THE SOCIALIZATION OF A FEMALE SUPERINTENDENT

by

Sue B. Davis

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Educational Administration

David J. Parks, Chairman
Elizabeth Compton
Christina Dawson
Lorraine Lange
Dianne Yardley

December 8, 1997

Blacksburg, Virginia

Key words: Female, Superintendent, Socialization, Qualitative, Case Study
THE SOCIALIZATION OF A FEMALE SUPERINTENDENT

by

Sue B. Davis

Committee Chairman: David J. Parks
Educational Administration

(ABSTRACT)

This is a single case study of the socialization of a woman in the public school superintendency at the end of the 20th century. It is a description of the forces that come to bear on her behavior as the chief executive of a school system.

Socialization is a continuous process of adaptation to and personalization of one's environment. Further, it is believed to be a process that occurs throughout one's professional career and life and not a fixed, end state; therefore, one's career is embedded within one's socialization for life.

A model is proposed which represents female socialization as dynamic role creation through the responses of accommodation and role personalization as they are affected by the interaction of organizational, community, and personal forces. These forces are communicated through the transmittal processes of formal policies, networking, and mentoring. The unique experiences of this superintendent are explored to see if these forces of influence appear in this situation.
Data collected through interviews and document reviews were coded and then analyzed with a matrix. Seven categories of subjects were interviewed, so this study not only provides the perspectives of the superintendent but also those of her spouse, secretary, current and former colleagues in the central office, a building-level administrator, current and former members of the school board, and community residents. Documents from the news media, records of school board meetings, and division publications provided information about the total experiences of this superintendent.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the culmination of two years of reading, studying, writing, and editing. The process and the product were often in conflict for my time and attention as I struggled with the requirements of research writing and attempted to maintain my focus on a topic that I found to be fascinating.

My companion in this journey was my advisor, Dr. David Parks, who patiently answered inane questions, made numerous suggestions, offered thought-provoking comments, and directed me toward relevant resources. The quality and depth of this study are directly a result of his careful reading and consideration of the many drafts of this document.

One rarely completes any major task without the help and support of others. My committee, consisting of Dr. Christina Dawson, Dr. Dianne Yardley, and Dr. Lorraine Lange, offered editing suggestions and additional female insight to the study. Dr. Elizabeth Compton served as a source of strength and skill, as she encouraged me and read draft copies to offer suggestions for improvement.

Due to my frequent absence from home, my husband, Michael, has become so efficient in the kitchen that he may never relinquish the job he has so skillfully mastered. He has neither complained, nor become a martyr. His pride in my accomplishments is never boastful, but is quiet, sincere, and steadfast.
My daughter Ashley, who is a junior in college, has realized that she is not the only one who struggles to accomplish a difficult academic task. I think that she has become a better student as a result of our lengthy conversations.

My friend Thomasine Carter has been my confidante and traveling companion. She has thoughtfully considered each dilemma I have presented to her during this study, and I am grateful for her friendship.

Finally, I want to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my friends and colleagues in the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, in the Virginia Iota State Organization, and in the local Alpha Gamma Chapter for their substantial monetary support with two scholarships. Being honored by one’s peers is a rewarding and enriching experience.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong> ..................................................................................</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Acknowledgements</strong> ....................................................................</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>List of Tables</strong> ......................................................................</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>List of Figures</strong> ....................................................................</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 1 The Problem</strong> ..........................................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Context ..........................................................................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupational Sociology ..................................................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socialization in Occupations ..................................................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socialization of Women in the Public School Superintendency ..........</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Questions ........................................................................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical Base ..........................................................................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beginning Propositions ..................................................................</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature</strong> ....................................</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Impact of Socialization Forces on the Role of a Female Superintendent</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Forces .......................................................................</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Forces of Socialization ................................................</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networking and Mentoring ................................................................</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminist Theory ............................................................................</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women in Leadership Positions ...................................................</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women in Educational Leadership ..................................................</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 3 Methodology</strong> ............................................................</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selection of the Superintendent and Informants .............................</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection ............................................................................</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Questionnaires ................................................................</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4  The Results ................................................................. 66

Personal Forces of Socialization ........................................ 66
  Background ........................................................................ 66
  Her Expectations .............................................................. 72
Professional Forces of Socialization .................................... 73
  Organizational Expectations for Values .......................... 75
  Organizational Expectations for Leadership Style .......... 75
  Organizational Expectations for Job Knowledge ............. 76
Community Expectations for Values ............................... 77
Community Expectations for Leadership Style ................. 77
Community Expectations for Job Knowledge ................. 78

Transmittal Processes ......................................................... 79
  Formal Policies ................................................................ 81
  Media .............................................................................. 82
  Mentoring ........................................................................ 84
  Networking ....................................................................... 85
Female Superintendent's Socialization ............................... 87
  Dynamic Role Creation .................................................... 87
  Accommodation ................................................................ 88
  Personalization .............................................................. 89

Chapter 5  Discussion of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations for Future Research ................................................. 92
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Comparison of the Superintendent in This Study and Typical Women Superintendents ................................................. 43

Table 2  Crosswalk Table of Interview Questions, Socialization Forces, Informants, and Sources .................................................. 48

Table 3  Crosswalk Table of Socialization Domains, Definitions, Research Questions, Codes, and Sources........................................ 55
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Forces Contributing to the Socialization of Female Superintendents ................................................................. 10