

THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN  
IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY: A STUDY OF  
ACCUMULATIVE DISADVANTAGE

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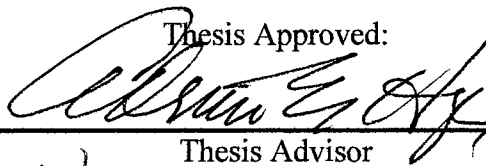
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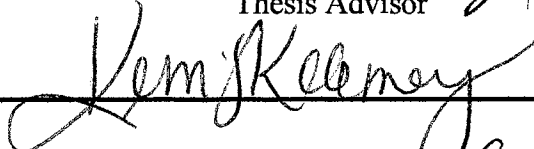
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Thesis Approved:



Thesis Advisor



Dean of the Graduate College

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father.

Manzo Miller

1930 - 1999

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## CHAPTER I

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Ella Flagg Young became the first woman superintendent of the Chicago schools in 1909 (Blount, 1998). Young's enthusiasm for women's school leadership reflected the palpable momentum among women activists at the time. After all, in a mere 50 years women had progressed from having few means of employment outside the home to dominating their new profession of teaching, accounting for around 70 percent of all teachers by 1900 (Blount, 1998). Women's ascendance into formal school leadership positions could not be far behind, especially as steady suffrage victories had cleared the way for women to wage and win campaigns for elected superintendencies west of the Mississippi River (Blount, 1999).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, thousands of women succeeded in attaining school leadership positions (Blount, 1999). During this time school districts added formal bureaucratic structures and administrative layers, a trend that resulted in a proliferation of administrative positions. Women moved into positions, becoming lead teachers, teaching principals, supervisors, mid-level administrators, sometimes ultimately superintendents (Blount, 1998). Feminists considered attainment of the superintendency as a particularly important goal for women because it was a position from which they could wield considerable educational influence. It also symbolized women's increasing social, political, and economic power (Blount, 1998). "When Young took the reigns of the Chicago schools, women held around 9 percent of all superintendencies and their

numbers appeared to be heading higher” (Blount, 1998, p. 2). Even though many of these women superintendents served in small or rural county school systems typically deemed undesirable by men, nonetheless women ambitious for education leadership were urged to go west to seek these opportunities (Blount, 1998).

The golden age for women school leaders continued until after World War II in spite of economic depression and a backlash movement against women’s social and political advances (Blount, 1998). Then from the end of the war to 1970, women’s representation in most school administrative positions declined quietly, yet rapidly (Blount, 1998). The percentage of women superintendents, for example, plummeted from 9 to 3 percent during these decades and has risen only slightly since (Blount, 1998).

Ironically, in spite of Ella Flagg Young’s optimism and even though numerically women have dominated teaching throughout this century, proportionately fewer women lead school systems today than did in her day, leaving unfulfilled her vision of women “in executive charge of the vast educational system.” (Blount, 1998, p. 2)

Women now make up around half the ranks from which the vast majority of superintendents are taken: central-office administrators and principals (Keller, 1999). In district central offices, 57 percent of the professionals are women as are 41 percent of principals (Keller, 1999). These figures suggest that many women are close enough to see the superintendent’s job clearly, but relatively few crack the barrier (Keller, 1999).

Many educators and policy experts say a change is long overdue. With baby boomer administrators expected to retire in droves over the next decade, many see an opportunity for more women to take their place at the top. More minority women in the

job would help public school leadership better reflect the makeup of an increasingly diverse enrollment (Keller, 1999).

Unfortunately, researchers who have studied the problem and some women educators themselves say that, in the end, many women decide to live under the glass ceiling rather than struggle against the often unconscious notion that leadership is a male trait. Others refuse to sacrifice their personal lives to a grueling job-a job that was shaped to fit a man (Keller, 1999).

#### Statement of the Problem

According to the United States Department of Education, 72 percent of all K-12 educators in this country are women and during the 1990s, women continued to be the dominant gender in professional education as well as in university-based professional preparation programs for administrators (Glass, 2000). At the same time, in the chief administrative position in public K-12 education, that of the school district superintendent, men continue to dominate. Even though the percentage of women superintendents nearly doubled during the 1990s-from 6.6 percent to 13.2 percent, the vast majority of superintendents (87 percent) continue to be men (Glass, 2000).

The Salieri effect explains this under-representation of women in the superintendency, despite their over-representation in the teaching profession, in terms of accumulative disadvantage. According to Clark and Corcoran (1986), individuals may begin as equals but find that disadvantage for some accumulates and grows disproportionately with time. The processes of accumulative disadvantage (Cole, 1979) may well begin at a far earlier age for women, and there may be processes and outcomes that impede the progress of women.

In other words, it is possible that female aspirants possess experiences essential to performing the role of the school district superintendent, but that these experiences were gained at the local site-level (typically an elementary setting), while male counterparts have experiences evaluated as being of greater value because they were gained in a secondary or district-level setting. It is possible, that over time, women succumb to the repetitive setbacks they encounter throughout their careers. These setbacks are barriers that influence the attainment of the superintendency.

### Purpose of the Study

Through the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage, the purpose of this study is to describe and explain the under-representation of women in the superintendency despite their over-representation in the teaching profession. The experiences of women possessing superintendent certification, but not serving this high-level administrative position, will be sought so that voice may be given to their perspectives about careers in education administration. In this study, the following will be accomplished:

1. A description of the stories of women's lives and experiences that pertains to or describe a career in education administration.
2. An analysis of the stories these women tell through the lens of the Salieri effect and accumulative disadvantage.
3. Other realities that may be revealed.
4. An assessment of the usefulness of the Salieri effect and accumulative disadvantage for explaining the phenomenon under review.

### Orienting Theoretical Framework



As accessible and visible public servants, superintendents are vulnerable to incompatible demands from many quarters. They must be attentive to the diverse interests of students, teachers, staff, school board, parents, the press, and various other interest groups in the community (Chase, 1995). Among the particularly difficult tasks superintendents face are negotiating employee contracts, closing schools (when enrollments decline), increasing student achievement, and maneuvering tighter budgets. In addition to these more or less routine aspects of the job, superintendents sometimes find themselves in the middle of extraordinary or emergency events (Chase, 1995). Given these immense responsibilities, it is not surprising that the job is frequently described as highly stressful and, that a superintendent's average length of tenure in any one job is between four and six years (much shorter than that of other school administrators, such as principals; Konnert & Augenstein, 1990). Tyack and Hansot (1982) suggest that the leadership of big-city-school systems may well be among the most demanding jobs in the United States today.

Fullan (1991) reports the task of the district administrator is to lead the development and execution of a system-wide approach that explicitly addresses and takes into account all causes of change at the district, school, and classroom levels. In addition to doing this for specific policies, it is also the district administrator's task to increase the basic capacity of the system to manage change effectively. No wonder there is such a high turnover rate among superintendents.

Lorber (1983) discusses the interactive processes that keep women in academic medicine from positions of power and describes the "Salieri" phenomenon. She alludes to Peter Shaffer's (1980) play, *Amadeus*, in which Mozart's lack of social graces gives

Salieri, the court composer and gatekeeper of musical patronage for the Emperor Joseph, the occasion to prevent Mozart's extraordinary accomplishments from receiving recognition. Salieri does recommend Mozart to the Emperor for a post, but he makes sure that the salary is set quite low. In the process, Salieri makes a pretense of being a benefactor to Mozart. Mozart, unhappy with the poor salary, is unaware that his career is actually blocked rather than advanced. Instead, he is grateful for the efforts which Salieri has made on his behalf. Not until after his death could Mozart's works be judged on their own merit, apart from the "functionally irrelevant" characteristic-lack of social graces-which so disturbed the prominent Salieri (Clark & Corcoran, 1986).

There are more women who would like to have the job of superintendent than the figures reflect. Over the past 20 years, significant increases of women in doctoral programs in educational administration suggest that more women aspire to the superintendency now than ever before (Grogan, 1996). Since the turn of the century, women have dominated the teaching ranks at all levels (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Recent nationwide surveys of numbers of teachers show no significant changes, with figures ranging from 87 percent at the elementary level and 57 percent at the middle level to 52 percent at the secondary level (Bell & Chase, 1993).

However, in the middle management level of principals and assistant principals and increasingly at the central office level, there are growing numbers of women (Grogan, 1996). Despite a demonstrated interest in the position which is revealed in surveys and through an increase of women candidates for the superintendency in university training programs and internships throughout the country over the past two decades, numbers of women superintendents remain consistently small (Ortiz &

Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989). Paven (1985) reports a 15 percent increase in the number of superintendent certificates awarded to women between 1970 and 1984 in a Pennsylvania study. Shakeshaft (1989) found that by the mid-1980s women accounted for 50 percent or more of the candidates in doctoral programs in educational administration throughout the country.

Unfortunately, although they aspire to the superintendency, women in administrative positions may be unfairly judged by a dominant, inner circle of men and may not measure up because of their social status. Women may not be blocked out entirely, but their progress is limited to a relatively low level of advancement in male-dominated occupations and societies (Clark & Corcoran, 1986). This process that potentially influences the careers of women may be termed accumulative disadvantage (Clark & Corcoran, 1986).

If women do not enroll in the best graduate programs, do not receive parity in financial aids, do not become protégés of productive, established academicians, do not have resources to carry out their research and scholarly work, do not penetrate the collegial networks where useful advice, advocacy, and patronage are dispensed, and so forth, they may begin with initial disadvantage and find that it grows with time. (Clark & Corcoran, 1986, p. 24)

The idea of accumulative disadvantage, as recognized by the “Salieri” phenomenon, will be helpful in understanding the interactions in the male-dominated networks of the school superintendencies that guide women to less rewarding job positions. The evidence is present that women are interested in the superintendency, but they are not fulfilling their dreams and goals in achieving those job positions. Using the

lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986), this study will look at women who are in position to acquire jobs as superintendents, but have not obtained such employment. Through this research, women will be given voice as to the disadvantages they may have accumulated and experienced which have affected their career paths.

### *Procedures*

This study will use qualitative methodology implementing an explanatory case study (Yin, 1984) using interviews to gather data collection. Interviews will be conducted with women who have superintendent certification, but are not employed in the top-level education administrative job positions in public schools. These interviews will give voice to women as the process will tie together the data collection and data analysis. Seeking explanations for why and how events occur is “an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena” (Merriam, 1988, p. 2).

### *Researcher*

I began my career in education as an elementary classroom teacher in a very small school district that consisted of 500 students for grades K-12 and remained there for two years. I was then employed at a larger school district with a student population of approximately 2,000 students for grades K-12 where I taught a variety of elementary grade levels for eight years. I then became an elementary principal at the school I had been teaching in and have held that position for five years. As site principal, I have been responsible for grades kindergarten through fifth, requiring policy development affecting teachers, parents, and students. I served on building and district committees that involved developing and writing curriculum, securing materials and equipment, developing budgets, hiring and evaluating personnel, directing achievement tests, developing

schedules, working on staff development opportunities for faculty and staff, grant writing, conducting workshops for teachers, and developing outreach to parents.

During my studies for the doctoral program, I became very interested in women's roles in education administration. I have my certification for the superintendency, but I am not a superintendent due to my own personal desire and goal to conduct research and teach at the university level. I am interested in the stories of other women who hold the superintendent certificate, complete graduate classes and testing to achieve it, yet do not have the job of a superintendent. I am intrigued with the theory of the Salieri effect and how this phenomenon in terms of accumulative disadvantage is preventing some of the most qualified aspiring candidates from leading our public school districts.

#### *Data Needs and Sources*

Since the purpose of this study was to describe and explain the under-representation of women in the superintendency, despite their over-representation in the teaching profession, specific types of data will be necessary for inclusion within the case study framework. Information needed will include descriptions of elements, experiences, and stories of women's careers in educational administration including other realities that may be revealed during interviews. Permission will be requested by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board to allow the use of human subjects for the research.

Up to ten successful female school principals or central office personnel with superintendent certification and aspiring for the chief administrative position will be asked to participate in the study. These women will be principals or central office

personnel in a variety of school districts including small rural and larger urban schools. They will be located by recommendation from a panel of experts in the field of education.

### *Data Collection*

The purpose of this case study is to find out from superintendent certified women the experiences in their lives that they believe contributed to their absence of the top-level school administration employment. The experiences these women have encountered cannot be directly observed (i.e., life experiences, assumptions, beliefs, and feelings). Therefore, the long interview method will be the primary source implemented for gathering data. “The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (McCracken, 1988, p. 9). Conducting long interviews will give me the opportunity to continuously assess and evaluate data collected, allowing me to redirect, probe, and review the line of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Interviews will be based on an open-ended format, allowing for interaction between the interviewer and participants. Interviews will also help me to “understand and put into a larger context the interpersonal, social, and cultural aspects of the environment” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 85). Questions will help the participant to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future (Fetterman, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following interview questions will produce data necessary for dialogue and interaction:

1. Tell me about yourself – personal and as a professional in education – degrees held, career path, experience as a teacher, principal or other administrator.
  - a. May I have a copy of your vita/resume?

2. Tell me about the school district – its location, school board members, number of staff, and number of students.
3. Tell me the various types of knowledge, skill, and training that are needed by individuals who are aspiring to be a superintendent of schools in your district.
4. Tell me about your satisfaction with your present job position.
5. How long have you been aspiring to be a superintendent?
6. Tell me why you would like to have a school superintendent's job.
7. Tell me what you have done in the process to secure a position as a superintendent.
8. Tell me about any advantage and disadvantage, hardship or obstacle you have encountered in your personal professional career.
9. Why do you think you have not been selected as a superintendent?
  - a. Why do you think others have been selected?
  - b. What have others told you why others have been selected?
10. What support do you have in reaching the superintendency?
  - a. Do you have support from other women aspiring to be superintendent?
11. How do you believe women who aspire to be superintendents can succeed in their career goals?

Prior to beginning each interview, the purpose of the research will be explained.

The interviews will last up to 90 minutes at a location of the interviewees' choosing.

Demographic data will be collected from each of the participants during the interviews:

gender, age, level of education, occupation and career path. Interview sessions will be

audiotape recorded to provide a verbatim account of participant responses for subsequent

analysis and transcription. Accountability for the data will be strengthened by transcribing the interviews myself with the assistance of interview notes and audiotapes. An audit trail will be maintained by means of interview notes/transcriptions, coded field notes, and daily journal entries (Erlandson et al., 1993).

### *Data Analysis*

In a qualitative design, the researcher must analyze data throughout the data collection process. Continuing analysis is necessary because it is through the analysis of data that a researcher discovers where next to look, who next to interview, or what next to ask (Merriam, 1988).

The procedures used to analyze the data in this study were those of the explanatory case study (Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) believes the explanatory case study is to explain the causal links in real-life intervention. Interview questions for the women participants will be based on the original theoretical proposition and research questions. These interviews will be immediately transcribed and coded. Differences in repeating patterns will be documented and analyzed. I will code the data for variants that could be defined as accumulative disadvantage. The lens of the Salieri effect will be used to view the data and to reveal the influence of accumulative disadvantage on the lives of women who are in position for the job of the superintendency.

### *Research Criteria*

Certain research criteria must be met for a qualitative study to be considered trustworthy. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).



### *Credibility*

Guba and Lincoln (1989) identified credibility as the relationship between the constructed realities generated by the respondents and the interpretations and transmittance of those realities by the research. Erlandson et al. (1993) identified two steps necessary to establish the credibility of the research data. First, I must separate myself and my biases from the data. Second, I must attempt to accurately depict what the research subject had submitted.

Credibility will be achieved by using peer debriefing and member checks. Peer debriefing provides for an outside professional to analyze the study and provide feedback about the findings and conclusions in order to challenge, refine and redirect the process of the study as necessary (Erlandson et al., 1993). Dr. Adrienne Hyle, my dissertation advisor will serve as this professional. Member checks will allow respondents to test categories, interpretations, and conclusions of the inquiry throughout and upon completion of the study. I will conduct member checks with those people serving as data sources by summarizing the data and granting the respondent the opportunity to challenge interpretations or modify factual mistakes (Erlandson et al., 1993).

### *Transferability*

Transferability refers to the degree to which a study's findings can be applied in other situations or with other respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick description and purposive sampling help facilitate transferability (Erlandson et al., 1993). Data will be presented with enough detail to allow the reader sufficient information about context, sample, and methodology to expose its transferability to other situations or similar groups. Through purposive sampling, the sample will be selected to meet the purpose of

the study. Individuals will be chosen based upon their automatic qualifications into the group which I will study.

### *Dependability*

Dependability in a naturalistic study refers to the reliability and trackability of the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is verified by the “audit trail” that yields credentials and a detailed record of the process of the study (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Dependability can be communicated through a reflexive journal. A reflexive journal is a detailed record, providing a daily schedule, methodological log, and a personal diary focus in on the researcher’s reactions to the study. I will keep a weekly journal describing the facts of the interview and observation (i.e., name of the interviewee, date and length of interview or observation, reactions to the interview, etc.). I will review my journal entries on a tri-weekly basis (Erlandson et al., 1993).

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability, like dependability, is established through the audit trail of data collection and through a concerted effort on the part of the researcher to recognize potential bias. Conclusions, interpretation, and recommendations should be related to their sources and supported by the study (Erlandson et al., 1993). An audit trail of interview transcripts, tapes, notes, analysis, and other documents will be kept.

### *Significance of Study*

Knowledge obtained from this study will be valuable to current research, theory development, and practice. In addition, the new knowledge will also include information needed to reevaluate the reasons for the lack of women superintendents in our school districts.

### *Theory*

This study using the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) will help to explain how accumulative disadvantage has contributed to very few women employed as district superintendents. Through this research, the applications of this theory may be enhanced and broadened.

### *Research*

Little research has explored the careers of women aspiring to the superintendency. This study will assist educators, school boards, and others understand the influences present and at work that prove to be barriers to women who are certified to be superintendents, but have not obtained the job positions. The research base will be enriched and broadened through this effect.

### *Practice*

For women who are in position for jobs as superintendents, understanding the accumulative disadvantage women may experience has the potential to bring about change and improvement of employment practices in public education and educational administration. This study will assist educators in understanding the connection between informative theory and the improvement of practice.

### *Summary*

The purpose of this study is to examine the under-representation of women in the superintendency, despite their over-representation in the teaching profession, in terms of accumulative disadvantage as described by the Salieri effect. Qualitative methods allow for a thick description of the realities women may encounter as they position themselves for the superintendency.

## *Reporting*

Chapter Two contains a review of the literature pertaining to the underrepresentation of women superintendents in public schools and the accumulative disadvantage they may experience. The phenomenon of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and the fact that many women aspire to become superintendents are also explored in Chapter Two as well as gender inequity and traditional practices still being used in selection of school administrators. The data is present in Chapter Three followed by an analysis of the data in Chapter Four. The last chapter contains a summary of the study, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Interest in women gaining access to top administrator posts is increasing as many current superintendents are retiring and more women are seeking the top job in school districts. However, at the cusp of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in a field dominated by women at the head of the classrooms, the number of women in the superintendency remains at 10 percent, no larger a proportion than at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Lucas, 1999, p. 1).

In an effort to review the barriers that are present and describe the under-representation of women in the superintendency, despite their over-representation in the teaching profession, this chapter will focus on four broad areas of research:

1. The history of women in education and the superintendency.
2. Women and the superintendency.
3. The phenomenon of the “Salieri” effect.
4. Accumulative disadvantage women encounter.

#### *The History of Women in Education and the Superintendency*

The emergence of women teachers in the 1800s is remarkable considering long-standing Western traditions prohibiting women from this work. Women were to respect and rely on men’s authority; thus they were thought to have little need of education, much less were they to provide it. (Blount, 1998, p. 11).

In colonial and pioneer days men filled the positions of primary school teaching. With the shortage of men at the time of the Civil War, women were recruited. The fact that women were anxious to get out of the home and enter the labor force accounted for their willingness to work for half the wage of men (Howard, 1975). Women eventually predominated in the field and with this shift came the labeling of teaching as a low status profession, sometimes referred to as a semi-profession (Simpson & Simpson, 1969).

Shakeshaft's (1989) look at the number of women in school administration since 1905 uncovers consistent male dominance in all positions except in the early days of the elementary school principalship. Although the bulk of teachers since 1905 have been women, they have primarily clustered in the elementary schools. "Women have never been the majority of secondary principals or district superintendents" (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 20).

Ella Flagg Young was appointed the first women superintendent of the Chicago schools in 1909 and Ruth B. Love was appointed as the second women superintendent of the Chicago public schools in 1980 (Shakeshaft, 1989). Seventy-five years transpired from one appointment to the next with little change in the superintendent job prospects for women.

Early in the twentieth century, ambitious women seeking school leadership positions briefly enjoyed broad-based and enthusiastic support from a powerful emerging political constituency of women. Suffrage activism and the larger women's movement effectively propelled women into school leadership positions. During these years hundreds of women waged successful campaigns for superintendencies, and by 1930,

women accounted for nearly 28 percent of county superintendents and 11 percent of all superintendents nationwide (Blount, 1999).

Blount (1999) reports an appointive system, however, would effectively halt women's progress into school leadership positions. Women rarely received appointment to superintendencies because they tended to be excluded from the male political networks responsible for placing most superintendent candidates. This superintendent selection method quietly and effectively removed women from contention for school leadership opportunities. Carlson (1972) openly acknowledges that the superintendency is a male occupation. Although women made up an increasing percentage of the work-force during the 1980s, they continued to be excluded from most leadership positions (Morrison, White, VanVelsor, & the Center for Creative Leadership, 1992).

Tyack and Hansot (1982) note the educational system has undergone a great deal of change during the twentieth century, but the social characteristics of superintendents have not. Almost all superintendents have been "married white males, middle-aged, Protestant, upwardly mobile, from favored ethnic groups, native-born, and of rural origins" (p. 169). In 1991, 594 of the nation's 10,683 K-12 superintendents were women (Bell & Chase, 1993). The male dominance of the occupation is striking because superintendents rise from the ranks of teachers, 70 percent of whom are women (Kaufman, 1989).

While the presence of women in the prestigious professions of medicine and law has increased slowly over the last twenty years, the superintendency has remained resistant to women's integration, despite the fact that half the graduate students in programs of educational administration are now women. (Miller, 1986, p. 11).

The superintendency is a difficult job in today's world of education. Various citizen groups seek input into educational policy making interest groups whose main concerns are not education. At the same time, the charter school movement, privatization of public education services and management, and state or mayoral takeovers of school board functions has also contributed to the erosion of superintendents' authority and policy-making leadership (Glass, 1997).

### *Women Superintendents*

Female school administrators possess a unique combination of skills, attributes and experience that lend themselves well to education leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and they should not be afraid to tap into that reservoir. Successful female superintendents are embracing these common gender-based attributes in their work, even as societal and cultural biases apparently continue to negatively impact the numbers of women in the superintendency (Lucas, 1999).

“In the past two decades, dozens of surveys and studies have documented bias against women seeking administrative jobs in education” (Keller, 1999, p. 3). Keller (1999) explains biased circumstances have led many women to conclude that they must be better prepared and do a better job than men to succeed. Even then, the effort might be hopeless.

Although little research on female superintendents exists, we know women are more likely to be hired for the top school job in troubled, urban districts than elsewhere. We know, too, that women come to the superintendency at an older age than their male counterparts. They are usually the first female school leader in their district (Vail, 1999).



In a profession in which men and masculinity set the standards for what is valued, women superintendents, visible and isolated members of an under-represented minority group, are pressured to “de-feminize,” or disaffiliate from other women in order to prove themselves as professionals (Bell, 1995).

Chase (1995) suggests women who want to succeed, stay silent about systemic problems of inequality. “The numbers alone tell the story of particular inequality represented by women in the superintendency” (Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000, p. 44). The percentage of American schools superintendents who were women in 1992 was 6.6, a number virtually unchanged from 6.7 percent 40 years earlier (Glass, 1992). Nearly three fourths (74.4%) of the education work-force are female (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1997, p. 79), yet women as a group continue to be under-represented in the ranks of superintendents (Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). The United States public school superintendency continues to be the most gender-stratified executive position in the country (Bjork, 1999), with men 40 times more likely to advance from teaching to the top leadership role in schools than are women (Skrla, 1999).

According to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (2002) there were 481 male full-time employed superintendents compared to 56 female full-time employed superintendents in Oklahoma in the 2001-2002 school year. Assistant superintendents employed in Oklahoma at this same time consisted of 68 males in comparison to 35 females employed full-time.

Although there is current emphasis on the significance of teachers’ experiences, very little attention has been given to administrators’ experiences (Brunner, 2000).

According to Shakeshaft (1989), few individual accounts, biographies, histories, case studies, or ethnographies have centered on women superintendents.

Grady, Ourada-Sieb, and Wesson (1994) interviewed 51 female superintendents from urban and rural areas across the United States to examine their perceptions of the positive aspects of the superintendency. They identified multiple sources of job satisfaction, including making a difference, creating change, providing direction, meeting children's needs, having control, and working with people. They found that most women felt quite fulfilled in their roles and that the benefits of superintending include the variety of work involved and the many opportunities to increase skills and grow on the job.

Glass (1992) found that women and minority superintendents have more academic degrees, are more liberal politically, and accord a higher priority to curriculum and instructional activities than do white male superintendents. Female, male, and ethnic minority superintendents all identified finances as being the highest-ranked problem facing their school boards. Glass (1992) concludes that overall, "the differences between women and minority superintendents compared to their white male counterparts are not great" (p. xii).

Proportionately, more than men, women continue to occupy superintendencies in the smallest and least cosmopolitan districts, with the fewest central office administrators, declining student enrollments, more reported stress in the job, less satisfaction, and the greatest vulnerability to significant school board conflict.

(Tallerico, 1999, p. 38).

Tallerico and Burstyn (1996) argue that such unpromising contexts contribute to the premature exit of qualified women superintendents, reflect an ingrained system of gender

stratification, and reinforce the continued disproportionate formal power of men in the superintendency.

Brunner's (1997) original research of women superintendents yielded seven strategies for success drawn from the work of twelve women superintendents who were capable and effective in the role, but also well liked and supported by others (p. 31). The seven strategies derived from the original study were stated as follows:

1. Women superintendents need to learn to balance role-related expectations with gender-related ones.
2. Women superintendents need to keep their agenda simple in order to focus on their primary purpose: the care of children, including strict attention to academic achievement.
3. Women superintendents need to develop the ability to be "culturally bilingual." This refers to women's ability to remain "feminine," in the classical sense, while communicating in a "masculinized" culture.
4. Women superintendents need to "act like a woman."
5. Women superintendents need to remove or let go of anything that blocks their success.
6. Women superintendents need to be fearless, courageous, "can do" risk takers. At the same time, they need to have a plan for retreat when faced with the impossible.
7. Women superintendents need to share power and credit. (Brunner, 1997, p. 31).

Blount (1998) reports since the rise of the modern women's movement, women have used the political and legal systems to fight for some measure of access to power in public schools, at least to the extent that power inheres in positions of school administration; yet women's representation in these positions is still far short of their proportion in the teaching force. "A truly fair system for female and male students will not exist until we question the deeply rooted tradition of denying women power in public schooling. And then we must change" ( p. 169).

### *The Phenomenon of the "Salieri" Effect*

The brunt of the sociological literature on scientific elites hold that scientists who are placed in structurally advantageous positions as a result of outstanding roles accrue certain advantages due to attaining these positions. For example, there are accumulating advantages and visibility for being in an outstanding academic department as a graduate student. (Clark & Corcoran, 1986, p. 24).

Merton (1968) and Zuckerman (1977) described this process with Nobel laureates; in these cases honored standing was converted into other occupational assets. The term "Matthew" effect is an allusion to Christ's description of accumulating faith: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (King James Version, Matthew 25; 29). Merton (1968), Zuckerman (1977), Cole (1979), Lorber (1983), and others who have used the quotations are referring to social status advantages: a case of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer as time (or the career in this case) goes on (Clark & Corcoran, 1986).

The "Matthew" effect tends to be considered fair. The advantaged scientist, after

all, faces a series of challenges along the way. Success seems to be the result of a funneling process; many begin the race, some drop out along the way, some finish in record time, others finish very slowly. (Clark & Corcoran, 1986, p. 24).

Cole and Cole (1973) suggest that, because the apprentice in top departments interact with productive, influential scientists, and because they have superior resources to carry out research, some male scientists have social advantages and rewards attributable to strategic location and to interactions with high-status people. These advantages affect their achievement in positive ways.

“An interesting modification of the “Matthew” effect is the “Salieri” phenomenon” (Clark & Corcoran, 1986, p. 25). Clark and Corcoran (1986) explain the idea of accumulative disadvantage, as suggested by the “Salieri” phenomenon, seems useful for understanding processes in academe that lead similarly talented graduate students into highly productive careers or less productive ones. Clark and Corcoran (1986) believe models of causal chains might be drawn and tested once we better establish the nature of the relationships, choices, and interactive processes of advantage or disadvantage. “We tend to think that the “Salieri” phenomenon (when gatekeepers to career advancement permit access, but control achievement) is an interesting extension of sponsorship conceptualizations warranting further study” (Clark & Corcoran, 1986, p. 40).

The “Salieri” effect in terms of accumulated disadvantage has also been called “sex discrimination” in the workplace (Gregory, 1999). “Regardless of its name, it is apparent that there must be some type of ongoing social control that maintains differences in performance, opportunities and rewards” (Gregory, 1999, p. 4).

### *Accumulative Disadvantage Women Encounter*

The latest studies of the superintendency and the principalship report on one hand concerns among current superintendents of an impending crises brought about by a perceived shortage of applicants for both positions (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Jones, 2001) and on the other hand, data that show the attrition levels “have not changed appreciably over the past several decades” (Glass, et al., 2000, p. 22). Most acknowledge that the evidence of a shortage of applicants is anecdotal at best. It is also complicated by reports of an increase of women in administrator preparation programs nationwide (Glass et al., 2000,). Young (1999) criticized policy approaches used across the country to address the perceived crises in the principalship because they ignored gender as a possible discriminating factor. “The same could be said of the superintendency” (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 238). If women account for approximately 33 percent of assistant/associate/deputy/area superintendents (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999), the types of positions from which most current superintendents are drawn, it is surprising that only 13.2 percent of superintendents are women (Glass et al., 2000, p. 15).

No hard data exist, but one wonders how many women (and minorities) licensed to be superintendents are not considered qualified for reasons unrelated to knowledge and skill. Although the figures for minorities in the superintendency have also increased slightly to 5.1 percent, there is still a dramatic under-representation of these two groups [women and minorities] in relation to white males. (Glass et al., 2000, p. 15)

“The positions of power and prestige in educational leadership still remain firmly in the hands of White males, with White females gaining some ground over the past decade” (Grogan & Andrews, 2000, p. 238).

Vail (1999) reports there is an unofficial path to the superintendency, and it traditionally begins with the high school principalship. Many would-be superintendents spend time at the helm of the secondary school; after all, high school principals handle large budgets and numerous employees, which is seen as good training for the superintendency. “The next step is often a central office position in the business or facilities office-again, good experience for a superintendent, who will need to manage money and construction” (Vail, 1999, p. 7).

This is a career path many search consultants have come to expect when they review candidates for the superintendency. But, unfortunately, it’s a path that leaves most women at a disadvantage. Women are more likely to have been elementary school principals than high school principals (Vail, 1999). “The perception often is that women cannot handle finance or construction” (p. 7).

Tallerico (1999) reports qualified female candidates for superintendents are out there. To find them, boards need to pay attention to the way they hire employees because the people on superintendent search committees often choose candidates based on gut reaction. But over-reliance on feelings of connection puts female candidates at a disadvantage; if most of the members of a hiring committee are men, they will be more apt to feel connected with the male candidate.

Both men and women still can have trouble seeing females as leaders. The stereotype of a woman as a difficult boss remains. Most leaders have been men and

women will be at a disadvantage because of history and culture long before women are embraced (Vail, 1999).

Bhalalusesa (1998) believes a woman who is seriously interested in preparing for a professional career is disadvantaged from the start. She may have the option of postponing marriage and family building so as to avoid interruption, modification or abandonment of her career goals by marriage and child rearing, but she is faced with psychological pressure both from within herself and society. The ways of behaving and believing learned childhood and deeply ingrained through the growing process make her feel inadequate.

The forces which are embedded in her conception make her feel that as a woman, career development is not a substitute for motherhood or marriage, which is a highly valued role. Worse, still, she has to think about it within a specified period and soon feels time is passing and it will be too late for marriage and family.

(Bhalalusesa, 1998, p. 26).

In the American Association of School Administrators data published in the “2000 Study of the American School Superintendency,” insights were given on the lack of better representation of women in the superintendency and are also a representation of accumulative disadvantage women experience:

1. Women are not in positions that normally lead to the superintendency.

Women, today, are 75 percent of elementary classroom teachers. High school and middle school teachers have many more entry points for a move into administration and the superintendency.

2. Women are not gaining superintendent’s credentials in preparation programs.



Nationwide data indicate women constitute more than 50 percent of the graduate students enrolled educational administration programs. Women also are achieving the doctorate at comparable rates to male candidates. However, only about 10 percent of women in doctoral programs are opting to earn the superintendency credential along with their degree.

3. Women are not as experienced nor as interested in district wide fiscal management as men. School boards see the management of fiscal resources to be a critical component of the superintendency, placing a high degree of emphasis on budget and financial decisions by using skills and experiences in these areas as key hiring criteria. Women typically, have responsibility management, curriculum, and are instructional leaders.
4. Women are not interested in the superintendency for personal reasons. The abundance of work hours, interference with family life is consistent with gender socialization. Many physical career moves are anticipated in a superintendent's career.
5. School boards are reluctant to hire women superintendents. A glass ceiling exists in school management in conjunction with most school boards still containing a majority of men. Women superintendents perceive some restrictive forces working against them being hired by boards.
6. Women enter the field of education for different purposes. Women today may choose to enter education as a career may want to be teachers, not administrators due to the tradition of teaching being accessible to women.

7. Women enter too late. AASA's 10-year studies always have shown that women superintendents are older than their male counterparts because many women teach in the classroom for more years than men or took several years out for child-rearing. (AASA, 2002, p. 2-7)

Valian (1998) suggests that women tend to be (whether men care to admit it or not) gender classified and patronized regarding what the women are capable of doing. Repeat occurrences of the patronage result in accumulated disadvantage and subsequent misrepresentation in positions of power.

The accumulative disadvantage women experience when they aspire for the superintendency may not disappear completely and could continue to accumulate after they obtain a superintendents job position:

Capable women are exiting the school superintendency prematurely for reasons that primarily have to do with their gender. These capable women are disadvantaged as a result of various combinations of cultural and social discrimination, professional and organizational isolation and a diminished quality in their personal and family lives. (Beekley, 1999, p. 173).

Egan and Bendick (1994) conducted a survey of U. S. professionals working in occupations with an international focus. The study consisted of males and females who were similar in a variety of areas that included their range of work specialty, years of work experience, and hours worked each week. Items that were beneficial to men did not benefit women equitably and men's qualifications and achievements proved to be more valuable than women's.

“In academia men and women now start out with equal salaries, but they do not progress at the same rate” (Valian, 1998, p. 52). The National Science Foundation (1996) discovered data that revealed full-time academic male and female scientists received similar salaries one to two years after obtaining their Ph.D.’s. Three to eight years after receiving their Ph.D.’s, women earned 92 percent of men’s salaries. Nine to 13 years after receiving their Ph.D.’s, women earned only 90 percent of males’ salaries.

The American Association of University Professors (1996) reports data that show no reduction in tenure disparity in many years. In 1976-77, 64 percent male professors had tenure, with only 44 percent of female professors possessing tenure. In 1995-96, 72 percent of men were tenured with only 48 percent of women tenured. The tenure gap revealed 20 percentage points in 1976-77 in comparison to 24 points in 1995-96.

Valian (1998) suggests men and women share gender schemas about what it means to be male or female. These unarticulated beliefs about men and women make it more difficult for women, yet easier for men to accumulate advantage and achieve top job positions.

Women have more trouble than men in reaching the top because our gender schemas skew our perceptions and evaluations, causing us to overrate men and underrate women. Once gender schemas are invoked, they work to the disadvantage of women and the advantage of men by directing and skewing perceptions. (Valian, 1998, p. 52)

Gender schemas are capable of making it harder for women to be evaluated fairly. These schemas also make it problematic for women to obtain the benefits of their successes and be acknowledged as leaders (Valian, 1998). Valian (1998) also believes

people who observe women that are unsuccessful at a job they expect them to fail at due to perceived gender schemas, will probably not look at other reasons for failure. People, instead, will contribute women's failure to her sex instead of looking for the actual reasons failure occurred.

Greene (1988) believes that support must be available for women who are in the process of redefining their position, it is imperative that women already in powerful jobs, such as the superintendency, actively network with others who aspire to a similar position. The most important support they can provide for each other is access to the system.

#### Summary

Women have seldom attained the most powerful and prestigious administrative position in schools, and the gender structure of males as managers and females as workers has remained relatively stable for the past 100 years. Historical record, then, tells us that there never was a golden age for women administrators, only a promise unfulfilled. (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 51)

Women are in position and aspire to enter the superintendency even though men continue to dominate the job position. Women who want to be superintendent will benefit from understanding the "Salieri" effect in terms of accumulative disadvantage and how it could affect their own careers. These women will continue to aspire and succeed in their quest for top-level education administration jobs.

## CHAPTER III

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This research was conducted using an explanatory case study method of inquiry (Yin, 1984). It included interviews of ten women who were elementary, middle school, and high school principals and a central office administrator, all of whom were superintendent-certified. The experiences of these women were recorded, so that voice could be given to their perspectives about careers in educational administration and to assess the disadvantages they may have accumulated and experienced that could have affected the direction of their careers.

The purpose of the study, to describe and explain the under-representation of women in the superintendency despite their over-representation in the teaching profession using the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage, was reviewed with participants before each interview began. Each participant, a female not serving in a high-level administrative position yet possessing superintendent certification, was given another opportunity to ask questions about the study for clarification before and after reading and signing the Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form (Appendix B). A copy of the IRB consent form was retained by each participant unless they declined. This case study was conducted within a three-month time period during the spring semester of the 2003 school year.

#### Case Study Procedures

Women serving as administrators in a variety of school districts across the state of Oklahoma including small rural, suburban and larger urban schools were asked to participate in this study. The women were interviewed at their particular school sites with the exception of one (interviewed at an off-campus workshop site), in communities with populations ranging from 8,371 to 506,132 on the 2000 census. The school districts these women were employed in had student enrollments that ranged from 1,935 to 42,302. Enrollments at their individual school sites ranged from 167 to 5,300. The number of certified staff they supervised ranged from 27 to 110 and support personnel ranged from 8 to 55. Four women were employed in urban schools, four in large schools, one in a suburban school and one in a rural school.

Four women were elementary principals at sites with grades PreK-5. Two women were elementary principals at sites with grades K-5. Two high school principals were interviewed at sites with grades 9-12. One middle school principal at her site with grades 6-7 and one assistant superintendent whose site included grades PreK-12 and adult education were also interviewed. These women were identified by recommendation from experts in the field of education and were considered by the executive directors of the Oklahoma Association of Elementary School Principals and the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administrators and professors in the field of education administration to be very successful school principals or central office personnel in the state of Oklahoma's public school system. Those identified held superintendent certification and were aspiring for the chief administrative position.

In total, 10 potential participants were located and contacted directly; no one declined to participate in the study. During the initial contact, I introduced myself,

described the study, enlisted the participant's cooperation and, when cooperation was given, scheduled the personal interview.

All participants were given the option of meeting in a location of their choice. The primary location for nine interviews was the workspace office of the administrators at their particular school site. One interview took place at a career technology center where the participant was attending a workshop and the cafeteria served as the interview location due to a lack of offices and private space. Every participant agreed to have her interview audiotaped. Each long interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. The interview protocol is attached (see Appendix C). The interview questions did not specifically target problems of gender. However, I did not realize during the interview how many gender issues were present until my analysis of the data. During my analysis it became apparent that gender was a very important part in the way female administrators view their careers in educational administration and the disadvantages they were faced with and accumulated.

Five participants offered to give me a tour of their facility after the interviews, showing me the classrooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums, conference rooms, labs, media centers, offices, auditoriums, their latest technology and new playground equipment. One high school administrator took me into some of the lab classrooms where I was fortunate enough to meet teachers and students constructing crafts that would be sold for a classroom fundraiser. She also introduced me to all her assistant principals and school counselor.

### *Respondents*

All participants have aspired from 1 to 10 years to become a superintendent. The ages of the participants ranged from 43 to 53 years of age. Nine women were Caucasian and one was African-American. Nine participants were married; one was divorced. Nine women had children and one did not. Table 1 presents these demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Subject ID	Race	Age	Marital Status	Children
1	White	47	Divorced	1
2	White	46	Married	2
3	White	43	Married	2
4	White	48	Married	2
5	White	48	Married	1
6	Black	46	Married	0
7	White	49	Married	1
8	White	53	Married	2
9	White	50	Married	3
10	White	53	Married	2

Four women held bachelor degrees in elementary education while three women held their degrees in special education. One respondent had her undergraduate degree in business and economics while another had hers in general education and one held her degree in language arts. Masters degrees included three women with special education degrees, two in school counseling, two in elementary education, one in administration, one in curriculum and instruction, and one in English.

Six participants possessed doctorates including four in educational administration, one in student personnel, guidance and counseling and one in curriculum and instruction. Nine had completed postgraduate hours in educational administration while one had hours in school psychometry. A detailed description of participants' education information can be found in Table 2.



Table 2

## Educational Backgrounds

Subject ID	Position	Years in Education	Highest Degree	Bachelors	Masters	Doctoral
1	Elementary Principal	23	Masters	Elementary	School Counseling	None
2	Elementary Principal	24	Doctorate	Elementary	Special Education	Educational Administration
3	Elementary Principal	21	Doctorate	Special Education	Special Education	Educational Administration
4	Elementary Principal	14	Doctorate	Special Education	Learning Disabilities	Educational Administration
5	High School Principal	23	Doctorate	Elementary	Elementary	Educational Administration
6	Middle School Principal	25	Masters	Education	Education Administration	None
7	Elementary Principal	24	Masters	Elementary	Curriculum and Instruction	None
8	Assistant Superintendent	29	Doctorate	Special Education	Guidance and Counseling	Student Personnel Guidance and Counseling
9	Elementary Principal	22	Masters	Business Economics	Elementary Education	None
10	High School Principal	24	Doctorate	Language Arts	English	Curriculum and Instruction

All respondents had been active teachers at one point in their careers with experience ranging from 6 to 23 years. The subjects these women have taught included: Gifted education, Title reading and math programs, kindergarten through fifth grade, music, school counseling, emotionally disturbed, educable mentally handicapped, learning disabilities, high school special education, English, reading, science, social studies and language arts.

The career paths taken by the respondents were varied. Three women went from practicing teachers straight to the principalship while two went from being teachers to assistant principals and then principals. One woman began as a teacher, went to central office then to assistant principal and to principal. Another respondent went from being a teacher, to assistant principal then to central office and finally a principal. One participant started out her career as a teacher, went to central office, became a principal and then went back to central office. One more was a teacher in the beginning of her career, went to the university level to teach and then became principal while still another respondent was a teacher first, went to central office, then went to the university level and then a principal.

The years of administrative experience the respondents possessed ranged from 1 to 23 years. Additional administrative positions these respondents have held in the past included elementary, middle school, junior high and high school assistant principals, arts coordinator, special education director, education services coordinator, special services director, instruction specialist, curriculum specialist and curriculum director. Table 3 summarizes participants' career information.

Table 3

## Career Information

Subject ID	Years Teaching	Subjects Taught	Career Path	Years Administration	Years Aspiring
1	10	Gifted Chapter 1 Reading Math School Counseling Grades 1,3,4,5	Teacher, Principal	13	5
2	10	Emotionally Disturbed Arts Coordinator Grade 5	Teacher Arts Coordinator Assistant Principal Principal	14	10
3	9	Special Education Learning Disabilities Mentally Handicapped	Teacher Assistant Principal Principal and Coordinator Principal	12	3
4	8	Special Education	Teacher University Professor Principal	6	1
5	11	Elementary Education, Middle School English High School Reading	Teacher Assistant Principal Principal	12	5
6	9	Elementary Education Middle School Science, Social Studies Language Arts	Teacher Assistant Principal Principal	16	2
7	11	Grades 4 and 5	Teacher Principal	13	5
8	6	Special Education,	Teacher Director Principal Assistant Superintendent	23	5
9	15	Kindergarten Music Grade 2	Teacher Principal	7	1
10	23	High School English	Teacher Director University Professor Principal	1	1

Students attending the schools these women were in charge of were as diversified as the communities where the school districts were located. The ethnicity of the students ranged from 0% to 35% Hispanic, 4% to 40% African-American, 25% to 89% Caucasians, 0% to 4% Asian and 0% to 38% American Indian. Poverty levels were varied with free and reduced lunches ranging from 7% to 76%. Table 4 describes the participants' school district demographics.

Table 4

District Demographics

Subject ID	School Size	Students	Subject ID	School Size	Students
1	400	40% African American 0% Asian 35% Hispanic 25% Caucasian 0% Native American	6	610	6% African American 1% Asian 3% Hispanic 73% Caucasian 18% Native American
2	475	14% African American 3% Asian 3% Hispanic 79% Caucasian 1% Native American	7	167	7% African American 0% Asian 0% Hispanic 55% Caucasian 38% Native American
3	544	4% African American 3% Asian 2% Hispanic 89% Caucasian 1% Native American	8	5,300	5% African American 3% Asian 1% Hispanic 86% Caucasian 6% Native American
4	413	5% African American 2% Asian 1% Hispanic 86% Caucasian 6% Native American	9	650	24% African American 4% Asian 2% Hispanic 55% Caucasian 5% Native American
5	1,600	15% African American 3% Asian 8% Hispanic 68% Caucasian 5% Native American	10	1,765	4% African American 1% Asian 4% Hispanic 79% Caucasian 12% Native American

School board members for the districts where the respondents were employed varied from five to seven members. Eight respondents had five member boards and two respondents had seven member boards. Three districts had all male school board members while seven districts had a combination of male and female members.

All respondents had the career goal of obtaining the job of the superintendency if they could find the right “fit” with a school district that wanted them. One respondent would like either a superintendent’s position or a position at the university level.

### *Reporting*

The data presented in this chapter are organized into the emerging themes of (1) perspectives about careers in educational administration, (2) disadvantages and advantages accumulated affecting direction of career paths, and (3) strategies for success. Perspectives about careers in educational administration presents the information these site administrators believe could help guide women to success at the top-level school administrative position. Disadvantages and advantages include what they believe has accumulated in their lives enough to affect the directions of their career paths. Strategies for success involved what the participants in this study assume about women’s roles in administration and the necessary attributes they need to attain the superintendency.

#### Perspectives about Careers in Educational Administration

Individuals aspiring to be superintendents of schools need specific knowledge and skills that are necessary and required for their individual school districts. Their knowledge is what they need to know and includes the content. Most agreed that using their knowledge and understanding of the school and school system business and finance were imperative to being chosen superintendent in their school districts. Half also

believed that to qualify for a superintendent's position in their district, the candidate must also have public relations knowledge. Some responded that a superintendent in their district must understand the principles of the government that are the foundation of the system of American schools by being active politically. Other perspectives about the attributes superintendents must possess included the knowledge of being an instructional leader and maintaining credibility.

The specific skills needed for application of this knowledge in schools or districts included interpersonal skills, communicating well with others, and relationship building. These individuals aspiring to be superintendents of schools believed their particular boards would look for these specific skills when interviewing for the superintendent's job position. There *is* present in the superintendent's job position an interchangeability of the knowledge and skills necessary to not only "do the right thing" for the individual school districts, but also the application of the knowledge and how to apply it. It is possible that the distinct lines of knowledge and skills blur at times due to the various job duties and expectations from the students, parents, faculty, staff, and community.

### *Knowledge*

When describing the types of knowledge needed by individuals aspiring to be a superintendent of schools in their own particular district, various topics were discussed. Areas of knowledge that were explored included the knowledge of systems and organizations; knowledge of theories, models and principles of organizational development; knowledge of the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community; knowledge of the purpose of education and its role in modern society; knowledge and understanding of principles of representative governance that undergrid

the system of American schools; and the knowledge and understanding of the values and ethics of leadership. This knowledge included a large amount of information and understanding acquired through education, experience and awareness. Dependent upon the individual school district, it could be finance, curriculum or community knowledge, but all of these are necessary to do what is right for *their* school district to obtain optimal success.

*Finance.* One of the foremost topics discussed was finance which is the knowledge and understanding of managing money and money resources. This understanding of education finance data includes revenues, expenditures, debt, and cash and security holdings of elementary and secondary public school systems. Knowledge of school finance and funding assists in understanding, supporting, and running cost-effective school systems and organizations. A high school principal from a large school district believed knowledge of finance was the top prerequisite for an aspiring superintendent in her district.

Our current superintendent...they hired him because of his knowledge of finance.... Our buildings were just in shambles and like I said, he put into place a capital needs improvement plan. I think that this board expected that. The one superintendency that I interviewed for last year...that was something they were looking for, too. (5-2-03, 10)

An elementary principal from an urban area also agreed that a working knowledge of systems with an understanding of finance was necessary for aspiring superintendents in the urban schools.

I think you need to have a wide basket of knowledge and the most important would be a working knowledge of finance and you need to be able to explain your balance. Like in our district, we have a 100 million dollar budget and you have to have a superb business manager, but really the superintendent needs to be able to know each of those categories, all the codes, where the money comes from and what it means to have a negative fund balance. (3-25-03, 2)

Another elementary principal from a large school district also agreed that understanding systems and finances is important and is one of the things her district is looking for in a superintendent.

Well, as you know, we've had several superintendents lately and I think the biggest thing right now is to be a "money-man" a "finance person" because we have all this construction going on. I know right now, it is a *huge* priority for our board and our district to get our facilities up to par and be equalized across the board. (4-4-03, 4)

An elementary principal from a rural area discussed her idea on finance and agreed to the necessity of knowledge about finance in her district with an understanding of problems organizations are having in her district and Oklahoma. "I would personally think that finance would be at the top of the list now due to the problems in Oklahoma" (4-17-03, 7).

One more elementary principal from an urban school district also made strong comments about the knowledge of finance a superintendent candidate must have for her district.



They have to be able to analyze data and work with all the groups that provide data so they can set viable goals and she or he definitely has to be someone who can manage the size budget that a school district this size has to work with. What better time to take a look at that, now, in a state where our revenue has declined? In a district this size if the superintendent was not someone that could plan well and was very knowledgeable about school budget management, we could not be open, literally, so I think the knowledge base has to be very vast. I think they wanted someone who had a track record with a district that viewed them as a fiscally sound manager. (3-24-03, 1)

*Knowledge to do the right thing.* Knowledge needed by different schools and districts to do the right thing for their individual needs and circumstances was a unique area of discussion examined by respondents during their interviews. What follows is a diverse list of the knowledge needed to do the right thing for various school districts and sites. These multiple beliefs about having the knowledge to do the right thing were identified as necessary to possess by the aspiring superintendents.

Some of the administrators reported that their board members feel it is important for aspiring superintendents to be knowledgeable about theories, models, and principles of organizational development and student development. Having the knowledge of curriculum and being an instructional leader is very valuable to her school district reported this urban high school principal.

One of the reasons this district continued to attract me is because they do concentrate on curriculum. As far as knowledge base, I'm curriculum crazy! I think that has got to be the first thing. You have got to know how to be that

instructional leader, or willing to learn to be that instructional leader. I don't think we ever know all of it for sure, but that is part of it. The realization is that you are going to run a building, deal with maintenance, the management part and just get ready with that. (4-4-03, 5)

One elementary principal from a large school district also believed in the importance of the superintendent to understand organizational development and do what is right for the school and for the community involved. Her school board would look for a superintendent that has the knowledge of theories and models to help make the school progressive and grow.

We are not going to be old school forever. We want to be progressive. We want our town to grow. We want opportunities for our children. That would be a really good, ideal type of setting. You could interact with faculty and create a climate of change and jump on the bandwagon with this whole community climate, bring people and young families in and offer them some real innovative services and curriculum in schools. (4-2-03, 3)

Another elementary principal from an urban school was certain that the superintendent's position would need someone who has the knowledge to be an instructional leader and realizes they must do the right thing for their district and city.

I think they (school board) look to that person to be knowledgeable enough and wise enough to establish viable goals for the school district, to be able to assess what the school district needs to be doing in terms of how and what will make our city a better city to live in. In this city, the school is the main interest. The school

is one of the biggest pieces of the city's growth and well being. The knowledge base of organizational development and student development has to be very vast.

(3-24-03, 1)

Knowing the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community is a necessity for the superintendent to be aware of in the school district where he or she is employed. The knowledge of the diversity of the community will assist the superintendent in making productive decisions for his or her particular school and students involved. A middle school principal from a suburban district discussed how important it could be to have knowledge about the community where the school district is located. "Legalities and those things are always important, but in order to be a superintendent in this community, you have to *know* the community in the right way" (4-25-03, 6).

An elementary principal from an urban school believes she has what her school board is looking for in a superintendent. In order for the superintendent to do what is right for the diverse community they must exhibit the knowledge needed as a leader for changing schools and communities.

I look for new ideas and challenges all the time. My latest adventure is a program called Even Start. It is a federal project that brings adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and early childhood education to schools that have diverse communities. I like the challenge of being the visionary, the leader, and that is what the school board is looking for and that is what I would love. (3-24-03, 1)

A diverse school population and community can take many shapes and forms for the school superintendent. An elementary principal from a large school supported the idea that the superintendent for her district is expected to have the experience to deal with not only a variety of cultures, but also the people who have little knowledge of schools and how they are administered to.

People here have such varied backgrounds that come. Really high expectations from the various cultures and then you have others that are just not knowledgeable about how schools are and we can't provide certain things.

Working with parents is part of the superintendent's job. I know our superintendent only gets what is negative, but I think that is what they must have a lot of experience in. It is working with not troubled parents, but parents with different opinions and different perspectives. (4-4-03, 4)

An elementary principal in an urban district explained what her school board desires and why the knowledge about diversity and public relations is beneficial to the superintendent's job position with the understanding about the purpose of education and its role in modern society and individual communities.

You are such a PR (public relations) person, which is another thing you have to be when you are out in public. I think the superintendent ought to have the knowledge to be able to develop cohesiveness among her school board members. I think that is very hard and sometimes the superintendent may not be able to develop that culture. (3-25-03, 2)

A superintendent's position can be a political office due to the knowledge needed on federal, state and local issues and governance in education. In conjunction with

knowing and understanding government policies on education the superintendent may find it necessary to engage others in the district and community to further the goals and visions he/she may have for the future of the schools.

An elementary principal from an urban district shared her ideas on the need for superintendents to have knowledge of the principles of representative governance that is the foundation of systems of American schools. This includes being savvy politically and knowledgeable about politics for her own district.

You are a politician. You may not want to be, but you are. Superintendents are out there going to civic groups and speaking about the district-the state of the district, as I call it, just answering questions, promoting the next bond issue, just being really visible and visible in the schools. (3-25-03, 2)

“I think they expect a superintendent to be politically active,” agreed an elementary principal (4-2-03, 3) from a large school district where it was believed being knowledgeable about community organizations along with the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community is a necessity for improvement of schools. Another elementary principal from an urban school believes a superintendent must be active politically to do what is right for the school and community.

In some of the small districts I have gotten the feeling that their school boards are looking for aspiring candidates who live in the community, belong to the Rotary Club and attend regularly, and also attend every football game. These are the community expectations.... What we want in this town. Sometimes, school boards look for a leader who most matches the person who left. If the former person was politically active, the next leader should be also. (3-24-03, 1)

The knowledge and understanding of the values and ethics of leadership was discussed with the importance of credibility being explored. As a leader, it is necessary to build and maintain trust, inspiring others to believe in their leader. The ability to gather, sort, and structure information; developing a vision for the school district in such a way to see clearly into the past, present, and future; feeling empathy for the district and community by understanding and explaining change; the power to inform and persuade; moving forward and leading toward the unknown; and the strength and endurance to lead a long journey are ways respondents believed would build trust. Very few people are born knowing how to accomplish all this. It may take many years of education and understanding using a variety of avenues to obtain the necessary knowledge to succeed as a superintendent. This abundance of knowledge is essentially doing what is right for the school, students, parents, and community.

This elementary principal from an urban district believed in the importance of trust and values in leadership and doing what is right for her school.

You have to be very credible and I just think that is very important. I think the other thing the superintendent needs to be able to do is, she has to remember why she has that job. I'm here to do what is right for the children. At the same time, I'm here to do what is right for my staff and the parents who feed into my school. So, I've just expanded that "do what's right for children" to include the adults and I think a superintendent should do that. (3-25-03, 2)

This same principal explains the importance of making those "right" decisions on her own for the school and what her vision of the "bottom-line" is.

When I am in that central office, I hope I remember when I am making those tough decisions and sometimes I'll have to make them by myself.... It won't be an administrative team decision with my team working with me. It may not be a board thing. It might be here is the information, now what am I going to do? I hope I remember "bottom-line" is kids are coming to school to learn, adults are coming to school to work so I need to make a decision based on what is good for them. I may not like that decision, but I must remember, "Is it going to be good for everyone involved?"(3-25-03, 2)

Another elementary principal from a small, rural school supports the same idea of doing the right thing for her school and explains what it takes to obtain this in her district.

I think to build a real team and partnership that you really need takes a lot of effort and a lot of time. They (students, parents, school board, and community) have to see it in you. If you are not willing to go those extra four miles, you can't get them to go one half a mile. This is what I have found in working with people. (4-17-03, 7)

A central office administrator from another large district was also in agreement that the superintendent must be able to exhibit the knowledge of the values of leadership and do the right thing for their unique school and district, but this is part of the job position that does not appeal to her.

The knowledge a person would need in this community is very much liking to being in the Chamber of Commerce, Lion's Club.... Doing those kinds of things and I don't aspire to do *that*. That personality is not me at all. I'm a behind-the-scenes, take care of all the crap, person. (4-24-03, 8)

A laundry list of the knowledge needed by different schools and districts to do the right thing was given by the respondents that included having the knowledge of curriculum, being an instructional leader, knowledge of finance, theories, models, public relations, values and ethics of leadership. The list is as diverse as the administrators who were interviewed and their individual school sites and districts. The knowledge to do the right thing for their individual school districts was extremely important and paramount to their own perceptions of what knowledge would be required to obtain the superintendency job position.

### *Skills*

Communicating well with others and relationship building within the district are skills that can compliment being active in the community where the school district is located and can be requirements school boards expect the aspiring superintendent to possess and be capable of applying to their school and individual situations. Candidates must possess excellent interpersonal and communication skills that will unify, motivate others and inspire confidence among students, parents, school district employees and their professional associations including teachers, principals, administrators, classified, and contracted workers, and in the community at large. The candidates must also build partnerships with internal and external stakeholders and supporters who will benefit their select schools.

*Interpersonal and communication skills.* Outstanding interpersonal and communication skills assist superintendent candidates to reach out, listen and build confidence and trust between and among students, parents, employees, bargaining units, advocacy groups, government, higher education, business, and foundations. A middle



school principal from a suburban district was in agreement that superintendents must have good communication skills and the expertise in applying them especially in her district.

Everybody just is not a good fit for various communities. You definitely would have to be a person who is community minded, is a person that is a listener, someone who is out and visible and someone who can effectively communicate with all of the constituents. That, in my opinion, is the most important. All of the legal, stuff you need to know, that comes second as far as I'm concerned. (4-25-03, 9)

An elementary principal in an urban school district explained that her board desires superintendent candidates who have communication skills with the ability of application.

Particularly, a district the size of ours, I feel like our school board's greatest concern when we had a superintendent search has been looking for someone that can relate to the community at large-the bigger community, the Chamber, and all the different cultural entities that entails. (3-24-03, 1)

This elementary principal from a large district agreed with the other administrators on the importance of the skill and capacity to communicate with others in her particular district.

...One who has the ability to communicate with a variety of people. I think our community likes a person who interacts with the community, but they are not overly demanding of a public relations person. They do expect the superintendent

to be supportive, be at activities, be a part of the Chamber of Commerce and be visible. (4-2-03, 3)

A high school principal from an urban school district concurs with other administrators on how valuable it is to have the skills for relationship building and the capacity to build upon these skills to improve the school and community.

I think our board expects not only a good relationship with the board, but the community and they expect community involvement. You do network with the community and know the community when you are in organizations, and you are visible. They expect visibility. (5-2-03, 10)

The large school district this assistant superintendent is from has a school board who believes the superintendent candidates must have prior relationship building experience as a superintendent with excellent communication skills.

Certainly, having had previous superintendency experience that includes highly valued relationship building skills and communication skills is important. Now, there is nothing that says it can't be a woman. It would be a real surprise, but I don't know. Maybe over time.... These jobs suck the life out of you. (4-24-03, 8)

An urban elementary school principal verified her belief in the importance of relationship building as an extremely marketable skill that can benefit not only the superintendent, but those around him or her.

This luncheon I came from today the superintendent gave a state of the district address actually at the Chamber of Commerce and to a group of community people. Every minute you get, you seek out the people you have connections with to help solve problems. (3-24-03, 1)

## *Summary*

Similarities and differences emerged when comparing the respondents' perspectives about the various types of knowledge and skills that are needed by individuals who are aspiring to be a superintendent of schools in their district. These similarities and differences resulted from the diverse school districts and expectations of the school boards and communities from individual school districts. The variety of knowledge discussed by participants encompassed the knowledge needed for that particular school district and included having the knowledge to "do the right thing" and what needs to be done. Having the knowledge of what needs to be done and how to do the right thing was predominate in the varied knowledge these administrators discussed.

Similar viewpoints about knowledge were the understanding of finance with the knowledge of systems and organizations and how they were suppose to be administered in their own select schools, political knowledge needed on federal, state and local issues and governance in education in order to be politically active and productive for their schools, knowing about community organizations in conjunction with the conditions and dynamics of the diverse community that is necessary for the improvement of their individual schools, understanding theories, models, and principles of organizational development and student development along with the values and ethics of leadership including credibility, having the knowledge of curriculum and being an instructional leader, and knowledge about public relations with the understanding about the purpose of education and its role in their particular school district and modern society.

The skills complimented the knowledge needed to know by applying skills and knowing how to perform them. Viewpoints about skills and their application within their

particular schools were revealed to include excellent interpersonal and communication skills and relationship building within the school districts. These skills are knowing how to unify and motivate others, assisting in reaching out, listening and building confidence and trust in the entire school community.

### *Impacts on the Direction of Career Paths*

In addition to providing me with an idea of what knowledge and skills these administrators believed aspiring superintendents should have to acquire the superintendency in their district, these women described to me what they have been confronted with along the way in their individual career paths. They talked about disadvantages that included gender issues in relation to communication, false gender equity, gendered expectations, being placed in a double bind, differential rewards, lack of experience, and time required of the job. They also talked about what has helped them achieve their goals. Advantages they have encountered in their personal professional careers were teaching experience, a variety of experiences, gendered traits, being willing to take risks, having a positive attitude, growing the next generation of administrators, having a strong faith, extra education, and family.

### *Disadvantages*

Many of these women have had to deal with more than one disadvantage or obstacle along the way. Virtually all of the issues discussed and explored were associated with gender. These included gender as it related to misperceptions, reverse gender equity, needing a coach, gender bias, gendered expectations, the double bind, differential rewards, relocation expectations, fear of the unknown, lack of experience, and time required of the job.

*Misperceptions.* One elementary principal from an urban school district revealed a disadvantage that existed when males have had false perceptions of females. These resulted in communication difficulties and/or expectations.

I have had employees where gender has been an issue with my job position, particularly with male employees. I have male employees now and there is not communication difficulty, but there are certain perceptions attached to working with females, there just are. I think there are those of the other gender that perceive that or want to use that as an excuse for communication issues, or not being able to say what you think or have an opinion or something like that. I don't really buy into that. (3-24-03, 1)

This same principal added another experience she has had when others exhibited misperceptions of females,

You know, no one has said this to me, but just in inquiries to some of the small districts, I have gotten the feeling that just because I am a woman, there is no interest. Even though it wasn't just said, "Because you are a woman and we don't really want you to apply", but I can't even put my finger on what was really said, but there are ways for applicants to know that they are really looking for a male. I am kind of hypersensitive about that, too, I think, it may be. They may not even intentionally be sending out that signal, but I've just gotten that sense. It has been in a couple of rural areas. (3-24-03, 1)

Another elementary principal from an urban school discussed what she has heard from others that gave her reason to believe there are misperceptions of females in educational administration.

A female can do the job just as well as a male, but other people don't have that impression. I have had so many people tell me the last two years they are so glad they have a male assistant principal, a man here. (4-25-03, 9)

*Reverse gender equity.* A different principal from an urban school district has faced disadvantages in connection with her gender including this instance where she believed she should have received the job placement but did not because the district preferred a man for the position

In the past three years, I have been looking in the metro area (for a higher-level administrative position) and have been a finalist for an elementary director's job and finalist for the director of human resources job. I know on one job the superintendent was told he had too many females at central office so he needed to hire a man. That was really hard to hear because he didn't tell me that directly, but someone in that group told me later after the hiring had been made. I had left the interview so pumped, I mean, I was pretty cocky when I got my Sonic drink on the way back over to work. I was going, "This is mine! I can feel it!" To hear that was pretty disheartening. (3-25-03, 2)

Retaining a good attitude and humor, this same principal added her feelings about not being able to be yourself and the need to be more like a man in the eyes of others.

So, now, I've learned to slow down, listen, gather my research and go do all that. Truly, after that one interview, when it was a male/female thingy I came home, told my husband, "I'm having a sex-change. I'm just telling you now. You might want to think about being married because I'm going to have a sex-change because it has got to be a man!" I really think it is still a man's world. You can be

the best person and I know just going to my professional meetings, if it is principals and superintendents there, there are some, a lot, of the male superintendents still look at female administrators as little girls. In fact, last year, two of them came up and said, "Little girl, how's it going?" Well, number one, I'm not little and I'm not a girl. I'm 46 years old, so think about it, honey. I refrained from calling them little boys, but it came inside my head. I had good self-control. That mentality is still out there, that females and this is just my perception, that females can't do that job. That has been a good lesson because I don't have to be the aggressive, pushy woman, but in my answers I need to be more assertive and even if it is totally wrong, it is okay, at least I'm assertive and I know what I want to do. That has been a good learning experience for me. (3-25-03, 2)

When discussing another situation that put this principal at a disadvantage because of gender issues, she added,

When I was trying to become an assistant principal, I was told by my superintendent that he narrowed it down to me and a man outside the district. Both of us coming out of the classroom, both of us fifth grade teachers and we both interviewed. He said, "You know, I really want to hire you, but I counted up in our directory and I had more women than men and I really need more men." I thought, "You know what? I was active on the district level. Our district had our 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was co-chair of that. It was a huge two-year process. I was chair of our professional development committee because we don't have a paid person for that and that is a huge thing in our district!" I mean, I had done all these

leadership things district-wide as well as being a teacher and leader in my school, and I thought, we don't even know this guy. He is coming in from another district and he gets it because he is a *male*. Then, as I go home and as I have my glass of wine and I'm counting in our directory and it wasn't true! There were not more women than men and so that just irritated me. I will never forget that and the other experience. That wasn't that long ago, just last summer. (3-25-03, 2)

*Needing a male.* The following elementary principal from a small school described the disadvantage she felt when she applied for a teaching position, knew she was qualified, but was informed the job was being "held" for a male coach they were hoping to employ in their district.

Oh, yes, I have been discriminated against because of gender and I'll tell you where I first saw it, applying for a position. Not an administrative position per say, but actually my first teaching position. It amazes me of course this was 1980-81. I actually went to one district and applied because I wasn't willing to move. I actually had to write a story about myself for the application. When the interview was completed, the superintendent told me I had good qualifications and they did have a job opening, but they needed the job to stay open for one of the male coaches coming to the district and if he didn't want it, he might want it for his spouse if she was a teacher. The superintendent added, "Be sure (of course, I was a lot younger then) and put your picture on there (application). If there were any openings, they would show your long hair and you would be considered." I was real uncomfortable with some of those things. I just cringe at some of the things that are still asked or said in interviews. It bothers me. (4-17-03, 7)



This elementary principal from a large school was also at a disadvantage in her past district due to a hierarchy of job placement that women were unable to obtain to due to male administrators at the junior high and high school level.

It would never happen to go from elementary principal to high school principal. It just wouldn't happen. It doesn't happen, I'm just telling you, it doesn't happen.

There was a junior high principal who went to the high school or you could have a junior high assistant go to the high school assistant and maybe have opportunities, but secondary was set apart from elementary. It was set at a hierarchy and you abide by the hierarchy. The hierarchy was the high school principals who had more power than the junior high principals, etc., and it was very strict. Women were more often the elementary principals. (4-2-03, 3)

Another elementary principal from a large school saw the disadvantage of hiring and the hidden agenda of placing men instead of women in the secondary schools.

Women have applied for the secondary roles that have opened up. We have a new principal at the middle school and an assistant. All those people are new. There are no women that were hired, but women did apply. They even had women interns that weren't hired in those positions even though they interned and did a great job. (4-4-03, 4)

*Gender bias.* A central office administrator from a large school district believes she is put at a disadvantage in her career due to gender issues.

As far as being a woman, does gender have an effect? Yes, I believe that it does.

When I go to professional meetings or to any of the state meetings, it is a man's

deal. A woman must put forth a greater effort to be noticed at these meetings than men. (4-24-03, 8)

The same central office administrator added that gender issues are alive and well in Oklahoma school districts, but it seems to be accepted instead of challenged.

It is almost like it is a male-only club and it is pretty well accepted that is how it has been and will be forever more, thank you very much. Truly, I see women where all the male superintendents are and they are not embraced in the same way. It is not the same thing. (4-24-03, 8)

An elementary principal from a large school district reported the disadvantage she experienced from her own superintendent in the various professional relationships that were present among the district's administrators.

I see differences in the relationships our superintendent has with the men building level administrators versus the women building level administrators. It is interesting. It is almost as if there is an expectation for the women to have a different role as an instructional leader in their building. The conversations with all our secondary administrators are men and that discussion is typically finance, with building issues typically maybe some scheduling issues, but even this is deferred to their counselors who are women. It is just almost like the housekeeping is different and the secondary talk about crucial discipline issues. We (elementary administrators) don't sit and talk about our crucial discipline issues we have. It is a different dialogue the superintendent's office has and is just very interesting. (4-4-03, 4)

Looking at gender as a disadvantage, this high school principal from a large school district agreed it is a problem and described what she has seen.

I think there is gender-bias. I have witnessed it. I know that when the high school principal before the last one before me was hired, I was a part of the interview process and we had a candidate who was female and thought she would have done a great job. I was told this town wasn't ready for a female principal. I did not apply, but neither was I asked to apply. At the point I was at central office and I had my certification, but I was not invited to apply. (5-2-03, 10)

An elementary principal from a small rural school discovered the presence of gender bias when she took the place of a former principal who was male. Her faculty and staff were not very forgiving of the fact that she was a female and was different from their former boss.

The former principal he and I were just so different. What we looked at, what we thought, what we wanted seemed to be off the end of the spectrum as far as what I could see when I got here. What I did notice was really interesting. I would come in and I would hear, "He did it this way. He did it that way." I would hear his name so much that first year! It was like, "I am not him!" That was really hard until I had my place and that took more than a few, probably two or three years. (4-17-03, 7)

This same principal addressed the resentment she received from not only the faculty and staff, but also from her students in her rural school.

I noticed there was some resentment when I took over the principal's position.

Where I probably saw the bigger one was from the older students. Since they had

been here they had always had a male fifth grade teacher and a male principal and they expected things to be just like they were before. I didn't do things the same way. There was a lot of resentment. I will never forget some of the looks from the students and the attitude. That was really difficult here. (4-17-03, 7)

*Gendered expectations.* A high school principal from a highly populated urban school district expressed her agreement about the disadvantages associated with gender and the expectations of others.

As far as women in secondary administration, I think we still have the challenge justifying ourselves, proving ourselves. We are not the "old coach" and that expectation of having a large man as the head of the district is still out there. Look at my desk. See what size it is? (It was very large.) To be honest, the male/female thing continues to be a challenge. If you care about being attractive and not everybody does, but I do, I think that can give off messages other than that. I don't care where I go, coming here, wherever I went, I had to establish that I was a person of integrity and quality. I can't box somebody in the ears. I'm not going to throw anybody on the ground. Hopefully, the males don't do that either, but there's just that need still in some people that, that be there. (4-4-03, 5)

This same administrator further explained her disadvantage due to the expectations of others and her gender when she was assigned a principalship and took the place of a male principal.

You must know how to build a trust because if that is not there, nothing else is going to happen. Taking the time to build that trust is important. Here, it took me probably the first couple of years and part of that has to do with the guy I

replaced. He was an assistant principal here and then principal for seven years and he still substitutes in our building. Those things take time to work through. If you can live through that, you can build that trust. (4-4-03, 5)

Concerns about disadvantages associated with gender from this black middle school principal from a suburban school district provide evidence of not being given credit where it is due because of the expectations that the male said it first.

There are people who don't want you to succeed. It is funny when you are in a meeting and decisions are being made and something comes out of your mouth that is profound and it is overlooked, but then, later on, the same thing is said from someone else's mouth (male) and it is a wonderful idea! Oh, my gosh! I love that! And that happens. I think that happens to all women in our profession at some point and time. I don't have a problem with that so much because I know in my heart where the idea came from. That just lets me know I still have it. Most times I handle it well. Sometimes, I'll say, "You know, I just said that. I think that is a good idea because I originally said it." There is a time to speak and a time not to speak. (4-10-03, 6)

*The double bind.* For this participant, a middle school principal from a suburban school, race and gender placed her and her career in a double bind. She believes others see her differently because of both.

Whenever I think the opportunity is there to speak, I do, but some of the obstacles have been because I am a woman. I am a black woman. I don't give in to stuff in my way. I don't think things will change as I go on up the career path. I don't see anything changing in the next 5 to 10 years. I don't know, hopefully it will, but I

don't think I will see that in my lifetime. I hope I do. We will have to change it.

(4-10-03, 6)

Another principal from an urban high school felt like she was placed in a double bind because not only did she experience the positive, but also the negative from others in how she presented herself by her physical appearance and her clothing.

I have been complimented. Obviously, if I have been elected as President of our professional organization, I have been able to carry off that balance of caring about my physical appearance as well as being an intellectual and a leader. This has certainly been a frustration at times to get past that. (4-4-03, 5)

This same principal felt there was a double bind present because of her gender when she experienced the positive feelings of being a people person and then experienced the negative feelings of being a task person in her job as a leader. As a female, this administrator was more comfortable as a people person.

You know, when you really get down to it, just do your job every day, be there, be there for the people. I always thought I was a real people person until I got into the principal's job and then I became a task person and I have had to learn to balance those things. Any of us in leadership roles, don't you, have to learn that caring versus, "Hey, I *still* expect." (4-4-03, 5)

*Differential rewards.* Seeing a difference in pay scale was a disadvantage because of gender this central office administrator from a large school district described, "The first discrimination I noticed was the realization of the salary differential we had here was a big difference in administrators' salaries. A big drop. The administrators' job positions normally held by females received a smaller salary" (4-24-03, 8). The same

administrator also concluded there was a difference in the district's superintendent search committee's pick for superintendent due to gender.

I don't think it (a female superintendent) will ever happen in this district. It certainly may, but I don't think it will. The search committee did get down to a semi-finalist who was a female and I think she would have done a bang-up job. She ended up not getting into the final five. Of course, no one is going to say why.

(4-24-03, 8)

A principal from a small school district believed there is a difference in how a school may be presented to the aspiring superintendent candidates due to the circumstances she experienced when she took over the principalship at her school.

The most difficult thing I have found with this situation is what you go into. I would say whatever job you are applying for or position, do your homework because you can hear that this is this situation, but when you get there, you find it is totally different than presented or the interpretations are different because even with this one, I found that the main thing when I first came was just trying to build a trust. (4-17-03, 7)

Other disadvantages not related to gender were also discussed. These disadvantages included the participants' unwillingness to relocate, giving up time with family and having to split up families as needed to advance upward into educational administration.

*Relocation expectations.* A disadvantage that was voiced by over half the participants was the reluctance to relocate to a different school district, town, city or state in order to move up the career ladder. A variety of reasons were described and discussed.

An urban elementary school administrator knows she is tied down now to her job, but is looking and thinking about the future of her career.

This is my last year with a real firm tie here because my son will go to college next year. So, I will be able to pursue something else if I want to. I will feel like I can and look forward to doing so. (3-24-03, 1)

Another elementary principal from an urban area agreed that right now is not the time to relocate,

I don't want to leave this city area because my son will be a senior in high school next year, that is my baby. My other one is at a university, so I don't want to move until I get him through school. (3-25-03, 2)

This elementary principal from a large school district shared her viewpoint on relocating to another job,

It (this job) has been a real challenge, but I do not regret the message I received (from God) that it is okay not to be so driven and this message I have truly internalized as my calling. I'm not sure how long my calling is suppose to last, but I truly love the elementary site and that is why I haven't relocated and changed jobs. (4-2-03, 3)

*Fear of the unknown.* This urban school principal was also looking to the future and questioned her decision to ever leave and pursue a superintendent's position,

Do I really want to leave this job knowing even though I don't have tenure as an administrator, I do have seniority? I'm one of the oldest ones in the district on the elementary level. Do I really want to leave that, take a risk, and go somewhere



else where I would be the rookie? I am the primary support in my family, so you have to think about that. (3-25-03, 2)

This elementary principal from a small, rural school discussed her lack of desire to move away from her home,

I find myself looking at superintendents' positions, where they are and the size of the school. If the right opportunity came at the right time, I'm not saying I wouldn't go. I just don't know at this time. I wouldn't be willing to go somewhere and move at this point when I want to be at home. So, I would just as soon stay where I am or find something around here. I just don't know. (4-17-03, 7)

A central office administrator was also very reluctant to move away from her district and home,

I have been here since 1974. I fell in love with the community and lived in the same home since 1980. My kids wound up moving here. I am just very, very place-bound. I think that is one of the things I see when folks really pursue a superintendency. They go to a small district and work their way up. They have to be very mobile. At least that has been my observation. (4-24-03, 8)

*Lack of experience.* Several administrators believed a lack of experience in many educational administration career areas have been a disadvantage to them and the possible advancement in their professional lives. This elementary principal from an urban school worries she may not know enough about the necessary subjects she could need in the future.

Do I know everything I need to know? One of my mentors brought me a manual she got at the state department that I didn't know existed on finance and it is

written for the superintendents. That has been helpful just having that extra piece of information. (3-25-03, 2)

An elementary principal from a large school knew she was lacking in experience when she interviewed for an assistant superintendent's position.

When I interviewed for an assistant superintendent's job, I did not have a lot of experiences at that level obviously. In fact, one of the questions they point blank asked me was, "What is your knowledge of the grievance process?" Not only grievances, but also then the negotiation type experiences. I said, "You know, I am one of those fortunate people. I have never been involved in a grievance. I don't have experience with that." They hired an assistant superintendent who *did* have that experience plus more and wanted a bigger school experience. (4-2-03, 3)

This elementary principal from a small rural school agreed the lack of experience is a disadvantage.

I feel like for me, personally, maybe it is because of this school system, but I feel like we have not had enough experience as administrators or I haven't personally in that area to move into that position. We'd be at a disadvantage on that. I'm afraid that would hurt me personally. (4-17-03, 7)

The lack of experience with finance worried this elementary principal from a large, urban school.

The superintendency kind of bothers me a little bit because of finance. I'm not exactly sure what I believe or think I do feel with the knowledge I have right now.

The finance really bothers me. I don't want to be an accountant all day. If you're in a pretty small district, you kind of do everything. (4-25-03, 9)

*Time required of the job.* Another disadvantage some participants shared was one that involved giving up time to work that could be spent with family and lost time for self. Participants believed it was a choice that was extremely difficult to make and made a big effect on how they decided to pursue their career paths. An elementary principal from a large school explained what a large time commitment the superintendency could be.

I think women superintendents have to have that extreme commitment of giving up their time and that causes a problem for us because we perceive ourselves angels of mercy and do-it-yourselfers. I think you really have to make a conscious effort to be able to say no or give up family time for whatever portion of your life you are giving that up for. (4-2-03, 3)

An elementary principal from another large school agreed that you have to give up your personal time if you go into upper level educational administration.

Probably the hardest move was teaching higher education and then going into administration because of the time involved. In higher education you control your schedule, you pick and choose. In upper administration you have no time that is your own. So, it is all controlled by all these outside forces. (4-4-03, 4)

When discussing time with family and the superintendency, this central office administrator shared her doubts about obtaining a superintendent's position.

I do not think I want that kind of pressure cooker. I want to be able to do some things with my family. I've seen superintendents in the past who have not been able to be with their family. (4-24-03, 8)

Along with not having time to spend with family, another disadvantage revealed is splitting up families in order to pursue a high step up the educational administration career ladder. An elementary principal from a large school describes her split family situation.

I have my home here and my husband lives in another town about 75 miles away. He drives down and spends a couple of days with me and then I go to his house for the weekend. It has been a real challenge. (4-2-03, 3)

Another elementary principal from a large urban school agreed that a split family is not an ideal situation.

Look at me. I don't live at home. I have an apartment here and go home on the weekend. We have kind of overcome that barrier. We both got different jobs. He didn't get what he was looking at, but I did. So, then, it was, "Okay. Now what do we do?" (4-25-03, 9)

### *Advantages*

Participants revealed many advantages that could have made an impact in their career. These administrators revealed advantages related to teaching experience, a variety of experiences, gendered traits, being willing to take risks, having a positive attitude, growing the next generation of administrators, strong faith, extra education, and family.

*Teaching experience.* Having the background of being classroom educators as women have demonstrated successfully and in large numbers since the 1800's in conjunction with working in other educational positions has been looked at as an advantage to the majority of participants. Being a woman has given them the opportunity to become a teacher and use those skills to further their understanding of students and

then progress into other job areas. This elementary principal from a large school discussed her experience and how it has been advantageous to her.

I really like seeking funding or seeking special projects. I love creativity and I really like working with parents and I think that is part of the superintendent's job. I know our superintendent only gets what is negative, but I think that is what I've had a lot of experience in because from teaching all the way up to working with parents who have different opinions and different perspectives. This experience has been very beneficial to me. (4-4-03, 4)

A middle school principal from a suburban school district agreed being a woman who had a background in teaching helped her pursue other areas including administration.

My certification was so wide spread I was very flexible. I've taught every subject in the building except math only because I didn't have that certification. I taught for eight years and then became an assistant principal here before I became principal. (4-10-03, 6)

A high school principal from an urban school described why she chose to leave the teaching profession even though she greatly loved it and decided to become an administrator and also look at the superintendency.

I wasn't going to be an administrator. I was always going to be a teacher, but because of my experiences in another district, I thought, "You know, I bet I could do this." It just totally changed what I wanted to do with my life, so I got certified and in the process of interviewing for the assistant principal's job, this job came up and I thought maybe that would be good because I would get to see every

school in the district. I am really big on climate and that was a really cool job for me to have because I got to see how the principals set the tone for the building. I knew the minute I walked into the building what tone that building had based on leadership. (3-25-03, 2).

*Variety of experiences.* A high school principal from an urban school described her varied experiences beginning as a teacher and believed being a female has been a benefit with her working in the different areas in education.

I taught in a large city for 11 years then moved over to administration as an assistant principal. Next, I went to central office in another large city and became the educational services coordinator. I worked over there in a lot of different areas. It was a wonderful prologue into the principal's position. Not everyone can do that, but for me it was great because I worked with federal programs. I worked directly with the superintendent. We worked with partnerships, negotiations and a lot of different areas. I learned so much not only about programs, but what happens at central. Next, I became a principal at a middle school and then became a principal here at the high school. (4-4-03, 5)

This same administrator added how important it was to her career to have a background of many different grade levels.

I have been fortunate because I started my career in elementary and I really don't know everything, but at least in my personal experience. I have a background of being at all levels and this gives me an appreciation. (4-4-03, 5)

A high school principal from a large school agreed her career advancement was due to the variety of experiences her profession had provided for her.

I took this job in the middle of the final process of a job search for superintendent in a smaller district in which I was a finalist. I went ahead and decided that I had read in a book on the principalship that there is no real job that prepares you adequately for the superintendency. It is a variety of experiences that probably the closest would be the principal at a comprehensive large high school as far as managing finance, maintenance, support personnel, teachers, knowing instruction, curriculum, and assessments. I learned a lot about finance in central office. I learned federal programs and how to write federal grants and I do see some similarities. The things I haven't done here, I have done at central office. (5-2-03, 10)

*Gendered traits.* A central office assistant superintendent from a large school believes the qualities women have are an advantage along with the opportunities of being in the actual classroom with the students and the advantage of working with different ages and grade levels.

Stamina and heart females have anyway. I think having more experience and education as possible.... To have been an elementary principal and then a secondary principal would be a really good fix for somebody trying to move up. I know superintendents who have never been in the classroom, which I think, is bizarre or they have been in the classroom one year. (4-24-03, 8)

Being a woman was also advantageous to this high school principal from a large school because she began as a teacher as many females in education do and was chosen for her job due to the logical choice and circumstances.

I taught high school for many years. I then went to central administration and then came to a site. Most people go to a site and then central administration, but the principal that left here and I had worked very closely together and philosophically we were alike. As the director of secondary education, I had been involved in the school improvement process so I knew it better than anyone. I had helped them with all their curriculum mapping and getting their curriculum aligned, work with them on assessment, been on their school improvement team. So because of my 20 years here prior to that, my close relationship with the previous administration, which they wanted the same things to continue.... I guess they felt like that I was the logical choice even though I had not been at the helm of a large high school.

(5-2-03, 10)

This same principal added her thoughts on how proud she was of being the first female high school principal ever in her town.

We have a male principal that has been here since 1994. We did have a female superintendent prior to this one. She was the only one in the history of our schools in this town. I am the first female high school principal they have had, ever, here.

(5-2-03, 10)

*Being willing to take risks.* Another advantage some participants believe has helped them in their career in education is to take on challenges, meet them head-on and conquer them. An elementary principal from a large urban school believes in a challenge, "This is what my parents had me to do. To not be afraid and take on any challenge, something that is exciting!" (3-24-03, 1)



Another elementary principal from an urban school concurs that challenges she takes help her grow professionally,

I'm always looking at what do I want to be when I grow up? That kind of thing....

Even though you know I'm going to be 50. It is just you have to keep interested.

I'm sure that is part of my deal, too. I've changed jobs, I've never had to leave a job and always loved every job I had. Just looking for the next thing that will help me grow a little more. (4-25-03, 9)

Challenges can be exciting as well as an advantage, comments this elementary principal from an urban school.

This is the most fun I've ever had (the principalship). I love it! I love the challenge and I guess I need that. I kind of need that risk factor in order to make it exciting. I need new projects and new initiatives. (3-24-03, 1)

*Having a positive attitude.* A middle school principal from a suburban school agrees her attitude about challenges had been an advantage to her life.

I like a challenge and I think that is why I get myself involved in so many different things. I like doing new things and the superintendency would be another challenge, not necessarily that it is a stepping stone, but it is a challenge. I'm a problem solver. I like solving problems. I like putting pieces of the puzzle together to make things fit. That would be another thing I could try on. (4-10-03, 6)

A principal from a large high school commented on her love of her job and the positive attitude she has had because of her passion for teaching.

I love what I am doing now. It is the hardest job you will ever love. I think I borrowed that from the army, navy or someone. I missed being with kids in school when I went to central office. I loved teaching. I went into teaching because it was a passion for me. It didn't seem like I was in school when I was in central administration. I like being back here and the daily interactions with parents, students and teachers. (5-2-03, 10)

This principal further explained how her positive attitude has expanded into her desire to become a superintendent in the future.

My career goal was to be a teacher and then a professor and even when I first left, I was going to come back and teach. The more I was around my superintendent, the more I saw what a difference he was making. I thought I want to make a difference like that! So that is how I ended up here and I imagine that is why I will pursue the superintendency. (5-2-03, 10)

*Growing the next generation of administrators.* Cultivating school leaders while in an administrative position can be an advantage for her career in the future as this elementary principal from an urban school explains.

Down the road, if I can look at a school board or someone interviewing me and say I cultivated four new leaders of my school staff over the course of nine years. That should be evident that I have a vested interest in cultivating good leaders and want to be one myself. I have a couple of teachers interested in becoming principals. I have one in her second year as principal. I have one that has finished national boards and her administration certification. I have two more that are working on it. (3-24-03, 1)

A principal from a large high school believes it is important to cultivate new administrators, but is also aware how she had been mentored and cultivated by others in the educational administration profession.

My superintendent took me to a superintendents' monthly meeting that is a legislative update from January through May. He took me several times to that. I have had encouragement from several female superintendents. Being around them, seeing what they do.... I think that is a big piece of it whether they say you can do this too. It is connecting with and watching them. I would say those two have influenced me whether they are fully aware or not. (5-2-03, 10)

A middle school principal from a suburban school believes strongly the importance of not only cultivating future leaders, but also the extremely necessary fact of hiring quality people for her district.

It is going to be important for me to go into some realm of supervision that allows me or affords me the opportunity to bring in quality people into a large setting. I do that now in my building by hiring teachers I think are quality teachers, but I would like to do that on a larger scale plus I would like to be involved in curriculum and instruction at a larger scale than I am doing now. (4-10-03, 6)

An urban school elementary principal described the difficulty in trying to mentor others into the principalship because of the direction the principalship has been taking the last few years in Oklahoma.

I don't think districts have adequately planned to compensate principals for what they have to do and the hours that it really requires. Five years ago when I considered mentoring someone into the principalship, I felt like I could tell them

what was expected of them and what they needed to be able to do. It is much more complex now. It involves much more crises management, much more problem solving, much more flexibility and it is much harder now to mentor someone into the principalship. Part of that is because you can't really encourage them to look at an adequate compensation scale in return for what it is you tell them they need to learn how to do. Because they do need to know how to do a lot more today and those of us that are old have had to go out and seek that training and learn on our own. (3-24-03, 1)

*Strong faith.* To some participants, having a strong faith has been an advantage to them because of their belief in a higher force guiding their lives and careers. An elementary principal from a large school talked about her faith and how it changed the course of her life.

When I decided to go into special education, I had no one in my family that had special needs, disabled or a handicapped person. I am very impatient and ignorance kind of sends me over the edge. I recognized all that about myself and I have no explanation for you why I went into special education except that God said, "You need to learn these things. You are not very tolerant and you've got to learn how to do this." Of course, I just treasure my years as a special educator. (4-2-03, 3)

This same principal discussed faith as an advantage when setting goals,

You never know what to pray for and so I really feel blessed because I was struggling. I knew the minute I finished my doctorate, "You've got a problem here. You know, you are going to have to deal with this because you set these

massive goals for yourself and you either have to say I don't need those goals anymore and you have to redefine your goals or you have to ask for help in redefining your goals because maybe you are not the right judge for what you are doing. (4-2-03, 3)

A high school principal from a large urban school also agrees that faith is an advantage to have and could help guide women to the career move that is right for them.

Sometimes I have tried to make it other ways and God has said, "No honey, not that door. Wait and the right door will open." It always has. It is not amazing, it is God. I really believe that. (4-4-03, 5)

*Extra education.* Taking extra college hours has been an advantage for this middle school principal from a suburban district because it contributed to opening another door that was beneficial and a step closer to her career goals.

I've taken various courses periodically since I had gotten here just because it was an interesting subject and I wanted to take it not pursuing a degree of any kind, just to apply the information and gain the knowledge so I've probably taken an additional 15-20 some hours just because I wanted it. Then, a few years later on I decided to pursue the doctoral degree in administration. A university was starting their program and I was one of the chosen ones I guess to get into the program. So, that sparked an interest I already had, the opportunity and the door was open. (4-10-03, 6)

Another principal from a large elementary school also believed the extra education received was an advantage that contributed to her continued success in education.

When I taught at a university I was there for six years. During that time I made the switch from getting my doctorate in special education to my doctorate in education administration. Part of that was because there were so few courses to take in special education. I already had two degrees in that area and I was very interested in administration which was a whole new field because the people I was going to school with in my doctoral program...most of them had been practicing principals for years and that was very new to me. It was a real boost to change fields and to really get out of a specialty area and get into regular education and see how the two matched. (4-4-03, 4)

This same principal continued to discuss how the extra education benefited her job position.

I really have learned so much because I didn't teach elementary. I actually taught high school special education so I came into this job with absolutely zero level regular education experience. As a special education director, I worked with all the elementary schools, their principals and their staffs in inclusive projects and stuff, but as far as actually working on the ins and outs of elementary curriculum and scheduling, I had learned so, so, so much. When I say it is a new day, it really is because I don't have that background so I have really had to learn a lot. (4-4-03, 4)

*Family.* One elementary principal from an urban school district believed her family was her biggest advantage and was very important to her success so far. Family, including her husband, gave needed support, encouragement, and ears to listen. A family that is not demanding, does not stand in the way of career goals, and assists in every way

possible in the obligations of every day life can provide a nurturing, conducive environment for ongoing success climbing the educational career ladder.

I think you have to take advantage of opportunities, so when my husband and I talked about working on our principal's certification together, taking advantage of that, so we did that. My husband is extremely supportive of what I do and I certainly support him. (4-25-03, 9)

An elementary principal from a large school also received strong support from her family and believes they would continue to support her if she were chosen for a superintendent's job position.

I think I would now have family support moving from teaching to administration and then to higher education and then back to administration. Probably the hardest move there was involved teaching higher education and going into administration because of the time involved. In higher education you control your schedule, you pick and choose, and in administration you have no time that is your own. So, it is all controlled by all these outside forces. My family is use to that now so I think they could support that. They could not have supported that without an intermediate move in there. We had to kind of grow into the fact I didn't have control over that and so I had to grow into when I really had to say no and change the schedule in some way. I had to learn that. (4-4-03, 4)

A middle school principal from a suburban school district has always had the strong support and understanding from a husband that is encouraging and never stands her way from growing as a professional an doing what she wants to do.

I have a husband who doesn't stand in the way of anything I want to do. He is just, "Whatever you want to do, baby. If you think you can do it, go for it." A lot of family support. The people here, my teachers, I have several who would support me. I have a family relationship with those that I work with as well. (4-10-03, 6)

### *Summary*

The administrators explained the experiences in their lives they believed to be disadvantages or advantages, hardships or obstacles that made a possible affect on their career paths. With individual lives being so profoundly different, a wide variety of disadvantages and advantages were looked at and discussed.

### *Strategies for Success*

Considering everything discussed about what their districts are looking for in aspiring superintendents and the disadvantages or advantages they have experienced in their professional careers to get where they are, these administrators revealed how they believed women who aspire to be superintendents can succeed in their career goals. These respondents have seen and experienced a multitude of successes and failures in their lifetimes including personal and professional. The advice and knowledge these women shared can be an extraordinary assistance for any women who want to dissolve the glass ceiling and obtain the superintendency without looking back.

*Being diversified.* The participants believed being active in professional organizations and networking with others in these organizations would be extremely helpful for the aspiring superintendents. A high school principal from a very large school



district explained her viewpoint on the strategy of belonging to professional organizations.

It is absolutely critical that you are involved professionally, that first and foremost. Being involved in organizations like the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administrators (CCOSA) and doing professional development, I think, has been a big strategy for me. If I'm to be superintendent, I should know all I can know. There is knowledge, you're talking mainly about connections. Those are so important and being active professionally. I think you have to continually read and you have to be informed about what is going on not only at the state level, but also national. Always be involved politically. I've been a lobbyist for education for as long as I can remember, so I know legislations and that's important. (5-2-03, 10)

"Belonging to professional organizations is very important," agreed another high school principal (4-4-03, 5) from an urban school district who felt very strongly about being active within your profession. A high school principal from a large school district discussed her strategies for success.

I have received some honors as a teacher and that was a strategy for me. I definitely believe my advance degrees benefited me. I have always been active professionally which I believe was a good choice. Being involved as a classroom teacher in the Oklahoma Education Association and our local association, networking in the state and being connected.... It is so important, volunteering, being on committees for the state, knowing people, being introduced to people by people you know and volunteering to do presentations. (5-2-03, 10)

Professional experiences are also important to this high school principal from an urban school district that believed in sharing with others.

I'm pretty crazed, of course I attend professional development opportunities and I always bring back something. I make that a point that something is going to come back in this building to one level or another and very often I share it with other principals. It is a part of our responsibility. I'm a member of several professional organizations, Phi Delta Kappa, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, so I'm constantly reading and looking for ideas, sharing things that I read, much to the chagrin of some people. I tell the faculty this, "If we are not willing to learn to be those lifelong learners, how in the world do we expect the kids to be there?" (4-4-03, 5)

*Seek diverse experiences.* In addition to some of the secondary principals interviewed, an elementary principal from a large school district agreed professional experiences such as connecting with other professionals in the field, forming relationships with these people and learning from each other are strategies that helped her improve in her own professional career.

I think I have certainly matured over the years and I think I've certainly changed over the years. I do see things and I do try to listen a lot more and gather additional data and information more frequently. (4-2-03, 3)

An elementary principal from a highly populated urban school believed in the importance of professional experiences that include the networking and connections that can be made.

Maintain a good relationship with the people you network with is number one. Like the people I have worked with the past 20 years. I am so thankful I've kept track of them and they kept up with me. I've maintained those relationships. I probably rely on that more than anything. I think keeping in mind what you do now does have an impact on what you can do in five or 10 years. I think about that when starting a new program or hiring staff or mentoring somebody else into the position. I think all those things have an impact on your success. (3-24-03, 1)

When describing the knowledge and skills that would benefit superintendent candidates, various perceptions of diversity were discussed. An elementary principal from a large school district chose to explain how diversity helped her reach her goals along the way of her career path in education and has prepared her better for the future.

I think to diversify.... I think one of the things that helped me was to diversify because I was going down. I had been in a specialty area for so long I needed to diversify and get in the regular education arena. I didn't know how bad I needed it until I got there. Also, diversify in levels. One thing I really value is that now I have elementary experience. It is not teaching experience, but I have curriculum experience, scheduling experiences, hiring teachers, writing a plan at the elementary level, but I taught for eight years at the secondary level. I think if you were in a superintendent's position, if you had that opportunity, because you're going to be working with administrators from all levels, but at least you have the vision. You might not have the experience of a secondary administrator, but you have a vision of what they are talking about. So, I would say, diversify. Get as much experience, that would be, if you had the opportunity to do that. Even if it

was just elementary to middle or middle to high school. Just a little bit of change.

(4-4-03, 4)

Diversity can also mean setting yourself apart from others in way to gain the attention and consideration of school boards explains an experienced elementary administrator from an urban school.

I'm not looking for a job from a school board that is interested in the "good ole boy" because I'm not a "good ole boy". So, it has got to be a board looking for the best candidate and then if I think that is apparent, that will help, but I do think you've got to set yourself apart from others whether it is male or female. I think you have got to get that resume, a cover letter that attracts something about you, someone's interest. Network and see who you know and if that is a job you really want to go after. (4-25-03, 9)

*Promote your success.* Showing prospective employers you not only have diversity, but a track record for success is what this high school principal from an urban area believes in and discusses.

To have evidence of influence (success) in that you've seen building progress, you've seen data that shows you made a difference. That's not always looked at, but in the districts that are progressive and going places, you've got to show that you have some differences. (4-4-03, 5)

An elementary principal from a small school and small town felt that same way about having proof of successes and accomplishments explaining,

They definitely have to show, have documentation of successes as they have gone up the career ladder. It is really hard to be considered without a strong showing of

expertise in areas of keeping the school together in climate and finances. (4-17-03, 7)

Portfolios are items that are not emphasized in a lot of places within the professional ranks, but it can be a very important and valuable thing to do. A high school principal from an urban area explains her view on portfolios.

It is not like you are going to take this big ole honker of a book into an interview, but you can go back and say this is the place I want to be. These are the things I've done that feed into that place. It is a great reference source not to mention the fact that if you feel bad about what you are doing you can go back and say, "Well, look! I've done some decent things!" (4-4-03, 5)

It is necessary for superintendents to know all they can about current educational issues, laws, and practices. A high school principal from a large school district comments why she thinks it is necessary to be informed.

I obviously don't know everything I need to know about the 657 pages or whatever there is to the No Child Left Behind legislation, but you have to read and you have to be informed. (5-2-03, 10)

*Find the right place.* It is very important for aspiring superintendents to look for the school district that is "right" for them. This can be a challenge when they are out in the job market and looking for a productive position that can benefit the candidate and the students of the school district. An elementary principal from an urban school gave her advice in this area.

Have a clear vision of what you want your district to look like and what you can bring to it. Be very strong in beliefs and stay firm. Have strong support from peers

and mentors. Have a strong belief you can do it. Mentally picture yourself and have a mental gain. (3-25-03, 2)

A different elementary principal from a large school agreed it is necessary to find the ideal community for the aspiring superintendent.

I think they (aspiring superintendents) have all the gifts they need. I think they have to find the ideal community who perceives those gifts. I do not think in Oklahoma we are yet to that point. When I went to the superintendency training, they stressed to us, be picky on any job that you take, know the financial status of the district, know the school board of the district, know the community expectations. I think in Oklahoma our glass ceiling is perhaps a little bit lower and I think we have to be picky about where we will be successful. What is the point of butting the glass ceiling if you are just going to bloody your own head? I don't see that and I feel like I have bloodied my own head in the principalship a couple of times being young, naïve and immature. (4-2-03, 3)

An elementary principal from a large urban school explained her viewpoint of small school districts and how hard it could be to find the right fit for her and her leadership style.

Most of them (small school districts) have faculty and staff that live in the community and have lived there forever, who don't want to change. Their school board members have been there forever and their children no longer attend school. They are really interested in someone who can get along with their board. That is probably not going to be me if that is all that is required of me. Some of these positions have been open a long time. Districts are desperate for leaders, but

if we really stop and think about it, there is not a huge push in Oklahoma to cultivate superintendents. (3-24-03, 1)

A superintendent's job is a people job because you deal with people continuously as part of the job. The respondents believed they needed to be a person who works well with other people from all walks of life. "Be a servant of the people," stated a middle school principal (4-10-03, 6) from a suburban school district who believed strongly superintendents are employed to serve all the people in the community. In agreement, this high school administrator from an urban area gave similar advice about being a people person.

People don't realize a big portion of your job is just dealing with people. I think most of us spend our days that way. You have got to reach out to people. If you're not a people person, this job is going to be harder for you. It just is. It is okay if you are not a people person, but it *will* be harder. (4-4-03, 5)

*Set goals.* It is necessary for aspiring superintendents to have a vision and know what their goals are for the future of the school district they would like to administer over. School boards are interested to know during interviews for superintendents what goals are already in place. This middle school principal from a suburban school believes in the necessity of goals, "They have to know who they are. Have an identity of self. Set goals and then go through the process of reaching those goals. Set realistic goals" (4-10-03, 6).

Another principal from an urban elementary school believes having superintendent certification will benefit her in the future as she solidifies her goals toward climbing further up the career ladder and using the certification as an advantage.

You know, I am like this. The superintendent certificate, too, as you know can qualify me to do other things not necessarily just the superintendency. Because I like new program design, problem solving, even being able to work in curriculum or some other areas, too, I see as an advantage. (3-24-03, 1)

This same principal is very focused on her career desires and her qualifications to stay centered on her future goals.

I would be a good match for a community with a changing population or even a small community with some diversity, that needs or seeks someone with the creative abilities to design a school that matches the community. I guess that is a nutshell of what I think I would be good at. (3-24-03, 1)

*Do not give up.* It can be second nature to give up when times become hard in the job-hunting process for a superintendent's position. The aspiring candidates need to remember to match their capabilities and visions with the right setting that will benefit everyone involved. An elementary principal from an urban school district explains, "First of all, you have to take the big plunge and apply for jobs and somehow you got to put your foot forward" (4-25-03, 9). Another elementary principal from a small school believes in resilience.

Don't give up. That is the thing. Sometimes it might not work out in one spot, but if you find out the reason why.... Research, don't just give up. Find out why that position wasn't for you and if there is something you can do to make yourself more well rounded the next time, for the next possibility, because there *are* jobs out there. (4-17-03, 7)



An elementary principal from an urban school district believes in the importance of having a vision for the school district you may acquire with the superintendent's job and have firm beliefs without giving up.

Have a clear vision of what you want your district to look like and what you can bring to it. Be very strong in beliefs and stay firm. Have strong support from peers and mentors. Have a strong belief you can do it. Mentally picture yourself and have a mental gain. (3-25-03, 2)

### *Summary*

The similarities and differences in the perspectives the 10 women voiced in relation to their strategies for success for aspiring superintendents on the skills and knowledge needed to become successful at their career goals were discussed. Being diversified, seeking diverse experiences, promoting yourself and your success, finding the right place, setting goals, and not giving up were explored.

### Summary

Ten women administrators in a variety of school districts across the state of Oklahoma were interviewed to discover their perspectives about careers in educational administration and to discover the disadvantages and advantages they may have accumulated that could have had an impact on career paths or choices. A case study including individual respondents' site demographics, career paths, career goals, and participants' backgrounds using the long interview method was conducted. The similarities and differences of this information along with the similarities and differences in their perspectives about careers in education administration, disadvantages and advantages accumulated affecting direction of career paths and perspectives about the

skills and knowledge aspiring superintendents need to have and strategies for success were discussed. In Chapter IV the data is analyzed both individually and collectively using the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of the study was to describe and explain the under-representation of women in the superintendency despite their over-representation in the teaching profession using the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage. These women were certified for the school superintendency without holding the top administrative position and aspiring to become school superintendents. A representative sample of respondents was purposefully selected for the study to uncover information about a primarily male job occupation.

In this study, the data presented in Chapter III were analyzed individually and collectively through the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage. During analysis of the data the following themes emerged: (1) respondent demographics (2) career trajectories (3) education (4) district demographics (5) perspectives about careers in education exploring knowledge and skills (6) careers impacts involving accumulated disadvantages and advantages, and (7) strategies for success.

#### Respondent Demographics

The demographic data presented in Chapter III were analyzed to examine ways in which the participants' personal data and experiences may have provided contributing factors to their perspectives about women's careers in education administration. The accumulated disadvantages and advantages that may have affected the direction of their

careers and what qualities they believe aspiring superintendents must possess in order to gain a superintendent's position in their own school district.

### *Personal Data*

Personal data were explored in order to discover what the impact was on the participants' decisions towards achieving the superintendent's job position due to individual circumstances. It was important to look at each respondent's personal data to gather a complete description of the personal aspects that could have shaped the outcomes of their job aspirations and goals. Personal data I analyzed included participants' age, race, marital status, if they have children, residence location, family and mentor support.

*Age.* Respondents ranged in ages from 43 to 53 years of age. In general, participants did not mention age when discussing disadvantages in their lives and did not voice age as a concern pertaining to where they were in their aspirations for the superintendency. All participants have been and still are very driven and age did not play an important part in their outlook on what they want to obtain or conquer in their lives. These women aspire to become superintendents and they would like that to happen as soon as possible. One respondent spoke of reaching retirement before too long, but she did not express any desire to stop looking for a newer and higher job position. Age was not a deciding factor that would halt what they plan to achieve in their lives. Middle age did not stop these women from dreaming their dreams and reaching out for more accomplishments in the future.

At the same time, there did seem to be a difference in how these women viewed

their aspirations for the superintendency according to their age. The participants in the 50-age span *did* express less desire to move their residence to obtain a superintendent's job position. They were not as willing to leave family, home, and friends to take a job that could or could not last longer than one year. With age, a more cautious attitude was exhibited along with the expectation and desire to find a superintendency that would be a "good fit" and the continuance of employment for a chance to become successful at the job position.

*Race.* Race was not mentioned in the interview data with the exception of the one black respondent. This woman believed that she had experienced disadvantages in her career not only because she was a woman, but because she was also a black woman. Even with having to deal with the race issue, this participant would not let it stumble her or get in her way. She was determined she would not fail due to her race or being a woman.

Looking back at the interview data, I would have liked to have included more of a cross-section with a variety of races to further explore the impact different races of the aspiring superintendents had on their perspectives of educational administration careers and the disadvantages and advantages they acquired through the years. My data could have reflected more of a difference if the majority of the respondents were not Caucasian. The white respondents did not voice any concerns over race or as a disadvantage, but did not say their race was of any advantage, either. This is an area I believe the white respondents have not examined as something that could have an impact on their careers. It was more of a concern for the black participant because of disadvantages race injected into her life.

*Marital status.* I also examined marital status and the role it could have played in these women's lives and aspirations for the superintendency. The one divorced respondent did not discuss if her divorce was due to her career drive, but she did feel she was disadvantaged having her son attend school in the same system in which she worked. She felt tied down to her present job because she did not want to uproot her son and move somewhere else without career assurances. Being a single parent presented disadvantages that would not have been present if this respondent were in a supportive family environment.

The married respondents spoke of the support given to them by their spouses to achieve what they desire in their careers. The support and encouragement of spouses proved to be an advantage, but again, the disadvantages occurred when relocating and changing jobs could disrupt their family life including the spouses' jobs and family ties where they reside currently.

Two respondents chose to take administrative positions which required them to live apart from their spouse seeing each other on the weekends and holidays. But, living and working away from their spouse creates the disadvantage of being isolated from the support that could be advantageous for self-esteem, motivation, and encouragement for superintendent job aspirations. Living in separate residences also causes the hardship of money spent for an extra household including the extra house or apartment and living expenses. The disadvantages that come from living apart may become multiple and add up with other disadvantages. These may appear in conjunction with any pre-existing disadvantages causing an accumulation of disadvantages affecting multiple aspects of the respondents' lives.

*Children.* Having children proved to be an advantage to the participants because of the love and support children gave the aspiring superintendents. At the same time, having children overwhelmingly caused respondents to constantly reexamine their life goals and if they could really attain those goals while their children were at home or if what they wanted would have to be postponed until the children were grown and out of the house.

The pressure and stress in doing what is right or what is expected when raising a family is a disadvantage because the data from my participants has shown the majority of women do what they consider is right for their children, putting their own life, wants and needs on the back burner. In the meantime, the aspiring superintendents try to gain more administrative experience, more staff development, “placing” themselves for a superintendent’s job position just in case the right fit comes along and it “fits” into their lives at the time.

*Residence locations.* Fifty percent of the participants in this study revealed they would rather not relocate to achieve a higher job position. Participants felt they should not have to relocate because of a job that should be obtained in close proximity to where they live if life were fair and the school districts would hire females if they were truly the most qualified for the job position.

Exploring the locations where the interview respondents lived revealed an interesting relationship in how they viewed themselves as being ready for the superintendency. Respondents living in a small town or suburban area revealed a desire to stay where they were, working their way up and waiting “their turn” for the superintendent’s job position in their own district. This revealed either a lack of desire to

move on and leave the district or the need to stay put because they are comfortable in their surroundings and they feel tied down due to family relationships.

The lack of desire to leave their current district is a disadvantage because the respondents would not be able to adjust as well and work with the boards that believe it is up to the superintendent to complete the various job duties some school boards require. This limits many choices for their career because of the differences in the ways individual school districts are operated. The perceived need of staying in a small community because it is a more comfortable place would be a disadvantage by hindering the opportunity for advancement in larger cities.

Respondents living in the larger cities were more willing to relocate to secure a superintendent's job position in a larger district giving them more opportunities and greater advantages to grow and develop their career goals in life. A disadvantage for respondents could be choosing not to go to smaller towns and school districts thinking it would not be for them with the small town obligations that many rural superintendents are demanded to perform such as driving a school bus, working the ticket gates at the ballgames and performing custodial or maintenance duties around the entire school. If respondents believe the larger city or smaller town is the only place to be, they are setting the stage for disadvantages by narrowing the options and missing out on life's challenges and experiences. Table 5 presents more personal demographics.



Table 5

## Respondent Demographics

Subject ID	Marital Status	Family Support	Children	Location of Residence	Desire to Leave Current District for Superintendent's Job
1	Divorced	No	Yes	Large City	Yes
2	Married	Yes	Yes	Large City	Yes
3	Married	Yes	Yes	Large Town	No
4	Married	Yes	Yes	Large Town	Yes
5	Married	Yes	Yes	Large City	Yes
6	Married	Yes	No	Suburban Town	No
7	Married	Yes	Yes	Small Town Rural	No
8	Married	Yes	Yes	Large Town	No
9	Married	Yes	Yes	Large City	Yes
10	Married	Yes	Yes	Large Town	Yes

*Support.* It became very clear after analyzing the data that family or mentor support was of a monumental importance to all respondents. If there were a lacking of family support in any way, these women had the insight to obtain important support from their mentors who were a part of the education system in one way or the other.

Few participants had a strong education background through their family. Having been raised in a family of educators seemed to be an advantage for the respondent who had this experience, but those who were not raised in that type of environment accumulated the disadvantage of not having family that thoroughly understood what being in education entails in many areas. The time involved, advice on how to succeed in

education and the connections with other educators associated with family members have already been established for those women with an education background.

Only one respondent was raised within a family of educators. The participants without family in education sought support and advice more from college advisors and mentors from whom networking developed into supporting relationships. These relationships were of great importance to these women and served as a life-support during uncertain times in their lives. One administrator did not seek the support of mentors because of the small size of her school and the lack of communication and networking that takes place in her school district.

These women adapted amazingly well to their own particular situations by choosing who would give them the most valuable support and advice when they needed it. Respondents believed support and having someone to connect with regarding questions or advice was an invaluable asset to them. Family and/or mentor support was greatly responsible for where respondents were in their current job position. This very obtainable advantage should never be disregarded as insignificant. By keeping relationships and contacts current, aspiring superintendents can build bridges that will continually pay off for them in reaching their personal and career goals for the future.

### *Summary*

Disadvantages were found in all personal data. It was clear that disadvantages associated with this data affected the majority of career decisions respondents were responsible to execute. The constant state of forming decisions that made an impact on their lives and the lives of their families accumulated multiple disadvantages that could have severely affected the direction of their career passage. Advantages were fewer and

appeared to have less of an impact on the direction respondents chose to follow with their careers.

### Career Trajectories

I examined the respondents' career paths to discover connections between the career paths the respondents adopted and any disadvantages that were involved in their course. The career paths participants chose were many, but ultimately led to their positioning for the superintendency. Respondents did not express any regret at the path they had chosen to get where their career was at present; they believed they were doing what they should do to become ready for a superintendent's position.

All participants must have taught in the classrooms to become an administrator. The differences in career directions appeared as respondents left classroom teaching for other career opportunities trying to position correctly for the higher administrative positions they believed were available for them in the future.

The career trajectories these women pursued revealed advantages and disadvantages along their chosen path. The advantages that were exposed in the data concerning their career trajectories were few, but include slowly climbing the career ladder in educational administration and gaining a variety of experiences in conjunction with the advancing job positions.

Disadvantages became clear as participants discussed the struggles to leave the classroom and try to better themselves career-wise. The changing of schools, the struggle between personal lives and gaining extra education credit hours, passing certification tests, and finding themselves "stuck" in various job positions because administration felt like they were doing such a great job, they needed to stay there.

Exploring the accumulative disadvantages of the participants, I discovered data that explained the situations and circumstances that revealed a control over their career advancements. Table 6 describes respondents' history in classroom teaching and their entry into administration.

Table 6

Respondents' History in Classroom Teaching and Entry into Administration

Subject ID	Teaching-Grade Level	Teaching-Content	Teaching-Years in Classroom	Site-Locale	Entry into Admin.-Site Pop.	Current Position
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	Elementary Curriculum	10	Rural	240	Elem. Prin.
2	Emotionally Disturbed	Special Education	10	Urban	475	Elem. Prin.
3	Learning Disabilities/EMH	Special Education	9	Urban	1289	Elem. Prin.
4	Mental Retardation/Learning Disabilities	Special Education	8	Rural	413	Elem. Prin.
5	Elementary	Music	11	Urban	690	High School Prin.
6	Middle School	Science Social Studies Language Arts	9	Sub.	610	Middle School Prin.
7	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Elementary Curriculum	11	Rural	167	Elem. Prin.
8	Special Ed.	Special Education	6	Rural	500	Assist. Super.
9	Kindergarten	Music	15	Rural	238	Elem. Prin.
10	High School	English	23	Rural	765	High School Prin.

The data depicts respondents' multiple teaching capabilities in the classroom with numerous years spent in dedication to their profession. They taught in a variety of school

locales and sizes, but their current job position in education is not indicative of their qualifications.

I felt it was important to investigate participants' beginnings as a classroom teacher and the path leading into administration to perhaps discover the disadvantages that could be present and how they accumulated over time creating a career maintained in a fixed direction lacking a quick-paced advancement. Table 7 illustrates respondents' years as administrator disclosing student numbers participants administered to and the number of certifications obtained.

Table 7

Respondents' Years as Teacher

Subject ID	Teaching Content	Student Population	Years in Classroom	Number of Certifications
1	Elementary Curriculum	484	10	5
2	Special Education	147	10	5
3	Special Education	530	9	5
4	Special Education	440	8	5
5	Elementary Music	319	11	8
6	Science Social Studies Language Arts	1495	9	7
7	Elementary Curriculum	150	11	3
8	Special Education	480	6	5
9	Elementary Music	135	15	4
10	English	47	23	6

These data revealed multiple subject areas taught with varied student populations ranging from extremely large schools to the smallest of rural schools. The years spent in the classroom were abundant with a myriad of certifications revealing high qualifications.

Surveying the data participants provided in regard to their school sites and districts provided helpful information about the size school and districts they had experienced along with the number of years served in the districts. The locale of the participants' years as administrator and the time spent in these positions is depicted in Table 8.

Table 8

Respondents' Locality as Administrator and Years Completed

Subject ID	Wealth of District	School Classification	Size of School Site Population	Years in District
1	Poor	Urban	400	9
2	Lower Middle-Class	Urban	475	6
3	Middle Class	Rural	544	9
4	Middle Class	Rural	413	6
5	Upper Middle Class	Urban	1,600	3
6	Middle Class	Suburban	610	17
7	Poor	Rural	167	13
8	Middle Class	Rural	5,300	23
9	Middle Class	Urban	650	2
10	Middle Class	Rural	1,765	1

Data provided in this table portray respondents working in more poor and middle class schools than upper middle class or wealthy districts. School site populations were large with the exception of one and many years were spent working for the same district with the exception of one. Examining the data reveal that it appears respondents are being

being “held” at a lower level of administration without further advancement regardless of the years and dedication to their schools.

I chose to examine data that could possibly give evidence that portrayed participants’ entry positions as administrators including the complexity and responsibilities of the job positions. Table 9 examines the respondents’ administrative positions and complexities of the rank with required responsibilities.

Table 9

Respondents’ Administrator Job Positions Including Complexities and Responsibilities

Subject ID	Entry Position	2 <sup>nd</sup> Position	3 <sup>rd</sup> Position	4 <sup>th</sup> Position	Complexity of Job	Supervisor Respon.
1	Assistant Elem. Prin.	Elem. Prin.	Elementary Principal-Different District	N/A	Low Test Scores 94% Poverty Diverse	Cont. Ed. Calendar-PreK-5 30 Support Staff 32 Cert. Staff
2	Assistant Elem. Prin.	Elem. Prin.	Elementary Principal-Same Position	N/A	No Assistants 40% Poverty	PreK-5 12 Support Staff 33 Cert. Staff
3	Elem. Prin.	Elem. Prin.	Elementary Principal-Same Position	N/A	No Assistant Largest Elementary in School District Only 2 Teacher Assistants	PreK-5 10 Support Staff 30 Cert. Staff
4	Special Ed. Admin.	Elem. Prin.	Elementary Principal-Same Position	N/A	No Assistants Large Elementary No Teacher Assistants	PreK-5 14 Support Staff 27 1/2 Cert. Staff

5	Assistant Middle School Prin.	Junior High Assist. Prin.	Education Services Coordinator	High School Prin.	4 Assistant Principals 30% Ethnic	9-12 15 Support Staff 110 Cert. Staff
6	Assistant Middle School Prin.	Elem. Prin.	Middle School Principal	N/A	2 Assistants 50% Poverty	6-7 20 Support Staff 48 Cert. Staff
7	Elem. Prin.	Elem. Prin.	Elementary Principal-Same Position	N/A	No Assistants No Teaching Assistants Very Poor District	K-5 29 Cert. Staff
8	Special Services Director	High School Prin.	Assistant Super.	N/A	Responsible for Student Personnel Services	PreK-Adult
9	Elem. Prin.	Elem. Prin.	Elementary Principal-Same Position	N/A	1 Assistant 40% Poverty	K-5 12 Support Staff 30 Cert. Staff
10	Curric. Director	Director Secondary Education	High School Principal	N/A	Not Title I School 14% Native American	9-12 55 Support Staff 110 Cert. Staff

Data provided a look at the very small gains respondents were able to achieve in their job positions even though the complexities and responsibilities of the jobs were high. Some respondents achieved nothing more than what their entry level position was even though qualifications, certifications and desires were high enough to warrant the more deserving job position of superintendent.



Three respondents went directly from being a teacher to the principalship. The reasons the participants chose this path were varied. One woman was asked directly by the superintendent to take the principalship. Another respondent was recruited by the school district for a special project designed by the superintendent. One principal knew she needed more experiences at different levels of education. Advancing from teacher to principal was an advantage because they went directly to the position without having to hold other assistant positions to obtain the title. The disadvantages could be seen when the lack of experience was visible in work productivity and the self-assurance of the respondent in doing what was right for her school.

Three women were teachers first, then went on to become assistant principals and then achieved the principalship. The participants went this route due to the feeling of being “driven” and wanted to do great things. They also believed being assistant principal was a wonderful and helpful prologue to being principal. This became an advantage to these principals and their success in the principalship because as an assistant, they were exposed to what is expected of a principal including the job duties and obligations to the school district. The assistant principal position also placed them for the principalship as their next career move. Another woman started out as a teacher, advanced to central office, then on to assistant principal and finally principal. She chose the central office path because she wanted to experience all the classrooms and see how, who or what made the “tones” of the classrooms. The experience was an advantage, but this also became a disadvantage that accumulated due to the time spent in the job position when she could have been advancing further in her career. One more participant went from being a

teacher to central office and then became a principal. Finally, she returned to central office because of her desire to overcome the “good ole boy” system and achieve some type of superintendent’s placement. This respondent also became disadvantaged due to her continuing years in the same job position.

Another principal was a teacher first then chose to go to the university level to teach and then become a principal. This was a path that developed due to the search for what she desired in her career and because it was a form of administration that she enjoyed and learned from the experience. This participant discovered her true self and what she wanted in her career. The advantage gained was personal. Her disadvantage was time lost in finding a superintendent’s job position.

A high school principal chose to teach first and then go to central office where she stayed for a little while before going to the university setting and then became principal. This was quite a journey she chose because of her love for curriculum and instruction and the numerous forms it takes within the many different realms of education. This principal viewed this path as an advantage for her personal career because of her enjoyment with curriculum. This journey, likewise, was a disadvantage because of the time and years she spent in curriculum job positions when she could have been trying to obtain a superintendent’s rank.

### *Years of Experience*

I was pleased that my respondents had experienced many years in administration. Only one respondent has served a single year in the principalship, yet, she was still a very strong leader with her mind focused on her future and where she wanted to go with her career. She was one of the older participants, but continues to strive and accomplish her

goals and beliefs in her career. Even though she had only one year as a principal, she had been a director and university professor, each of which contributed to her leadership qualities.

Nine of the respondents had a substantial number of years in educational administration and shared remarkable experiences that revealed how and why each respondent traveled their own particular career path. All participants chose the path they felt would be the most advantageous for them administratively. Disadvantages accumulated and arose when participants found they were locked in the principalship or assistant principalship without having the opportunity to move on up the career ladder. It was evident during the interviews these women believed they were hired into their present positions because of their ability, hard work and career aspirations. Respondents believed that they became disadvantaged when they demonstrated capabilities in doing their job because districts for their own benefit chose to keep them in their current job position without moving them up to the superintendent's job status.

### *Aspirations*

The numbers of years these participants have aspired to be superintendents revealed they have been and are ready to possess their own superintendent's job. All respondents have shown through data included in the tables presented in this study they are capable of the leadership role and are willing to take the responsibility of being superintendent. The advantage of possessing these capabilities is the ability of performing their current job position in an excellent fashion as the respondents have accomplished. The productivity and success of each respondent carries over to the success of their individual schools and school districts. Another advantage is the preparation of a solid

foundation for the superintendent's job position if one becomes available and proves to be the one that actually provides a good "fit" for the respondent and the district.

Disadvantages are recognized when looking at the years of desire for a superintendent's job position these respondents have possessed. Hiring school districts look at those years spent as staying in the same place without other districts hiring these participants as superintendents. This situation could perpetuate the disadvantage in response to the districts wondering what is wrong with the aspirant, when in actuality respondents are more than qualified.

As respondents continue to stay in their current administrative positions without advancement, they continue to prove what excellent employees they are. Respondents are not being hired as a repercussion to this accumulating disadvantage of districts' desire to keep aspirants from leaving or advancing further. Respondents expressed their concerns in the assistance they provide for their current superintendents without credit being publicly given for their input and ideas.

The participants all aspire for the higher-level superintendent's standing, but each one portrayed a very cautious outlook on finding the right fit for their particular leadership style. Each respondent spoke very carefully about what type of position would work for them. Not one woman was looking to find a superintendent's job position just for the sake of having one. Waiting for the right job could be seen as a disadvantage for these women. If they try to wait for all the perfect circumstances, the chances for gained experience could be passing them by. This could be the reason why some participants have aspired so long without any rate of job success.

Accumulating years without experiences as a superintendent could be seen as time being wasted. Very few people find the perfect job without complications somewhere along the way. The disadvantage of waiting to take a superintendent's position keeps holding back the aspirant year after year, keeping them stuck and root-bound to the position they currently hold and are somewhat content with. If the respondents worked as a superintendent just for a one-year term, they would at least have one year rich in a variety of experiences and more of an understanding of the superintendency and what is involved in the job position.

### *Summary*

The career paths of all respondents were chosen by the participants to benefit their own particular life and career. The multiple paths they chose to arrive at in their current position were the right paths respondents believed for each individual. Looking at their job positions currently, respondents seem to have stalled themselves in creating advancement up the career ladder.

Disadvantages such as staying put in the same job position for years without advancing further causing other school districts to wonder what is wrong and the need for the current employer to keep their productive administrators are accumulating for these aspiring superintendents due to their own view of the perfect fit for their job. In essence, I see them holding themselves back by being way too cautious. Participants could be unwilling to take a chance on a new career because they have accumulated disadvantages that cause them to doubt themselves, their knowledge and skills, and abilities they actually have for the superintendent's job position.

## Education

Education was of extreme importance to each and every woman administrator I interviewed. It did not seem to matter if respondents had been exposed to an educational background when younger. All these women encompassed the determinations to achieve an advanced education and succeed in a career of education. Respondents did not consider they were currently completed or finished with education or their careers. Each respondent acknowledged they were life-long learners.

### *Positioning*

All participants were highly educated with six obtaining doctorate degrees and four with master's degrees. Four participants received doctoral degrees in educational administration, one in curriculum and instruction, while one was received in student personnel, guidance and counseling. Clearly the respondents were serious about using education to help position themselves for the school superintendent's job placement.

The years spent in education these participants accumulated were also indicative of their dedication to their careers in education and their desire to do more than just stay in a job long enough to retire. Nine participants had more than two decades of experience in education, yet they wanted to advance and move even further up the career ladder. Their years spent in education proved to be advantageous to all respondents by allowing them more experience in the education field, but disadvantages were clearly presented in the data by the number of years their careers were spent with many working at the same job with no opportunities to move up, staying stagnated without advancing appropriately and swiftly according to their experience, knowledge and skills.

### *Content Expertise*

The range of subject areas participants studied and majored in to earn their degrees was extensive. The majority of bachelor degrees were obtained in the education area. Master degrees branched out further into specialized areas with the doctoral degrees primarily in educational administration. This data explains the passion respondents held for their particular area of interest. Even with a broad range of education areas, disadvantages arose for the women who were educated but not possessing experience in secondary education.

Some school boards hold the belief a superintendent must have high school experience to be a successful superintendent even though respondents held a secondary principal's certification. The respondents equally found it difficult to obtain a high school principal's job position or central office position without prior secondary experience. This disadvantage is detrimental to aspirants because if the lack of experience is held against the aspiring superintendent, the experience cannot be obtained.

The advantage of the broad spectrum of studied subjects was the ability to obtain a specialized teaching position if and whenever needed. Teaching positions in all areas are plentiful in Oklahoma due to state teachers residing in other states for more money offered for their expertise. The respondents will always have these knowledge areas just in case they may ever need them to acquire another teaching position.

### *Summary*

There appeared to be more disadvantages for the respondents in elementary education that accumulated as they tried to leave the realm of being elementary and successfully advancing on to the secondary and ultimately into superintendent's job

position. There were not many other advantages shown other than more of an understanding of a specific subject area or the opportunity to obtain a job in that particular field.

### District Demographics

The employing districts were varied with each one having multiple diversities. This data revealed the setting each respondent was a part of and involved with. Data were helpful in showing the magnitude of experience the respondents had in relationship to their school site and the students they were involved with.

### *School Population*

The school sites' populations reported ranged from a very small number to an extremely large number. The elementary sites held the smaller number of students with the middle school somewhat larger and the high schools with the largest population. Elementary sites typically housed grades kindergarten through fifth grades with the middles school encompassing sixth through eighth grades and the high school having grades ninth through twelfth.

Disadvantages were apparent for the elementary administrators due to the "being stuck" in an elementary site with smaller numbers of students and a lack of opportunities for advancement or the probability of working with a larger number of students, faculty and staff. In some school districts it can be practically impossible to move from one level to another level if it were considered higher accompanied by more pay.

The assistant superintendent's school site included the entire district. It is an advantage to be in the position of assistant superintendent as far as positioning for the superintendent's job position. But for the women who are not yet assistant



superintendents, this is a disadvantage due to the funding inadequacies schools across Oklahoma are experiencing. Many school districts are phasing out the assistant superintendent job positions to save funding. This requires the superintendents to have more job duties without the extra pay. With the disappearing assistant superintendent job position, it is more difficult to transcend from being site administrator to superintendent without the career step of assistant superintendent. The job position of assistant superintendent could greatly assist the aspiring superintendents in observing, participating and preparing for the rank of superintendent. In many districts, that chance has diminished along with the job position.

### *School Diversity*

The diversity of the student body at school sites did not prove to be an area that produced very much concern in reference to job placement. Respondents could be accumulating disadvantages by not becoming involved in diverse student populations. If they spend very many years in one position without exposure to diversity, opportunities for a more advanced knowledge of dealing and working with different cultures are lost.

One respondent spoke of her understanding of the racially diverse students at her school, their families and cultures. She was employed at a very large urban school. This school had lower test scores before she took over the position and she has since brought those scores up and improved the overall environment and culture of the school. The relationships between the school and the families of the students were also enhanced and enriched. The achievements with this diverse school could be viewed as an advantage for accomplishing many productive benefits for the school district, students and parents. The

experience and knowledge gained may also be seen as an advantage for the administrator as possible use and proof of excellence in her future career.

The advantage of working in a position such as the respondent with many diverse students would be the experience and the ability to work with many types of people and understanding their cultures. This experience could open many extra career doors due to the changing face of society and the need for superintendents who have had the experience of working with diverse students and families. Only one study respondent was advantaged in this way.

The disadvantage of being employed at school sites without a diverse student body is the lack of preparedness to deal with multicultural students, families and cultures when trying to obtain the rank of superintendent. For example, if a respondent were working at a predominantly Caucasian school, it would be more difficult to become successful at acquiring a job in leading a Native American or African American school district. It would not be impossible to attain such a job, but it could be somewhat more difficult. It would be a disadvantage that could accumulate over the years limiting the choices for career advancements that could be available.

Another disadvantage could arise when the administration for the school district realize the talent of the aspiring superintendent and moves her to another low performing school site in order to bring up test scores and school performance. The principal must keep performing her successful responsibilities without advancement up the career ladder. The more successful an aspiring female superintendent becomes the more disadvantages accumulate as described as the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage.

### *Summary*

Disadvantages were apparent from the lack of diversity in some schools and the absence of experience respondents will acquire working with different types of people. This could cause less of an opportunity to achieve a superintendent's job position in a diverse area in the state of Oklahoma or other states that have multiple races and cultures.

The advantage produced for the respondents who work with diverse people is the opportunity to have more experience than others in this area making the respondent more marketable in schools where diversity is an issue and is important to the school board. The respondents are more readily adaptable for a superintendent's job position in any area of the state Oklahoma or any other location.

### Perspectives about Careers in Education

Much of the knowledge and many of the skills revealed were similar in each district even though individual school districts and school boards consisted of very individual environments, cultures and personalities. All participants appeared to be knowledgeable about what they believed to be necessary to do what is right for their school district to achieve their goal of success.

### *Knowledge*

The knowledge needed for their school districts, including content, appeared to be different for the participants in the smaller school districts. It was interesting to discover the areas of knowledge that some respondents felt they personally were lacking such as business and finance. These areas were the subjects believed their individual school districts would require their superintendent candidates to possess.

The school districts with central offices took care of the majority of business and finance matters these aspiring women superintendents wanted and knew they needed to know about. Sadly, the majority of districts did not provide staff development in these areas. It was up to the individual participants to seek out on their own their particular needs in staff development. Superintendents were encouraged to stay current and attend the workshops they believed were needed along with weekly legislative sessions at the state capitol.

It was also evident when analyzing data that the larger and richer the school district, the more serious schools board members are about employing superintendents who were extremely knowledgeable about finance, making it a high priority for the districts who desire fiscally sound managers capable of managing massive-size budgets.

### *Doing the Right Thing*

Respondents described the necessity of having the knowledge to do the right thing for their individual needs and circumstances. Knowledge about doing the right thing did not prove to be the same for all participants. The participants found it invaluable to know the “tone” of their school district and community. This knowledge led participants to the similar beliefs about having the knowledge to do the right thing for their school.

Several respondents spoke of the importance and advantage for their superintendent to understand organizational development and possess the knowledge of theories and models to help make the school and community progressive and grow. This necessary knowledge was similar for large and small school districts due to the schools

needing and contributing to community support and involvement to keep their schools appealing to families new to the districts.

Small schools need the superintendent to have knowledge of their community to make the school grow and become more innovative and successful. Most respondents believed it would be a disadvantage to try and be a successful superintendent without the knowledge of the school as a large part of the city's or town's growth and well being.

The knowledge about changes in schools and communities and the diversity encompassed within the changes was presented as necessary knowledge. Each participant was aware of the changing school and community populations from the smallest to the largest of school sites. Many respondents meet this change with visionary ideas, writing grants, looking for funding for new, innovative programs, seeking to make better changes and build upon those. It would be a disadvantage for aspiring superintendents to be unaware and uninvolved in the types of changes occurring in public schools today.

Dealing with a variety of people with different personalities is a challenge, but this was knowledge a large majority of respondents felt was beneficial to have. The mention of this knowledge being necessary was surprising to me because typically, the site administrators deal with the daily parental concerns, complaints and opinions. Many parents believe the superintendent to be inaccessible and do not go see him, or her, unless a major problem or concern has transpired without any resolution with the teacher or site administrator. Many parents go straight to the school board members with problems that also bypass the superintendents' personal interactions.

All respondents believed they were prepared with the knowledge of working with people who have varied perspectives of how the school district should be run. Working

daily with faculty, staff, parents and community members provides a very large knowledge base of working with not only disgruntled parents but also supportive ones. This also provides a good understanding of public relations and working with people on how schools should be administered to. Participants consented that an advantage of being a site administrator was working with different people in a variety of ways. A disadvantage to this daily solving of problems with the same parents would be when an aspiring superintendent acquires a superintendent's job position in a different community with different ideals, goals and expectations for their school district. Participants believed a cautious approach would be more beneficial when starting a new job position until an understanding and knowledge of the new school district and community is achieved.

Participants reported how important being well versed and knowledgeable in political issues and governance in education can be. Knowing how school board and community meetings are run, all participants believed having the political understanding of government policies about education would be imperative. Again, many participants believed this was not encouraged by their school districts for their current job position and is a disadvantage that accumulates developing a lack of understanding of the governance in education and the continual ignorance of the government policies unless particular ones are brought to the aspirant's attention for a particular school need.

This knowledge of educational issues is beneficial to the respondents' current job positions, but it is up to the individual to research and stay current on all educational and political issues that could affect schools sooner or later. Participants report the superintendent is encouraged to have political knowledge and communicate that knowledge to everyone in the school district and the community to assist in providing

visionary goals and perspectives for the extreme benefit of their students and schools as a whole.

The knowledge of leadership including values and ethics was a strong strength respondents believed could assist the superintendent in their particular district become successful or would be asked to leave. Building a strong trust and being a very credible person is necessary knowledge to gain the support of the school district and community. Participants believed that having a strong base of trust makes the superintendent an inspiration for the biggest majority of everyone he or she comes into contact with.

Respondents believe it is never too early to begin building trust, credibility, leadership, and gaining strength and endurance to become successful. This is a knowledge that respondents believe is very important in their own positioning for a superintendent's job rank. This is a knowledge that will follow the aspiring superintendent to a successful superintendency with benefits for the future of their career and the schools they are administering to.

### *Commitment*

When I analyzed all data from this study, it became overpowering to me that all but one participant I interviewed had a very strong commitment to all their students. I did receive information from an individual who admitted she did not want to perform the extra duties required of superintendents. The majority of these women were not in education just for the money or the benefits associated with an education position. This information explained the importance of the knowledge respondents felt necessary to do the right thing for their students, school district and community. I can see why nine of the

participants will make successful superintendents if they continue to strive to do what is right for their schools and all people involved

### *Skills*

The skills respondents agreed upon as necessary to become a successful superintendent were very similar and included interpersonal and communication skills. These skills respondents believed to be important at every school district due to the ability the superintendent should have to reach out, listen, and form the foundation to create and build more confidence and trust with all entities of the school district and community. Applying communication skills includes being visible and relating to all the different cultural entities.

Some respondents reported their school board demands their superintendent candidates have the skill of communication and the need to attend all activities such as the Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, Rotary Club and be very visible. On the other hand, a few respondents reported this was not an extremely important skill because the superintendent does not live in the area and commutes making it difficult to be present at all functions regularly.

A few respondents were keenly aware of the pressure, stress and requirements many school districts demand of their superintendents. They understand through association with other superintendents and networking with other aspirants the challenges a superintendent's rank most likely would entail. These women have an advantage in realizing the expectations of others for the job position. Women who are not aware of the demands of the school board and superintendent's job have another disadvantage that accumulates with that lack of knowledge and awareness.



One respondent was very skilled already in communication with others because she is already aware of and recognizes the benefit of specifically seeking out people who are or can be connections to help solve problems. It was impressive to recognize the determination this participant had in realizing what she needs to do to be successful.

### *Summary*

Having such a variety of respondents from different school districts produced a large laundry list of knowledge needed they believed was beneficial to their own perceptions of what their individual schools require for success as a superintendent. This diverse list was revealing in the fact that each district can be an extremely different situation for aspiring superintendents and these aspirants should be prepared for a multitude of ways they will be required to do the right thing and continue success in the superintendent's job position.

The data collected revealed the respondents' perspectives about careers in educational administration including knowledge and skills needed for success. Interview data explained an emergence of the heightened awareness respondents had of their own jobs and what they needed or lacked to become successful superintendents. Their perceptions were for their individual situations, schools and communities. Each respondent's interview transcript except for one maintained their capabilities of flexibility and their intense desire to succeed and do whatever is necessary to pursue and obtain a superintendent's job position.

Being flexible in many ways for the superintendent's job position and maintaining the desire to achieve in educational administration is advantageous to the aspirants by keeping their focus more intense on the job search. But if the aspirant is too flexible,

disadvantages rise up again and accumulate with districts looking at aspirants as being too flexible without discipline and determination to withstand the difficulties of the job position.

Possessing the expected knowledge and skills for aspiring superintendents of particular school districts is an advantage if an aspirant obtains a superintendent's job in that district. Aspirants could accumulate disadvantages if they possess the knowledge and skills only for that district without being aware of what other districts require, expect and demand of their superintendents. Table 10 presents respondents' perspectives about careers in education.

Table 10

## Perspectives about Careers in Education for Individual Situations

Subject ID	Knowledge Needed	Skills Needed	School Population
1	-Can analyze data correctly -Manage a large budget -Set goals	-Have to be a good communicator -Networks -Maintains good relationships with others	400
2	-Working knowledge of finance -Superb business manager	-Need to be a public relations person -Effective communicator	475
3	-Business -Instructional leader -Know political issues	-Communicate with and understand a large variety of people -Interacts with community	544
4	-Must be a finance person -Business -Knowledge of facilities	-Interacts with community -Works with community -Collaborates with others	413
5	-Manager -Instructional leader -Knowledge of curriculum	-Deal with many people effectively	1,600
6	-Knows legalities -Knows the community	-Communicates and is community-minded -Fits in	610
7	-Finance is number one -Previous experience	-Communicates with a large variety of people -Listen to ideas	167
8	-Strong finance background -Knowledge of politics -Previous experiences	-Communicates with community -Visible at community clubs	5,300
9	-Earned a doctorate degree -Huge understanding of finance -Experienced -Instructional leader	-Communicates with employees -Guides employees	650
10	-Deep knowledge of finance -Knows curriculum -Knows how to raise test scores	-Be visible in community -Good communicator -Good relationships with everyone	1,765

## Career Impacts-Accumulated Disadvantages and Advantages

The knowledge and skills needed for careers in education administration as perceived by all respondents provided an abundance of information about their beliefs and what aspiring superintendents must have to obtain a superintendent's job position in their particular school district. This information became even more beneficial providing me with a map revealing accumulated disadvantages and advantages they encountered along the way of their career journey that clearly made impacts on participants' career choices and beliefs.

These women explained to me the confrontations they experienced along the way in their individual career tracks. These confrontations became disadvantages in their careers and accumulated over time causing their careers and lives to suffer in a variety of ways. Advantages were also encountered during the passage of their careers providing career growth and strategies for success.

### *Disadvantages*

Disadvantages or obstacles were very much at the surface of the discussions these women voluntarily offered. There was not one respondent who had not had any disadvantages during their individual careers. Some of these women had experienced a few disadvantages with others experiencing and seeing many others. The disadvantages these women discussed were almost all connected with gender, which emerged as a problem I discovered and explored.

*Overlooking disadvantages.* As disadvantages were discussed, it seemed to me that participants overlook many disadvantages that occur on a day-to-day basis because

they are too busy to analyze it, they may not recognize it, do not talk about it or do not see it as gender disadvantage. This type of disadvantage can grow and accumulate over time without the conscious recognition that it is actually taking place. The smallest differences that are exhibited toward women aspiring for the superintendency stack on top of each other causing discrepancies in their promotion opportunities, salary amounts, and respect. What may seem minor to the outsider looking at disadvantages can multiply into very noticeable inequalities.

One respondent spoke of not being able to put her finger on the disadvantage while interviewing for a superintendent's job position, but believed there was one present. The way these women described disadvantages included: A feeling of something wrong, a sense things were not right, being ignored, hierarchy of administrators, differences in relationships, not being forgiven for being a female, resentment, challenges, expectations of others, not given credit, a double bind, discrimination and unwillingness to conform.

These women believe they risk fewer disadvantages if they remain quiet and do not speak of what they are experiencing. Women are learning through negative experiences again that they will probably be ignored so they stop speaking, which is also multiplying the disadvantages, by staying quiet.

There were many legitimate disadvantages these women were faced with and even though they seemed to have survived through them in actuality they are and have been accruing and accumulating without any disadvantages disappearing. The disadvantages these women shared were actually very large happenings in their careers

and made an impact large enough for the participants to realize it happened and yes, it did make a difference in the direction of career goals.

*Acceptance.* Disadvantages tend to be very hard for these women to accept because all of the aspiring superintendents I interviewed believe they are in control of their careers and lives. If these women can control something, then it is not a disadvantage to them and they cannot see it. They believe they are not experiencing it, but they are. Women need to learn how to see disadvantages when they occur and work on ways to make the unbalanced scale more equal. The more the aspiring superintendents discover and recognize, the more in control of their career they will be.

*Issues.* The issues participants explored with me that related to gender included misperceptions, reverse gender equity, districts needing a coach, gender bias, gendered expectations, the double bind, differential rewards, relocation expectations, fear of the unknown, lack of experience and the time required of the job. These many issues connected to gender were extremely important to these women and obtained enough merit according to them to affect their careers and lives.

*Misperceptions.* The misperceptions people attach to working with females are issues that affected all respondents in actuality and are exhibited frequently during the course of their current job. These women are prepared to encounter this issue even more so when they obtain a superintendent's job position. One respondent believed she is hypersensitive to detecting these perceptions others have about working with her. This hypersensitivity makes her more aware of people she deals with and more capable of solving the problems she encounters with perceptions along the way.

Another respondent dealt very strongly in her own way within herself to overcome the misperceptions people have of her at work. She is a principal, but has a male vice-principal. Parents are always commenting how glad they were there was a man in the building to help the principal “take care of things”. As a strong, determined woman she believes you have to ignore insensitive comments and overcome any inferior feelings that tend to rear their ugly heads contributing to a feeling of helplessness and loss of control of the job and power. She has been treated negatively, but does not like to admit she has been treated unfavorably.

The majority of the participants tend to ignore people’s incorrect misperceptions because they do not want to create a scene or be viewed as someone who takes offense and returns unprofessional remarks without using a controlled response. Other respondents choose the right time to speak to correct others’ misperceptions by using dignity, control and professionalism. When women act assertively people perceive them in a negative sort of way believing they are not good problem solvers and should not be “bossy”. Again, these women are very strong-willed, determined and driven to achieve what they desire in life.

*Ignored.* One of the most problematic issues some of the women had encountered was the disadvantage of being qualified for a job placement, but was looked over, put aside or ignored because certain districts preferred a man for the position in their school district. Even in today’s society people who interview others can make this desire known without actually coming right out and stating they are discriminating against the female applicant. Aspirants should exhibit to hiring school boards that they have an edge over other job candidates.

The respondents who experienced this type of disadvantage proved to be very determined and driven to overcome this beating down of ego and self-esteem. Some of the women stay positive, try to have good attitudes, and add humor while their career disadvantages keep accumulating causing respondents to not get the job placements they desire. Other respondents stated they internalize these feelings of being disadvantaged; try to learn from the situation by becoming even more prepared to tackle the next job placement they want to try for.

Discrimination in job hunting is alive and well according to the respondents. The actual holding of jobs for male coaches to be employed instead of a female is prevalent in small, rural districts. One participant stated school districts are now advertising for principals and superintendents with an extra job duty attached of being a male football, basketball, and track or baseball coach. This is a plan that tends to completely insure the employment of males, preferably male coaches. This is a great disadvantage respondents felt because the school boards are more or less stating they do not want the best administrator they can employ, they are wanting a male who could possess less than desirable qualification for the job.

*Job hierarchy.* The disadvantage of hierarchy of job placement was more prevalent than what I expected according to respondents. Women are forced to stay in their current job positions and cannot take higher steps up the career ladder due to the male administrators at the junior high and high school levels who are “picked” first for a higher level without allowing the women administrators at the elementary sites to grow and obtain a higher job level that is also accompanied by more money. These women are working in environments that will not offer them the advancement they have earned.



Some respondents felt “trapped” with this disadvantage because they do not want to go down the career ladder, but they cannot progress any higher. This causes multiple disadvantages because even though the women know what is expected and how to do the right thing for their school district, they are more or less forced to leave and go to a different district without a job hierarchy if they desire a higher job placement. The school districts lose high quality professionals due to the job hierarchy. One participant reported a hidden agenda of placing men instead of women in the secondary schools. I found through the data this is true not only in the small rural schools, but also some of the larger urban schools.

*Gender bias.* Gender bias as a disadvantage was also present for all participants from small to large school sites crossing all boundaries. Respondents told of the differences they see and feel when they meet at district administrators’ meetings. The subjects the superintendents talk to the female administrators about are quite different than what is discussed with the male administrators. The bookkeeping topics such as reports always include the females, but respondents report the men have more eye contact, more body language and discuss more serious issues with each other such as finance, business, building and grounds maintenance and issues, political, law and government policies. Again, respondents report a “feeling” they are different or in a different group while not being a part of the male club.

The difference in how women administrators are treated compared to men administrators is a serious disadvantage that the majority of women I interviewed can see, but do not know a way to change it so they just accept it. I did not receive any ideas or advice from respondents on how they can help change the gender bias that is already

present in the schools. Their focus is to better themselves even more and move on to their own job productivity. They strive to be very self-confident and acquire the competence they need to be noticed and become successful.

Participants in this study not only saw gender bias as a disadvantage at the local levels, but unbelievably it is also experienced at the state and national levels in accordance to what participants experience at their professional organizations and meetings. The men's club is still present causing even more accumulated disadvantages and keeping the women away from the job placement advantages that become available at all levels.

*Gender expectations.* Gender expectation is a disadvantage that accumulates quickly because it is more or less out of the control of the aspiring superintendents. This is one of those disadvantages that is hard for the aspirants to recognize because it is how people are brought up thinking a certain way about gender and how each gender is "suppose" to act. Respondents explained how they have been expected to be quiet, not vocal. They believe men do not want them to succeed because they should be home. The participants felt like it is and always will be a continuous struggle to validate their ideas, prove themselves, and justify everything they do. They also believe people expect them to have more male characteristics so they can "do the job".

For one participant from a suburban school, not only did she have the gender bias as a disadvantage, but felt like she was double disadvantaged because she was also black. This middle school principal explained how she must deal daily with these issues, but she is not afraid to speak her mind when needed and will not back down because these issues

are presented to her. This respondent possesses many admirable qualities including courage and tenacity that helps provide her with the tools to be successful in education.

*Double-bind.* The double-bind disadvantage presented itself as a problem for several other respondents because of the positive experiences present and then the negative while trying to balance the two. Multi-tasking each and every day can create multiple situations where the positive and negative experiences can make women administrators feel they are being pulled apart as reported by many participants. Respondents also reported the double-bind of positive and negative experiences with gender issues as an extra hurdle thrown in to deal with daily. One participant who particularly liked looking attractive and staying healthy believed people had misperceptions about that. She felt this put her at a professional disadvantage because people associated her attractiveness to being feminine and being feminine with not being as smart as men administrators.

*Differential rewards.* A disadvantage that is easier for aspiring superintendents to recognize is differential salaries and rewards. Respondents reported the administrators' job positions that are usually possessed by females received a smaller salary that is a large drop from the male's salary in their administrative positions.

Participants explained that due to job hierarchies that are present in some school districts where females are "held" at the elementary positions, the elementary positions receive less of a salary than the middle school, high school and central office positions. The elementary job position is the least costly to the majority of school districts because more "power" is given to the middle school and high school positions. This disadvantage blocks females from ever reaching the same salary scale as male colleagues. This creates

a great monetary disadvantage after just a few years accumulating more each year and in the end, causing their teacher's retirement fund to suffer a substantial amount. This disadvantage truly bothers respondents, but they believe their hands are tied and they internalize their disappointment, anger, and frustration about their careers.

*Relocation expectations.* Most respondents did not want to leave their family or uproot them to an unfamiliar location. One respondent who was single did not want to leave her son or make her son change schools. I had only one participant who chooses not to relocate yet because of her love for the students at her particular school.

Having to relocate to find a job or have to make that decision is a great disadvantage to the respondents because in all probability they *are* missing out on a higher and better paying job position they are highly qualified for. It is a difficult position for aspiring superintendents to be in and are not in advantageous positions to choose because of family ties. Two very determined participants live separately from their families now just so they can be site principals. These two women *would* relocate for a superintendent's job position because they are conditioned to separate kinds of living conditions.

*Fear of the unknown.* Fear was a disadvantage respondents spoke of because of what is not familiar to them. The fear of the unknown was mentioned by the majority of the participants. They believe even if they do not have a superintendent's job position and situations are not perfect, it could become worse if they go somewhere different they are not familiar with. The thought of giving up seniority where they are and take a superintendency that could be as short-lived as a year was a very scary thought for them especially for the women who are the main source of income for their family.

Another unsettling thought for these women was the fear of having to “start over” and work their way up, rebuilding what they have already established where they are as far as trust, confidence and self-assurance. This fear is clearly a disadvantage to aspiring superintendents causing them to second guess themselves and keep their career stagnant without progressing as they desire and as they truly want. The fear is very understandable, yet, out of the control of the aspiring superintendents.

*Lack of experience.* The administrators who spoke about their feelings of inadequacy for their lack of experience in some of the educational administration career areas felt this disadvantage would prevent any possibility of obtaining a superintendent’s job position unless a school district was very desperate for a superintendent because no one else wants the job due to the district’s business affairs being in shambles. I did not interview one woman who wanted a job just given to her because they could not find anyone else. These women believe in themselves and believe they are qualified and could do a very good job of administering a school district.

Respondents believe the lack of experience was tied to many reasons and issues, but there was a strong tie to the job hierarchy in educational administration. The women who are at the bottom of the school administration job hierarchy cannot move up the career ladder into middle school, high school, or central office explaining the disadvantage of not getting the business and finance experience of the higher level education jobs or the experiences the higher job levels bring with the territory. Those experiences would be nonexistent to the aspiring superintendents. The aspirants can only search out themselves for staff development and training in their particular areas lacking experience such as business and finance and use their own time to attend these. This is

also a disadvantage because of the work time and money lost if the school district does not give the funding or support needed.

*Time required of the job.* The time that must be spent as a truly successful superintendent is in reality the same long hours any chief executive officer must perform if they are going to be a successful and long-term superintendent in a school district. The abundance of time spent on the job is a disadvantage for many aspirants depending on each one's particular home and family life. Respondents were very aware and realized they would have to spend more time on the job and less "off" time to spend as they like. No one mentioned the extra money received would compensate for the extra time needed to be spent on the job. Respondents believed it would be difficult, but not impossible to spend more time on the job to become successful. Their problems with time come if they try to spread themselves too thin with family, work, time for themselves and the time it takes to continue researching, attending workshops and training improving individual career development needed for the betterment and success of the school.

A few of the participants were hesitate about the extra time they would have to spend in the superintendent's job position. These women also seemed doubtful if they wanted to give up their time, causing the disadvantage of not pursuing the superintendency even though they are qualified and want to try.

### *Summary*

All ten participants in this study revealed multiple kinds of disadvantages, but many had the same experiences, doubts and fears about the disadvantages that occur continuously in the educational administrations career field. The respondents worry about how they should proceed in achieving their career goals as superintendents. Many

disadvantages have accumulated, multiplied and built upon each other causing doubt and a supreme cautiousness of new experiences.

### *Advantages*

The advantages respondents attested to were the ones they felt made an impact on their careers and helped them to progress towards their career goals. These women talked fondly of the advantages they had in their lives because of the strength the advantages gave them to stay driven, persevere and help counteract the accumulated disadvantages they have to deal with so frequently.

*Teaching.* Every participant believed having a background in classroom teaching would be advantageous when they received a superintendent's job position because they experienced the classroom, students, parents and community. This gave them many solid experiences to build upon, learn from and apply to the next job.

*Variety of experiences.* Aspiring superintendents who have acquired a variety of experiences during their careers is an advantage the majority of respondents agreed upon to assist in all the various areas in education. A background in teaching different grade levels can open doors because it helps prove they can work with a variety of age levels, parents and experiences.

A few respondents had some experience at the central office level and this helped them to go up the career ladder an extra peg to middle and high school job status. The experience at central office exhibited they could deal with large numbers of students, business, finance, or curriculum areas that other site administrators may never acquire.

*Gendered traits.* The participants fully believed that being a woman had advantages contrary to the gendered disadvantages. These women had a large amount of

teaching experiences at many different age and grade levels as typically many women educators do. Along with teaching and working with others comes the endurance and heart many women aspiring to be superintendents apply to everything they can to help ensure their career path runs more smoothly and progressively.

*Being willing to take risks.* All the respondents I interviewed were impressive in that they believed they should take challenges and be successful. The advantage of taking risks helped these administrators take more control by choosing their own challenges on their own terms. The challenges are individual for each person, but help each one grow more professionally gaining confidence and power proving that risks can be a good thing for them professionally.

*Having a positive attitude.* In the changing world of education, a positive attitude as much as possible will always be an advantage that helps keep the passion for the job alive and well. Positive thinking and having a positive attitude can be a force that improves job placement in the future along with career choices.

*Growing the next generation of administrators.* Mentoring and cultivating new leaders is an advantage these participants believe should not be passed up. Encouraging and helping others to become new school leaders is another experience that not only helped their own aspiring faculty, but can also show the interest and dedication the aspiring superintendent has in education.

Respondents believe it is harder to attract people to the leadership roles in education due to the complex nature of the job and multiple job duties and expectations without the pay deserved for the job. The cultivation of exemplary leaders exhibits the



aspiring superintendents' capabilities to surround themselves with dedicated and efficient people who can assist in the successful operation of schools.

*Strong faith.* Many participants were adamant that having a strong faith in a higher source was an advantage that helped guide them in their careers and lives. These women truly believe things in their lives happen for a reason and they have faith in that, but they also believe an aspiring superintendent must work with that and make the best decisions possible after praying and meditating. Having a strong faith is a staple for some of these women who base their entire lives on it and lean on it for support on a daily basis. Respondents explained they only have to stop and listen to God in order to do the right thing for them and their lives.

*Extra education.* An advantage that participants think can open extra doors for them and take them closer to career goals is having or taking extra education courses they believe would be beneficial for their career journey. Extra education hours can benefit and optimize their current job and future employment by allowing more opportunities to change positions, levels, or fields and contribute to continued success in their jobs.

*Family.* Family was an advantage that nine of the respondents believed were instrumental in their career successes so far. Multiple versions of families were husbands, parents, children and grandparents as well. Support, encouragement, advising and listening assisted these women without standing in the way of their goals or giving negative feedback to what they really want to do to succeed.

The environment a family provides for the aspiring superintendents is extremely important as a safe haven where many ideas, issues and discussions can be voiced without critical judgment. Discussing issues and concerns openly with people who are

personally close to the aspiring superintendent may assist in seeing solutions, goals and ideas more clearly.

### *Summary*

The advantages respondents presented were important to them and made a positive impact on their career paths. These experiences that were in the past still are beneficial to respondents because they learned and grew from them and can acknowledge the advantages as being relevant in their lives. For some women administrators the only really true support they accumulate is on a personal level. Advantages are necessary and are worth women's efforts to accumulate as many as possible because women more commonly than not accumulate advantage at a slower rate than men.

### Strategies for Success

The women administrators who participated in this study believe strongly the many women who aspire for the superintendency can achieve such a job position if they are determined enough to do so. The ten administrators support the idea that the experiences they accumulated in their careers with the multiple disadvantages and advantages can help other aspiring superintendents learn from their mistakes and successes. This information will assist other aspirants in seeing more clearly and not repeat those same mistakes. They will greatly benefit from the strategies that can pave the way to optimal success in the educational administration field.

### *Being Diversified*

The participants discovered being diversified in many areas has played an important part in their current careers and will assist women aspiring to become superintendents more marketable. Being involved actively in professional organizations

displays the capabilities of the individual for networking, service and opportunities for presenting information to others. Participants believe staying connected, being politically savvy, informed professionally, searching for ideas, writing and receiving grants are extremely advantageous. Being diversified in different areas will demonstrate qualifications and inform school boards and search committees that the aspirant is very competent for the job and is not afraid to work extraordinarily hard to not only develop herself professionally, but the school as a whole.

Participants realized it can be a disadvantage for the aspiring superintendent if their school board does not want to or have the money to send people to professional meetings for these types of opportunities but persistence on the aspirant's part with the district and finding more ways locally to become diversified should be explored and conquered.

The seeking of diverse experiences is a strategy that is the sole responsibility of the aspirant to help improve her career. Forming and maintaining good relationships with others and learning from them can have a large impact to a career in educational administration. Respondents stated that seeking diverse experiences would help prevent the burnout many superintendents acquire shortly after being hired. Changing jobs or changing levels provides capabilities in many other subjects and areas and will become an advantage that can accumulate for the future. Becoming a superintendent encompasses many experiences and visions. If an aspirant creates the advantage of having diverse experiences, it will make themselves more appealing to a school board or search committee, gathering attention and interest that could be the deciding factor in receiving a job.

### *Promoting Your Success*

Respondents advise other aspiring superintendents to promote their own successes as a strategy for showing others that you have and can make a difference in schools. Accomplishments are evidence of progress and success and should be continually documented in order to verify the aspirant's expertise in many different areas.

Several participants mentioned professional portfolios as a way to keep track of all successes and valuable information for a reference source. This strategy is one that can balance out somewhat the disadvantage of not having enough experience in other areas due to a job hierarchy or other reasons.

### *The Right Place*

Every respondent believes it is important to find the right place for his or her individual visions and goals where they can be successful, but also benefit the school district as a whole. This is a strategy that will help aspirants gain confidence and keep the strong belief in themselves they are more than capable of being successful in the job. Finding the right school and community will be an instrumental factor in finding a superintendent's position with longevity and maintaining the support of the school district. This advice could assist women with the advantage of finding a successful superintendent's job position and gain many beneficial and productive experiences.

The necessity of being picky is something these women believe is essential in finding the right place. Taking the time to look at different districts and discovering as much as possible about the community, finances, school boards and culture of the school district. It would be another disadvantage if an aspiring superintendent chose a school

district not suitable for her job vision or style of leadership. If she had to leave for undesirable reasons, it could cause more damage than good to her career.

### *Set Goals*

A very important strategy all participants believe as an advantage to have is the concept of having visions and goals for the school district they would like to administer for. Many school boards desire visionaries for their superintendents because they can bring in a sense of fresh air with a lot of knowledge. Participants that had already interviewed at least once for a superintendent's job position revealed that is one of the questions school boards are most likely to ask. Aspirants must be prepared to not only answer, but also explain what benefits her vision and goals will bring to the school. It is important to not acquire a disadvantage of being ill prepared to answer a question that should be a main priority to have and share with others. Formulate your visions and goals now even if the aspiring superintendent is stuck in their current job.

### *Do Not Give Up*

Aspiring female superintendents must be very skilled, knowledgeable, tough-skinned, focused, determined and driven. An important strategy to always remember is do not give up even when it gets extremely tough working with and trying to vanquish disadvantages that have followed and affected an entire career in education. Do not retreat if a job interview does not go well and they do not obtain the job position. Decide what could have made it turn out to be an advantage instead of a disadvantage. All respondents have been discouraged at some point in their career, but they got up, learned from it and went on to tackle another challenge. Meet job opportunities head-on and go for it if it is what the aspirant wants and believes they can be successful at. Do not give in

to the disadvantages that may have followed them and formulated hardships or obstacles in their lives.

### *Summary*

Participants believed in a variety of strategies that would improve aspiring superintendents' chances for success. Determination and drive was the main key for success they reported for becoming successful at becoming a superintendent. The strategy of diversification in many areas can be evidence of competence in several areas. This reveals their inclination to work hard as a professional to accomplish success. Aspirants are capable of creating their own advantages of possessing diverse experiences that can prove to be beneficial.

Respondents reported the promoting of successes reveals to others the capabilities aspirants possess. Promoting successes and becoming employed at the right school can be beneficial to aspirants and to the school district. Another important strategy for success respondents explained was having a vision and setting goals for the schools they want to work in. It is imperative to not give up on their vision and goals or on achieving a superintendent's job.

### *Summary*

In this chapter, data were analyzed from interviews with ten women who live and work across the state of Oklahoma and aspire to become a superintendent of schools at some point in their career track. These women were all school administrators and certified to become superintendents, but none had achieved the superintendency. Respondents provided their perspectives about careers in educational administration and also revealed multiple disadvantages and advantages they accumulated in their lives that

had an impact on the path of their careers. This case study included the respondents' site demographics, career choices, career goals and participants' backgrounds.

Data were analyzed both individually and collectively using the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage. The data provided information including the aspiring superintendents' perspectives about careers in education revealing similarities and differences, and accumulated disadvantages and advantages affecting the directions of their career paths. Data also revealed skills and knowledge aspiring superintendents need to have as strategies for success.

Consistent with the literature in Chapter II on the phenomenon of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage, the data revealed that aspiring female superintendents accumulated disadvantages that appear to have controlled and maintained any advancement or abilities they could have obtained. The disadvantages these women accumulated in their careers revealed similarities with the information provided in the literature.

The similarities that became apparent from the disadvantages participants accumulated coincided with the data published in the American Association of School Administrators "2000 Study of the American School Superintendency" (2002) that represented many of the disadvantages respondents accumulated and experienced during their careers. Participants were not all in positions that normally lead to the superintendency due to current job placements in elementary education. Respondents felt ill prepared to work with finance even though it was reported that school boards see the management of fiscal resources to be critical to the superintendency. It was also reported that school boards see the management of fiscal resources to be critical to the

superintendency. It was also reported school boards are reluctant to hire women superintendents as my participants have experienced. Another similarity in the report (AASA, 2002) and in this study was that women enter into the superintendency when they are older than males do because they have taught in the classroom for a longer period.

Other differences confirmed in this study were aligned with benefits. Valian (1998) reported differences in women's and men's salaries with women receiving less which was experienced by participants in this study in conjunction with males receiving more benefits such as cell phones. The National Science Foundation (1996) also discovered data revealing salary discrepancies with women receiving the disadvantage of a lower salary even though they possess the same educational degrees and qualifications.

Gregory (1999) believed the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) has also been called "sex discrimination" and is a social control that maintains differences in how they perform, their achievements and what they receive in return. Participants did not at any time place the term "sex discrimination" on the disadvantages and experiences they had encountered throughout their careers.

Additional differences between what was reported by respondents and what was discovered in the literature were also found. Beekley (1999) reported women leaving the superintendency prematurely for reasons belonging to their gender. Participants in this study did not have the desire to stop aspiring for the superintendency because of their gender and they did not report knowing any female superintendents that have left the superintendency due to problems with gender.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND COMMENTARY

In today's school districts a shortage of female superintendents is visible. Many would say that women are over-represented in the teaching profession and under-represented in administration. Many women aspire to become superintendents, have become certified to do so, and have positioned themselves for the superintendent's rank. Yet, we have not seen an increase of women superintendents in our schools. This study explored the link between the under-representation of women in the superintendency and accumulative disadvantage. This chapter includes a summary of the study, implications and commentary, which evolved from data compiled in this study of female aspiring superintendents and their under-representation in terms of accumulative disadvantage.

#### Summary of the Study

This study was conducted in the spring of 2003 with ten women administrators who were superintendent certified and were employed in different schools and areas in Oklahoma. These administrators had been aspiring to become superintendents for some time without accomplished success. It appeared the superintendency was not attainable for these qualified women without an understanding of the cause.

#### *Purpose*

Using the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage, the purpose of this study was to describe and explain the under-representation of women in the superintendency despite their over-representation in the teaching profession. Specifically, the following goals were set:

1. A description of the stories of women's lives and experiences that pertain to or describe a career in education administration.
2. An analysis of the stories these women told through the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage.
3. Other realities that may be revealed.
4. An assessment of the usefulness of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage for explaining the phenomenon under review.

To accomplish these purposes, several kinds of data were needed.

#### *Data Needs and Sources*

Because the primary focus of this study was to describe the stories of women's lives and experiences that pertained to or described a career in education administration, the primary data needs were voluntarily met by ten participants who were highly qualified female administrators aspiring for a superintendent's job position. Participants were required to be successful female school principals or central office personnel with superintendent certification and aspiring for the chief administrative job position. These women were from a variety of school districts including small rural and larger urban schools. These women were located by recommendation from a panel of experts in the field of education.

#### *Data Collection*

Each participant was asked to voluntarily sign a consent form before participating in the study. Participants signed the consent forms following a completed description of the study's purpose. The long interview method consisting of an open-ended format was the primary source for gathering data. Interview questions produced data that was a result

of the interaction between the researcher and participants. Additional demographic data were also collected during the interview such as gender, age, level of education, occupation and career path. Interviews were audio tape recorded to provide accuracy. Interview notes/transcriptions, coded field notes, and daily journal entries supported an audit trail.

#### *Data Organization and Interpretation*

Data resulting from the interviews were organized into the emerging themes of respondents' perspectives about careers in educational administration, disadvantages and advantages accumulated affecting direction of career paths, and strategies for success. The school sites, school systems and communities were described along with demographic data presented on all participants. Participants' demographics, educational backgrounds, career information and district demographics were reported in tables, followed by narrative that was often enhanced by the direct quotes of the respondents. Other themes that evolved from disadvantages experienced were also reported.

#### *Data Analysis*

The data were then examined for repeating patterns. I coded all data for variants that could be defined as accumulative disadvantages and other additional themes/topics. Finally, the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) was assessed for its usefulness in revealing the influence of accumulative disadvantage on the lives of the participants who were in the position for the job of the superintendency.

#### Findings

Major findings related to the purpose of this study of describing and explaining the under-representation of women in the superintendency despite their over-

representation in the teaching profession will be addressed in a similar format as the original research questions. Findings include:

1. Respondent demographics including:
  - a. career trajectories and
  - b. education
2. District demographics including:
  - a. perspectives about careers in education exploring knowledge and skills;
  - b. career impacts involving accumulated disadvantages and advantages and;
  - c. strategies for success.

### *Respondent Demographics*

It was evident that disadvantages described throughout this data created an impact on the majority of participants' career choices. Disadvantages were discovered in all aspects of respondents' personal data such as age, race, marital status, if they have children, residence location, family and mentor support.

*Personal demographics.* Respondents' age span was broad, but age was not identified as a detractor from what they wanted to achieve in life. However, older respondents revealed more of a reluctance to move their residence in order to possess the superintendency.

Race was not an issue the Caucasian respondents recognized as an advantage or disadvantage. Race was a disadvantage to the one black participant because of her feeling of being over-looked and basically "used" for her "racial" knowledge, with others

claiming her ideas as their own. She possessed a very strong personality, choosing to overcome that disadvantage each time it would reappear.

Marital status for some seemed to be a disadvantage in individual circumstances when relocating could wreck havoc on the personal family life. This situation is not unique in the education career area. Changing spouses' jobs, whether it is the husband's or the wife's position, children's schools, friends and churches appeared to be a disadvantage that could make a direct hit upon respondents' decisions about their careers. There are some situations that career choices were made for the family, not the individual participants. The advantage of being married was reported as support from the spouse. It was reported children were an advantage to respondents for their love and support. Yet, disadvantages were multiplied as most respondents had to constantly reevaluate their career goals until children were grown and left the home. The majority of respondents accumulated less advantage in the progression of their careers as other individuals in different job areas have experienced by putting others first in their lives and putting their own careers on hold.

Half of the participants stated they did not want to relocate to become a superintendent. This resulted in limited career options. The disadvantages were present as respondents perceived the need to only look for the superintendency in a smaller town or large city, thereby creating fewer options in careers.

Support of family or mentors was described as monumental in participants' lives creating advantage. Without family support or family with an educational background, more disadvantages accumulated due to lack of emotional support as reported in the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986). A lack of support causing disadvantages was

also present for the participant in a small school district with no mentors or networking connections.

### *Career Trajectories*

Disadvantages were abundant and created by staying in the same job position for too long with no further advancement and looking for the perfect fit for a job. Due to the accumulated disadvantages, participants appeared to be reluctant and too guarded to find a superintendent's job position.

Investigating the respondents' jobs leading to their current positions included not only their beginning classroom positions, but those paving the way into more advanced administrative opportunities that provided further chances for placement in the rank of superintendent. As teachers progressed from the classroom they attained more responsibilities, duties, and knowledge of what leadership roles would involve. The majority of respondents progressed from teaching into a coordinator, director, or assistant principal's job position. Only three teachers advanced from teaching in the classroom directly to the principalship without additional training.

The course of the respondents' careers advanced to the higher administrative positions of principals and an assistant superintendent exhibiting their success at administration with the abilities to advance further. As these higher job positions were acquired, participants began the journey of displaying their personal discipline, more wide publicity, courage to succeed in a male-dominated field, reputations for extremely successful performances in the schools, displaying the importance of the position and focusing on the children, to become successful and ready to become a superintendent.

These valuable characteristics respondents made public resulted in more visibility in their current job position, but also contributed to the visibility and reputation that would be applied towards their efforts for obtaining the superintendency. The job responsibilities these women were faced with were multiple and revealed their abilities to multitask and maintain professional control while being in the public eye performing the job tasks parents, school boards and communities expect.

These women demonstrated the extent of their professionalism, abilities and qualifications to secure a superintendent's job position. Even though respondents were highly qualified with a proven record of success in other administrative positions, they were not chosen to lead their own or other school districts down the path of success. The studying, planning, communication, knowledge of children and educational administration proved to be overlooked. Respondents continue to model professional behavior contributing to children's success in education while waiting for their chance at the superintendency. Qualified women are "kept" in their "place" without proceeding to the next, higher administrative level. This negative effect on their lives and careers can be described by the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986).

### *Education*

Participants obtained their degrees in a variety of areas. Six participants possessed doctorates in areas such as educational administration, student personnel, guidance and counseling and curriculum and instruction. Respondents who obtained the same amount of education and degrees, but who were employed in elementary education communicated more disadvantages that accumulated as they tried to advance to higher levels or positions in central offices at the director or coordinator level, assistant principal

or principalship. Participants discovered they were being “held back” for being accomplished without a chance to progress and become successful as is explained in the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986).

#### *District Demographics*

The lack of diversity in some schools proved to be a disadvantage due to the lack of experience respondents acquired working with different people. This disadvantage could also accumulate causing fewer opportunities of obtaining a superintendent’s position in diverse areas of Oklahoma or other states with many cultures and races. Advantages were present for participants working with diverse people giving them a more marketable tool to use in schools where diversity abounds and is important to the community.

#### *Perspectives about Careers in Education*

All respondents possessed a high knowledge base about what they believed to be necessary to do what was right for their school districts and to achieve their goal of success. There were such a variety of respondents from different school districts, a large laundry list of knowledge needed was revealed. Participants explained this knowledge was helpful to their own perceptions of what their specific schools required for achieving success as a superintendent. The list reported the individual’s school districts could have extremely diverse situations for aspirants to the superintendency. Aspirants must be prepared for the many ways they will be expected to do the right thing.

Respondents possessed a very high awareness of their particular requirements for their current jobs and what they should have or lack to obtain the superintendent’s job position. The majority of respondents strongly believed in their own capabilities of being



flexible and their driving desire to succeed and do anything required to aspire and achieve the superintendency. Disadvantages could accumulate as in the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) if aspirants acquire only the knowledge and skills for one particular district with an absence of awareness for what other districts require for their own superintendents.

### *Career Impacts-Accumulated Disadvantages and Advantages*

All respondents reported many different types of disadvantages, but many revealed similar experiences, doubts and fears about disadvantages that appear constantly in educational administration. Disadvantages such as not being listened to or taken seriously, limited opportunities for acceptance and advancement, gendered expectations from others, professional and organizational isolation and diminished quality in their personal lives have accumulated for respondents as in the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) creating doubt and extreme caution dealing with new encounters.

A theme that emerged from investigating the disadvantages of female aspiring superintendents that I did not expect was the theme of gender issues. The reason I was surprised with the gender issues that came to the surface and evolved into a theme was because the interview questions did not refer to gender or issues associated with gender. Respondents, in describing their experiences, voluntarily brought to the surface, focused on, and discussed disadvantages they had experienced throughout their careers that they believed were connected to gender.

### *Strategies for Success*

All respondents believed women who aspire for the superintendency could succeed. Being diversified in several areas was reported as important and can prove competency in multiple areas.

Participants reported it was necessary to promote your success as proof of progress and achievement. This strategy could counteract the accumulation of some disadvantages in the course of careers. Finding the right school to become successful as superintendent is a strategy all participants explained would be an advantage. Having visions and goals for that school district is of a great importance when interviewing for superintendent positions along with knowing the benefits of those visions for the school.

#### *Applicability of the Salieri Effect (1986) and Accumulative Disadvantage*

It is clear from the data that respondents reported a wide spectrum of accumulative disadvantages that appeared to support the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and the processes of accumulative disadvantage. Each individual's experiences, perspectives, and career trajectories were unique to the particular respondent, but each individual had amassed many disadvantages throughout their personal and professional lives. Long-standing, continuing, and accumulating disadvantages existing in this data included inequalities in salary, promotion, and the ability to reach the top and become a superintendent.

Keller (1999) described how barriers to advancement in educational administration may be present and portrayed the under-representation of women in the administrative profession. It was clear in this data that barriers and accumulating disadvantages were a part of the respondents' lives. Many different paths and changes in

their lives and careers were revealed causing the individuals to try and position themselves for the superintendency the best way they knew how while trying to overcome the disadvantages; trying their best to accumulate advantages that would be beneficial for their individual situations.

Keller (1999) also explained that there could be bias against women. Women are led to believe they must be better and perform better than men to become successful. All participants believed it was vital to be an outstanding candidate above men in order to at least get an interview for the superintendency.

The literature reported that the high school principalship is the unofficial ladder to the superintendency. Vail (1999) reported superintendents must spend time at the helm of the secondary school to be ready for the superintendency. Some respondents were already at the high school level and were not achieving the superintendent's job positions any faster than elementary administrators. The majority of respondents was at the elementary level and faced with not being able to be on that unofficial path to the superintendency.

It was also reported in the literature how women are disadvantaged from the beginning of pursuing a professional career. Bhalalusesa (1998) reported psychological pressure from within and from society for believing their learned childhood and feeling inadequate. These participants believed many of these feelings and have already had to choose between family and career to get where they already are in their careers.

Female aspiring superintendents must have education, experience, and other qualifications that are necessary for success. Respondents were not aware that the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage could affect their lives and careers. These women knew their desire for the superintendency could bring them

more earnings, recognition, helping others, and autonomy. They did not realize the difficulty they were going to have ultimately possessing that particular job rank. These women did not realize, especially early on in their careers, that they needed to accumulate as much advantage as possible. Any advantage respondents could accumulate could be extremely useful and well worth the time of examining possibilities.

As reported in the literature, the respondents possessed ranges of work specialties, years of work experience and years of education, but these qualifications and achievements proved to be more valuable to men instead of these women (Valian, 1998; Pavan, 1985). Respondents had to work to seek out information to assist in their careers, which disadvantaged them if not enough, or the wrong information was acquired. Clark and Corcoran (1986) in explaining the Salieri phenomenon also believed it was necessary to look at relationships, choices and the advantages and disadvantages to understand why the gatekeepers are keeping women at bay from higher positions in education. Respondents were not aware of the many aspects that surround their careers. This failing to see or understand their accumulating disadvantages and lack of accumulated advantages proved to be yet, another disadvantage.

Shakeshaft (1989) and Brunner (2000) believe there has not been very much research conducted on the experiences of women administrators including superintendents. Respondents in this case study have contributed many experiences that could prove beneficial to the research of aspiring women superintendents and create additional areas of study on aspirants using the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage.

### *Conclusions*

The findings of this study provided insight into the under-representation of women in the superintendency despite their over-representation in the teaching profession. This research documents the careers of women administrators who aspire for the job of superintendent, but have not achieved such a placement despite their qualifications, drive and determination to achieve this goal. The narrative revealed the complexities of aspirants' lives and career paths that included their capabilities and their difficulties. Participants received support and encouragement from families and mentors to achieve the superintendency, yet that job placement remains elusive.

Gender issues became a theme that was unexpected in this study due to the absence of gender-based interview questions. The majority of information given by respondents reverted to issues related to gender. With the lack of encouragement from their current administration to advance higher to the top-level job positions, the respondents believed that gender issues were responsible for the accumulation of multiple disadvantages and difficulties preventing them from reaching their career goal.

The efficacy of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage as an effective tool for exploring the lack of women superintendents even though many women are certified and qualified to gain this top administrative level has been demonstrated. This useful tool provided a way to evaluate the respondents' demographics and district demographics.

An important conclusion reveals the superintendency is a very strong position of power that is quite different from the ordinary lower-level administrative positions respondents have more commonly held in educational administration. Participants in this study have had the opportunity to voice their experiences in attempts to acquire the

superintendency. Inequalities exist for superintendent certified and qualified women who are positioned and aspire for the superintendency, yet cannot achieve that objective due to the accumulation of disadvantages they have amassed over the years. Respondents in this study are top-level professional educators who have provided the best education they believe possible for their students, while they were teaching and as aspiring superintendents. They will continue to do so even with the absence of the superintendency job in their careers because they are professionals. These professional women are outstanding resources their state is regrettably not experiencing and if this trend continues could cause a deficit in the educational administration system.

#### Implications

This research provides an opportunity to evaluate the usefulness of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage in the examination of aspiring female superintendents and their absence of job placement as superintendent in the public schools. The experiences of the respondents were varied and unique with individual circumstances involved providing an overview of accumulated disadvantages they encountered. This study details the efforts of aspiring female superintendents in their personal quest to achieve the right of entry to top-level school district positions and their lack of success in obtaining their professional goals.

#### *Research*

The findings of this study were clear that aspiring female superintendents do accumulate disadvantages that appear to control and maintain their career advancement, abilities, and salaries they could have earned. These findings were consistent with the

phenomenon of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage.

The research in this study details the narratives and experiences of aspiring female superintendents. This information provides an understanding both for the reader and the researcher. This study also contributes to the knowledge base of educational administration by documenting the experiences of 10 aspiring female superintendents. The information presented analyzes the passage of these individuals throughout their career path and documents the barriers present for females desiring the superintendents' job position.

This study was limited in nature. The interviews were limited to aspiring female superintendents within ten different school sites in one mid-western state. Further research into the absence of female superintendents across the nation would benefit from a wider selection of respondents. Other studies could perhaps track the educational administration careers of female aspiring superintendents and would be beneficial due to the lack of research in this particular area. Some of these studies should be large enough to productively compare school district demographics and female aspirants' demographics such as gender, age, types, and lengths of employment in education.

Existing knowledge may be enhanced by further study of the participants included in this study in order to discover further achievements, if any, in successfully obtaining a superintendent's job position. The types of career advancements or job placements would assist in understanding how they accomplished the position. Additionally, further research of female superintendents currently employed in the top-level position would

provide more useful information into the evasive realm of the superintendency of for aspirants.

Potential for further long-term study could also include the discovery of women who are just beginning or thinking about aspiring for the superintendency and presenting them the information of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage. This heightened awareness may provide women with enough information to control the disadvantages and advantages in order to achieve the superintendency at a faster rate providing more time spent at the level of superintendent.

### *Practice*

An important inference of this study is that accumulated disadvantages were clearly found for the female aspiring superintendents interviewed. For those women in educational administration who plan to aspire and place themselves for the superintendency, this suggests that they should concern themselves with controlling the accumulation of disadvantages within their careers and strive to accumulate many advantages that will assist in balancing out the disadvantages.

In addition, a major amount of participants' focus and concern was being centered on their current job position, not realizing the many disadvantages they were accumulating by staying in their job position many years without advancement. This finding leads to the inevitable conclusion that those aspirants who are not cognizant of the disadvantages that they are accumulating or choose to not see the damage these disadvantages are causing their careers will not become successful at obtaining a superintendent's job position.



This study also examined the advantages participants have experienced and accumulated, but there were not many advantages that contributed a great deal to their career advancement. Aspirants were also not aware of the fact that they could also control and contribute to the advantages that they are capable of accumulating to their benefit. It is important that female aspiring superintendents become more involved in the controlling, maintaining, and placement of their own career with a vision and goals of what they want to accomplish in their lives and careers.

The phenomenon of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) was applicable for these participants. Using the lens of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage assisted in viewing the participants' careers and why there had been a lack of career advancement for all. The success of future use of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage will be likely dependent upon what group will be studied, in what phase of their career they are in, and where they would like to advance in their career.

### *Theory*

In general, the phenomenon of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage was found to be a useful tool and application to study female aspiring superintendents and the disadvantages they may accumulate throughout their lives and careers that could control and disrupt a successful career path as a school superintendent. Applying the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage when studying the career paths of female aspiring superintendents was extremely helpful in making clear that disadvantages are present in the aspirants' lives and are piling up one on top of another possibly causing the participants' careers to

become stalled without advancement. The women in this study were not disadvantaged women or faulty in qualifications and desire for the superintendency. These women were less advantaged in the career areas in which they needed an accumulation of advantages to be considered for a superintendent's job position.

Understanding the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage would be beneficial for all female aspiring superintendents in order to heighten their awareness of disadvantages when they appear and learn how to control and overcome them to achieve success. There is a need for further research and development of the phenomenon of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage may offer important information that can change and improve the advancement of women in educational administration.

#### Commentary

This study began as I was employed as an elementary school principal in a rural school. I had taught elementary school for ten years and had been an elementary principal for five years. I became certified as middle school and high school principal, but most importantly, superintendent certified. Even though my personal career goals included ultimately working in the higher education setting, I obtained my certifications not knowing what life might bring my way.

I became very curious about why there were so few women superintendents even though I knew several women who were certified and placed themselves strategically for a superintendent's job position. There were so many women in education with the majority working as teachers. Even though more women were capable of gaining an

elementary principal's position, the higher the level of schools such as middle and high schools, and the superintendency, the fewer women I would see employed.

I knew my own reasons and goals for not pursuing the superintendency, but I knew several women who desired a superintendent's job, but could not obtain the position. My desire was to discover the reasons women were not able to obtain the superintendency and if they were aware of the reasons. I did not know at the time if this was a situation that was present only in rural areas or if women administrators in suburban and urban areas were experiencing the same problems.

When the phenomenon of the Salieri effect (Clark & Corcoran, 1986) and accumulative disadvantage was brought to my attention, I believed this was an outstanding lens to discover if accumulated disadvantages were present and were in fact affecting women's lives and careers preventing them from obtaining the superintendency even though they desired, were qualified, and had placed themselves for the job position.

Not only did I learn an abundance of information from aspiring superintendents and the disadvantages they may encounter in their careers, but I discovered the depth of their dedication, drive and desire to succeed in educational administration. These women, with the exception of one, deeply and truly cared about the students in their schools and in their districts. The determination they possessed was contagious and convinced me that these participants are more than ready and qualified for the superintendency. I believe the majority of aspirants have special qualities that should not be overlooked by school districts needing a superintendent.

My experience with this case study and the participants involved has enhanced my belief that women are just as qualified, or more so, than males for the highest-level

job in educational administration. Many of the greatest assets Oklahoma schools possess in these women aspirants are being ignored and wasted.

As of fall 2004, all the participants in this case study, with the exception of one, have remained employed at the same job position, the same school, and the same school district. One elementary principal was named elementary director at a different school district. No participants have achieved the superintendency. This is a fact that speaks quite loudly considering the talent and qualifications the participants in this study possessed for the highest-ranking job position in public school educational administration.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)  
APPROVAL FORMS

Appendix A

IRB Approval Form

Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 2/17/2004

Date: Tuesday, February 18, 2003

IRB Application No. ED0358

Proposal Title: THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE SUPERAGENCY: A STUDY OF  
ACCUMULATIVE DISADVANTAGE

Principal  
Investigator(s):

Cheryl Evans  
313 Paul Miller  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Adrienne Hyle  
314 Willard Hall  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as:  Example

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI:

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Barber, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbarber@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

  
Carol Olson, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)  
CONSENT FORM

## Appendix B

### Institutional Review Board (IRB) Consent Form

#### Consent Form

“The Under-Representation of Women in the Superintendency: A Study of Accumulative Disadvantage”

#### General Information

You have been asked by a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University working on a research project (dissertation) to be interviewed about your position in education administration and how accumulative disadvantage has affected you and your career.

The interview serves two purposes: (1) information collected in the interview will be used by the researcher to prepare a scholarly paper (dissertation) about the under-representation of women in the superintendency due to accumulative disadvantage, and (2) information collected by the doctoral student may be used in scholarly publication of the student and/or the project director (dissertation advisor).

The interview should last approximately 90 minutes and will be tape-recorded. The questions asked will be developed by the doctoral student. The researcher will type transcripts of the interview for analysis. The project director (dissertation advisor) may review these transcripts. All tapes and transcripts are treated as confidential materials. These tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key and then destroyed at the completion of the research study. Only the project director (dissertation advisor) and researcher will have access to these tape recordings and transcripts.

Notes will be taken by the researcher. The project director may also review these notes. All notes are treated as confidential materials. Only the project director (dissertation advisor) and researcher will have access to these notes. The notes will be kept under lock and key and then destroyed at the completion of the research study.

Pseudonyms will be assigned for each person interviewed and/or observed. These pseudonyms will be used in all discussions and in all written materials dealing with interviews and observations. Lastly, no interview will be accepted or used by the researcher unless this consent form has been signed by all parties. The form will be filed and retained for at least two years by the project director (dissertation advisor).

Very little research has been conducted on the under-representation of women in the superintendency despite their over-representation in the teaching profession. Research in this area could provide valuable information for women who aspire to be superintendents as well as for school districts, school boards, and education administration programs.



Understanding

Some interview questions about job experiences or aspirations may cause discomfort for some respondents, but the researcher does not know that such will be the case. I understand that participation in this interview is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director (dissertation advisor).

I understand that the interview will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken from the interview will be recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

I understand the interview will not cover topics that could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior or use of alcohol.

I may contact the project director (dissertation advisor), Dr. Adrienne Hyle, at (405) 744-7929 or the researcher, Cheryl Evans, at (405) 743-5947. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 415 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; telephone number (405) 744-5700.

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

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ A.M./P.M.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it and provided the subject with a copy of this form.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ A.M./P.M.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)

FILED: \_\_\_\_\_

INITIALS OF DISSERTATION ADVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

Informally, I will introduce myself and explain the consent form. Then, I will begin the interview by conversing and concentrating upon the following questions.

#### Background Information:

1. Tell me about yourself – personal and as a professional in education – degrees held, career path, experience as a teacher, principal or other administrator.
  - a. May I have a copy of your vita/resume?
2. Tell me about the school district – its location, school board members, number of staff, and number of students.
3. Tell me the various types of knowledge, skill, and training that are needed by individuals who are aspiring to be a superintendent of schools in your district.
4. Tell me about your satisfaction with your present job position.
5. How long have you been aspiring to be a superintendent?
6. Tell me why you would like to have a school superintendent's job.

#### “Salieri” Effect in Terms of Accumulative Disadvantage:

7. Tell me what you have done in the process to secure a position as a superintendent.
8. Tell me about any advantage and disadvantage, hardship or obstacle you have encountered in your personal professional career.
9. Why do you think you have not been selected as a superintendent?
  - a. Why do you think others have been selected?
  - b. What have others told you why others have been selected?
10. What support do you have in reaching the superintendency?
  - a. Do you have support from other women aspiring to be superintendent?
11. How do you believe women who aspire to be superintendents can succeed in their career goals?

VITA

#2

Cheryl Lynn Evans

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE  
SUPERINTENDENCY: A STUDY OF ACCUMULATIVE  
DISADVANTAGE

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Stroud High School, Stroud, Oklahoma, in May 1975; received Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May 1988; received Master of Science degree in curriculum and instruction from Oklahoma State University, in May 1998; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Administration from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in December 2004.

Experience: Worked for Olive Public Schools, Olive Oklahoma, from 1988-1990. Held positions of elementary school educator in first and fourth grades. Employed by Cushing Public Schools, Cushing, Oklahoma, from 1990-2004. Held positions of elementary school educator for eight years in the first, fourth, and fifth grades. Served as elementary school principal for six years at a K-5 school site. Have worked as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the College of Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, from summer 2004 to present.

Professional Memberships: American Educational Research Association (AERA); Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (RMERA); International Reading Association (IRA).