

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE NUMBERS, JOB RESPONSIBILITIES, AND
PREPARATION OF SELECTED MALES AND FEMALES AS CENTRAL OFFICE
ADMINISTRATORS IN SELECTED SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN VIRGINIA

by

Elizabeth I. Tarner

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
in
Curriculum and Instruction

T. E. Gatewood, Co-Chair
J. L. Curcio, Co-Chair
M. Boucouvalas
M.G. Cline
L. C. Webb

November 5, 1997
Falls Church, Virginia

Keywords: Education, Administration, Superintendent, Gender, Women, Female,
Leadership

Copyright 1997, Elizabeth I. Tarner

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE NUMBERS, JOB RESPONSIBILITIES, AND
PREPARATION OF SELECTED MALES AND FEMALES AS CENTRAL OFFICE
ADMINISTRATORS IN SELECTED SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN VIRGINIA

by
Elizabeth I. Tarner

Committee Co-Chairs: Joan Curcio and Thomas E. Gatewood
Curriculum and Instruction
(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to examine the distribution of males and females in line and staff positions in central offices in selected school districts in Virginia and to explore factors which may have contributed to this distribution. Answers to the following questions provided data for the study: What is the gender distribution in central office positions? What is the percentage of central office positions by gender based upon the total office gender representation in line and staff positions? What is the gender distribution in line and staff positions? In what way do the selected case study subjects portray their aspirations, their perceived barriers to promotion, their mentors, and their perceptions of gender in central offices?

First, 56 out of 65 school superintendents responded to a survey requesting the number and title of central office positions, the name and gender of person holding each position, and the designation of each central office position as line or staff. Student population and region were used in the analysis. The findings revealed that males outnumber females in central office positions and in line positions. Fifteen school districts had no women in line positions.

Second, six interviews with line and staff representatives from three school districts were conducted to examine how they portray their aspirations, their perceived barriers to promotion, their mentors, and their perceptions of gender in central offices. The interviewees revealed that the line position representatives followed a different career path than those in staff positions; the females and the staff representatives did not aspire to be superintendent; the line position representatives had doctorates while those in staff positions did not; those in staff positions discussed their accomplishments in programs; those in line positions talked about the responsibilities of their jobs. All had mentors and guidance in their careers.

Recommendations for future studies include more study on the culture of a school system, a continuation of this study on women in line and staff positions in central offices, more inclusion of the perspectives of the female educator in training programs, and the requirement of states and school districts to record gender as part of the statistics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

What a pleasure to acknowledge those who helped me achieve my highest educational goal. The last two years have been the toughest two years of my life, with every seemingly possible challenge confronting my loved ones and my emotional and physical well being. Many deserve acknowledgment for their role in my achievement of this goal.

Sincerest appreciation is expressed to Dr. Thomas Gatewood, co-chair of my committee, for his encouragement, understanding, support, availability, and patience through the different stages of my dissertation ; to Dr. Joan Curcio, co-chair of my committee, for her steady and consistent encouragement, motivating insight, and support; to Dr. Marvin Cline, whose lessons on research and life will stay with me; to Dr. Marcie Boucouvalas, whose support and teachings sparked my thoughts and practices about leadership and development; and to Dr. Loretta Webb from whom I learned firsthand lessons on leadership, hope, and miracles. To all the committee members, thanks for your advice and guidance.

Sincere appreciation is expressed to Dr. Barbara Hutson and to Dr. Kenneth Underwood who served on my committee during one phase of my doctoral program. And a special thank you goes to Dr. Vincent Cibarrelli, former Executive Director of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, for supporting this study. Appreciation is expressed to the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, and the American Association of School Administrators for supplying up-to-date information. A special thanks to Mamdouh Sharara and Rabab Saab for helping me understand the intricacies of SPSS.

Appreciation is expressed to the participants in this study for sharing their time, their thoughts, and their views.

To the members of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, an organization of key women educators, a heartfelt thanks for the scholarships that helped me continue my doctoral studies. To my friends who inquired about my progress, gave feedback, answered questions, and listened--thank you. I am forever grateful.

To educators, friends, and family who influenced me, helped mold who I am, instilled persistence in pursuing my dreams and goals, helped me manage the unknowable, and stirred my passion for learning, thank you.

Heartfelt thanks to my children: my two daughters, Stephanie and Dawn, for their love and encouragement; and a heartfelt thanks to my husband, Dennis, who has been my greatest provider of love and encouragement to complete this personal goal and all others.

And to my mother, whose life was shortened by illness, whose teaching career was short-lived, whose endurance and determination was evident through very difficult times as a single parent of three children, a special thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	3
Justification of Study	3
Assumptions	4
Delimitations of the Study	4
Definition of Terms	4
Overview of Subsequent Sections	6
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	7
Introduction	7
Leadership and Women	7
A Historical Glance of Women in Educational Leadership	11
Percentage of Women in Executive Positions	14
The Profile of the Female Superintendent	16
Factors of Role Prejudice and Sex Role Stereotyping	16
Research on Gender Issues for Women	19
Estler's Models of Underrepresentation	20
Conclusion	21
Chapter 3: Methodology	23
Introduction	23
Phase One: Quantitative Research	23
Phase Two: Qualitative Research	24
Data Analysis	25
Rationale for Qualitative Research	26
Validity	27
Importance of Internal and External Validity and Reliability	27
Chapter 4: Data Analysis	29
Purpose of Study	29
Research Questions	29
Quantitative Data Analysis	30
Research Question #1	30
Research Question #2	31
Research Question #3	32
Gender Distribution in Central Office Positions by Region	33
Overview	33
Research Question #4	34
Research Question #5	35
Research Question #6	37
Research Question #7	40
Research Question #8	41
Research Question #9	44

Summary	45
Qualitative Data Analysis	46
Purpose of Qualitative Phase	46
Interview Subjects	46
A Visit to a Medium-Size School System (MSS)	48
Interviewees	48
Their Job Responsibilities	51
Networks	51
Career Paths and Goals	53
Hiring Practices	54
Gender Distribution in the Central Office--	
Two Perceptions	54
Perceptions on Female Leadership	55
Summary	55
A Visit to a Small School System (SSS)	56
Interviewees	56
Changes in Central Office Since 1990	58
Challenges	59
Mentors and Networks	60
Career Aspirations	60
Summary	61
A Visit to Large School District (LSS)	61
Career Aspirations	62
Mentors	64
Gender as Barriers	65
Summary	66
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations	67
Summary of Findings	67
Quantitative	67
Major Findings	68
Other Interesting Findings	68
Qualitative	69
Interviewees in Staff Positions	70
Interviewees in Line Positions	70
Interviews with the Males	71
Interviews with the Females	72
Conclusions	72
Recommendations for Future Research	74
Epilogue	78
References	80
Appendices	89
Appendix A: Sample Distribution of Males and Females	90
in Central Office Positions	
Appendix B: Sample Selection of School Districts	91
Appendix C: Request Letter to Superintendents	96
Appendix C: Letter from Vincent Cibbarelli (VASS)	97

Appendix C: Form for Organizational Structure	98
Appendix D: Follow-up Letter to Superintendents	99
Appendix E: Follow-up Letter Concerning Labeling	100
Appendix F: Letter to Superintendents Requesting Interviews	102
Appendix G: Letter to Interviewees/Central Office	105
Questionnaire for Interviewees	106
Appendix H: Letter to Interviewees	113
Appendix I: Questionnaire for Interview	114
Appendix J: Respondents for Study	116
Appendix K: Virginia School Divisions and Regions (Map)	117
 Vita	 118

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Gender Distribution in Central Office Positions Statewide	30
Table 2:	Percentage of Central Office Positions by Male and Female in Line and Staff Positions	31
Table 3:	Gender Distribution in Line Positions Statewide (N=56)	32
Table 4:	T-test for Males in Staff and Females in Staff Across School Divisions	33
Table 5:	Number of School Districts by Region	33
Table 6:	Gender Distribution in Central Office Positions by Region	34
Table 7:	Percent of Central Office Personnel in Line and Staff Positions by Gender and Region	35
Table 8:	Chi-Square Values for Line Positions in Regions 2, 4, 6, 7	36
Table 9:	Chi-Square Values for Staff Positions in Regions 2, 6, 7	37
Table 10:	Gender Distribution in Line and Staff Positions by Region	37
Table 11:	Number of School Districts Represented in Enrollment Size	39
Table 12:	Gender Distribution in Central Office Positions in Six Enrollment Sizes	40
Table 13:	Percentage of Total Central Office Males and Females and Males and Females in Line Positions in Enrollment Sizes	41
Table 14:	Chi-Square Values for Four Enrollment Sizes	42
Table 15:	Chi-Square Values for Four Enrollment Sizes	43
Table 16:	Gender Distribution in Line and Staff Positions by Enrollment Size	44
Table 17:	Distributions of Male and Female Line and Staff Members in Chosen School Districts	47
Table 18:	Interviewees in MMS (Medium Size System)	50
Table 19:	Interviewees in SSS (Small Size System)	57
Table 20:	Interviewees in LSS (Large Size System)	62