the other hand, she might not be successful in the position if she forces herself to adopt a leadership style unsuited to her personality and outlook.

Given the problems of today's superintendent and the richness of women's history in educational leadership, contemporary women superintendents' leadership behaviors can be interpreted in myriad ways. Through detailed interviews, this study gathers histories, background information, and examples of the lived experiences of 10 women superintendents. By filtering these interviews through the decision-making model of the Golden Triangle, through the three diverging elements represented by its sides, and through the processes of hermeneutic phenomenology, this study will illuminate women's decision-making with regard to their leadership models and behaviors and provide insight into how these decisions affect their success in their positions.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Chapter Three introduces the methodology selected as the framework for this study. The interpretive paradigm has been selected because of the potential to generate new understandings of complex, multidimensional human phenomena, specifically, seeking practical knowledge from the embedded world of meanings and of human interactions (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The chapter begins with a brief introduction and the historical evolution of phenomenology as a philosophy as well as how it is applied methodologically is addressed. It then focuses on van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology in addition to van Manen's (2014) newer expansion and addition of ideas as the research methodology for this study. van Manen (1990, 2014) utilizes a combination of European and American phenomenology, which allows the research to take advantage of various types of phenomenological nuances. Finally, the researcher addresses the specifics of the research design. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the relationship between gender and leadership styles utilized by women superintendents.

Introduction

Interpretive research is a kind of qualitative research that explores humans' meaning-making behaviors. Under the interpretive research umbrella, hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on interpreting, understanding, and attaching meaning to participants' experiences, rather than explaining them (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). In research that utilizes the hermeneutic methodology, the goal is for findings to emerge from the interactions between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 1998).

Because every lived experience is unique, each perspective further distinguishes the complexities surrounding the phenomenon. van Manen utilized an amalgamation of European and American phenomenology, which allows the researcher to take advantage of assorted types of phenomenological nuances (1990, 2014). This methodology was selected because, for the purposes of this study, it provided a relevant way to collect and organize data, identify themes, and discover answers to my research question while adding the participants' voices to the story.

In this chapter the development of hermeneutic phenomenology is described, and it is explained how the components are utilized to gain information. Then it describes how components are used to search for the information necessary to answer the research question. Next, it addresses the specifics of the research design and the implications of the themes that emerge. The subsequent chapter focused on the 10 interviews conducted with women superintendents. Chapter Four will begin with vignettes. These vignettes have provided a snapshot of each participant, highlighting information such as years of service, education level, leadership style, personality, and any additional nuances that added detail regarding their experiences as a women superintendent. Each vignette ends with an analysis and interpretation of the data through writing. Phenomenology seeks to help the researcher understand how individuals construct their lives' meaning intersubjectively, through mutual agreement with others about the shared meaning of words and concepts.

A phenomenological researcher attempts to interpret and find meaning in a specific phenomenon that an individual experiences. But because every lived experience is unique, each perspective (including the researcher's) adds to the

complexity surrounding the phenomenon. Phenomenological writing often consists of narrative, such as an anecdote or story, to help illustrate and make comprehensible ideas that might otherwise escape us (van Manen, 1990). In phenomenological research, writing is an essential element that helps the researcher synthesize the information. Annells (1996) viewed hermeneutics as an interpretive process that uses language to attempt to bring understanding to experiences and phenomena. Chapter Five provides the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the research.

The Beginnings of Phenomenology

In the field of philosophy, phenomenology began to flourish in the United States in the early 1900s. As the concept spread among thinkers, many different viewpoints developed, eventually creating a division among philosophers. This fissure resulted in two opposing schools of thought: transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). These two schools of thought have resulted in many different perspectives and approaches that researchers and scholars have used over the years operationalizing it from many perspectives. The overarching theme is that phenomenology seeks to understand how individuals involved in a particular relationship construct meaning through intersubjectivity. As the individual experiences a phenomenon and describes it to the researcher, the researcher attempts to interpret it and discover the meaning that the individual attaches to it. The interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to generate new understandings of "complex multidimensional human phenomena" (Ajjawi & Higgs, p. 614).

Transcendental Phenomenology

German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) first conceived phenomenology in the late 19th century. Husserl believed that truths could not be measured objectively without taking into consideration the subjective human experience. This led to the development of transcendental phenomenology, a conceptual approach used to describe a phenomenon as it is observed through consciousness, without considering questions of its cause (Keller, 1999; Kockelmans, 1994). In a process known as synthesis, transcendental researchers seek to wring data from the interviews to clarify the transcendent themes expressed, searching line by line through the interview responses and looking at precisely what is said by the participants. They do not interpret the results – that is, attempt to assign meaning to them – until they have completed the synthesis. They seek to reduce the interviews sufficiently to reveal cross-themes and learn what is common to each one (Will, 2012). The data will be synthesized using van Manen's (1990) approach, following multiple steps: life-world existential as guide, isolating thematic categories, and hermeneutic phenomenological writing.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Existentialism

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a philosopher of the late 19th century and early 20th century and a student of Husserl, disagreed with his mentor's view of phenomenology as a rigorous science free of all presuppositions. Heidegger asserted that transcendental phenomenology focused on things only as they appeared, rather than as they truly are, and therefore was appropriate only for describing, rather than understanding, a given phenomenon. Heidegger's work proposed that consciousness is

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not separate from the world of human existence, and he argued for an existential adjustment to Husserl's writings that interprets human experiences (Critchley & Schürman, 2008; Harman, 2007).

Heidegger further postulated the existence of a pre-understanding, which refers to meanings of a culture, or the organization of any human structure, that are present before we understand and become part of the culture or structure. People cannot step outside of, or put aside, the historical structure because it ingrained in us and dictates part of our understanding of the world (Laverty, 2003). Interpretation is seen as critical to this process of understanding. Heidegger further set himself apart from Husserl by claiming that to be human is to interpret, and by stressing that every encounter involves an interpretation influenced by an individual's background or history (Heidegger, 1927, 1962). Therefore, according to Heidegger, human life must be observed in its state of being, which allows for the interpretation of existence (Critchley & Schuman, 2008; Harmon, 2007; Smith 2011).

According to Heidegger, consciousness is not separate from the world, but is a formation of a historically lived experience. A person's background and native culture have a great effect on how he or she understands his or her experiences and makes sense of the world (Laverty, 2003). This process of intersubjectivity produces a circularity of interpretation and understanding known as the hermeneutic circle (Smith, 2011).

Hermeneutic Circle

The hermeneutic circle refers to a process of interpretation in which one builds an understanding of a whole in terms of a reality situated in the detailed experience of an individual's everyday existence (Smith, 2011). Twentieth-century philosopher Hans-

Georg Gadamer would expand the hermeneutic circle further by positing that the true understanding of the whole requires a view of horizons between the interpreter and the researcher. A horizon, as defined by Gadamer, is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point (2006). The hermeneutic process becomes a dialogical method whereby the horizon of the interpreter and the phenomenon being studied are merged together with each other to gain a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon (Dowling, 2007). Gaining a better understanding from the back-and-forth movement between the horizons requires an in-depth analysis of lived experiences. The components of the Golden Triangle, detailed in chapter two, have provided a frame that allows the researcher to weave threads of understanding about leadership style throughout the process.

The hermeneutic circle will be used at this stage to interpret the research phenomenon and to aid in giving meaning to the collected information. Ajjawai and Higgs (2007) defined the hermeneutic circle as "a metaphor for understanding and interpretation, which is viewed as a movement between parts (data) and whole (evolving understanding of the phenomenon), each giving meaning to the other such that understanding is circular and iterative" (p. 623). The themes have been continuously moved back and forth between the literature, the research texts, and the earlier analysis, moving from parts to whole. This stage helped the researcher reflect on the emerging interpretations in the process of writing and articulating the interviews (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). In addition existing literature was consulted to find support for the emerging themes to aid in the back and forth movement between the horizons and an in-depth analysis of lived experiences. The horizon is the range of vision that

includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. A horizon then is the interpreter's experience, which includes prejudices and biases.

Another challenge of hermeneutic phenomenology is disentangling the themes and "bracketing," or setting aside, the results. Using the hermeneutic circle helps make sense of the data. LeVasseur (2003) has compared the hermeneutic circle to a children's game to show how it brings meaning to the data. In the game, someone puts an unknown object into a brown paper bag, and players try to guess the name of the object. The bag acts as a temporary bracket because it prevents players from knowing and labeling the object by sight. If a player places his or her hand into the bag, he or she will discover some of the item's specific qualities and can begin to identify the object. Likewise, in hermeneutic phenomenological research, we sense the textures and shapes of the conversations and gradually make sense of the phenomenon. But different people – different researchers as well as different participants – will associate different meanings with the phenomenon based on their context and personal frames of reference (Crotty, 1998). This is because the positionality of each researcher will be different.

Max van Manen's Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a Methodology

van Manen attempted to introduce and elucidate a hermeneutic approach to phenomenology embedded in the everyday lived experiences of human beings. To study lived experiences from a phenomenological perspective means capturing and interpreting the phenomena as they present themselves through the consciousness of the researcher. van Manen (1990) described the purpose of phenomenological research as borrowing the collected experiences and interpretations of another human being, within the setting of the whole of human existence, and filtering these experiences and

interpretations through oneself in order to obtain a greater understanding. Building upon this idea, Annells (1996) viewed hermeneutics as an interpretive process that helps bring understanding to phenomena through language. Our individual consciousness is the only connection humans have to the world, and to observe consciousness allows phenomenology to explicate the meanings as they are lived (van Manen, 1990). The aim of phenomenology, then, is to transform a lived experience into a descriptive expression of its essence. The effect of the text is at once a reflexive and reflective appropriation of something meaningful (van Manen, 1990).

In this study van Manen's human science approach was used, through hermeneutic phenomenology, to guide the methodology – formulating questions, collecting and describing data, explicating phenomena, and constructing textual reflections – and help interpret the meaning of consciousness through lived experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenological researchers analyze interview data to find the experiences and the conceptual frameworks that provide deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 1990, 2014).

A theme is a recurring statement or idea that is present throughout the text. van Manen described these occurrences as thematic categories and articulated their meaning within hermeneutical writing as a way to determine the experiential structures that make up particular experiences. In other words, the researcher tries to find meaningful themes in the accounts from the participants. van Manen (1990) posited that the description of any lived experience is an appropriate source for uncovering or revealing the thematic aspects of the phenomenon that are meaningful to the participant. As themes surface from the lived experiences, they will be reflected through van Manen's fundamental

existential themes. In hermeneutic phenomenology research, it is important to note that the researcher does not simply capture and transpose parts of the conversations, but conducts interpretive analysis to situate them for further analysis and discussion.

This process involves using the hermeneutic circle in an effort to peel back layers, searching for meaning. van Manen also asserted that not all meanings of significance surface from lived experiences. It is necessary to determine incidental themes from essential ones. In this research the nuances of life experiences were searched, as van Manen suggested, in order discovering the different ways women experience the superintendent's role. These nuances and experiences are the links that, so far, are missing in the literature. The approach favored by van Manen aims toward more complexity, which has resulted in additional thematic threads. These threads have become the theoretical framework for my study (van Manen, 2014).

This methodology requires horizontal, dialectical interaction between the parts and the whole of the text, as well as the parts and whole of the researcher's experiences with the phenomenon. Several rewrites have been necessary in order to gain more understanding. This process of intersubjectivity produces a circularity of interpretation and understanding known as the hermeneutic circle. van Manen himself acknowledged the difficulty of conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study: "to do hermeneutic phenomenology is an attempt to accomplish the impossible: To construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the life-world, yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication or meaning can reveal" (van Manen, 1990, p. 18).

In his first research, van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological methodology introduced six systematic structures of human science research that provide researchers with the methods necessary to elucidate some aspect of the life-world – the sum of experiences and activities that constitute the life of an individual or group (Kongsuwan, 2009; Smith, 2011; van Manen, 1990):

1. Turning to the nature of lived experience.

2. Investigating experiences as lived.

3. Reflecting on essential themes.

4. Engaging in the art of writing and rewriting.

5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation.

6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (van Manen, 1990).

Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience

Phenomenological research is driven by a phenomenon in the world that interests us to a point that we feel compelled to study it. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher internalizes and reflects on the collected information using his or her own knowledge and experiences to decipher and to find understanding through various methods. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher internalizes and reflects on the collected information using his or her own knowledge and experiences to decipher and to find understanding through various methods. The researcher needs to be full of thought in an attempt to figure out not just the parts of the world, but more importantly the whole (van Manen, 1990, 2014).

Investigating Experience as We Live It

van Manen (1990, 2014) describes phenomenological research as establishing a contact with a lived experiences through investigation. This research provides a basic understanding of the nature of the lived experience itself (Smith, 2011; van Manen, 1990, 2014).

Reflecting on Essential Themes

van Manen (1990, 2014) emphasizes that the understanding of some phenomenon through lived experiences is not truly understood until the lived experiences are brought to consciousness first in thought and then secondly on paper. The process of reduction involves peeling back the layers of influence while seeking to discover the first meaning of the lived experiences through reflective practice exposing the meaning of a phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). The primary process of any phenomenological inquiry rests on reflective practice, it may be difficult to convey or interpret silent or obscure meanings that are lost through text or observational description. Through reflection, the inquirer comes to distinguish structures within the lived experiences. These structures or themes are communicated through the writing and interpretation process (Smith, 2011; van Manen, 1990, 2014).

These themes are not the same themes that are utilized by other qualitative research methods through coding of transcripts or counting the frequency of use. Phenomenological themes are understood as the structures of the phenomenon, or experience. van Manen (1990) reflects, "Making something of a text or lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure" (p. 79). The theme is the experience of focus or

meaning of capturing a snapshot of the phenomenon. van Manen (2014) described

phenomenological research as a method driven by a phenomenon in the world that

interests us so greatly that we feel compelled to study it. Heidegger (1971) claimed, "To

think is to confine yourself to a single thought that one day stands still like a star in the

world's sky" (p. 4). To be full of thought means we are searching for the meanings of

the parts of the world that consume us until we reach understanding (van Manen, 2014).

Existentialism are universal themes that will help to explore meaning aspects of our

life-world and how it relates to the particular phenomena, in this case women

superintendents and the leadership theory they utilize within the context of their job

(van Manen, 2014).

The researcher attempts to make sense of the lived experience while remaining

open to the discovery of new meanings. van Manen (1990) also cautions, "Grasping

and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of

seeing meaning" (p. 79). There are four fundamental existential of spatiality used as

heuristic guides for reflecting on human experiences (van Manen, 1990). In his latest

research van Manen (1990, 2014) expanded and modified these four to stand alone

topics and not be a subheading of Reflecting on Essential Themes, which he referrers to

as guided existential inquiry. His adaptations are more about the observations collected

during the interviews and less about the process of writing the findings. To write a

comprehensive paper that covered all of the nuances, both texts were utilized to produce

this research. He stressed the importance to gather rich subtle experiential detail from

the participants a reflective inquiry process concentrating on the lived relation

(relationality), lived body (corporeality), lived space (spatiality), lived time

(temporality), and lived things and technology (materiality) will be utilized to explore phenomena in a heuristic manner (van Manen, 1990, 2014).

Temporal reflection: temporality-lived time. Temporal reflection (lived time)-the lived world of temporality is the subjective lived time reflecting on the participant's feelings and perceptions of the time while being in the world. "The temporal dimensions of past present and future constitute the horizons of person's temporal landscape (van Manen, 1990 p. 104); Temporality-Lived Time, in the rewrite, guides the researcher in that as the existential theme of temporality may guide the reflection to ask how time is experienced, objective as opposed to subjective, during various events. For example three hours may feel differently to us if we are with our family playing at the beach as opposed to waiting three hours for a loved one to get out of surgery. It is the same three hours but the way it feels to us can be immensely different. People refer to the length of time it will take to do a something because space is an aspect of time and time is experienced as space (van Manen, 2014).

Spatial reflection (lived space): spatiality-lived space. Spatial reflection (lived space) the lived world of spatiality describes how one relates or understands one another in the world or the space that we may occupy with them. Lived space is not confined to simply physical space, but also felt space. In order to understand the world or landscape in terms of space, "it is helpful to inquire into the nature of the lived space that renders that particular experience its quality of meaning" (van Manen, 1990, p. 103). In the updated text with under the title of Spatiality-Lived Space, spatiality defined as the existential theme that may guide our reflection on how space and place is experienced (van Manen, 1990, 2014).

One example of this could be a superintendent's office. Many of the offices also serve as the boardroom during the monthly meeting. Recognizing how a superintendent felt in their office the day after a contentious meeting could provide information on how the place and space impacted her from the experience of the meeting. van Manen uses the example of a child attempting to keep a secret from their parent. The child learns to live in two worlds, the inner and outer. The child no longer shares the same world with the parents who are unaware of the secret (van Manen, 1990, 2014).

Relational reflection (lived other): relationality-lived self-other. Relational reflection (lived other) – the lived relation we maintain with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them. "As we meet the other we are able to develop a conversational relation with them which allows us to transcend ourselves" (van Manen 1990, p. 105). In his second text, van Manen further described this process as Relationality-Lived Self-Other. Relationality is explored by asking how people are connected to each other and/or the community (van Manen, 1990, 2014).

In this study the community has included the different groups that the superintendent deals with in her public and personal life. Some examples that have been included are spouse, children, school board, parents of students, students, community leaders, faculty and staff, business owners, and other superintendents. In the study relationality is explored the situations experienced by the women in their daily operations and how it impacted their inner and outer world (van Manen, 2014).

Corporeal reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Corporeal reflection (lived body)- our physical or bodily presence, not necessarily consciously or

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deliberately, both reveal and conceal something about ourselves; depending on how our body as an object it gazed upon (van Manen, 1990, p. 104). In his second text, van Manen expands this idea under the similar heading: Corporeality-Lived Body. The existential theme of corporeality can elaborate additional phenomenological nuances of an experience by asking how the body is experienced with respect to the phenomenon. While we are bodily engaged in an experience we might not pay attention to our bodies or their reactions to a situation (van Manen, 1990, 2014). van Manen (2014) asks, "How and when do we become aware of our bodies? How do our desires, fears, cheerfulness, anxieties incarnate themselves in the world in which we dwell?"(p. 304). Emotions can be reveled through facial expressions, body language, posture, arm and leg placement. While these emotions can be masked occasional glimpses can seep through during the interview process (van Manen, 1990, 2014). In the second text van Manen added two additional topics in this area: Materiality- Lived Things and Technology and Lived Cyborg Relations. These topics were not as evident during the 1990s as they are now in 2014.

Materiality-lived things. The materialistic things in our life and the importance they hold may guide our reflection to ask how things are experienced with respect to the phenomenon that is being studied. The things could be thoughts, deeds, experiences, events, secrets, or atmosphere. Questioning the materiality may help us to gain insight and meaning. Material reflections ask how things are experienced in relationship to the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014).

Technology: lived cyborg relations. Technology is everywhere in our daily life. van Manen (2014) divides the philosophies of technology into five different kinds

of lived cyborg relations in the human experiences (p. 308). These are: experiencing technology as taken-for-granted, experiencing technology ontically, experiencing technology onthotheolgocially, experiencing technology as technics, and experiencing technology aesthetically. Most of us take technology for granted in our lives as tools and techniques that will always be available. With the newer and latest gadgets some people find themselves being overwhelmed if they are less inclined to keep up with current trends (van Manen, 2014). The researcher was hesitant to add the Lived Cyborg Relations because of her lack of understanding of the connection with her subjects or their careers. However, during the review of the interview notes the researcher realized that every participant mentioned a technology related comment of some type. Many of them have active Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts. They share information with stakeholders and deal with negative posts from angry parents. They text and email constantly, keeping their phone near them at all times to remain connected to their building administrators and teachers. They use the calendar to keep up with upcoming events and weather applications to track storms that may cause school to have to be released. The superintendents consider their cell phone a part of their being and never leave it behind. This led the researcher to reconsider the importance of Lived Cyborg Relations and it was included in the research.

In returning to van Manen's original writings the final three stages should occur: The art of writing and rewriting, maintaining a strong and oriented relation; and balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (van Manen, 1990).

Writing and Rewriting

In order to conduct phenomenological research on consciousness, a transition of the lived experience of the phenomenology must occur through writing to render a meaning. Consciousness can be complex and ambiguous, requiring multiple writing sessions To sift through the multiple layers of meaning a series of writing and rewriting based on the back and forth movement between the parts and whole exposing a new meaning (van Manen, 1990).

Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Relation

The research needs to establish a strong relation with the object, or phenomenon and gain a thorough understanding. Phenomenological research is extremely demanding, but it is imperative that the researcher remains interested and focused in their work. It can be easy for some researchers to get side-tracked or to wander aimlessly mentally. The researcher must remain fully oriented to the study to ensure that they establish a strong relationship with the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

Balancing the Research Context by Considering Parts and Whole

There is a danger that the researcher can lose vision of the larger picture because she becomes lost in the details. The researcher can fail to remember what it was she was trying to answer in the first place, getting so buried in research and writing that she begins to muddle in a quagmire of muck of all of the details. It is crucial that during this tumultuous cycle of research bedlam, the researcher must step back, refocus, and look at the totality of the parts as they provide meaning to the whole (van Manen, 1990). This process of refocusing can occur several times throughout the various steps in order to maintain progress toward the goal.

Rigor of Study

Hermeneutic phenomenology provides an appropriate balance of structure and is not a step-by-step research methodology, but rather a helpful set of guidelines. The researcher first turns to the phenomenon, using the guidelines to fully explore the nature and scope of the research project. The next step allows for data collection with an emphasis on understanding the phenomenon. Reflection and writing are vital aspects of this approach, because through them the researcher is able to understand the essential meaning of the phenomenon as it emerges from the interview data (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; van Manen, 1990). This stage is extremely time-intensive because, through writing, the "researcher seeks to offer an interpretation of the essence of the particular phenomenon of interest" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 50). The researcher must maintain alertness, keeping his or her attention on the overall design and questions, and not getting lost in the details.

Quantitative sciences operate under the rules of precision and exactness in the measurement of perfection for research design. Because of its rigorous implementation of quantitative formulas and mathematical-based instruments, the subjective nature of a phenomenon is not taken into account. That does not mean that a qualitative research study cannot be rigorous. Qualitative studies strive for precision and exactness by aiming for interpretive descriptions that provide fullness and completeness of detail of a particular phenomenon (Smith, 2011).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is described as non-foundationalist because it focuses on meaning that arises from the interpretive interaction between historically produced texts and the reader, rather than from some objective truth. In other words,

meaning does not derive its justification from some external certainty, but rather from

intersubjective interactions (Laverty, 2003). Therefore it is important to note that this

study is not presented as a series of absolutes, but an interpretation of the narratives

provided by the selected participants (van Manen, 1990). This is an additional tool that

can serve to provide voices for women that have experienced the phenomenon and

perhaps to be used as an educational tool that prepares women aspiring to the position

of superintendency.

Maintaining quality in any research requires the use of systematic methods in

data collection and analysis, transparency in documentation, and consistency in

operating within the philosophical assumptions (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Lincoln &

Guba, 2000). Carefully following these tenets has increased the credibility and ensured

the quality and usefulness of the final product.

Research Method

The philosophical framework of this research is congruent with van Manen's

hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology. Both of his texts are used as

organizational tools for the structure of the interviews, documentation of events, and the

structure of this paper (van Manen, 1990; 2014). In accordance with hermeneutic

phenomenological human science, interviews must be conducted in order to textually

capture the lived experiences (Smith, 2011). The preponderance of materials collected

for purposes of the study was in the form of in-depth interviews and materials collected

from interviews. The research phenomenon was interpreted by using the hermeneutic

circle (van Manen, 1990; 2014). The themes have been continuously moved back and

forth between the literature, the research texts, and the earlier analysis, moved from parts to whole.

An understanding of the social text was explored and clarified. In this method, the results have no single correct interpretation, yet the method provides rules to follow that have helped clarify and sharpen the central issues (Feinberg & Soltis, 1992). These rules include actively reflecting on the emerging interpretations at this stage in the process of writing and articulating the meaning derived from the interviews (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Also included are the acts of examining and comparing existing literature and finding support and meaning for the emerging themes.

Reflexivity and Positionality

In a phenomenological human study the beginning starts in the lived experiences of the researcher and eventually turns back to it during the process of considering the responses (van Manen (1990). Dilthey (1985) exerted that our lived experiences involves an immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life. This reflexive or self-given awareness is unaware of itself. Lived experiences gather hermeneutic significance as we (reflexivity) collect them by giving memory to them. Through conversations, meditations, day dreams, comparisons and other interpretive acts we assign meaning to the phenomena of a lived life (van Manen, 1990). Writing is a reflexive activity that involves the totality of our physical and mental being (van Manen, 1990, p. 132).

Once a study is situated in a methodology, the methodological approach provides direction for the research methods and guidelines for researcher positionality. Researcher positionality refers to the relationship between the researcher and the

participants and the researcher and the topic (Jones et al., 2006). Researcher

positionality should be transparent: "Where the researcher positions themselves [sic]

within their research study is critical to understanding the lens used to interpret the

data" (Jones et al., 2006, p. 104).

The researcher of this study was formerly a woman superintendent in a rural

school district and shares many of the same experiences of the participants. As part of

the study a friend interviewed the researcher using the same questions from the study.

This was done to allow the researcher to search her memories for events, relationships,

and feelings that might have been forgotten. While the women that work within the

region of the researcher were not directly included in the study, several were interested

in the study. A few of them wanted to offer suggestions of women to interview and

discuss their own issues that had been problematic for their tenure in the

superintendency. The researcher asked three of the women the questions from the study

and compared the responses with reflections from her own career experiences. Lived

experiences gather hermeneutic significance as we collect them by giving memory to

them and these two activities helped give awareness and memory to the experiences of

the researcher.

As noted previously, in hermeneutical phenomenology, the biases and

assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather embedded and

essential to the interpretive processes of the data. The researcher gives considerable in-

depth thought to his or her own experiences and considers how they relate to the issues

being studied. The researcher keeps notes or a journal to help reflect on and interpret

data (Laverty, 2003).

The final document may include the personal views of the researcher as well as an interpretation of all of the experiences detailed in the research data (Allen, 1996; Cotterill & Letherby, 1993; Laverty, 2003). Emphasis is placed on the experiences of the participants, focusing on the everyday occurrences of human life. This results in rich, detailed descriptions that bring the essential themes to light. To be successful, this process requires the researcher to develop close relationships with the participants. Because this is so time-intensive, hermeneutic studies generally have relatively small numbers of participants (Jones et al., 2006).

Prior to recruitment of participants the University of Oklahoma's Institutional Reviw Board (IRB) had to approve the study. All researchers and their faculty sponsors had to complete and pass the Collaborative Institutional Training (CITI). In addition, the IRB's Application was approved before the study began to ensure that human subjects are advised of the potential risks and benefits involving participation.

Sample Selection

The participants were selected through a purposeful mixture in order to obtain data that is sufficiently rich for a detailed study (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Denzin & Linclon, 2000; Patton, 2002). When participants were being selected there appeared to be only one African American within the state boundaries that met the requirements of the study. She was not asked to participate because it would have been impossible to protect her identity. These sampling criteria are appropriate, because it is important that all participants have experienced the phenomenon of being a women superintendent so that the interviews will provide insight and increase knowledge and understanding of women superintendents (Creswell, 2007).

Communication and language are intertwined and hermeneutic phenomenology offers a way of understanding the human experiences captured through language in a specific context. The goal is to develop a rich or dense description of the phenomenon in a particular context (van Manen, 1997). The ten women superintendents, who illuminated the phenomena, were selected and interviewed as part of this study.

For the last few years the researcher has been employed at the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) office that performs accreditation checks for public schools in one region of Oklahoma. For ethical reasons, women working actively as superintendents in this region were excluded from being selected as participants in the study. Otherwise, the work relationship might have affected participants' comfort level in sharing information, and this could have influenced the results. Another reason to exclude superintendents in this region is that it is important that participants decided to participate freely, without any feeling of coercion or obligation, and the researchers working relationships with superintendents in this region have had the potential to induce a sense of obligation (even if only in the superintendent's own mind).

Research Participation Inclusion Criteria

Subjectivity is valued in hermeneutics, and maintaining subjectivity depends on the values held by the researcher, the questions asked, and the ways in which findings are generated and interpreted by the researcher. Phenomenology can provide a deep understanding of phenomenon as experienced by several participants, but it is important to select participants with care to ensure that they have experienced the phenomenon under investigation so that the researcher and the participant can find a common understanding (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, participants must be able to provide the

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information needed to illuminate the phenomenon – in this case, the experience of being a women superintendent (Llewellyn, Sullivan, & Minichiello, 1999; van Manen, 1990, 2015). The intent was to select participants who not only have lived experiences that are the focus of the study, but who also are willing to share their experiences and who, as a group, were diverse enough to provide a variety of unique experiences (Laverty, 2003; Pollinghorne, 1989; van Manen, 1990, 2014). Participation was voluntary and no subjects were compelled to participate. It was clearly conveyed to the participants that they could leave the study at any time of their own choosing.

Description of Participants

The ten women reside in Oklahoma and are either working currently as superintendents or have recently retired from the superintendency. They have been chosen to participate, based on recommendations from other superintendents and SDE employees. The 10 women are at various career stages and have varying years of experience. The participants selected include two urban, two rural, and four suburban. All of the participants identify as white Caucasian. Their superintendent experience ranged from 1–15 years. Nine of the women have a master's degree and one holds a PhD. Their schools range in size from approximately 150–2,000 average daily student membership.

The participants included superintendents at schools of various grade spans with four of the schools being PreK–8 and six are PreK–12. Three of the schools are in areas so rurally located that no businesses exist near the schools. Two districts are located in or share boundaries with large urban areas. The remaining five schools are situated in small communities. This diversity lends richness to the data and is a valued aspect of

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the interpretive paradigm research (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The participants selected

the place where they were most comfortable sharing personal information.

Confidentiality

A research study guarantees participants' confidentiality throughout research

projects. Participants were advised that their names and information would be kept

confidential and their responses anonymous. Pseudonyms for each participant were

selected either by the participant or the researcher following the wishes of each

individual participant. Their locations or place of employment will not be divulged to

anyone. Only the researcher and the committee co-chairs have access to names and

responses. Since many of the participants are currently employed, it is imperative that

confidentiality be maintained to prevent any possibility of retaliation from community

stakeholders. In addition, materials would remain locked in the office of the researcher

and all audiotapes will be destroyed following final verification of transcription. To

preserve the authenticity of the participant's lived experiences the researcher did not

paraphrase many of the narratives. The results include a large number of direct quotes;

however the researcher felt that the emotion or influences of the participants' exact

words were so much more powerful as they were shared. Paraphrasing would have

diminished the passion exhibited by the participants about certain topics.

<div align="center">

Interview Setting

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In hermeneutic phenomenology, the interview is used as a means for exploring

and gathering narratives of lived experiences. In this case, the intent is to develop a

conversational relationship with the participant about the meaning of experiences

related to the phenomenon of being a women superintendent (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007;

van Manen, 1990). Because the interview has the potential to lead into a discussion of private and personal issues, including information about themselves or confidential information about employees, the participant was allowed to select a place where they felt comfortable talking.   Each interviewee was contacted by telephone and arrangements were made.

The intent was to travel to the participants' cities or towns so that they were not inconvenienced for this study beyond the time commitment necessary for the interviews. Six of the initial interviews took place in the participants' work offices, two in local cafés, and two in their homes.

At the beginning of the interview meeting, each participant was given the Informed Consent document approved by the IRB and the procedures were explained (including confidentiality practices) and the risks and benefits of participating. All participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and could withdraw without any negative consequences. The 10 women were asked the same questions at the first meeting with some additional probing questions when additional information or clarification was needed. The interviews were semi-structured, which has provided greater breadth and richness in data than structured interviews. Participants were allowed to respond to probing questions and to narrate their experiences, which has allowed for greater sharing of stories and anecdotes (Morese & Field, 1995). For participants who had given permission, the interviews were audio-record; otherwise, the researcher relied only on written notes that were scribed.

Data Collection Methods

The methods of data collection included interviews and a written reflective exercise. The transcripts were constructed from the audio recordings gathered from the interviews and read the transcripts several times to allow themes to emerge and to gain a sense of the data as a whole (Anderson & Spencer, 2002). After descriptions and themes have been collated, using van Manen's methods, additional interviews with the same participants were conducted to verify the findings, clarify specific details and gather additional information. Phenomenology is concerned with pre-reflective experiences and feelings, and the questions have helped the participants explore those experiences with further abstraction and interpretation by the researcher's own personal knowledge (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

It is important for a phenomenological researcher to have superb listening and perception skills and to attend to and make note of body language, voice inflection, and other meaningful details. Asking framing questions and probing for elaboration of events can help the participant remember and express additional detail. During the interviews each participant was asked to describe in detail her experiences as a woman superintendent. The specific questions asked were a combination of open and semi-structured, with follow-up discussion being led primarily by the participant, not the researcher. Many of the participants were nervous in the beginning and were hesitant to get off of the direct questions. Many times they began to open up and added additional comments that they deemed helpful. Openness is crucial, and the exchange may be entirely open with few direct questions asked (Koch, 1996). The purpose of this is to keep the interview process as close to the lived experience as possible (Laverty, 2003).

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Open-ended interviews allowed the respondent to describe and expand upon what is meaningful to them without having to fit their answer into a standardized category.

Throughout the interviews, participants were encouraged to engage in self-reflection. It is inevitable that both the interviewee and the researcher bring their own biases and assumptions to the process (Allen, 1996; Coterill & Letherby, 1993; Laverty, 2003). According to Creswell, it is important to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals, and he noted that multiple interviews with each participant might be required (2007). In this study, two additional interviews were conducted after the themes emerged to allow participants to reflect and expand on previous answers.

Since the researcher has previously been a woman superintendent and is an insider she has conferred several advantages that have helped to build trust and confidence with participants and develop rapport during the data collection process. Moreover, because of the experience in the position the researcher has an understanding of the educational jargon that is commonly used by professional educators (Minichiello et al., 1995). This has increased the quality and reliability of the interviews, because the participants did not have to be interrupted to ask for clarification of vocabulary and meaning.

Field notes were used to generate additional data during the interviews. These notes, along with observations, have served to supplement the interviews. Two types of notes have been taken: brief descriptive notes about the setting, people, actions, voice inflection, moods, conversations, and emphasis placed on specific experiences; and reflective notes that record and elaborate upon the observer's frame of mind, ideas, and

concerns (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). The field notes were transcribed to glean additional information and understanding, writing and rewriting during the search for meaning from the words of the participants.

The format was selected for this research because it allows participants to respond to questions but also probes in ways that allow them to narrate their experiences freely (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Morse & Field, 1995). This format is conducive to the identification and exploration of new themes. Lists of potential questions were compiled, based on the study of the related literature. The goal is to build a profile of participants' lives, including personal histories, socialization, educational background, leadership style, mentors, and networking. Due to the complexity of the topic, it is not feasible or productive to compile a comprehensive, complete list of questions in advance of the interviews. However, the list of potential questions (shown below) has been vetted in a practice interview and in a research class to check for understanding and variety.

Interview Protocol

- Tell me about your journey into administration.

- Did your administrative classes prepare you for the leadership position? If so, how? If not, why not?

- What has surprised you most during your career in leadership?

- Think back to a problem that you had to deal with as a superintendent.

  - What leadership style did you use to solve it? Why?

  - Do you generally consider which leadership style(s) to use when confronting a problem? If so, which one(s) do you prefer?

- In what situations are/were you most inclined to think about your leadership style?

- If you have/had a problem, whom do/did you turn to for assistance or to bounce ideas off of? Why? Do/did these people share your leadership style?

- How do/did people in the community view you? How do/did they treat you?

- Tell me about your relationship with the teachers.

- Have you ever felt that your gender was an issue in any of the relationships with district stakeholders?

- How would your staff describe you? Is it different from how your friends would describe you?

- What barriers did you face in becoming an effective leader? Why do you think these barriers arose?

- What benefits did you receive due to being an effective leader?

- How do you perceive yourself and what you are capable of doing?

These questions are important in extracting and explicating the meanings of the lived experiences of women superintendents, which is what the research question in Chapter One attempts to answer. Remaining open to additional research questions that might have emerged during this process is crucial, which has facilitated additional dialogue between my own meaning-making and the information that has been collected (Ajjawai & Higgs, 2007). The researcher hoped that any sub-questions that emerged would add to the richness of the lived experiences while continuing the hermeneutic circle of interpretation. The art of the researcher in the hermeneutic interview is to keep

the question open, and to keep both participants oriented to the substance of the question (van Manen, 1990).

Cluster/Timeline/Map

In the reflective written part participants were asked to draw a timeline, map, or cluster that describes significant events that have happened to them in their professional careers. The women were encouraged to use a graphic organizer, such as a flow chart or idea map, to help trigger memories of events that might have occurred several years prior to the interviews (van Manen, 1990). These events included education, degree attainment, mentoring relationships, family events, career changes, interactions with colleagues, training sessions, awards, and struggles that might have influenced them positively or negatively. During this process questions were asked and the participants' answers have been used to guide the conversation toward the particular issues that affected her career. This technique is used to help prompt memories of events that could add additional themes or anecdotal information to the study (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

Nine of the women used the technique to remember specific details regarding their careers. Some of the women drew additional doodles on the paper when trying to remember incidents from their past. The interviews allowed participants to share their stories in their own words while their demeanor was observed and noted as well as their writings/markings on their paper as they related specific details about their experiences.

The purpose of this exercise is to help establish participants' understanding of the research phenomena, to raise their awareness of the phenomena in their daily practice, and possibly to raise consciousness and elicit memories of key elements of their personal experiences that they might have forgotten (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Their

stories and experiences have shown exactly what gender bias looks like when it happens to an individual. Rosen stated that, "The significance of anecdotal narrative in phenomenological research and writing is situated in its power: to compel, to lead us to reflect, to involve us personally, to transform, to measure one's interpretive sense" (1986; van Manen, 1990).

The information from the interviews was used to explore and gather narratives and develop a relationship with each participant (van Manen, 1990). The interviews have provided participants the opportunity to share stories in their own words, enabling the researcher to glean additional information by listening to voice inflection and emotion and observing body language and facial expressions (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

Initial Writing Process

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Writing

Phenomenological writing allows a researcher to reflect on some aspects of our lived world and experiences to make them understandable and intelligible. According to the hermeneutic phenomenological view, consciousness is not separate from the world but rather is a formation of historically lived experience (van Manen 1990). A person's history or background includes what his or her culture imparts from birth and what is handed down from parents or caretakers, and this cultural knowledge base gives her ways of understanding experiences and making sense of the world (Laverty, 2003). According to van Manen, the purpose of phenomenological research is "to 'borrow' other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning…in the context of the whole of human experience" (1990, p. 62).

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Stories gathered from the participants through interviews in order to gain a deep understanding of their experiences. For readers these stories have helped make the participants seem more human and their experiences more real. People generally feel sympathy when told about a victim of a horrific incident. But when a victim is given a name (pseudonym), he or she is given a voice, and, as a result, people develop a deeper, more understanding connection, and they are consequently more likely to be moved to initiate change. The goal of this project is to provide that kind of deeper understanding of what it is like to be a woman superintendent. Immediately after each interview the notes were typed and reread several times using the hermeneutic circle to interpret the research phenomenon following the third and fourth tenants of van Manen (1990): reflecting on the essential theme, and the beginning stages of engaging in the art of writing and rewriting. During this time while thinking about my own experiences as a woman superintendent, reading additional research, and watching videos on research conducted involving women in general. The researcher reviewed their own interview and the interviews of the women who were not actual participants to continue comparing similarities of experiences. Note cards of themes that were pulled out of the interviews were made and themes categorized based on their similarities, comparing them with the researcher's experiences. Comparing the researcher's personal experiences and involvement in the position as superintendent gave additional insight to make sure the researcher was considering how her own experiences were affecting feelings and thoughts regarding their stories.

Data Synthesis

Themes from the phenomenon will be isolated from the narrative transcriptions based on two approaches used by van Manen: the holistic approach and the highlighted approach. The holistic approach leads the researcher to capture the fundamental meaning as a whole according to the text. The researcher listened to the audiotapes and read notes from the interviews and focuses on the written transcripts to capture a picture of the data as a whole. Using the highlighted approach, on the other hand, the researcher selectively listens to audio recordings or reads texts to discover meaning through interpretive analysis, highlighting essential meaning with regard to the phenomenon or lived experiences being described.

Reflection

In hermeneutic phenomenology, researchers' prejudices are important for understanding and cannot be removed with bracketing (van Manen, 1990). These viewpoints need to be made obvious to allow comparison with those of the research participants. The best researchers can hope for is to recognize and make explicit their understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories that are brought to the research (van Manen, 1990). For example, as a former woman superintendent, the researcher has shared similar experiences with some of the participants, and has used her personal experiences to help find meaning in the information that the participants share.

By constantly crosschecking the interpretations with the original transcripts, closeness was maintained to the participants' constructs, grounding interpretations in the themes (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Reading and rereading the

texts from the interview transcripts and written exercises and listen repeatedly to the audio recordings, searching for the themes and the details that support them. This process is often referred to as immersion (van Manen, 1990). The researcher's goal was not to guide the lived experiences into thematic categories, but to simply allow the experiences to flow as freely as possible.

Artifacts. Throughout the project personal files were maintained of reflective notes, documents provided by participants, the cluster/timeline/map created by participants, and the raw data from the transcripts of the interviews. The interview responses and the information from the files have been themed to uncover similarities, differences, and answers to the guiding questions. According to van Manen, "Themes are the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through. By the light of these themes we can navigate and explore such universes" (1990, p. 90). Likewise, themes help the researcher proceed with phenomenological descriptions that can make meaning of the information.

These descriptions can be found in a variety of forms, including interview transcripts, stories, reflections, and conversations (van Manen, 1990). The information gathered from the interviews, the written reflective exercises, and the shared experiences will be explored for significant statements that lead to understanding of how a participant experiences the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The results that emerge have been integrated into an in-depth description of the phenomenon. These descriptions have been written up using sensitivity to the subtle undertones that exist in the speakers' language, both spoken and unspoken.

First and Second Order Constructs. The next stage in the process was to identify and understand first-order constructs. This refers to the participants' ideas as expressed in their own language (Titchen & McIntyre, 1993). In hermeneutic phenomenological research, the researcher's understanding of the participants' first-order constructs should be checked with the participants at each stage, not only to provide a clearer picture but also to create more opportunities for discussion and possibly to prompt additional memories or details (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

Identifying second-order constructs and grouping them to create themes and sub-themes is the next stage. The researcher uses his or her own personal knowledge of the phenomenon to generate second-order constructs. He or she examines each interview transcript and all of the other collected information to seek similarities, which allows the researcher to construct a composite data set for each sub-group. All relevant material is grouped together in a way that leads to answers to the research questions (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

Writing. Next, the researcher writes a final extensive description of the findings (Anderson & Spencer, 2002). This focuses primarily on participants' common experiences, but it adds an interpretive element that posits meaning and identifies assumptions that the participants themselves might have difficulty articulating to others (Crotty, 1998). The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is to use participants' experiences to develop a full, detailed description of the phenomenon being investigated (van Manen, 1990).

Because of the criticism that sometimes directed at phenomenological research studies is that the researcher knows too much about the problem prior to conducting the

study; he or she is not able to be objective (van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic alertness must be maintained during these situations: The researcher must step back to reflect on the meanings of situations, rather than accepting preconceptions and interpretations at face value (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). This was completed by deliberately comparing my personal experience with the participants and delineating between the perspectives.

The aim of phenomenological data analysis is to "transform lived experience into a textual express of its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflexive appropriation of something meaningful" (van Manen 1990, p. 36). van Manen's (1990) fifth tenant was carefully followed by maintaining a strong and oriented relation. This means that close attention to where the researcher was within the data that had been collected. Comparing the researcher's interview answers to the participants helped develop a clear picture of not only where the researcher was, but also helped to eliminate some assumed interpretations that the researcher had when the research was started. Some of the participants had experiences that were so closely related to the researchers that additional time was spent during this stage of the research.

The researcher typed all of the interviews into one document. Then sections containing similar experiences were moved together in order to search for possible themes. Ideas were written on index cards and then separated into piles of themes. This allowed for the themes to visually stand out to the researcher. Some of the piles had a few cards in them, while others continued to grow throughout the process into large piles.

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Immersion. Through this process, identified by van Manen, (1990) as immersion, the researcher read and reread text of the interviews and written exercises, and listened repeatedly to the audio recordings searching for themes and the details to support themes. First-order constructs were examined and pulled from the participants' quotes. First-order constructs refer to participants' ideas expressed in their own words or phrases, which capture the precise detail of what the person is saying (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Titchen & McIntyre, 1993). These constructs were the answers given to the research questions. Understanding was checked at each stage through feedback from the participants via probing questions. This form of iterative member checking provided a richer and deeper understanding of the participants' experiences (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

In the next phase, the personal interview and information from the researcher was used as a tool to generate the second-order constructs. All of the information was compared to see similarities in order to construct a composite data set for each subgroup, grouping together all relevant information to answer the research questions maintaining hermeneutic alertness. The researcher frequently spent time reflecting on the meanings of situations while writing and organizing thoughts to assist in highlighting ideas and themes in the research. Ideas shared by the participants, were analyzed comparing their experiences to mine, each other, and the research that the researcher read. Interpretation of each interview transcript was used to form a picture, which then informed understanding of each participant's story.

The sixth and final tenants of van Manen (1990) were followed by balancing the research context while considering the parts and the whole. The researcher continually

moved details through the hermeneutic circle while writing and rewriting the information searching for meaning. Prejudices were identified through writing, reflection, analysis, and critique of the theoretical framework. With every draft preconceptions, assumptions and beliefs of the researcher regarding the research process became evident by examining the experiences of others. van Manen (1990) also suggested the use of descriptive coding to isolate and determine themes to describe the lived experience of each of the participant. Specific recommendations for descriptive coding lead to a series of emergent themes regarding the inherent perceptions. The primary emergent themes were grouped to form themes and subgroups of themes used to answer the principal research question (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

Researcher. A meticulous study has several components that the researcher will explore, including rigorous data collection and analysis. Creswell (2007) stated that ethical decisions are threaded throughout the study. As a former woman superintendent, the researcher naturally has personal experiences that are embedded into this study. As all phenomenological researchers do, she has attempted to reconstruct the exact meaning from participants' responses with as much accuracy as possible, followed the methods detailed above and used a reflective journal. The reflective journal has captured information concerning thoughts and impressions during each interview.

Employing the hermeneutic phenomenological research method can be laborious due to the large amount of writing. However, the benefits of using this methodology far outweigh the drawbacks created by the amount of work involved. After reviewing

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articles by other researchers who utilize this method, I realize how important it is to document procedures thoroughly for the purposes of clarity and validity. It has remained my priority to maintain a careful balance between thoroughly describing the interviews and writing reflectively to glean meaning from them. Because this methodology is so intensive, the most challenging part of the project has been writing the descriptions and narratives in a way that is both clear and accurate.

Conclusion

Hermeneutics is the study of human cultural activity as it exists, with a view toward interpreting this activity to find intended or expressed meaning (Kvale, 1996). This interpretive process is achieved through the hermeneutic circle, moving from the parts of experience, to the whole of experiences, and back, again and again, to increase the depth of engagement with the understanding of texts (Annells, 1996; Heidegger, 1927, 1962; Laverty, 2003; Polkinhorne, 1983). The hermeneutical approach asks the researcher to engage in a process of self-reflection (Allen, 1996; Coterill & Letherby, 1993, Laverty, 2003). After this research project has been completed and its written results have been made available, women in the field of education will have access to additional information to help them plan careers, advocate for better instruction, and understand their professional selves to a greater extent. This research project will help lead those in charge of the system – boards of educations, state department of education, personnel, city councils, and other leaders and stakeholders – to realize the disservice that is done when the superintendency is not inclusive of all qualified candidates. Likewise; hopefully textbooks will be changed to include leadership theories that reflect people of all genders and races who might participate in administrative classes.

Research exploring the leadership behaviors of women in educational organizations can construct a basis for further research. This study will provide a foundation for a more comprehensive understanding about how gender affects the women superintendent while adding additional voices to the conversations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Findings

This section contains the data resulting from the interview questions listed in the previous chapter. The results were then transcribed and based solely on the researcher's interpretive analysis, presented using van Manen's (1990, 2014) templates within the context of the six existential life-worlds: relationality (lived self-other), corporeality (lived body), spatiality (lived space), temporality (lived time), materiality (lived things), and technology (lived cyborg relations). Vignettes, including the basic information about each woman including reasons for selecting profession, education, approximate age, school size, and career path, set the stage as a way to introduce the reader to the participants. The remaining portion explores the experiences of each woman allowing the researcher to provide analysis based on the interpretations of the participant's narratives.

There are many areas in the next two chapters where long quotes have been included. The reason for that is because this lived experience is the story of the women participants and they shared their deepest thoughts and feelings. Many of their quotes were so powerful that changing them would have lessened the impact and this research project has given the women a chance to be heard. The 10 women interviewed had vastly different personalities, but shared a passion for improving student achievement.

Nine of the women have master's degrees and one has a PhD. Three of the participants have state department experience in addition to their public school experience. During the interviews, some of the participants mentioned the temporary change in-state requirements for superintendent certification. For a period of

approximately five years, between 1999 and 2015, the state changed the requirements

for school superintendents. Any educator with a master's degree could receive a

superintendent's certification if he or she could pass the state exam. There was also a

requirement that a person had to be a building an administrator for three years prior to

getting a superintendent's certificate. This was also waived during the time period of

approximately five years. While this has since changed back to require university class

requirements, several of these participants received their certification in that manner. In

addition, several of the participants mentioned being limited by location. Prior to the

availability of online classes, many of the small regional colleges were limited to the

graduate degrees offered. Some of the regional colleges started offering satellite classes

in the mid-90s, and as technology improved, ITV (Interactive Televised) classes were

added. However, both of these options may still require an hour of travel time to a

participating facility. Another hindrance for some students was cost of the college

hours and travel expenses; however, the local regional colleges offered tuition waivers

to teachers and schools that volunteered to take student teachers and field experience

students. These waivers then were used to help pay the cost of tuition, making a

master's degree much more affordable to acquire.

The advancing technology has improved the availability of additional selections

of degree choices for educators, but in the past, primarily administration or counseling

were the only available degree options. In the last 5 years, online classes from most of

the universities in the state have grown to the point that educators have a much larger

selection of advanced degrees, but that option was not available to most of these

participants.

Phenomenological Narratives: Presentation of Findings

Cathy

Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other.

Cathy is a middle-aged, petite woman who was full of nervous energy during the interview. She has 16 years of experience in education, and this was her second year as superintendent of the K–8 district where she works. Cathy started out as a teacher, and initially did not want to go into administration. She wanted to become a reading specialist. Her male superintendent recommended administration as a course of study. He told her that he would be retiring soon and that he was looking for someone to take his place. He wanted to make sure that the next superintendent cared about the school and worked to keep it open for the community. He told Cathy that he knew she would do a good job and he would like her to consider administration.

Another teacher and Cathy decided to work on their master's degree through the university. The closest university was located about an hour and a half away, but they offered ITV satellite classes through the local career technical school. Cathy still wanted to study reading, but the university limited the fields of study through the ITV program. Administration was one of the selections, so Cathy enrolled in administrative classes.

Cathy finished the courses in administration around the same time that the superintendent was about to retire, so she took the superintendent's test and passed it prior to taking the principal's test. She was one of the participants who were not required to take additional coursework. During our conversation, Cathy expressed surprise that she was able to pass the test so easily.

Cathy felt like she was not prepared by her college coursework to handle the things thrown at her. Bond issue discussions and bus repairs were two of the main issues that she struggles in handling. District finances create another constant worry because of continuous cuts. Cathy has a good grasp of the finances, but sometimes the school board members do not trust that she knows what she is doing. Last year they wanted to try to pass a bond issue to build a big gym, but Cathy knew they could not afford it. She talked to them several times at the board meetings and individually explaining the problem with building an expensive gym. Cathy invited the bonding company to the board meetings to explain why the gym was a poor business decision and finally the board decided to let the idea go.

The older people in the community doubt that Cathy is able to handle the finances, but they also view her as the savior. The person that was willing to step up and provide leadership when no one else wanted the position. The younger people are more likely to support her when there are problems, and less likely to question her abilities. The parents and teachers appreciate Cathy's hard work and dedication to the job. She attends all of the extra-curricular activities and is very active in the local church where she teaches a children's Sunday School Class.

Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Cathy is a nervous attractive petite woman that under values the contributions she makes to her district. She continually tugged at her shirt collar and the sides of her sweater during the interview. Her secretaries joked that she eats her meals in the same manner. They said she eats her meals in small nervous bites that she picks at through the day. When

she responded to questions she does so in an uncertain way that gave the impression she needed reassurance from me that her answers were correct.

Cathy was one of the participants that nervously drew doodles on her cluster to think through her ideas. When she discussed a parent that was causing issues in the district she wrote the name of the family and circled it continuously as she talked in a nervous, almost angry way. Cathy said that she gets really frustrated when she works so hard to make improvements and some people are never happy with what she does.

Spatiality reflection (lived space): **spatiality-lived space.** Cathy wanted to be interviewed in her office. Cathy's office is a large room shared with two secretaries. Their desks are placed in the middle of the room in a large square. The room has been painted and decorated in an attempt to hide the old building's foundation issues. The secretaries and superintendent work very closely together to keep the school a safe attractive environment for the students and staff. The office also serves as the board room, teacher's lounge, and the place where parents check students in and out of school. The environment is very relaxed and welcoming. There is always fresh coffee available and frequently food is offered to guests and staff to eat. When Cathy was answering questions, she would occasionally turn around and seek approval from her secretaries regarding details about a specific situation. They work together to keep the district operating successfully.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Cathy has a love/hate relationship with technology. The state reports annoy her when they are inaccurate and difficult to correct. Her district is in a very remote location and they have ongoing issues with

internet services. The lack of sufficient speed and bandwidth make the districts'

technology very slow and annoying.

Cathy has had issues with the SDE reports being incorrect. Much of the

information is uploaded from the district's student information system. One student

failed a state mandated test, but the SDE reported that all students had passed. Cathy

being a very morally guided person wanted to make sure that their information was

correct. She made numerous phone calls to try to get the data corrected, but to no avail.

She finally annoyed the SDE to the extent that she ended up on the list to be site

monitored by Assessment during the next achievement test cycle.

Cathy has also had significant issues from parents using Facebook. One parent

became such a problem that Cathy had to get a restraining order for her and her

daughter that attends the same school. The parent started making threats and erroneous

posts about Cathy's family on social media. Most of the community supported Cathy

during this time, but there were a few that supported the parent. After the judge

continued the restraining order for a significant length of time, the parent moved her

children out of district and the issue resolved itself.

Cleora

Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Cleora is a

vivacious petite woman who is close to retirement after serving four years as

superintendent. She is a self-assured stylish woman who dresses trendier than most

women her age. She has a chic hairstyle and wears dangly jewelry, but looks put-

together and professional. Cleora has been in the education field for 33 years, as a

teacher, special education director, assistant superintendent, superintendent, and state

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department employee. She also retired briefly and worked as an educational consultant before returning to the superintendency.

During the interview Cleora had an easy laugh and conversation flowed easily for her. She is very animated when she talks about her career and experiences. Cleora is a very politically astute superintendent and is able to word requests in a way that people understand what she wants without being offended. She has an easy smile and is able to calmly address problems with people without losing her temper.   Another person once described Cleora by saying, "She can tell people to go to hell, and they will gladly go because she told them to with such kindness and a smiling face."

Cleora's written submissions were extremely organized and neatly arranged on the paper. She said that she learned early to try to keep a healthy balance between all of the responsibilities she had including her family and work. When she went into private business she taught students and parents how to organize their lives for good time management practices. She enjoyed helping people learn to use good organizational skills to improve their grades and to learn to stay on task.

Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other. Cleora's career started out as a special education teacher who followed her husband, who was a football coach. She resigned and moved every time that he went searching for another winning team. Together, they decided to get a master's degree, driving an hour to work and an hour to school. Cleora wrote her husband's papers for him so he could pass his class. He was hired as a principal at a district. She noticed that all he did was extraneous job tasks such as filling pop machines and driving the bus. He did nothing as far as improving instruction and Cleora thought that it was very odd.

The following year, her husband got a job as a superintendent and Cleora said she learned that it was a bad idea to work at the same district with her husband. One evening on the drive home together from work, she asked her husband if there was a state rule regarding instruction. He said "Well, maybe there was a rule about six hours or so a day." Cleora knew she did not see a lot of instruction going on at the school and decided that curriculum was a topic she wanted to learn more about as a topic of study. Cleora wanted to be an instructional leader. She started back working toward her administrator's degree. The next summer, with a certificate, she started applying to jobs.

Cleora started as the assistant superintendent in a very large district. The acting superintendent wanted someone else that was a good ol' boy. The board had already been quietly discussing replacing the superintendent because he was not a good money manager and they were looking for someone that could step into the superintendent's position if they decided to act. There were many questions asked of Cleora in the interview about her ability to handle situations such as backed up plumbing and the type of woman she would be if she got the position. Cleora had to reassure the committee that she knew how to call a workman when needed and she was not the type of woman to run around town acting inappropriately.

The employees love Cleora because she uses humor to make requests. She got down on her knees and begged a coach to drive the bus when they were shorthanded. He laughed and agreed to help. The employees also know that Cleora pitches in to help do things when she can. She is not afraid of hard work and does extra things to help the district.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Cleora has a Facebook page and a Twitter account. She keeps up with political issues and regularly comments public on her stance. Cleora will send out multiple emails to people regarding complicated issues to seek input and opinions regarding the potential impact. She will then involve herself in discourse using the information she gathered in an attempt to improve education in the state.

Shawna

Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Shawna has been in education for 28 years and she just completed her first year as a superintendent at a PreK–8 district. Shawna started out as an elementary teacher, but was moved to the middle school because she did a good job handling the students. She had taught for 17 years when her principal came to her and told her he was going to start applying for superintendent jobs. He recommended that she get her administration degree and take his job. Shawna laughed, "He kept nagging me to go get started. He told me I could be as hardheaded as a mule, and that I just needed to go get started taking classes." A professor at the college told her to go ahead and get the superintendent's certificate, also, since she only needed to test.

Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Shawna's personality is the first thing that people notice. When she enters a room, the dynamic changes regardless of what is going on to one of happiness and laughter. She is loud and laughs at herself and everyone around who she interacts with at the school. Shawna uses a lot of large hand and arm motions when she talks. She is direct and straightforward, but when she gives directions, she does it with a smile on her face and

is ready to assist. People enjoy being in Shawna's company and she uses her personality to encourage other educators.

Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other.

Shawna gets along with other people and her joyful personality endures many people to her. She is always positive and upbeat, laughing at herself to keep other people motivated. In the district she worked before she became superintendent, Shawna did a lot of the extra reports for the other administrators. They counted on her because she was dependable and a hard worker. Parents like her because she is direct and does not beat around the bush when she is telling them information. She told me that once she walked into her office and a parent was screaming at the superintendent and special education director. She said she walked in saying, "Whoa whoa! What the hell is going on in here Maggie? Stop yelling and let us discuss this!" She said the mother said, "Well ok, but I am really upset!"   Shawna had everyone laughing and agreeing on a decision before they left the office.

Shawna decided to get her certificates after watching her district go through superintendent after superintendent in a short period of time.

Shawna shared:

I finished the course work and took the tests and passed them both. I was
a principal for a while, but I worked in a district that had a lot of turmoil.
We were going through multiple superintendents in a relatively short time.
I finally decided that I could do a better job than most of the ones that we
kept getting, but I didn't want to try the job there. The board was trying to
micromanage everything and they were always in turmoil.

Spatiality reflection (lived space): spatiality-lived space. Shawna got frustrated applying for superintendent jobs. She became selective regarding where she applied and only applied to districts with stable boards and finances. After a year of not receiving any interviews, she called her Regional Accreditation Officer (RAO) from the state department to vent. The RAO, who was a former woman superintendent, recommended that Shawna apply for every opening regardless of where it was so that she could get her foot in the door and get some experience. Shawna said:

Even doing that, I didn't get a lot of interviews. I knew it was because I was a woman. I was going up against men with less experience, but they wouldn't even give me the chance to come in and interview. There were several districts that I knew I should have at least received an interview. It was very frustrating.

Shawna finally got a job at a small, rural district that was having financial issues. She has just finished her first year and has been rehired with an extended multiyear contract. She was excited, but realized quickly that the other male superintendents around made more money than she did. Shawna discussed the fact that if she lived in another part of the country or was a male she might not have had as much difficulty getting her first position. The region and culture of the state where she resides will continue to be a barrier for her in getting a job in a coveted school system.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Shawna is very competent with technology and frequently did the state reporting for all administrators in her previous district. She completed the Annual Statistical Reports for the district which is the report

that provides the state with all of the average daily membership and attendance records to the SDE. This report is extremely important because it is the source of information that generates the state aid and local ad valorem funding for the district. It has to be accurate and precise and Shawna was the only administrator that knew how to generate the reports from their districts student information system and then transfer the data to the SDE system.

Shawna also maintains Facebook and Twitter pages. She works closely with the technology company at her new district to troubleshoot the teacher's computer issues. She also does the E-Rate planning and paperwork. To complete E-Rate she has to understand the technology needs of the district and make long term planning goals. She then collects bids from the participating vendors. Shawna then has to select the best price and product, order and help install the equipment.

Kay

Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Kay is a petite woman in her mid-30s. She has been in education for 12 years and she just completed her second year as a superintendent at a PreK–8 district. She is very religious and in compliance with her religious beliefs, she wears no make-up, and wears longer dresses or skirts, though her attire is frequently covered in bling. Kay wears stylish t-shirts or blouses, but will have a long sleeved shirt underneath. In an attempt to modernize her hair, she swirls her long locks up into fancy buns making it appear shorter in length. She also wears her hair tucked up into berets and caps. A sign on her wall states, "Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, backwards and in high heels." During

the interview, she showed no sign of fear and appeared to delve headfirst into any situation.

As Kay was talking to me she would lean over close to me as if talking to a close friend. It seemed that she is possibly very lonely in her position. She is the only administrator in the building and shared that she really does not have anyone to discuss issues with that can act as a support. There is another woman superintendent that works in the next district, but she worries that they want to consolidate them. She trusts one other superintendent in the area, somewhat, but also questions his motives.

Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other.
When asked about her situation, she gladly shared,

> I was always told that I was bossy. I had taught for five years when the
>
> superintendent of our PreK-8 school started giving me extra things to do.
>
> I enjoyed being in charge. I started handling the Gifted Program and
>
> doing some of the reports that he didn't like to do.

Kay continued:

> I learned more about the law and I relished the extra
>
> responsibilities, although I was not compensated financially for
>
> my work. I wanted to help make the other teachers' jobs easier. I
>
> still try to do that now for my new teachers.

Kay unexpectedly became superintendent 2 years ago. She stated:

> The last year the other superintendent was at our school, I was the
>
> unofficial principal. He met with me in the middle of the spring semester
>
> and told me the school was broke. He called all of the other teachers in

and told them that the school was going to have to close down and there

was no money left to pay them for the rest of the year.

Kay also lamented:

He had not even told the school board there was a problem. A

neighboring school announced that they would be consolidating and one

of the students called his mother who was on the school board at our

school. It was a fiasco. The teachers were crying, parents were crying,

and the superintendent was trying to pack up his belongings and leave.

Kay, who is a dynamic worker, stated empathetically:

I didn't have my superintendent's certificate yet, but I told him that I

wanted to try to save the school. I had taken most of the classes and the

test, so we worked out something with the state so that I would have my

certificate by the beginning of school.

In a search for financial support, Kay called the local Native American tribe and

they contributed enough money to help the school end the fiscal school year in the

black. She had to meet with several tribal leaders and negotiate the assistance. Kay

also rallied the community to have some fundraisers to keep the district from closing.

They are now financially on track because of Kay's efforts. Kay is in a very small

community that has a lot of religious people. Many of the older residents doubt the

appropriateness of woman being in charge. The younger parents view her as the savior

of the district and respect the work she has done.

Spatiality reflection (lived space): spatiality-lived space. Kay's district is

very small and has around 80 students. She knows them all by names and knows where

they live. Kay spends a lot of time worrying about the students and their issues including low student achievement, home problems, and poor attendance. She has trouble sleeping because the constant budget cut has put her district in a fiscal status that barely allows them to survive from year to year. Kay does not have children of her own, and spends almost all of her time either at school or running school errands. On the day prior to the interview she had driven to one city to drop off documents to the SDE and then turned around and driven over an hour to another city to pick up supplies for the local basketball tournament. She says she lives, breathes, and thinks school all of her waking hours.

Temporality (lived time). Kay loves the district and constantly worries and frets about problems. The facilities are very old and problematic. Earlier in the year the gym became infested with copperhead snakes. They had been attracted inside by the mice that had overrun the old Works Progress Administration (WPA) rock building that was built in the late 1930s. The rock has separated in some areas allowing the assortment of animals into the facility. In an effort to save money, Kay had invited a parent that was a state investigator into the district to get rid of the animals and to make the building safe for students. The parent was part of a local group of disgruntled patrons and he condemned the building for asbestos and fire code violations. Kay was very distraught because that was the only area students had to play and do physical education during inclement weather. The issue caused a lot of controversy in the community for a short time.

The teachers that were part of the group went to the school board complaining about trivial things such as teachers wearing caps in the building. Kay said one of the

teachers has a hormonal issue that causes her hair to fall out and she wears caps to hide her bald patches. That type of pettiness made the year seem long and miserable for everyone. Two of the teachers that caused most of the issues resigned at the end of the year. Kay and the remaining staff are looking forward to a calmer, more peaceful year.

Kay finally called her RAO and asked for assistance. The RAO gave her contact information of other state officials regarding the fire codes and asbestos violations. They reviewed the issues and the building and determined that it was safe for use. This caused additional problems with the man that had originally issued the decree condemning the building. He started calling the SDE weekly to complain about various issues. They finally moved their children to another district and the complaints stopped.

In many of the rural communities, such as this one, the school is the source of their identity. Maintaining a school site means everything to them. They may hate each other and fight with each other as neighbors, but the community will join forces and fight bitterly when the mention of school consolidation or annexation comes up in the news or from state officials. When the district faced the possible consolidation/annexation because of the shortfall in funding, the community members started having bake sales and car washes to raise money to save their school district. Some of the more wealthy community members wrote checks directly to the district in an effort to help. Kay was in the middle of the fund raising activities, and because of this many of the community members view her as the savior of the district.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Kay is not very astute technologically. She does not participate in Facebook or Twitter and she has difficult submitting reports

online to the SDE. She serves as the principal and superintendent and she teaches a class. There have been so many issues at the district that she does her best to address the problems as they arise. Kay has not had time to do any long range planning for the district.

Meredith

      Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Meredith is an older, tall medium-build woman toward the end of her career. She is in her mid-60s and is retiring at the end of the year after 44 years in education, nine of those as superintendent at a PreK–12. She said she was tired and worn-down from dealing with school issues, but her eyes still sparkle when she starts talking about her career. Meredith had recently gone through a traumatic experience as a superintendent, and while for the most part she was successful, the recent experience appears to have tainted her entire view of the position, but it does not reflect her stellar career in educational administration.

      While she says she is tired when I started talking to her about her experiences I could see that she still has a passion for education. She wears her long hair up in a bun of ringlets that hang down to her neck. Her salt and pepper bangs frame her friendly face. She has one of those personalities that make a person want to spend more time with her. She is witty and charming, laughing frequently at herself and events that have happened throughout her career.

      Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other. Meredith shared, "An old superintendent once told me, 'To start a journey, a person has to take the first step.' I started teaching in 1971. I have worked at something all my

life." The first 5–6 years, Meredith worked at small community schools as a teacher and a coach. She has loved all of the different jobs that she has had, and although she taught for 20 years, she really wanted to teach teachers. Meredith started working on her master's degree so that she could reach her goals. She shared that she had married a coach, but two coaches in one family were too many, so she started looking at other options.

Meredith stated:

When I was younger it never entered my mind I would not be successful. I finished my master's program and then completed a PhD. I liked the concept of having personal contact, and I wanted to know the students and the teachers. At a smaller school you have the ability to know everyone, and I know every one of them.

Meredith is highly regarded in her area and several of the neighboring superintendents mention her name when they want to call someone to discuss options when they experience a problem. If there is a group decision to be made, the other superintendents will not make a decision without contacting Meredith. She is very active in the state organizations and regularly attends legislative meetings to advocate for rural schools. She is adored by her community and the board trusts her.

Spatiality reflection (lived space): spatiality-lived space. Meredith arrived at her office at the same time that the researcher did. She stopped and greeted each person with a friendly comment and laughter. The office was very welcoming and had the school mascot posted everywhere. The building and her office was covered with district accomplishments. Trophies, mascots, and student achievements were the

foundation for the décor. Meredith obviously treated everyone the same. She has high expectations but people work really hard to please her because she tries to make things better in the district.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Meredith does not have time for technology and has people in the district that takes care of those issues for her. Technology is not her strength and the district is large enough that she can delegate the responsibility to others.

Lynn

Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Lynn is in her 40s and spoke directly about herself and her 20 years in education. She dressed conservatively and did not wear much makeup or jewelry. Lynn's nonverbal actions during the interview were also conservative. She sat in a reserved manner with her hands neatly folded in her lap. She attempted to do the paper activity, but only half way made an attempt. It seemed that maybe she was not comfortable putting her ideas down on paper. Lynn wrote a few titles down that could not be considered relevant and put down the pencil.

Lynn is a no-nonsense superintendent who described herself as honest and hardworking. When the interview started Lynn took a deep breath, sat back in the couch cushions and began to reflect on her experiences. In the beginning it seemed as if maybe she was trying to hide parts of herself in the cushion, although she slowly relaxed.

Lynn stated that she does not know how she ended up in the education field. The college she went to had a good education program so she decided to try it. She

started teaching and developed a good working relationship with the board president. He encouraged Lynn to get a master's degree in counseling or administration. She completed the principleship, which is an internship required to complete the administrative degree. Lynn also took advantage of the state's temporary certification window and took the superintendent's test without the classes. Lynn said,

> I went ahead and took the test, never expecting to take that route in my career. I started looking for a job as a principle in other districts, but the school wanted to keep me so they gave me the title of principle and a few extra duties so I would stay and get some experience.

Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other. The superintendent was put on suspension for something, so Lynn received a call one night at 10:00pm and the board president said, "You are in charge." They had to go through the legal steps to dismiss the previous superintendent, but made Lynn interim. The board asked Lynn if she was interested and she told them yes. Lynn stated, "I had done the job at this point for 3 months, so they officially hired me." This is her 7th year in the position as superintendent at a PreK–8 district.

She talked about the ex-superintendent and his wife. They still live in the community and blame the issues that resulted in his removal from the position on her. Lynn says that she really does not know the details of exactly what happened, but that she constantly has to deal with problems that his family causes. They are very close friends with Lynn's administrative assistant, and Lynn believes that she feeds them information to help them cause problems.

Lynn said for the most part she ignores the issues with the past administration and does her job, but sometimes she would like to fire her assistant and retaliate against the ex-superintendent. She knows however that it would cause a bigger riff in the community and that it is better to ignore the problem. Lynn believes that if she will continue to work hard and do the right things, eventually the problems will disappear.

Temporality (lived time). Lynn requested that her interview be held in her home. She did not feel comfortable talking about any of the district's issues because of the chance that someone might overhear part of her comments. She has to work so hard to combat those types of problems that she was afraid that if a stranger appeared and went into her office behind closed doors that rumors would possibly be spread. Lynn says that the constant turmoil in the office wears on her sometimes and makes for long days. She frequently stays out of the office and spends her time in the buildings and classrooms in order to keep the peace.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Lynn does not really have any patience for a lot of what she terms "frivolous" technology applications such as Twitter and Facebook. The people that do not like Lynn frequently post antagonistic statements about her, but she ignores them. Sometimes her supporters try to show her things that have been posted, but she refuses to read them. Lynn completes the required SDE reports online and makes sure that the district has adequate bandwidth for state testing requirements. She still has a flip phone and does not want to update to a more complicated version.

Jo

    Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other. Jo

has been in education for 27 years, and this is her 4th year as superintendent at a K–12

district. She is in her mid-50s and is a rule follower. She believes everyone should

adhere to the same set of rules, which sometimes causes her conflict with stakeholders,

including her family. Jo said she started the job of superintendent feeling behind and

felt she has a difficult time trying to get caught-up and on track.

    The former superintendent, the counselor, and the school had become

embroiled in some legal issues dealing with Medicaid. Jo stressed:

> I don't know the story but he resigned. My brother called me and said he
>
> had an $80,000 salary. My mom and brother told me to go take the test
>
> and they offered to pay for it. I had just got divorced. I applied for the job
>
> and the board offered me only $65,000. I countered with $75,000 and
>
> they called me back and everything fell into place.

    Jo says that she does not have a lot of friends because she believes the same

rules apply to everyone. Her own brother no longer talks to her because of an incident

that occurred with his granddaughter. Jo would not show her any favoritism and it

made her brother very mad. Jo stays to herself, goes to work and does her job and goes

home.

    Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Jo is a very

no-nonsense type of person. She wears very little makeup and has a somewhat stern

appearance and does not seem very approachable. Jo answered all of the questions

without adding additional comments unless she thought something needed explaining.

She completed the cluster map with equally spaced and shaped circles quickly, but did not add any additional information. Through the interview she became more personable her nonsense approach to dealing with district issues was reflected through her stories of school issues. Jo is very passionate about public school issues and is active in several of the administrative state organizations. The other superintendents respect her opinion on state issues and frequently seek out her opinion when they are having issues.

Spatiality (lived space). Jo requested that we meet in her office for the interview. The staff in the outer office was very quiet and subdued. The assistants were busy working on their computers and aside from the occasional phone ringing from a call, there was not any noise. Jo's personal office was very stark without very many decorations. The walls were empty except for Jo's degrees and certifications. All of her files were neatly in place in a wire basket on the side of her desk.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Jo loves technology. Her district has the latest and greatest of everything. Her district has implemented the one-to-one initiative and all of the students have iPads to do their classwork and homework assignments. Their district has a Facebook page that communicates the occurrences and calendar of events. Jo has a personal page where she interacts with friends and people from the community. Jo is very involved with the E-rate process at her district that is involved in getting additional hardware through government type grants.

Margo

Spatiality (lived space). Margo asked that we meet in a local café. Most of the participants requested out of the way places that they could speak without anyone hearing our conversations. Margo however has a larger than life personality and uses

dramatic hand gestures when she is talking about an issue that she regards as important to children. Several times during the interview Margo bangs her hand on the table, seemingly not to notice the people that turn to look at her.

Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Margo is a stylish woman who is a superintendent at a large, urban-area school. She is self-assured and exudes confidence in her stylish business suits. Margo is medium, but solidly built with perfect posture that creates a very commanding presence. Her shoes and jewelry all perfectly matched and her hair is perfectly styled. She mentioned that an anonymous blogger posted that her hair had too much presence as a way to make a dig at her.

Margo has a military background and she believed the experienced shaped who she is as an educational leader. She left the military and started teaching for five years out-of-state. She earned her administration degree and started looking for a job back in her home state. Margo was perusing through the state department website looking at job openings, when she accidently applied for a director's job. The next day the state superintendent called her and made an offer. Margo said slamming her fist on the table, "I got the job. Just like that! I had never been a building administrator."

Margo never attempted to hide any of her emotions as she relived her experiences. She is a very passionate person and sometimes quickly swings from very excited to very angry. When the interview started she sat very upright in the booth, but as she relaxed and began to tell me stories regarding her experiences she would lean forward as she shared details. She was very hurt at the way she was treated by people that she regarded as friends. Part of the story she shared with me she did not want me to share.   She feared that someone would figure out that she was a participant and then

would know they had hurt her so deeply. She did not want the offenders to know her

hurt.   She gave a detailed explanation of exactly how she had been betrayed and how

hurt she was by their actions. The events had happened a year prior to the interview but

her anger was still evident through her tense facial expressions and rigid demeanor

during that part of the conversation.

Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other.

After a while, Margo decided to go back to a public school. One of the RAOs

encouraged her to apply and to concentrate on improving relationships in the

community and on improving her own knowledge base by going to trainings and

conferences. Margo expressed,

> One conversation can change everything. I was hired as an assistant
>
> superintendent. I did that job for five years and I did a lot of growing.
>
> The RAO told me to keep my nose clean and do things right. With my
>
> military background I got all of the HQ (Highly Qualified) up to lock step
>
> by just jumping in and working hard.

Margo decided she wanted to make the next step and find a superintendent's

position. The superintendent in her own district was ready to cut back on his workload,

so they traded positions. Margo has been the superintendent for four years at a PreK–12

school.

The people in the community are divided on the job that Margo has done. The

older people love her because she goes out of her way to help them by providing tables

and chairs for their meetings. The previous superintendent charged them to use the

building and supplies because he did not want them in the school. Margo started

meeting with the groups regularly and assisting them with different issues. The teachers also like her because she supports them by providing the support they need to provide strong educational services.

The high school principal does not care for Margo and backstabs her when he can. He feeds information to the people that do not like Margo because he wants her job as superintendent. He was overlooked when Margo was hired and has worked continuously to under-mind her to force her resignation. Margo does her best to act professionally around him and to keep the district on tract.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Margo is a self-identified "techie." She uses technology to write community newsletters, articles for the paper, and does the website posts for the district. Margo has the latest iPhone with a large number of downloaded applications that she uses for organization and the implementation of educational improvement. She has a very negative opinion of social media. A group of women in town were mad at her and they used social media to attack every decision she made as superintendent. They took one incident that happened and twisted it around and stirred up the community. The group instigated a personal attack on Margo using Facebook as a weapon. Part of the community took her side because of all of the improvements that she had made over the past few years, and the other half had been waiting for an opportunity to attack her.

The news story eventually made the state news and Margo started receiving hate correspondence from across the country as news of the story spread through Facebook shares. Margo is still very angry, although she has moved on to another position, when she relates the actual details of the events that led to her resignation. She still has copies

of screenshots that she printed of all of the conversations regarding the decision she made that received the negative attention.

Cara

      Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other. Cara is a proper woman who never has a hair out of place. She has been in education for 34 years, serving the last 11 as superintendent at a rural PreK–12 school. Cara was a teacher at another school and the assistant superintendent started encouraging her to get an administrator's degree. Cara really thought about the possibilities and of the potential influence she could have on the children. Cara's mentor told her not to do it for financial reasons, but for the right reasons. Cara is serving as superintendent at her second school district. She left the first district because she was tired of the local turmoil. The board members still call her occasionally asking her opinion on financial matters.

      Cara is a refined genteel woman that rarely shows any emotion. She is aware of the perceptions that people have and she works hard to overcome any negative publicity. She is ready to retire, but her board views her as the savior of the school and try to encourage her to stay. The school district has experienced some problems with past superintendents. The school safe still has deep, jagged scratches on it where a former male superintendent tried to open the door on a weekend to steal money. His gambling problem caused the district several issues including a public embezzling charge. Because Cara has worked so hard to improve the school, the board will not even look at applications from a male. The board wants another hard-working woman.

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Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. During the interview Cara was very reserved and professional. It was obvious that she was very proud of her career and accomplishments at the district. She looked very proper and used very few hand gestures while talking. She would smile as she reflected on something that she felt proud of, but was very controlled. She sat straight up with very proper posture and acted very appalled when she discussed an incident with a SDE employee that kept using the "f" word during a meeting. Cara's demeanor stayed the same throughout most of the interview. She expressed guilt that her husband was wanting her to retire. He is significantly older than her and had started to have health problems. He had been pressuring her to retire for several years, but she felt extreme loyalty to the district that she had rescued.

Spatiality (lived space). Cara requested that the interview be conducted in her office at the school district. Cara's office could have been decorated by a professional interior decorator. The furniture is very large solid wood with intricate carvings. The desk sets in front of a very large matching armoire that houses the computer and files. There are large professionally framed pictures hanging on the walls. Her office was moved during the year to an old Works Progress Administration (WPA) building that had been empty for several years. Cara had the building remodeled and moved her office into the building. She found some antiques in storage, cleaned them, and brought them out for display in the district's board room so that it is a show piece for the community. At first the board had been a little argumentative about the updates, but now they are complete the board and the community members are very proud of the remodel. Cara laughed when she told me that now that it is complete and the

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community members like the remodel some of the board members have started taking credit for the work.

Temporality (lived time). Cara discusses the time during her previous tenure at another small district with great disdain. She felt she had poured her heart and soul into the district, but the community turned on her over some seemingly trivial issues. Cara has a hard time turning loose of the previous district. She maintains contact with the previous district treasurer and keeps up with their finances. If she becomes concerned about the decisions the new superintendent makes, she will contact one of the board members to question them. She constantly compares her new district and the decisions she makes to how they would have impacted her previous district.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Cara knows that technology is important for the students, but she only does the minimum to complete state reporting. She texts and emails, but that is the extent of her knowledge and personal use. People in the district take care of all of the other issues that require technological knowledge.

Erica

Corporeality reflection (lived body): corporeality-lived body. Erica started 25 years ago as a high school math teacher. She taught for 10 years before earning her master's degree in administration and was the most experienced superintendent in this study. She was a single mother who started looking for options that provided her family additional financial compensation. Because of her rural location, she was limited on where she could earn another degree. The only degrees available for her were in counseling and administration. She said she was not a "babying person," so she felt that

administration was the only viable option for her. She just completed her 15th year as superintendent at a PreK–8 district.

Erica is a plain dressing woman that does not worry about makeup or trendy hairstyles. She proudly states that she is a mathematical no-nonsense type of person. She likes that she has a principal to help her this year, because they are more of a touchy feely type and the teachers like it. When money is tight in the district, Erica has to do both jobs and she does not think that the teachers relate to her style as well as they do when there is a principal with a different leadership style. She did not exhibit any emotion about anything that she had accomplished at the district.

Relationality reflection (lived self-other): relationality-lived self-other. Erica was recruited through her sister who is a friend of the researcher. Her sister had visited previously about how hard Erica has worked to save the district frequently doing manual labor to save money such as sweep the halls and clean the bathrooms. Erica brushed off any questions that were asked in an attempt to gather additional insight regarding the issues.

Erica says she does not have any friends at work and she wants to keep it that way. Her son lives in the area, but he takes his family to another district because of problems with a teacher at Erica's school. Erica is a very hard worker who drives a bus and does janitorial duties when needed. She is the first one to arrive at work and the last one to leave. She has high expectations for herself and her staff and she admits that sometimes her stern attitude is a turnoff for people. She keeps her private life very private and does not socialize in or around her community. She has a very close-knit

family that lives three hours away and Erica goes there to get away from the stress of her position.

Technology (lived cyborg relations). Erica tolerates technology. She is responsible for all of the state required reports and acts as testing coordinator. She uses technology as a tool, but does not use it for social interactions. She emails information to her staff and forces them to respond, so that they are also forced to use technology. They use technology in the district, but only as required. Most of the teachers are older, nearing retirement age and view it as a bother.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Discussion, and Implications

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore effects of gender on leadership styles of women superintendents by investigating the lived experiences of women participants currently filling the position of superintendent. The 10 women participants have contributed their stories in an effort to have their voices heard. A phenomenological design was used to understand and provide a description of the experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of women superintendents (van Manen, 1990). This lived experience adds additional voices to the phenomenon of women superintendents.

Hermeneutic phenomenological human science attempts to construct an interpretive description of meanings by reflecting on the basic structures of the lived experiences of human existence (van Manen, 2014). van Manen (2014) exerts that "phenomenological research and writing tries to make intelligible the experiences that we explore in a feelingly understanding manner" (p. 390). This means that the researcher not only describes what something is, but also will attempt to offer possible interpretations. Simply bringing the lived experiences to consciousness is not enough. The researcher must peel back the layers to reveal the meanings that are lost in observational description (van Manen, 1990). The researcher aims to be allusive by orienting the reader reflectively to that region of lived experiences where the phenomenon dwells in recognizable form (van Manen, 2014).

When the researcher first became a school administrator, she would frequently call her father, a former administrator, to ask how to proceed. He would quote the

specific law to her that applied to the situation. She would stop and reflect, "That is what that law actually looks like in a school!" Many times a person can understand the theoretical meaning behind a concept, but not have an adequate understanding of how that looks and impacts the life of someone. Because of this phenomenon, exerts from the interviews are included in this chapter. They provide a better understanding of how the women were impacted by the experiences and give a more accurate view of how the theme appears in real life situations.

Chapter Five presents a summary of the findings, followed by a discussion and analysis of the themes and the implications of the relevant literature and theory. The chapter continues with an outline of the study limitations along with a discussion of implications, and closes with recommendations for future research.

Analysis of Findings

The additional voices that were brought out through this research brought forth the lived experiences of women superintendents to determine if gender was an issue that affected their leadership careers. The findings in this hermeneutic phenomenological study add to the foundation of current knowledge on women superintendents. Therefore, the results may help (a) universities develop administrative programs, (b) professional organizations to recruit and retain, and (c) women educators to prepare and advance to the position of superintendent. Although the women had success with their position, and leadership was not reflected as an issue in this study, researchers need to continue to address the low percentage of women in superintendent positions.

Phenomenological Analysis

The phenomenological analysis of the themes that emerged from the interviews were organized using the Golden Triangle as an organizer. The themes were organized under the headings relationships, self-esteem, power, and leadership. While these are not all of the themes that emerged from the interviews, these overarching themes provided details and insight to answer the research question. The themes are not separated in a way that they stand alone as one thought. Many of the themes bleed over into more than one heading and are difficult to classify. For example relationships are important to women which impacts how they use power and select their leadership styles. Feinberg asserted that "Interpretivists are concerned with the ways individuals understand and act in specific social contexts…they view schools as places where groups and individuals interact through local, mutually understood rules of the game" (1992, p. 79). The themes that emerge from the interviews are the unwritten rules that women believe should be abided by to gain entrance into the superintendency and to be successful.

Relationships

Relationships were the first and most important theme for every participant. Women are more likely to assign moral value to relationships (Gilligan, 1989). This phenomenon is referred to as the ethics of care. This is in contrast to the mostly male dominated filed of ethics in which justice and impartial rationality were seen as desirable characteristics. The masculine voice places an increased emphasis on moral decision is protecting the rights of people and making sure justice is upheld. The feminine voice places an increased emphasis on protecting interpersonal relationships

and taking care of other people (Gilligan, 1989). The relationships were the source of intense joy and devastating heartbreak for each of the participants

The discussion of relationships provided a window into the community and gave perspective on how the community members view their women superintendent. The superintendent is frequently the most respected leader in the community. These leaders are often the most educated and highest paid person, which results in additional stress for the superintendent because everyone is watching and making judgments. Some family relationship descriptors are also included in this section. All of these subthemes under the relationship heading help to give a total picture of the experiences of the participants with the different stakeholders.

Mentors. The participants found the role of mentors and role models an invaluable asset. This includes mentors who guide the women into administration and the mentors who assist them after they have acquired the position and need guidance. Eight of the women mentioned that male role models mentored them into administration. Organized mentoring programs encouraged additional women into administration by helping the women recognize gender bias as a real issue. Ibarra et al. (2013) asserted that women have not been socialized to compete successfully in the world of men, so they must be taught. Women frequently worry more about their physical presence, causing an overinvestment in their image, which diminishes the resources they have for important tasks (Ibarra et al., 2013). She also pointed out, Learning how to be an effective leader is like learning any complex skill: It rarely comes naturally and usually takes a lot of practice. Research shows that people in secondary school administrative jobs make an easier transition into superintendency.

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They have more opportunities to demonstrate financial skills and are more visible to the public. Women can start applying for those positions that will put them in the direction to move to the role of superintendent. Administrators can seek out mentors to support them in developing the skills they need to successfully navigate work arrangements that fit both their personal lives and their career.

Cathy did not want to study administration, but was considering becoming a reading specialist. The superintendent persuaded her to study administration when she realized that she had limited selections because of where she lived. Cara and Shawna were both encouraged by a male administrator in their respective districts. Cara shared,

I was a teacher at another school and the assistant superintendent started encouraging me to get my administrator's degree. I hadn't really thought about that. I wanted to impact more children. My mentor told me to not do it for financial reasons, but for the right reasons. Four of the participants mentioned their RAO as a mentor. Cleora stated:

The RAO gave me lots of support and encouragement. He came each year to do the accreditation of the district. I got a divorce and during the next RAOs visit he told me get my superintendent's certificate because I did all of the work anyway. He said I would get more money and could delegate some of the work.

Cathy shared that the retired superintendent who talked her into studying administration still lives in the community and drives a bus for the district. Cathy relies on him heavily for advice on how to handle issues especially if they occur with specific

people that reside in the community. She is not hesitant calling him for advice and guidance. She laughed and said, "As long as he answers my calls, I will keep calling."

Some of the participants have more than one mentor who they have used since getting hired. When Shawna has problems she calls her past RAO for advice or another superintendent she use to work for, before he got fired. Sometimes she calls the previous superintendent to make him feel good, but she does not trust his advice because she felt he was getting old and a little out of touch. Cara shared that one of the well-known superintendents took her around and introduced her to people. She stated, "I felt like I was clinging to him for comfort."

When Erica first started, she would call the male superintendents in the area. There were not any other women in the area. She expected more issues from the male superintendents being young and women, but they took care of her and took her under their wing and provided support. A couple of other women moved up in the area, one about 20 miles away and one about 40 miles away.

When she is having issues, she calls several different people for advice. A woman from the state helps her review options to consider regarding the possible ramifications of different solutions. The administrative assistant is from the community and she gives advice on how to deal with some of the issues that involve the local stakeholders. Kay tries not to call the superintendents from the two closest districts. These superintendents have both indicated an interest in consolidating the school with theirs, so Kay does not trust them to give the best advice.

Kay stated:

I don't think they need to know I am having problems, because it might encourage them to attempt to consolidate. There is one superintendent that is a little farther away and he gives me good advice. He is not afraid to tell me he doesn't know, but he has a lot of good experiences and has helped me.

Jo stated, "In the last two years I have decided I don't want opinions from just anyone. My concept is to learn as much as I can. Knowledge allows you to understand where you are in it." She does not value the last superintendent's opinion because the turmoil he had continues to cause problems in the community. Jo also shared, "I value the secretary's opinion of the school as a whole. I like to hear what people say if it is actual information and not gossip."

According to the participants, mentoring was important because it is usually the first place that women start their road into administration. Participants commented that a male superior provided the participants guidance and they considered emulating that leadership style. Researchers have indicated that some women purposefully utilize masculine leadership styles in order to be successful in an effort to emulate their mentors (Burns & Martin, 2010). Eight of the participants mentioned a male administrator, family member, or state employee who offered encouragement to start down the administrative path.

Support and mentoring networks is an area where research indicates that men and women differ. Women report feeling isolated in the position of administration and navigate the system without networks in much higher numbers than men. This is especially troubling since women often do not attempt a move into administration without "being tapped" (Gupton & Slick, 1996; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Marshall &

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Kasten, 1994). Being tapped indicates that a male has identified a women as having the skills needed to advance. The male taps the woman, as in taps her on the shoulder, to point to a new career direction. When women discuss the need for a mentor they are searching for another women who demonstrates the ability to balance their jobs with family obligations, but male mentors can more frequently open the doors for additional lucrative opportunities (Stimpson & Filer, 2011).

Seven of the participants mentioned being tapped by a male administrator or their state department accreditation officer. Some of the mentors are still involved in helping the participants figure out how to navigate difficult issues. Many times a male mentor helped the participant get their feet in the door for an interview. One of the participants had a difficult time even getting through the initial selection process to get an interview. Women may experience limited access to the superintendency because selection-process criteria are based on White male norms (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Several participants mentioned RAOs who encouraged them into the superintendency, or assisted them after employed. There are 12 people who serve in the position with the state department. These leaders regularly work with different administrators during the state-required audits, state conferences, and regional meetings. The group works with superintendents, site administrators, and counselors during the audits and trainings. If this group was made aware of the possible significant impact they make on women who might not ever consider moving up, it might make them more cognizant of the need for them to be supportive and encouraging to potential leaders, especially women.

State wide organizations. There are three main leadership organizations in the state. One for large urban schools, one for rural districts, and a third, that is the largest

and most active, that also includes site administrators. Two participants mentioned

professional organizations by name as places where they did not feel included. One of

the participants stated that she did not believe the men alienated women on purpose.

Bringing the issue to the attention of the largest organization has brought the

problem to light for them. The largest leadership organization has a new executive

director who has been very receptive to working at becoming more inclusive of all

genders. The last state-wide meeting the organization held a separate breakfast for the

women participants. They had several guest speakers that discussed a few issues of the

major issues that face women in leadership positions.

Another aspect of a professional organization's involvement is that these

organizations provide a hiring consortium that helps school boards that need new

superintendents to advertise, screen applications, and hire their new leaders. These

groups have the potential to educate boards about giving women an equal opportunity at

their superintendent openings. These organizations also could provide mentoring

groups for women considering superintendency, or applying for positions.

Already, these organizations hold classes for educators who are considering

starting the process to get their administrative certificate. It would be an easy expansion

to include a segment designed to encourage women to go into the field. Ibarra et al.

(2013) asserted that it is not enough to identify and instill specific skills if they are done

within a social vacuum. A person becomes a leader by internalizing a leadership

identity and by taking purposeful action. As a person's leadership capabilities grow and

opportunities to demonstrate those capabilities increase, self-esteem and confidence will

provide the encouragement needed to climb the ladder (Ibarra et al., 2013). Resume

construction, interview skills, and educational opportunities to strengthen weaknesses are a few areas that women might need to increase their chances for being hired in a desirable district.

Meredith mussed,

There have been times that the little groups of men were more welcoming, but it doesn't bother me to be myself. At the group that is for rural schools, the separation is more evident. They are really bad about not welcoming and including women. I wonder why they do that. I don't think men create that on purpose, there are good superintendents, but there are just so many more of them and they tend to stay in groups.

Cara also shared similar thoughts, stating:

When I first started the other superintendents didn't include me at the meetings. I wasn't one of the guys so I felt out of place. At large conferences there would be a sea of men. The men would go to parties and get-to-gathers after the conference. It was six years before I was invited to any of those gatherings. Now they include me.

Community stakeholders. Community stakeholders include business owners, alumni, civic groups, and the residents of the community. In different communities the groups with the power vary depending on the makeup of the people that reside in the area. In some districts where sports is important it can be the football booster club, but in districts that have an agricultural background the FFA Booster Club might have more influence.

Trying to maneuver through the power struggle of these groups can be very time consuming. Meredith had to work to win over the alumni of the district. The former superintendent had the middle school named after him, but the alumni hated him. They felt he was a micromanager and he made them clean the gym before and after the annual reunion. They had to rent the tables and chairs and other supplies for the reunion. Meredith worked hard to build a relationship with the alumni. It took years for her to improve the relationship. She took the women to lunch and let them use the tables and chairs for free. She had the gym cleaned for them and helped them get everything ready. Before she left her first district, the alumni started awarding $10,000 a year in scholarships to the graduating seniors.

When Cara started as a superintendent, she felt that people questioned everything. People thought that she was not old enough and some people called her young woman. She compensated by making sure she worked harder than everyone else at school. She felt that women work harder so they look good and sell themselves short. Cara gets really annoyed when she calls the State Department of Education; they always think that she is a secretary. She is annoyed by the stereotype that because she is a woman, she cannot be a superintendent. She made a point to dig gas lines. She stated: "People are not going to mess around with me. Some men try to intimidate women, or they say we are picky; especially when I say, 'Yes, I want the grass planted back in that spot that we just dug!'"

On Cara's first day, she was out on the tractor working on the front entrance of the school. Someone drove up and asked to see the superintendent. Cara said, "That is me!" The man cussed and said, "You are a woman, this won't work and got in his

vehicle and drove away." Cara admitted she made some mistakes at her first school. The previous superintendent was never seen and people complained, so after she was hired she started going to all of the activities. People started saying she was a micromanager and too involved in the community. Cara wore suits and heels when she started but people made it known that she did not fit in with their community. She started wearing more slacks and it helped her.

For the most part, Cathy claims that the community likes her, but the older population questions her judgment on financial issues. Cathy's description of this relationship was, "They think I have this, but then again they are not real sure." One continual issue that the community disagrees with Cathy is on passing a bond issue. The community wants to build a new basketball gym and the board wants to please the community.

Cleora did not move up from within her district. There was an opening for an assistant superintendent at a nearby district. Cleora started asking around about the school. A friend told her, "You need to stay where you are. Yes, you can do the job, but you don't need to." Cleora called the superintendent to inquire about the position, but he didn't want to talk to her. He was not impressed with her credentials, but she got an interview with the school board. The board had lost faith with the superintendent so they were involved with the interviews. It was a big interview with 11–13 people who held various positions in the district. One of the members asked Cleora, "What are you going to do when the sewer is stopped up with gunk?" She responded, "Well I will go take care of it. I don't shirk responsibilities." Another person demanded, "What kind of woman are you going to be?" She told them she would not be out running the streets

and would not embarrass them." She was also asked if she would go to school activities by herself, and she replied, "Yes except for OU/Texas weekend because I already have my tickets. I will be at that game!" She smiled when she said, "They loved me!" The superintendent had someone else picked out for the job, but the school board hired her because the hiring committee recommended her for the position.

Shawna was also surprised by the comments she received from the community once hired. Shawna stated:

It surprised me at first how many comments from community members I got because I was a woman. The preacher at one of the largest churches in the community told me that he was upset that I got the job, but he told me that after he met and talked to me he changed his mind. He told me that after talking to me he thought I could handle the job. He prayed with me and then decided that it was going to be ok.

Shawna also stated:

I have been amazed at how hard it was for me to be accepted. I wonder sometimes if one person in the community says something to me about being woman, how many are thinking the same thing but don't say it. So 20 people have said something to me, but are all the rest thinking the same things?

Erica never really had any issues from men in the community. The male employees and community quickly realized that she knew just as much as they did. Erica laughed,

I just don't go around spouting my knowledge. My family was big into sports so I know as much about things like football as anyone else. Now I have been

here long enough that most of the staff I have hired. We have mutual respect, but I try not to develop friendships with them. It makes it difficult, hard to keep lines when you see them through their lives as friends.

Erica does worry about watching how much time she spends with any man. She said, "I don't want any rumors going around about me." When Kay officially became the new superintendent of the district, someone from the SDE came out, went through the district's finances, and gave her suggestions on where to cut money. She agreed to take the superintendent's position for her teacher's salary in order to save more money. A couple of teachers left and the district absorbed the positions so that they could get back on track financially. For the most part, the community views her as the golden girl of the school. They know all of the things that she did to get the money that saved the school from consolidation.

Family. Family is very important to all of the participants. They rely on their family for support through the stressful times. Several of the participants were encouraged by family members to get their superintendent's certificate. Jo does not have friends other than family. She makes a point to not socialize with the teachers. If someone comes in to talk, the others think that she is showing favoritism. Her brother refuses to speak to her anymore because of his granddaughter. She had to be fair in a situation and he did not like the outcome of one of her decisions. He was very supportive of her desire to become a superintendent, so she could support herself after a divorce, but she has a strong sense of right and wrong and does not regret the decision that she made that caused his anger.

Cleora dreaded telling her parents that she was going to be a superintendent because she thought they would disapprove. She stated:

I did not know what they would think about me being a superintendent. I told them and they said, 'we always wondered about that. You are so much smarter than your ex-husband.' I started back working toward my degree. I really think that it is important to encourage women and mentor them into administration.

School board members. School board members are like other stakeholder groups in that they can differ greatly based on the belief system of the community in which they reside. Some boards act appropriately and allow the superintendent to handle the day to day operations of the school, but some boards attempt to micromanage the superintendent and staff. Cathy has had a continuing disagreement with the board about building a new gym. She invited the bonding company to present the information to the board because she does not believe it is fiscally in the district's best interest to attempt the project. She has covered the finances with the board twice, but they are still adamant that the district should build a new gym. The proposed project would raise taxes 24%, but the school board would not concede until after the bonding company showed them the numbers for a second time. It should be noted that the presenter from the bonding company was a male. The board members believe that Cathy does an outstanding job, but they did not trust her advice regarding finances.

Shawna reflected:

After I got the job one of the students whose dad is on the school board told me, Dad came home and said, 'well I think we have found a good candidate….if the

board can handle hiring a woman.' I think if people would give women a chance, they would be surprised about how much more work we do.

The board hired Cleora, but they had difficulty dealing with the idea of woman leader. The board members asked her to get a bus driver's license and she said no. The board members would step in if they felt an issue arose that they felt she could not handle. The board members were used to hiring people to take care of personnel, and Cleora felt that was her job. She was exhausted running around taking care of all their issues. Cleora said, I didn't feel like I could take off because I was always going to activities at the school. I had no time with my family. One of my granddaughters said, 'Meme, it is like you are with me, but you are not really with me.' The job was a great opportunity and she made a lot of valuable connections, but she decided it was time to go somewhere else.

The board asked Cara to do things as a servant such as to bring them water and coffee. She quickly put a stop to that behavior. Shawna was excited when she finally got a job at a small, rural district that was having financial issues after trying for a year. She has just finished her first year and has been rehired with an extended multiyear contract. She was excited, but realized quickly that the other male superintendents around made more money than she did and appeared to do less work.

Teachers and Staff . The women have various methods for dealing with teachers and staff. Two of the participants have mostly a hands-off approach and make sure that teachers and staff do not view them as a friend. These participants fear that they will lose their power or people will accuse them of favoritism. The other participants use a variety of methods to relate to teachers and staff.

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Erica said when she started she decided that they needed to work on boosting morale at the district. She decided that visibility was the key and so she sent notes of support. She used humor to get people on board. She laughed, "I literally once went to a coach and got down on my knees and begged him to drive a bus. He laughed and agreed to assist." The staff viewed her as the savior and worked with Erica to accomplish the goals. Her leadership style is inclusive. Her first district was in an influential part of the state so she had to learn to deal with high-powered people in the community. They left her notes stating that the Title meetings were the best meetings ever. Erica worked hard to make people feel welcome and valued. Another superintendent gave her some positive advice and said, "Don't shoot at skinny cats." This meant that before she made a major move, she needed to make sure it was going to be worth the effort.

Initially, when Meredith started it was difficult because the school had never had a woman superintendent. She felt like she spent five years proving herself to be capable. A lot of skepticism existed from the women teachers and it took a decade to win them over. She felt that it helped her to live in the district. The district had not had that from their superintendents in a while. The staff would see her shopping at the local grocery story and it increased their support of her goals. Meredith finally started winning the teachers' respect and appreciation by establishing herself with the National Board Teachers (NBT). She spent many hours helping them work to pass and attain their NBT certification and through the years only had one teacher not pass. Her assistance finally proved to the teachers that she cared about them personally.

Shawna believes some of the teachers try to manipulate her. She laughed and stated,

I could manipulate my male bosses when I was a teacher. I could figure out how to get my way and get what I wanted. Women are less likely to be manipulated because we can spot that behavior, but we have to work twice as hard.

Although most of the teachers are usually on board with the changes, a couple of them are unhappy. These teachers have even gone to the school board meetings to complain about the superintendent and some of the other teachers who work in the building. The teachers complaining are conservative and some of the new people that were hired do not fit into their idea of a good teacher. Kay stated,

One of my best hires has brightly colored hair, several ear piercings and tattoos. She is a wonderful teacher, but some of the other teachers complain about the way she looks. The two that went to the board complained that I have no control and that people wander around the halls all of the time. I tried to do some conflict resolution and mentoring of the two teachers that were unhappy, but nothing worked. They have both resigned and I think next year will be much better for everyone with them gone.

Kay tries to be the boss first and the friend next, but some of them teachers try to reverse that and she works hard to make sure everyone understands that she is not playing favorites. The teachers are supportive of Cathy, everyone gets along, and they appear to have a strong collegial relationship with each other. No significant discipline

problems exist. Most of the student population attends school in Cathy's district on a transfer from a larger nearby district. Parents like the small school atmosphere so they transfer their children. Because the students attend on a transfer, they know that behavior concerns can cause the district to reject the transfer the following year.

Parents. Parents were the least important relationship concern that the women discussed. Most of the participants expressed that angry parents are a natural part of any administrative position. Parents often feel frustrated because they feel like they do not have control or an understanding of the operations of a public school. Some of them frequently have meetings with school people and yell and scream in order to be heard. Shawna complained that some parents try to bully her into doing what they want. One woman said, "I don't want my husband to come up here because he is too upset."

Shawna stated:

I felt like she was trying to say that I better just fix their problem because her husband was going to come get me. She was really surprised when I looked her dead in the eyes and said, Go back and get him. Bring him up here and we will deal with the issues.

Shawna also said, "Women have to be more of a bitch. I say it with a smile, but I say exactly what I think."

Safety. Two different women mentioned harrowing experiences that scared them. Superintendents regularly are forced to enforce policies that make stakeholders angry. Parents get mad about discipline issues, community members want winning ball teams, and board members want special privileges for their family members. These are

all potentially emotional issues that can cause tempers to flare and people to lose control and make irrational decisions. The issue that resulted in the parents who tried to drive the superintendent off the road was about a mistake in scheduling, which would seem like a minor issue to most people.

Cara decided to leave after a harrowing incident that made her feel unsafe. The football coach prepared the schedule wrong and Senior Night was not a home game. This was a major catastrophe in the eyes of the community because the tradition was to honor the seniors at the last home game of the season. Facebook was out of control and people were posting obscene comments. Their district lost the flip with the other school to see if they could move the game. Cara finally told the fans to go get in the bleachers and support the kids. One woman yelled, "I fucking paid to get in to the game I can do what I want!" The same mom yelled that Cara had better check the tires on her car. The coach would not leave the field and had to be escorted out. Later, when she was driving home on a dark highway, some cars pulled up and boxed her in on the highway. There was nowhere to go. She escaped unscathed, but that incident made it clear to her that it was time to look for another position. It was heartbreaking for Cara. She tried hard to be fair, consistent, and a good listener. She felt she was a really hard worker, but that was not enough.

Administrators can be proactive to minimize their danger. They need to develop office procedures that force people to sign in, and arrange personnel in the outer office so that there is a direct line of sight of the superintendent. Administrators should never meet with parents when alone in a building. The furniture should be placed between the superintendent and visitors to limit physical access. All administrators should be aware

that there can be the potential for people to lose their self-control when they are angry and things can get out of control.

When the researcher was an administrator and was aware of a potential problem with an angry parent, she would put the local police on notice so they would be prepared to react if there was a problem. She also had another male administrator in the room as a witness. Some women might feel that to do that would be to give away some of their authority or power, but she found that it would often help to defuse the situations when two people would visit with the parent. As a safety precaution the office had a side door that exited to the outside. The researcher had the maintenance man build a bookcase in front of the door with a piano hinge that was hidden. The book case would swing out to reveal the door if there was an emergency that required a quick exit.

The women in this research spent the majority of their time discussing their relationships. The feminine voice places more emphasis on protecting interpersonal relationships and taking care of other people (Gilligan, 1997). Several of the women discussed feeling the need to protect their employees. The women also expressed the feeling of being betrayed when their employees and community did not reciprocate their feelings of loyalty.   Two of the women participants were still very bitter about incidents that had occurred and they felt betrayed because of the lack of support that they had received when there was turmoil in the district. During their tenure they worked countless hours to improve academics, facilities, and standards for their districts. Both of the women left their respective districts, but continue to carry feelings of anger and betrayal.

As an RAO the researcher has used her position to provide first year women superintendents extra support. She helps them make connections with other professionals that have expertise in the area of school finance, grants, and Federal programs. She also provides a shoulder when the women are having problems and need to vent or are seeking advice. Recently one of the new superintendents was having issues with the office staff. The office staff expressed annoyance over an issue that would never have occurred with a male superintendent. The researcher gave the woman some advice and reading materials that could help her find some possible solutions to the problem.

The researcher also used some of the information that she learned through the research project to assist a new superintendent in arranging her office. The researcher pointed out several safety issues including an outside door that was open to people coming in the building unannounced, desk placement that allowed easy access to her by a potentially angry parent, lack of seating provided to concerned parents, and generally an uninviting environment. There were several very large bulky pieces of furniture crammed into one corner of the room making it dark and heavy looking in the area behind the superintendent's desk.

The next time the RAO visited, the woman superintendent was excited to show the changes to the office. She had locked the side door and established office procedures to protect herself, her desk had been moved into a safer more attractive arrangement, and the office was decorated to create a welcoming atmosphere. There were pictures on the wall and decorations placed neatly around the room. The space of the room was more balanced with the large bulky pieces spread out around the room. It

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would be more difficult for an angry parent to reach the woman superintendent if they decided to try to injure her and the room was much more conducive to meetings with stakeholders.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem reflects a person's overall subjective emotional judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. This is reflected through comments that the participants made about themselves, but also the way they carry themselves physically or movements they make when they are discussing the way they have handled situations. Self-confidence is a narrower construct than self-esteem focusing on performance expectancies and self-evaluation of abilities (Anderews, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989). Self-esteem and self-confidence differ between women and men. For males self-esteem and self-confidence go hand in hand, and their self-esteem rises and their confidence at a specific task improves. Women's self-esteem, on the other hand, does not consistently improve when their self-confidence improves as they performance improves at specific tasks. Women diminish their self-esteem through negative self-talk when they feel they have made a mistake, and they compound the problem by failing to give themselves proper credit for their successes (Heim et al., 2003). Two of the participants freely admitted that they talk negatively to themselves when they feel that they did not handle a situation correctly.

Women are thought to have lower self-confidence than men, but it is not clear whether women have less self-confidence, or if they only have less self-confidence in areas in which they are traditionally thought not to excel. Shakeshaft (1989) exerts that self-confidence has not been studied through the eyes of women, but like many other

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aspects of leadership studies, by forcing women to be measured by male defined

standards of self-confidence. Women are more likely to have self-confidence in areas

where they have experience which tends to be the private sphere functions (Shakeshaft

(1989).

 Kay expressed,

> I know I am an intelligent woman, but I have trouble delegating. I try to do it
>
> all. My first year was very difficult because I was trying to fix the finances, and
>
> go to meetings to meet the superintendent certification requirements. I had to
>
> keep in contact with my district by phone and I felt disconnected from the
>
> school. The state-wide meetings were also difficult because I felt like was the
>
> only one asking questions. One of the other first year superintendents made me
>
> feel like a dumb little woman. I always felt like I was operating behind
>
> everyone else. I am gaining more self-confidence every year. One of my
>
> mistakes early on was I had to learn to listen a little more. I had to talk to
>
> myself. I would tell myself, 'Quit making quick decisions. Have discipline!
>
> When you have time give ideas more thought!

Kay believed that when she makes a decision regarding leadership, it is important to

make good decisions. She added, "You better be fair."

Shawna lamented:

> I feel I am a good asset for the district. If I were better at finances, it would
>
> help. I was not prepared to do the finances. I went to training, but until you are
>
> in the middle of it you don't understand what they are saying. I do not think I
>
> want to go to a bigger school, because I wouldn't want to be a politician all of

the time. I like this size of school because I am learning more things all the time.

Erica, the superintendent with the most experience, stated:

> The hardest thing is that I always have the feeling that I am one step away from a huge mess up. I am one step away from failing to keep the doors open, or paying staff. I am not as confident as I should be. I think I hide it really well, and that people don't know that about me. My family does not even know that about me. I am always conscience about not feeding any of that.

Meredith shared:

> The hard thing about being a superintendent is that sometimes it takes a while to look at the spectrum of possibilities. You have to get a grip on what you really believe and sometimes that takes a while. If something is a stymie on academic integrity, it is going to stop. That is where inconsistencies occur. I error on making decisions that appear to be more severe than some other people do.

Meredith worries about showing favoritism. She drives long distances to go to school activities and talks to the windshield as she drives. She believes women leaders have a tendency to do that more.

An intriguing comment was the comparison of one woman's ability as a superintendent to a male scrotum and it made me wonder if that was the point that Meredith felt that she was successful, when she was compared to a man's sexual organ. Meredith boasted proudly:

> The word on the street was that I had more balls than any man; I took that as a compliment. Women who really become administrators have to have a desire

within that if they accept a job they have to do it and never falter. You have to be meaner and tougher than the men. My mother's philosophy was women should be warm and fuzzy. I have never been warm and fuzzy, but I am personable. If you sign on the line to do this job, you are going to have to do it. There is a fine line between having confidence and having a big ego. When you sit behind the big desk you will not please everyone, in fact very few.

Some anti-adrogynists feminists maintain the problem is not femininity in and of itself, but rather the low value that patriarchy assigns to feminine qualities such as "gentleness, modesty, humility, supportiveness, empathy, compassionateness, tenderness, nurturance, intuitiveness, sensitivity, unselfishness," and the high value it assigns to masculine qualities such as "assertiveness, aggressiveness, hardiness, rationality or the ability to think logically, abstractly, and analytically, ability to control emotion" (Tong, 2009, p. 143).

School finance was an area that 8 of the participants mentioned as a concern during the interviews. Finance is an analytical mathematical skill that is thought to be a masculine strength. As an RAO the researcher visits school districts regularly for various audits and it is ironic to her that many of the male superintendents give the responsibility of the district finances to the treasurer. The staff members that primarily, especially in the smaller districts, serve as the district treasurers in the districts in that area are women that also serve as the superintendent's secretary.

Power

Research indicates that power is sometimes a difficult topic for women. According to John Stuart Mill (1869), an English philosopher, A man's power is

demonstrated by the readiness of other men to obey him. Masculine and feminine views power in opposing ways. Miller (1986) asserts that women have been experienced their power by producing changed and by empowering others. She believes that power is used by women, but for the benefit of others. Women encourage collaboration, consensus building, and support in order to serve the needs of broader communities Miller (1986). This aligns closely with the belief that women place a high value on relationships that was described earlier in the chapter. Women use their desire to form relationships and collaborate to develop goals that improve the school district.

All 10 participants initially avoided the topic of power. To get answers, I had to do follow-up interviews. Several of them asked for additional time to think about power. Erica believed everyone has power, but it is their decision to use it or not. She shared, "Power is the ability to effect change. I use power to implement new programs and strategies to improve student achievement and help teachers." Cara said, "The only time I think about power or use the word power is when I feel a teacher or adult has abused their power." She also said, "I try to empower my faculty/staff and administration with tools and motivation to build relationships with students, and in turn I hope they empower the students to utilize their gifts and their ability to learn." Jo pointed out, "There are times when some community members feel that I had the power to do things that were not legal, based on the actions of superintendents who preceded me." Kay shared,

> With all of that power, came the responsibility to make choices every day that
>
> were in the best interest of our students, faculty, district, and community. It

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gave me opportunities to make a difference for each of those groups. Every

decision that I make has students' best interests at the core.

Kay also believed that those opportunities create a lot of pressure at times to make sure

that every decision made follows school policy and, most importantly, the law.

The collaborative role is more comfortable to the participants in this study as

well as others. Many women have been victims of patriarchal power and from that

assume that power corrupts. They are also afraid of power because of the potential that

it will destroy valued relationships (Miller, 1986). Many feminist theorists believe that

an ethic of care must complement principles of human rights. They strive for a

collaborative, sharing, with more feminine concerns about how people can organize

themselves to solve problems (Brunner, 2000). Several of the women were so

uncomfortable about the topic of power they would segue from the topic of power to

leadership.

Leadership

Researchers use the leadership component in the middle of the Golden Triangle,

as explained in numerous studies, to illustrate how women superintendents might adopt

a leadership style based on outside influences in a given situation, or generically

throughout their career. The participants' self-described leadership style was added as a

way to determine not only what style they believe they use, but also what terminology

that the participants use to describe their methods. This proved to be a valuable

addition.

Participants provided some unique terms to describe their methods of leadership

such as "go and do", and "wallowing the pig". Three of the participants mentioned that

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they purposefully chose a leadership style that was different than their mentor's. These participants respected their mentor but wanted to lead in a different way because they were looking for different results. One participant asserted "Good leadership is gender neutral, but the way it is executed is different. It requires just the right mixture between empathy and following the rules; it requires respect but unconditional love." Erica called her leadership style the "go and do". She stated:

> We don't have unilateral discussion. We are a small rural school. Originally we were 2 or 3 one-room schoolhouses that combined into a PreK-8 school with around 180 kids. I try to back my staff up when there are issues. I listen to their concerns. They would tell you I am opinionated. I like to be in charge and in control and I don't like surprises. Most of the time I have their back and I am always looking at what needs fixed.

Meredith identified her strategy as "wallowing the pig". She stated:

We throw the beast out on the table and wallow it until we come up with a solution. We name the elephant in the room and the principals let it all out. We also use the Good to Great theories, like thoroughbreds, let them race. I keep track to keep them in line and show them the finish line giving guidance.

Meredith also stressed using empathy when talking to angry parents. She stated:

> I want to see things their eyes when there is a problem. Someone needed to be heard. I would apologize, sometimes saying things like, 'I am so sorry that this situation has caused you stress.' Sometimes, but rarely I use authoritarian. I had to cut the bus routes to save money, and then I just used the facts. We needed to conserve finances so it had to be done.

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One of my mistakes early on was I had to learn to listen a little more. I had to talk to myself. I would tell myself, 'Quit making quick decisions. Have discipline! When you have time, give ideas more thought!'

Meredith believes that when she makes a decision regarding leadership, it is important to make good decisions. She added:

You better be fair. You can't be one-way to one and different to another. We have had the position that if someone wanted to leave, we let go to another district. If they are unhappy then hopefully we could get them happy, if not then we let them leave. These are the things I have thought a lot about through the years. There is nothing worse than a teary woman. I will do what I can to be fair and consistent according to the written word: school policy and procedure and state and federal laws.

Lynn is a hands-on person and a hard worker. She believes the culture of education has changed. The parents have changed and the way our society raises kids has changed. Lynn stated that she always treats everyone with dignity and respect, regardless of their home life. When making a decision, she does her best to ask parents, teachers, and the custodian when they are discussing changes. They do not have grade level meetings or school improvement committee meetings. She works at a small school so she talks to many parents and staff and gets a good sampling from the various groups. If a problem arises, like a weather issue that requires a quick decision, she will go ahead and make the decision on her own. Lynn said there are no other administrators in her district so everything comes back to her. She will sometimes call

other area administrators including another woman in the area with more experience for assistance or suggestions.

Jo has what she described as a very eclectic leadership style. She believes it is important to not be aggressive and not to make people cry. She tells others that if a problem occurs, she will give them chances to fix it. She believes she has respect from about 60% of the teachers. Most of the teachers have been at the school for 15–30 years.

Cathy tries to have a collaborative leadership style. She believes in giving teachers a voice in most issues, if an opportunity exists to do so. Cathy believes that she has the loyalty of the teachers because they are a "heard stakeholder." The previous superintendent had an autocratic style but he had the respect of the teachers. It was his personality style to make decisions. As he got older, he would take some questions, but he still made all of the decisions. Cathy keeps that in the back of her mind as she tries to allow people to have more of a voice in the operation of the district.

Shawna has had to deal with some difficult issues as a new superintendent. Not only was the money tight, but also the school had received a D rating from the state. She complained:

> I had to change all of the scheduling. It was not conducive to learning. They were not honoring the 90 minutes of required reading required by state law. I talked with everyone and told them, we are a PreK-8 and are under attack around the state. The legislature wants to close us in order to save money. We can't survive and be a D school!

She revamped the schedule and no one interrupts that time, not even the secretary. The teachers and staff have a lot of meetings and Shawna takes the time to sit in classrooms. She is hands-on, but not a micromanager. She stressed, "I offer assistance". We are very collaborative, but she knows her name is on the bottom line. She tries to do about 90% collaborative, but the other 10% of the time Shawna make the decisions. Shawna added:

> I try to make sure we do not have the cranky ones running the place. I am sorry, but that is the way it has to be so that we are all working toward a common goal. I have developed a good relationship with most of the teachers. I think they were use to a micromanager. A few of the cute ones got away with stuff with the former male superintendent and they have had a hard time understanding I don't operate that way.

According to Shawna, one of the teachers only had 12 students in her classroom and if the teacher thought the students were too low academically, she would send them to special education, which often left her with only six students in the classroom. The students she was sending did not have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and were not supposed to be in the special education class. Shawna was mortified the teacher was doing that. Shawna told her she needed to learn to differentiate her instruction. Shawna described some of the teachers as "scaredy cats." The teachers were so used to being micromanaged that they would not ask for anything.

Kay had also faced some disgruntled teachers who were favorites of the previous superintendent. The others say that she has a backbone of steel, but she usually prefers to be the leader with them following behind. She tries to give the

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teachers choices, but sometimes she feels she needs to be a boss and give directives.

Cathy felt like her college coursework did not prepare her to handle the problems and issues she encounters. Bond issue discussions and bus repairs were two of the main issues that she felt were a struggle to handle. District finances create another constant worry for Cathy. The neighboring district stopped signing emergency transfers so her enrollment has dropped this year making her nervous about finances.

Jo felt her college training prepared her for curriculum and instruction, but she was ill-equipped for school finance management. She also stated she was not prepared for the parents, and that a blatant disregard existed of the general public for rules. Angry parents will not take no for an answer, Jo stated, "These parents will not stop until they have someone's head on a platter". There are times when she purposefully positioned her authority so that she had a more positive outcome. "You are either amazing or if you cross people you become the devils playmate."

The golden triangle was modified to include leadership theory in the center, which provides a structure for explaining the variables that affect women, either consciously or unconsciously, when they choose a leadership style. Several theorists opposed paternalism as a leadership style, but affirmed it in gender-biased descriptions of leaders. Some theorists recognized the need for a participatory, democratic, employee-friendly, and consensus-building approach to leadership; however, when these models were not present, theorists did not consider this absence, as attributable to the fact that women leaders were not included in the theory development (Irby, Brown, Duffy, & Trautman, 2001). By including only the male researched type leadership styles, women are continuing to be marginalized and isolated as they attempt to be

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successful or they may not seek leadership positions because society does not appear to include women in such roles (Colemen, 2001, 2005; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). The leadership style themes have been broken down into (a) relationships, (b) power, and (c) self-esteem as the components that trigger a women superintendent to lead a specific way. The components were utilized to categorize the themes that were prominent in the interviews of the participants.

University and state department training was another theme that came out as an area where participants either felt like they are confident or have the skills they need or are lacking in specific areas. This is where participants indicated that they first learned of the names of specific leaderships styles. Four of the participants mentioned using autocratic leadership style during emergencies, such as calling off school because of a snow day. The participants felt that someone just needed to make the decision and it did not need to be discussed. Two of the women use autocratic leadership regarding how they lead on a daily basis, but both of those superintendents mentioned having conflict in their schools. One has had teachers go to the school board against her and the other one stated only 60% of the teachers respect her. Four mentioned that their leadership style was democratic; however, when they were asked additional questions one was describing democratic and three were describing collaborative. Democratic leadership is when the team discusses the issues and provides input, but the leader makes the final decision (Martindale, 2011). Collaborative leadership is when the team makes the decision based on input from the team. Collaborative leadership requires individuals who have skills, attitudes, and self-awareness necessary to build relationships, handle conflict and share control (Archer & Cameron, 2013). For

collaborative leadership to work effectively and efficiently the staff has to be trained in the decision making process as well as the administrators.

Formal training of superintendents begins in the colleges and universities. These future school leaders need to understand that leadership is inclusive of all genders and races (Katz, 2008). Educational leadership programs should include women leaders' voices when designing coursework for future school-leader candidates (Katz, 2008). Many women are unaware of the challenges that they will face as a woman in acquiring and maintaining employment as a woman superintendent. These leaders learned leadership styles based on masculine theory, which excluded women's experiences in theory development (Gillian, 1997). Several theorists opposed paternalism as a leadership style, but still affirmed it in gender-biased descriptions of leaders. Some of the theorists recognized the need for a participate, democratic, employee-friendly, and consensus-approach to leadership; however, when these models were not present, theorists did not consider this absence, as attributable to the fact that women leaders were not include in the theory development (Irby, Brown, Duffy, & Trautman, 2001). By including only the white male leadership styles and not acknowledging the differences in the way women are treated, leads women to continuing to be marginalized and isolated as they attempt to be successful or they may not seek leadership positions because society does not appear to include women in such roles (Colemen, 2001, 2005; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). Even when professors branch out into more inclusive styles of leadership they frequently neglect to explore the differences women will face once in the position. To properly prepare women for

the position it is important that they are fully prepared for all of the issues they will face during their tenure, not just the ones that males face.

Women appear to have the least trouble gaining ground in (a) small, rural districts with low tests scores that have a difficult time recruiting leaders; (b) urban areas that are considered undesirable; and (c) large districts where women can work their way up through the central office. Women of color have an even more difficult time navigating the system, but also find it easier to find employment in districts considered undesirable by their male counterparts (Brunner, 1999; Newton, 2006; Tallerico & Bustyn, 1996). These women appear to have an easier time gaining employment in districts with a higher rate of minorities where local stakeholders more readily accept them.

For this study, the term success regarding a position referred to if the woman made progress toward improving student achievement and not if she was able to maintain employment in a specific district. Regardless of gender, sometimes certain people are not a good fit for a district, but that in no way is a determinant for success. These 10 women were successful because they have remained true to themselves. Regardless of how the community viewed them, they were comfortable in their own skin and continued to put student achievement above all else. Two of the participants were struggling some with teachers and school boards, but they were both new to the position and are working through the issues. Both of those women have reached out to someone who is providing mentoring to assist them through the difficult situations. Both of the women took over districts that were in some type of crisis. They both agreed that they had to spend such so much time addressing the crisis to keep the

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district solvent that they did not spend the time they needed on developing a leadership style. They lead in a more autocratic way, because they felt rushed. Kay commented on the issue stating:

> My first year was very difficult because I was trying to fix the finances, and go to meetings to meet my entire superintendent certification requirements. I had to keep in contact with my district by phone and I felt disconnected from the school. Both of these participants are still in their positions and plan on making leadership a primary focus for the upcoming year.

While some people claim that the issue of women gaining entrance into superintendency is a thing of the past, during the 2014–2015 school year in Oklahoma, approximately 87 women superintendents existed compared to 427 male superintendents (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015). This shows that approximately 20% of the superintendents are women, but in certain parts of the state, the percentage is much lower (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015). For example, in the far southeastern region of the state, only five of the 60 districts have women leaders, which are 8% of the schools (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015). Most of the women were either in very large, or very small districts, which could explain the appearance of improvement in the state. In the county surrounding the state capital, five women and nine men are leading school districts (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015). The two largest districts in the state have women superintendents leading them. They have acquired their positions within the last two years and are very active on social media. One has posted videos to share information with the district stakeholders.

Moving Forward

One theme of this research produced a possible solution to this problem. Second-generation gender bias was a surprising phenomenon that social psychologist Crosby found in her research more than 25 years ago. Crosby proposed that women are unaware of having been a victim of gender discrimination or deny that it exists because they have worked hard to take gender out of the equation. Women desire to be recognized for their skills and talents so they believe that everyone else in the organization will reciprocate (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). Many of the participants of this study mentioned that they felt they worked harder than their male counterparts, but they felt they were not recognized for their abilities.

Second generation bias is embedded in stereotypes and organizational practices that are difficult to detect and have to be pointed out before people understand that they exist. As mentioned previously when a specific manufacturing company invited a task force in to review their business practices, they discovered that leaders tended to hire and promote people, mainly men, whose backgrounds and careers resembled their own (Ibarra et al., 2013). Just as in education, women in the business world frequently take different paths up the ladder because of family considerations or personal preferences, and these paths do not lead to the levels that the women would like to ultimately hold (Ibarra et al., 2013). A woman that is seeking to enter administration was recently told by her superintendent that she needed to wait until she was older to go into administration. He told her she needed to wait her turn, and wait until her child was older. He seemed surprised and changed the subject when she responded by saying, "You do realize that the man you just hired is younger than I am."

Implications

When the researcher began her career as a superintendent, she was unaware of the issues that face women superintendents. She was like many of the participants and believed that if she worked hard enough people would respect her for the effort. As the researcher read through the research and listened to the participants discuss their careers, she frequently wanted to scream, "Me too!" According to research, half of all students who are studying administration are women. If these issues were presented during the graduate courses, it would better prepare women for the job and they would be more prepared for facing the difficulties. Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb (2013) found that when women are educated and begin to recognize the subtle and pervasive effects of second-generation bias, they feel empowered, not victimized, because they can take action to counter those effects. For women in the business world, Ibarra et al. (2013), recommended three actions to improve their chances for advancement: (a) educate women and men about second-gender bias; (b) create safe "identity workspaces" to support transitions to bigger roles; and (c) anchor women's development efforts with a sense of leadership purpose rather than how women are perceived, thus giving women more insight into themselves and their organizations. These recommendations transfer into educational leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study provide insight into the experiences of women superintendents; however, an abundance of data on this topic exists and is ready to be examined. The topics for additional research are unlimited. Additional researchers should replicate or conduct further study regarding women superintendents and

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leadership. Follow-up studies using different methodologies, expanded populations, or participants in different regions of the state could provide additional explanation or clarification of this issue. Some different topic areas that were mentioned by numerous participants during their interviews are presented below.

Social Media

All 10 participants mentioned social media and how it affects them. Researchers could consider conducting a study to examine how participants use social media to their benefit or demise. This information would add significantly to the research. Some of the participants use social media to promote their school and to increase positive public relations with their area stakeholders. Five of the participants mentioned social media in a negative light because the area stakeholders have used it to post unflattering information about the superintendent. One had an anonymous blogger make comments about her hairstyle and the rest mentioned how parents have started using Facebook to promote their personal agendas.

Training and Certification

It was discussed in an earlier chapter that several of the participants fell within a time period when the superintendent classes and the three years of administrative experience were not required. People were allowed to take the superintendent's test and were only required to have a Master's Degree in any subject. Someone could have a Master's Degree in Library Science or reading and take the superintendent's test. If they passed the test then they were eligible to get a superintendent's certificate. A study to determine if a difference exists in the success rate of women who took the classes as compared to those who did not would add another dimension to the research.

Second-Generational Bias

In addition, as suggested in different training opportunities, second-generational bias should be examined as a topic of discussion. Second generation bias is embedded in stereotypes and organizational practices that are difficult to detect and have to be pointed out before people understand that they exist. Just as in education, women in the business world frequently take different paths up the ladder because of family considerations or personal preferences, and these paths do not lead to the levels that the women would like to ultimately hold (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles are another possible research topic that could produce answers for a strand of study. It would require a researcher with a sustained research agenda to commit to the 5 or 10 year extended period that it would require for a longitudinal study, to determine the long term impact of a leadership style. The skills, values, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required in one environment can be radically different than another environment that could require another leadership style.

Summary

Many times women have used gender as a defense in an attempt to justify their participation in public school education. Researchers have pointed out that women are better at certain things because of their innate abilities in an attempt to prove that women deserve to hold specific positions. Women have struggled with being allowed into the teaching profession and then into educational administration. The conflict has continued throughout history without a solution. There continues to be inequity in the ratio of male-to-women leaders as compared to the ratio of male-to-women teachers,

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and gender continues to be an issue that disqualifies women from leadership

participation in other fields as well. Through continued research, and implementation

of programs that educate everyone involved, this problem can be eliminated. University

programs, state departments, male administrators, and the women themselves have to all

be aware of the issue and work together to find solutions. Additional research needs to

be conducted and changes implemented until this issue is resolved.

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