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Breaking Barriers to Achieve the Superintendency

Becky J. Foley PhD

University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service

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**BREAKING BARRIERS TO
ACHIEVE THE SUPERINTENDENCY**

By

Becky J. Foley

B.S. University of Maine at Farmington, 1990

M.S. University of Southern Maine, 1997

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Public Policy

The University of Southern Maine

August 2015

Advisory Committee:

David Silvernail, Professor, Educational Leadership, Advisor

Catherine Fallona, Professor, Education and Human Development

Betsy Webb, Superintendent, Bangor School Department

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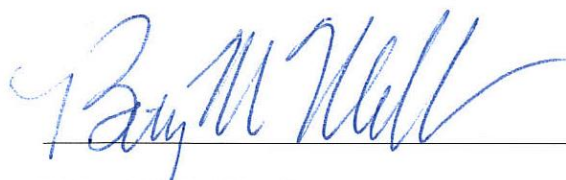
Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Silvernail", written over a horizontal line.

David Silvernail, Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Catherine Fallon", written over a horizontal line.

Catherine Fallon, Member

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Betsy Webb", written over a horizontal line.

Betsy Webb, Member

BREAKING BARRIERS TO ACHIEVE THE SUPERINTENDENCY

By Becky J. Foley, M.S.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. David Silvernail

An Abstract of the Dissertation Presented in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Ph.D. in Public Policy
August 2015

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the phenomenon of the external and internal barriers that exist for women administrators in Maine seeking to reach the school superintendency. During the 2014-2015 school year in Maine, females comprised only 21 percent of all superintendents. While there is research about the shortage of superintendents nationwide, there is scant research from the female perspective. This research provided insights from women's perspectives about why gender inequality exists at the superintendent level in education in the state of Maine.

Through the use of phenomenological interviews, this qualitative research study focused on the views of six female participants who were administrators in Maine during the 2014-2015 school year. This study was designed to uncover the barriers to be overcome, and the supports needed for more women to enter the superintendency. Within the design of this phenomenological interview study, the six female administrators were divided into three subgroups: two current superintendents, two aspiring superintendents, and two non-aspiring superintendents. Each of the participants met with the researcher and completed either two or three individual interviews. Data gathered from those

interviews were analyzed to answer the following questions: (1) What do female administrators perceive as external barriers to achieving the superintendency? (2) What do female administrators perceive as internal barriers to achieving the superintendency? (3) What do female administrators perceive to be the needed supports for women to access and be successful in the superintendency in Maine?

Findings were explored through a research framework created for this study based upon barrier research. Conclusions drawn from this exploration revealed there are multiple barriers preventing female administrators from reaching superintendency. There is strong evidence of the following external barriers: (1) cultural expectations, (2) being place bound, (3) gender bias, (4) board bias, (5) non-support from other women, and (6) lack of mentors. Evidence exists for the following three internal barriers: (1) perfectionism, (2) lack of self-confidence, and (3) choice.

Included in this study are recommendations and possible policy implications to support more women in attaining a superintendency, and to balance the inequality that currently exists.

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First and foremost, I am extremely grateful to the six women in this study who allowed me into their lives to learn from their reflections of being women in the twenty-first century, juggling multiple roles and demands as wives, mothers, daughters, and administrators. They are an amazing group of women, and all of them inspire me with their stories, honesty, and insights. Additionally, their dedication and passion towards education motivate me to aim higher, and to work harder every day to improve the quality of education for all students in Maine.

I cannot thank my advisor, David Silvernail, enough for his endless wisdom, constant coaching, and unwavering support of me. His words of encouragement kept me focused on the goal of completing this dissertation. I want to thank my other committee members, Catherine Fallona and Betsy Webb, who read through drafts of my work in progress, and presented me with invaluable feedback for revisions and improvements.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Background and Context.....	2
Purpose.....	7
Research Approach.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	8
Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
Women in Leadership Positions.....	10
Barriers to Women in Leadership Roles.....	19
External Barriers.....	21
Gender Prejudice/Bias.....	21
Being Place Bound.....	22
Cultural Expectations.....	23
Women's Non-Support of Women.....	24
Board Bias.....	25
Internal Barriers.....	26
Self-Confidence.....	26
Perfectionism.....	28
Choice.....	29

	Supports Needed.....	30
Chapter 3.	METHODOLOGY.....	33
	Introduction: Problem/Questions.....	33
	Methodological Overview.....	34
	Research Context – Sampling Procedures.....	35
	The Sample.....	36
	The Participants.....	37
	Data Collection.....	43
	Data Analysis.....	45
	Trustworthiness.....	48
	The Researcher.....	50
	Pilot.....	50
	Limitations of the Study.....	51
	Delimitations of the Study.....	51
Chapter 4.	FINDINGS.....	52
	Introduction.....	52
	Key Findings.....	53
	Findings: External Barriers	55
	Finding A: Cultural Expectation.....	57
	Finding B: Gender Bias.....	64
	Finding C: Non-support of Other Women.....	72
	Finding D: Being Place Bound.....	77
	Finding E: School Board Bias.....	82

Finding F: Lack of Mentors.....	87
Findings: Internal Barriers	92
Finding A: Perfectionism.....	94
Finding B: Lack of Self-Confidence.....	98
Finding C: Choice.....	103
Findings: Solutions Identified by Subgroups and Participants..	108
Finding A: Mentoring/Networking.....	109
Finding B: Formal Training.....	112
Finding C: Role Models.....	114
Finding D: Educational Opportunities.....	114
Summary.....	115
Chapter 5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	119
Conclusions.....	120
A. Cultural Expectations.....	120
B. Non-support of Other Women.....	122
C. Gender Bias.....	124
D. Being Place Bound.....	125
E. Board Bias.....	127
F. Lack of Mentors.....	128
G. Perfectionism.....	129
H. Lack of Self-Confidence.....	130
I. Choice.....	131
Removing the Barriers.....	133

Recommendations.....	135
Policy Implications.....	137
Next Steps in Research.....	138
Concluding Remarks.....	139
REFERENCES.....	141
APPENDIX A. Interview Questions.....	147
APPENDIX B. Letter of Informed Consent.....	151
APPENDIX C. Interview Overview.....	153
APPENDIX D. Member Check Recording Sheet.....	154
APPENDIX E. Transcriber/Confidentiality Agreement.....	155
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR.....	157

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2:1	Superintendent Applicant Pool in Maine.....	16
Table 2:2	Research Framework.....	20
Table 3:1	Demographic Data on Participants.....	37
Table 4:1	Overview of the Barriers Identified by Subgroups.....	54
Table 4:2	External Barriers Identified by Participants.....	56
Table 4:3	Internal Barriers Identified by Participants.....	93
Table 4:4	Solutions Identified by Participants.....	109
Table 4:5	Overview of Barriers Experienced by Participants.....	117

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2:1	Women in Fortune 500 Companies.....	12
Figure 2:2	Fortune 500 CEOs.....	12
Figure 2.3	Women in Administrative Positions.....	15

Chapter One

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Approximately 76 percent of educators in the United States are female, but only 23 percent of those educators are school superintendents, leading to a disproportionate ratio of male to female superintendents (Goldring, 2013). During the 2014-15 school year, that disproportionate ratio was equally true in Maine: 75 percent of the educators are female, but only 21 percent of the state's superintendents are female (Burdin, 2014). Although the percentage has increased since 1889 when Mary Snow became the first female superintendent in Bangor, Maine, the continued disparity is cause for concern since there are few highly qualified candidates for superintendent openings in the state. Furthermore, there is little research on women and the superintendency in Maine. Whatever barriers exist for males, as a group, they are not serious impediments as evidenced by the fact that only 25 percent of all Maine's teachers/administrators were male in 2014, yet 79 percent of the superintendents were men. Therefore, more research is needed to learn what is preventing women from reaching, or even applying for, superintendent openings. This study explored the experiences of female administrators, attempting to discover the external and internal barriers that exist for females seeking a superintendency in the state of Maine, and to identify supports needed to increase the percentage of female superintendents. Through a qualitative study, perceptions of current women administrators in Maine were examined, with the hope that the knowledge generated from the inquiry would generate new insights into how some women have been

able to overcome those barriers, and others have not, while also informing policymakers of the supports needed for overcoming the barriers. The sample in this study consisted of six female administrators working in the Maine public educational system.

Background and Context

Navigating the complex problems that face today's society requires reflective leaders with knowledge, vision, and political astuteness. Leaders possessing those diverse skill sets are scarce, but desperately needed to successfully lead countries, businesses, and organizations. Despite the fact that women make up half the population and give birth to the entire population, stark gender gaps persist in leadership positions.

Ilene Lang, president and chief executive officer of Catalyst, (2010)

notes:

The latest data reveals leadership gaps across all Fortune 500 industries and a glacial rate of progress for women in business. Women constitute nearly half the total workforce, earn 57 percent of Bachelor's degrees, 60 percent of Master's degrees, and control or influence 73 percent of the consumer decisions in America. Yet among Fortune 500 companies, women make up less than three percent of CEOs and hold roughly 15 percent of Board seats. And in 2009, women made up only 6.3 percent of executive officer top earning positions within the Fortune 500. These inequities don't just hurt women. They harm families, employers, and the U.S. economy. (p. 2)

She further explains:

Catalyst Bottom Line research found that Fortune 500 companies with more women corporate officers, on average, financially outperformed those with fewer, and the same holds true for Fortune 500 companies with more women on their boards of directors. On average, companies with more women on their board of directors significantly outperformed those with fewer women by 53 percent on Return on Equity, 42 percent on Return on Sales, and a whopping 66 percent on Return on Invested Capital. (p. 12)

Lang notes (2010) "women's representation in leadership has remained flat over time, regardless of industry" (p. 2). Excluding potentially well-qualified leaders by having women in limited administrative positions is not in the best interest of society. In an interview with Kay and Shipman (2014), Christine Lagarde who runs the International Monetary Fund, asserted that having women in leadership positions at the top of organizations benefits the world economy.

Men have controlled much of women's lives until recently (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). The United States has yet to elect a woman president. Women in the United States did not gain the right to vote until 1920. Of the 195 independent countries in the world, women lead only 17 of those countries (Sandberg, 2013). Women hold 20 percent of seats in parliaments globally. Of the Fortune 500 CEOs, just 23 (4.6 percent) are women (Catalyst, 2015). Lang notes that one can predict if those numbers exist in Fortune 500 businesses, then they are present in smaller businesses (Lang, 2010). Women fill 19.4 percent of the elected legislative officials in the United States

(<http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/>, 2015). In the state of Maine, the statistics are slightly better, with 29.6% of the elected legislative officials being women (<http://www.ncsl.org>, 2014). “The pipeline that supplies the educated workforce is chock-full of women at the entry level, but by the time that same pipeline is filling leadership positions, it is overwhelmingly stocked with men” (Sandberg, 2013, p. 15). “A truly equal world would be one where women ran half our countries and companies and men ran half our homes” (Sandberg, 2013, p. 7).

In the field of education, the statistics are equally disparate. Nationally, as of the 2011-12 school year, 76.3 percent of PreK-12 educators were women (Goldring, 2013). If gender equity existed, the ratios would remain the same through the administrative level of superintendent; however, the proportions are inversely related: 52.4 percent of principals were female; 47.6 percent were male. Most of female principals serve at the elementary level (63.8 percent female; 36.2 percent male). At the high-school level, the gender imbalance becomes more noticeable with only 30.1 percent of the principals being female.

When an examination is done of the superintendency, the imbalance becomes more obvious. There is an increasing need in the United States, and in Maine, for more educators to aspire to the superintendency as there is a shortage of superintendents nationwide (Sutton, Jobe, McCord, Jordan, & Jordan, 2008). As in other leadership positions, there is a disproportionate amount of male to female superintendents nationwide and in Maine. Dana & Bourisaw (2006) explain:

In the general culture of the United States, masculine culture prevails not only in most organizations, but also in most public schools and their school communities. It appears that the challenges for women who wish to ascend to the

superintendency are, indeed, major in terms of the socio-cultural, political, and religious ideologies that exist and that have conditioned others in their attitudes, opinions, prejudices, and discriminations (p. 65).

Sandberg (2013) says that “our culture needs to find a robust image of female success that is first, not male, and second, not a white woman on the phone, holding a crying baby” (p. 49). More powerful images of strong female superintendents are needed to impact the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency. In 1909, when Ella Flagg Young became the first woman superintendent of the Chicago schools, she believed the parity between men and women would soon be achieved:

Women are destined to rule the schools of every city...In the near future we will have more women than men in the executive charge of the vast educational system. It is a woman's natural field, and she is no longer to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership. It will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show critics and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man. (Stephens, 2009, p. 50)

Over a hundred years later, Young's vision has yet to be realized. According to The American School Superintendent 2010 Decennial Study, the percentage of female superintendents has increased to 24.1 percent, the highest percentage ever reported (Kowalski & McCord, 2011). That is fairly consistent with the ratio currently in Maine as there are 130 superintendents: 103 (79 percent) are male and 27 (21 percent) are female. Although the percentage is on the increase, the continued disparity is cause for concern. “The pool of female leaders may be deep and wide, but few are able to make the tough trip upstream” (Dana, 2006, p. 83).

With a significant disproportion of male to female superintendents in Maine and nationwide, and with a limited job applicant pool for most superintendent positions, that gender imbalance is not helping reduce the superintendent shortage. There is scarce information as to the barriers preventing females in Maine from seeking and obtaining superintendent positions.

Critics argue that the majority of the literature in the field of educational administration is from the male perspective. There is an underrepresentation of women in research (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). According to Brown and Irby (2005), dissertations that include the study of women comprised approximately nine percent of all leadership dissertations completed between 1985 and 2005. More research is needed to learn about women's experiences, and not to try and compare them against males' experiences (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Brown and Irby (2005) indicate that the more "we know about women in leadership roles, how they obtain their positions, and how they have become successful, the greater the likelihood of increasing their numbers in the field" (as cited in Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 34). Catalyst, the leading nonprofit organization working globally to advance women and business "believes that until women achieve parity in pay and business leadership, they will be marginalized in every other arena" (Lang, 2010, p. 2).

There are many women who have attained the educational requirements and training needed for administrative positions, including the superintendency. However, women are not serving in superintendent positions in Maine or at the national level at the same proportion as men. That underrepresentation is a concern at a time when the leadership style of women is needed more than ever to navigate our schools through the

myriad, ever-increasing demands and mandates in education. “Our schools need to move toward more caring and innovative organizations using practices that are prevalent with women leaders” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 105).

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological interview study was to examine six women administrators’ perceptions regarding the barriers that exist for women seeking the superintendency, and the supports needed to overcome those barriers in Maine. To shed light on the problem, the following research questions were examined:

1. What do female administrators perceive as external barriers to achieving the superintendency?
2. What do female administrators perceive as internal barriers to achieving the superintendency?
3. What do female administrators perceive to be the needed supports for women to access and be successful in the superintendency in Maine?

Research Approach

The focus of this study was the experiences and perceptions of six female administrators. The participants were two current female superintendents, two who seek the superintendency, but have not secured a position, and two female administrators who have no aspirations for the superintendency. This investigation used qualitative research methods. Phenomenological in-depth interviews were the primary method of data collection, which included three interviews with each participant. Each participant was identified by a pseudonym, and all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Coding categories were developed, and data were triangulated.

Significance of the Study

Policymakers in Maine need to recognize the unique challenges of females aspiring to the superintendency in order to provide supports and remedies that may lead to more parity in the superintendency. According to researchers, the superintendency is one of the most male-dominated executive positions in the United States and remains, for the most part, patriarchal (Glass, 2000; Bjork, 1999; Dana, 2006). Men are 40 times more likely to advance to the position of superintendent of schools than are women (Skrla, 2000). According to Marshall (1997, ix-xi):

Policy researchers and analysts have gained and retained legitimacy by focusing on the problems and methods identified by powerful people. Those with a different focus are silenced, declared irrelevant, postponed, cooped, 'put on the back burner' . . . or otherwise ignored. Policies - authoritative agreements among powerful people about how things should be - have been made without a feminist critical glance. . . . Policymakers and analysts need to pause in order to recognize how issues of gender, the needs of particular groups like the urban poor, women, and non-dominant nationalities are left out of educational policy analyses.

At a time when there is a shortage of qualified candidates seeking the superintendency, barriers must be removed, so the untapped resource of aspiring female superintendents can be fully utilized. All schools in Maine deserve to be led by transformational leaders. In past years, Maine was a performance leader on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests in reading, math, writing, and science. Recently, however, Maine's NAEP rank has dropped from a leading state to an average state. Other states have accelerated; Maine's NAEP scores have stalled. According to a

report released in 2013 by Educate Maine, only 32 percent of the state's fourth graders, and 39 percent of its eighth graders read at proficiency (Clews). Limiting the superintendency to half the population impedes progress, and prevents access to potential transformational leaders needed in Maine schools to prepare students to be workforce ready and able to compete in a global society.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In this chapter, a literature review outlines various issues that deal with women and the superintendency. Initially, the review examines how women in leadership positions fare across all industries, and then the focus narrows to women in the superintendency with an examination of statistics of women in the educational field, external barriers to be overcome, internal barriers to be overcome, and supports needed for women accessing the superintendency.

Women in Leadership Positions

“Scholarly research suggests that the best problem-solving doesn’t come from a group of the best individual problem-solvers, but from a diverse team whose members complement each other. That’s an argument for leadership that is varied in every way – in gender, race, economic background and ideology” (Kristof, 2013, p. 1). The Global Gender Gap Report released in 2013 by the World Economic Forum identifies how equitably countries divide their resources between women and men in four key areas: health, education, economics, and politics. The United States ranks an embarrassing 23rd out of 136 countries in the status of women (Hausmann, 2013). That is a decline from the U.S. position of 17th in 2011 (Hausmann, 2013).

In the report, *Five Challenges, One Solution: Women*, Bohnet, Ibarra and Lang (2013) assert:

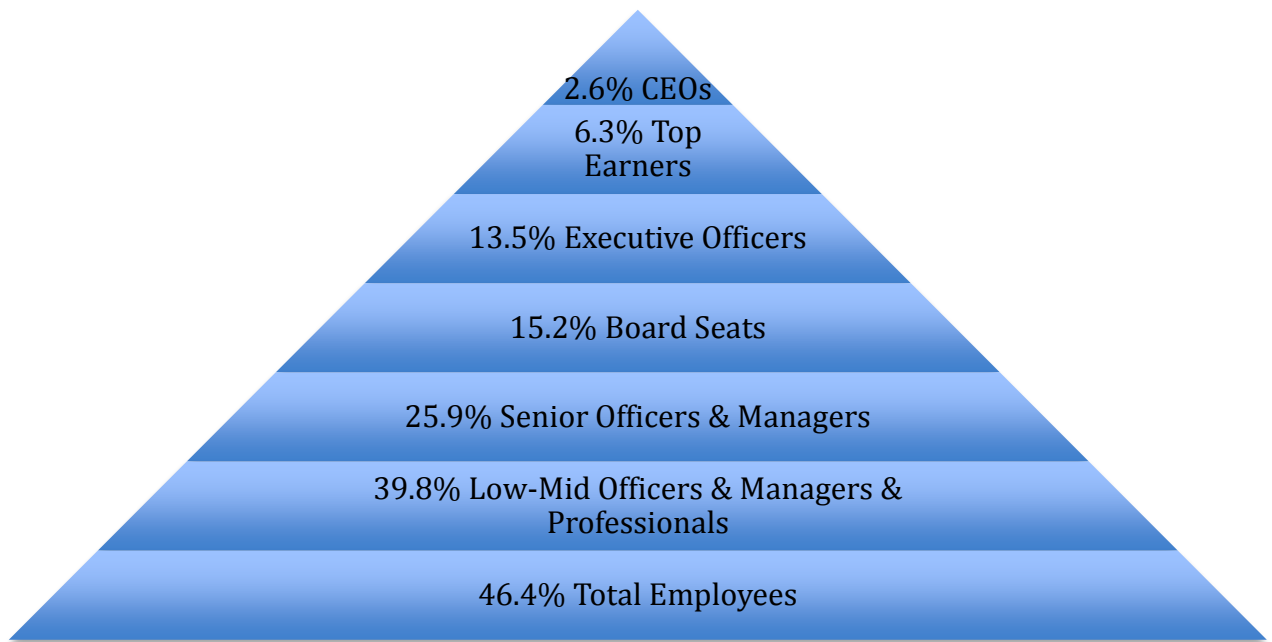
The business case for closing gender gaps is palpable. Due to demographic change, the current fertility rates in many developed countries imply that the labor force is shrinking. Competition for talent is stiffer than ever and closing gender

gaps in economic opportunity is paramount to replenishing the labor force. In addition, women have reversed the gender gap in education and are now better educated than men in many countries. No organization wants to forego the best-educated talent simply because it happens to be female. (p. 11)

“Women help the bottom line of companies, companies want female talent, but somehow the pipeline to the top is still broken” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 205).

Companies with a majority-female board of directors earn a 26 percent higher return on invested capital (Kristof, 2013). “Female members of Congress get significantly more legislation passed than do the men, and work more often with members of the other party” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 198). Regardless of those positive outcomes, the evidence is not creating quick change: the gender imbalance remains a challenge across most sectors. Lang (2010) notes that women’s representation in Fortune 500 leadership positions remains primarily in the lower ranks and lower-paying positions. The magnitude of the lack of women leaders in the top leadership positions is displayed in figure 2.1 and figure 2.2.

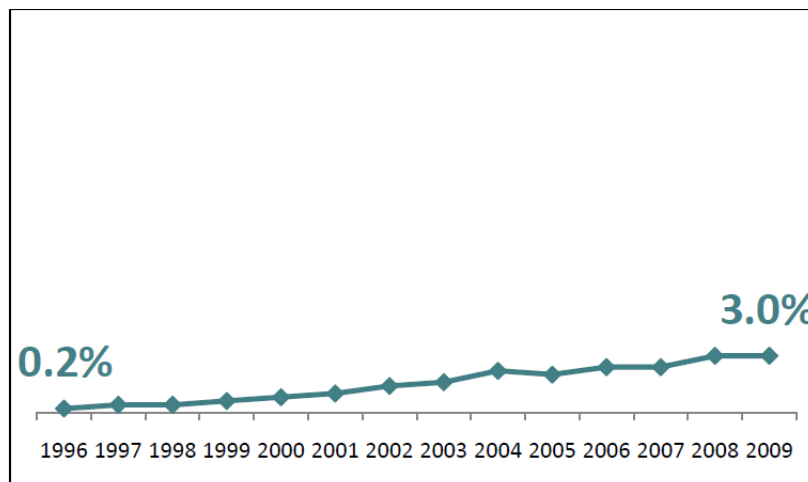
Figure 2.1: Women in Fortune 500 Companies (Lang, 2010, p. 3)



Furthermore, as Lang (2010) reveals, women's growth in Fortune 500 leadership has been minimal over time:

Figure 2.2

Fortune 500 Women CEOs¹⁰



2.6%

Fortune 500 Women CEOs
as of September 23, 2010

Women corporate officers of Fortune 500 organizations had a slow increase between 1996 and 2009, growing from 10 percent in 1996 to 13.5 percent in 2009. The growth was not steadily upward: in 2008, 15.7 percent of the officers were females (Lang, 2010).

Even in female-prevalent industries such as retail and insurance, the same underrepresentation exists. In the retail industry, women held only 18.2 percent of board seats and 18.5 percent of corporate officer positions in 2009. As Kay and Shipman (2013) report:

We now know this discrepancy isn't caused by lack of competence. Over the past fifty years, women in the United States have reversed the education gap and turned it in their favor, now earning more undergraduate degrees, more graduate degrees, and even more PhDs than men. A half dozen global studies, from Pepperdine to the IMF, now show that companies that do employ women in large numbers outperform their competitors by every measure of profitability. (p. 86-87)

When women are given an equal opportunity, the equity gap lessens. For example, in 1970, women musicians comprised only 5 percent of the musicians in the top symphony orchestras. By the mid-1990s, that had increased to 25 percent. The gains were attributed to a change in hiring practice. During auditions, a screen was erected so the judges could not critique a performance by appearance or gender. Based solely on sound, women began to be hired in greater numbers (Kay & Shipman, 2013).

Additionally Bohnet, Ibarra, and Lang (2013) note:

Research consistently shows that stereotypes rule when evaluating others, making gender-biased discrimination in hiring, promotion and job assignments difficult to

overcome-short of blind evaluation procedures . . . Individuals cannot help but be influenced by stereotypes. “Seeing is believing,” and as long as more women are not in leadership positions, associating leadership with women will continue to be difficult. Indeed, when MBA students are given an otherwise identical case description, they tend to evaluate the CEO named Jane more harshly than the one named John. This has been called the “think-leader-think-male” phenomenon, and it constitutes a serious barrier to women’s advancement. (p. 11)

The same phenomena exist in the field of education. Glass (1992) reports that in the early 1990s, the superintendency was reported to be one of the most male-dominated executive positions in the United States. People in general prefer the status quo, and Dana and Bourisaw (2006) note:

They are white males in their fifties. They always have been. Most of them are successful in their roles, and as Americans, we like to replicate success. So we hire more of the same -- much more of the same. If the system isn’t broken, why fix it? The utilitarian answer is, it is an issue of supply. The altruistic response is our schools need to move toward more caring and innovative organizations using practices that are prevalent with women leaders. (p. 105)

Stephens (2009) analyzed the 50 largest school districts in the United States (1972-2002), and reported that women are filling positions in notable numbers in every position with the exception of the superintendency. In the study, she observed:

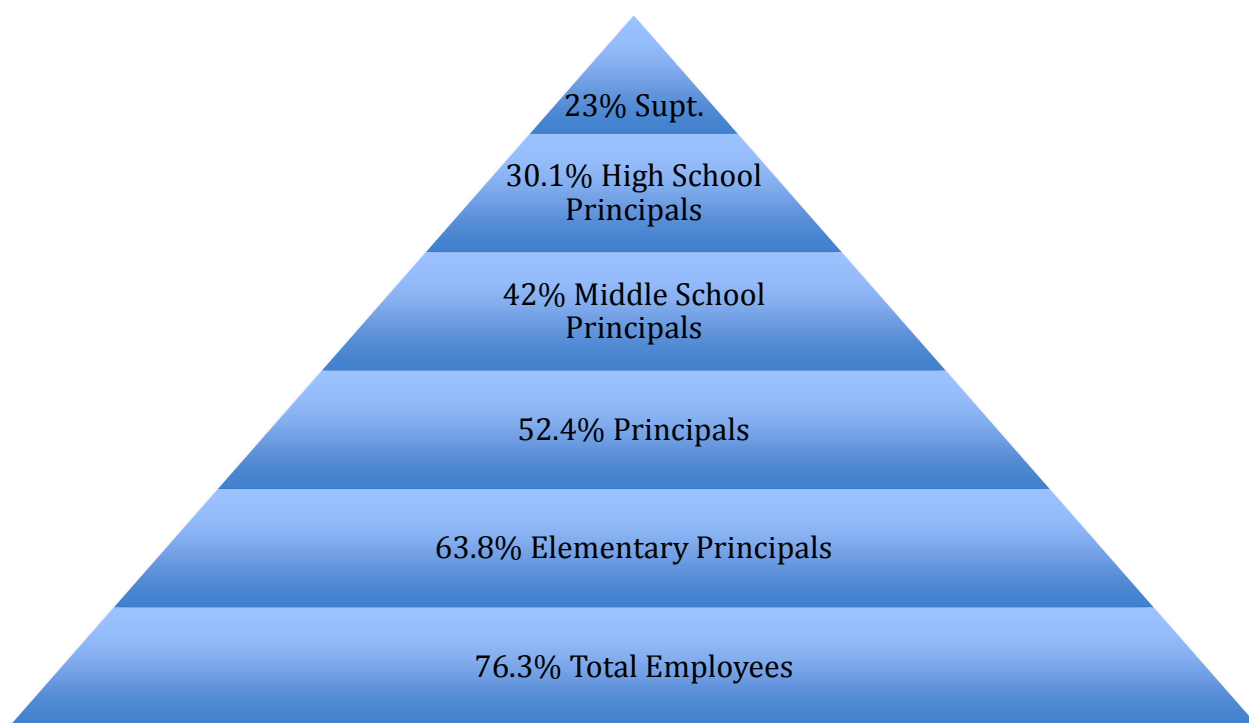
...the increases in the number and percentage of women holding positions as superintendent in the largest school districts are distinctly modest, from zero (0%) in 1972 to eight (19.5%) in 2002. Statistically significant or not, that hardly

matches the advances made in other positions, nor does the pattern of increases suggest that women will approach parity any time soon. The position of superintendent remains outside the pattern of advances made in school administration, and persistently, overwhelmingly male, at least in the districts that participated in the study. (2009, p. 55)

The data show that the superintendency is the most elusive of administrative positions for

females to secure (Goldring, 2013) as seen in figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3: Women in Administrative Positions (2011-12)



As previously mentioned, the labor force is shrinking. Furthermore, it is frequently heard that there is a leadership crisis in education. Many administrators are retiring, and districts are worried about the quantity and quality of applicants that exist to replace these

retirees. Superintendents from areas in rural Maine report that it is a challenge to recruit and retain highly qualified staff (Silvernail & Linet, 2014). Results from the report show the following:

Three of the other top 10 challenges for both rural and non-rural school districts deal with personnel topics:

1. The availability of special-education personnel.
2. Being able to offer competitive salaries and benefits.
3. Recruiting and retaining high quality building administrators.

Relatively speaking, being able to provide competitive salaries and benefits is particularly challenging for rural school districts (it ranks fifth-highest), while recruiting and retaining high-quality building personnel ranks fifth-highest for non-rural school districts. (p. 10)

While recruiting high-quality building administrators is a concern for superintendents, those are the administrators that will be the future superintendents in Maine. The lack of potential qualified applicants at the building level is also currently an issue at the superintendent level as reflected in the table below. The five-year average for the number of total applicants for individual superintendent openings in Maine was 7.77 (MSMA, 2015).

Table 2.1: Superintendent Applicant Pool in Maine

School Year	Average Number of Applicants
2010-2011	7.94
2011-2012	6.09
2012-2013	7.14
2013-14	8.2
2014-15	9.5
Average Per School Year	7.77

“School administration programs now enroll more women than men, but there remains a comparatively low number of women employed as school leaders. These enrollment figures indicate that for women aspiration is not the issue; opportunity is” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 108). Many female educators are not selected for administrative positions, even when more qualified. Women superintendents are more productive, work longer hours, and have higher entry scores to preparatory programs than men. Women applicants tend to be older when applying for administrative positions, and have more years of service (Dana & Bourisaw 2006). Dana & Bourisaw (2006) report that women enter the superintendency approximately eight to fifteen years later than men do.

Once women decide to move into administrative positions, they tend to go into the elementary principalship, while men move into the principalship in middle and high schools. Dana & Bourisaw (2006) note that men are three times more likely than women to become principals, 2.5 times more likely to become assistant principals, and 2.5 times

more likely than women to go directly to the principalship, without ever becoming an assistant principal.

At a time when implementing federal and state initiatives such as teacher evaluation and proficiency-based diplomas is daunting, the most effective leaders, whether male or female, should be encouraged to lead school districts. Women's leadership style may be more effective in leading in the 21st century. Stephens (2009) said,

The paradigm shift in leadership is depicted in business management literature as a shift toward a more flexible organizational structure based on units that are more lateral and cooperative. It is an organizational structure that values leadership over management and emphasizes collaboration, consensus, building and empowerment.” (p. 51)

“Both men and women superintendents believe that women are advantaged by their instructional and interpersonal strengths” (Grogan & Brunner, 2005b). “The increased focus on academics and accountability should make the job more attractive to more women who tend to have more focus on curriculum, teaching and learning” (Brunner & Grogan, 2007, p. 88). “Women are more apt to utilize a more collective leadership style, which relies on the notion of collective power: a focus on relationships, events, and activities... that contribute to organizational direction-setting and goal achievement” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 45). Collective leadership is a process that requires “thinking together” (Follett, 1998). “... all together we may create a group idea, an idea that will be better than any of our ideas alone, moreover, which will be better than all of our ideas added together” (Follett, 1998, p. 24). Through collective leadership and “using listening skills effectively, collaborating, and including stakeholders in the decision

making, women are more able to ‘transform’ the culture” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 175), and create “cognitive shifts” in participants (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 104). “Women administrators are likely to introduce and support strong programs in staff development, to encourage innovation, and to experiment with instructional approaches”(Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 18). “Women leaders are much more likely than men to keep student learning as a central goal of leadership” (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 89). “Women add value because they bring different perspectives to the table” (Bohnet, Ibarra & Lang, 2013, p. 11).

Many extraordinary challenges face our world as well as our nation and we can’t afford to miss or let ourselves ignore anyone’s talent or ability and promise, who can give us good leadership. The world as we see it right now needs anyone who can contribute to his or her fullest measure of thinking and brain power to help make our world and country better. (Stephens, 2009, p. 62)

Barriers to Women in Leadership Roles

There is extensive literature about barriers that exist for women seeking leadership positions. Called “barrier research,” it “opened the question of female approaches to leadership and to seeing the world from a female lens, as opposed to comparing male and female behaviors within a previously identified male paradigm” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 33). The Oxford English Dictionary defines a barrier as a “circumstance or obstacle that keeps people or things apart or prevents communication or progress” (OED, n. 1.1). What follows in Table 2.2 is a framework focused on the external and internal barriers women have identified as preventing them from not applying for, or from obtaining the job of superintendent.

Table 2.2 Research Framework

External Barriers	Components	Definitions
Gender Bias/Prejudice	<p><u>Sexism:</u> developed from sex-role expectations within different cultures and subcultures and in the ensuing stereotypes that develop into descriptors of and expectations for the behaviors of men and women (Dana and Bourisaw, 2013, p.17)</p> <p><u>Gender Structuring:</u> “extent of access to opportunity for socialization to leadership in organizations and practices employed in the preparation, mentoring, recruitment, and selection of women for school and school district leadership positions (Dana and Bourisaw, 2013, p. 21). May result in discriminatory recruitment and selection practices, advancement opportunities, power in making decisions, and other norms and expectations (p. 25)</p>	<p>Unfair difference in the treatment of men or women because of their sex (Macmillan Dictionary).</p> <p>The treatment can be intentional or unintentional, overt or covert.</p>
Being Place Bound	<p><u>Spouse</u> is unwilling to move</p> <p><u>Child care:</u> Inability to move due to child care</p>	Being unable to move geographically to seek the superintendency and increase odds of obtaining a position.
Cultural Expectations	<u>Sex-role stereotypes</u> , reinforcing discriminatory practices (Bolman & Deal, 2003)	Sociological expectations reinforced by a culture (certain things in groups are shared or held in common” (Schein, 1992, p. 8) that shape a person’s identity and experiences. These may be positive or negative, and may undermine an individual’s ability to development into an autonomous adult.
Non-support of Other Women	<u>Sexism</u> perpetuated by women	Women not supporting women in achieving leadership positions. “Other women do not generally support their women superintendents” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2013, p. 73).
Board Bias	<u>“School board member demographics</u> can have a negative impact on women and minorities in superintendent selection” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2013, p.115).	Bias by school boards to prefer and be more likely to hire a male superintendent.

Internal Barriers	Components	Definitions
Self-Confidence	Failure to take a risk or “lean in” Over thinking situations or actions Cultural expectations of role of women Negative stereotypes of women	A feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities, and judgment.
Perfectionism	Feeling the need to be almost 100% qualified before pursuing the superintendency	“Predilection for setting extremely high standards and being displeased with anything else” (Webster’s 11 th New College Dictionary, 1995, p. 816).
Choice	Choosing to opt out or not aspire to the superintendency	An act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities.

External Barriers

A more in-depth examination of the external barriers referenced by research is explored. The following barriers are examined more closely: gender prejudice/bias, being place bound, cultural expectations, women’s non-support of women, and Board bias.

Gender Prejudice/Bias: Dana and Bourisaw (2006) report that gender prejudice/bias is number one on the list of barriers to women achieving the superintendency. “Most people would agree that gender bias exists...in others. We, however, would never be swayed by such superficial and unenlightened opinions. Except we are” (Sandberg, 2013, p. 151). “Our culture still encourages blue and pink thinking, behavior, and marketing” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 92). Sandberg (2013) notes that gender bias is even reinforced by public policy:

The U.S. Census Bureau considers mothers the designated parent, even when both parents are present in the home. When mothers care for their children, it's parenting, but when fathers care for their children, the government deems it a "child care arrangement." (p.107)... we needed to be able to talk about gender without people thinking we were crying for help, asking for special treatment, or about to sue. (p. 145)

In a 2012 study (Moss-Racusin), scientists were given identical resumes for a lab manager position – except one was from a male and the other was from a female student. The male received higher marks from both male and female scientists. Sandberg (2013) notes that women do better in gender-blind evaluations; unfortunately, acquiring a superintendency requires face-to-face interviews.

Being Place Bound: Many women consider themselves place bound. Oftentimes women feel obligated to live in the area of their husbands' jobs because frequently they feel their husbands' work is tied to the community in which they live. Thus women often feel restricted to applying for positions within driving distances of their homes (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Keedy, Bjork, Winter, Rinehart, & Ricciardi, 2007; Silverman, 2004, Haack, 2010). "Being place bound proves to be a very frustrating dilemma for married women with children or unmarried women with family or other commitments that cannot be met from a distance" (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, pg. 156). Dana (2006) notes that because of competition for lower administrative vacancies, women who are place bound may have limited opportunities to enter into an administrative position. Watkins, Herrin, and McDonald (1998) note:

Few women have the luxury of relocating in order to attain job advancement.

Ninety percent of women reported they would relocate only if their husbands secured employment. Seventy-five percent of men would relocate for a better job with or without the spouse's employment. (p. 22)

That provides evidence of the difference in ingrained societal expectations for males and females. Additionally, a single woman may become place bound when factors such as childcare, provided by family members, limits them to a particular geographical area.

Cultural Expectations: “Even though married women now routinely work and progress from entry-level jobs to jobs of greater responsibility and leadership opportunity, a sizable number remain bound by cultural expectations -- filling the expected roles of wives, meeting the responsibilities of domestic labor, caretaking of children”(Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 157). Many times women will have guilt or internal tension between the personal desire to move up the ladder and the desire to focus on the children, husband, and home.

Such cultural expectations influence the way women lead, as noted by Lips:

Because of women's socialization as nurturers, the primary modus operandi for them is to develop and use power “with” others in fulfilling their leadership responsibilities. They achieve power “with” others through the meaningful engagement of others in the decision-making processes of the school district. Lips asserts that women pass through decades of socialization, using a communication type of “sharing ideas, turn-taking in speech, and listening,” and men are socialized to develop a communication style described as “asserting ideas, interrupting, and holding the floor.”(as cited in Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 69)

For most of the twentieth century, the majority of superintendents were male, and utilized authoritarian styles of leadership. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) note that in the twenty-first century, with all of the educational reforms needed, it has required transactional/transformational superintendents who are change agents to successfully lead their districts through systemic change. Women's style of shared decision-making, consensus building, and collaboration are well suited for that type of needed approach (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). However, even though there is more demand currently for a woman's style of leadership, the percentage of women in the superintendency has not significantly increased.

Change is slow to occur, and difficult to accept. Sandberg (2013) notes that there are differences in the behavior of males and females, and differences in how people perceive them. "First, for the subordinates who have been systematically culturalized to prefer male leadership (bosses), there is a jealousy factor that surfaces when a woman moves outside the cultural norms and assumes a position previously known as a "man's job," particularly at the CEO level" (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 167). "Employees will state a preference for men as leaders because of the perception that they are stronger and give firm directions" (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 174). Those cultural expectations become a barrier to be overcome for those females seeking the superintendency.

Women's Non-Support of Women: Due to cultural expectations, many women are even conditioned to prefer a male superintendent. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) note how many women do not support other women in achieving the superintendency (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). When the majority of superintendent positions are held by men, "then simply observing who is in charge day after day, year after year, is a conditioning process" (Dana

and Bourisaw, p.161). Changing sex-role expectations is not an easy task, but one that must be overcome if more women are to fill top leadership positions.

Furthermore, even women within the superintendency do not always support each other. Sandberg (2013) notes that “women are not just victims of sexism, they can also be perpetrators” (p. 164). Researchers (Matthews, 1995) have identified those female non-supporters as isolates and individualists. The isolates detach themselves from equity issues, not believing that sexism exists. The individualists do not believe in supporting or promoting women or becoming involved in order to correct the sexual imbalance in leadership. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) assert that such women do not mentor other women, and use excuses such as not having the time, or that no potential candidates within their own school district need support. “Former U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright has a saying that there is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p.182).

Board Bias: Another external barrier to overcome is board bias: most school boards prefer having male superintendents as claimed by Dana & Bourisaw (2006):

Men have culturally deep support from school boards and faculty in positively biased ways and are more frequently the “winners” of the administrative positions, primarily because school board members see the potential for men taking a strong stand and successfully exerting power “over” others in times needing strong leadership. School board members often fail to see the actual leadership efforts and results of successful women superintendents, perhaps because those achievements are not obvious in terms of “winning” and losing. It’s that “nurturing thing” – the cultural conditioning of women” (p. 176).

Gupton and Slick (1996) noted that the main barrier to women's advancement to the superintendency is the unstated but understood requirement that one must look and act like those already in power. Sandberg (2013) says it is time to "disrupt the status quo" (p. 146).

Internal Barriers

There are also internal barriers that obstruct females from being successful superintendents. In this study, the researcher will examine to what extent those barriers exist for Maine women seeking the superintendency. The most frequent internal barriers found in the literature involve self-confidence, perfectionism, and choice. They are the demons that must be acknowledged and defeated if women are to become superintendents.

Self-Confidence: Kay and Shipman (2014) define self-confidence for women as follows:

It is how we each create a confident interaction with the world that builds on who we are as women and as individuals. It is how we marry listening to the opinions of others without apologizing for our own. It is how we ask for votes, or donations, or support, while taming the voice that tells us we are being self-aggrandizing. It is how we reconcile what we both thought for more than a year was an irreconcilable paradox: our reluctance to speak up and take center stage, with the absolute need to make our voices heard. (p. 200)

Self-confidence in women looks different than it does in men. For men it often displays itself as "the drive to win no matter the cost. The boundless craving for risk. The propensity for quick decisions. The emphasis on high-decibel and high-energy interaction" (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 194). Kay & Shipman (2014) say in both genders

it involves “doing, working, deciding, and mastering” (p. 194). For many women, the lack of confidence prevents them from fulfilling their potential.

“We hold ourselves back in ways both big and small, by lacking self-confidence, by not raising our hands, and by pulling back when we should be leaning in” (Sandberg, 2013, p. 8). Sandberg goes on to say that men assume when they fail it is because of something they did not do, such as not studying enough for a test, whereas women are more apt to think it is due to their lack of ability. Women must learn to accept criticism and failure, reflect on the lessons learned, and not allow them to have a negative impact on their self-image. Women need to be encouraged to take risks, make mistakes, and succeed at tasks. The result will be an increase in self-confidence, which is critically needed in women:

Leadership and Management, in the United Kingdom, conducted a study in 2011, simply asking British women, in a series of questions, how confident they feel in their professions. Not very, as it turns out. Half of the women reported feelings of self-doubt about their performance and careers, while less than a third of male respondents reported self-doubt. (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p.14)

“It’s not usually a genuine lack of competence that holds most of us back from making that choice; the hurdle is a skewed perception of our abilities” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p.138). “There’s just a natural sort of feeling among the women that they will not get a prestigious job so why bother trying” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p.17). Haack states that such lack of confidence causes women to question their skill sets or “see the role as being a man’s job” (Haack, 2010, p. 30). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) note that “girls look to others for their self-esteem and boys search within themselves” (p. 97). “Confidence

that is dependent on other people's praise is a lot more vulnerable than confidence built from our own achievements (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p.133).

“Confidence requires a growth mind-set because believing that skills can be learned leads to doing new things. It encourages risk and it supports resilience when we fail” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 128). Both resilience and risk-taking are needed to be a successful superintendent. “The growth mind-set can help us recast failures as critical learning experiences” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 128). That is essential for female administrators to realize, as failure is inevitable at some point in administrative careers. “And the confidence gap is an additional lens through which to consider why it is women don't lean in. Even when we are prepared to tolerate the personal disruption that comes with aiming high, even when we have plenty of ambition, we fundamentally doubt ourselves” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 21). Building self-confidence is crucial for any person seeking a top leadership position.

Perfectionism: Sandberg (2013) reports that most women apply for open jobs only if they think they meet 100 percent of the criteria listed, while men apply if they meet 60 percent of the requirements. Women must not wait to feel that they are perfectly qualified, but must use the power they already possess. They must learn to take risks, and not be so afraid of failing.

Christine Lagarde, who runs the International Monetary Fund, said, “Of course it is part of the confidence issue to be overly prepared and to be rehearsed and to make sure that you are going to get it all and not make a mistake” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 12). Dana and Bourisaw conclude that girls “have a greater fear of looking foolish in front of others, more concern about being perfect” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 97). Kay &

Shipman note that the “perfectionism keeps us from action” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 107). Many women in education aspiring for the superintendency may never feel they are “perfect” enough to seek the position.

“The irony is that perfectionism actually inhibits achievement. Bob Sullivan and Hugh Thompson, authors of *The Plateau Effect*, call it the “enemy of the good,” leading to piles of useless, unfinished work, and hours of wasted time, because, in the pursuit of it, we put off difficult tasks waiting to be perfectly ready before we start. (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 107)

It is far worse to do nothing than to seek the superintendency and fail. Women must choose to act, so that they may have at least have a chance at success. Without action, failure is certain.

Choice: Haack (2010) observes that “women make the internal decision to select out due to reasons of personal lifestyle choices such as inability to relocate and the balancing of family and career” (p. 28). Some women who are qualified struggle with maintaining balance in their lives, and are not willing to make sacrifices when faced with choices. When they do choose the option to seek the superintendency, Freeley and Seinfeld (2012) conclude that “they should also reflect on their ability to balance numerous factors, including one’s personal and professional life, technical and soft skills, the needs of various constituencies including the Board of Education, and one’s role as a nurturing leader while still holding others accountable” (p. 95).

That choice is made more difficult due to the fact that equity has not been achieved in the home. Sandberg reports “when a husband and wife both are employed full-time, the mother does 40 percent more child care and about 30 percent more housework than the

father. A 2009 survey found that only 9 percent of people in dual-earner marriages said that they shared housework, child care, and breadwinning evenly” (Sandberg, 2013, p. 106-107).

Supports Needed

From an early age, “boys are less well prepared than girls in many areas but are more frequently encouraged and accepted into leadership positions” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 95). Bjork notes: “The absence of mentor relationships, role models, and networks is frequently cited in the literature as a primary reason why women and minorities do not go into the superintendency” (Bjork, 2000, p. 157). Such mentors are needed to problem solve in various areas such as finances, personnel, or board dealings. Because a school board, community, and staff will be observing the “glass house of the superintendency,” and quick to throw stones, there is a need for support for the person in the position. A new superintendent should be expected to have multiple mentors, as no one person is strong in all aspects of the superintendency. Those mentors could include retired superintendents who are willing to support a novice superintendent.

Dana & Bourisaw (2006) assert that women are in need of sponsors, “recognized citizens willing to advocate hiring them as school superintendents,” and those sponsorships will require more time than they do for men, simply because it is not an automatic practice for women. Sponsors “are successful people who understand how to develop effective relationships and networks with other successful people” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 188).

Networking is also critical for women wanting to become superintendents. Dana & Bourisaw (2006) report, due to the gender disadvantage, that it is essential for women to

pursue active participation in networks that provide information, professional development, and advocacy. Networking supplies needed knowledge and insight from other superintendents, along with general advice.

The advantages of networking are clear; particularly for the novice, networking is essential. Through networks, the novice can become acquainted with school superintendents who can provide knowledge and insight for them in their efforts to maintain positive and supportive board of education relationships as well as succeeding in other contexts in which the novice works. (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 203)

Stanford professor Deborah Gruenfeld says, “We need to look out for one another, work together, and act more like a coalition. As individuals, we have relatively low levels of power. Working together, we are fifty percent of the population and therefore have real power” (Sandberg, 2013, p. 160). Women need to be encouraged and supported as they aspire to higher-level leadership positions. “When a man, imaging his future career, looks in the mirror, he sees a senator staring back. A woman would never be so presumptuous. She needs a push to see that image” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 206).

There is little research on women and the superintendency in the state of Maine. The gender disparity is real: in 2014, only 21 percent of the superintendents in Maine were female. Continued research is needed until equality is achieved, especially at a time when the applicant pool is attracting only an average of six to eight applicants for each superintendent opening. Current research can become a catalyst for change by revealing the challenges and supports that are needed for women in the state. This study seeks to identify the barriers that exist in Maine for women, how some women are able to

overcome those barriers, and the supports needed for others to achieve the superintendency. Until parity is reached, advocates are needed to build awareness, expand opportunities, and enact change for women in Maine who seek the top leadership positions in school districts.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction: Problem/Questions

In 2014, approximately 21 percent (27 out of 130) of the superintendents in the state of Maine were women, leading to a disproportionate ratio of male to female superintendents (Burdin, 2014). It continues to be more difficult for women to become superintendents in Maine than it is for men. There are a variety of reasons for the underrepresentation of females. This study explored the experiences of female administrators to discover the external and internal barriers that exist for aspiring females seeking the superintendency in Maine, and what supports they perceived were needed to increase the representation of female superintendents in the state. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What do female administrators perceive as external barriers to achieving the superintendency?
2. What do female administrators perceive as internal barriers to achieving the superintendency?
3. What do female administrators perceive to be the needed supports for women to obtain and be successful in the superintendency in Maine?

This chapter contains the procedures used by the researcher to accomplish the purpose of the study, including the study design, study questions, the study sample, a brief biological sketch of the participants, the instrumentation, data collection procedures,

and data analysis procedures. Also included in the chapter are the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Methodological Overview

To explore the research questions, a qualitative approach was utilized, as the goal of this research was to dig deep and understand the meaning of the phenomenon of the lack of women in the superintendency. As Merriam suggests, “qualitative research is interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds. The primary goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). The study sought to capture the perspectives of six women in Maine, some who were able to overcome barriers and achieve the superintendency, while others were not. The researcher captured the essence of the women’s experiences through extensive interviewing, utilizing a phenomenological focus that Moustakas (1994) describes as the goal being to “develop patterns and relationships of meaning”(as cited in Creswell, 2009, p.13). The utilization of the three interviews allowed time for the participants to reflect between interviews, digging deeply to uncover the meaning of each individual’s experiences. Seidman further explains,

Phenomenological theory leads to an emphasis on exploring the meaning of peoples’ experiences in the context of their lives. Without context there is little possibility of exploring the meaning of an experience... It allows both the interviewer and participant to explore the participant’s experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning. (2013, p. 20)

The researcher was interested in investigating and analyzing the underlying socioeconomic, political, and cultural barriers preventing females from seeking and

obtaining the superintendency. In doing so, the researcher attempted to identify supports that might encourage more women to seek the superintendency, and to raise awareness of the current gender imbalance existing in the superintendency in Maine.

Research Context – Sampling Procedures

Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to focus on the particular characteristic (barriers and supports) of the population (female administrators) that best enabled the research questions to be answered. “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p.77). A non-random snowball procedure was used to select “information-rich cases for study in depth” to explore the barriers that existed for females aspiring to the superintendency (Patton, 2002, as cited in Merriam, p. 77). The 2014-2015 listing of superintendents was used to obtain a potential list of participants meeting the criteria: women currently serving in the superintendency.

The researcher consulted with Maine School Management Association (MSMA) to learn of potential interviewees, especially in the category of women administrators who aspire to be superintendents, but who have not obtained the position. Once a participant was identified, the researcher asked for further recommendations from that woman: each selected subject was asked to identify another. As the researcher was an assistant superintendent, she also used established contacts to inquire about women who were interested in the study. The goal was to interview two current female superintendents, two female administrators who aspired to the superintendency, and two female administrators who had no aspirations to the superintendency.

The Sample

To conduct this qualitative study, the researcher used a small, purposeful sample, utilizing six female participants from Maine who were current administrators in public schools. The sample studied was not representative of the population, so cannot be generalized.

The two superintendents interviewed had at least a year's experience in the superintendency in Maine. Maria was in her third year of being a superintendent in a district in central Maine. Mary was in her second year of being a superintendent in southern Maine.

Each of the two aspiring superintendents interviewed had applied for at least one superintendent opening. One participant continues to actively seek a superintendent position, while the other was working as a special ed director, and was not pursuing the superintendency during the study.

The two non-aspiring superintendents never applied for a superintendent opening, and do not aspire to become superintendents. Both were nearing retirement, and did not see themselves changing their minds about their career goals.

As unique and individual as they were in their personalities, interests, and goals for their future, they were all united by one commonality: they were female administrators in Maine trying to balance the demands of their personal lives with their desire to be strong leaders in education. None of the participants were working or lived north of Bangor, Maine; thereby, the sample is not representative of northern Maine. Following is a brief biographical profile of each of the participants.

The Participants

The six participants in the phenomenological interviews are identified by pseudonyms, as are their districts. Other than that effort to protect participant privacy, their words appear, in the quotations that follow, just as they were recorded. The participants are coded as present superintendent (S), aspiring superintendent (AS), or non-aspiring superintendent (NA). Table 3.1 gives an overview of the demographic data on each of the participants.

Table 3.1 Demographic Data on Participants

Participant Name	Category	Marital Status	Years Experience	Birth Order	County Participant Employed	Type of District
Maria	Superintendent (S)	Divorced	32	Oldest	Kennebec	Suburban
Mary	Superintendent (S)	Divorced	28	Third of Four	York	Rural
Victoria	Aspiring Superintendent (AS)	Married	19	Oldest	York	Suburban
Catherine	Aspiring Superintendent (AS)	Married	28	Youngest	Hancock	Rural
Diana	Non-aspiring (NA)	Divorced, Remarried	39	Oldest	Cumberland	Urban
Cleo	Non-aspiring (NA)	Married	32	Oldest	Androscoggin	Rural

Maria (S)

Maria is an independent woman who describes herself as a “finisher.” She currently is a superintendent in rural Maine. She is divorced and has three grown children who live out of state. When discussing her busy life as a superintendent, she does not feel she has much time left for hobbies. Previous to becoming a superintendent she enjoyed

exercising, and was an active crafter, knitter, spinner, weaver, furniture refinisher, cook, and reader. She now finds it hard for any of those activities because her superintendency is an “all-encompassing job.” She tries to find time to relax on the weekends, but often there are chores like house cleaning that must be done.

Maria grew up the oldest of three siblings. There were always high expectations, and there was never any doubt that she would go to college. She also had the responsibility of helping out with her younger siblings, and was considered the second mom in the family: she was eleven when her younger sister was born. On reflection, she felt that responsibility had an impact on her leadership skills. She has a vivid memory of her first leadership experience, being asked to be the captain of the safety guard. She said that having someone show confidence in her ability to lead at an early age had a lasting impact on her, and she would love to have the opportunity to ask the man that gave her that chance what he saw in her. Her first teaching job was teaching Sunday school, and in addition, she was the accompanist for her church choir.

Maria attended Lycoming College in Pennsylvania. She graduated with a major in English, and her certification in teaching. After moving to Maine, she received a master’s degree in literacy, and a certificate of advanced studies in educational leadership, both from the University of Southern Maine.

Mary (S)

Mary is a soft-spoken woman who is divorced with two adult children, currently in their twenties. Mary is new to the superintendency, and is in her second year as superintendent. When discussing her move from a very rural part of the state to a more suburban one, she was very reflective in her thoughts on her path to the superintendency.

In addition to her work life, she enjoys the outdoors, and confesses to liking the snow. She loves snowshoeing, camping, gardening, traveling, reading, and admits to a love/hate relationship with knitting. Mary is the third of four siblings, the only girl. She talked about having to learn to fend for herself at an early age with her brothers. Mary's parents were both educators: her father was an administrator, and her mother was a special education teacher. That influenced her decision to go into education. When speaking about leadership, she noted that leadership positions seem to find her. She was president of the drama department, member of the student council, and participated in band. As the stage manager in the drama club, she had an interesting reflection:

I am more comfortable with people looking back and realizing, "Oh, I get it....she's, you know, she did this, this and this or set this up so we would get there"...I can be out in front leading the charge, but I prefer to be putting everything in place and empowering people to do it. I guess, I'm not much for being in the limelight.

After high school, Mary attended University of Maine at Farmington. She had a dual major in education and special education. She received her master's degree from the University of Southern Maine, and is currently working on a doctorate from Walden University.

Victoria (AS)

Victoria accepted the invitation to become a participant in the interview study without hesitation in spite of her busy schedule. She is a working mom with three children under seven. Her busy life of work, children, husband, and working on an advanced degree, does not leave much time for hobbies, but she finds time to participate

in a breast cancer walk every year because her mother is a breast cancer survivor. Beyond that, her days are filled with being a mom, and taking her kids to their gymnastic and swimming activities. There is little down time in her life.

She currently is an assistant superintendent, and aspires to be a superintendent someday. She was very reflective and candid in her responses. Victoria grew up the oldest of three siblings. Victoria's parents divorced when she was five, leaving her with the responsibility of helping out with the younger siblings, with the youngest being only three months old at the time. Because of her responsibility for caring for her brother, she felt much older than him. In high school, she was the captain of the soccer team, and was a peer helper in an on-site nursery school facility, sparking an early interest in education, and building leadership skills. She felt those experiences were influential for the leader she would later become.

After high school, Victoria attended Wheelock College in Boston. She graduated with a major in early childhood education with a focus on teaching children with special needs. Shortly thereafter, she received her master's degree in special education from the University of Southern Maine, as well as a certificate of advanced studies in educational leadership.

Catherine (AS)

Catherine was eager to talk about her journey in education. She is a wife and mother of one son, who is in his early twenties and lives within thirty minutes of her. She loves the outdoors including hiking, gardening, and kayaking. She currently is a special-education director, and aspires to be a superintendent someday. She was very reflective in her comments and after the first interview said her husband was surprised by how

talkative she was because she is usually quiet. Catherine grew up the youngest of three siblings, the daughter of a father who was a first-generation immigrant from Canada. Catherine commented about how first generation-immigrants tend to be high achievers and have high expectations for their children. Catherine's parents divorced when she was six, and her mother remarried later to a man who had six children. Catherine was still the youngest of the children in the blended family. Most of her stepfather's children were grown, and did not live with them. She felt like she has always been a teacher: she taught ski lessons and Sunday school before reaching the age of twelve. At her high school, she was always requested to mentor the younger students. She frequently found herself leading groups as she was a decent writer and facilitator, and she was willing to step up as needed to get things done. She realized that not everyone wanted to do those jobs, but they came pretty naturally to her. She reflected that there are many leadership opportunities in education for those who are interested.

After high school, Catherine attended the University of Maine at Orono for two years and transferred to University of Maine at Farmington, from which she graduated. She later earned a master's degree in education leadership from the University of Maine at Orono.

Diana (NA)

Diana is outgoing, friendly, self-confident, reflective, and hard working. She does not see herself becoming a superintendent. She is married to a school administrator and has two grown children. She loves to cook, and read. To escape from work, she and her husband travel. She currently is an administrator in an urban school. Diana is the oldest of two sisters. Diana commented that her parents did not understand her desire to be a

leader, and have often said to her about being an administrator, “Why do you want to do that? That’s a lot of work.” She remembers her first leadership memories as being from school, not from home. She always wanted to be a teacher, but was not encouraged to follow her dream. She recalled a conversation when she was a junior in high school, with her school superintendent, who discouraged her from becoming a teacher because he felt the field was “glutted.” Diana did not let him deter her, and stayed in education. Diana seemed born to lead and talked about how she was influenced by other teachers:

They influenced me not really academically, but in leadership. It really was..., the support to start a school newspaper, to launch a campaign, to have a student representative on the school board, to start a student smoking area.

After high school, Diana attended Colby College and majored in French and Spanish, with a minor in education. She earned a master’s degree in education leadership from the University of Southern Maine within her first five years of teaching. It was eighteen years before she was hired for her first administration position.

Cleo (NA)

Cleo has a quiet, reserved way, but her intelligence and reflective manner is soon apparent. She is an assistant superintendent, the mother of two grown daughters, and the grandmother of two. She’s been married forty-one years and her elderly mother lives close to her. When discussing her busy life, she talks about not having much energy left at the end of the day to devote to hobbies. However when time allows, she is fond of gardening, loves to read, and enjoys quilting.

Cleo is the oldest of three siblings. Her mother referred to her as bossy, which some say may be an early sign of showing leadership potential. At a young age, Cleo was

given the responsibility of babysitting her two younger brothers. She spoke of having strong female role models, beginning with her grandmother who ran away from an arranged marriage in Czechoslovakia and ended up in New York. The other grandmother was very astute, worked in the garment industry, and invested money in stocks.

Cleo spoke of being in a large high school with about 800 in her graduating class. She felt insecure during those years, and did not have many leadership opportunities, partly due to class size. Although she was a gifted writer, math did not come easy for her, and she was not in the top track at her high school. After high school, Cleo attended University of Delaware. While there, she went to New Mexico and studied with Ivan Illich, author of *Deschooling Society*. One of her first memories of leading was returning to college and being responsible for bringing in Rudolf Flesch, author of *Why Johnny Can't Read*. Her student teaching was in the New School in Delaware, which utilized alternative approaches. Later, she obtained her master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Maine at Orono.

Data Collection

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The primary method of data collection was the phenomenological in-depth interview. The purpose of that approach is to understand the “essence of an individual's experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 93). “The focus is on the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24).

Upon approval of the study, all potential participants were contacted by phone or e-mail, and invited to participate in the research study. When they chose to take part, the following pieces of information were sent to them: (1) an introductory letter explaining

the research study, (2) letters of informed consent, and (3) an interview overview. Over the course of the 2014-2015 school year, the interviews were conducted and transcribed. It was estimated that each interview would take an hour to an hour and a half and this was the approximate time it took.

The researcher hired a transcriptionist to transcribe the interviews. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality agreement beforehand, so the identity of each participant would remain anonymous. All interviews were audio recorded, with the participants consenting before tape recording began. To help keep the identity of each participant confidential, the interviews were coded. The researcher's goal was to have three interviews with each participant. The purpose was to "concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience" in trying to achieve the superintendency (Seidman, 2013, pg. 21). The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants. All information remained confidential, and non-identifiable. In each interview, the researcher provided an open-ended question, then the participant responded. The first interview obtained background information, and built rapport with the participants. Participants were asked to tell as much about their experiences with the topic as possible (Seidman, 2013). Specifically, through the three interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on their experiences of seeking or not seeking the superintendency. Creating a relaxed atmosphere in which the participant was comfortable speaking freely and honestly about their leadership experiences was critical.

The intent of the second interview was to examine the barriers referenced in the research framework. The aspiring and non-aspiring participants were questioned about existing internal and external barriers preventing them from reaching the superintendency.

The current superintendents were questioned about the barriers they encountered when applying for the superintendency. The researcher included a question regarding supports that were provided or would be helpful in trying to obtain the position of superintendent. Each participant was reminded that there was no right answer, but the purpose was to have each tell her own story.

The third interview required participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. That required that the participants examine how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present decisions of pursuing, or not pursuing, the superintendency (Seidman, 2013). “The combination of exploring the past to clarify the events that led participants to where they are now, and describing the concrete details of their present experience, establishes conditions for reflecting upon what they are now doing in their lives” (Seidman, 2013, p. 23). As part of the third interviews, the researcher attempted to discover the each interviewee’s perceptions about possible solutions to the barriers.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed after each interview, and before the next interview was completed. After the first interviews, the existing data were analyzed, capturing reflections, tentative themes and ideas. From the first interviews, the data collected further informed the data collected in the second interview, and possible areas to clarify. A third interview was conducted where the meanings for each woman’s experiences were examined. During that third interview, there sometimes was a need to clarify confusion from previous answers given during the first two interviews.

All transcripts were coded. To reassure the researcher that the significant codes were captured, a computer program (Dedoose) provided assistance in analyzing and categorizing the data. All interviews were downloaded into the software. Keywords, phrases, and concepts were identified. The researcher examined codes, patterns, and themes occurring throughout the interviews.

There was a back-up copy of all memos and interviews. During the data analysis, the process of horizontalization was utilized, with all the data examined and treated with equal weight, or at least all pieces of data having equal value at the initial data-analysis stage (Merriam, 2009). Categories were created from the process of triangulation or three sources: the researcher, the participant, and the literature review/research framework (Merriam, 2009).

The research framework (Table 2.2) presented in Chapter Two was utilized to organize the barrier research into categories to better facilitate the analysis of patterns, relationships, comparability, and distinctions across the six participant interviews and resulting findings. The categories were studied and regrouped, examining data to explore the interrelationship between categories. The research framework was particularly helpful in grouping the barriers to better understand the obstacles to the superintendency that were common, as well as different, for the three groups: superintendents, aspiring superintendents, and non-aspiring superintendents. The framework was further divided into two separate categories: internal and external barriers.

The exploration of the findings of the study supported several conclusions that provided answers to the research questions regarding barriers. Viewing the participants' perspectives and stories through the lens of the framework provided many possible

directions for analysis, explanations, and insight. Through the use of the framework, the researcher could further distinguish the varying combinations for each participant.

Several of the data-analysis documents used to generate the answers to the research questions are included in the Appendices. The complete set of data-analysis documents are on file and available upon request. That access to the inquiry's "paper trail" gives other researchers the ability to transfer the conclusions of this inquiry to other cases, or to repeat, as closely as possible, the procedures of this project.

The analysis sought to identify a list of significant statements, leading to identifying recurring themes. Critical analysis occurred to ascertain that the essence of the interviews was captured. Ongoing analysis occurred throughout the study with research memos written after interviews. Documentation was kept as interview transcripts were studied, which allowed participants to be questioned about possible emerging themes.

The data analysis involved "moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (Merriam, p. 176). The purpose of the data analysis was to discover the internal and external barriers preventing women in Maine from seeking and obtaining the superintendency. As themes emerged in one interview, the researcher compared them to the next interviewee's responses. Themes that emerged from one or more participants were retained. As the relevant data were sorted, categories were refined, revised, and renamed to get more specific and robust. File folders or electronic folders were created for each emerging theme. The researcher included journaling notes made while reading and analyzing the interviews. It was through the researcher's scrutiny and reflection that the participants' meanings became known (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was utilized to support the argument that the researcher's results were "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). "As Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.125) state, the best way to ensure the possibility of transferability is to create a "thick description of the sending context so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity between them and ...the study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 227).

One component used in research to ensure trustworthiness is credibility. Credibility evaluates whether research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). To establish credibility, the researcher deliberately chose to conduct three interviews with each participant, utilizing the phenomenological interview. That multi-layered approach generated a rich, more credible data set. Data were collected from multiple people with different perspectives. In addition, after the interviews were transcribed, member checking was utilized. Each participant was sent selected quotes to review, ensuring that the researcher captured the essence of the interview, and was accurate in her interpretation (Merriam, 2009). That confirmed that a participant's responses were not misinterpreted. And it required the researcher to revise in order to better capture the participant's perspective. A document was created to capture the participants' comments and the action taken on the researcher's part (See Appendix D).

To address transferability, precise, elaborate descriptions of the setting, participants, and findings were created. That transferability "refers to a description of the

setting and participants of the study, as well as a detailed description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participant interviews, field notes, and documents” (Merriam, 2009, p. 227). Rationale for the identification of themes in the barriers both external and internal was provided through direct quotes from the interviews. Additionally, transferability was enhanced through careful selection of the study sample (Merriam, 2009). That maximum variation was achieved by carefully selecting the sample from a variety of female administrators who seek or have chosen not to seek the superintendency. The use of maximum variation allows “for a greater range of application of the findings by consumers of the research” (Merriam, 2009, p.229).

Confirmability is a measure of how well a researcher’s findings are supported by the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data were compared and crosschecked at different times and in different places. The use of the computer program Dedoose assisted in the identification of codes and themes. Multiple methods were utilized through comparison of participant responses with what was present in research relevant to the phenomenon of interest.

Additionally, the researcher continued to collect data until “saturation” was reached: until the researcher began “to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces” (Merriam, p. 218). The researcher also looked for data that supported alternative explanations (Merriam, p. 219).

The process of reflexivity, a process of critical self-reflection, was employed with rigor. The researcher explained biases and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken (Merriam, 2009). That was essential due to the researcher’s position and knowledge as assistant superintendent.

The Researcher

At the time of conducting this study, the researcher was employed as an assistant superintendent. Thus, the researcher brought to the inquiry process practical experience and understanding of the context of the study. That could have been a liability, and required commitment on the part of the researcher to remain unbiased in the interpretation of the findings. However, there were assumptions that were made by the researcher from the outset. The primary one was that there were external and internal barriers preventing females from acquiring the superintendency, beyond the barrier of personal choice, given the preponderance of male superintendents in Maine. Because the researcher had experienced some bias when seeking her first administrative position as assistant principal at a middle school in Maine, she assumed that some bias still existed, even though the experience had been seventeen years prior to this study. Various procedural safeguards were utilized to assure the results were trustworthy, including critical self-reflection, dialogue with advisors, and triangulation of data.

Pilot

A pilot was conducted with one current female superintendent, and a female administrator who had no aspirations to become a superintendent. The objective was to field test the interview questions before beginning the actual data-collection process. A transcriptionist transcribed each of the interviews. Modifications were made to the interview questions between the first and second interview as some of the questions were resulting in the same answers. Some of the barriers that were identified were the

following: being place bound, perfectionism, choice, gender bias, and board bias. Both participants were helpful in giving feedback on the process and experience.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were as follows:

- Although the researcher attempted to bracket her perspective, she was employed as an assistant superintendent in Maine at the time. To mitigate that, peer examination was utilized. A colleague reviewed quotes to ascertain whether there was consistency with the researcher in the themes that emerged.
- The women interviewed shared their perspectives. The researcher operated under the premise that they were accurate reporters of their realities, and did not embellish or exaggerate their experiences.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of the study were as follows:

- The study was restricted to the state of Maine and reflected social, cultural, and political qualities unique to the region.

This study was confined to employed female administrators in Maine. The sample did not include women of color/minorities.

Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

This study began with a candidate-selection process based upon a snowball method. The researcher contacted the Maine School Management Association (MSMA) and met with the associate executive director. She agreed to contact females who had applied to the superintendency, but had not yet acquired the position to see if they would be willing to be interviewed. Two women contacted the researcher, but only one met the criteria of currently working in the state of Maine as an administrator. When the researcher interviewed each administrator, she asked the participant for other potential female administrators that might be willing to be interviewed. From that pool of potential interviewees, six administrators were selected and interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to record the participants' responses to the planned interview protocols and analyze the data to explore the perceptions of women regarding the barriers that exist for women seeking to be superintendents in Maine, and the supports needed to overcome the barriers in that state. To shed light on the problem, the following research questions were examined:

1. What do female administrators perceive as external barriers to achieving the superintendency?
2. What do female administrators perceive as internal barriers to achieving the superintendency?

3. What do female administrators perceive to be the needed supports for women to obtain and be successful in the superintendency in Maine?

The researcher interviewed six female administrators over a period of two and a half months (December, 2014 to mid-February, 2015) to complete three in-depth interviews. (Due to the distance and time constraints, one of the participants had only two interviews, with the questions from the second and third interviews combined.) Any clarifying questions were completed through e-mail correspondence. The twenty-six interview sessions, along with the interviewer's notes, contribute to the rich source of data from which the findings, which are the focus of this chapter, were derived. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed soon after the interviews in order to remain as close to, and as involved with, the emerging data as possible. Ultimately, in this qualitative interview study, it is the voices of the women that tell the full story of their administrative experiences with the quoted excerpts providing strong evidence of the barriers that currently exist for women seeking the superintendency in Maine.

Following is a presentation of each of the findings of the study by research question. The findings are arranged by how many of the participants and subgroups have experienced the barriers that the research referenced.

Key Findings

Each of the key findings is explored in depth, and the evidence in this study is drawn primarily from the voices of the participants in their interviews. Illustrative quotations have been selected to represent the participants' perspectives. This section is the product of the careful and thorough documentation of the process of exploring the barriers that exist for female administrators in Maine. Connections, comparisons and

contrasts among the transcripts of participants are explored. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the barriers identified by groupings, reflecting that the only barrier experienced by all participants was the barrier of cultural expectations.

Table 4:1 Overview of the Barriers Identified by Subgroups:

Barriers that Participants Identified
I. Findings for All Participants
A. Cultural Expectations
II. Findings for Those That Are Superintendents (S): Maria and Mary
A. Gender Bias
B. Board Bias
C. Being Place Bound
D. Non-support of other women
E. Perfectionism: Maria only
F. Lack of Self-Confidence
G. Lack of Mentors: Maria only
H. Choice: Maria only
III. Findings for Those That Aspire to be Superintendents (AS): Victoria and Catherine
A. Gender Bias: Victoria only
B. Board Bias: Victoria only
C. Being Place Bound
D. Non-support of other women: Victoria only
E. Perfectionism
F. Choice: Catherine only
G. Lack of Mentors: Catherine only
H. Lack of Self-Confidence: Catherine only
IV. Findings for Those Not Aspiring to the Superintendency (NA): Cleo and Diana
A. Gender Bias
B. Being Place Bound: Cleo only
C. Non-support of other women
D. Lack of mentors
E. Lack of Self-confidence: Cleo only
F. Perfectionism
G. Choice

The reporting of the findings is arranged according to the research questions of the study, and organized by the barriers identified in the research framework. The research framework was utilized during the interviews with the participants, and in the organization of the data and findings. The findings are further organized by the stories of the participants and their identified subgroups of present superintendents, aspiring superintendents, and non-aspiring superintendents. Quotes from the participants provide evidence of the findings. The first section explores the external barriers that subgroups and participants identified. The second section explores the internal barriers that subgroups and participants identified, and the final section identifies possible solutions to the barriers.

External Barriers Identified by Subgroups and Participants

The first research question that the study sought to answer was, “What do female administrators perceive as external barriers to achieving the superintendency?” An overview of the findings of the external barriers is organized in Table 4.2, and then more fully explored in the narratives of each participant of every subgroup. The participants are coded as present superintendent (S), aspiring superintendent (AS), or non-aspiring superintendent (NA).

Table 4.2 External Barriers Identified by Participants:

External Barriers	Participants Who Experienced Barrier	Definitions
Cultural Expectations	Maria (S), Mary (S), Victoria (AS), Catherine (AS), Diana (NA), Cleo (NA)	<u>Sex-role stereotypes</u> , reinforcing discriminatory practices. Sociological expectations reinforced by a culture: certain things in groups are shared that shape a person's identity and experiences. These may be positive or negative, and may undermine an individual's ability to develop into an autonomous adult. For example, our society has been culturalized to prefer male leadership.
Gender Bias	Maria (S), Mary (S), Victoria (AS), Cleo (NA), Diana (NA)	Unfair difference in the treatment of men or women because of their sex. <u>Gender Structuring</u> : extent of access to opportunity for socialization to leadership in organizations and practices employed in the preparation, mentoring, recruitment, and selection of women for school and school district leadership positions. May result in discriminatory recruitment and selection practices, advancement opportunities, and power in making decisions, and other norms and expectations.
Being Place Bound	Maria (S), Mary (S), Victoria (AS), Catherine (AS), Cleo (NA)	<u>Spouse</u> is unwilling to move <u>Child/Parental care</u> : Inability or unwillingness to move to advance one's career due to child care, impact to the move on children, or having to take care of one's parents.
Non-support of Other Women	Maria (S), Mary (S), Victoria (AS), Diana (NA), Cleo (NA)	<u>Sexism</u> perpetuated by women. Women not supporting women in achieving leadership positions. Other women do not generally support their women superintendents.
Board Bias	Maria (S), Mary (S), Victoria (AS)	Bias by school boards to prefer and be more likely to hire a male superintendent.

Lack of Mentors/Networking	Maria (S), Catherine (AS), Cleo (NA), Diana (NA)	Men and women not actively mentoring or providing networks for females to enter the superintendency.
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Finding A: Cultural Expectations

All of the participants and subgroups experienced the barrier of overcoming cultural expectations in their careers. With many of the participants, the most demanding of these expectations included trying to balance work, a personal life, and what they perceive to be their role as wife and mother. The other cultural expectation mentioned was overcoming the barrier of society's expectation that the superintendent be male.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

Maria began with the observation, "How do you contradict or counteract years and years, hundreds of years, of educational, you know, past practice where the women stayed as the teachers and the men went on to be the administrators?" Maria provided the following example of that happening several times since becoming superintendent: "I've had people call here and ask to speak to the superintendent and they'll talk to Sue [the secretary] and say, 'Well, can he call me back?'"

Maria further expanded on the barrier of overcoming the cultural expectation of the woman's role in the family:

Yeah, I think the whole piece about males getting there is definitely bound to the family and the woman's role in the family....the woman's role is to stay home and take care of the kids and I think it's definitely, definitely bound to that because, first of all, it's the . . . having to work and then take the classes . . . and it was ok, I'll wait till my kids were in school before I started, but it was definitely a consideration of the kids and where they were and, in this position, you're out a

lot and it's 24 almost, it seems like 24 hours a day sometimes, . . . when you compare that to what the woman's role in the family is, it doesn't jive at all. So a woman I would believe . . . would notice, some exceptions certainly, but tend to wait until the kids are gone to be in a position like this. So I think . . . where I can think of some younger male superintendents who have little kids, . . . they go to the meetings at night and the wife stays home with the kids, whereas in a typical family you might not, . . . it's kind of a role reversal if the woman went out at night . . .

Mary, in her second year of being a superintendent, also reflected on the impact of cultural expectations in her seeking the job. When first asked whether cultural expectations were a barrier for her, she said no. However, by the last interview, she identified it as a barrier through this example:

That's a hard one. I don't know because you know as well as I do if the husband had found a job away, there's just, "Well, he's the breadwinner, that's the expectation, we're going to have to move the family," that's what you do, but I was the breadwinner, but I couldn't do that, I couldn't, I mean I was my own barrier I guess because I couldn't separate myself enough to say, "Oh, the kids will be ok," but I was also on the heels of a divorce. Maybe we're just, we're [females] not quite as egocentric and that's the price you pay, but in that regard I guess I would prefer to be the way we are because I think that those were big decisions for my family, for my kids.

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Catherine, like Maria, reiterated the observation about the perception of the male superintendent:

... [W]e obviously all to one degree or another have that idea that a superintendent is a male.....I mean are they going to visualize me? Probably not . . . Everyone I worked for was male and white. Every superintendent I ever had, so there were no examples of women . . . no ready examples of women. They were out there, but I didn't know about them . . . I really felt that superintendents were all men. I do kind of feel that way still.

When she talked about the possibility of even mentioning to her fellow special ed directors that she may think about applying for a superintendent opening, she reflected on a response:

I think that they probably hold the same types of . . . thoughts about what a superintendent is and does and how a superintendent operates and their . . . whether they would recognize immediately or not, their vision is of a man . . . that vision is a middle aged to older man who has a certain skill set and . . . that would make them a good superintendent.

As a further stereotype of the superintendency, Catherine said, "I'm not a sports person and this is why I'll never really be superintendent because they're going to ask me, 'How do you feel about sports?' and I'm going to say, 'Bullshit.....all intramurals.....I think it should be about education.'"

Catherine added this about the cultural expectations around domestic chores and parenting:

You know when women have babies and have to clean the house and pick up kids from daycare and do the homework and start the dinner and do it all again . . . I mean, I could be grumpy and my husband would run the vacuum and occasionally might get it out, but, sure, I definitely fulfilled all those pretty stereotypic callings.

Catherine waited to get her master's degree because of her son, and related that both she and her husband started out as teachers, but noted the following difference between them: her husband accepted a managerial position while their son was still in elementary school. Catherine would not accept an administrative position until much later. When asked whether she considered applying for administrative positions during the same time as her husband, she responded:

No . . . because . . . he [her son] was a baby, I mean . . . no, no I didn't. And, yeah, so that was interesting and my husband did leave education to . . . he really kind of went into that upper middle-management really quickly . . .

The researcher asked whether her husband ever considered not taking the position because of how young their son was at the time, and Catherine replied, "No, never . . . not even a little bit." She went on to make a very insightful remark about cultural expectations: "And some of it's been internal, like so culturally seeded, that I wouldn't say that I was somebody who chaffed against it as opposed to someone who embraced it."

Victoria, unlike the other participants, chose not to wait until the kids were older to become an administrator, and reflects upon the demands that creates, ". . . [M]y own

personal desire to be a mom and do a good job at that and be kind of present for my kids . . . I think those are . . . barriers.” She goes on to describe a recent day in her life of trying to balance life as an administrator and as a mom:

I mean, last week I had, I had like three hours of office time and I got a phone call from daycare. Daycare is five minutes up the road . . . Tim’s at 102.9 degrees, you need to come and get him, I think it’s his ears. So I call the doctor, the doctor right down the road, they can get him at noon. So it was 11 o’clock. So I drove to daycare, picked him up, got him to the doctor’s. They saw him, drove through CVS, got Amoxicillin. I had a one o’clock meeting back here . . . It’s 11 o’clock, get him, get to the doctor’s, get medicine . . . I got him to my mother-in-law’s, I was back here at 1:03. I was like, phew, made all that. That was efficiency. And then Thursday Jolieba threw up down in the auditorium, so then she was in here laying around until my mother-in-law could come pick her up, but I think that’s just part of, and that’s what’s kind of nice about being here. . . . [W]hen Jolieba threw up and the nurse called down, you know she came right here instead of laying in the nurse’s office....she came right here and sat here. She colored and, you know, waited for my mother-in-law to come pick her up . . . I mean I would hope that they would remember [someday] that I was here when they were sick at school or when they weren’t feeling well . . .

She reflects on how the roles are different for her husband: “I think if I was a man, I mean, my husband works until 7:00 two nights a week. He doesn’t worry about whether people have had dinner or baths, or, by the time he gets home, two of them are in bed...”

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

All of the women struggled with balancing the demands of work and their personal lives. Cleo, like Catherine, spoke of the conflict with her spouse around equality of domestic chores:

. . . I would say it was 35-40 percent [his part of the domestic duties]. I would say he picks up a lot of stuff. He would do more if I let him, but there's a lot of stuff I don't want to give up. You know, like I don't want him to do the wash. I really don't. Another thing I see about women who work...they have to have so much control over their lives in order to have the work life balance that everything has to be like this and so you have to be incredibly organized because my kids and my husband will tease me occasionally about . . . "You got to do this, and you got to do this."

. . . and I'm like, "Yeah, because that's the only way I can control my life so I can get everything done." Because my husband will yell at me and say, "Can't you just sit down on Sunday morning and read the paper?" "No, because I've got to get the wash done, I gotta do this, I gotta do that, you know." "I'll do the wash." "No, I don't want you doing the wash . . . that's not going to work."

In addition, Cleo talked about the responsibility of having to take care of her mother who is 87. "My dad died in 2011 and so we're the major caregivers for her." Those dual responsibilities have impacted Cleo's decision to not seek the superintendency.

Like Cleo and Catherine, Diana shared the effect of a spouse not sharing, or not understanding equal responsibilities for parenting and domestic chores. She spoke of the time that her husband accepted an administrative job that was going to be far from home, not realizing the impact it would have on her having to pick up more of the domestic responsibilities:

His first job was assistant principal at Ganado High School. He came home . . . he was called, I think on the drive back from the interview offering him the job, which he accepted. I burst into tears. “Do you know how hard that job’s going to be . . . it’s very hard you crazy guy . . . This is going to be hard you know. That means now . . . so I’m principal at Coleman High School and the kids don’t drive yet, that kind of stuff . . . so everything’s going to have to be me.” And he’s like, “Yeah” . . . He’s definitely not gender biased, but he just didn’t get that. I’m like ok, it was sort of doable when we shared to some extent. I have always been the bigger parent, . . . It’s just the way that it is and he just didn’t get that at all.

Diana, like Maria and Catherine, waited until her kids were older before advancing into administration:

I knew I wanted to be the high school principal there, but not at that point. The kids were like five and eight or something like that and I thought, “Too much, I’ll just wait until the next time.” Plenty of time and you know, I just sort of got drafted and so it worked . . . so that’s a gender issue, it is a gender . . . a cultural issue, yes, but there was no doubt in my mind and again it’s not a put down of my husband at all, it’s just what it was, you know, I was the primary parent . . . it was . . . to Mom for extra help and for work with homework, and falling apart, and

that would primarily be me . . . realistically, how much can I do? So let's put that off . . . I didn't apply . . . because the kids were too young. Now did I want that job? You bet. I just thought I'll wait until the next round because I wasn't going anywhere . . .

The cultural expectations, experienced externally or internally, presented a barrier for all of the women to overcome. Upon reflection, the women recognized how much societal expectations have influenced them, either consciously or unconsciously, to put motherhood and/or marriage before their careers.

Finding B: Gender Bias

One of the most substantial findings of this study was that all subgroups experienced the external barrier of gender bias, with five of the six women revealing that they had experienced it. The women perceived that the bias resulted in an inability to lead or to acquire a particular administrative position. In some instances the bias appears to be unconscious on the part of an offender, and at other times it was much more intentional, but five of the six women interviewed felt gender bias had impacted their professional careers.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

Some of the gender bias experienced by the participants was more obvious than others. Maria, a current superintendent, had to apply for several positions over a two-year span before acquiring a superintendent position. At one point she ran into a woman who had served on one of the interview committees where Maria interviewed, and who also had a daughter that Maria had hired as a teacher. The woman said to Maria:

“I realized that when” . . . And I think she was still talking about her daughter, but I think she was also talking about our interview . . . “that when you’re on an interview committee, you have a preconceived idea of what you’re looking for . . . I thank you for giving my daughter a chance, realizing she’s a new teacher, and I know you would have been a great superintendent here” . . . She said them both kind of at the same time and I just felt like, yeah, . . . they wrote me off, you know, when I walked in the door.

Maria continued to talk a lot about the preconception that many people have of the superintendent being a male:

I think that has to do with . . . people’s pre-determined ideas about what a superintendent looks like . . . looks like in quotations, . . . when you have that mental picture in your mind about the superintendent, it’s always, a guy . . . a big guy . . . a nice suit with a white shirt and the tie . . . I just, I’m stuck on that, but I do believe that that’s the picture of what people have and I think anybody that walks into an interview . . . whether it be, you know a male that looks different than that or a female has to try to sort of counteract that pre-conceived image of what a superintendent is. So certainly gender plays into that . . . in Salem, we did have a . . . new principal come in and he was an in-district person and the board loved him and it was just kind of a joke about that he looked good in a dark suit, white shirt and tie and so he was the golden boy. So it was not in an interview situation but it was . . . the truth. It was the perception . . . I did a lot of interviewing before I got this position in a lot of different districts and I just felt like, you know if I had been a guy in a dark suit and white shirt . . . I think I

would have had a better chance. I just think it's, I just think it's there and people don't come out and say that but I do think it's there . . . I've also sat on a lot of interview committees and heard people's reactions and even seeing my reaction so when you're, ok, so you're interviewing for a principal or a superintendent or assistant superintendent and the candidate walks in, . . . I think in general your first perceptions of that person are extremely important and if you have something, a picture in mind and that person doesn't, and I find myself and I try not to do this, but if you have your ideal candidate in mind and if the person walks through and they don't look like what you have that picture, you discount them and you know, try as you might or try as I might, that always is there in the back of your mind....but . . . you get that first impression and I do think that's important . . . it plays a huge factor.

Mary reflected about her experience of gender bias while serving as the assistant superintendent:

I did feel as though [the superintendent] paved the way for the male assistant superintendent who was before me when he thought that [he] had planned to retire earlier and Bill would take over, he really paved that way by making him visible. . . we have a local TV station and they're always knocking on the door....he would get Bill in front of the camera . . . he would have Bill speak to the board on different issues. I did not get those same opportunities ...which is what's showing itself right now because that board didn't get to see me in that light because he didn't do that. Part of it was because I think he was wanting the board to see that he was intending to stay and he wasn't ready to hand [over] the reigns . . . but I

think the other part was I don't know if was even conscious, that he wasn't being helpful that way for me . . . looking back as I sit today, that was an issue. It's a barrier that's now going to be something I have to overcome to try to get that position.

Mary also tells about preparing for an interview for a superintendent's position and experiencing the following:

I have a friend who's aunt is on the school board and she said, "Oh, I was talking to my aunt" . . . and she . . . at this point they didn't know if I was an applicant or not . . . "and she's really hoping that you're applying," and I said, "That's nice to know."

I'm never sure how a board feels and . . . there was a comment about, "If you have an interview make sure that you don't dress provocatively." I don't think that was the word, but it was something . . . And I'm thinking what in the world is provocative . . . me, provocative . . . I can't quite imagine it for one thing and what does that mean? What does that mean? Am I provocative if I wear heels? If I have a skirt on? Because I'm certainly not going to wear a mini skirt, I'm not going to wear a blouse down to here, so what constitutes provocative and would you ever say that to a man, "Be careful what you're wearing?"

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Victoria who had interviewed for the job of superintendent, but had not been offered the job, provided an example of gender bias. When Victoria questioned the board chair about why she had not been offered the job, the woman revealed her thoughts about how the issue of gender had impacted the decision:

She [the board chair] was quite clear that there was a gender issue, gender-biased issue that happened there. But not from her, not on her part, on the board's part, and she's not sure how to sort of control that. And she didn't indicate whether it was coming from the female half of the board or the male half.

That was the first time that Victoria had interviewed for the position of superintendent, and she reflected, "This is the first time I have ever felt discriminated against, being a woman. I think if I was a man, I would have been the superintendent here."

Since she has been an assistant superintendent, she has been told that perhaps she should not offer people coffee, that doing so may make some people believe she is not a "strong" leader. Such experiences affect her self-confidence.

I'm willing to not offer anybody coffee between now and the end of January. But what else?.....so then Friday I put on a coral pink colored jacket and I thought, should I wear pink? I don't know....it's thrown me...it really has thrown me.

Unlike Victoria, Catherine could not give an example of gender bias. When asked whether she had experienced gender bias, she said, "Well, you know, to a certain degree, I experience it every day." However, she went on to say, . . . "I do not feel that I have overtly been the object of gender discrimination." As she reflected, she added, "It's interesting how many women special education teachers there are versus how many men special ed directors there are... so either indirectly or directly, there's a tendency to promote men in that direction as opposed to promoting women."

Later on in the interview, she talked about wanting to get her doctorate and said:

“I think it would make me more competitive. I think it would level the playing field in terms of being a woman.” Even though Catherine could not think of an example of her experiencing gender bias, she still perceives that gender is a barrier to be overcome to reach the superintendency. In her case, she thought that having a doctorate would help her to overcome that barrier.

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

Cleo relates that she experienced gender bias in trying to reach the assistant superintendency. Initially, she was encouraged by the recently hired male superintendent in her district to apply for the position when it came open. She reflected on the existing culture in the district at the time:

They [the men] did some really ugly....they did some really obnoxious harassing kinds of things when I look back on it now... that we could have reported and we just didn't....we just kind of ignored it in a lot of ways because what could we do about it really? They would talk about these waitresses they would hang out with when they would go . . . hunting and it's like . . . aahhh . . . we don't want to hear this . . . why are you talking about this? And we would just . . . the three of us, would just look at each other like, ok, we'll just shut up and let them go on and then we'll move on to whatever we're going to work on . . . all the women were like this really sucks and we don't know what to do . . . we didn't really talk to each other about it because what do you do and some of the female administrators from not talking to each other about it, it kind of looks like they're playing the game with these guys, so you don't know whether you have allies or not and so you don't know whether to open your mouth or not.

She goes on to tell of another incident: “I was cleaning something up at the table in the central office and the assistant superintendent came by. I had my hair up and he kissed me on the back of the neck and I turned around to him and I said, “Don’t ever touch me again. Don’t come near me.”

When the assistant superintendent position eventually came open in the district, she wanted to apply. She tells about her experience:

I had the support of a couple of the principals, . . . the superintendent . . . was saying, “Yeah, I could see you doing that. . . . What do you want to do?” I said, “I want to be assistant superintendent.” He said, “Ok, ok, ok,” and then all of a sudden it was like, “Nope, we’re going to hire somebody else” . . . and I really think. . . . I don’t think it was. . . . I don’t know if these incidences occurred at the same time, but it was very clear that I did not want to play the game of flirty and all that kind of crap that he was known for . . . well there was a rumor going around he was having an affair . . . later found out, no he was just very friendly and people made some assumptions about it and she let him do things like kiss her in public on the cheek, not on the lips, that made people think something odd was going on. When your boss is doing that, it’s intimidating and it’s, so it makes it hard to know what to do. . . . He [the superintendent] said, “I really need to find somebody from the outside.” . . . A couple of the women said, “Yeah because you wouldn’t play in the sandbox with him, that’s why he didn’t want to do that anymore.” He was hoping he could get somebody else in. So he got Michele who definitely wouldn’t play in the sandbox, so it was kind of interesting because she was not about that.

From the experiences of the participants, it appears that certain districts show evidence of being gender biased while in other districts there appears to be no evidence of gender bias. Diana has experienced both phenomena. Early in her career in the 1970s she experienced gender bias when she applied for an assistant principal position at the high school where she was teaching, and did not get it because they did not think she could handle the discipline. She noted that perception:

Now perceived because of course as a classroom teacher in the school, they would have direct evidence to the contrary. I'd never send kids out of class or any of the like. It felt like you can't have a women AP. That's absolutely what that felt like and I thought, "That's it . . . I'm angry!" . . . they didn't want to hire a woman in my own school where I was a respected classroom teacher, so that set me back on my heels for a little while. . . . So I definitely felt that I would have had a much longer, much longer career in school leadership, school administration, but for gender bias that I did not get that first job and then I stopped [trying] and there was no doubt in my mind I didn't get it because I was a woman. They had no evidence that I couldn't handle disciplinary issues other than my gender and an assumption.

It was eighteen years later before Diana applied and became an administrator. She switched districts, and was in the next district for 28 years. In that district, she never experienced or perceived there was any gender bias. Females were hired at all levels of administration. It wasn't until she left that district to take a different administrative position in a different part of the state that she felt the bias emerge again. Of her next role she said, "So, incredible good ol' boys club. Just incredible. . . . just outrageously so."

And from there she went to another district where someone else pointed out a situation when gender bias occurred:

I do think that there are some issues here and I think one is with the superintendent and me and it was named by someone else . . .”I’m like, oh my gosh, you’re right.” ...the curriculum person and I were meeting with the superintendent and I was standing and the two of them were sitting and I forget what it was . . . we were trying to make our case and Robert came in and said, “He never even looked at you. He never even gave you eye contact,” and I said, “I know and I was just....I thought it was just my status, I’m not a chief, I’m not a director and he said, “It just occurred to me.....I think it’s gender bias.”

“Wow....wow....wow.....and so now I’m sensitive to that and I’m not positive still...”

Except for Catherine, all the women perceived that they experienced gender bias personally, and discussed how it has impacted them obtaining a superintendency or other administrative positions that might lead to a superintendent position.

Finding C: Non-support of Other Women

All subgroups experienced the external barrier of the non-support of other women. Catherine was the only participant who did not cite the non-support of other women as a barrier in their professional careers. The remainder of the participants gave specific examples where they had experienced women being non-supportive of other women in leadership positions.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

Mary, a practicing superintendent, reflects, “It’s interesting and again, this is just my second year and I’m kind of the newer kid on the block, but the people who have reached out haven’t been my female neighbor superintendents . . . it’s been males that have been a little bit easier to or more quick to lend a hand . . . ”Hey, if you have a question about this”.... As females, she wonders about whether the females are more competitive with one another and says, “They seem like really nice people and a couple of them I know.....there are a couple of women who are close, but maybe it has to do with when they both arrived. I’m not sure why it is....if it’s a circumstance or if it’s a bigger issue.”

Like Mary, Maria has felt the non-support of other women, particularly on interviewing committees:

“I think probably women on the interview committee, did play a part . . . in maybe the hiring of a man over a woman.” This does not mean that she hasn’t had the support of some females, . . . “as far as other women who are superintendents....I think they’ve been very supportive. I think of the women that I’ve worked with, Bobby, Sally, and I think, and just others that have been at meetings and....that I’ve talked to have been extremely supportive.”

She makes the additional point about men supporting men better:

I think . . . the network of men, and maybe because there’s more of them in the superintendency, is a lot stronger . . . you go to the meetings and you tend to see like the men all.....it’s a big social event for the men whereas . . . I’ve noticed that the women seem to, it’s not such a social event for the women. . . . it’s definitely

still the good ol' boys network. I think you tend to see women not maybe networking as much at these meetings as the men are . . .

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Victoria shared that a woman she believed supported her for the superintendency made a non-supportive remark to someone else:

One of the females . . . it's interesting . . . one of the female school board members who I really thought I had full support from . . . who had done a lot of work beside me with curriculum, and the proficiency-based stuff and really holds me in pretty high regard had a conversation with Arlene the other night and just said, "Well, she's just so strong in curriculum. I don't know if the superintendent is a good match." I was shocked: Harvard grad, smart woman, stay at home mom, and really being groomed to be the next board chair.

When Catherine was initially asked whether she had ever experienced the non-support of other women, she said she knew that women were known for backbiting, but that she had not experienced it. She was able to reference two women who were supportive of her seeking the superintendency. One was the woman that completed her superintendent internship at the same time as she did, and the other is a good friend who is a curriculum coordinator. However, like Maria, she reflected on how few women are in the superintendency:

. . . I just haven't personally known any women in the superintendency. . . . I know Brenda, but I don't know that she would even know me . . . , Oakland has

an assistant superintendent who is a woman. We have a good friend....my husband taught with, she was an English teacher and then she became a curriculum coordinator which is the equivalent of an assistant superintendent in the district

However, when the researcher probed about whether she felt women encouraged one another to aspire to the superintendency or higher levels of leadership, Catherine anticipated the reaction of her fellow female special ed directors if she mentioned that she might be thinking of applying to superintendent openings:

Oh, what would Theresa and their two directors, Jenn and Emily....what would Jenn and Emily think - that I had the audacity to do that? I can't even imagine looking across the table at any of those women or girls or whatever and saying, "I've applied for a superintendent's position." It just seems like.....it's seems out there, it just does.

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

Cleo could think of only a male superintendent who had encouraged her to be a superintendent. As she moved into previous administrative positions, including the assistant superintendency, she had women that were supportive and non-supportive of her. When she was in the principalship and trying to hold a staff member accountable, she talked about the women who did not support her during that time:

I had people who were really working against me on this and you know, maligning my character, calling me at home, and saying what a horrible person I am, and, "How can you do this to this person, blah, blah blah?" . . . I hung up several times and said, "Please, I'm at home I do not want to talk about this."

Diana, although she began the interview process emphatically saying that she had never aspired to the superintendency, had an experience of a woman being non-supportive. Recently, however, an opening occurred in the one district that caused her to consider a superintendency for a brief moment. Diana is a past recipient of a principal of the year award, and has been a very successful administrator, including at the central office level. On paper, most would consider her to be a highly qualified and competitive candidate for a superintendent opening.

When the vacancy occurred, a female superintendent asked her to dinner. Diana wondered if the woman wanted to talk to her about applying, because “I knew she was doing some of that [recruiting] and I thought, “I don’t think so but why else would she be doing this because we haven’t gotten together.” Diana related an account of that dinner:

And so she never said anything [about the superintendent opening] and so finally I thought, “Ok, I am going to say it,” just because I don’t want this to end without putting her on the spot a little bit. So I said, “You know Becky, obviously I’m hearing from all kinds of people in the district and in the community....what do you think....should I be going for this?” “No, absolutely not, you would hate it. You would absolutely hate it, absolutely not.” She discouraged me....discouraged me....and I am positive that if she had....if we were meeting for dinner for her to encourage me, I would be applying....still not positive if that was the right thing or not, but I know I would be applying, but because she so actively discouraged I’m pretty sure I’m not going to . . . it was like sort of like I’m surprised you’re even asking, of course you would hate it, you would be

miserable and didn't really expand and I didn't probe too deeply... Let me also add ... with these two [female] friends that I got together with last night, ...they were dying to hear so what are you thinking and what did Becky say and all this.....and one is because as I've mentioned to you, I have been really serious about promoting school leadership, district leadership with people that I supervise or with peers, . . . so these are two of them. One is an assistant principal at Salem and then the other one is a female who is principal at Longmeadow and both absolutely, people that I hired to be teachers and then really encouraged teacher leadership, all kinds of opportunities and look at them now. So, very excited and they will both continue to pursue higher, there's no doubt about that so they wanted to hear what [she] had to say . . . they absolutely know me and very intimately and how I lead and so it would never be a question of being able to do it or not being able to do it. They both came down ultimately on the side of saying that they agreed with [her]. That they thought that . . . I really wouldn't enjoy it that much.

Diana did not apply for the opening, and has no desire to consider any other superintendent openings. As many women are people pleasers, the non-support of other women can have a heavy impact on a woman's decision of whether she applies or not to leadership positions. Five of the six participants and all subgroups reported the impact of non-support of other women as a barrier to be overcome.

Finding D: Being Place Bound

All subgroups experienced the external barrier of being place bound at some time in their careers, with five of the six participants and all subgroups reporting that barrier.

Females considered the impact of moving away from their support systems, and the impact on their children and/or husbands when considering career moves. Not wanting to give up supports, or disrupt the stability of their children's lives created a barrier in furthering their careers. The barrier of being place bound was self-imposed by some of the participants, while in other instances, such as Victoria's experience, it was externally imposed by the spouse.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

In her reflections, Maria did not feel the barrier of being place bound ultimately impacted her becoming superintendent because she had reached the point of being "pretty clear that I was willing to move, so it couldn't have been location. It was just me and I didn't have a family to drag along with me."

However, earlier in her career and while Maria was married, it was a barrier as she noted, "I think when I, when I was married, yes.... I applied for a couple of assistant superintendents and it was in that area so certainly then I think, after my divorce, I felt a little freer to open up the possibilities."

When asked whether she felt her husband wouldn't move, or whether she would have considered moving earlier, she said:

I didn't even consider it [moving] as an option. I don't know why. . . . I felt like I loved my house, so it was more of a connection with the house and being happy there and you know, my friends were there . . . my support group . . . while I was careful to apply for positions that were within driving distance, I don't know that I really ever considered just picking up and moving and I don't know why . . . And I think as I went through the process I realized that . . . I was going to have to go

where the opportunity presented itself, but that wasn't until, you know, later on in the process and I had to deal with that because I could have stayed where I was forever, but, do I want to do the next step and if so . . . somebody had told me at one point that most superintendents started way up north and . . . that I probably was going to have to take one of those positions way up north . . . I knew that I wanted to stay within driving distance to at least Boston. . . . a lot of it was I set my own boundaries or bounds . . . I would have gone anywhere south and I applied all over the place farther south.

She also mentioned that she did not want to go out of state because of the impact on her retirement.

Mary experienced being place bound, but like Maria it was more self-imposed: I think my own self-made barriers for not going earlier [to a superintendent opening] probably were my family. I wasn't looking away because my kids were in high school and I wasn't going to do that . . . and kind of part of that would have been time . . . so, you know, I wasn't going to be superintendent in Austin, it was going to be someplace away which would require a move because there was no place else in San Patricio County that I was interested in.

Like Maria, once Mary's children were grown and she was divorced, her willingness to move contributed to her being able to obtain a superintendent position.

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Victoria is definitely impacted by being place bound. As she was questioned on the impact of that barrier she reflected:

Absolutely! Absolutely. I, you know I live in Surrey because that's where my husband wants to live. My mother-in-law lives next door. She's . . . close to 80. . . and you know, we, it's a little dirt road . . . six-tenths of a mile up a dirt road. It's not where I would choose to live. In fact I lived on the waterfront in Marblehead before I moved there and I loved it. Loved it. I could walk in town . . . this is not where I would choose to live, but it's like one of those compromises in my marriage and we're not moving and so I'm stuck . . . I'm stuck in a few places. One is that . . . I live in a school district that I am totally unimpressed with and I don't want my kids to be in that school, and so coming here allowed me to bring my kids here which is huge for me. . . . and I think that the other thing that strikes me is that, you know, that's what I'm struggling with around Nedham. I mean Nedham is a better job in almost every way. . . . but it's 45 minutes from home . . . But, when I think about where I would want to work more it would be there, but I can't....I can't move Nedham 45 minutes closer and my family is not moving to Nedham. We're living in Surrey and I don't want my daughter going to Surrey schools, so I do feel very stuck by location and yeah, yeah, I think all of these things are absolutely playing in. I think if I was a male, I would not have a problem working 45 minutes away. I don't know. I just think moms are different. I go home in between school committee meetings and I make dinner and I do tubs and I get everybody in their pjs and I get all their clothes out and I pack lunches and I'm organized, so that then when I go to school committees, they're in front of the TV show before they go to bed and everybody is organized and I've seen

them. I've touched base with them. I know they're fine....I think that not moving from where we live continues to be a barrier.

Like Victoria, Catherine has experienced being place bound; however, unlike Victoria it is more self-imposed:

. . . so I have felt bound by kinds of things like selling the house . . . certainly wouldn't have done something like that when my son was younger or in school . . . I didn't see myself making that change. I didn't see myself living in a really large metropolitan area where there were lots of career and educational opportunities. . . .I felt . . . very much attached to my continuing contract, I had a nice little house in a nice little area with reasonable schools and I wasn't going to jeopardize all of that for a complete unknown. I was not a risk taker.

When asked whether she would move for her husband's career, she answered, "Nope, I wasn't. When he really felt the need to go some place bigger like the Boston area and I was, "No way" . . . you couldn't pry me out of the stability that I felt that I had built and wanted to have for my son."

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

Like Mary, Maria, Victoria, and Catherine, Cleo has felt the limitations of being place bound as she reflected:

Yeah . . . because my husband really loved his job and . . . or liked his job and he had a really good situation there and also we had made a pact because we had moved our kids quite a bit up until then . . . we said we're not moving until they get out of high school, so that was the pact and I did look for jobs outside of 88 several time. I interviewed in Taft, I interviewed in Beeville . . . Even now, I'm

not [moving] because of my mother. Because my daughter wants us to move closer to Robstown and I said no, your sister lives in Edna and your grandmother lives in Waco, I'm staying right where I am. I'm right in the perfect place. I'm 20 minutes from your sister, 20 minutes from your grandmother and I'm 40 or 50 minutes from you . . .

Diana was the only one of the participants that did not believe that being place bound had been a barrier at any time in her career.

Finding E: School-Board Bias

Two of the three subgroups experienced the external barrier of school-board bias, with three of the six participants reporting that barrier. The non-aspiring superintendent group did not report the barrier. In some instances, the school-board bias was more a perception of the participants. Rarely in an interview process will someone say that there was gender bias by a board because it is illegal to hire or not hire because of gender. The three participants who are superintendents, or who have been interviewed for a superintendent opening, all feel that there was a bias, with boards preferring male superintendents. Diana, Cleo, and Catherine have not experienced that barrier; however, it is worth noting that they have not been interviewed for any superintendent opening.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

Maria perceived that she experienced school-board bias. It was a perception, nothing that she could prove for sure. Through her numerous interviews, Maria reflected on what she perceived school boards were searching for:

I think school boards are looking for a strong, I think all school boards are looking for strong leaders and I think, . . . typically, you know, when you think about the

male and the female you would think that the male would be stronger . . . a stronger leader than the female and that's just, you know . . . that's a cultural thing, it's a gender thing, it's . . . and I honestly believe that's true.

When Maria was asked whether she felt board bias in any of her interviews, she said:

Yeah...I can definitely...and again, it's just feelings. I went for one and I felt like I walked in and they definitely wrote me off because I was a woman . . . I walked in and they . . . the way the room was set up I was facing the windows and there was a terrible...glare so I asked them if they could shut the blinds and . . . it was like a big deal. So it's like, did I blow it because I asked them if they could shut the blinds, but I just felt like they totally wrote me off...

For Mary, board bias was more blatant. While interviewing, during one of the site visits, the male board chair had a conversation with her:

So he came in and we talked for a minute and I said, "Ok, so, you know, we've talked a few times, you've now seen where I come from and the standards that I likely will bring with me wherever I go . . . so do you have any concerns?

Anything that I can address for you?" And he said, "Well, you know, he said you're . . . You're kind of young and you're kind of attractive or kind of good looking." I said, "Well, I am younger and"

And he said, "Well, I'm just concerned about guys just, you know, lapping at your heels." And I said, "Well, I said I guess I've been kind of good looking then for a long time and I've probably learned how to manage that," and made some joke out of it.

“The reality is that if you’re a man and you’re in a position of power, the women flock.” I said, “What I have found as a woman in a position of power is that the men flee so I really don’t think that that would be an issue, and I certainly have the skills to deal with it if it was an issue.” “Oh yeah, yeah, I’m sure you can handle it. . . . I’m sure you can,” and then he went on to the next question, but . . . that took me back.

Mary also spoke of another experience at an interview for a superintendent’s position:

I look at the board that I do know in Savannah. There’s never been a female superintendent so . . . and I know all those board members and there are a couple that I sit back and think . . . he’s pretty old school, I wonder if he’s going to be resistant . . . I don’t know how I’m going to stack up against anyone who’s been there, and knows the system well, and Mr. Smith, who was the superintendent and is a man . . . I think I’ll get official word that I’ll be a finalist but I thought I’d be the only finalist, but no, no, they’re going to bring two and it will be myself and it will be this man, who is a superintendent who . . . to me, I look and think really? I’ve got this, for goodness sakes, I have all this experience in the district, but politics is such an odd thing . . . and this man, first of all, I honestly had to acknowledge with myself, he’s got a step up on me simply because he’s a man . . . he does. The men are . . . they are going to be the hardest of the whole board, those four men for various reasons . . . one of them worries that I’ll be too much like the superintendent who’s leaving. I’m applying for this job because I know that I can lead this district and . . . I have experience being a superintendent, I had

to explicitly say that just to shake them enough so that I could move on . . . So where I should be sitting back thinking, “I got this, this guy has one more year of experience than I do, he comes from a military background” . . . So we’ll see, but I am feeling like . . . it’s not a done deal. No . . . and that man piece. It’s huge.

In the end, the district hired the male finalist.

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Victoria who had interviewed for the job of superintendent, but had not been offered the job, provided an example of the board bias that existed in the district where she interviewed. When Victoria questioned the board chair about why she had not been offered the job, the chair admitted that the issue of gender had impacted the decision:

She [the board chair] was quite clear that there was a gender issue, gender-biased issue that happened there. But not from her, not on her part, on the board’s part, and she’s not sure how to sort of control that. And she didn’t indicate whether it was coming from the female half of the board or the male half. The board chair went on to say, “.....that unfortunately we have a misogynistic board” and that she thinks that sometimes as chair she, people find her a little too....forceful and think she might just do better to just go sit in the corner.

Victoria continues:

She (the chair) did run against one of the men who was high powered, where he runs his own business and she got it. It was close. It was 7-5. She has been on the board for 19 years and she’s a member of the ASCD Board for like almost that long . . . 15 years or something. . . . so she’s very active with . . . ASCD and she

really does know her stuff. She's really the way more qualified candidate than, ...she's almost a professional board member.

That was the first time that Victoria had interviewed for the position of superintendent, and she reflected, "This is the first time I have ever felt discriminated against - being a woman. I think if I was a man, I would have been the superintendent here." As further evidence, she goes on to say:

Well, they said that....they did not say it to me, but I have heard they said in the executive session afterward that I just didn't have the same rough, gruff voice as Patrick [previous male superintendent] and they weren't sure I could put people in their place. At the time I had trouble figuring out if it was a grieving process over losing Patrick or it was a gender bias kind of thing. Since I have gotten here I have figured out it was more . . . of gender bias.

Catherine has not been offered an interview for the superintendent position by a board and therefore has not experienced board bias personally, but she made the following observation: "...to me they [superintendents] are all men and that's what a board is looking for and if you are a woman you are an exceptional woman, you are a Connie Brown in education um . . . you're a superstar."

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

Cleo reported that she had not experienced school-board bias, but had observed it while working under a female superintendent. This was her observation about how critical the board/superintendent relationship is:

Well, I mean, they were so brutal to her in meetings . . . I don't even know how to say it, but just being unkind or saying things that would you never say that to a guy kind of thing. Again, like kind of questioning competence, pointing out faults publicly, that kind of stuff and not all the time, and she had a really difficult time managing the board. Scott is like a master, oh my God, he's amazing with the board. She just...and maybe that is partly her inexperience because she hadn't been the superintendent before, but she wasn't getting a lot of support even from the board chair which is where you would think you would have that real relationship kind of stuff, and I just did not see that at all with her and it was brutal. I think she was only in the superintendency for two years, maybe not even quite two years there when she left.

Diana had not experienced or observed school-board bias. Maria, Mary, and Victoria feel that board bias is a barrier that females face in trying to reach the superintendency. As Cleo noted, the superintendent/board relation is one that is critical for being successful, even after reaching the superintendency.

Finding F: Lack of Mentors/Networks

All subgroups reported the barrier of lack of mentors/networks, with four of the six participants reporting that barrier. In the non-aspiring subgroup, both participants reported it was a barrier for them.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

When asked about who mentored and encouraged her to seek the superintendency, Maria said, "Yeah...nobody." This is her further reflection about networking:

Why isn't there a woman superintendent's group that gets together and I don't know....maybe it's we're too busy doing our jobs that we don't take the time to do that, you know, like a lot of guy superintendents go off and play golf together and in fact in one of the superintendents....in the spring, they have the golf thing....it's like, ...I don't play golf, I don't really choose to hang out with those people. But it's a big thing to the guys and I was at the . . . superintendent's meeting one day and they were just talking about how they got together to play golf....it seems just like more of a man thing. Maybe women have other friends and, you know, how kind of you think men have either their family and then their jobs and women maybe have this sort of intermediate group of friends somewhere that they get their support from . . . I don't know . . . I do think it's lonelier being a woman superintendent than a man superintendent from what I've seen.

Bobby, Sally and . . . others that have been at meetings . . . have been extremely supportive. I think . . . the network of men, and maybe because there's more of them in the superintendency is a lot stronger.....you go to the meetings and you tend to see like the men all . . . it's a big social event for the men . . . I've noticed that the women seem to, it's not such a social event for the women. . . it's definitely still the good ol' boys network. I think you tend to see women not maybe networking as much at these meetings as the men are and...I think the other women superintendents . . . I think that we know that they're there for us. Alice and Bobby have said many times and Sally too when she was still working . . . if you have a question, you know, just call or email or whatever . . . this may just be me, but I try to figure it out myself first and then I maybe emailed Bobby

three times in the last three years with a question and maybe Alice two or three times . . .

Mary, like Maria, reflected about the lack of networking or mentoring for women:

....I look at the men and their camaraderie and . . . their exchanges and it's just, it's just different . . . it's just different and some of it I'm sure is because they've been in for a while, they know each other, but you really have to work on getting that going. It doesn't just happen.

However, when Mary was aspiring to the superintendency, her superintendent was helpful in mentoring and encouraging her:

. . .I would have to give the superintendent kudos for that too because he did support me and would tell me, "Here are your strengths, Mary, here are things that you do really, really well," and if there was something he felt I needed to improve on he would help me with that so he certainly was encouraging in terms of....once he could see me, and I think it took a while, but once he could see me as a possible superintendent, which took longer than it did for the assistant before me because he was a guy so it was an automatic, but once he finally bought in, he was very supporting.

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Victoria had people encourage and mentor her along the way so lack of mentoring was not a barrier. Even when she decided to accept an assistant superintendency, her superintendent at the time had this conversation with her:

I said to Joe . . . I'm thinking about taking the assistant superintendent job and he's like. . .you shouldn't, you should be a superintendent. You want to be a

superintendent, you be a superintendent. You are more than qualified. You could have been a superintendent five years ago. Why would you take a lateral and collateral move?

Even when she was a teacher, her superintendent encouraged her to take leadership classes:

At the time I had no desire to go into leadership, but my superintendent . . . I was working in Newton and my superintendent said, “You know, it’s just about developing leadership skills and you’ll use them no matter what you’re doing. Even if you’re teaching, you’ll use them.”

Catherine could name women who have encouraged her to seek the superintendency, but when asked about mentors and professional networks for women, she said, “That’s huge I think. I just don’t think it exists.”

On further reflection, she made this perceptive observation:

I would say that most of the women whose opinions I respect and seek would be highly supportive. I think that at times women can appear non-supportive because they are truly too busy with their own lives, personal and professional, to lend much in the way of active support. Also, I think that when we are talking about the highest level of public education leadership, the superintendent, too many women don't see themselves in the position and therefore don't necessarily see other women in that position either. Everyone I worked for was male and white. Every superintendent I ever had so there were no examples of women.no ready examples of women. They were out there, but I didn’t know about them.

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

When asked about the barriers preventing her from reaching the superintendency, Cleo says, “I think it was the role models. I didn’t have a mentor role model encouraging [me] on the way and I didn’t have a mentor role model to help me balance life and work or to help me figure out how to do that.”

Many of the participants would reference being mentored at the lower levels, but when it reached the level of the superintendency Cleo said, “It evaporates” and that people don’t “talk to women about it.”

Diana also reflected that she had not been mentored or encouraged to consider the superintendency:

I suppose there are probably some other people along the way.....had they done that, it would have given me pause to at least think about it consciously as opposed to I am just going to be the best high school principal in the world and I’m going to make my school the best it can possibly be for everybody there and that gets 1000 percent of my focus. And that didn’t happen and so it didn’t sway me. I just stayed the course happily. Just really driven. We had a great year last year, it’s going to be a better year for kids this year and for my staff this year because of this, this and this and I’m going to work to make that so.

When asked whether someone encouraging and mentoring her might have swayed her to consider the superintendency, she says:

Yes, I think so...for instance if Ron Brown had . . . along the way said, “You really need to consider the superintendency, Diana. You’d make a really good superintendent,” I would have begun to think about that. Because I would take to heart his advice.

When asked what her largest barrier had been to not aspiring to the

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think that it might be as simple as it was never encouraged. As I reflected with you before, I really don't recall anyone saying, "You know, Diana, you're a great principal, you need to start thinking about becoming a superintendent, get in a program, get a peer group, get your certification, because you're going to want to do that and we're going to want to see you as superintendent. And I....that's all that I can really put it upon other than it just was never anything I wanted. Well, why didn't I want it? I don't know.....it wasn't anything that I aspired to.

Finding: Internal Barriers Identified by Subgroups and Participants

The second research question that the study sought to answer was, "What do female administrators perceive as internal barriers to achieving the superintendency?" An overview of the findings of the internal barriers are organized in Table 4.3, and more fully explored in the narratives of each participant of each subgroup.

Table 4.3
Internal Barriers Identified by Participants

Self-Confidence	Maria (S), Mary (S), Catherine (AS), Cleo (NA)	A feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities, and judgment. Failure to take a risk or "lean in." Over thinking situations or actions. Cultural expectations of role of women. Negative stereotypes of women.
Perfectionism	Maria (S), Victoria (AS), Catherine (AS), Cleo (NA), Diana (NA)	Feeling the need to be 100% qualified before pursuing the superintendency. "Predilection for setting extremely high standards and being displeased with anything else."
Choice	Maria (S), Catherine (AS), Cleo (NA), Diana (NA)	An act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities. Making a conscious decision not to apply to a superintendent opening, or to postpone it to a different time.

Finding A: Perfectionism

All subgroups reported the internal barrier of perfectionism, with five of the six participants reporting that barrier. In the superintendent subgroup, only one participant reported this as a barrier.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

Mary does not consider herself a perfectionist and said the following:

I think I've done a pretty good job giving myself license to not know everything I'm supposed to know yet and that I'm going to flounder, and that I'm going to make some mistakes, and that I'm going to have to reach out to people, and I'm going to have to take the risks because I have to so, nah...probably not.

Maria, unlike Mary, did not hesitate to admit that she is a perfectionist:

Totally a perfectionist...Oh yeah.....all the time. I have extremely high expectations of myself and . . . of people that work with me and they'll tell you that. I will be there to support....I think they would say this . . . I would be there to support them in any way, . . . but I do have really, really high expectations, so sometimes I have to catch myself on that and think, reflect on....am I expecting too much here, . . . the administrative team has almost completely turned around since I've gotten here and I have some amazing administrators . . . my expectations carry through to the people that I hire . . . yeah, I have really high expectations and I'm just not happy with myself if I don't think . . . I'm fulfilling my expectations. I'm my worst critic probably.

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Victoria's perfectionism impacts all areas of her life. When asked how prepared she needs to be when she's gone into a position, she says:

I think very prepared. I think I feel like I need to be very prepared for everything I go into. I think it does fit me, yeah, I think it does fit me and I think, I think it's one of the things that is frustrating me a little with the pool of superintendents that are out there. These people are.....and I know I'm fussy. It's not like I'm casting a line out and applying everywhere. I am being fussy about where I want to be but, you know I look around and think, you're in a York County Superintendent's group or a Saco Bay Superintendent's group, I think, wow....these people, half of them just punt. They don't even know what they are really talking about, and it's

not accurate, but it sounds it. They say it with conviction. I don't know. It's interesting.

Because she has young children, that perfectionism also impacts her personal life: ...women that tend to go into this kind of job tend to be people that just take care of things so, I've heard myself just managing everything. Like Christmas, . . . he shops for me . . . I do all of Santa, I do all of his family, I do all of my family. I wrap every damn thing, you know what I mean? And it's overwhelming. I'm down there at 12 o'clock last night wrapping presents, and it's like.....I knew I had to get the policy updated,I got that out, then I'm downstairs wrapping presents, 12 o'clock, and he's upstairs snoring. Yeah... I was thinking maybe he needs to . . . it's a lot and when Audrey was younger I could shop with her . . . she wouldn't know. Now I can't buy any Santa thing for anybody, even for him from Santa with her with me because if she sees it, even in the cart . . . so it's a lot, . . . some of it may be a perfectionism thing, but don't you think that's one of the personality traits that sort of Type A is one of the personality traits of people that end up in this type of work? I could organize into piles and say to him ok you're off Tuesday and Wednesday, you need to do a couple hours worth of wrapping, but it's still me organizing it. Even if I say to him do a couple hours worth of wrapping, I'm still organizing the whole thing, and I think some of that is just my personality . . . my own expectations and my own personality of just wanting to just do it so I know it's done . . .

Catherine admitted with having to deal with her perfectionism and reflected on her perfectionistic tendencies:

Yes. I want to do things well, that's important and well is sometimes perfect . . . well is well, I recognize that in a superintendency, you can't be perfect because you can't be all things to all people all the time. That's just not going to happen and that's not realistic . . . at the end of the day, every day, to close my eyes and say I did a nice job regardless of what anyone else thinks. I worked hard, I worked with integrity, I sought knowledge or I had to seek knowledge; I made informed decisions. I waited to make decisions so that I can be better informed tomorrow. Catherine applied for a superintendent opening, and did not get an interview.

When asked whether she felt like she failed, she said,

Yes. I mean, I didn't even get an interview so it was a little bit of a knock . . . so what's the tipping point in getting an interview? I don't know. I would have thought the AOS that I applied for was like Southbridge, Wincester, you know, small schools, part-time position, um.....depending on skill set . . . it could be more like a job with the director, my experience as a director would certainly . . . be valuable.

She questions her ability at times to be a superintendent. "Do I really want to jeopardize all that for something I'm not 100 percent sure that I could do to the standard that I want it to be and then you know, obviously would it be to the standard of the people who decide whether or not you're going to be there?"

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

Cleo said the following about the impact of her perfectionism:

I said oh, I can do this and then came back to assistant superintendent and I went holy crap, what did I get myself into. I have no clue what to do here, or I felt like I

had no clue. That's partly me because I just, I never think unless I'm perfect....I have to know exactly what to do when I need to do it and that's just not realistic....Yeah, because I'm never good enough. I can never do anything good enough and so I'm always second guessing, am I good, am I bad . . . I think it's because if I don't, I'm a failure, I'm not perfect and it's going to hurt me, you know. It's an ego blow because even when I was telling you that I applied for these other jobs and I didn't get them, I felt kind of bad saying that.

Diana, like Cleo, admits that she also has to deal with the barrier of perfectionism: To the nth degree, my dear . . . Yes, yes, yes . . . yup, 100 percent. I worked about 90 hours a week except in the summer, but pretty regularly 90 hours a week which isn't that healthy, but I look back and say, I was absolutely the happiest ever doing that.

When Diana was asked whether her perfectionism impacted her waiting to go for an administrative position until her kids were a little older, she said, "I'd say yes, but I also wanted to be a great mother, so a little perfectionism there. And probably in my thinking couldn't do both perfectly."

Finding B: Lack of Self-confidence

All subgroups reported the internal barrier of lack of self-confidence, with four of the six participants reporting that barrier. In the superintendent subgroup, both participants reported it was a barrier for them. It was not as straightforward as some of the other barriers. The women told conflicting stories about their self-confidence at different times and in different circumstances. Mary, Maria, Catherine, and Cleo have felt

at times that a lack of self-confidence impacted their careers. Victoria and Diana did not feel it was an internal barrier for them to overcome.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

Maria reported not feeling confident with the finance piece of the superintendency:

I feel really comfortable with everything, but my challenges are the finance piece and I don't . . . and I don't even know if I'd say a challenge, but probably my weakest areas are the finance piece and the transportation piece. That whole building thing, but I firmly believe [in] having the right people on the bus. . . I don't think you can do it all yourself and I just so firmly believe in having the right people there to help you and being able to trust those people.

For some, more self-confidence was gained through education. When Maria was asked whether she felt like she had to have a doctorate before applying for a superintendent opening, she indicated she did.

Self-confidence is not a consistent barrier for Mary. There are times and areas where she feels very self-confident and other times where the lack of self-confidence impacts her. She reflected, "I don't think that I need to prove anything to these people, but I do need to prove to myself that I can do this and do it well." That reflection shows self-confidence in who she is, but one can see the lack of self-confidence creeping in with the following situation:

I thought, all right, maybe I wouldn't apply there because while I've been involved in negotiations . . . when I came here, they had just negotiated and so I haven't gone through that process as a sitting superintendent so it makes me a

little . . . so I guess I do find myself sometimes thinking, well they really want somebody who's really strong in budget and I certainly have learned a lot, . . . I think we all think about where our strengths and weaknesses are and the weaknesses, I think for a woman, in their mindset play bigger . . . it gets back to that, if we're not an expert at it, we think it's a weakness . . . I think I've realized over the years to not think that I can do a job that I don't know a lot about, but that I'm not....I haven't prepared for...so, special-ed director . . . I kind of felt better prepared for having been a special-ed teacher, doing the testing for a while and so I felt pretty prepared for that, but I remember saying . . . curriculum director? I don't know the federal programs . . . I don't know . . . other than special ed curriculum . . . and what Bob [her superintendent] said was, "Mary, you are a smart woman, you can learn those things. What I need you to be able to do is to lead the others. To bring the teachers along to make sure that we can move forward." I think he meant those skills . . . I probably did need that because I didn't feel comfortable walking into something that I felt I wasn't maybe all prepared for. For example, Salem . . . I didn't put my name in. It's a bigger district. Here I am sitting here with, you know, it will be two years. If I'm not well known in the southern part of the state, for those reasons, I didn't and it's more urban than I probably want to be, . . . I wasn't like the man who might just say, "I'm going to go for it." In hindsight, I probably should have put in for it. And do I think that they're open to a woman. I do have that thought . . . the last interview that I did, I was sitting there and I thought do I need to . . . I'm soft spoken . . . it doesn't make me any less effective as a leader . . . I tend to err on

the side of caution and I try to figure out, does this look like a place that would first of all be a good fit for me . . . I think there are certain jobs right now that I think that I'm not going to try for that one, but I don't think I look at it so much in the light of being a woman as I do...I don't have the same experience, I'm still new at this....I won't be a candidate because I haven't . . . I'm only in my second year type of deal so . . . I think we talked a little bit about this . . . that a man tends to feel they can just try something new without having all that background and being prepared for it and so for me . . . I can't be superintendent, I don't know anything about that.

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Victoria did not feel she lacked self-confidence; Catherine recognized it and identified it as more risk aversion to failure, the fear of trying and failing. She is reluctant to apply for positions unless she feels fairly assured that she is going to get it. She says, "I have a hard time . . . , I hate to sound like an egotist, but I think that I would have a hard time initiating that [applying for a superintendent opening]. I would want them to want me too which is so bad."

The first time she applied to be a director of special education, she did not get it, and when asked how long it was before she applied again, she said, "I did not get an interview when I applied for Ganado's superintendent position. Camden Hills had a special ed director position quite a few years ago....shortly after I got my master's . . .

and I applied and I didn't get an interview and it was a long time . . . well, it was years before I tried again. It must have been six or seven years."

She goes on to say, "The shot to the self esteem, consequences, . . . I would say that's the number one factor keeping me from applying to other positions . . . to going forward to even applying."

When questioned whether she would apply to a district like Falmouth, a high-income suburban district, if they asked her to, she replied:

Oh, if they said, "Catherine we want you," I'd probably . . . I would be incredibly boosted in my confidence. I can't imagine that I wouldn't, I mean I really can't. But yeah, you're right, I probably lack a certain confidence in taking that step, but I think Falmouth is a unique district in that . . . it's not overly huge, but I think . . . of it as being in a progressive area where you have, you know very educated people who have very high expectations of what their public school is going to look like and what the superintendent, the face of the superintendent is going to look like. There are certain positions that I'm more predisposed to applying for which might be positions that are considered less attractive to some people, but they wouldn't be for me, they really wouldn't be. I really feel like I understand rural people in rural Maine and I have a passion for being in a rural area . . . and I feel . . . that I have plenty to offer a rural school district. I don't know that I have plenty to offer a district like Falmouth or Yarmouth, . . . where there's a certain amount of polish that some people have and an ability to be articulate . . . that I might be able to pull off, . . . but it's far more natural for me to be somebody who is a rural person who understands rural people and wants to service them.

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

When it came to the internal barrier of self-confidence, some of the women told conflicting stories. For example Cleo says:

I really need a lot of positive reinforcement to feel . . . and I think a lot of that had to do about when I got tracked after junior high . . . that was a hugely seminal time for me so when that happened it was like, oh . . . I guess I'm not good enough, I'm not good enough for that and so I think that really had a huge impact on me.

However, when Cleo reflected on her current superintendent, she says, "When I see what Harry does I say I could do that so much better and yes I could, I definitely could. Yes, on a daily basis I say I could do that so much better..."

That statement seems to provide evidence of a certain amount of self-confidence. However, at another point in her interview she says:

One, I don't feel like I have the confidence to do that [the superintendency] because I don't feel like I've had a good role model to show me that you can do it kind of thing . . . somebody that I've been intimate with or have had that conversation with to say, I do know female superintendents . . . some of them I would aspire to be like and some of them I wouldn't . . . actually I don't know of a female superintendent that I would aspire to be like...how about that?

When asked about whether she feels that she needs to be assured of getting a job before she will apply, she says, "No, not guaranteed, but that I'm confident that I'll get the job. If I get an interview, I'm pretty confident I'll get the job."

Like Catherine, she also says she has to feel like she has most of the skill set needed before she will even apply. She says, “. . . I’m not a risk taker . . . I get embarrassed if I fail so and I think that was a lot of high school and a lot of that whole tracking thing . . . that business.”

Unlike Cleo, Diana did not feel that she lacked self-confidence or that it caused her not to apply for a superintendent opening.

Finding C: Choice

All subgroups reported the internal barrier of choice, with four of the six participants reporting that barrier. Two of the six participants, Cleo and Diana, reported that they have made conscious choices to not pursue the superintendency. Catherine and Maria made the conscious choices to postpone applying for superintendent openings until their children were older. The barrier of choice did not impact Mary and Victoria.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

When Maria was in high school, she talked about an experience where she did not try out for drum major because her boyfriend did not want her to. She later regretted that decision and has consciously not made that mistake again. As she reflected on this, she said:

I’m very much a when the door opens person I walk through it even though, like I have to figure out how I’m going to sell my house and get an apartment and move my life to a different [place], but the door opened and I, and I still believe that how many years later. It does stem back from that high school piece because I really...I should have done that and I let somebody talk me out of it.

When asked whether choice influenced her decision, she said, “I don’t think so, . . . no I think it’s just more of a timing issue.”

Mary aspired and reached the superintendency, but when talking about the barrier of choice, she reflected:

See it’s difficult because when I was a teacher or even a special ed director, I wasn’t at that time aspiring to be superintendent so it really wasn’t until I was assistant superintendent and . . . and then having been assistant for a long time and with a superintendent who was nearing retirement . . . kind of gave me more opportunities.

She made the connection of it not being a conscious choice to not apply. Once she was in a position that she could “see” what the superintendency involved, she applied and obtained the position of superintendent.

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

For Victoria, choice was not a barrier: she aspires to be a superintendent. Of the six participants, Victoria is choosing to seek the superintendency at the same time that she is juggling the demands of a young family.

Catherine is very reflective about career moves, and acknowledges that she has made conscious choices to wait to seek an administrative job:

. . . well, that lasted for a long time, I mean it really lasted through high school, through the first few years of college . . . I didn’t want to jeopardize, I would not have wanted to jeopardize a steady income for something that might not work out because I really didn’t have the skills to do it or I got unlucky. I might have a

board that loved me and wanted me and brought me in only to have that board turn over in six or eighteen months, and I'm not what they want, and not what they see as a leader for their school.

She goes on to say, "I didn't really want to be in it and I did feel.....I felt....very much attached to my continuing contract. I had a nice little house in a nice little area with reasonable schools and I wasn't going to jeopardize all of that for the complete unknown. I was not a risk taker."

Her mother's death caused her to rethink her choices as shown in this reflection:

My mother passed away about....I think it's four years now and I think.....and she died fairly young. She was only 70, so that's not old. I mean, it occurred to me that I had allowed all these fears to dominate my life for an awfully long time and perhaps, I don't know what to do anymore . . . but yeah, it was a definite turning point and my husband has remarked on it many times since . . . when did I stop being so fearful . . . and that's the only thing I can attribute it to, I mean maybe there were little things going on all along, all the time in a growth pattern, but I think that her death and the finality of it made that impression upon me that life was going by and there wasn't a lot to stop me from trying something different and what was the worse that could happen . . . I used to be able to come up with a big long scenario of the worse that could happen, let me tell what's the worse that can happen . . .

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

It was only recently that Diana made a conscious choice about the superintendency:

. . . it's absolute truth. So I very recently made a conscious decision not to apply. I will always remember making that decision. I never struggled with the idea [before] of, "Should I be preparing to become a superintendent?" I just didn't. It was not something any more than I ever made a conscious decision not to next become a brain surgeon.... I never consciously considered it. I didn't. I never consciously considered it. No, you know, apparently, didn't see that it would give me anything that I needed. And yet, interestingly, it was during my first year as a teacher, first year as a teacher that I knew that I wanted to be a principal. I believe it has never been a conscious choice when someone has even brought it up because it has not ever been a goal and so I never, I don't think, made a choice about it. Probably so quickly, but not having processed because it's like, I don't want to do it...I don't know what I'm doing . . . as much as I like challenge, I still, I don't know.....maybe I'd rather be commissioner or king of the world in D.C. or something, it just never called to me so I don't think . . . there really was a decision time, like is it about time I start pursuing certification . . . no, I was totally doing what I wanted to do to the extent that I never even wanted to do that any other place.

Although Diana has recently made the conscious choice not to aspire to the superintendency, if invited by certain individuals to apply at the one place where she has 28 years experience, she said:

I think I would. I think I would not be able to say [no].....I think if they ask me to be the custodian I couldn't say no, um....it's just...it's not the position, it's that my heart will always live there, 28 years and I was obscenely obsessed with that

place and I am of that place and so I would readily do anything of any nature, you know, could you come back and facilitate da da da. If they said you have such unique insights. Would you come back and work with the committee that's going to select somebody and help to facilitate that process, sure absolutely yes....anything that would help that district, you know it's a little crazy...and I never aspired to the superintendency, and so I would have gone out in a casket.

Cleo, like Diana, has made a conscious choice to not apply for superintendent openings as reflected in the following:

I don't want to have to deal with the board like he has to deal with them. It would drive me nuts first of all because I don't think I could work with our board so I can't see me stepping into that. Other boards maybe.....like the Salem board, yeah...they're so different. We have a board that's like cowboys and they're always shooting. It's ridiculous and you can't rein them in, so you kind of have to play the game or play the politics and I kind of get that. I do have my superintendent certificate because at one point I kind of thought maybe I would be interested in that, but really, when I had grandchildren, it went right out the window. I think it really is because I want to spend more time with my family. I still really like the work, I don't like coming home after board meetings on cold, dark nights, I don't like that or going to the meetings at night, but I don't want to do it 24 [seven] . . . so I just don't want to do that any more.

She did respond to the question, "If the timing had been right and Bob had left, would you probably have gone for it?"

I would have. I look and say I could do that so much better, but I don't want to at this point. I just don't want to. The other part for me is, I know myself and I'm an introvert and it is very tiring for me to have that political face that you have to have as a superintendent and I just don't think I could do it. It would be too exhausting for me....too exhausting. It would just be not something I could do. Even now what I do now....like I told you, I go home and I basically "veg" out in the evening and on the weekends I recuperate from the week . . .

Findings: Solutions Identified by Subgroups and Participants

The third research question that the study sought to answer was, "What do female administrators perceive to be the needed supports for women to access and be successful in the superintendency in Maine?" An overview of the findings of the solutions are organized in Table 4.4, and more fully explored in the narratives of each participant of each subgroup.

Table 4.4 Solutions Identified by Participants

Solution Needed	Participants Who Noted this Solution
Mentoring/Networking	Maria (S), Mary (S), Diana (NA), Cleo (NA)
More Formal Training	Cleo (NA), Diana (NA)
Access to Good Role Models	Maria (S)
More Educational Opportunities	Catherine (AS)

Finding A: Mentoring/Networking

Two of the three subgroups reported the solution is more mentoring and networking for female administrators, with four of the six participants mentioning that as a possible solution. The subgroup of aspiring superintendents, Victoria and Catherine, did not mention it as a solution.

Women Superintendents: The Journeys of Maria and Mary

Maria's thoughts about mentoring other women:

So, it would be nice if there were some kind of women's superintendent group, but I'm betting that we wouldn't take the time to go... I think the women have a different attitude and you have to support them a little bit differently and um....maybe, you know, encourage them...and maybe we, as women superintendents, don't focus enough on encouraging the women coming up through the ranks.

Mary said, "Even last week when I was at the conference . . . I look at the men and their camaraderie and um....their exchanges and it's just, it's just different...it's just different and some of it I'm sure is because they've been in for a while, they know each other, but you really have to work on getting that going. It doesn't just happen."

Women Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Victoria and Catherine

Neither Victoria nor Catherine mentioned the need for more mentoring in getting to the superintendency. That may be due to the fact that both felt they had good mentors in seeking the superintendency.

Women Not Aspiring to the Superintendency: The Journeys of Cleo and Diana

Cleo talked about a mentoring program for principals and wondered about a similar program for females seeking the superintendency:

You know how MPA has the . . . principal mentorship program or networking? If they had a superintendent's mentorship program or networking session where people who were interested in becoming superintendents could then go and meet other women, try to make connections with somebody, that makes sense, or meet a sitting female superintendent....I don't know, I think that would be really helpful. I started one of these for principals with....a professor at UMF and we did this whole series, two years of principals for women only and....that was our meeting place and we met there once a month or once every other month and we would just have a discussion starter around some kind of leadership and then we'd just have these roundtable talks about it and I think that really helped me a lot in learning that and wouldn't that be a great thing for cohorts of people who are thinking of moving up the ladder?

Diana had many similar thoughts about the importance of encouraging one another:

So I think every day in our buildings and in our districts we have nonstop opportunities because we are with the people, we are with those most likely, I mean, most people are not Georgette Wentzell who come from wherever and go into the superintendency. There are people who were teachers, and . . . whatever it was, but have been in the system and then aspire to a higher level of leadership and so I think the opportunities are right within our buildings or right within the halls of USM or those afternoons and evenings with those who come for their master's degree programs. I think that those who pursue in other areas, not in school leadership, you know, we should be sounding the call with them, you

know, I mean these are people obviously that are looking to better themselves, to improve their learning, to learn more and these are the right people, not all of them obviously, but among the right people and so I think these are all opportunities....everything is an opportunity. Everything that I did as the principal of a school was an opportunity to promote school leadership with the 150 adults in the building with me, whether it was consciously saying, “Becky, we’re going to start 9th grade teams and I would love for you to chair that committee. It’s going to be tough, but you’re the right person, I’m going to support you . . . to a sort of classic kind of a way to create an opportunity for you to be seen as a leader . . . but plant those seeds, bring those opportunities to people. Bring them with you to things....here, come to this conference with me . . . I’d like you to go to this and this, represent us, bring back your learning, teach us about it when you come back . . . and I don’t think that we do it just for females. We’re doing it across the board, but especially to make sure that we’re not letting females that we identify as having those leadership skills sort of click off around those opportunities for whatever reason.

But I think female leaders bring even more to the table because of what makes us female, and because we are not in any way lacking for any of the other skills or any of that kind of stuff, knowledge, understanding, but we’re able to bring another aspect that enhances and so I think it’s the support, it is exactly, you know, it is encouraging others, it’s creating opportunities for a cohort group. It is speaking to our young female teachers about it, not just....ok, I think you should consider the principalship, but I really think that that would be one of the steps

that you would take to leading the district. I'd love to see you be a leader in this district, and then the support along the way to continuing to think about that . . . that next career step and trying to grease the skids with well placed words here and there so that others who may not consider would expand their thinking.

Finding B: Formal Training

One of the three subgroups reported the solution as the need for more formal training, with two participants identifying that as one possible solution. The subgroup of non-aspiring superintendents noted it as a solution.

Mary hopes, with time, more females will enter the superintendency. "I don't know if it's a generational thing. I do think that as time goes on and we continue to push forward, it becomes more acceptable for there to be a woman superintendent." However, Cleo and Diana feel like a more conscious, formal effort needs to be made to recruit women into the superintendency.

Cleo had the idea of restructuring the superintendent internship:

So I'm thinking that for like the superintendency, if they could restructure the internship so that it is not just I'm following you around and doing your bidding, but that it's . . . delegated . . . like student teaching where you give up the class to the student teacher. . . .and it would have to be long. It can't be six months. It would probably need to be a year.

Diana mentioned needing different stakeholders at the table to identify and recruit potential up and coming superintendents:

I think that's a joint endeavor. I think there's a place for the universities to be at that table and I think the principals association, the superintendents association. I

think our current female superintendents and I think our current male superintendents have a role because if it seems like a group of women doing this work, then it's too much the us against them thing. I believe firmly that there are tons of guys out there who would actively be a part of this . . . solution really.

Maybe a collaborative effort might be wise . . . how do we support our best, our brightest, our future here so that the superintendency in Maine is enhanced and . . . by the addition of a steady stream of candidates who are highly qualified and skilled and ready to lead our schools in very difficult times. And so yes, I think it needs to be a really conscious, conscious decision and planning needs to go into this to say, it isn't just drop a word here and there when it occurs to you when you're with somebody, but it's, how do we sit somewhere in the state and identify people? I think at our level it would be hard to identify our youngest because they are in the classrooms right now, but very easy for me to identify school-level folks. . . how do we reach out to these people and say . . . it's not that we're trying to push you out of the principalship because we are grateful. That having been said, it's a bit of a walk to the next step and we want you to get on that path and are poised to support you in this.

Finding C: Positive Role Models

One participant from one subgroup reported that a needed solution is for current female superintendents to be positive role models. That solution was identified in the subgroup of superintendents. Maria mentioned the responsibility of the women in superintendent positions to be good role models for other women:

I feel the responsibility to be a good model and a good representative, but there are some women, and I've heard some stories, who haven't done such a great job. You get a couple of us that aren't doing a very good job and it just throws everybody right back to....oh, yeah...she's a woman and um.....so I think probably the best thing we can do is to really be.....not go and play golf,....be doing the best job we can. Jill's done a lot to....dispel a lot of the feelings about women superintendents, because I think the men that she deals with, the other superintendents, really respect her and what she does.

Finding D: Educational Opportunities

One participant from one subgroup identified the need for more educational opportunities within the state. That solution was identified in the subgroup of aspiring superintendents. Catherine is concerned about the existing educational opportunities in the state. This was her reflection about trying to get her master's degree in rural Maine:

Maine continues to be a rural state and if you don't make a reasonable pathway for women to....obtain the educational background to become a superintendent then you're not going to have any women that do it. It's a long ride to Bangor or to Portland in weather like this. In my ed-leadership classes, there were a few women . . . I said to my husband after my first one when I got home, "Oh, it's the.....I've never seen so many pairs of sweatpants and whistles." I really, you know, everybody had left their coaching job to come and take their ed leadership class.....I need two more to get this or that . . . that was a reality check. I think that very first class was . . . I was really taking it because I wanted to see what it was like and when I looked at my colleagues, I thought, they're going to be your

principals and they're going to be your superintendents unless you do something about it, but anyway, education I think is really about the biggest barrier.

Summary

The findings of this study were grouped into three categories: findings of what external barriers were identified by participants and subgroups, findings of what internal barriers were identified by participants and subgroups, and findings for what possible solutions were identified by participants and subgroups. Each of the findings contributed to answering the following research questions: What do female administrators perceive as external barriers to achieving the superintendency? What do female administrators perceive as internal barriers to achieving the superintendency? What do female administrators perceive to be the needed supports for women to access and be successful in the superintendency in Maine? A snapshot of which participants experienced the different barriers is captured in Table 4.5.

The one barrier that was common to all participants, whether external or internal, was overcoming cultural expectations: most often, women feeling the need to “do it all.” Secondly, it was overcoming the cultural expectation that society expects a superintendent to be male. The second finding was that five of the six participants experienced the external barrier of gender bias. An additional finding was that five of the six participants experienced the non-support of other women. Only one participant did not experience that bias, and she was the same participant that had not experienced gender bias or board bias. Five of the six participants experienced the external barrier of being place bound at some point during their careers. Three of the six participants reported having experienced the external barrier of school board bias; the ones who did

not experience it had not been interviewed for any superintendent openings. Three of the six participants felt that the lack of mentors and networking impacted their careers.

Findings related to internal barriers included five of the six participants reported perfectionism was a barrier for them. Four of the six participants reported lacking self-confidence in areas around the superintendency. For some of the women, self-confidence was dependent on the circumstance. For the barrier of choice, four of the six participants noted it as impacting them.

Four of the six participants stated strongly that more mentoring and networking among female administrators would help to balance the inequality between men and women in the superintendency. Two participants identified the need for more formal training in the responsibilities of being superintendents. One participant felt it was important that current female superintendents be good role models, and one participant identified the need for more educational opportunities within the state. Table 4.5 summarizes the barriers encountered by each participant. Board bias was the least encountered barrier, while every participant identified the barrier of cultural expectations. Of the participants, Maria had to overcome the most barriers.

Table 4.5 Overview of Barriers Experienced by Participants

Participant	External Barriers						Internal Barriers		
	CE	NS	GB	PB	BB	LM	P	SC	C
Maria (S)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mary (S)	X	X	X	X	X			X	

Catherine(AS)	X			X		X	X	X	X
Victoria (AS)	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Cleo (NA)	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Diana (NA)	X	X	X			X	X		X
No. of Participants Experiencing Barrier	6	5	5	5	3	4	5	4	4
Codes: CE – Cultural Expectations; NS – Non-support of Other Women; GB – Gender Bias; PB – Being Place Bound; BB – Board Bias; LM – Lack of Mentors; P – Perfectionism; SC – Lack of Self-Confidence; C – Choice SC – Lack of Self-Confidence; C- Choice									

Chapter Five examines the findings from the data analysis, interpreting the results to develop conclusions, and to identify possible implications and recommendations. The proposed recommendations potentially could provide benefits for women seeking the superintendency, and for policymakers in the state of Maine, resulting in an increased number of women entering the superintendency.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of females' perspectives of what barriers are to be overcome externally and internally to enable women to become superintendents in the state of Maine. This study examined the perspectives of six women serving as administrators during the 2014-2015 school year. At that time, there were 27 women serving in the 130 superintendencies in Maine, or 21 percent.

Data were obtained by interviewing six participants through a phenomenological interview study. The six participants fell within one of three subgroups: superintendents (S), aspiring superintendents (AS) or non-aspiring superintendents (NA). Each of the participants' interviews ranged in length from twenty-six to eighty-four minutes. The interviews were focused on the following research questions:

1. What do female administrators perceive as external barriers to achieving the superintendency?
2. What do female administrators perceive as internal barriers to achieving the superintendency?
3. What do female administrators perceive to be the needed supports for women to access and be successful in the superintendency in Maine?

The interviews followed the women's perspectives, probing when necessary to gather further information or clarification. In addition, during the interviews the researcher asked a variety of background questions that supplied demographic information about the participants. Information obtained through the interviews created common themes, and illustrative quotes were provided as evidence of the themes. Conclusions and

recommendations were created from the analysis and synthesis of the women's shared stories.

Conclusions

There are many internal and external barriers for female administrators in Maine to overcome in order to reach the superintendency. Those barriers have marginalized female administrators, keeping them at the level of teacher, principal, or central office, while the superintendency has remained elusive for many of them as evidenced by the facts that 75 percent of the educators in Maine are female, while only 21 percent of the superintendents are. That failure to attract, hire, and retain women in the superintendency deprives schools and students from potentially transformational leaders. What follows is a more in-depth examination of each barrier, and recommendations for removing or overcoming the barrier, based upon the participants' experiences.

Cultural Expectations

Female administrators struggle with the demands of balancing work, a personal life, and their roles as wives and mothers. The participants noted the effort needed to do it all well. For all of the participants except Victoria (AS), the aspiring superintendent, that resulted in them postponing career advancement while their children were young. For Cleo (NA) and Diana (NA) that postponement led to them never reaching the superintendency, because they are now nearing the end of their careers and are focused on retirement. That finding aligns with the literature that says males move into administration earlier than females, thus reaching the superintendency at earlier ages. Women applicants are older when applying for administrative positions, and have more years of service (Dana & Bourisaw 2006, Evans 2003, Kowalski & McCord, 2011).

Because women enter the superintendency approximately eight to fifteen years later than men, women, like Cleo and Diana, may never obtain a position in the superintendency because they literally run out of time, especially since many females are now postponing having children until later in life (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Part of that postponement of career advancements is due to the lack of equal shared responsibility between spouses in regards to domestic chores and childrearing. The societal expectation continues that it is the female's responsibility to be the nurturer and the "primary" parent. That commitment to children before self prevents some women from reaching the level of superintendent, or at least causes them to postpone seeking it as Mary (S) reflected:

Oh, the kids will be ok, but I was also on the heels of a divorce so you know, maybe we're just, we're [females] not quite as egocentric and that's the price you pay, but in that regard I guess I would prefer to be the way we are because I think that those were big decisions for my family, for my kids.

Because only 21 percent of the superintendents in Maine are women, there are few female superintendents to serve as role models. Cleo remarked that she did not know of any current female superintendents that she aspired to be like, or whom she felt were meeting the multiple demands of family and career while balancing it all well. The lack of networking among present female administrators is preventing some from seeing possible solutions to meeting the dual roles of family and the superintendency. When female superintendents are not highlighted or made more visible within the educational community, then working female administrators such as Cleo and Catherine (AS) do not see role models who could serve as potential mentors. Furthermore, it perpetuates the

stereotype that superintendents are white, male, and in their 50s. The mindset of the white, male superintendent requires a shift, and simultaneously, the message needs to be reinforced that women belong in the superintendency, and that it is not only permissible, but needed, for women to aspire, to achieve, and to expect spouses to share in the domestic chores and care giving responsibilities equally in order for female administrators to successfully integrate their work and family lives.

Non-support of Other Women

Catherine, an aspiring superintendent, was the only woman who did not feel the barrier of the non-support of other women. Mary and Maria (S), both current superintendents, experienced the barrier; however, it differed for each. Since becoming a superintendent, Mary has not felt much support among fellow female superintendents. Mary noted that a few women superintendents in her area seem to be friends, but have not been quick to reach out to her. As the new superintendent in the region, Mary has found male superintendents to be more supportive.

It was during the interview process that Maria felt the non-support of women. Maria, like Mary, did note that the male superintendents' network seemed much stronger, and she reflected that it might be "because there's more of them in the superintendency." The difference that these two women experienced might be due to Maria working as an assistant superintendent under a female superintendent, creating a more ready access to a female superintendent and her established network, whereas Mary had worked under a male superintendent, and did not have a close working relationship with any female superintendent.

Like Maria, Victoria, the aspiring superintendent, experienced the non-support of women from an interviewing team. That is supported by the research of Dana and Bourisaw (2006) who noted people in general prefer the status quo. The status quo among superintendents is:

They are white males in their fifties. They always have been. Most of them are successful in their roles, and as Americans, we like to replicate success. So we hire more of the same--much more of the same. (Dana and Bourisaw, 2006)

Both of the non-aspiring superintendents, like the superintendents and Victoria, the aspiring superintendent, felt the non-support of other women. Diana probably experienced it the most blatantly of all when a female superintendent openly discouraged her from applying for a superintendent opening where she would have been a viable candidate. That was followed by two female administrators whom she had mentored also discouraging her from seeking the position.

Cleo's perceived non-support was at lower levels of administration, as she had never applied for a superintendent opening, or even explored the possibility. Research shows there are women who do not believe in supporting or promoting women, or wanting to correct the sexual imbalance in leadership (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Matthews, 1995). Without the support of other women, it will be more difficult to correct the gender imbalance. If the gender imbalance remains, the pool of candidates for superintendent openings will remain smaller than it needs to be, restricting the number of authentic leaders available to lead school districts.

Gender Bias

Catherine was the only woman who did not experience the barrier of gender bias; however, her reflections revealed her understanding of the bias that does exist within the superintendency. She noted the fact that there are more men in the superintendency, and also in her current position as a special education director. Additionally, she felt that if she had a doctorate, it would give her a competitive edge when seeking a superintendent position. That is supported by the research that female superintendents have more formal education than their male peers: 52.1 percent of females and 42.1 percent of males had doctorates according to the 2010 decennial study of the superintendency (Kolwalski & McCord, 2011). That additional education, however, has not in and of itself created gender balance in the superintendency.

All of the other participating women, regardless of the subgroup, experienced that barrier, with the participants revealing specific experiences where the gender bias delayed or impacted them from obtaining an administrative position. For Maria, gender bias delayed her becoming a superintendent, and Victoria felt that it prevented her from getting the superintendent position for which she had recently applied. Mary and Victoria referenced how the bias made them become more self-conscious about their appearance on a regular basis: Mary worried about what others would construe as “provocative,” while Victoria feared wearing anything that may appear “feminine,” thereby reducing her authority. Victoria was advised by a male superintendent not to come on too strong in an interview, causing her to wear a flowered blouse to present a “softer” appearance. In hindsight, she regretted that decision: she was perceived as not being authoritarian

enough. The concern about appearance is a tightrope women face regularly when dressing for the workforce, or when applying for administrative positions.

Of all of the participants, Cleo experienced the most severe gender bias barrier. She worked in a culture permeated with sexism: sexual references, kisses on cheeks, and overt advances. She feels her refusal to participate in such behaviors cost her a position as assistant superintendent. Although there are state and federal laws created to protect employees from that form of discrimination, her district was so indoctrinated in the sexism that even the females tolerated it, rather than report it, because of how they might be perceived: “What do you do? Stand up and say, ‘This is really making me uncomfortable or I’m really offended by this,’ then you look like a bitch” (Cleo).

Like Cleo, Diana experienced gender bias early in her career. The sex-role stereotypes held by the staff caused them to hire a male instead of a female assistant superintendent; they perceived that Diana could not handle students with discipline issues. She waited eighteen years to apply for another administrative position. Research supports the experiences of the participants, as Dana & Bourisaw (2006) noted in a study by Skrla (2000), “The U.S. public school superintendency is understood to be a man’s role, and women who inhabit this role will necessarily have difficulties caused by their femaleness.” (22)

Being Place Bound

The barrier of being place bound appears to be a major hurdle for women striving to become superintendents, because they can become limited to a certain geographical location due to their inability to move. In a state such as Maine that can be very

restrictive, especially in northern Maine where a district can encompass a wider geographical area: AOS 90 comprises sixteen towns, for example.

Five of the six participants in the study experienced the barrier of being place bound. At times, it was a choice of the participants, an internal barrier, while in other cases like Victoria's, it was externally imposed by a spouse's unwillingness to move. All participants, with the exception of Diana, considered that to be a barrier at some point in their career. Mary, Catherine, and Cleo did not consider moving for career advancement because of the potential impact on their children. It was more self-imposed with Mary and Catherine. For Cleo, it was mutually agreed upon with her spouse. And once their children were grown, the barrier of being place bound remained, due to her aging mother.

Maria never considered moving because she loved her house, and the support of her friends. As with Mary, once she was divorced, her willingness to expand the geographical location of her superintendent search contributed to her being able to obtain a position. In both cases, Mary and Maria had to move to another part of the state to find their first jobs as superintendent.

As Dana and Bourisaw noted, "Being place bound proves to be a very frustrating dilemma for married women with children or unmarried women with family or other commitments that cannot be met from a distance" (p 156). With the exception of Victoria, the participants did not express frustration as much as acceptance and a willingness to put family above the career. But it wasn't until that barrier was eliminated, however, that Maria and Mary were successful in securing superintendent positions. For the other aspiring superintendents, being place bound continues to restrict their

possibilities for being hired as superintendents. For the participants in this study, the barrier was more often self-determined than external. .

Board Bias

The three participants who cited that barrier were Maria, Mary, and Victoria. The subgroup of non-aspiring superintendents had not been interviewed by a school board, so of course, had not experienced it as a barrier. The other two subgroups experienced it as noted in specific examples by Mary and Victoria. Mary had a board member question whether she could handle the men who might pursue her, and Victoria was told that the board interviewing her had gender biases. Maria had to go through numerous interviews before obtaining a superintendency, and she perceived that part of that struggle was a result of board bias toward male applicants. The literature supports Maria's perception that boards prefer males: that they do not perceive women to be strong managers (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Haack, 2010; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006), or have the rough, gruff voice that Victoria was told she needed. "Board members are subject to cultural values, gender-structuring practices, and gender prejudice in ways that may be more subtle than they recognize" (Dana & Bourisaw, p 165). Many white-dominated male boards are looking for the white male superintendent. That subtle bias creates a barrier for women to overcome. To eliminate that barrier, female applicants must be effective communicators and self-promoters, and convince boards that they can do a job better than their male counterparts. The mindset of boards must shift for the board bias barrier to be removed.

Lack of Mentors

Maria, Catherine, Cleo, and Diana cited not having a mentor as a barrier for them. Diana and Cleo, both of the non-aspiring superintendent participants, noted that as a barrier, compared to half of the participants in the other subgroups. Research supports that many women need a tap on the shoulder, or the confidence of someone believing, either directly or indirectly, that they have the skills for a position, and communicates that to them on a regular basis, providing advice and support when needed (Dana and Bourisaw, 2006). Once Maria acquired a position in the superintendency, other female superintendents did mentor and provide guidance when she reached out to them with questions. But that type of mentoring is needed earlier, before women reach the superintendency. Additionally, women need to be more vocal and seek mentors, not be so reticent in letting it be known that they aspire to the superintendency. As assistant superintendent, Maria worked for a female superintendent. Had Maria made her long-term professional goals known, that woman could have been a natural mentor. Cleo revealed that she did not know of one female superintendent in the state that she aspired to be like. That lack of role models contributes to society, school boards, and others not being able to visualize a female superintendent, and perpetuates the stereotype that all superintendents must be male, white, and in their 50s. Similarly, Catherine felt that formal or informal mentoring or networks that encourage women to go into the superintendency just doesn't exist in Maine, but are needed. She noted that many women are so busy with their roles as wives and mothers that they do not have the time to mentor one another. The beliefs women hold about themselves are critical; women must support one another in acknowledging the skills each possess so the confidence level of women is

improved, creating enough assurance in women for them to apply more frequently and in larger numbers to superintendent openings.

Perfectionism

Of the internal barriers, perfectionism was the one most cited by participants. All of the subgroups and participants, except Mary, referenced that barrier. Salvador Dali said, “Have no fear of perfection – you’ll never reach it.” However, women who have that predisposition never stop striving for the illusive state, and their perfectionistic tendencies have both positive and negative manifestations. Positively, most perfectionists have a tendency to persevere, to hold high standards for themselves, and to be goal directed. All of those traits will likely assist those women in achieving the superintendency, and in meeting its multiple demands. On the negative side, however, perfectionism can cause added stress or delays as seen with Diana and Victoria referencing how perfectionism impacted their personal lives as wives and mothers. Diana and Catherine pointed out that their perfectionism with motherhood kept them from becoming administrators when their children were young, as Diana reflected that she could not do both jobs perfectly at the same time. Victoria’s tendency towards perfectionism did not prevent her from going into administration while having young children, but she noted how overwhelming and stressful it can be when she is trying to do it all perfectly, especially during times like the holidays where she found herself wrapping presents at midnight while her husband was upstairs sleeping peacefully.

For others the perfectionism manifested itself as a barrier when it prevented some participants from applying for more challenging jobs until they felt more qualified. This was the case with Catherine and Cleo who said, “I have to know exactly what to do when

I need to do it and that's just not realistic....Yeah, because I'm never good enough." This is what Kay and Shipman refer to when they say, "Perfectionism is the enemy of the good" (2014, p. 176). Waiting for the perfect time will create risk-averse women who will never feel flawless enough to apply for challenging superintendent positions. In Cleo's case, she basically ran out of time to become a superintendent as she was "never good enough." Research shows that men go into administration earlier than women, with females being twice as likely to have more than 20 years of teaching experience before becoming an administrator (Kowalski & McCord, 2011). Similarly, Catherine, like many perfectionists, fears failure and tries to avoid it. Although she realizes that her perfectionism is unrealistic, and acknowledged that she can't be all things to all people, after applying to only one superintendency and not getting an interview, she hesitates to take another risk. That negative side of perfectionism is the barrier that Sandberg (2013) references when she encourages women to "lean in" and not be afraid to fail.

Lack of Self-confidence

Victoria and Diana did not believe that lack of self-confidence was a barrier for them. The other four participants, including the current superintendents and Cleo and Catherine, saw their lack of self-confidence in some areas as being a barrier. For Maria, the lack of self-confidence displayed itself by wanting to have more administrative experiences before applying for a superintendent opening. To gain that experience, she became a curriculum coordinator/assistant superintendent and remained in that position for twelve years before going into the superintendency. The 2010 Decennial Superintendent Study references that 50 percent of women held an assistant superintendent position before becoming superintendents, while 33.9 percent of men had

done so. (Kawalski & McCord, 2010). Instead, many males go from a building-level position such as a high-school principalship directly to a superintendent position.

Mary's self-doubt, similar to Maria's, exhibited itself by needing to be an expert in all areas. That is common for many women. Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany, and Christine Lagarde, director of the International Monetary Fund, both admit that they frequently over prepare and rehearse for meetings as they feel they "don't have the level of expertise to grasp the whole thing" (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p 12). That feeling of needing to be an expert is one that Mary noted when she said "if we're not an expert at it, we think it's a weakness." Mary also reflected the same thoughts as Merkel and Lagarde when she said, "I didn't feel comfortable walking into something that I felt I wasn't maybe all prepared for." That self-doubt about performance is far more pronounced in women than men (Kay & Shipman, 2014).

For Catherine and Cleo, a lack of self-confidence prevented them from taking risks, with Cleo noting that she sees it as an embarrassment if she fails. They do not like to apply for a job unless they are fairly assured of being offered the position. Catherine applied for a job once, and when she did not get the position, she waited six to seven years before applying again. Women lacking self-confidence are hesitant to take risks, consequently making it more difficult for them to become superintendents. When seeking the superintendency, the expectation of getting the job on the first try is unrealistic.

Choice

When first approached about aspirations for the superintendency, Cleo and Diana both wholeheartedly said they had none. However, while the interviews occurred, it was apparent that if circumstances had been right, they would have served. In both cases, it

would have taken being encouraged by the right people, and in Cleo's case, it would have needed to happen earlier in her career. One wonders how many more women would enter the superintendency if just given a tap on the shoulder and encouragement.

Catherine and Maria made the conscious choices to postpone entering the superintendency until their children were older and more independent. For both of them, their children were out of the home before they applied for the jobs. Administrative jobs require longer hours and more responsibility. If spouses are not willing to take on shared responsibility for child rearing and domestic chores, women will continue to enter administration later, delaying the amount of time that they will be able to spend as superintendents in comparison to men.

Although the study was designed to determine whether there were substantial differences among the subgroups of women, none were found. One might assume the women in the superintendent group would have experienced fewer barriers, but Maria had experienced all of the barriers, and still became a superintendent. The fewest number of barriers experienced by any participant was six.

That leads the researcher to believe that most women in leadership positions encounter those barriers, with the exception of board bias, on a regular basis, whether they aspire to the superintendency or not. What seems to separate the groups and women is persistence. Maria, a superintendent, continued applying for openings until she reached her goal. She spoke of herself as a "finisher," and that determination helped her get hired as a superintendent. She estimated that she applied to at least ten districts before being hired; whereas the other women in the other subgroups had not. The women in the aspiring group applied for no more than two openings. The women in the non-aspiring

group had not applied to any. Catherine and Diana spoke of times when they applied to lower administrative positions, and when they did not get hired, waited years before applying again. Women need to be encouraged to persevere and not to give up quickly in the quest for the superintendency.

Removing The Barriers

If more women are to become superintendents in Maine, the obstacles preventing them from being hired must be removed. Removing those barriers is both a societal and an individual responsibility. Eliminating the external barriers of gender bias, non-support, board bias, cultural expectations, being place bound, and lack of mentors mentioned in this study will require the cooperation and efforts of many stakeholders. Removing the barriers of perfectionism, self-confidence and choice would appear to lie solely with individuals. But society has played a large role in creating those barriers to women acquiring top-level positions, including the superintendency, in Maine and throughout the United States.

On the whole, society expects girls to raise their hands in classrooms, to behave, to be protected from external dangers, and frequently discourages females from taking risks and making mistakes. Boys, on the other hand, are often encouraged to be more vocal, to misbehave (“boys will be boys”), and to take risks. Male risk-taking, perseverance, and assertive behavior facilitate more men reaching and acquiring top leadership positions across all sectors, including the superintendency. By taking risks and succeeding at even small goals, individuals build the self-confidence needed to become future presidents, congressmen, CEOs, and superintendents. If society is discouraging girls from taking risks, while encouraging boys, then society is partially responsible for

the lack of self-confidence in females, and for the gender inequality that results in top leadership positions.

Females are heavily influenced by societal pressures that impact women's impressions of who they should be. Frequently those messages urge perfectionism, both subliminally and overtly. Newspapers, TV, magazines, Facebook, and other online sources consistently show females with near-perfect body images, air brushed though they may be. Mary and Victoria experienced such self-consciousness about their appearances. Their experiences are not unlike those of other female leaders such as Hilary Clinton or Michele Obama. Neither woman espouses to be a model, yet frequently the media's attention is on their appearance: what they are wearing or their latest hairstyles. Males do not undergo the same scrutiny. In schools, girls are expected to raise their hands, to be nice, to make high marks. That perpetuates the need for girls to do things right, to be as perfect as possible. Is it then an individual's responsibility alone to overcome her perfectionistic tendencies, or does society share responsibility to convince females that it is acceptable to be less than perfect, to make mistakes, and to take a risk?

In the study, society's pressure for female perfectionism led Catherine, Diana, and Cleo to feel like failures for applying for jobs they did not get. That was especially true for Diana, who waited 18 years before applying to a second administrative opening. The perfectionism of many of the participants also delayed them from going into administration until their children were older. Men feel confident in applying for job openings when they meet 60 percent of the job requirements, while women tend to feel that they must be near 100 percent qualified. That has delayed qualified women from

applying for superintendent openings longer than their male counterparts, or meant they never applied at all.

Additionally, society has an impact on the internal barrier of choice for women who may aspire to the superintendency. Society has sent mixed messages to women, causing confusion for many. On the one hand, our culture does not value women that work without a salary, as the hours of endless volunteering or being a stay-at-home mother is not seen as a “real work.” Yet many women who go to work suffer from the guilt of leaving their children at daycare, and struggle to juggle the multiple roles and tasks as experienced by Victoria. The guilt that many women feel is different from that of males. Most males believe they have a responsibility to provide for their families, to advance as far in their careers as possible. For many males, there is little agonizing over the impact to their families when they accept positions that require more hours of work and time away from home. But trying to do it all, being the ideal employee, the ideal mom, often deters women from going into the superintendency. The demands of the position make it seem “too much.” The message that needs promoting is that it is permissible to make a choice to go for the superintendency without feelings of guilt and continuous second-guessing. The mindset needs resetting, so the norm becomes that all individuals seek their passions without guilt: confident that spouses, family and others will support their decisions and find avenues to success.

Recommendations

Through centuries of male-dominated leadership, the “good ol’ boys” network seems to have been established naturally, while women leaders, few in number, appear to require help in establishing networks. The Maine Principal’s Association and Maine

School Management Association could be instrumental in supporting and creating an initial networking system for women. The pressure and encouragement from peers that exists in networks, much like a cohort group, will provide support for women wanting to enter leadership positions, especially the superintendency. The shared norms and beliefs of networks could promote a sense of solidarity, and encourage support among members of the network to excel and move the mission of the group forward (Adler & Kwon, 2002,). Such support would likely increase the number of females entering leadership roles. If females do not support one another at lower levels of administration, there will be fewer female candidates for openings as the pipeline gets closer to the superintendency.

Female networking groups by geographical regions could be created throughout the state. The groups would provide opportunities for conversations among women administrators to share challenges and victories, and brainstorm strategies on meeting the multiple demands of families and careers. Through those dialogues, women would be able to visualize the roadmaps that lead to disrupting the status quo and overcoming the barriers that prevent many female leaders from reaching top leadership positions.

To lessen the barrier of non-support of other women, the first step would be to make more women aware that the bias exists. Mathews (1995) calls such women the isolates, detaching themselves from equity issues, not believing that sexism exists. More articles focused on addressing and raising awareness of the sexism and of the non-support by women of women in leadership positions would draw attention to the bias. Building awareness around the issue may assist women in becoming more conscious of their own subtle biases of preferring male to female superintendents. Women need to recognize that

they are in this struggle together, and if they are not supporting one another, they are working against one another. Women administrators need to encourage one another to persevere, to urge other women to apply for openings, and to celebrate one another's accomplishments.

More formal mentoring programs are needed for women who aspire to future leadership positions. A readily available list of superintendents, noting areas of expertise, could be available for all new superintendents. As Mary found, many male superintendents are very supportive of female leaders. It is important to include them in the equation of ridding society of gender inequality. It would be rare for any one individual to be able to mentor an aspiring superintendent in all needed areas. Multiple mentors, both males and females, are required to help aspiring and new superintendents navigate the complex and multiple roles of the superintendency. Such a list, with the support of the Maine School Management Association, could assist new and aspiring superintendents to connect with mentors who would support them in needed areas.

Superintendency-preparatory programs should provide balanced curricula, examining both male and female perspectives in leadership courses. The current heavily male-dominated focus on leadership perpetuates the myth that all successful leaders are men. If more people were aware of successful female leaders, stakeholder groups would likely be more excited and willing to be led by transformational female superintendents.

Policy Implications

The state and the Maine Schools Superintendent Association in conjunction with each other should strive to find ways to adopt policies promoting greater equity in the superintendency. Such policies could advocate for highlighting successful female

superintendents, making them more visible to boards and other stakeholders. They could assist all stakeholders in beginning to visualize “their” superintendents as female. The fall Maine School Board Conference is an opportune time to begin that work. Consciously having female superintendents be presenters at sessions, or being part of panels and roundtable discussions could make them more visible to board members throughout the state. Any small conscious actions can potentially help shift mindsets and level the playing field of gender equity in the superintendency. The state should examine ways to promote greater gender-equity for without this deliberate attempt to adopt needed policies, it is likely the current level of females in the superintendency will remain the same.

An emergent theme throughout the interviews was the lack of mentors and networks. One way the state might consider promoting greater gender equity is by creating policies that would establish more formal networking or mentoring programs for female administrators. One participant noted that women often hesitate to take time out of their busy schedules to mentor one another; however, most educators, whether male or female, will find time for worthwhile professional development that will advance their knowledge or careers. The policy could assist in establishing formal mentoring programs, eventually impacting the current superintendent gender-imbalance in Maine.

Next Steps in Research

A quantitative study of past, current, and aspiring female superintendents in Maine about the external and internal barriers could identify how extensively the barriers are contributing to the current disproportionate amount of males to females in the superintendency in Maine.

Within this study, to further understand the barriers, obtaining the following information on the women administrators may be beneficial: whether they have their superintendent certificate, age, jobs held, and jobs that they are seeking within administration. If the same information was also obtained on males, these two sets of quantitative data could be compared to assess the differences within the two groups.

Additionally, there is a lack of literature in the field about female administrative behavior. More research is needed from the female perspective about their experiences, and why there are fewer women than men in administrative positions. The more that can be learned about women in administrative roles, and how they reached the superintendency, or why they lacked aspirations for the superintendency, the better chance there is that the number of female superintendents in the state of Maine can increase.

Further study about school-board bias is needed to determine whether board members are aware of, and are able to recognize, their biases towards female superintendents.

Concluding Remarks

Women can and are entering the superintendency in the State of Maine. Through six females' shared stories, this study revealed what they perceived to be barriers to their becoming superintendents. Currently, half of the potential source (females) for the superintendent openings in Maine is sorely untapped and largely underutilized. While women have made advancements in entering the superintendency since 1889 when Mary Snow from Bangor became the first female superintendent in Maine, the current 21 percent of female representation is a slow advancement towards equal representation,

especially when considering that 76 percent of educators nationwide are female.

However, there is hope: there are more opportunities than there were in 1992, when only 6.6 percent of women were in the superintendency nationally. The gender imbalance may at first glance seem small and insignificant, but it is a critical issue, and one in which all must acknowledge the small parts they play. All stakeholders must participate in, and contribute to, ensuring that the best and brightest females are advocating for career advancement. It is only through the shared efforts of many that the leadership gap will close and the gender ideal realized, attaining gender equality in the superintendency in Maine. The current mindset of the superintendent being male is unacceptable: it robs students of potentially transformational leaders, leaders who could create a more educated populace. Removing barriers will create a society where both sons and daughters have more choices for pursuing their passions and positively impacting society. It is vital that stakeholders advocate for gender equity in not only the superintendency, but in all leadership positions. Much is left to be done to plant and nourish the seeds of aspirations for female administrators to become the future superintendents in the state of Maine, but there is no better time than now as women are stronger, and more ready to lead and change the educational landscape than ever before.

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Appendix A

Interview 1: Background Information

1. Tell me a little about your personal life: husband, kids, grandkids, and hobbies.
2. As a child, tell me what experiences might have influenced you in becoming a leader or influenced your leadership style?
3. Tell me about your educational background, including where you went to college, your major.
4. Tell me about the positions you held before reaching _____ (current position), and how long you were in each of them.
5. In the districts where you have been employed, please describe the demographics of the district.
6. What is your ultimate professional goal?
7. Tell me about your experience in reaching your current position as _____ (superintendent, principal, other administrative position). What was your thinking when you applied to this position?
8. Tell me about your leadership style.
9. Tell me how your leadership style helped you obtain your current position.
10. In what ways has your gender played a role in your career path?
11. Talk about times in your career where your personal life has influenced your professional life.
12. Other information you would like me to know about you.

Interview 2: Barriers to the Superintendency

1. Literature has referenced external barriers that may prevent some women from reaching the superintendency. Tell me to what extent you feel any external barriers impacted your pursuit for the superintendency? Have you any experience with the following barriers:
 - a. Gender bias/discrimination,
 - b. Lack of Mobility/Being Place Bound
 - c. Cultural Expectations
 - d. School board bias.
 - e. Non-support of other women
 - f. Lack of mentors or professional networks.
2. Literature has referenced internal barriers that may prevent some women from reaching the superintendency. Tell me to what extent you feel any internal barriers impacted your pursuit for the superintendency?
 - a. Choice such as personal lifestyle or personal beliefs
 - b. Perfectionism
 - c. Self-image; self-confidence
 - i. When you see a particular job that you want to apply for, what do you need in order to feel confident enough to apply for the position?
 - ii. What would prevent you from applying to the job?
 - d. Lack of aspiration/ambition,
 - e. Burnout

f. The following are different areas of responsibility within the superintendency:

- i. Personnel Issues
- ii. Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment
- iii. Budget/finance
- iv. Board Relations
- v. Transportation
- vi. Maintenance
- vii. Educational Leader

Which ones do you feel most confident about and which ones do you feel least confident about? Have any of these ever kept you from applying for the superintendency?

3. From the perspective of being an educational leader, what supports enabled you to obtain your position? (If she is a superintendent, ask the following): From the perspective of being a superintendent, what supports enabled you to obtain your position?
4. Based upon your experiences, what else is needed as we try to increase the number of women in the superintendency in the State of Maine?

Interview 3: Reflection on the Meaning

1. Given what you have said about your life before becoming an administrator, and now that you are an administrator, what do you think were the largest barriers to

seeking the superintendency or in making the decision to not pursue the superintendency?

2. What do you think are the solutions to these barriers?
3. What could have caused you to perhaps make a different choice?
4. Given what you have reconstructed in these interviews, where do you see yourself going in the future?
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

APPENDIX B
Letter of Informed Consent

Date:

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present research study, “Breaking Barriers to Achieve the Superintendency.” The Review Board has approved this research project for human subject participation. This study attempts to understand what female administrators believe are the barriers that exist that make it more difficult for females to achieve the position of superintendent in Maine. Data will be collected by in depth interviews with female administrators in Maine who agree to participate in the study. Interviews will be 60 to 90 minutes in length and will be conducted face-to-face. A broad scope of the questions will be supplied to the interviewees before the interview.

At any time during the study, you are free to withdraw with no penalty to yourself. Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. Your identity will not be associated with the research findings in any way. Only I, the researcher, will know your identity as a participant. The transcriber of the audiotapes will sign a confidentiality agreement. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study before, during, or after the interview process. You may also contact me if you wish to make any additions or clarifications after the interview is concluded.

There are minimal risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. Every measure will be taken to ensure participants remain anonymous; however, there is a chance that some readers of the study may be able to identify participants through quotes

or descriptors. Participants will be allowed to check the transcripts for accuracy. The expected benefits associated with your participation will be the information shared and insights gleaned about your experience and perceptions about the superintendency that may encourage and/or facilitate other women in deciding whether to become a superintendent. Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedure. A second copy of the consent form is included with this mailing for you to keep for your records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Becky Foley, Doctoral Candidate at the University of Southern Maine

Telephone numbers: (207) 242-5082 (cell) (207) 225-1005 (work)

E-mail: becky.foley@msad52.org

APPENDIX C

Interview Overview

This overview is provided for your personal use in preparing for the interviews. In the first interview, you will be asked to tell about your educational background, the educational jobs you have held, (including your current one), the demographics of your current district, how you would characterize your leadership style, and a little bit about your personal life (kids, marital status, hobbies).

In the second interview, you will be asked to reflect on what barriers, either external or internal, had to be overcome or still exist in your trying to achieve this position. You will also be asked about what supports assisted or would have assisted you in seeking the superintendency.

In the final interview, there may be follow up questions once the researcher has transcribed the first two interviews, and identified emerging themes and patterns.

Throughout the interview, clarifying questions may be asked such as: Can you share an example, Tell me more about that, What did you mean by that, or Can you explain further the feelings you are expressing?

Thank you so much for your willingness to share your perceptions and experiences as a female administrator in Maine for the purpose of this research study.

APPENDIX D
MEMBER CHECK RECORDING SHEET

Name of Participant	Comments	Action Taken
Victoria	Request to change some names of places/ names of people.	Changed
Catherine	All correct.	None
Cleo	All correct.	None
Diana	All correct.	None
Jeanne	All correct.	None
Maria	Changed mind about one statement	Omitted
Mary	All correct.	None

APPENDIX E
Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

Date Submitted:

Researcher: Becky Foley

Email Address: becky.foley@msad52.org

Dear Transcriber:

As part of the process for this research, you will be given access to confidential information, including audio recordings of participants. The individuals who participated in this research project have revealed the information with the understanding that the information would remain strictly confidential. As a transcriber, you have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. Please indicate your agreement by completing the form below.

As the Transcriber, I agree to the following:

1. I agree to keep all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information with anyone other than the researcher.
2. I agree to keep all research information in any form secure while it is in my possession.
3. I agree to return all documentation in any form when I have finished the transcription.
4. I agree, after consulting with the researcher, to destroy all research information that is not returnable to the researcher (i.e. information stored on a computer hard drive).

I understand that to violate any of the above agreements would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards.

Print Name/Signature

Date

Biography of the Author

Becky J. Foley is currently the chief academic officer of the Portland Public School District. Prior to that, she was the assistant superintendent for four years in a school district in central Maine. She also was an elementary principal for thirteen years. She received a master's degree in educational administration from the University of Southern Maine in 1997, and a bachelor's degree in education with a major in literature from the University of Maine in Farmington in 1990. Her current professional work includes overseeing curriculum, instruction, and assessment for seventeen schools in the Portland School District.

Becky was born in Falfurrias, Texas, and attended Sinton High School, graduating in 1974. She moved to Maine in 1986, and enrolled in college at the University of Maine at Farmington to pursue her interest in teacher education. She has two grown children, and has been in a long-term relationship for the past sixteen years.

She is a member of several professional affiliations, including the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. She is a member and officer of the honor society Phi Kappa Phi in recognition of her academic achievements. Becky is a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy in public policy with a concentration in educational policy and leadership from the University of Southern Maine, and will receive the degree in August of 2015.