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FACTORS AFFECTING BLACK, HISPANIC, AND WHITE FEMALES TO THE
SUPERINTENDENCY

by

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FACTORS AFFECTING BLACK, HISPANIC, AND WHITE FEMALES TO THE
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to God who is the head of my life.

My dissertation committee and Dr. Jill Morris for your support and guidance.

My parents who raised me to be the person I am today.

My husband who pushes me to reach my highest potential.

My children – may you never stop learning.

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS AFFECTING BLACK, HISPANIC, AND WHITE
FEMALES TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY

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The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived barriers and strategies held by Black, Hispanic, and White women with regard to the position of school superintendent. This study will include a review of data collected from the *Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency* from a purposeful sample of active Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents from Southern states and Southwestern states in the U.S. A purposeful sample of active Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents from Southern states and Southwestern states in the U.S. were interviewed in an attempt to provide a more in-depth understanding of the factors affecting Black, Hispanic, and White females in attaining the superintendency. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentage, and a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), while an inductive coding process was used to analyze the collected qualitative data. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that there was not a significant mean difference with regard to perceived barriers and strategies among

the three groups. The qualitative analysis supported evidence from current research related to the topic that barriers do exist to the superintendency and strategies can be employed to attain the superintendency.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

While women make up 77 % of the teaching profession, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, they account for just 33% of superintendents in the United States (Tate, 2019). Solely looking at school superintendent data in the public school system, the statistics are nearly identical. In fact, of the nation's 13,728 school districts, women hold approximately 24% of the 1,984 public school superintendent roles (Burkman & Lester, 2013; Superville, 2017). Although the percentage of female superintendents in major cities has increased, the overall percentage of female superintendents has only increased by 0.7% annually (Callahan, 2018; Wallace, 2015). This is an overwhelmingly low percentage and one that presents concern in regards to diversity. In recent years, there has been growing interest in seeking diversification of candidates ascending to the top position in education, answering the call for greater inclusion of women and people of color (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

The number of superintendents of color has increased over the years. This increase has come, though, at a much slower rate, with 8.6% of respondents identifying as superintendents of color in 2020, compared to 6% in 2010 and 5% in 2000 (Modan, 2020). African American and Mexican American women are even less represented in these roles. Pruitt (2015) asserted that while more African American women are in principal and other district-level leadership positions, barriers prohibit African American women from pursuing the school district superintendent's role. Similarly, Mexican American women experience additional barriers when seeking top educational administrative positions (Mendez-Morse 1997; Rodriguez, 2014).

Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974 proposed equal opportunities for women in educational administration (Brunner

& Grogan, 2017), women still face an array of job-embedded challenges that keep them from attaining the top roles. Of course, with any barrier that is broken, there are obstacles to overcome. The feminist perspective has been employed by many researchers to truly understand the experiences of women in educational leadership (Grogan, 2000).

Feminism lends itself to the discussion of women and the superintendency by establishing the initial layer of gender. In general, feminist theory examines and describes the nature of the barrier. On the other hand, critical race feminism contends to expose the nature of gender and race inequality. This study will explore the barriers and strategies to the superintendency for Black, Hispanic, and White females and why these factors exist.

Research Problem

Women constitute more than 50% of the population, but progress into the workforce and further into the leadership ranks has not afforded women equal gender representation (Catalyst, 2017; Chira, 2017). Gender disparities in the workplace can also be discovered by looking at the population of female teachers. Studies show about 76% of the nation's K-12 educators are women. Despite the dominance of females in the classroom, few have broken the "glass ceiling" to hold the highest position in K-12 education - superintendency (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001; Glass, 2000).

When it comes to school superintendents – the school district's CEO – only 24% are women, according to federal data and a survey conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the association of the nation's public school superintendents (Ramaswamy, 2020). About a fourth of superintendents in the nation are women. With such a small population, there is a need to examine the experiences these women have had as they serve in both rural and urban school districts

in various regions across the United States (Wiley, Polnick, Bustamante, and Ballenger, 2017).

Women continue to be underrepresented among the ranks of public school superintendents despite having similar incentives and disincentives as men when considering a career as superintendent, outnumbering men as educators, and comprising at least half of the students in educational leadership programs (Allen, Ballard, Coke, and Kelsey, 2014). According to Brunner (2000), female superintendent networking opportunities are limited and not equal to what men experience. This could be directly related to the lack of female representation.

In 2010, AASA reported that nearly one in every four superintendents in the United States is a woman. However, only 2% of respondents categorized themselves as African-American women, and another 2% as Latina (Domenech, 2010). A more recent AASA report found that the share of women who lead districts is rising incrementally, but steadily, from 24.1% in 2010 to 26.68% in 2020. The number of superintendents of color is increasing much more slowly, with 8.6% of respondents identifying as superintendents of color in 2020, compared to 6% in 2010 and 5% in 2000 (Modan, 2020). It's possible the lack of role models is the reason for the underrepresentation of African-American female superintendents. With only 8% of the superintendents identifying as superintendents of color in the AASA's report, there may not be enough leaders in the position nationwide to provide inspiration.

The most common ethnicity among school superintendents is White, which makes up 68.2% of all school superintendents (School Superintendent Demographics and Statistics in the US, 2021). Comparatively, only 13.8% of the Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and 11.0% of the Black or African American ethnicity have attained the role of superintendent (School Superintendent Demographics and Statistics in the US, 2021).

Women have played integral roles in public education for years and continue to do so. Schools today are composed of a large majority of women in various faculty and staff positions. Yet, women, particularly Black and Hispanic women, continue to be underrepresented in the role of superintendent of schools (Harris, 2020; Rodriguez, 2019). According to the literature, there is scant research on Black and Hispanic female superintendents. Therefore, these women remain faceless subsets within the ranks of American school superintendents.

Awareness of the existence of Black and Hispanic female superintendents raises questions about them. The answers to these questions may provide insight and offer encouragement to other Black and Hispanic females considering careers superintendents. Without answers to these questions, though, Black and Hispanic female superintendents will continue to be invisible CEOs (Keller, 1999). Black and Hispanic females already have to deal with the “double jeopardy” of being a woman as well as being a woman of color (Kim, 2008; Bagalini, 2020).

The intersection of race and gender makes aspiration to a position of the superintendency in education even more intimidating (Katz, 2014). Having insight into the successes and challenges of those that came before you is important to your success in that role. Finding out who influenced female superintendents and what types of support they received while achieving top academic positions should be evaluated and studied (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). However, there has been little research conducted on the plight of Black and Hispanic females aspiring to the position of superintendent. The voices of these leaders need to be heard, too, so that others may learn, be inspired, and follow in their footsteps with the insight of what a position of this nature could hold for them as women of color (Revere, 1987; Castillo, Lopez-Estrada & Menchada, 2021). The

intent is to examine the lived experiences of these women in addition to the barriers and strategies they encountered on their journey.

Significance of Study

This study will compare and contrast the experiences of Black, Hispanic and White superintendents, give them voice, and document their successes as well as their challenges. This study adds to the limited amount of research focused specifically on Black and Hispanic female superintendents and on female superintendents in general. Results from the study provide insight and information for Black, Hispanic, and White females aspiring to the superintendency by describing career experiences, needed skills, and limitations encountered by these females who have successfully attained the superintendent role. This study will also reveal the reasons that the women who hold or have held these positions pursued them. It will explore their career paths and the lessons they learned along the way in an effort to understand what effect gender and race have had on them in their pursuit of the superintendency. Jackson (1999) stated, “We are in a position to tell a complete story of all of these women leaders. We need to hear their voices loud and clear, for us to understand the intensity of their struggle.” There is a pressing need to gain more understanding of the underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic female public school district superintendents and their administrative experiences as well as the overall role of the public school district superintendency in order to serve as a guide for minority females who aspire to educational leadership positions (Amedy, 1999; Rodriguez 2019). Grogan (1996) affirmed that more studies should be conducted from an orientation which centers upon understanding the meanings and contexts of the leadership experiences of female superintendents.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived barriers and strategies held by Black, Hispanic, and White women with regard to the position of school superintendent. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as barriers on their path to the superintendency?
2. What do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as strategies that have assisted them on their path to the superintendency?
3. To what extent does race influence the barriers experienced by female superintendents?
4. To what extent does race influence the strategies used by female superintendents on their path to the superintendency?
5. What are the experiences of female superintendents in terms of their barriers and strategies to superintendency?

Definition of Key Terms

Black/African American: According to U.S. Office of Management and Budget, a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel, and Drewery, 2011).

Critical Race Feminism or CRF: A framework that examines the legal status of women from minority populations and the unique ways they experience discrimination of race, gender, class, socioeconomic status, and sexuality (Wing, 2003).

European American or White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. This designation includes people who

indicate their race as "White" or reported entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Feminism: A social movement whose goal is to gain equality between women and men (Lober, 2005).

Hispanic: Of, relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent and especially of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin living in the U.S.

Perceived barrier: Any obstacle that is believed to hinder the employment of women as school superintendents (Dulac, 1992).

Perceived strategy: Any factor that is believed to facilitate the employment of women as school superintendents (Walker, 2014).

Superintendent: Person hired by the board of education and elected or appointed group of officials who govern and set policy for a school system.

State superintendent: A state's public-school senior administrator who governs all public-school districts in a state or territory (Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

Conclusion

The invisible glass ceiling has allowed women to see the path forward but not the barriers that awaited them (Smith, 2010). For females, especially women of color, the barriers are even more difficult to overcome. The presence of women in the role of public school administration has increased but not at the same rate as their male counterparts (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Goffney & Edmonson, 2012). The number of women administrators has increased, but a "glass ceiling" has made the challenge of attainment for a female superintendent who is qualified very difficult, compounded by minority when procuring leadership roles (Blackmore & Kenway, 2017). Consequently, the

invisible glass ceiling leads to women being more heavily represented in teaching roles; but women have also begun to seek more opportunities for higher education. In 2008, women earned more degrees than males within each racial/ethnic group; however, women are still not equally represented in the male-dominated roles of school administration (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010, p. vi; Bryant, 2014). This treatment of women sparked the feminist movement. As important as the women's movement has been, it has been determined that the "mainstream women's movement reflected the aims and objectives of white, middle-class women" (Simien & Clawson, 2004). Critical Race Feminism carries us beyond the study of mainstream white women and their endeavors by adding the vital lens of race. This study will examine the perceived barriers and strategies of Black, Hispanic, and White females that have successfully attained the role of superintendent through the lens of feminism, intersectionality, and critical race feminism.

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies reveal that women have shown unwavering strength and determination in their journey to the most powerful position in public schools. There was a time when women were reported as teachers, principals, and founders of schools. Hansot and Tyack (1981) referred to this time in the early decades of the twentieth century as the golden age for women school administrators because thousands of women were successful in attaining leadership positions in schools: Women became lead teachers, teaching principals, supervisors, mid-level administrators, curriculum directors/coordinators, assistant superintendents, and sometimes women became superintendents. However, the instances of female superintendents were reported even then as rare. A steep decline was noted, though, from the end of the World War II to the 1970's (Blount, 1998). Joylynn Pruitt mentioned in her 2015 dissertation that while women continue to seek the positions of power and leadership, they still must work through the biases of Boards of Education, State Departments of Education, and the school community. These authorities based their decisions on gender and racial stereotypes that result in them favoring men over women and minority candidates (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

According to a 2015 study by Pew Research Center, women are more compassionate and organized than men when it comes to leadership roles. However, equity in the workplace in the 21st century has yet to be achieved, especially for the highest levels of executive leadership (Sandberg, 2013; Ratcheva and Zahidi, 2016). O'Reilly (2015) asserts, "A woman has to work twice as hard to be considered half as good" (p. 50).

Overall, men are proportionately more likely to gain promotion to principal, and do so more quickly than women (Maranto, Carroll, Cheng, and Teodoro, 2017). As a

result, there is an imbalance in educational leadership for females. Women are closing the opportunity gap; unfortunately, gender equity is elusive as parity in positions of leadership is estimated to occur in the year 2085 (Klos, 2013). In spite of the narrow opportunity gap, women that aspire to high levels of management face barriers as they attempt to gain access to a predominantly male-dominated workplace (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Yellen, 2020).

There has been research focused on women in educational administration and the pursuit of the superintendency including parallel research highlighting the challenges for aspiring and sitting superintendents of color (Arnez, 1982; Ortiz, 1982; Chase, 1995; Enomoto et al., 2000). There also has been research focused on the challenges of Hispanic/Latina superintendents, specifically by Méndez-Morse (1997, 1999, 2000), Ortiz (1999, 2000), Manuel and Slate (2003), Quilantán and Menchaca-Ochoa (2004), and Couch (2007).

This literature review will seek to examine previous research with a focus on: a) barriers to the superintendency, b) strategies to the superintendency, and c) further barriers minority female superintendents face. Taking into consideration the gap that exists in educational research literature comparing women superintendents of different ethnicities, questions were created to guide the study and examine the phenomena based on the perceptions of these women who are actively serving in the role of superintendent. This study seeks to fill this research void and progress understanding of the obstacles and attributes Black, Hispanic, and White women have to contend with to occupy the chief executive seat.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework describes the “collections of concepts, concept maps, and/or conceptual models depicting a piece of theory examined for a research study” (Houser, 2008, p. 171). The theoretical framework for this research is grounded in feminist theory which is often equated with feminism. This framework places gender relations at the center while recognizing “multiple intersectionalities of identity” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p.28). As Marshall (1997) explains in her work *Feminist Critical Policy Analysis*, feminist theory serves to “uncover cultural and institutional sources or forces of oppression” (p.12). Its approach uses “women’s realities and voices from the counterpublics, the silenced, the non-events, the meaning-making” in order to “provide the lenses and tools for discovering and disrupting modes of oppression” (Marshall, 10 1997, p.11). Authors Marshall and Andre-Bechely (2008) explain that feminism challenges the historical power and influence of patriarchy in education (p.283). In this section, an understanding of this theory along with intersectionality and critical race feminism is discussed in relation to the impacts they have on the barriers and strategies of females aspiring to the superintendency.

There are a number of different variations that could be used to define the term feminism. Yet, for the purpose of this dissertation, we will define it as follows: a diverse collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies (Day, 2016). While much research on gender and performance focuses on the extent of women's gender identification (Kaiser and Hagiwara, 2011), how women construe gender identity is rarely considered. This research will seek to make those considerations.

Women leaders are persistently scrutinized and disadvantaged by systemic discrimination in theory and practice (Pullen and Vachhani, 2020; Glass, Bjork and Brunner, 2000). They are scrutinized on issues as broad-ranging as their suitability and

capabilities to perform leadership roles, the advantages and disadvantages that women bring to leadership, and the structural inequalities they suffer (Calás and Smircich, 1991; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly and Heilman, 2016; Heilman, 2012; Stainback, K., Kleiner, S., Skaggs, S., 2016; Glass, Bjork and Brunner, 2000). Women leaders also experience disproportionate visibility due to their gender (Bell and Sinclair, 2016).

The first wave of feminism occurred during the late 19th century. It emerged out of a climate of liberal and socialist politics (Rampton, 2015). The goal of this wave was to open up opportunities for women with a focus on suffrage. The early stages of this movement challenged domesticity and witnessed women behaving in “un-ladylike” ways (Rampton, 2015). Women began speaking and spending time in jail after arrests. This first wave sparked discussions surrounding women’s right to vote and participate in politics. These discussions uncovered the stark differences between men and women in relation to morals. The claim was that by increasing women’s presence in politics, public behavior would improve.

The second wave of feminism took place after World War II (Anand, 2018). Men returned home after the war. However, upon return, women were fired from their positions and replaced by men (Anand, 2018). During the second wave, feminism evolved into two separate movements. These two movements were known as equal rights feminism and radical feminism. Within equal rights feminism, the objective sought equality with men in political and social spheres, where legislation and laws such as legalization of abortion and efforts to make women more established in the workforce equal to men were the primary goals (LeGates, 2001). The other movement had a different approach, though. Radical feminism wanted more radical change to the society that fundamentally saw it as patriarchal and needed to be altered if women were to escape its oppression (LeGates, 2001). This movement was influenced by the Civil Rights

movement and women of all ages began to fight to secure a stronger role in American society (Milkman, 2016).

The third wave of feminism began in the 1990s. Third wavers sought to redefine femininity and sought to celebrate differences across race, class, and sexual orientations (Delao, 2021). The feminists of this wave aimed to be released from any oppression. An aspect of third wave feminism that mystified the mothers of the earlier feminist movement was the readoption by young feminists of the very lipstick, high heels, and cleavage proudly exposed by low cut necklines that the first two phases of the movement identified with male oppression (Rampton, 2015). It focused on race and gender and grew out of the sex-positive debates of the second wave (Anand, 2018). This third wave thus primarily tried to bring in communities that were previously left out of feminist goals and recognizes the intersectionality of oppression (Anand, 2018).

Black feminist scholars introduced the concept of intersecting 'multiple identities' in their critiques of the essentialism of a single female consciousness promoted by liberal White middle-class feminism (Frankenberg, 1993; Levine-Rasky, 2011; Ringrose, 2007). Theorists Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000, 2009) are recognized as the women who operationalized the construct of intersectionality as "a macrolevel social theory that starts from the assumption that social systems such as patriarchy, class, and race are inextricably interlocking and together co-create a matrix of dominations, privileges, and oppressions" (Greenwood, 2008, p. 38). Crenshaw's definition of intersectionality is "to describe how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics 'intersect' with one another and overlap" (Delao, 2021). Intersectionality is quite inclusive. The common positions are "We are here for women of color, trans people, lesbian, gay and bi people and the differently abled" and "Listen to women, listen to people of color" (Pluckrose, 2017). Intersectionality is a tool researchers can engage

analytically and dispositionally in examinations of interlocking educational injustices (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Natapoff, 1995; Scanlan & Theoharis, 2016). It has been described as a way for researchers to highlight the relational aspects of human connections and society (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013).

As Mariana Ortega mentions in her article “White Feminism and Women of Color” the list of respected women of color is short. Nonetheless, understanding the cause of this is perplexing. In her essay, she tries to figure out the reason for intersectionality and asks the following questions:

“Why is it that feminists still scramble to fill out the spot for the respected, well-known woman-of-color, speaker that will bring in a crowd? Why is it that there is only a small percentage of books and articles written by women of color in the growing lists of feminist publications? Why is it that I or any of the few women of color who are involved in feminist work could write lists of all the experiences that make us invisible, misunderstood, homogenized, and victimized while dealing with white feminists” (Ortega, 2016).

While the feminist perspective uses gender as the unit of analysis, Burton and Weiner (2016) noted, “gender is only one of multiple identities individuals hold (e.g. race, ethnicity, sexuality) and that those identities intersect to influence each person’s experiences” (p. 2). According to Hankivsky (2014), “intersectionality rejects the idea that human lives can be reduced into separate categories such as gender, race and class” (p. 255). Liang and Peters-Hawkins (2017) claim that “the intersectionality perspective posits that race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and species are socially constructed categories that interact with each other to produce unique life experiences that correspond with one’s location within interlocking ‘vectors of oppression and privilege’ (Ritzer, 2007, p. 204; see also Crenshaw, 1991; Hooks, 1984)” (p. 47). Because “social identities

are not mutually exclusive and do not operate in isolation of each other,” Hankivsky’s view of intersectionality theory calls for an understanding of the “multifaceted, complex, and interlocking nature of social locations and power structures and how these shape human lives” (p. 255).

The theory of critical race feminism “emerged at the end of the twentieth century to emphasize the legal concerns of a significant group of people, those who are both women and members of today’s racial/ethnic minorities, as well as disproportionately poor” (Wing, 2003, p. 1). Unfortunately, women have suffered many injustices which have hindered their progress in the U. S. Critical race feminism (CRF) seeks to understand how society organizes itself along intersections of race, gender, class, and other forms of social hierarchies (Vergee, 2012). Feminism unveiled the injustices of women in our society. However, CRF utilizes counter-storytelling as methodology and legitimizes the voices of women of color in speaking about social oppression (Vergee, 2012).

An abundance of research exists on the lived experiences of women. The question is whose voice is being depicted as a representation for all females. More frequently than others, “mainstream feminism [...] paid insufficient attention to the central role of White supremacy’s subordination of women of color” (Wing, 2003, p. 7). The Black voice has even been represented by Black men before Black women. According to Brown (2014), research is needed that specifically targets the needs of African-American women as they have experienced the dual discrimination of being both African-American and women because:

The voices of many African American women superintendents have been assigned to the voices of White women and African American men. Rarely are the voices of African American women superintendents revealed to solely

address the issues and challenges of recruitment and retention faced by African American women to the public school superintendency. Neither, has credence or validation been given to the impact of race, gender, and social politics on the recruitment and retention process of African American women in the public school superintendency (p. 576).

Therefore, according to research, the voice that was being represented was the voice of middle to upper class White females which left the Black and Hispanic females voiceless. The lived experiences of women of color have been marginalized in literature over the years and the lives of White women have been documented as all women. CRF presents a consciousness that supports the idea that minority women have been discriminated against because of gender and color and that discrimination has been ignored by research (Collins, 1986, 1990, 2000, 2009; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Coles, 2020). When looking at barriers to the superintendency, we must not underestimate the challenges such theories present.

Barriers to the Superintendency

The disproportionate number of women represented in the superintendency clearly indicates that gender must be considered in determining factors affecting females to the superintendency. A few recent studies on women superintendents (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner 2000; Derrington & Sharatt, 2009; Muñoz, Pankake, Murakami, & Simonsson, 2014; Sperandio & Devdas, 2014) describe the current issues female leaders are facing, which includes personal issues such as marriage, children, and relocation as well as professional challenges such as opportunity and gender bias. Unfortunately, women have found it difficult to strike a balance with workplace increased responsibilities and the demanding obligations on the home front (Sperandio & Devdas, 2015). Obtaining the position of superintendent can be challenging in itself. Having to contend with these

additional factors further complicates the role. Compounding the problem, responsibilities of a superintendent are unlikely to change which means women will still be challenged by finding a balance and making decisions between their career and home life responsibilities (Sperandio & Devdas, 2015).

Research reveals a disproportionately low number of women serving as public school superintendents. The same underrepresentation exposes a variety of barriers that impede the ascension of women to the top leadership positions in the nation's public school districts (Blount, 1998; Connell, P. H., Cobia, F. J., & Hodge, P. H., 2015; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; LeMasters & Roach, 2012; Kelsey et al., 2014; Sampson, M., Gresham, G., Apple White, S., Roberts, K., 2015; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sharratt & Derrington, 1993; Skrla, L., Reyes, P., Schewrich, J., 2000; Sperandio, 2015). Sampson et al. (2015) noted a range of barriers for the disproportionately low number of women serving in the superintendency including selected career path, lack of self-efficacy, gender bias, and family constraints. The majority of the literature that exists in regards to barriers to the superintendency for women are general barriers that exist for all women. There is little research, though, on the barriers that women of color face specifically. Therefore, there is a need for further exploration.

Gender is a barrier common to all female superintendents. The position of superintendent has consistently been a male-dominated position. The U.S. Census Bureau has described the superintendency as the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States (Bjork, 2000; Modan 2020). This is commonly referred to as the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling pertains to upper-level workforce opportunities proven to be impenetrable to the vast majority of marginalized workers (Reiners, 2021). There is an abundance of research supporting this metaphor for the underrepresentation of females in higher level leadership positions. Eagly and Carli (2007) believed that the

glass ceiling was more of a labyrinth. The labyrinth presented continual twists, turns, detours, dead ends, and unusual paths to ascend to administrative positions (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). There are women that break through the glass ceiling. However, they often find novel ways of doing so and there are few that reach the executive level leadership positions.

Merida Johns (2013) shared some historical background in her study about how and when light was shed on the issue of gender bias in leadership positions. Although this work is not specific to women in school leadership, it shows a broader picture of how there are disparities among women when it comes to attaining an executive level position. Johns (2013) found that in 1991, the issue of women falling behind men in taking on senior level positions became a growing presence in the workplace to the extent that the United States Congress decided to create the Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. In addition to this act, Congress also established the Glass Ceiling Commission with the purpose of studying how businesses fill management positions, developmental and skill-enhancing practices needed to be in such positions, compensation programs and reward structures, and creating an awards program for those who promote a more diverse workforce at the decision-making levels (Johns, 2013). Findings of the commission were shared in 1995 that reaffirmed that there were existing barriers for women in the workforce (Johns, 2013). The commission reported that they found barriers for women to reach top positions that included societal, governmental, internal business, and business structural barriers (Johns, 2013). They also stated that there are certain “career pipeline” barriers such as “lack of mentoring, initial placement in dead-end jobs, different standards for performance evaluation for women and men, and little or no access to informal networks of communication” that are holding women back from reaching their

fullest potential as leaders in the workforce (Johns, 2013, p. 2). This could also be attributed to search firms.

School districts usually hire search consultants to find their next superintendents. The role of the professional search consultant creates an external barrier for women aspiring to become superintendents because they act as gatekeepers (Castro, 1992) to positions dominated by White males (Alston, 1999; Brown, 2014; Brunner, 2008; Dobie & Hummel, 2001). Those that hold these positions are looking for candidates that “fit the description” of the qualities and characteristics they feel a superintendent should possess. On the upward path to leadership most of the gatekeepers are men and many still cannot fully accept women as leaders (Craig & Hardy, 1996). They also come from a variety of different backgrounds in the field of education. Gatekeepers to the superintendency include not only superintendents who have clout at the local, state, and national levels, but also consultants who are hired by school boards to conduct superintendency searches, professors of educational administration who control access to internships and informal networks, and school board members who have the responsibility of hiring and evaluating superintendents (Carreon, Cassedy, Borman & Dubeck, 2013). Gatekeepers hold the power to control who advances to the next step in the hiring process. These gatekeepers are usually white males who form a tight network that is difficult for women to penetrate.

“The Good Ole Boy” network becomes an additional barrier females are faced with on their ascent to the superintendency. The “good ole boy” network was defined as a “network of white Southerners who conform to the values, culture or behavior of his peers” (Good ole boy, 2015). It is evident how a network such as this can function as a barrier. Members of this group found commonalities in social group and culture. Yet, females, no matter the background, would never meet the requirement determined by the

“good ole boy” system (Babo et. al., 2007; Edgewater, 2008; Mac Arthur, 2010). These men usually worked together, but also developed strong bonds outside of work. As a result, they did favors for each other and were influential in decision-making. Since women were not privy to this group, they were overlooked for career advancement opportunities. Networking played a critical role in advancing to the superintendent position (Archer, 2003; Glass, 2000; Jones & Washington, 2010; Kowalski & Stouder, 1999, M. Miller, 2009; Zachary, 2009). The “good ole boy” network was a place for this kind of advancement to occur, but the one place women were not allowed.

Another place women have not always been allowed is the high school principalship. This barrier can be seen there as well. Dowell and Larwin (2013) identified the high school principalship as the number one position from which most superintendents ascend, even though fewer women serve in this position (Burton & Weiner, 2016; DeAngelis & O’Connor, 2012; Dowell & Larwin, 2013; Marczynski & Gates, 2013; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2013). This can be particularly challenging for women because they are underrepresented in the role of high school principal. According to Dowell and Larwin (2013), women represented less than 1% of high school principals in 1973 and only 16% by 1990 while 40.7% of elementary school principals were women. Kim and Brunner (2009) found 50% of the women in their study followed an alternative career path to the superintendency that did not include the high school principalship at all. Polinchock (2014) and Sperandio and Devdas (2015) described a plethora of career paths taken by female superintendents with no dominant pattern, but many transitioning through central office positions to the assistant superintendency. If a high school principalship is a prerequisite to a superintendent position, the disproportionality is no surprise. However, to further examine barriers to females, we must also examine barriers to females that are of a minority race.

Further Barriers Minority Female Superintendents Face

Terranova, et. al (2016) indicate that barriers are factors that discourage career moves or progression. An increasing number of studies have found that African American women assistant principals, principals and central office administrators experience intrinsic/extrinsic barriers when pursuing the position of superintendent (Brown, 2014; Gerwertz, 2006; Roane & Newcomb, 2013; Wyland, 2016). These barriers hinder them in their aspirations of executive leadership. Exploring these barriers could assist Black female administrators in their pursuit of the superintendency.

As previously noted, prior literature regarding women in leadership reflected the experiences of white females, not women of color (Brown, 2014). Black females have to contend with the barriers that affect white females along with barriers regarding race that are also imposed on them. A significant body of research exists that expounds on extrinsic barriers that impact an African-American woman's ascent to the superintendency (Alston, 2005; Brown, 2014; & Hosford and Tillman, 2012).

One of the barriers to the superintendency for African American females is a lack of mentoring. Although it has been determined that mentoring is not as effective as a strategy for career advancement of members of underrepresented groups, if it is not sufficiently employed (Blanchard, 2009; Parker, 2009, Guptill, 2003; Ellerbee, 2002). To address the deficit of women in superintendency, Guptill (2003) identifies providing support to women in such roles as a strategy in their study of mentorship experiences of school superintendents.

Wallin and Crippen (2008) found that male superintendents were mentored at twice the rate of female superintendents. In addition, they found the rate that women were mentored by men was much lower than the rate that men mentored each other. Researchers (Blanchard, 2009; Guptill, 2003; Ellerbee, 2002) articulated that mentoring

and collegial support are among the factors that lead to access and success in the superintendency. Their study further illustrates the importance of mentoring for diversity in that individuals seem more likely to mentor those who are like themselves, thus suggesting that African American superintendents and aspiring superintendents could be among those least likely to be mentored (Blanchard, 2009; Guptill, 2003; Ellerbee, 2002). This is possibly attributed to the stereotyping of African American women.

Studies also show that stereotyping is yet another obstacle that African American females have to overcome in their pursuit of the superintendency. One of the stereotypes that has been damaging to Black females seeking executive-level positions because it has been etched into the minds of society is that of the “Angry Black Woman.” This stereotype derived from the 1950’s show, *Amos and Andy*. The character of the show was an angry, hostile, and aggressive, nagging wife. From the husband’s inept ability to provide for the home, Sapphire and her mother were presented as the successful breadwinners and angry, castrating women when the cultural “norm” was to be the opposite (Weide, 2015). This stereotype has been portrayed on screen in a number of roles since then. It can even be seen in the reality shows of today. The image of Sapphire is the epitome of the Angry Black Woman syndrome (Cox, 2017). Stereotypes such as this can be seen as a threat to those who have been charged with hiring the next school superintendent and detrimental to a Black female who is aspiring to this top leadership position. As other groups are stereotyped based on skills related to their performance, women of color face stereotypes concerning their identity (Cox, 2017). Race and gender discrimination combined can become an immense hurdle to overcome. As for the intersection of race/ethnicity and sex, Brunner and Grogan (2007) concur with Tallerico (2000a) and suggest that, generally, there are “more hoops for women of color to jump through on their way up the administrative career ladder” (p. 112). This statement

insinuates that it is not just African American women that are affected by such barriers, but other women of color, too.

Hispanic superintendents are also affected, but have a different set of challenges that impede their ascent to the superintendency. They, too, are impacted by both race and gender. However, in addition to feeling pressured to be more knowledgeable, Hispanic superintendents reported the need to work harder and longer to be better than other superintendents in order to dispel the misconception by some that they did not get their position based on the merit of their qualifications (Campbell-Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Tallerico, 2000). They feel subject to racial prejudice just as Black women do. One form of this racial prejudice is revealed in Hispanic superintendents reporting that they feel pressured to mobilize the ethnic communities within their school districts in a non-threatening manner (Campbell-Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000).

Leticia Hernandez asserts in her 2018 dissertation study that the experiences of White and African American women are very different from Latina women, and therefore it is necessary to tailor mentoring to meet their needs and aspirations. Manuel and Slate (2003) stated that Latinas experience minimal support and encouragement from their spouses regarding their leadership paths. They also do not receive support or encouragement from parents or siblings (Hernandez, 2018). Latina women lack family and spousal support for positions that involved higher leadership positions (Manuel & Slate, 2003). Magdaleno (2006) states that a same-race mentoring program is more likely due to certain Latino/a cultural assets that the participants can share. Magdaleno (2006) added that there is an understanding of cultural and family values.

These barriers to the superintendency can be stifling to a career as a school district CEO. However, there are women who chose not to allow such obstacles to halt their

pursuits to success along their journey. They continue to push and strive. Therefore, it is also necessary to examine the stepping stones of those that have been successful.

Strategies to Attain the Superintendency

There are many challenges that can be encountered on the way to reaching the ultimate career advancement to the superintendency for women. Regardless, women have learned to downplay these barriers to successfully gain positions and complete their tasks at hand (Skrla, et al., 2000). The challenges or barriers could be labeled as either internal or external (Shakeshaft, 1987; Grogan & Brunner, 2005). More often, research shows the barriers keeping women from the superintendency are external ones. Nonetheless, there are still some females that break down these barriers to attain the highest level of leadership in K-12 schools. Those that have successfully accomplished this goal have shared their experiences of how they were able to persevere. Personal accounts of females in the position create optimism for aspiring, female superintendents (Eakle, 1995; Harris, Smith, & Hale, 2002). The stories shared include similar career paths, strong mentorships and networking opportunities that are essential to those climbing the ladder to superintendency success.

Glass (2000) lists seven reasons why women's career mobility path to the superintendency is still low. These seven reasons include: (1) women are not in career positions (i.e., high school principals, athletic directors, etc.) that normally lead to advancement into the superintendency; (2) women are not preparing for the superintendency; (3) women are not as experienced nor as interested in fiscal management as men; (4) personal relationships hold women back; (5) school boards are hesitant to hire women superintendents; (6) women enter the field of education for different reasons today; and (7) women enter administration at an older age.

The Study of the American Superintendent: 2015 Mid-Decade Update conducted by the AASA (Finnan et al., 2015) reported that the majority of superintendents' career paths followed the tradition of teacher to site administrator to assistant superintendent to superintendent. However, according to a study done by Sharp and Walter (2004), 31% transitioned directly from site-level administration into the superintendency. A majority of the principals, men in particular, make this leap from the high school principalship. Females have sometimes been considered at a disadvantage if their principalship experience has been at the elementary level instead of the high-school level (Sharp & Walter, 2004). Wolverton and MacDonald's (2001) research found that more high school principalships are held by men than women, and many believe the high school principalship is the position that most clearly resembles the superintendency. To the contrary, it is a position that few women experience which leads to a lack of mentors for them on this path.

Mentorship and networking is a double edged sword. They can be both a barrier to the superintendency if unable to be utilized appropriately and a strategy if they are. Research has indicated that mentoring is one of the most successful strategies used by women and women of color to not only help them obtain a position as a superintendent, but also retain the position of superintendent (Alston, 1999, 2000; Anderson, 2000). Many superintendents in their first year find the task of district leadership overwhelming and complex without ongoing support (Augustine-Shaw and Funk, 2013).

Family support can also be a double-edged sword. In one of the most comprehensive studies of the superintendency, Kowalski and Strouder (1999) suggested lack of family support as a barrier for limiting administrative opportunities for women. This implies that gaining the support of family can be a strategy to the superintendency. Raising a family was not seen as a barrier in attaining and maintaining an effective

superintendency (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Women reported strong support from their spouses or partners in managing family responsibilities was an integral factor in their success in the role. Married superintendents, of either gender, will need strong support from their spouses (Craig & Hardy, 1996).

According to Beckwith et al. (2016), researchers have suggested that social networking is the single most valuable tool that African American women can use to connect to the dominant group to strengthen ties and encounter socially distant ideas. With their repetitive presence in the literature, they seem to be strategies that should not be ignored. Cain (2015) suggested the same... mentorship and sponsorship are important tools that must be taken advantage of by African American women.

Another strategy that studies reveal has been successful particularly with African American leaders in their ascent in educational leadership is assimilation. Beckwith, Carter, and Peters (2016) theorized that African American women who were successful in ascending to the top of their corporations or departments played the game of assimilation. Giscombe and Mattis (2002), cited by Beckwith et al. (2016), postulated that adopting existing organization norms was key to becoming a prototypical leader. African American women must learn to win the support of the dominant group because the position of authority is conferred to those within the dominant group or those who are perceived to be like members of the dominant group (Beckwith et al., 2016).

In looking at strategies of Hispanic female superintendents, Ortiz (1999) stated that school boards match Latinas to specific contexts. This could be considered a strategy for Latina superintendents as they tend to go to areas that have high concentrations of Latinos. Ortiz stated that unlike the appointment of White men, the appointment of Latinas had symbolic and political overtones. It could easily seem that Latinas will favor the community that embodies their race, and that they will run the school systems in a

biased format. However, neither is the case. They are, instead, in search of opportunity that will land them a place in the position they have worked the hardest to secure in whatever form that opportunity may present itself.

Summary of Findings

Females face both internal and external barriers to the superintendency (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner 2000; Derrington & Sharatt, 2009; Muñoz, Pankake, Murakami, & Simonsson, 2014; Sperandio & Devdas, 2014). As a result of these barriers, there is an underrepresentation of females ascending to this top school leadership position (Blount, 1998; Connell et al., 2015; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; LeMasters & Roach, 2012; Kelsey et al., 2014; Robison et al, 2017; Sampson et al., 2015; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sharratt & Derrington, 1993; Skrla et al., 2000; Sperandio, 2015). Gender is the most common external barrier that females face in their pursuit of the superintendency as this position is the most male dominated executive position in the nation (Bjork 2000, Modan 2020, Sampson 2015). In addition to the barriers that all women face, minority females experience further barriers. One of concern is the lack of mentoring as mentoring can be a strategy if effectively utilized. However, minority superintendents are the least likely to be mentored (Blanchard, 2009; Guptill, 2003; Ellerbee, 2002). The small percentage of minority superintendents does not provide minority females with many opportunities to be mentored by a female superintendent of the same ethnicity. Therefore, minority females have to contend with not only gender barriers, but racial barriers, too (Grogan, 2007; Tallerico, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Campbell-Jones and Avelar-Lasalle, 2000).

Mentoring is one of the most successful strategies for all women in their ascent to become the school district's CEO (Alston 1999, 2000; Beckwith et al., 2016).

Augustine-Shaw and Funk (2013) assert there is a necessity for ongoing support in the

superintendent position. In terms of women of color, assimilation has been a successful strategy to the superintendency (Beckwith et al., 2016). With so few minority superintendents, being supported by the dominant group is imperative because authority is given to those who are in or perceived to be like members of the dominant group (Beckwith et al., 2016).

Conclusion

All women have obstacles to overcome in their path to superintendency. Among these barriers are issues around gender, lack of mentoring, relationships with school boards, finding a “right match,” difficulty in networking, and a perceived innate lack of skills in contract negotiations (Gilmour & Kinsella, 2009). Black and Hispanic women experience obstacles that are exacerbated when their race and gender intersect (Brunner and Grogan, 2007; Tallerico, 2000). However, the obstacles they have to overcome merely because they are women become secondary to the obstacles they are faced with because they are of a minority race. Although research exists on female superintendents and barriers that were perceived and barriers that were experienced, there is little research that looks at how perceived barriers differ based on race.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived barriers held by Black, Hispanic, and White women with regard to the position of school superintendent. This mixed-methods study collected survey and interview data obtained from a purposeful sample of active Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents from Southern states and Southwestern states in the U.S. Quantitative data were collected using the *Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency* (QPB-SIWSS). The qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a one-way ANOVA, while an inductive coding process will be used to analyze the data obtained from the interview transcripts. This chapter presents an overview of the research problem, operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose and questions, research design, populations and sampling selection, instrumentation to be used, data collection procedures, data analysis, privacy and ethical considerations, and the research design limitations of the study.

Overview of the Research Problem

Studies show that women in general tend to encounter similar barriers in regards to gender when assessing the superintendency. Black and Hispanic women superintendents, however, encounter “unique problems and roles” (Revere, 1987) due to gender and race complexities. Over the last 20 years, the literature has increased regarding Black and Hispanic women in educational-leadership roles, including the superintendency (Alston, 2000, 2005; Gewertz, 2006; Horsford & Tillman, 2012; Jackson, 1999; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). Much of the existing research is, however, in the form of unpublished dissertation studies (Downing, 2009) rather than peer-reviewed research, and tends to focus on gender or race issues rather than exploring the impact of

both gender and race concerning superintendency acquisition (Brunner, 2005). However, current research is limited regarding the demographics of Black and Hispanic female superintendents and their overall experiences in accessing the superintendency.

Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

This study consists of two constructs: (a) barriers and (b) strategies. Barrier is defined as any obstacle that is believed to hinder the employment of women as school superintendents (Dulac, 1992). Strategy is defined as any factor that is believed to facilitate the employment of women as school superintendents (Walker, 2014). Both constructs will be measured using the *Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency* (QPB-SIWSS).

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived barriers held by Black, Hispanic, and White women with regard to the position of school superintendent. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as barriers on their path to the superintendency?
2. What do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as strategies that have assisted them on their path to the superintendency?
3. To what extent does race influence the barriers experienced by female superintendents?
4. To what extent does race influence the strategies used by female superintendents on their path to the superintendency?
5. What are the experiences of female superintendents in terms of their barriers and strategies to the superintendency?

Research Design

For this study, the researcher used a sequential mixed-methods design (QUAN→qual). This design consisted of two phases: first, a quantitative phase and second, a qualitative phase. The advantage of implementing this design is it allows for a more thorough and in-depth exploration of the quantitative results by following up with a qualitative phase. A purposeful sample of active Black, Hispanic and White female superintendents in southern and southwestern states was solicited to complete the QPB-SIWSS to examine the perceived barriers encountered, and the perceived strategies used by superintendents in accessing the superintendency. In addition, interviews were conducted to further explore perceptions of barriers and strategies that had an impact on the participants attaining the superintendency. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a one-way ANOVA, while qualitative data were analyzed using an inductive coding process.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of all K-12 superintendents residing in Southern and the Southwestern states. The participating superintendents were located in Texas, California, Tennessee, Florida, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Arizona, North Carolina, Alabama, Missouri, and Mississippi. Table 3.1 indicates the gender breakdown of K-12 superintendents in each state with ranges from 59% - 76% male and 23% - 41% female. The majority of the superintendents in each of these states are male. Of those that are female, the large majority in each state are also white with ranges from .3% - 7.5% Black, 0% - 6.4% Hispanic, and 20% - 36% White. A purposeful sample of active Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents in each state was selected to participate in this study.

Table 3.1

Gender of Superintendents

State	Male (n)	Male (%)	Female (n)	Female (%)
Alabama	119	76.0	38	24.0
Arizona	167	59.0	117	41.0
Arkansas	201	77.0	60	23.0
California	624	61.0	402	39.0
Florida	74	74.0	26	26.0
Georgia	149	76.0	48	24.0
Louisiana	56	70.0	24	30.0
Mississippi	100	68.0	46	32.0
Missouri	395	76.0	126	24.0
North Carolina	96	70.0	41	30.0
Tennessee	102	71.0	42	29.0
Texas	785	76.0	253	24.0

Table 3.2

Female Superintendents

State	Black	%	Hispanic	%	White	%
Alabama	11	7.0	0	0.0	19	30.0
Arkansas	7	3.0	0	0.0	53	20.0
Arizona	1	.3	18	6.4	98	35.0
California	18	1.7	25	2.4	368	36.0
Georgia	9	4.5	0	0.0	39	20.0
Missouri	5	.9	0	0.0	121	23.0
Mississippi	10	6.8	0	0.0	36	25.0
Louisiana	6	7.5	0	0.0	18	22.5
North Carolina	9	6.6	1	.70	32	23.0
Tennessee	6	4.1	0	00	36	25.0
Texas	6	.6	33	3.2	214	21.0

Participant Selection

A purposeful sample of female superintendents working in public school districts in the southern and southwestern regions of the U.S. was sent an email soliciting participation in a study on barriers and strategies to the superintendency. The superintendents were selected to provide a wide range of experience, race, and ethnicity. Those who chose to participate in the survey were asked to participate in an interview. Once the surveys were complete, Black, Hispanic, and White participants from the specified regions were solicited to participate in the study. Superintendents that volunteered to be interviewed in addition to the survey were naturally included in the selected group. Interview participants were contacted via phone and their responses were recorded.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using the *Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency* (QPB-SIWSS). The original instrument was developed by Dr. Betty Jane Dulac and used in her 1992 dissertation. The questionnaire consisted of 18 demographic questions that address personal and professional characteristics of women in the superintendency. The next sections contained 30 statements, each utilizing a semantic differential scale to determine the perceptions of barriers. Scoring will be completed using the numerical value for rating barriers from “1” representing not a major barrier to “5” representing a major barrier.

Dulac created the original survey in 1992 for a quantitative dissertation study of 90 women superintendents and 158 school board presidents in public school districts in six Northeastern states. The study analyzed and compared women superintendents’ and school board presidents’ perceptions of barriers and strategies of women superintendents accessing the superintendency. Content validity was established by: (a) submitting the questionnaire to two women administration experts who reviewed the instrument and provided suggestions for improvement, (b) having a statistician analyze the instrument format and offer coding facilitation suggestions, and (c) using pilot study participants to critique the instrument pinpointing any ambiguities (Dulac, 1992).

Respondents were provided an opportunity at the end of the second and third sections to list additional barriers and strategies. A Likert scale was chosen citing the scale was the most important for collecting data on perceptions (Dulac, 1992). Dulac (1992) noted “a computer application of the data determined a reliability coefficient of .96 for barriers and .86 for strategies.” Composite scores range from 0 to 100; the higher the composite the greater the perception of a barrier or strategy (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

<i>Composite Score Representation</i>	
Composite score	Perception
0-20	Low
21-40	Low-medium
41-60	Medium
61-80	Medium High
81-100	High

Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative

The researcher obtained permission from University of Houston-Clear Lake's (UHCL) Committee on Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and informed consent was provided. After permission is granted, the names and email addresses of all the K-12 female superintendents in the Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas were solicited by purchasing an email listing for superintendents in the U.S. from emailistus.com. The female names and contact information were extracted from the directory. The questionnaire was retyped using SurveyMonkey in order to convert it to an electronic version. Then, the female superintendents were emailed the survey cover letter explaining the purpose of the study assuring confidentiality, and stating the importance of participation. Inside the introductory email, a link to the *QPB-SIWSS* was included. The results of the survey was downloaded into an excel file from SurveyMonkey and imported into the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Qualitative

The researcher obtained permission from University of Houston-Clear Lake's (UHCL) Committee on Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS). Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Superintendent participants were solicited to participate in the interview based on the initial group respondents. The superintendent participants responses were reviewed and interview participants were selected from their survey response to ethnicity. Interviews with Black, Hispanic, and White superintendents were scheduled and conducted by the researcher. A semi-structured interview followed that was guided by a list of open-ended questions aligned with the research questions. The participants did not receive the questions in advance to limit the possibility they may come to the interview with prepared responses. The prepared questions served as a guide for the researcher. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with the participant's permission. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participant identities. The SurveyMonkey data file, audio recordings, transcriptions, and interview field notes were stored in a flash drive or in a locked compartment in the faculty sponsor's office a minimum of five years by the faculty sponsor after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

All survey data were imported into IBM SPSS for further analysis. To answer research question 1, *What do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as barriers on their path to the superintendency?*, frequencies and percentages of responses to items 15-35 of the *QPB-SIWSS* was calculated to determine the perceived barriers to the superintendency as identified by active Black, Hispanic, and White female

superintendents. For this study, *barriers* are defined as an obstacle that is believed to hinder the employment of women as school superintendents.

To answer research question 2, What do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as strategies that have assisted them on their path to the superintendency?, frequencies and percentages of responses to items 36-56 of the QPB-SIWSS was calculated to determine the perceived strategies to the superintendency as identified by active Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents. For this study, strategies are defined as any factor that is believed to facilitate the employment of women as school superintendents.

To answer research question 3, *To what extent does race influence the barriers experienced by female superintendents?*, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between the three groups. The independent variable, race, will be divided into three categories: (a) Black, (b) Hispanic, and (c) White. The dependent variable, barriers, was a continuous variable. A Turkey post hoc test followed and was used to assess the significance of differences between pairs of group means; significance value of .05 was the threshold for statistical significance. Eta-squared and omega-squared was utilized to calculate effect size.

To answer research question 4, *To what extent does race influence the strategies used by female superintendents on their path to the superintendency?*, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between the three groups. The independent variable, race, was divided into three categories: (a) Black, (b) Hispanic, and (c) White. The dependent variable, strategies, was a continuous variable. A Turkey post hoc test followed and was used to assess the significance of differences between pairs of group means; significance value of .05 was

the threshold for statistical significance. Eta-squared and omega-squared was utilized to calculate effect size.

Qualitative

Qualitative interview data will be measured using thematic analysis (Lichtman, 2013). Following transcription, interview transcripts were transferred into *NVivo*, a qualitative analysis software package, for coding. To answer Research Question 5, *What are the perceptions of female superintendents in terms of their barriers and strategies to superintendency?*, interview data were coded to identify patterns and emergent themes (Lichtman, 2013). Codes are the smallest unit of meaning that can be derived from a statement; for this study, codes were selected based on explicit statements within the interview and from emergent concepts; to increase the validity of findings, codes were connected to research literature and survey results. After all responses within the interview transcripts had been coded, the codes were organized into larger groups of themes. The emergent themes were used to describe the relationship race has on barriers and strategies to the superintendency.

Qualitative Validity

Validity was strengthened by triangulating the results across the quantitative and qualitative data. In order to ensure validity, data obtained from surveys was cross-checked and compared among participating groups. The data collected during interviews was subject to member-checking by having participants review the preliminary results and transcripts in order to enhance the validity of the responses provided. Interview responses were organized into themes by focusing on redundancy. Peer review will be performed by having content area experts in the School of Education at UHCL review the findings. Member checking of the data were established by having the interview

participants review the findings to ensure that their responses were accurately documented during the transcription phase.

Privacy and Ethical Considerations

Prior to the collection of any data, the researcher gained approval from the UHCL's CPHS and provided informed consent resulting in minimized risk to subjects demonstrated by: (a) establishing a voluntary questionnaire methodology, (b) using an organization's database to ensure an equitable selection process; (c) providing informed consent to each survey participants; and d) providing informed consent to interview participants to assure confidentiality. The data collected remained securely locked in a cabinet in the researcher's office. The researcher will maintain the data for 5 years as required by CPHS. After the deadline has passed the researcher will destroy all data files associated with the study.

Research Design Limitations

There are a few limitations regarding this study. First, turnover is somewhat common in the position of superintendent and school districts are not mandated to publish this information. Records used for this study may not have been accurate, resulting in emails (survey invitation) to be sent to superintendents no longer in those positions. Second, assistant superintendents, regardless of gender, were not included in the study's sample population. Assistant superintendents may also experience barriers related to the research questions; however, they cannot be generalized to the results of this study. Third, the use of an online survey and email notification may reduce importance to participation in the research and completion of the survey. Superintendents receive a large number of emails, many of which are vendor or sales solicitations. An email request for survey participation may have been dismissed by superintendents or been marked as SPAM in an email filtering system.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived barriers held by Black, Hispanic, and White females with regard to the position of school superintendent. This chapter identified the need to further examine the relationship among the constructs. The instrument used to collect data is the *Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency*. The qualitative component of Chapter III was collected through interviews on the barriers and strategies to the superintendency. Chapter IV will report the findings of the *QPB-SIWSS* as well as all interview data collected. Results were reported in the following order: demographic characteristics of participants, instrument reliability, results of data collection for all five research questions, and a summary of findings. In Chapter IV, additional research data have been analyzed and discussed in further detail.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived barriers and strategies held by Black, Hispanic, and White women with regard to the position of school superintendent. This chapter presents the finding of quantitative and qualitative data analysis of the study. First an explanation of the participants' demographics of the study is presented, followed by the results of the data analysis. This chapter presents the data analysis for each of the five research questions. It concludes with a summary of the findings.

Participant Demographics

Seventy-five female superintendents participated in this study. Thirty-one of the superintendents (20.3%) indicated they were Black, 26 superintendents (17.6%) indicated they were Hispanic, 91 superintendents (61.5%) indicated they were White, and one superintendent (0.68%) indicated they were other. Twenty-five (33.3%) were Black, 25 (33.3%) were Hispanic, and 25 (33.3%) were White. Part 1 of the Questionnaire on *Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting on Women Securing the Superintendency* comprised demographic questions. Tables 4.1-4.16 contain results from the 75 participants. The tables appear in the same order the questions were written in the questionnaire. Table 4.1 reflects that the highest percentage of participants (57.0%) were 50-59 years of age, 8 or 11.0% of the participants were 60 years of age or over, and 32.0% of the participants were 40-49 years of age. Table 4.2 indicates the majority of the participants, 58 or 77.3%, were married. Nine (12.0%) of the participants were divorced or separated, 6.7% were single, and 2.7% were widowed. One participant chose not to respond to the question.

Table 4.1

Age of Participant

Age	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Under 25 years	0	0.0
25-29	0	0.0
30-39	0	0.0
40-49	24	32.0
50-59	43	57.0
60 or over	8	11.0
Total	75	100.0

Table 4.2

Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Single	5	6.7
Married	58	77.3
Widowed	2	2.7
Divorced or separated	9	12.0
No response	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

As shown in Table 4.3, 73.3% of the participants did not have any children in the K-12 school system. Eleven (14.7%) had one child and nine (12.0%) had two children in the K-12 school system. Table 4.4 demonstrates that 30.7% of the participants did not respond to the survey item. Nine or 12.0% of the participants had children 13-19 years of

age. Only one participant had a child under 5 years of age. The majority of the participants (34.7%) had no children.

Table 4.3

Number of Children in School (K-12)

Number of Children	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
0	55	73.3
1	11	14.7
2	9	12.0
3	0	0.0
4 or more	0	0.0
Total	75	100.0

Table 4.4

Age of Youngest Child

Age	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
No children	26	34.7
Under 5 years	1	1.3
5-12	9	12.0
13-19	16	21.3
No response	23	30.7
Total	75	100.0

As shown in Table 4.5, all participants held degrees higher than a bachelor. The majority of the participants, 52 or 69.3%, possessed a doctorate. Twenty-three (30.7%)

possessed a master's degree. As shown in Table 4.6, 25 or 33.3%, of each race/ethnicity is represented by the participants.

Table 4.5

Highest Degree Earned

Degree	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Bachelors	0	0.0
Masters	23	30.7
Doctorate	52	69.3
Total	75	100.0

Table 4.6

Racial/Ethnic Origin

Race	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Black	25	33.3
Hispanic	25	33.3
White	25	33.3
Total	75	100.0

As shown in Table 4.7, 38.7% of the participants did not have extended family in the immediate area. The majority of the participants (61.3%) have extended family in the immediate area. Table 4.8 denotes the highest percentage of participants (28.0%) work in districts containing 1,000 - 2,999 students, whereas 14.7% work in districts with 10,000 - 24,999 students and 13.3% work in district with 1 – 299 students. Nine (12.0%) work in districts with 10,000-24,999 students and another nine (12.0%) work in districts with 5,000-9,999 students.

Table 4.7

Extended Family in Immediate Area

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	46	61.3
No	29	38.7
Total	75	100.0

Table 4.8

Number of Students in District Where Employed

Number of Students	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1 - 299	10	13.3
300 - 599	6	8.0
600 - 999	4	5.3
1,000-2,999	21	28.0
3,000-4,999	9	12.0
5,000 – 9,999	9	12.0
10,000 – 24,999	11	14.7
25,000 – 49,999	3	4.0
50,000 or more	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

As indicated in Table 4.9, the highest percentage (33.0%) of participants worked in districts located in rural areas with a population of fewer than 2,500. Twenty-one (28.0%) worked in a town or small city containing a population of 2,000 – 9,999 and eighteen (24.0%) worked in districts located in suburbs with a population of 10,000 – 99,999. The lowest percentage of participants (11.0%) worked in urban centers or large cities having a population of 100,000 or more population. Table 4.10 reflects the majority of participants (50.7%) had been in their present position for 1-4 years. Twenty (26.7%) had been in their present position for 5-8 years, and (13.3%) had been in their present position for less than a year. Seven (9.3%) participants had been in their positions for less than a year.

Table 4.9

Metro Status Where Employed

Metro Status	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Rural (under 2,500 pop)	25	33
Town or small city (2,500 – 9,999 pop)	21	28
Suburb (10,000 – 99,999)	18	24
Urban center or large city (100,000 or more)	11	15
Total	75	100

Table 4.10

Number of Years in Present Superintendency

Years	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than a year	10	13.3
1-4 years	38	50.7
5-8 years	20	26.7
9 or more	7	9.3
Total	75	100

Table 4.11 reflects the majority of participants (50.7%) had been in their present position for 1-4 years. Twenty (26.7%) had been in their present position for 5-8 years, and 10 (13.3%) had been in their present position for less than a year. Seven (9.3%) participants had been in their positions for less than a year. Thirty-five (46.7%) participants held their longest superintendency for 1-4 years. Twenty-five (25.0%) held their longest superintendency for 5-8 years whereas 8 (10.7%) had less than a year in their longest superintendency. Seven participants (9.3%) were in their longest superintendency for less than a year (see Table 4.11). As shown in Table 4.12, most

participants, 56 (74.7%) held one superintendent position including the present one. Thirteen (17.3%) have held two superintendencies and 3 (4.0%) have held 5 or more superintendencies. Two participants (2.6%) have held 3 superintendencies and only one participant chose not to respond. Table 4.13 indicates that 46.0% of the participants were 40-49 years of age when they acquired their first superintendency and 41.0% were 50-59 years of age. Nine (12.0%) were 30-39 years of age and 1 (1.3%) was 60 or over when they attained their first superintendency.

Table 4.11

Longest Superintendency Held

Years	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than a year	8	10.7
1-4 years	35	46.7
5-8 years	25	33.3
9 or more	7	9.3
Total	75	100

Table 4.12

Number of Superintendencies Held Including Present One

Years	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	56	74.7
2	13	17.3
3	2	2.6
4	0	0
5 or more	3	4.0
No response	1	1.3
Total	75	100

Table 4.13

Age at First Superintendency

Age	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Under 25 years	0	0
25 - 29	0	0
30 - 39	9	12
40 -49	34	46
50 - 59	31	41
60 or over	1	1
Total	75	100

The six female superintendents that participated in the interview process consisted of two superintendents from each race/ethnicity. There were also representatives from rural, suburban, and urban metropolitan areas. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities during the reporting process and are illustrated in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Interview Participant Pseudonyms and Demographics

	Marital Status	Highest Degree	Age	Metro Status	# of years in current superintendency
Black					
Dr. Garrison	Single	Doctorate	50-59	rural	1-4 years
Dr. Shannon	Married	Doctorate	40-49	urban	5-8 years
Hispanic					
Dr. Yuri	Married	Doctorate	50-59	suburb	5-8 years
Dr. Camil	Single	Doctorate	50-59	urban	9 or more
White					
Ms. Williams	Married	Masters	50-59	suburb	1-4 years
Dr. Camp	Married	Doctorate	No response	suburb	Less than a year

Research Question One

Research question one, What do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as barriers on their path to the superintendency?, was measured using frequencies and percentages of responses to items 15-35 of the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting Women Securing the Superintendency. Results indicate that Black, Hispanic, and White females perceive a lack of networking opportunities as one of the greatest barriers for females to the superintendency.

The survey questionnaire items related to the perception of barriers included 21 items using a 100-point slider scale (0-20=low perception, 21-40=low-medium perception, 41-60=medium perception, 61-80=medium-high perception, 81-100=high perception). The responses to the perception of barriers impacting Black, Hispanic, and

White women on their path to the superintendency are provided below. The results listed in Table 4.18 are averages of the participants' responses in each subgroup.

Black Female Superintendents

Black female superintendents rated the following three survey items highest in regards to perceived barriers as show in Table 4.15: existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs ($M = 64.3$), predominance of male candidates for administrative positions ($M = 64.4$), and exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network” ($M = 75.0$). Items receiving medium to medium-high rating were: lack of a strong woman's network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network” ($M = 61.9$), the belief that women must be better qualified than men to attain top level administration positions ($M = 56.2$), gender bias in the screening and selection process ($M = 61.7$), and lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment ($M = 56.2$). The lowest ratings were given to inappropriate career path experiences ($M = 26.5$), lack of motivation to compete for top jobs ($M = 20.6$), and lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs ($M = 29.7$).

Table 4.15

Perception of Barriers for Black Female Participants

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
15. Conflicting demands of career and family	62.1	28.41
16. Lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment.	56.2	35.23
17. The belief that women do not make good administrators	45.0	32.98
18. Inappropriate career path experiences.	26.5	27.85
19. Childhood socialization to “proper” roles for men and women.	36.8	27.80
20. The predominance of male candidates for administrative positions.	64.3	32.60
21. Lack of a mentor.	40.6	28.98
22. Existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs.	64.3	33.37
23. Doubt by those in a hiring position of women’s long-term career commitment.	55.5	28.55
24. Lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs.	29.7	26.8
25. Gender bias in the screening and selection process.	61.7	33.13
26. Exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network.”	75.0	30.42
27. Lack of acceptance by male administrators.	48.0	32.19
28. Lack of acceptance by female administrators and staff.	39.4	28.34
29. Lack of political “know-how.”	49.0	29.55
30. Lack of motivation to compete for top jobs.	20.6	23.14
31. The belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions.	56.2	30.73
32. Lack of a strong women’s network similar to the “Good Old	61.9	32.01

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
33. Covert sex discrimination	53.9	31.19
34. Overt sex discrimination	44.3	30.57
35. Potential colleagues' insubordination in working for a female boss.	38.3	31.67

Hispanic Female Superintendents

Hispanic female superintendents rated the following barriers highest as shown in Table 4.16: the exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network” (M = 69.4), the existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs (M = 65.8), and the predominance of male candidates for administrative positions (M = 67.6). The next highest ratings were given to conflicting demands of career and family (M = 64.8), gender bias in the screening and selection process (M = 60.6) and a lack of a strong woman’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network” (M = 62.8). Lower ratings were given to inappropriate career path experiences (M = 18.2), lack of motivation to compete for top jobs (M = 21.8) and lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs (M = 30.6).

Table 4.16

Perception of Barriers for Hispanic Female Participants

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
15. Conflicting demands of career and family	64.8	31.92
16. Lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment.	53.8	35.31
17. The belief that women do not make good administrators	36.4	33.27
18. Inappropriate career path experiences.	18.2	23.22

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
19. Childhood socialization to “proper” roles for men and women.	36.8	33.74
20. The predominance of male candidates for administrative positions.	67.6	34.73
21. Lack of a mentor.	44.2	38.11
22. Existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs.	65.8	38.36
23. Doubt by those in a hiring position of women’s long-term career commitment.	55.6	55.56
24. Lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs.	30.6	33.90
25. Gender bias in the screening and selection process.	60.6	33.32
26. Exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network.”	69.4	37.61
27. Lack of acceptance by male administrators.	54.8	34.56
28. Lack of acceptance by female administrators and staff.	36.4	32.33
29. Lack of political “know-how.”	46.4	36.52
30. Lack of motivation to compete for top jobs.	21.8	26.51
31. The belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions.	57.5	34.20
32. Lack of a strong women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network.”	62.8	37.71
33. Covert sex discrimination	50.7	33.86
34. Overt sex discrimination	41.1	31.53
35. Potential colleagues’ insubordination in working for a female boss.	43.8	32.84

White Female Superintendents

White female superintendents rated the following barriers highest as shown in Table 4.17: exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network”

(M = 68.7), lack of ability to relocate as a result of a personal commitment (M = 66.9), and the predominance of male candidates for administrative positions (M = 69.8). Most gave medium ratings to the following barriers: lack of acceptance by male administrators and staff (M = 54.9), gender bias in the screening and selection process (M = 52.6), and lack of a strong women's network similar to the "Good Old Boy Network" (M = 52.2). The lower ratings were given to inappropriate career path experiences (M = 21.8), lack of motivation to compete for top jobs (M = 22.2), and childhood socialization to "proper" roles for men and women (M = 26.9).

Table 4.17

Perception of Barriers for White Participants

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
15. Conflicting demands of career and family	63.2	25.28
16. Lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment.	66.9	32.17
17. The belief that women do not make good administrators	47.2	29.96
18. Inappropriate career path experiences.	21.8	31.06
19. Childhood socialization to "proper" roles for men and women.	26.9	25.86
20. The predominance of male candidates for administrative positions.	69.8	27.89
21. Lack of a mentor.	41.0	37.92
22. Existence of the "buddy system" in which men refer other men to jobs.	65.1	33.79
23. Doubt by those in a hiring position of women's long-term career commitment.	38.1	29.73
24. Lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs.	33.3	29.51
25. Gender bias in the screening and selection process.	52.6	34.45

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
26. Exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network.”	68.7	35.57
27. Lack of acceptance by male administrators.	54.9	33.03
28. Lack of acceptance by female administrators and staff.	32.2	30.25
29. Lack of political “know-how.”	32.6	27.35
30. Lack of motivation to compete for top jobs.	22.2	24.70
31. The belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions.	52.2	34.43
32. Lack of a strong women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network.”	52.2	35.43
33. Covert sex discrimination	44.4	31.64
34. Overt sex discrimination	36.4	26.89
35. Potential colleagues’ insubordination in working for a female boss.	34.1	25.46

As shown in Table 4.18 there were similarities in the mean scores among Black, Hispanic and White superintendents regarding barriers to the superintendency. All three represented groups felt strongly that the following are barriers to the superintendency: exclusion from the informal socialization process of “Good Ole Boy Network” was a barrier to the superintendency ($M_B = 74.1$, $M_H = 79.4$, $M_W = 68.9$), the predominance of male candidates for administrative positions ($M_B = 64.3$, $M_H = 67.6$, $M_W = 69.8$), existence of the “buddy system in which men refer other men to jobs ($M_B = 64.3$, $M_H = 65.8$, $M_W = 65.1$), gender bias in the screening and selection process ($M_B = 61.7$, $M_H = 60.6$, $M_W = 52.6$), conflicting demands of career and family ($M_B = 62.1$, $M_H = 64.8$, $M_W = 63.2$), lack of a strong women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network” (M_B

= 61.9, $M_H = 62.8$, $M_W = 52.2$), and the belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level admin positions ($M_B = 56.2$, $M_H = 57.5$, $M_W = 52.2$).

Consequently, the three groups did not feel the following were barriers to the superintendency: lack of motivation to compete for top jobs ($M_B = 20.6$, $M_H = 21.8$, $M_W = 22.2$), inappropriate career path experiences were a barrier to the superintendency ($M_B = 21.6$, $M_H = 29.2$, $M_W = 30.9$), and lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs ($M_B = 29.7$, $M_H = 30.6$, $M_W = 33.3$).

In terms of differences in the mean scores, Black and Hispanic female superintendents felt the predominance of male candidates for administrative positions was a barrier to the superintendency ($M_B = 73.9$, $M_H = 71.1$). However, White female superintendents did not feel that was a barrier ($M_W = 35.0$). Black and Hispanic females also strongly felt doubt by those in a hiring position of women's long-term career commitment was a barrier to the superintendency ($M_B = 55.5$, $M_H = 55.6$ while White females did not feel as strongly that this was a barrier to the superintendency ($M_W = 38.1$).

Table 4.18

Summary of Mean Scores for Black, Hispanic, and White Female Participants Barriers

Survey item	Black	Hispanic	White
15. Conflicting demands of career and family	62.1	64.8	63.2
16. Lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment.	56.2	53.8	66.9
17. The belief that women do not make good administrators	45.0	36.4	47.2
18. Inappropriate career path experiences.	26.5	18.2	21.8
19. Childhood socialization to "proper" roles for men and women.	36.8	36.8	26.9

Survey item	Black	Hispanic	White
20. The predominance of male candidates for administrative positions.	64.3	67.6	69.8
21. Lack of a mentor.	40.6	44.2	41.0
22. Existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs.	64.3	65.8	65.1
23. Doubt by those in a hiring position of women’s long-term career commitment.	55.5	55.6	38.1
24. Lack of self-confidence in ability to succeed in top jobs.	29.7	30.6	33.3
25. Gender bias in the screening and selection process.	61.7	60.6	52.6
26. Exclusion from informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network.”	75.0	69.4	68.7
27. Lack of acceptance by male administrators.	48.0	54.8	54.9
28. Lack of acceptance by female administrators and staff.	39.4	36.4	32.2
29. Lack of political “know-how.”	49.0	46.4	32.6
30. Lack of motivation to compete for top jobs.	20.6	21.8	22.2
31. The belief that women must be better qualified than men in order to attain top level administrative positions.	56.2	57.5	52.2
32. Lack of a strong women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network.”	61.9	62.8	52.2
33. Covert sex discrimination	53.9	50.7	44.4
34. Overt sex discrimination	44.3	41.1	36.4
35. Potential colleagues’ insubordination in working for a female boss.	38.3	43.8	34.1

Research Question Two

Research question two, What do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as strategies that have assisted them on their path to the superintendency?, was measured using frequencies and percentages of responses to items 36-56 of the Questionnaire on Perceptions of Barriers and Strategies Impacting Women

Securing the Superintendency. Results indicated that Black and White female superintendents both perceive learning the characteristics of the school district for which you are applying as the one of the greatest strategies to women pursuing the superintendency. However, Hispanic female superintendents perceive obtaining the support of family as one of the greatest strategies to the superintendency along with coping with the demands of career and family.

The survey questionnaire items related to the perception of strategies included 20 items using a 100-point slider scale (0-20=low perception, 21-40=low-medium perception, 41-60=medium perception, 61-80=medium-high perception, 100=high perception). The responses to the perception of strategies impacting Black, Hispanic, and White women on their path to the superintendency are provided below. The results listed in Table 4.21 are averages of the participants responses in each subgroup.

Black Female Superintendents

Black female superintendents rated the following survey items highest in regards to strategies to the superintendency: developing a strong self-concept ($M = 6.2$), obtaining the support of family ($M = 73.3$), and learning characteristics of the school district in which applying for positions ($M = 75.8$). The next highest ratings were given to enhancing interviewing skills ($M = 72.7$), preparing an effective resume ($M = 70.8$), and learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family ($M = 68.07$). The lowest ratings were given to invoking affirmative action and Title IX ($M = 27.1$). The majority of the Black female superintendent ratings in regards to strategies to the superintendency as listed in Table 4.19 were in the medium to high range of scores.

Table 4.19

Perception of Strategies for Black Female Participants (%)

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
36. Increasing visibility in professional circles.	61.3	29.49
37. Obtaining a doctorate.	62.9	34.19
38. Formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals.	60.0	34.87
39. Preparing an effective resume.	70.8	29.55
40. Utilizing a women's network similar to the "Good Old Boy Network."	60.6	30.49
41. Enhancing interviewing skills.	72.7	27.16
42. Gaining access to community power groups.	59.5	35.93
43. Enlisting a mentor.	61.1	30.85
44. Obtaining the support of family.	73.3	32.33
45. Learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family.	68.1	32.60
46. Developing a strong self-concept.	76.2	28.28
47. Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position.	75.8	31.38
48. Attending workshops to improve professional skills.	65.4	30.71
49. Invoking affirmative action and Title IX.	27.1	30.90
50. Being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions.	61.0	33.83
51. Increasing flexibility to relocate.	67.7	33.89
52. Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.	48.7	31.30
53. Knowing the job description of position for which applying.	66.6	35.79

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
54. Adopting a female role model	52.9	28.08
55. Developing political “know-how.”	64.9	30.05
56. Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.	55.4	32.42

Hispanic Female Superintendents

Hispanic female superintendents gave high ratings to the following strategies as shown in Table 4.20: obtaining the support of family ($M = 72.5$), developing a strong self-concept ($M = 71.5$), and learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position ($M = 70.8$). Medium-high ratings were given to strategies such as learning the characteristics of successful women in other fields ($M = 65.8$), learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family ($M = 70.8$) and knowing the job description of the school district in which applying for position ($M = 69.4$). The lowest rating was given to invoking affirmative action and the Title IX ($M = 23.0$).

Table 4.20

Perception of Strategies for Hispanic Female Participants (%)

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
36. Increasing visibility in professional circles.	64.5	33.26
37. Obtaining a doctorate.	62.9	34.19
38. Formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals.	60.0	34.87
39. Preparing an effective resume.	57.8	35.56
40. Utilizing a women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network.”	53.0	39.06

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
41. Enhancing interviewing skills.	63.7	32.29
42. Gaining access to community power groups.	60.6	31.31
43. Enlisting a mentor.	63.5	38.19
44. Obtaining the support of family.	72.5	33.68
45. Learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family.	70.8	34.00
46. Developing a strong self-concept.	71.5	33.00
47. Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position.	71.3	36.64
48. Attending workshops to improve professional skills.	60.8	32.86
49. Invoking affirmative action and Title IX.	23.0	27.04
50. Being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions.	51.5	34.47
51. Increasing flexibility to relocate.	49.5	34.17
52. Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.	42.4	33.80
53. Knowing the job description of the position for which applying.	65.8	34.64
54. Adopting a female role model	55.6	35.85
55. Developing political “know-how.”	64.8	32.09
56. Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.	65.2	34.22

White Female Superintendents

White female superintendents gave high ratings to the following strategies as shown in Table 4.21: learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for positions ($M = 83.1$), developing a strong self-concept ($M = 79.16$), and knowing the

job description of the position for which applying (M = 86.13). The next highest ratings were given to learning characteristics of the school district in which applying for position (M = 72.0), obtaining the support of family (M = 76.3), and learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family (M = 72.0). The lowest rating was given to invoking affirmative action and the Title IX (M = 27.5).

Table 4.21

Perception of Strategies for White Female Participants (%)

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
36. Increasing visibility in professional circles.	64.6	25.84
37. Obtaining a doctorate.	56.3	38.33
38. Formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals.	67.5	26.48
39. Preparing an effective resume.	68.8	30.48
40. Utilizing a women's network similar to the "Good Old Boy Network."	54.2	33.13
41. Enhancing interviewing skills.	78.0	25.25
42. Gaining access to community power groups.	62.2	25.48
43. Enlisting a mentor.	65.4	28.58
44. Obtaining the support of family.	76.3	30.62
45. Learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family.	72.0	29.26
46. Developing a strong self-concept.	79.2	26.68
47. Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position.	83.1	25.03
48. Attending workshops to improve professional skills.	66.8	27.58

Survey item	Mean	Std. deviation
49. Invoking affirmative action and Title IX.	27.5	33.18
50. Being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions.	62.9	31.28
51. Increasing flexibility to relocate.	60.2	28.22
52. Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.	45.6	30.76
53. Knowing the job description of the position for which applying.	86.1	22.23
54. Adopting a female role model	51.5	32.85
55. Developing political “know-how.”	70.7	27.69
56. Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.	65.8	28.79

As shown in Table 4.22 there were similarities in the mean scores among Black, Hispanic and White superintendents regarding strategies to the superintendency. All three represented groups strongly viewed the following as strategies to the superintendency: learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for a position ($M_B = 85.8$, $M_H = 73.2$, $M_W = 74.6$), developing a strong self-concept ($M_B = 76.2$, $M_H = 60.6$, $M_W = 79.2$), enhancing interviewing skills ($M_B = 72.7$, $M_H = 67.6$, $M_W = 78.0$), knowing the job description of positions for which applying ($M_B = 66.6$, $M_H = 62.8$, $M_W = 86.1$), attending workshops to improve professional skills ($M_B = 65.4$, $M_H = 54.8$, $M_W = 66.8$), enlisting a mentor ($M_B = 61.1$, $M_H = 65.8$, $M_W = 65.4$), increasing visibility in professional circles ($M_B = 61.3$, $M_H = 64.8$, $M_W = 64.6$), obtaining a doctorate ($M_B = 62.9$, $M_H = 53.8$, $M_W = 56.3$). The only item the three groups did not view as a strategy to the superintendency was invoking affirmative action and Title IX ($M_B = 36.4$, $M_H = 32.2$, $M_W = 19.3$).

In terms of differences in the mean scores, Hispanic and White female superintendents did not view learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family as a strategy to the superintendency ($M_H = 58.8$, $M_W = 59.3$). However, Black female superintendents did view it as a strategy ($M_B = 84.8$). Black and Hispanic female superintendents viewed preparing an effective resume ($M_B = 70.8$, $M_W = 68.8$) as a strategy to the superintendency, but Hispanic females did not ($M_H = 18.2$). Other items that reveal a difference in mean scores were as follows: formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals ($M_B = 60.0$, $M_H = 36.4$, $M_W = 67.5$), increasing flexibility to relocate ($M_B = 67.7$, $M_H = 21.8$, $M_W = 60.2$), being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions ($M_B = 61.0$, $M_H = 46.4$, $M_W = 62.9$), and developing political “know-how” ($M_B = 64.9$, $M_H = 41.1$, $M_W = 70.7$).

Table 4.22

Summary of Mean Scores for Black, Hispanic, and White Female Participants Strategies

Survey item	Black	Hispanic	White
36. Increasing visibility in professional circles.	61.3	64.8	64.6
37. Obtaining a doctorate.	62.9	53.8	56.3
38. Formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals.	60.0	36.4	67.5
39. Preparing an effective resume.	70.8	18.2	68.8
40. Utilizing a women’s network similar to the “Good Old Boy Network.”	60.6	36.8	54.2
41. Enhancing interviewing skills.	72.7	67.6	78.0
42. Gaining access to community power groups.	59.5	44.2	62.2
43. Enlisting a mentor.	61.1	65.8	65.4
44. Obtaining the support of family.	73.3	55.6	76.3

Survey item	Black	Hispanic	White
45. Learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family.	68.1	30.6	72.0
46. Developing a strong self-concept.	76.2	60.6	79.2
47. Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position.	75.8	69.4	83.1
48. Attending workshops to improve professional skills.	65.4	54.8	66.8
49. Invoking affirmative action and Title IX.	27.1	36.4	27.5
50. Being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions.	61.0	46.4	62.9
51. Increasing flexibility to relocate.	67.7	21.8	60.2
52. Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.	48.7	57.5	45.6
53. Knowing the job description of position for which applying.	66.6	62.8	86.1
54. Adopting a female role model	52.9	50.7	51.5
55. Developing political “know-how.”	64.9	41.1	70.7
56. Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.	55.4	43.8	65.8

Research Question Three

Research question three, *To what extent does race influence the barriers experienced by female superintendents*, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference among the three groups. The independent variable, race, was divided into three categories: (a) Black, (b) Hispanic, and (c) White. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the perceptions of barriers experienced by Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents. As shown in Table 4.23, results of the one-way ANOVA indicated that race does not influence barriers to the superintendency for females, $F(2, 66) = 1.760$, $p = .180$. Although the barriers

experienced by the female superintendents were similar, Black and Hispanic females reported perceiving slightly greater barriers than White females did.

Table 4.23

One-Way ANOVA Results - Barriers

Race/Ethnic Origin	N	M	SD	F-value	df	p-value	Min	Max
Black	20	1087.55	93.46	1.760	(2, 67)	.180	76	1715
Hispanic	23	1029.09	87.65				92	1617
White	24	982.94	97.01				76	1804

*statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Research Question 4

To answer research question 4, *To what extent does race influence the strategies used by female superintendents on their path to the superintendency?* a one-way ANOVA will be conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference between the three groups. The independent variable, race, was divided into three categories: (a) Black, (b) Hispanic and (c) White. A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the perceptions of strategies experienced by Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents. As shown in Table 4.24, results of the one-way ANOVA indicated that race does not influence strategies to the superintendency for females, $F(2,70) = .321$, $p = .727$. All three groups perceive strategies to the superintendency the same way.

Table 4.24

One-Way ANOVA Results - Strategies

Race/Ethnic Origin	N	M	SD	f-value	df	p-value	Min	Max
Black	24	1445.4	509.11	.321	(2, 70)	.727	92	2047
Hispanic	22	1460.1	405.09				76	1917
White	25	1365.3	401.67				76	1872

*statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Research Question 5

Research question five, *What are the perceptions of female superintendents in terms of their barriers and strategies to superintendency?*, was answered by using a qualitative inductive coding process. In an attempt to capture a more in-depth understanding of the factors affecting Black, Hispanic, and White females to the superintendency, 6 female superintendents (2 Black, 2 Hispanic, 2 White) were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the issue. An inductive coding analysis developed three distinct themes for both barriers and strategies to the superintendency based on the review of literature and survey responses. The emergent themes obtained from superintendents' responses are provided below followed by a sample of the superintendents' comments. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities during the reporting process.

Black Female Superintendents

Interviews were conducted with two active Black female superintendents from the representative group about their perceptions of barriers and strategies to the superintendency. An inductive coding analysis derived the following themes based on the responses concerning barriers to the superintendency: (a) gender, (b) race, and (c) stereotyping. The same inductive coding analysis derived themes based on the responses concerning strategies to the superintendency: (a) Career Path, (b) support, and (c) representation.

Gender. There were a number of times throughout the interviews that gender was mentioned in the conversation. When asked did they perceive that there were gender barriers when thinking back on the process of becoming a superintendent, Dr. Garrison responded, "There are definitely gender barriers. I do feel the standards for women are higher. The passion and details that we bring are seen as a disadvantage." I also asked

Dr. Garrison if she felt there were gender barriers that she had to overcome to reach the position of superintendent. Her response was, “I’ve been blessed to work under strong leaders and they know I get things done. Being effective in my role, my gender is constantly in the forefront. I put in more work than my male counterparts.” When asked about questions I might be asked in a superintendent interview that might represent gender barriers, Dr. Garrison shared,

Questions about budget or things that deal with facilities. The perception is that women don’t get involved in those areas of leadership. They may hear passion and think she’s emotional. I’m a collaborative leader...Oh, she doesn’t know how to make a decision. There is some language that I encourage aspiring leaders to be aware of and to know your constituent.

Dr. Garrison feels it is important to know the characteristics of the district/organization you are applying to for a position. She shared her experience of preparing to apply for a position as superintendent. She said she went to the community and talked to the people that live there. She read the local paper and looked up information online to learn of the district’s successes and challenges. Dr. Garrison wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the district to better prepare herself for the interview.

Dr. Shannon, in response to the question that asked her if she perceived that there were gender barriers in the process of becoming a superintendent, said “The superintendency is pretty dominated with White males. It’s difficult to network because we’re so few.” When asked about gender barriers that she had to overcome, Dr. Shannon responded, “Look at the statistics and qualifications of the applicants and tell me why are they not afforded the opportunity. Look at the disparity. I know without a doctoral degree, I would not have been considered.” In response to what questions I might be

asked in a superintendent interview that might represent gender barriers, Dr. Shannon replied, “I think it is highly unlikely that they would frame it that way. When you talk about your experiences, they make it seem like you don’t have enough experience.”

Both women felt their gender created adversity for them.

Race. Neither of the Black female superintendents felt they had experienced racial barriers in attaining their current superintendent positions. When asked about the racial barriers they had to overcome, Dr. Garrison replied,

Not so much. When I was a finalist there were three African American finalists so my community is different. People are polite in [city] because of the [high profile racial incident] and it’s more subtle....it depends on place and space. Depends on the community and the context. Black people are able to get in majority black district easier than majority white which says a lot. I do feel that is a barrier that we aren’t able to penetrate those districts. It’s separation.

Dr. Shannon did not feel that she has had to overcome any racial barriers.

Stereotyping. As Black female superintendents both Dr. Garrison and Dr. Shannon have experienced the “double jeopardy” of being Black and a woman. Dr. Garrison shared, “Black women have to endure the burden to do the job and prove that we are qualified to do it. People often see us as intimidating, aggressive, and emotional. That is how we are looked upon -very negatively”. Dr. Shannon did not share much in terms of stereotyping other than she is often perceived as being a “no nonsense” kind of leader. Stereotyping may have been more of a barrier, though, than gender for these women. Nonetheless, these female superintendents also utilized various strategies to attain the top educational seat.

Career Path. Both Black female superintendents that participated in the interviews have earned a doctoral degree. Both participants have over 20 years of experience in education and have been superintendent for more than 2 years. One of the participants, Dr. Garrison, started as a media specialist then became an assistant principal and principal. Following her principalship, she became a director of secondary schools, director of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and executive director of school transportation before becoming a school district superintendent. The other participant, Dr. Shannon, started in education as a special education teacher then became a principal and reopened a school that had been closed for 14 years as a science center. She was then promoted to central office where she worked for 9 years in human resources before becoming an assistant superintendent and finally a school district superintendent. Dr. Shannon stated, “When I worked in HR, people disappoint you daily. People don’t surprise me.” Both of the superintendents’ experiences were seen as an opportunity to strengthen their professional development.

Support. The Black female superintendents interviewed felt having support of family and having a support group on the job was a necessity. When asked if they would say being in a relationship or having children could be a challenge in attaining a superintendency, Dr. Garrison responded,

My daughter was 5 when I became superintendent. I think the field is more accommodating, but there are not enough hours in a day to balance. You have to get support. I have a nanny. I do miss key events and activities so it’s a tradeoff. It doesn’t prevent you from getting the job. You have to be clear with your family about expectations of the job.

The school boards can be demanding because it requires long hours and late nights at events or board meetings. Dr. Garrison asserted, “People (the community) feel

like you literally work for them.” Having a family that understands the time requirement to be successful at the job will be critical to sustaining the position.

Dr. Shannon was unmarried with no children at the time of the interview, but felt much the same way about the demands of the job. “I’m neither, but I could see how it would be a challenge with the long hours and time commitment. The day has no end.”

When asked about support in the position of superintendent, both superintendents shared much the same sentiment...it’s imperative. Dr. Garrison said,

My husband, son, and daughter are my strongest support group. I have a great husband, mom and sister. Girlfriends that are very close to me and colleagues that I mentor or those that mentor me. Great relationships with students I serve they keep me grounded. My faith— God. He’s always in control.

While Dr. Shannon, on the other hand, mentioned a more formal support group. “I’m part of a regional group. My support comes from Black males with superintendent experience. The most experienced person had 9 years from another state.” Those aspiring to the role of superintendent should not underestimate the power of learning from those before you who were successful and willing to support you in your role.

Representation. Another theme revealed in the interviews with Black female superintendents is the importance of representation in the position. In response to why they felt there were so few female superintendents, Dr. Garrison responded, “Standards are different being a female and being a Black female the standard is even more different for me. I know that for a fact. We, as Black females, need to help each other more.” Dr. Shannon stated, in response to the same question, “I still think there are people that think men are probably built for this type of work. They view this as man’s work.” In contrast, the more diversity that is seen in this role, the more others will be inspired.

Hispanic Female Superintendents

Interviews were conducted with two active Hispanic female superintendents from the representative group about their perceptions of barriers and strategies to the superintendency. An inductive coding analysis derived the following themes based on the responses concerning barriers to the superintendency: (a) gender, (b) race, and (c) stereotyping. The same inductive coding analysis derived themes based on the responses concerning strategies to the superintendency: (a) Career Path, (b) networking, and (c) support.

Gender. When the Hispanic female superintendents were asked if they perceived that there were gender barriers when thinking back on the process of becoming a superintendent, Dr. Yuri responded, “I always thought this. It was evident. The ones in the suits had the power. It was evident it’s a man’s world...white and male. Men are more willing to apply.” I also asked Dr. Yuri if she felt there were gender barriers that she had to overcome to reach the position of superintendent. Her response was... “I was the first female to be superintendent in the district. It’s a small rural community that’s very conservative. They don’t think about women being capable - this is one barrier.” When asked about questions I might be asked in a superintendent interview that might represent gender barriers, Dr. Yuri shared,

They will ask about some of the struggles you’ve had dealing with families.

They’ll ask how you’ll ensure there is clear communication from a variety of backgrounds. They might also ask questions about equity. If you say something is too left or center they don’t like...How will you watch what you say?

Dr. Yuri also spoke of the political nature of the job. She insinuated a need to be politically correct. Her sentiments gave me the feeling that you shouldn’t stand too firmly on any personal belief to avoid offending those in your community that do. That can be a

difficult task to execute on a daily basis and likely part of the reason the role of school superintendent is as challenging as it is.

Dr. Camil, in response to the question that asked her if she perceived that there were gender barriers in the process of becoming a superintendent, said:

Yes, especially in the west. I think it has gotten a little more diverse, but it used to always be male Latinos who were promoted faster than a Latina. Latina's take between 8-10 years to be promoted where Latinos are between 2-3 for promotion. So, there was a huge gender issue there. I didn't see that so much in the northeast district where I think it's strange because it's a large Latino community, but they are third and fourth generation where they tend to lean to white males being strong leaders.

When asked about gender barriers that she had to overcome, Dr. Camil responded:

It was even two or three-fold. The fact that I'm Latina, a female and openly gay and the fact that you can tell that I am openly gay in my appearance. I think that caused some folks to not want to work with me. Not to be inviting in any leadership opportunity. It takes time for people to get to know me or to be able to get to know me or to allow me in.

Being a member of the LGTBQ community can be difficult in any job when you work with people that lack understanding. People, in general, tend to fear what they don't understand. Of course, this can lead to barriers in assessing leadership positions when others focus so deeply on one characteristic that it prevents them from seeing any other characteristics.

In response to what questions I might be asked in a superintendent interview that might represent gender barriers, Dr. Camil replied,

They can ask questions that have to do with business. They may ask what is your background working with bonds? What kind of bonds have you sold in the past? What kind of legal counsel have you worked with? Which financial advisor would you recommend in a bond sale? Do you know the processes or life of a bond project? What are the 19 steps? How would you apply for a bond? Anything related to money, bonds, or bond projects? They think males have the most knowledge regarding finances. They tend to ask women questions about data, reclassification rate, educational questions.

Gender is just as much of a barrier to the Hispanic ethnic group as it is for Black female superintendents.

Race. Both of the Hispanic female superintendents felt they had experienced racial barriers in attaining their current superintendent positions. When asked about the racial barriers they had to overcome, Dr. Yuri replied, “Every position that I received it became rumor that she got the job because she speaks Spanish or because of her race. It was never about my qualifications.” Dr. Camil, in response to the same question, stated:

Yes, racial barriers for sure in every district. The majority of the superintendents were white males at the time that I moved there. The first opportunity I received to take on a higher leadership position came from a black female. She really supported me in every position after that as well. She really did help me so much. In the north east district, it was very white, Irish male dominated and that was also difficult for me. It’s sad because it’s happened here to when people see me or think of me they ask me to come and talk at one of their events. I feel that they know it’s me and working with the EL population or they want to identify me as LGBTQ. I think my sexuality is judged based on what I look like. I don’t speak on LGBTQ because I’m a conservative and its education. I speak on education.

People want to bring in all the culture and critical race theory. For me, those are my personal beliefs that I don't share with anybody because I have a job to do and I need to make sure that all my kids...I don't care what color they are... can read and write and are able to do math. So, I think people are a little surprised by that, but it's usually white males that don't tend to see that I have a business background and I have a strong leadership background. It's always ...can you come help me with my EL's or can you talk to this group because they are gay and I don't know what to do with them.

Race and gender can be an obstacle to those in pursuit of the top seat in educational leadership. It is what they see first and what you are judged on before they even see what you know. Those who are most affected by it, find themselves constantly working to prove themselves beyond what they are perceived to be.

Stereotyping. The Hispanic female superintendents that I interviewed shared experiences of being stereotyped that overlapped with other experiences they've had in attaining a superintendency. Dr. Yuri shared her perception of how strong women are viewed in the role: "A strong woman is perceived as a bitch. That can be a barrier." Dr. Camil felt that she was stereotyped as a Latina and as an openly gay woman. She shared,

I think Latinas are overlooked as being strong leaders. If you see me, I have a very hard, male look and I think that's why I'm openly gay. I have short hair and I wear a suit every day. So, people take me seriously when I walk into the room. When I had long hair and dressed more feminine and wore makeup, I'd get respect here and there, but I think it's a very difficult position for males to be able to identify women as being able to handle an entire district. I'm in the center of 7 districts. I'm the only female. They've expressed their concern with females taking on leadership roles. They have expressed to me how I'm different so I

think it's really strange that they've been open and confident enough to say that to me that I'm different. That I can manage it cause it's me. When there was another superintendent in one of those positions and she was a very feminine female. They treated her very different than they treated me and the board removed her from that position. To them the conversation after that was that it was expected because there was no way she would have been able to sustain that role for quite some time. She is now our boss in our county. She's at a way higher level than all of us. So, they kind of had to eat their words, but that's just the way it is in very small districts. It's very male dominated. In the classroom, though, it's completely different.

Hispanic females have stereotypes to combat, too, as they strive for superintendency positions, just as Black females do. For this reason, strategies to the superintendency are so integral.

Career Path. Both Hispanic female superintendents that participated in the interviews have earned a doctoral degree. Both participants have over 20 years' experience in education and have been superintendent for more than 2 years. Dr. Yuri taught special education resource and was also an inclusion teacher. She then became an assistant principal, principal, curriculum director, director and then equity alliance area superintendent. Dr. Camil started her career in education as an instructional aide, then became a teacher, administrator, district level administrator, assistant superintendent and finally superintendent. Dr. Camil shared, "I also worked in construction. I learned a lot about building facilities, contracts, acquiring land." She mentioned later that this knowledge was useful when she was asked questions in a superintendent interview about any experience she had working with bond projects. These women followed a somewhat

similar career path to the superintendency and used the knowledge gained to secure their positions.

Support. The Hispanic female superintendents interviewed felt having support of family and having a support group on the job was a necessity. When asked if they would say being in a relationship or having children could be a challenge to attain a superintendency, Dr. Yuri responded, “Yes, it’s an investment of your life. My children are much older. It did put a pause on my plans when my kids were younger. I have an awesome husband who does a lot.” Dr. Camil also felt the job required a large commitment and responded similarly in regards to the question about family support. She stated,

Yes, 110%. It’s very difficult especially if the person does not understand the board and the board demands. If the board is there to implement policies, you’ll have a good life. If you have a board that is not interested in policy, but they are interested in policing, then you will have a difficult superintendency. It will take a toll on your relationship. And if you have children, hopefully they are grown.

When asked about support in the position of superintendent, both superintendents shared that they did connect with other superintendents for support. Dr. Yuri mentioned that her support group consisted of other women superintendents in the state. Dr. Camil, on the other hand, stated:

I don’t have a support group. I can do better at that. I think it’s too hard to have the time. I’ve been reaching out to retired superintendents to help me. It makes a world of difference. That 15 minutes on the phone with them really helps me to improve my leadership.

Support of family stood out as necessity in the interviews with Hispanic female superintendents.

Representation. The Hispanic female superintendents also mentioned in their interviews the need for representation in the position. Dr. Yuri shared in her interview, Kids need to see people who look like them in the role of superintendent. This isn't just about you. It's about taking care of kids. If we want to make sure our kids have bright futures, we need to think about doing it for them. We need to show the world that we are all capable.

She also mentioned later in the interview that not having a role model is a barrier. Dr. Camil, in reference to representation, shared that her first leadership opportunity was afforded to her by a woman in leadership and she became her mentor. She stated:

The majority of the superintendents were white males at the time that I moved there. The first opportunity I received to take on a higher leadership position came from a black female. She really supported me in every position after that as well. She really did help me so much.

Hispanic female superintendents view themselves as the inspiration they are for other Hispanic females to follow.

White Females Superintendents

Interviews were conducted with two active White female superintendents from the representative group about their perceptions of barriers and strategies to the superintendency. An inductive coding analysis derived the following themes based on the responses concerning barriers to the superintendency: (a) gender, (b) race, and (c) stereotyping. The same inductive coding analysis derived themes based on the responses concerning strategies to the superintendency: (a) Career Path, (b) networking, and (c) support.

Gender. When the White female superintendents were asked if they perceived that there were gender barriers when thinking back on the process of becoming a superintendent, Ms. Williams responded,

I didn't perceive it, but knew that most people that get a superintendent position outside of their school district use search firms and most of them are run by men and they seek out other men who have superintendent aspirations and they kind of groom them. When I went through my superintendent administration program they said they had their stalls of people that they push through. When I applied, they had 3 people who had already been recommended through the search firm.

I also asked Ms. Williams if she felt there were gender barriers that she had to overcome to reach the position of superintendent. Her response:

Probably... my current district had never had a female superintendent before. They had never had a female superintendent before me. Sometimes it's timing. Females are seen as emotional and can't make tough decisions. Sometimes you get in a meeting and it's male dominated, but you may not feel quite like you fit in. Sometimes the males tease you...like "Here comes money bags." It's a brotherhood kind of thing. I feel like females who have been in the superintendency have figured out how to make that work.

In response to what questions I might be asked in a superintendent interview that might represent gender barriers, Ms. Williams replied, "They might ask you questions about budget, finances, or athletics...things they think women don't know much about."

Dr. Camp, in response to the question that asked her if she perceived that there were gender barriers in the process of becoming a superintendent, she said, "Yes, I did perceive that there were gender barriers. Some boards just don't want a woman. Search firms will tell you they just don't. If there was ever a woman and the board had a bad

experience they wouldn't want to try that again." When asked about gender barriers that she had to overcome, Dr. Camp responded,

Yes, I do feel that there are gender barriers that I had to overcome. I think it's a mindset. I think there is a perception that you might not be as tough as a man. In my experience, women get jobs when they are replacing a man that messed up. In my first experience that is what happened and they needed a leader to get everyone motivated again. The other one would be that the female superintendent is someone that is known in the district.

In response to what questions I might be asked in a superintendent interview that might represent gender barriers, Dr. Camp replied,

One thing that bothered me The search firm called and said they liked me and wanted me to come to dinner and I could bring my spouse. I was in a dating relationship that I knew was going nowhere so I didn't want to bring that person. So, I called the search firm back and said I was uncomfortable with that. I said if they are looking for someone married, that's not me right now and I'd rather just know up front and I'll back out. That was the most awkward thing I've ever had happen.

Gender is seen as a prominent barrier in this ethnicity just as in the previous ethnic groups.

Race. Only one of the White female superintendents felt she had experienced racial barriers in attaining their current superintendent position. When asked if there was any other issues we have not discussed that you would like to talk about, Dr. Camp responded, "My race was a topic of conversation in the position I am currently in because I am in the minority in this district." This surprised me as it was not information I had expected she would share.

Stereotyping. Both White female superintendents that I interviewed shared thoughts about how women are perceived. “Women are perceived as being very emotional and unable to make decisions,” Dr. Williams said. Dr. Camp mentioned, “There is a perception that women are not seen as being as tough as a man.” These were the only stereotypes they mentioned in their interviews. The both felt this perception of women created a barrier to the superintendency.

The stereotyping shared by the White female superintendents had more to do with their gender than their race.

Career Path. Only one of the female superintendents that participated in the interviews has earned a doctoral degree. Both participants have over 20 years’ experience in education and have been superintendent for more than 2 years. Ms. Williams stated,

I was a teacher in elementary 6 years. I taught first, second, third all self-contained. I was a librarian in elementary for K-6 and junior high 7-8. I was an assistant principal at junior high and elementary principal. I then became an elementary principal then HR director, assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, and superintendent.

Ms. Williams also shared, “When I entered the interview with the search firm, I rolled off answers about budget because I had worked in HR and central office for so long.”

Dr. Camp stated, “I’m a true come up the ranks administrator....teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent of academics, superintendent.”

Again, the career path described by White female superintendents is very similar to the career path of Black and Hispanic female superintendents.

Support. The White female superintendents interviewed both have a support group of both males and females in the superintendency. They also had similar thoughts

about challenges of the job and managing a family. When asked if they would say being in a relationship or having children could be a challenge in attaining a superintendency, Ms. Williams responded,

Could be...my kids are grown in college and professions. If you have a supportive family you can do it. I couldn't have been principal if it weren't for my husband. It depends on the age of the kids and supportive family. You have to have a spouse that supports it.

Dr. Camp stated,

Boards love when superintendents have families and they like for them to have children in the family. I have been widowed for 16 years. Search firms have told me they prefer women that are married and widowed is better than divorced.

Dr. Camp also shared, "I put my aspirations on hold after I lost my husband. I had my kids established with friends and schools and didn't want them to lose that when they had lost a father so I waited."

The literature in Chapter II and this study's survey results supports that women feel strongly that they need to obtain the support of family before pursuing the role of school superintendent. It is understandable considering the demands of the job that have been shared by both of those who have attained the position.

When asked about support in the position of superintendent, both White female superintendents shared that they did connect with other superintendents for support. Ms. Williams responded to the question of whether she had a support group or not by stating,

There is a group for women superintendents. We meet and have luncheons. The neighboring school district superintendent and I have become close, but she is retiring soon. I am also in contact with former superintendents of the district that I currently lead and they are supportive.

Dr. Camp's response to the same question was similar. She said,

Yes, I do have a support group. I have multiple support groups...other women.

Two superintendents that are really close to me. Both have been friends for years.

I see them at conferences and talk to them a lot. We have dinner together with our husbands. There are multiple superintendents I can call and talk to. There are also many males that have mentored me along the way.

Finding a female role model can be difficult, but necessary. However, a role model of either gender can be a valuable relationship.

Representation. The White female superintendents did not reveal any specific thoughts on the need for female representation in the position. Dr. Camp did share the following in response to women in overcoming barriers and seeking the position of school superintendent:

Learn everything you can. Get a doctorate because you're going to be up against men. You need everything in your toolbelt that you can get. Get all of the experience you can while you are prepping. I pushed myself and stretched myself to have a broader view. Make sure you're under a really good leader that you're learning from. Don't stay too long in any place if you're not growing...map it out. Weigh it out and decide how much you really want that top seat.

The words "broader view" stood out in my mind. Having a broader view gives you more insight and knowledge. Every active, sitting superintendent that I have spoken with regarding this study has mentioned their experience and it has consisted of experience on different levels. They are seekers of knowledge and take every opportunity to gain more knowledge that they can use to aid their success along the way.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected from surveys and interviews, participant demographics, and processes of answering each research question. In the next chapter, findings will be presented to compare what was found through this study with existing literature. Implications of this study in education and future research will be discussed.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived barriers and strategies held by Black, Hispanic, and White women with regard to the position of school superintendent. This study was completed during the fall of 2021 and active female superintendents from school districts located in southern and southeastern states in the United States were solicited to participate in this study. Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents were solicited to complete the survey instruments and participate in interviews. A one-way ANOVA and inductive coding were used to analyze the data collected. This chapter includes a summary of the findings, implications, and recommendations of the findings.

Summary

The research questions address barriers and strategies to the superintendency for Black, Hispanic, and White females. Research Question One asked what do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as barriers on their path to the superintendency. Quantitative analysis revealed exclusion from the informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network” as one of the greatest barriers affecting Black, Hispanic and White females to the superintendency. These results are similar to the results from other research that viewed accessibility as more of a hindrance based on gender and race rather than career path (Walker, 2014). This is also consistent with literature from other studies regarding school board members consisting primarily of men (Blount, 1998; Tallerico, 2000) and search firms or headhunters (Brunner & Grogan, 2007) selecting those who fit the traditional superintendent demographic of European American and male (Brunner, 2005; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Tallerico, 2000; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). The literature review also discussed

the grueling reality that females, no matter the background, would never meet the requirement determined by the “good ole boy” system (Babo et. al., 2007; Edgewater, 2008; Mac Arthur, 2010).

Research Question Two asked what do Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents perceive as strategies on their path to the superintendency. Quantitative analysis indicated that Black, Hispanic and White female superintendents all perceive obtaining the support of family as one of the greatest strategies to women pursuing the superintendency. This suggests that reliance on family or other support networks, as indicated in literature (Alston, 1999; Jackson, 1999; Loder, 2005; Young & McLeod, 2001), was important to the participants in this study. This is consistent with previous research on the lived experiences of Latina superintendents that states Latina superintendents receive minimal support and encouragement from their families (Manuel and Slate, 2003). Therefore, gaining the support of family can certainly be leveraged as a strategy to the superintendency. Prior to the 21st century, research suggested that women became superintendents in the latter part of their careers and were not likely to have external demands on them such as children at home (Blount, 1998; Grogan, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989). This is also consistent with the survey as nearly 60% of the participants were over the age of 50 and 73% had zero children in K-12 schools. It’s understandable why a female would need to obtain the support of family in order to pursue the superintendency as the role is extremely demanding.

Research Question Three asked to what extent does race influence the barriers experienced by female superintendents. Quantitative analysis indicated that race does not influence the barriers experienced by female superintendents. These results coincide with Veronique Walker’s 2014 study in which participants recognized barriers existed, yet used as many strategies as necessary to transcend them. Other research also debates

whether race could influence barriers to the superintendency. Sanchez & Davis (2010) states that White women who share the same skin color as most male leaders can at times focus specifically on gender, but women of color can face “gendered racism.” Minority women may struggle with the fact that they experience discrimination as women, but also experience discrimination based on ethnic and cultural biases (Sanchez & Davis, 2010). This, along with the literature review, suggests that being a woman and being a woman of color creates a “double jeopardy” that can make attaining a superintendency a more challenging goal to achieve.

Research Question Four asked to what extent does race influence strategies employed by female superintendents. Quantitative analysis indicated that race does not influence the strategies employed by female superintendents. These results are consistent with literature that states the general career path to the superintendency is the teacher-principal path (Kowalski et al., 2011). Findings of this study are no different. The superintendents in this study, regardless of race, followed similar career paths to the superintendency. These findings are also consistent with earlier studies. According to Bjork and Keedy (2001), the most common career path to the superintendency, 49%, is from teacher to assistant principal or principal, to central office administrator, to superintendent. The participants of this study also, regardless of race, held post-graduate degrees. Over 40 percent of the participants in this study held master degrees and 69 percent held doctoral degrees.

Research Question Five explored what the perceptions of female superintendents are in terms of their barriers and strategies to the superintendency. A total of six participants were interviewed and responded to semi-structured questions about their experiences on the path to superintendency including education, work experience, racial barriers, and gender barriers. Qualitative analysis demonstrated that participant responses

could be classified into seven different themes: (a) gender, (b) race, (c) stereotyping, (d) career background, (e) support, and (f) representation. Participant responses support the quantitative data describing barriers and strategies that females experience as they strive to attain the top educational leadership seat. Some of the key distinctions among the groups could be found in the discussion of race, stereotyping, and representation.

In exploring the theme of gender barriers, Black female superintendents certainly felt gender barriers exist. Their responses alluded to the fact that the research shows the superintendency is white male dominated. Black female superintendents also felt they had to work harder to get the same recognition as their male counterparts. Hispanic female superintendents also perceived that there were gender barriers to the superintendency. They viewed men as having more power. Promotions were also mentioned as they saw “men move up the ranks” faster than women. White female superintendents agreed that gender barriers were prevalent on their journey to superintendency. They both mentioned search firms as gatekeepers to the superintendency and the questions they would ask during an interview or the biases that would be revealed in their communication. This supports that the professional search consultant creates an external barrier for women aspiring to become superintendents because they act as gatekeepers (Castro, 1992) to positions dominated by White males (Alston, 1999; Brown, 2014; Brunner, 2008; Dobie & Hummel, 2001). It can be concluded that gender barriers do exist in attaining the superintendency and search firms create a buffer that leads to the disproportionality of females in the position.

Racial barriers were not an experience that the Black female superintendents felt they had encountered personally. One of the Black superintendents, however, did question why superintendents of color could more easily get hired for positions in predominately Black districts rather than majority white districts and referred to it as a

barrier. On the contrary, Hispanic female superintendents did feel they had experienced racial barriers throughout their career. Both Hispanic superintendents felt others would seek them out for their EL background as if they had no other qualifications. This further supports the notion that Hispanic superintendents reported the need to work harder and longer than other superintendents in order to dispel the misconception by some that they did not get their position based on the merit of their qualifications (Campbell-Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Tallerico, 2000). One of the two White female superintendents experienced race as a barrier in both superintendencies that she has held. During the selection process, there was a heavy debate regarding whether or not she could lead the district because she was from a race that had the smallest demographic within the district of which she was applying. It can be concluded that all races can be affected by racial barriers in some form along the path of securing a superintendency.

All three ethnic groups have been affected by stereotyping. All Black female superintendents shared experiences of being looked upon negatively. One of the two Black female superintendents expressed being seen as intimidating, aggressive, and emotional by others before getting to know her. This affirms Khosroshahi (2021) who noted as other groups are stereotyped based on skills related to their performance, women of color face stereotypes concerning their identity. Hispanic superintendent respondents noted that strong women in their role are referred to as a “bitch.” One of the Hispanic superintendents who is now openly gay had an experience of being seen as a female when she wore skirts, makeup, and had long hair, but later cut her hair short and began to wear suits like a man. For her, that transition confirmed that men received more respect than women because she had experienced it firsthand. The White female respondents of this study perceive that women in educational leadership positions are stereotyped as being too unstable and emotional to make decisions. These perceptions can lead to the

negative outlook of women in leadership positions, preventing them from being looked upon as ideal candidates for superintendent positions.

The Black and Hispanic female respondents of this study had over 20 years of experience in education, doctoral degrees, and had followed similar paths to the superintendency: teacher, assistant principal, principal, central office, district superintendent. In regards to the White female superintendents, each had over 20 years of experience, but only one held a doctoral degree. Both White female superintendents had “come up the ranks” along the same path to the superintendency as the Black and Hispanic female respondents. Superintendents in all three ethnic groups had secondary level experience. Two superintendents had high school principalship experience while the others had middle or junior high experience. This supports the literature that identified the high school principalship as the number one position from which most superintendents ascend, even though fewer women serve in this position (Burton & Weiner, 2016; DeAngelis & O’Connor, 2012; Dowell & Larwin, 2013; Marczynski & Gates, 2013; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2013). It also supports the research that reveals women who have participated in leadership opportunities while working at the secondary-education level (e.g., team leaders, department chairs, and coaching positions) seem to rise to the superintendency in greater numbers (Glass, 2000). The female superintendents in this study all have varying levels of experience in education. Obtaining a doctorate is clearly an asset, but it is possible to accomplish the goal of obtaining a superintendency as a female without it.

The Black female superintendent respondents felt support was important to maintaining the role of superintendent. Both spoke of the demands of the job and the challenge of balancing it all. One of the Black superintendents had children and stressed the need for support as the job was challenge. She noted her family as her greatest

support. This supports the survey results of this study that shows one of the greatest strategies to the superintendency is obtaining the support of family. The other Black female superintendent in the study was unmarried and had no children, but also relied on support from other superintendents in regional district leadership groups. Hispanic female respondents confirmed that having a support group or connecting with other superintendents was a necessity in the role. They also mentioned being in a relationship or having children could be challenging if they didn't understand and support the demands of the job. The White superintendents further substantiated the need for support in the role. Each of them had support groups of other superintendents in surrounding districts that they met to have lunch or contacted periodically. This supports the literature that notes many superintendents in their first year find the task of district leadership overwhelming and complex without ongoing support (Augustine-Shaw and Funk, 2013). It can be gleaned that support in the superintendency is pertinent to the success of superintendents in all three ethnic groups.

In studying the theme of representation in the interviews with Black female superintendents, one of the Black female superintendents strongly felt the standards were different for her being a Black female and that Black females needed to help each other more. The other Black superintendent felt that the lack of female superintendents resided in the belief that people still feel the work of a superintendent is better left to a man. The Hispanic superintendents both stressed the need for others to see themselves in the position. One of the Hispanic females felt, without a doubt, her career path to the superintendency was ushered by a Black female who hired her for her first leadership position and supported her all along the way. This supports the research that indicates mentoring is one of the most successful strategies used by women and women of color to help them obtain a position as a superintendent, and also retain the position of

superintendent (Alston, 1999, 2000; Anderson, 2000). Diversity in leadership is needed as it creates opportunities for others that aren't historically privy to such positions.

Implications

As the results from this study are examined and explored, many more questions remain about the connection between barriers and strategies and their impact on the Black, Hispanic and White female superintendency. The Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendent profile was established based upon the participants in this study. Various background differences existed including their age, marital status, number of children, degrees, district size and location, salary, career paths, and experiences. I would encourage all aspiring superintendents to take the necessary steps of learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for a position, developing a strong self-concept, enhancing interviewing skills, knowing the job description for which applying, attending workshops to improve professional skills, enlisting a mentor, and increasing visibility in professional circles to ensure acquisition of the superintendency; I would place special emphasis on education and career path.

Study participants confirmed that barriers to the superintendency do, in fact, exist. It should be noted that when comparing mean scores, White female superintendents did not feel as strongly about barriers that were specifically relating to their gender in comparison to Black and Hispanic female superintendents. Black female superintendents did not feel as strongly about mentorship as either a barrier or strategy in comparison to Hispanic and White female superintendents. Throughout this study, barriers varied depending upon ethnicity. For example, Black females aspiring to the superintendency should be advised of the leading barriers according to the participants of this study: a) exclusion from the informal socialization process of "Good Old Boy Network," b) existence of the "buddy system" in which men refer other men to jobs, and c)

predominance of male candidates for administrative positions. Hispanic females aspiring to the superintendency should be advised of the leading barriers according to the participants of this study: a) exclusion from the informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network,” b) predominance of male candidates for administrative positions, and c) existence of the “buddy system” in which men refer other men to jobs. White female aspiring to the superintendency should be advised of the leading barriers according to the participants of this study: a) predominance of male candidates for administrative positions, b) lack of ability to relocate as a result of personal commitment, and c) exclusion from the informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network.” It should be noted that the leading barriers for Black and Hispanic females aspiring to the superintendency are the same, but in a slightly different order. The barriers for White females aspiring to the superintendency are completely different with the exception of one. The exclusion from the informal socialization process of “Good Old Boy Network” is one that appears as a barrier in all three ethnic groups. This is a critical barrier because literature uncovers that females, no matter the background, would never meet the requirement determined by the “good ole boy” system (Babo et al., 2007; Edgewater, 2008; Mac Arthur, 2010). Therefore, special attention should be given to this barrier in determining ways to combat it. Superintendent preparation programs and universities should be advised of this disparity and create opportunities for aspiring female superintendents to interact and network with current sitting female superintendents. School districts should be advised that criteria should be set for search firms to include more diverse staff and interview panels with regard to gender and race.

Participants of this study also confirmed that strategies to the superintendency can be employed for successful attainment. It is also important to note that Hispanic females did not feel as strongly about employing strategies to attain the superintendency in

comparison to Black and White female superintendents, as seventeen out of twenty of their mean scores were lowest for all strategy survey items. Strategies varied slightly based on ethnicity. Black females pursuing the superintendency should be advised of the leading strategies according to the participants of this study: a) developing a strong self-concept, b) learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position, and c) obtaining the support of family. Hispanic females pursuing the superintendency should be advised of the leading strategies according to the participants of this study: a) developing a strong self-concept, b) learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family, and c) obtaining the support of family. White females pursuing the superintendency should be advised of the leading strategies according to the participants of this study: a) learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position, b) developing a strong self-concept, and c) obtaining the support of family. Special attention should be given to developing a strong self-concept and obtaining the support of family as they appear in all three ethnicities. This is consistent with recent studies on women superintendents, many of which describe the current issues female leaders are facing, which include personal issues such as marriage, children, and relocation (Craig and Hardy, 1996; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Derrington & Sharatt, 2009; Kowalski & Strouder, 1999; Muñoz, Pankake, Murakami, & Simonsson, 2014; Sperandio & Devdas, 2014). Finding a balance between home and work life could be key in gaining family support. Aspiring female superintendents should also be advised that they need to gain experience in a variety of education roles and do research to learn as much about the school district they are applying to as possible; this can ensure that they are a good match for the position, and will help to prepare them for the role. They should also be advised that they should be open to relocating in order to attain their first superintendency. Superintendent

preparation programs and universities should be advised of the need to better prepare aspiring female superintendents for the demands of the job and how to balance those demands with family.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research comparing Black, Hispanic, female superintendents include conducting research that explores the experiences of a larger sample of these superintendents. A larger sample size will expand the range of experiences and be more representative of the various populations of superintendents. Another recommendation would be a survey instrument that includes items on racial barriers or biases to better compliment interview questions. An additional recommendation would be to compare the success rates and career paths of superintendents who hold doctorates and those who do not. A final recommendation for future research would be to study factors affecting LGBTQ to the superintendency.

Conclusion

The relationship among Black, Hispanic, and White female superintendents with regard to barriers and strategies to the superintendency has been well researched. The findings indicated that the participants in this study perceived various barriers and strategies existed in accessing the superintendency. However, race does not influence their perception of these barriers and strategies. The exclusion from the “Good Old Boy Network” is a crucial barrier that female superintendents from all three ethnicities face. As the literature notes, networking plays a critical role in advancing to the superintendent position (Archer, 2003; Glass, 2000; Jones & Washington, 2010; Kowalski & Stouder, 1999, M. Miller, 2009; Zachary, 2009). The “Good Old Boy Network” is a perfect place for thi kind of connections to occur, but they omit women. The most successful strategy identified for Black and Hispanic females pursuing the superintendency is to obtain the

support of family. However, learning the characteristics of the school district in which apply for position was a more important strategy for White female superintendents. In terms of racial barriers or biases, it is evident they can be experienced in the three ethnic groups studies. In addition, stereotyping exists for females aspiring to the top leadership position pertaining to race or gender. Consequently, more representation of females in the superintendency position is needed for mentorship, but search firms create a barrier to the superintendency that is not easily broken. As confirmed in the literature review, on the upward path to leadership most of the gatekeepers are men and many still cannot fully accept women as leaders (Craig & Hardy, 1996). However, perseverance and the will to overcome obstacles in their path led the participants of this study to achieve their goal of becoming school district superintendents.

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APPENDIX A:
COVER LETTER

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Krystal Hawks and I am a 3rd-year doctoral student at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. I am also an elementary school principal in Alvin ISD, 2021 Alvin ISD Elementary Principal of the Year, and a 2021 Region IV Principal of the Year. I am now doing research for my dissertation. I am desperately in need of help from female superintendents in the Southwest. The main purpose of my research is to examine the perceived barriers held by women with regard to the position of school superintendent. Nationally, the percentage of women superintendents continues to be very small so this study would serve as a basis for understanding the perceived barriers that contribute to this disparity.

Your contribution to this study will be invaluable. Responses will remain anonymous and confidential. All surveys will be deleted upon completion of this study. The results of the study will be available upon request.

Please complete the enclosed survey. The entire survey should take no longer than 10 minutes. After completing the survey, click done and your answers will be sent back to me. If you would also be willing to assist me with the qualitative portion of my research and participate in a brief phone interview, please email me your contact information and I will schedule a time to speak with you. My contact information is listed below.

Thank you in advance for your participation. Please feel free to keep my contact

information in case you have any further questions about this study. My cell phone number is 281-235-3815, and my work phone number is 281-245-3660. I can also be reached at my email address hawksk4314@uhcl.edu.

Sincerely,

Krystal Hawks

APPENDIX B:

SURVEY

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

I. BIOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please circle the most appropriate answer.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Age</p> <p>a. Under 25 years</p> <p>b. 25 - 29</p> <p>c. 30 - 39</p> <p>d. 40 - 49</p> <p>e. 50 - 59</p> <p>f. 60 or over</p> | <p>8. Number of Students in District
Where Employed</p> <p>a. 1 - 299</p> <p>b. 300 - 599</p> <p>c. 600 - 999</p> <p>d. 1,000 - 2,999</p> <p>e. 3,000 - 4,999</p> <p>f. 5,000 - 9,999</p> <p>g. 10,000 - 24,999</p> <p>h. 25,000 - 49,000</p> <p>i. 50,000 or more</p> |
| <p>2. Marital Status</p> <p>a. Single</p> <p>b. Married</p> <p>c. Widowed</p> <p>d. Divorced or Separated</p> | <p>9. Metro Status Where Employed</p> <p>a. Rural (under 2,500 pop)</p> <p>b. Town or small city
(2,500 - 9,999 pop)</p> <p>c. Suburb (10,000 - 99,999)</p> <p>d. Urban center or large city
(100,000 or more)</p> |
| <p>3. Number of Children in School (K-12)</p> <p>a. 0</p> <p>b. 1</p> <p>c. 2</p> <p>d. 3</p> <p>e. 4 or more</p> | <p>10. Number of Years in Present</p> <p>a. Less than a year</p> <p>b. 1 - 4 years</p> <p>c. 5 - 8 years</p> <p>d. 9 or more</p> |
| <p>Position</p> <p>4. Age of Youngest Child</p> <p>a. no children</p> <p>b. under 5 years</p> <p>c. 5 - 12</p> <p>d. 13 - 19</p> | <p>11. Longest Superintendency Held</p> <p>a. Less than a year</p> <p>b. 1 - 4 years</p> <p>c. 5 - 8 years</p> <p>d. 9 or more</p> |
| <p>5. Highest Degree Earned</p> <p>a. Bachelor's</p> <p>b. Master's</p> <p>c. Doctorate</p> | <p>12. Number of Superintendencies Held
Including Present One</p> <p>a. 1</p> <p>b. 2</p> <p>c. 3</p> <p>d. 4</p> <p>e. 5 or more</p> |
| <p>6. Racial/Ethnic Origin</p> <p>a. American Indian/Alaskan Native</p> <p>b. Asian or Pacific Islander</p> <p>c. Hispanic</p> <p>d. Black, not Hispanic origin</p> <p>e. White, not Hispanic Origin</p> | |
| <p>7. Extended family in immediate area?</p> <p>a. yes</p> <p>b. no</p> | |

- | | |
|--|--|
| 13. Age at First Superintendency
a. Under 25 years
b. 25 - 29
c. 30 - 39
d. 40 - 49
e. 50 - 59
f. 60 or over | 14. List all positions you have held beginning with your first position after teaching.

_____ |
|--|--|

II. PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS

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

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

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

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

III. PERCEPTION OF STRATEGIES

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

		Not Successful			Highly Successful	
		1	2	3	4	5
36.	Increasing visibility in professional circles.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Obtaining a doctorate.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	Formulating and adhering to a plan of action to achieve career goals.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	Preparing an effective resume.	1	2	3	4	5
40.	Utilizing a women's network similar to the "Good Old Boy Network".	1	2	3	4	5
41.	Enhancing interviewing skills.	1	2	3	4	5

42.	Gaining access to community power groups.	1	2	3	4	5
43.	Enlisting a mentor.	1	2	3	4	5
44.	Obtaining the support of family.	1	2	3	4	5
45.	Learning coping skills to deal with conflicting demands of career and family.	1	2	3	4	5
46.	Developing a strong self-concept.	1	2	3	4	5
47.	Learning the characteristics of the school district in which applying for position.	1	2	3	4	5
48.	Attending workshops to improve professional skills.	1	2	3	4	5
49.	Invoking affirmative action and Title IX.	1	2	3	4	5
50.	Being proactive in seeking administrative internships for top level positions.	1	2	3	4	5
51.	Increasing flexibility to relocate.	1	2	3	4	5
52.	Learning how to deal with sex discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	Knowing the job description of position for which applying.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	Adopting a female role model.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	Developing political "know-how".	1	2	3	4	5
56.	Learning strategies of successful women in other fields.	1	2	3	4	5

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

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

APPENDIX C:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographic Questions

1. How long have you been a superintendent?
2. What is the highest degree you have earned?
3. Where did you receive administration certification?
4. What is your age?

Semi-structured Interview Questions

5. Tell me about your background and what educational pathway you traveled to arrive at the position of superintendent in your administrative career.
6. How many superintendent positions did you apply for before attaining your present position? Why do you feel that you did not obtain the position of superintendent during previous efforts?
7. Thinking back on the process of becoming a superintendent, did you perceive that there were gender barriers? If so, what were they?
8. Would you say that being in a relationship or having children could be a challenge in attaining a superintendency position? If so, how did you meet these challenges?
9. Did you have to move to a different city, county, or state to obtain this superintendency position? If so, what was the reaction of your family to this move or to previous opportunities to move?
10. Why do you think there are so few Black/Hispanic/White female superintendents in?
11. Do you feel that there were gender barriers that you had to overcome to reach the position of superintendent? If so, what were these barriers?
12. Do you feel that there were racial barriers that you had to overcome to reach the position of superintendent? If so, what were these barriers?
13. Some people may feel that there are not gender and racial barriers to overcome to attain a superintendency position. What would you say to them?
14. Suppose that I was being interviewed by a school board for the position of a school superintendent. What questions might I be asked that could represent gender barriers or biases?
15. Do you feel that there were any individuals that tried to block your access into the superintendency? If so, who were they, and how did you deal with this challenge?
16. Do you have a support group? If so, who makes up this group?
17. How would your employees describe you in your role as superintendent?
18. How do you describe yourself in your role as superintendent?

19. Do you feel that you were well informed of barriers that you would encounter in your administrative preparation program?

20. What would cause you to leave this superintendency?

21. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to encourage African American women in overcoming barriers and seeking the position of school superintendent?

22. Are there any other issues did we not discuss about your attainment of the superintendent position?

Concluding Questions

22. Do you have any questions for me?

23. May I call or e-mail you if I need to clarify information or ask additional questions?

24. Do you want a copy of the results of this study when it is completed?

APPENDIX D:

INFORMED CONSENT



INFORMED CONSENT: ADULT RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Title: Factors Affecting Black, Hispanic, and White Female Superintendents

Principal Investigator(s): Krystal Hawks, M.S.

Faculty Sponsor: Jennifer Grace, Ed.D

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived barriers held by Black, Hispanic, and White females with regard to the position of school superintendent.

Procedures: The research procedures are as follows: Participants will answer a survey and participate in an interview in order to obtain data on their ascent to the superintendency.

Expected Duration: The anticipated commitment will be approximately one year from October 2020-October 2021.

Risks of Participation: There are no risks for participation in the project.

{Many of the studies performed by UHCL faculty or students do not involve physical risk, but rather the possibility of psychological and/or emotional risks from participation. The principles that apply to studies that involve psychological risk or mental stress are similar to those that involve physical risk. Participants should be informed of any foreseeable risks or discomforts and provided contact information of professional agencies (e.g., a crisis hot line) if any treatment is needed.}

Benefits to the Subject

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) to better understand the barriers and strategies to assessing the superintendency for Black, Hispanic, and White females.

Confidentiality of Records

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the Principal Investigator or Faculty Sponsor for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

Compensation

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study. {For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained.}

Investigator's Right to Withdraw Participant

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

Contact Information for Questions or Problems

The investigator has offered to answer all of your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, **Krystal Hawks** by telephone at **281-235-3815** or by email at **hawksk4314@uhcl.edu**

Identifiable Private Information (if applicable)

Identifiers might be removed from identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens and that, after such removal, the information or biospecimens could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from the subject or the legally authorized representative, if this might be a possibility

OR

Information or biospecimens collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Signatures

Your signature below acknowledges your voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), institution(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to you. By signing the form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, and explanation of risks or benefits have been explained to you. You have been allowed to ask questions and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You have been told who to contact if you have additional questions. You have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate as a subject in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Principle Investigator or Student Researcher/Faculty Sponsor. You will be given a copy of the consent form you have signed.

Subject's printed name: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Signature of Subject: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Date: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items listed above with the subject.

Printed name and title: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Date: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281.283.3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE #FWA00004068)