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# The Identification of Demographic Profiles of K-12 Public School Districts Employing Female Superintendents in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas

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The Identification of Demographic Profiles of K-12 Public School Districts Employing Female

Superintendents in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas

by

Brenda J. Skeete

A Proposal submitted to the Department of Leadership,

School Counseling & Sport Management

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

December 2016

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This proposal titled Female K-12 School Superintendents in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas: The Demographic Profiles of Their Districts

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## DEDICATION

*This dissertation is dedicated to my three aunts that lost their battles with cancer during my coursework, all within a year of each other. My Aunt Lillie passed away on March 10, 2014, my Aunt Margaret just nine months later on December 23, 2014, and my Aunt Ophelia passed away on February 6, 2015. These ladies were excellent role models for me during my childhood and into well into adulthood. They were the epitome of love, strength, and hope and because of this, my aunts will forever be in my heart. The deaths of my aunts served as a reminder to our family that we must love on each other as often as possible because tomorrow is not promised to any of us. I love you Aunts Lillie, Margaret, and Ophelia. Rest in peace in your Heavenly long white robes; you have gained your wings.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I completed this journey of coursework, comprehensive exams, and this culminating paper, I have so many individuals I must acknowledge. As I began my quest for a deeper understanding about leadership, I was certainly challenged and often times found myself feeling defeated. However, I had a wonderful group of individuals that were always there to lift me up, encourage me, and remind me of my lifelong dream of earning a doctoral degree.

I first acknowledge my husband Brian who has been my biggest supporter, my backbone, my sounding board, and my shoulder to cry on during this rigorous process. He has encouraged me more times than I can count. Many times I wanted to hear him say, “just quit” but he never did so I didn’t. My mother was equally as encouraging. She also was a great motivator and she always told me how proud of me she was for pursuing a terminal degree at such a ripe age; maybe not in those exact words. I would be thoughtless of me if I did not recognize my beautiful daughter Khia and my grandson Tristan. They were instrumental in supporting me and showering me with their undying love. It is my hope that I instill hope in them and leave a legacy behind for them to push to their higher calling. For Philippians 4:13 says “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Next I give accolades to my entire Cohort 22 family - Amy, Angela, Anthony, Brian, Dei, Joanna, Paula, Rebecca, Robert, Rudy, Tamara, and Travis. They all mean the world to me. We stuck together like glue and we pushed and encouraged one another. We ate together, laughed together, studied together, and even cried together. Our motto was *Gaining pounds while*

*gaining knowledge*. I am very grateful to have been selected to be a part of such an awesome group of individuals. Thank you Cohort 22 for a wonderful experience.

Last, but certainly not least, I cannot forget my entire committee. I do not have the words to express my love and appreciation for my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Anne Swanson. She invested so much time in me; never giving up on me or allowing me to give up. Our collective goal was to make sure I produced a product that we were both proud of that has implications for school boards, aspiring superintendents, education departments, university professors, and legislators. I am still in awe that I had this opportunity to work with such a dedicated educator who shared a passion for my topic. Dr. Swanson will forever hold a special place in my heart.

My methodologist, Dr. Daniel Dinsmore, was awesome. He reassured me that I was on the right track with my methodology and statistics. Dr. Ali-Khan was very thorough in helping me craft the correct words and I found that to be very helpful and necessary. I must admit that at times, I felt she was too hard on me, but it was for my benefit. Dr. JeffriAnne Wilder was also a great asset to my committee. Her expertise was utilized in such a manner that gave my dissertation life and meaning to those not in the educational leadership realm. It is without a doubt that every member of my committee exemplifies excellence and has a joy for learning that inspired me throughout this entire process.

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### **Abstract**

The job of the local school superintendent is one of the most difficult chief executive undertakings in America today. Of the nation's roughly 14,000 traditional public school superintendents, a mere 1,984 are women, according to the U. S. Department of Education. Yet, nationally over 75% of all K-12 educators are women. The purpose of this explorative quantitative study is to analyze the demographic profiles of public school districts in four of the nation's largest states – California, Michigan, New York, and Texas - to see if there is a pattern of district types and sizes that women lead. Then the study will compare those districts that women lead to those that men lead. The districts were identified using the following variables: locale of districts, the size of the districts, diversity of student population, and poverty level. Looking through the lens of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory, this study sought to show that resources and institutions are reproduced, or passed on, to those sharing similar social capital. Chi-square with cross-tabulations was conducted to determine if certain district characteristics would allow one to infer the gender of the superintendent leading that district. Additionally, a binominal logistic regression was used to see if there was a relationship between the district types and the gender of the superintendent. The results of the study identified that there was no relationship between the locales of the districts and the gender of the superintendents, but female superintendents were more prevalent in smaller districts with high diversity and high poverty.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the White House Project Report (2009), GfK Roper polls indicated that in 2007, almost 90 percent of Americans admitted that they are comfortable with women as top leaders in all sectors, from academia and business to media and the military. The questions that arise from that statistic is, if so many Americans are that comfortable, why are women still not leading in greater proportion to men in the nation's top executive position in our public school districts as superintendents and more importantly, what are the demographics of the districts in which they lead? Gupton and Slick's 1996 study of women administrators provided an analysis of the evolution of issues underlying women's inequitable representation in executive positions in the profession of educational administration. I wanted to examine more closely the shifts identified by Gupton and Slick that have occurred for female superintendents as they ascend into the top leadership positions in our nation's public schools. It is important though, just as Gupton and Slick's study was a snapshot in time, so is this study.

The study of the American public school superintendent traces back to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is essential to understanding the evolution of public schools in this country (Finnan, McCord, Stream, Mattocks, Peterson, & Ellerson, 2015). Likewise, Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA, 2015), indicated on the professional organization's website that it is critical for the education community-at-large to understand the history and context of superintendents, who serve as a voice for all students. He believed it was important to produce a mid-decade update of the decennial study with an emphasis being placed on women serving in the role of superintendent. Domenech posited that the superintendency is the most important position in the country and that these reports are designed to help AASA improve school district leadership and also to assist

them in addressing issues supporting female and minority superintendents in our communities all across the nation.

I used Gupton and Slick's 1996 study as the foundation for this study but looking through the lens of social reproduction. Social reproduction is a paradigm of class analysis that is capable of explaining persistent inequalities in education despite state and local efforts. Furthermore, it states that resources and institutions are reproduced, or passed on, to those sharing similar social capital. In other words, sometimes what we might perceive as a significant change is really not that significant after all. Hardy (2016) posited that social reproduction refers to the labor of individuals to sustain, care for, and attend to their survival, well-being, and reproduction of themselves and each other. Maralani (2015) went on further to state that the processes that transform one generation into the next, and the implications of changing patterns within these processes are an interesting and important part of social reproduction. I will examine the relationship between the demographic composition of traditional public school districts and the gender of the superintendents in those districts to provide baseline demographic data of traditional public school districts in which women lead for later comparison to see if significant changes are indeed occurring.

The study by Gupton and Slick (1996) occurred in two phases over four years wherein both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. They mailed 14-page surveys to 300 school administrators, including superintendents, assistant superintendents, and principals and they got a 51% response rate. Baruch (1999) noted that the average response rate for questionnaires used as the basis for published academic studies is significantly less than 100 percent and, even more troubling, from 1975 to 1995 declined from 64.4 percent to 48.4 percent. Therefore, when Gupton and Slick's survey responses were received in 1993, their response rate

was slightly above average. More specifically, from their initial group of respondents, a select group of women was solicited to participate in phase two of the study. Subsequently, 25 of those women had indicated on the initial survey that they would like to participate in the more in-depth research, the qualitative part. Sixty percent of those actually responded, again yielding an above average response rate.

The results of their study indicated that 75% of women superintendents were employed in rural school districts, 5% in urban districts, and 21% in suburban school districts. However, assistant superintendents were more evenly distributed across all types of districts with 43% in suburban, 32% in urban, and 24% in rural districts. Gupton and Slick (1996) concluded that it was evident that women superintendents occupied rural districts that wielded less political power and have less financial weight in the grand scheme of the profession of educational administration.

Looking more closely at the access to equity shift from Gupton and Slick's 1996 study, current patterns will be analyzed in terms of gender and locale of districts and the results may perhaps highlight and bring awareness to the landscape of districts for aspiring superintendents, current superintendents, school boards or hiring firms, professors of educational administration at colleges and universities across the country, and even legislature, about the true status of women as they attempt to break through the glass ceiling in top positions in educational administration. Additionally, aspiring female superintendents might appreciate seeing the trend of where the majority of the female superintendents lead districts in this country and remain hopeful for their own futures. The study includes a representative sample of large and small districts, as well as urban, rural, and suburban schools. In this study, a state from each quadrant of the United States will be selected, as identified by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010). The states

selected are California (west), Michigan (midwest), New York (northeast), and Texas (south). These particular states were selected because of their large quantity of districts and the diverse sizes and locations.

Selected demographic data will be collected about the districts such as size, geography, diversity, and socioeconomic status (SES). More specifically, the demographic profiles will include the size of the districts as determined by the number of schools, number of teachers, and number of students in the districts; the geography/locale of the traditional public school districts (such as urban, rural, suburban), as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); diversity as determined by the racial makeup of students within the district; and the socioeconomic status (SES) of the districts as reflected by the number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (FRLP). This data will provide a comparative view of the profile of traditional public school districts that women lead and those districts led by men.

There are certain types of school districts that will be excluded from this study due to the lack of consistency in the manner in which their superintendents are hired or appointed, given that this study is focusing exclusively on districts in which superintendents are hired by school boards. Those schools that are excluded are component districts, supervisory unions, regional education service agencies, state-operated agencies, federal-operated agencies, charter agencies, and other education agencies. Component school districts share superintendents and administrative services with other school districts. Supervisory unions are education agencies that perform administrative services for multiple school districts. Regional education service agencies (RESAs) provide specialized services, such as special education, to a variety of local agencies that service many districts and assist the states' Department of Education in promoting initiatives. State-operated agencies include schools for the deaf and blind as well as programs

operated by state correctional facilities. Other types of districts include charter schools or schools that do not fit in any of the other categories. This study will concentrate primarily on all traditional public school districts in four states. School districts can be small, covering just a small town or rural county, or enormous, covering an entire populous city. There are a variety of each size and type of districts in the four states selected in this study.

The research will also gather race-ethnicity data and that data currently is broken down into seven categories as assigned by the NCES. In compliance with new standards from the United States Office of Management and Budget for collecting and reporting data on race-ethnicity, students included in the *other* category were further delineated to separate Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and students of two or more races. Therefore, as of 2011, the seven racial/ethnic categories are White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and two or more races. As a result of this allocation, no student is counted in more than one category.

Eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch is determined by students' family income in relation to the federally established poverty level. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2016) for the period July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, for a family of four, 130 percent of the poverty level was an annual income of \$31,590 and 185 percent was \$44,955. These were the amounts calculated only for the 2016-2017 school year, as it is adjusted annually. Students whose family income is at or below 130 percent of the poverty level qualify to receive free lunch, and students whose family income is between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level qualify to receive reduced-price lunch.

Despite its limitations, the free/reduced price lunch data are frequently used by education researchers as a proxy for school poverty since this count is readily available at the school and district levels, whereas the poverty rate is typically not available (NCES, 2015). Poverty is actually based on family income and parental educational attainment. However, according to the National Center for Education Statistics' website, "because the free/reduced price lunch eligibility is derived from the federal poverty level, and therefore highly related to it, the free/reduced price lunch percentage is useful to researchers from an analytic perspective." The NCES further stated that one important difference among students was that 45 percent of Black and Hispanic students attended high poverty school compared to only eight percent of White students.

The federal government does not have any current laws that dictate the qualifications for a school superintendent. Instead, state laws govern the certification process but common requirements include at least a master's degree in school administration, although some states require a doctorate degree, education management coursework such as school finance, and experience as a teacher. For example, California requires no additional certification or endorsement; only a basic administrative credential. Michigan requires its superintendents to hold a master's degree, have experience in budgeting and leadership, and also have a special license or superintendent endorsement. New York requires superintendent candidates to have a master's degree from an accredited institution as well as complete a state approved preparation program for school administrators, a passing score on a two-part examination, and have three years teaching and/or administration experience (New York State Department of Education). The Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2015) lists four requirements on their website: a master's degree from an accredited agency, holder of a principal certificate, a completed superintendent

application and successful completion of a superintendent educator preparation program.

Therefore, three of the four states this study will analyze require special credential endorsements and all require a master's degree and leadership experience.

In addition to varied requirements for superintendents, there are varied routes individuals may take to reach the top position in education. Most superintendents progress through the educational system first as teacher, school administrator, and then district administrator. However, much of the research on women in superintendency suggests that women take different paths to the position as opposed to white males who currently dominate the offices as superintendents in K-12 public education across the country (Dowell & Larwin, 2013; Grogan, 1994). These varied routes that women take could hinder their chances even further of gaining the administrative and leadership experience sought after by school boards and search consultants (Björk, 2000; Glass, 2000; Kamler & Shakeshaft, 1999; Kowalski, 1999; Scollay & Logan, 1999; Sharp, Malone, Walter & Supley, 2004; Tallerico, 2000). Specifically, Tallerico (2000) found in her study of executive search firms in the state of New York, *headhunters*, as she referred to them, that “one prolific firm describes the best superintendent candidate as having had three to five years’ teaching experience, three to four years as a secondary principal, a first superintendency in a small district, and then a second one in a larger district” (p. 29).

Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) posited that although representation of women in all levels of school administration has increased over the past decade, patterns of representation indicate that little significant progress is being made at the more senior positions, such as high school principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. The job of the local school superintendent is one of the most difficult chief executive undertakings in America today (Hodgkinson & Montenegro). Of the nation’s roughly 14,000 traditional public school



superintendents, a mere 1,984 are women, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Yet, 75% nationally of all K-12 educators are women according to the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2002). The position of superintendent is affected by issues related to public elementary and secondary education and school governance, with the most glaring matter being the vast differences that exist across the 14,000 school systems (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). These differences that exist in districts include the number of schools within each district, enrollment size, socio-economic status, teacher-student ratio, and geography.

Clearly, women remain underrepresented in high level management positions in education, such as in the roles of superintendent. A study done by Reskin and Roos (1990) supported the notion that men tend to be overrepresented in managerial and craft occupations while women were the majority in public service occupations such as, nursing, teaching, and clerical jobs. Nearly 100 years after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States constitution in 1920, women remain underrepresented in positions of power in business, law, the media, and academia (Kim & Carter, 2016). Despite the disparaging numbers at the higher levels, in most states, women tend to be over-represented in teaching roles. For example, in California during the 2014-15 school year, female teachers were over-represented at 73% compared to 27% male teachers (California Department of Education, 2016). The fact that female teachers dominate primary and secondary public school education in the United States is supported in research in several studies (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010; Lennon & Whitford, 2012; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Teachers are important to this study because this is typically the starting point for superintendents if they follow the traditional route. According to the state executives in the *Superintendents Prepared* study (1998, as cited in Hodgkinson & Montenegro,

1999), there is only one path to the superintendency; the traditional one that is exemplified by teacher to principal to central office administrator to superintendent.

This phenomenon of few women in the superintendency remains baffling but has often been attributable to the smaller pool of potential mentors, lack of female role models, and underdeveloped networks of support (Gupton & Slick, 1996). If women who are aspiring to become superintendents do not see successful women in those positions, perhaps they feel this is not a suitable career for a woman. In anecdotal support, Gupton and Slick (1996) stated that “many times, the positions being filled by women are those that have a minimal power base because they are in smaller, more rural school districts” (p. xxvii). Similarly, Eagly and Karau (2002) posited that women are becoming more commonplace than any other time in history in supervisory and middle management positions; however, women are still “quite rare as elite leaders and top executives” (p. 573).

The sample selected will not include any state that elects their traditional public school superintendents because of the political implications that characterize elected officials. Tallerico (2000) argued that superintendents that are appointed would be experts in the field instead of politicians. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2000) reported that 99% of all of the nation’s superintendents are appointed by the school board, leaving only one percent as elected officials. The SREB was created in 1948 by governors and legislators with a focus on improving the quality of life by advancing public education, from pre-K to PhD. The one percent of elected superintendents (154) is in the southeastern United States. Sixty-nine of those elected superintendents are in Mississippi, 44 in Florida, 40 in Alabama, and one in South Carolina; therefore, this study will not include either of those four states. According to the report from the SREB, Georgia and Tennessee, after lengthy discussions about elected versus

appointed, changed their policies to switch from election of superintendents to strictly appointment of them. In addition to the political issues surrounding election of superintendents, those elected officials are required to establish residency within the county's borders, which may reduce the availability pool of qualified individuals and thus impact the number of qualified women. My objective is to capture a sample of female superintendents that is consistent with the current national average of 27 percent.

### **Problem Statement**

Women constitute 76% of all K-12 public school teachers across the nation, but only represent 27% of the superintendents (AASA, 2015). The historical data of female superintendents shows a decrease from 25% in 1930, down to only 1% in 1980. Since that time though, the numbers are increasing – 11% in 1992, 13% in 2000, 24% in 2010, and 27% in 2015. This represents a disproportionately small number of women who move from the classroom into leadership positions (Holloway, 2000). However, research has clearly shown the potential of women (Barsh & Yee, 2012; Estler, 1987; Pounder & Coleman, 2002). Despite the research providing evidence of women's potential to lead, women still lag far behind men in acquiring leadership roles, and especially in academia as superintendents of local school districts.

Recently, researchers, practitioners, and even aspiring superintendents are expressing more interest in the demographic profiles of superintendents (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011) for various reasons. Those reasons are to better understand issues of gender and race, to identify contemporary issues affecting practice, and to identify future research topics around women in superintendency. Gender in leadership roles continues to be an area of research, so this study looked at the demographics of the districts that women lead and compare those districts to ones that men lead and hopefully gives future studies a visual representation of the condition of

educational leadership as it pertains to female superintendents and the districts they lead.

Tallerico (2000) gave five reasons why it is important to improve the diversity of top leadership in education. First, education deserves the benefit of the different perspectives and experiences that diverse educators bring to administration. Secondly, the diversity of talented and potential teachers is underutilized. Next, equal opportunity in employment is guaranteed by Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1963 Equal Pay Act. These legislatures aim to improve access to top level positions for women and people of color. Only then will teachers and leaders reflect the diverse nation we live in and children can see these leadership roles as being socially responsible. Lastly, it is morally objectionable to ignore inequities in the attainment of the top leadership role in education.

Earlier studies, from 1985 to 2005, focused on documenting the numbers of men and women in administrative positions and have prompted the research on why there are fewer women than men (Brown & Irby, 2005). However, this study went beyond the why and focused on the where. The identification of the demographic profiles of the districts that female superintendents are leading in the country's four largest states is absent from the literature. For that reason, this study placed an emphasis on the locations, the diversity, and the size of public school districts led by female superintendents and then compared those districts to those led by male superintendents in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas. There were a total of 3,169 public school districts included in this study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to identify the demographic profiles of traditional public school districts in four of the country's largest states, namely California, Michigan, New York, and Texas. Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) and Tallerico (2000) stated that it is important

that our nation develops and sustains high-quality chief executive officers for education who reflect the gender and racial realities of our increasingly diverse. In an effort to conclude if the districts reflect gender and racial realities, Derrington and Sharratt (2009) noted that the percentage of female superintendents had grown by a small amount and that women remained underrepresented in the position of traditional public school superintendent. Further, Holloway (2000) posited that compared to males, females were less likely to become administrators. Females represent 49% of the 48 million students in public schools, but *all* those 48 million students need to see role models to show that there are no glass ceilings that limit their abilities to develop and lead (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). They further stated that children might be able to visualize themselves in the role; “see one to be one” (p. x). Additionally, ensuring that women move into leadership alongside men is an issue that might benefit all educational stakeholders in our nation.

### **Research Questions**

Based on previous research (Gupton & Slick, 1996; McDade & Drake, 1982; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004), my conjecture is that higher proportions of women will be found in smaller rural school districts with high racial/ethnic diversity and low socioeconomic status. For purposes of this study, high racial diversity would be those districts having more students of color than Whites. In short, high racial diversity occurs if there is an equal or greater percentage of Black or African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and two or more races compared to White students. Hence, this study will seek to explore thoroughly the following two research questions:

Q1: What are the demographic profiles of public school districts in the California, Michigan, New York, and Texas where women are superintendents?

Q2: How do the demographic profiles of districts with women superintendents compare to those districts that are led by men in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas?

The demographic variables I will be comparing are the racial/ethnic composition of the student population, the number of students and teachers to determine the student-teacher ratio, the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRLP), the number of schools in the district, the locale code, and the gender of the superintendent for the districts.

### **Definition of Terms**

- *High-minority school* - School in which 80% or more of the student body belongs to a racial minority group (Ingersoll, 2002).
- *High-poverty school* - School in which 80% or more of the student body qualifies for FRLP (Ingersoll, 2002).
- *Locale codes*, defined by the NCES, identify the geographic status of a school on an urban continuum ranging from “large city” to “rural.” Locale codes are based on a school’s physical address. The urban-centric locale codes were assigned through a methodology developed by the U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Division in 2005. Each specific designation is defined as below:
  - *City, Large*: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more.
  - *City, Midsize*: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000.
  - *City, Small*: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population less than 100,000.

- *Rural*: The Census Bureau classifies all population and territory not included in an urbanized area or urban cluster as rural. Urban (urbanized areas and urban clusters).
- *Rural, Fringe*: Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster.
- *Rural, Distant*: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.
- *Rural, Remote*: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.
- *Suburb, Large*: Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population of 250,000 or more.
- *Suburb, Midsize*: Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000.
- *Suburb, Small*: Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population less than 100,000.
- *Town, Fringe*: Territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area.

- *Town, Distant*: Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area.
  - *Town, Remote*: Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area.
  - *Urban area*: The Census Bureau defines an urban area as a densely settled core of census block groups and census blocks that meet minimum population density requirements, along with adjacent densely settled surrounding census blocks. When a core area contains a population of 50,000 or more, it is classified as an urbanized area (UA). Core areas with population between 2,500 and 50,000 are classified as urban clusters (UC).
- *Low-minority school* - School in which 15% or less of the student body belongs to a racial minority group (Ingersoll, 2002).
  - *Low-poverty school* - School in which 15% or less of the student body qualifies for FRLP (Ingersoll, 2002).
  - *Medium-minority school* - School whose student racial balance falls within +/- 15% of the district average of minority (non-White) students.
  - *Medium-poverty school* - School whose student racial balance falls within +/-15% of the district average of minority (non-White) students.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations of a study are those characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of the study and are a result from specific choices by the researcher, such as my selection of how many and which states, the theoretical framework I selected, and the methodology I used to conduct this study. Additionally, I delimited which types of schools I would include and which I



would exclude, such as charter schools, which are considered public schools. My decision not to include state superintendents in this study, but to include itinerant (those serving dual-roles such as teacher and superintendent or principal and superintendent in very small districts), interim, acting, and regular superintendents was another delimitation.

### **Limitations**

Unlike delimitations, limitations are matters and occurrences that are out of the researcher's control. They can often times affect the conclusions that can be drawn from the results. Generalizations cannot be made about other states' school system based on the sample used in this study. Another limitation is that less than a quarter of the population size is used in this sample. More specifically, there are approximately 14,000 superintendents in the nation and this study is only analyzing 3,169 of the total population. Every study, regardless of how well it is conducted, has limitations.

### **Overview of Theoretical Framework**

This study will be conducted looking through the lens of Bourdieu's social reproduction theory, coined in 1973, which focused on the relationship between education, family, and social class. Bourdieu emphasized how social classes preserve their social privileges across generations. Bourdieu (1996) and Laslett and Brenner (1989) stated that social reproduction exists in companies where already-established senior executives, as part of the entire social system, develop procedures that favor hiring, retaining, and promoting people who are more like themselves. Bourdieu went further to posit that cultural capital is a major source of social inequality. Social reproduction theory states that resources and institutions are reproduced, or passed on, to those sharing similar social strata. In other words, similarity breeds connection and creates that 'good ole boy' system. Collins (2009) suggested that social reproduction theory

argues that schools are not institutions of equal opportunity but mechanism for perpetuating social inequalities. More commonly, feminists use social reproduction to understand the perpetuation and reproduction of systems of gender inequality (Laslett & Brenner).

Taking a deeper dive, Ferguson (2008) talked about social reproduction feminism as it relates to the *location* of the body. She argued that social reproduction sheds light on the “placement of certain populations into certain socio-cultural spaces” (p. 54). A socio-cultural environment is a set of beliefs, customs, practices, and behaviors that exist within a population or organizational culture (Hopp & Stephan, 2012). Additionally, this study will identify if the nation’s largest four states have women superintendents leading their public school districts that mimic that of the national average of 27 percent. The profiles of those districts that females lead will be outlined and compared to those that males lead. Gotwalt and Towns (1986) pointed out that historically, there has been a correlation between the number of women in educational administration and the feminist movement.

Social reproduction has three tiers, financial capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Financial capital is the amount of wealth one has. The top 20% of the wealthiest people make up 72% of the wealth in the country while the bottom 20% only make up 3% of the wealth. Social capital is the building up of reliable, useful social networks of trustworthy, useful connections in order to obtain opportunities and advantages in society. Cultural capital is one’s exposure to worldly experiences and artifacts that are typically passed down through generations. More precisely, cultural capital refers to certain cultural practices, knowledge, attitudes, and abilities that play a role in the reproduction of social class. The concept of cultural capital was developed by Pierre Bourdieu as part of his larger framework of social reproduction as he analyzed the reproduction of class-based power and privilege and how culture impacts processes of inequality.

Previous research has focused primarily on the effects of cultural capital on the educational outcomes of adolescents but less attention has been given to the importance of cultural capital in social contexts involving adults. It seems that the educational system does not value social and cultural capital of those less advantaged populations, which again inhibits women from ascending into top leadership positions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). For example, Bourdieu and Passeron argued in one of his best known works that French schools are not neutral, meritocratic institutions where student succeed through performance, but rather, schools favor the cultural capital and practices of middle and upper class students.

The access to social capital that is essential to be developed and hired, referred to as career mobility, is inhibited because of social reproduction. The criteria used to evaluate an individual's performance becomes more vague and tied more to organizational success as one rises up through an organizational hierarchy (Tolbert & Hall, 2016). Additionally, cultural capital is used by dominant groups to exclude others from jobs, privileges, and other key social resources (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Examining how social reproduction results in the exclusion or inclusion of certain leaders based on their gender or social position will lead to a greater understanding of workplace inequality.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This was a quantitative study and the data from the four states selected in the US was extracted from several sources. Those sources were the National Center for Education Statistics, each of the four states' Department of Education websites, and the Civil Rights Data collection site at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov). This data was then compiled into one spreadsheet and analyzed in SPSS. My hypothesis is that women superintendents are more prevalent in smaller rural, low

socioeconomic, and high diversity districts. To answer the research question about the demographic profile of districts in which women serve as superintendents, I used a binomial logistic regression with significant factors at  $p \leq 0.05$  (adjusted odds ratio with 95% confidence intervals). This was used to determine if the gender of the superintendent can be predicted based on certain variables like the size of the district, the diversity of student body, and the locale of district.

The process included extracting the data, organizing it into relevant categories, entering it into SPSS, and running the binomial logistic regression and other statistical tests such as the Mann-Whitney U test on non-normal distributions when comparing men and women superintendents and independent samples t-tests for normally distributed variables. It concluded with an analysis of the data. These results highlighted implications for current superintendents, aspiring superintendents or those in the pipeline, colleges and universities' educational leadership professors, school boards or hiring firms, and policy makers. "Tracking and looking at the numbers alone cannot tell us the *whole* truth, nothing but the truth, but--when interpreted well--they can be considerable assets in assessing the progress that women are making in the workplace" (Gupton, 2009, p. 4).

### **Significance of the Research**

This study was an exploration of one of the shifts that Gupton and Slick's 1996 study examined. More specifically, I focused on the fourth shift – moving from access to equity – where I explored the demographics of the public school districts that women led and compared them to those that men led. Furthermore, this study was intended to enhance our understanding of how far American women have come in the top leadership positions in our school system and where work may still need to be done. To answer my first research question about the similarities

of public school districts that women lead, the goal of this study was to provide the results for school districts and state legislatures on this phenomenon and highlight how the four states are faring when it comes to equalization (since there is no national data set identifying the gender of superintendents).

The study of the American public school superintendent traces back to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is essential to understanding the evolution of public schools in this country (Finnan, McCord, Stream, Mattocks, Peterson, & Ellerson, 2015). Mertz (2006) affirmed that the lack of women in the superintendency and the “continued scarcity in the position of superintendent, even after 30 years, suggests that the position has been little affected by Title IX and that women continue to have a long, uncertain way to go to reach the top spot” (p. 556). Beyond just understanding the evolution, the executive director of The American Association of School Administrators (AASA), indicated on the organization’s website, that “it is critical for the education community-at-large to understand the history and context of superintendents, who serve as a voice for all students” (2015). This idea made it inevitable to produce a mid-decade update of the decennial study with an emphasis being placed on the few women serving in the role of superintendent. The executive director went on further to posit that the superintendency is the most important position in the country and these reports are designed to help AASA improve school district leadership and also to assist them in addressing issues supporting female and minority superintendents in our communities. Although I recognize that racial-ethnic minority superintendents is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning that they serve less than 1% of all public school superintendents.

The second research question - How do the demographics of districts with women superintendents compare to each other and to those districts that are led by men? – will be

analyzed and would permit those already in the field and those aspiring to identify trends women face in educational leadership roles. The incomplete knowledge base of women superintendents has hindered positive action within the profession and within society. This study aims to intensify the career planning of women who aspire to become local school district superintendents by preparing a visual of the landscape of where women are currently serving as superintendents of traditional public school in our country. It is my desire that women feel more empowered to pursue the top leadership positions in education, regardless of the location of the district, because our children, schools, and communities need their talents.

### **Chapter Summary**

This project is a study of the size and demographics of public school districts and the placement of women superintendents in district from four states - California, Michigan, New York, and Texas. Women are the majority (72%) of K-12 educators (Glass, 2000) but are only a small percentage (24%) of the public school district's top leaders as reported in the 2010 decennial study (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). However, since the next edition of this study will be conducted in 2020, AASA researched further to see if this number had changed, and it had. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) reported more recently (2015) that the number of female superintendents in the United States has increased to 27%. Women are not filling many of the higher level management roles and superintendent positions in public school districts. Examining women's upward mobility, the history of women superintendents, and the lack of equity women face, these three concepts will perhaps set the foundation for a better understanding as to why more women are not filling superintendent positions in greater numbers. In this project, I will explore sociologist Bourdieu's social reproduction theory. Data will be obtained from the National Center of Educational

Statistics as well as the individual states' Department of Education websites, and then analyze that data in SPSS. As this study will show, women have made enormous progress on some fronts, especially in attaining doctoral degrees which some states require for superintendency.

The U. S. Department of Commerce (2011) stated in their report that:

Facts alone can never substitute for actions that directly address the challenges faced by women of all ages and backgrounds, but they are deeply important in helping paint a picture of how the lives of American women are changing over time and in pointing toward the actions and policies that might be most needed (p. iv).

The first woman superintendent of a large public school, Ella Flagg Young, insisted that women are destined to rule the schools. At the turn of the twentieth century, Mrs. Young, first woman superintendent of Chicago Schools, was quoted in the *Western Journal of Education* (1909, as cited in Blount, 1998), as stating the following in regard to the future of women superintendents:

Women are destined to rule the schools of every city. I look for a large majority of the big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. It is woman's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership. As the first woman to be placed in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show cities and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man. ("The Highest Salaried Woman in the World," p. 515)

A woman's natural field was probably referring to the woman's natural extension of parenting and early teaching. The forerunners of women teachers lie much further in the past during times when education was chiefly informal and was an inherent part of the child-rearing process. In short, women have traditionally been considered natural guardians for children.



## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the demographic profiles of traditional public school districts and the gender of the superintendents in four of the largest states: California, Michigan, New York, and Texas and compare those profiles to those of men superintendents. A study done by Gupton and Slick (1996) was used as a foundation for this study. In comparison to that study, another study done by Sharp, Malone, Walter, and Supley (2004), the women superintendents they surveyed felt as if they were not restricted to certain district sizes or locations, but Gupton and Slick found that 73% of the women superintendents they surveyed were overwhelmingly employed in rural districts. To their surprise, Sharp et al. noticed that the actual data in that study revealed that more of them were working in districts with 500 or fewer students and in rural areas as opposed to any other district type and size. My study is looking specifically at all public school districts in four states and the demographics in those states. Hence, my two specific research questions for this study are: What are the demographic profiles of traditional public school districts in the California, Michigan, New York, and Texas where women are superintendents? How do the demographic profiles of districts with women superintendents compare to those that are led by men in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas?

In this study, selected demographic data will be collected about the districts such as size, geography, diversity, and socioeconomic status (SES). More specifically, the demographic profiles will include the size of the districts as determined by the number of schools, number of teachers, and number of students in the districts; the geography/locale of the traditional public school districts (such as urban, rural, suburban), as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); diversity as determined by the racial makeup of students within the district;

and the socioeconomic status (SES) of the districts as reflected by the number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. This data will provide a comparative view of the profile of traditional public school districts that women lead and those districts led by men. Marie Wilson, President and Founder of The White House Project (2009), stated that while women may be participating in the workforce in equal and sometimes in higher numbers relative to those of males, as is in the teaching workforce, they rarely make it to the top.

In many societies, there are groups of people who are denied access to the rights and privileges enjoyed by others on account of physical, biological, social, or other traits, making them minorities (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000). As a response to this denied access, the White House Council on Women and Girls, created by President Obama in early 2009 to enhance, support, and coordinate the efforts of existing programs for women and girls, has a mission to ensure all federal agencies consider how their policies and programs impact women and families. This study will focus on women as the minority group in the pool of traditional public school superintendents, as well as two other areas – the upward mobility of females and the historical data of women superintendents.

Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) posited that ideas concerning race, gender, multiple identities, and the intersections of those multiple identities can help in understanding the unique challenges faced by women, especially women of color, who aspire to positions of leadership. Crenshaw argued that “the intersection of racism and sexism factors into black women’s lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately” (p. 1244). It is worth noting though that Black women represent less than one percent of all female superintendents in this country. Of course, this phenomenon and the others could be examined in future research and add to the current literature on

*intersectionality* in leadership. However, for purposes of this study, I plan to shed some light on the demographic makeup of public school districts and women superintendents, so I was intentional in looking only at the gender dimension.

As a result of the civil rights and women's liberation movements of the 1960s, some women have seen significant progress in equal educational access and job opportunities in all fields of the workforce (Violanti & Jurezak, 2010). It is worth noting that there is not one singular women's movement. Approximately ninety-four years ago, White women gained the right to vote, yet they have not reached equal status with men in other areas of the labor force. My focus is all women, but I do recognize that not all experiences are the same. Current statistics show that women make up 47% of the total employment in the U.S., but held just 14.2% of executive office positions in Fortune 500 companies in 2015 (CNN Money, 2016). Furthermore, only 4.6% of CEO positions were held by women (Soares, Bartkiewicz, Mulligan-Ferry, Fendler, & Kun, 2013). Despite 2006 being declared as the 'Year of the Most Powerful Woman CEO' by Fortune Magazine in companies such as Xerox, PepsiCo, eBay, and Kraft Foods, women still remain under-represented in top leadership positions. This is relevant because it supports my claim that women are underrepresented in many other areas but also in the position as superintendents (CEOs) in our country's traditional public school system.

Our nation has approximately 14,000 superintendents (NCES, 2013) but less than 2,000 of those are women, yet about 76% of all K-12 educators are women according to the U. S. Department of Education (Glass, 2000). More recently the AASA (2015) shows an increase in female superintendents to 27%, up slightly (approximately 3%) from the 2010 decennial study. This study adds to the current body of literature to highlight gender differences in career paths as it further defines the pipeline challenges that gender inequities still persist in educational

leadership. Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) suggested that society could benefit from ensuring that women and minorities are coming through the education pipeline in proportion to their talents.

While there are many well documented barriers to mobility (Grogan, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989), organizational conditions that increase the odds of women being promoted to top positions remain underexplored. Grogan and Shakeshaft identify these barriers to include, but not limited to low self-confidence, family commitments, lack of preparation, gender stereotyping, glass ceilings, lack of opportunity, the attitudes of gatekeepers, and the limitations of essential work-related experience to lead women on the path to superintendency. In contrast, Gupton and Slick (1996) found in their study that there are shifts in some of those barriers, which will be discussed later in this section.

Research has also shown that women tend to be superintendents predominately in small districts, are older than their male counterparts, have more formal education and professional experience, and are notably considered to be 'instructional leaders' (American Association of School Superintendents, 2015). In order to better understand why women are still underrepresented in the superintendency role, I will look at the historical data of superintendents. Then, I will look at the historical data of women superintendents. Lastly, this study will discuss the most commonly cited barriers for women superintendents, which will also include recommendations for aspirants to overcome those barriers. The results of the analyzed data will highlight trends and the history of women superintendents in the United States, beginning with the first female superintendent in the US who was named in 1909, and the sparseness of women superintendents still to this day that needs to be understood so women, and men alike, can bring about a change.

## Historical Data of Superintendents

According to Kowalski and Brunner (2011), the position of school district superintendent was created in the mid-1800s between 1837 and 1850. The first district superintendents were appointed in 1837 in Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky (Grieder, Pierce, & Jordan, 1969, as cited in Kowalski & Brunner; Moody, 2011). Since the early history of the United States, leadership has been largely dominated by males, but this has not always been the case in the classroom, as most classroom teachers are females in today's school across the country.

In the early 1900s, the superintendency remained a nearly all-male position. There was no formal training or professional development; they were appointed merely because of their propensity for management, their instinct, and simply because they were men (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993). However, during this time, Funk, Pankake, and Schroth (2002) detailed that many of the male superintendents were found to be corrupt businessmen who lacked integrity in both finance and administrative practices. This resulted in many men being replaced, whose characteristics were thought to be that of honesty and credibility.

Our nation's future is inextricably tied to the success of our children in public schools and that responsibility lies ultimately on that of the superintendent. "No federal or national organization collects or reports annual administrative data by gender" so it is difficult to establish trends over time (Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007, p. 103). Although statistics are minimal, some reports from the National Center for Education Statistics noted a disproportionate representation of women in the superintendency.

Opportunities for women to teach were broadened beyond "dame schools" when men were eager to find more lucrative jobs, such as lawyers, doctors, and the more "professional" jobs. As a result, in the early decades of the 1900s, thousands of women succeeded in attaining

school leadership positions and this period continued until after World War II, despite economic depression and a backward movement against women's social and political advances (Blount, 1998). Were these female teachers, in one regard, educational leaders in their own rights? One might think so because these women designed their own curricula, prepared their materials, admitted students, and even controlled the schools' affairs.

Early in the twentieth century, suffrage activism and the larger women's movement effectively propelled women, although not all women, into school leadership positions and by 1930, women accounted for approximately 28% of county superintendents and 11% nationwide (Blount, 1998). These numbers are relatively low in comparison to the number of women in the teaching field. For example, Bell and Chase (1993, as cited in Grogan, 1996) stated that 87% of elementary school teachers were women, 57% of middle school teachers were women, and 52% of secondary school teachers were women. Today, the national average is over 75% percent of all teachers are women. To show an incremental rise, Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, and Ellerson (2011) found that the percentage of women in superintendency nationally is about 24.1%, but more recent data by AASA (2015) showed an increase of women superintendents at 27%. Still a minute percentage, this suggests that the phenomenon of gender inequities still exist even after the women's rights movement and legislative actions, such as affirmative action. In an effort to improve gender inequities, Title II of the Civil Rights Acts of 1991 created the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) to study the barriers to the advancement of minorities and women within corporate hierarchies and make recommendations on ways to dismantle the glass ceiling, which the Wall Street Journal stated existed because of the barriers women face as they try to penetrate that ceiling.

A school superintendent leads school districts that vary in size and demographics. Nearly all, approximately 99%, superintendents are hired by local school boards of education. Some lead county systems while others lead city school systems. Many small districts have superintendents that may have dual roles, such as principal and superintendent. Although a superintendent's responsibilities will vary, that person is ultimately the executive for that district who is held accountable for the schools in his or her school district.

The typical tenure of a superintendent in the largest large-city districts is two to three years, but half of superintendents in the largest 25 districts are able to complete a four-year contract (Glass, 2002). The large-city superintendents who assumed responsibility for educational programs quickly became the most visible and respected educators in the country. A strong driving force for early large-city superintendents was the Americanization of large numbers of immigrants. Glass went on further to say that the vision of school held by most of the superintendents was rooted in their experiences of growing up in rural and small-town America.

The twenty-first century finds one-third of America's public school children attending one of ten large urban (large-city) school districts (Glass 2002). He posited that by 2020, approximately one-half of public school enrollments will be clustered in twenty districts, resting the educational stewardship of a majority of the nation's youth on the shoulders of very few large-city school superintendents, thus determining the future of American democracy. However, their brief tenure makes it highly unlikely that a superintendent can develop and implement reform programs to give greater academic achievement in conjunction with rebuilding dilapidated schools and building strong working relationships with the city's political structure.

### **Historical Data of Women Superintendents**

Nationally, there has been a seemingly substantial growth in women superintendency from 1% in 1992 to its current percentage of about 27%. Women seeking school leadership roles were supported by suffrage activism and the women's movement and that support was so strong that by 1930, women held about 25% of the superintendencies (Blount, 1999). The time from the 1919-1950 was known as the "Golden Age" for women administrators (Blount). However, this ended in the mid-1940s when the men returned from World War II and resumed the administrators' roles. Therefore, in 1980, women represented only 1% of superintendents (Blount, 1998; Brunner, Grogan, & Prince, 2003; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). In 1992, the percentage rose to 11%, 13% in 2000, 24% in 2010, to its current 27% in 2015 (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011; American Association of School Administrators, 2015). Although the numbers of women superintendents have always been relatively small in comparison to those of men, there have been years where women had greater success in accessing the role of superintendent. Over this 35-year span from 1980 – 2015, the increase from 1% to 27% may seem significant, but women are far from reaching parity. Derrington and Sharratt (2009) stated that at this rate, it will not be until the year 2035 that there will be an equal gender ratio in superintendency.

Kim and Brunner (2009) indicated that women's career development in the superintendency has been largely ignored except in rare instances (Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Tallerico, 2000). Glass (2000) noted that women are not typically in positions that normally lead to the superintendency. He posited that coaching, which traditionally is in secondary school, is more preferred by men teachers and affords men that initial step toward administration. Men then become secondary building principals and central office administrators. In addition to this missed opportunity of being a coach for women, a large percentage of women are in elementary



education; many elementary schools are without assistant principals and almost none utilize department chairs (Glass, 2000).

Gender differences in career mobility can be viewed from the perspective of uncovering what works for women, and how those things that work provide added value to the role of superintendent of schools (Kim & Brunner, 2009). Their study compared the career mobility of men and of women, giving specific attention to women's career pathways. In this study, the researchers modified Shakeshaft's (1989) model of the typical career path of women and men in school administration to include elementary or secondary teacher; coach or club advisor; elementary principal or assistant secondary principal; supervisor, secondary principal, or director/coordinator; assistant or associate superintendent; and then superintendent. Earlier models (Ortiz, 1982, as cited in Shakeshaft, 1983) reported two major career patterns of superintendents based on the district size: a large district pattern was teacher – principal – central office administrator – superintendent; while a small district eliminated the central office administrator. Glass (2000) defined the typical pathway to superintendency as teacher – coaching assignment – assistant principal or department chair in a high school – central office administrator – superintendent.

Women have gained some rights but the term *glass ceiling* has become popular as a way to refer to the scarcity of women in top-level leadership. A ceiling is designed to keep things (or people) within a certain space, thus stunting one's growth despite her competence. We are making incremental strides, albeit slowly, and since education is the most promising frontier for change, we need to take advantage of the opportunity to teach, train, inspire, motivate, and encourage our women to become leaders. After all, every person in the United States who desires to, have at least 13 years of schooling and many go on to post-secondary institutions of four, six,

or even eight more years of education. Despite over 160 years of demanding equal rights, women's opportunities for leadership are anything but equal. Females have never been a majority but their representation in the superintendency has fluctuated considerably since the late 1800s (Kowalski et al., 2011).

### **Gupton and Slick's Shifts**

Kowalski and Stouder (1999) posited that the literature on female superintendents began to develop in the 1970s, but because there were so few women in the position at that time, much of the research on career barriers was conducted among job applicants rather than the actual superintendent in office. The largest body of research related to women has examined the barriers women face entering the leadership positions in education (Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007). Kowalski and Stouder's 1999 study found that the literature cited more frequently eight specific barriers: lack of family support, lack of collegial support, lack of employment opportunity, gender discrimination, familial responsibilities, lack of self-confidence, racial/ethnic discrimination, and personal lack of tenacity. The study overall found that women superintendents experienced external barriers more often than internal ones.

Internal barriers, those associated with the individual, include low self-confidence and motivation, while external barriers, those involving society or institutions, would include gender discrimination or lack of mentors/role models (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993). On the contrary, Shakeshaft (1989) suggested that "internal barriers are merely camouflage for deeper, societal roadblocks to women's advancement" (p. 83). Extant literature reveals a history of gender-related barriers to administrative positions (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Derrington & Sharrett, 2008; Grogan, 1996, 2008; Loder, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1989). "As a result, forward-thinking members of the education profession are seeking ways to improve academic preparation

and superintendent selection to eliminate obstacles that have previously discouraged women from pursuing careers as district and school administrators” (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011, p. 85). For transformational changes to transpire and to represent our culturally diverse society in the equitable gender representation in the field of educational leadership, an understanding and awareness of gender issues in this arena must occur. Women superintendents have experienced many barriers and challenges that could contribute to the inequality in numbers as compared to men superintendents. These barriers and challenges include, but are not limited to, being ill-prepared, the attitudes of the gatekeepers, and lack of support.

Shakeshaft et al. (2007) and Gupton (1996) found that more barriers previously identified as internal have been overcome than have those barriers previously identified as external. For example, Gupton and Slick outlined that there have been four shifts that occurred in the past decades. The first is a shift from women lacking aspiration to become superintendent to one where they simply need a better support system to help them overcome some of the barriers they face. Second, women are earning more credentials to become superintendents, but they are ill-prepared by university educational leadership programs, mainly because they are being taught by white male professors through the lens of white male leadership models. A third shift occurred from focusing on too few women acquiring the position to one that might include retention of them. The final shift is from access to equity. More women are accessing the position of superintendents, but equity is not seen in what types of districts they are hired, which is the core of this study.

It would behoove the educational institutions, policy makers, school boards, and current superintendents to recognize the potential barriers caused by gender discrimination and are

cognizant of other barriers that some women may face, such as a lack of education, training, and experiences. This burden should not be placed solely on the oppressed women to ensure change. Aspiring women superintendents might find it useful to be able to detect that within organizations are discrimination, stereotyping, and negative preconceptions (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009) so that can perhaps successfully navigate through the system. However, there is hope for gender equality, but it will take the concerted effort of all - women and men. For women, recognizing that a barrier or barriers exists, whether they are internal or external, is the first step toward overcoming it.

It has been thought that women do not aspire to be superintendents, but they do (Glass, 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005). In their study, as many as 40 percent of the women they surveyed that were currently in central office administration identified themselves as aspiring to the superintendency and 74% of them had already earned their credential or were working toward it. The fact that women constitute more than 50 percent of the graduate students enrolled in educational administration programs support the above claim that women do aspire to be superintendents. Along those same lines, women's academic preparation for the position is more current; 47% of women earned their highest degree within the past 10 years compared to 36% of men (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). They further claimed that more than 40% of men earned their highest degree 15 or more years ago.

Most of the barriers to women in administration that existed in the mid-1980s are still evident today. However, there have been gains in every category. Women no longer lack the confidence, aspiration, or motivation (Funk, Pankake, & Schroth, 2002; Gupton & Slick, 1996). Sex role stereotyping and overt discrimination still exist and they impede women's career progress, but women are no longer underrepresented in preparation programs or in doctoral

classes (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; NCES, 2015). If the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are to be met successfully, stated Brown and Irby (1995), education could stand to transform its orientation from one of exclusion to one of inclusion. It is morally objectionable to ignore inequities in the attainment of the top leadership role in education (Tallerico, 2000).

Women continue to face serious problems in educational administration. The field not only continues to be imbalanced in terms of gender, but in the perceptions about women and women's leadership. Additionally, the imbalance rests in the actions that are taken based upon these perceptions, such as hiring practices, make it more likely that the gender imbalance will persist (Young, 2005). There are structural and systemic barriers that work against the advancement of all candidates who are not White males. Discrimination exists as a reflection of societal role expectations (Dowell & Larwin, 2013). Looking at the shifts mentioned in Gupton and Slick's 1996 study, I begin with preparation. Next, I will discuss the attitudes of the gatekeepers or school boards and hiring firms. Then I move into the support that is necessary for women to excel in the position of superintendent, and last, I discuss access to equity for women.

**Shift 1: Preparation.** The preparation of superintendents is a critical component and essential element of systemic education reform and is more than just having the necessary degrees and credentials, but it also entails keeping current and up-to-date by being well-read (Gupton, 2009; Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2009). Scathing reports, most critical of university-based preparation programs, and state legislative interventions have prompted significant changes in licensure for school administrators over the past two decades (Kowalski et al., 2009). As a result of these changes, nine states no longer require a license for the position of superintendent. Fifty-four percent of the remaining 41 states grant waivers or emergency

licenses and 37% allow or sanction alternative routes to licensure of superintendents (Feistritzer, 2003).

Women are earning higher degrees in higher numbers than ever before. In support of this claim, the National Center for Education Statistics (2015) shows that women earned more than 63% of doctoral degrees in educational leadership in 2013, up 18% since 2000 (Glass et al.). Glass et al. (2000) stated that superintendents with doctorates are least likely to be found on rural, small-enrollment districts that are below average in wealth. This perhaps implies that more women are better prepared academically to lead in more populous districts. Preparation also requires women to be psychologically and mentally ready to handle the stress and possess political awareness to be the top executive in the school system. Gupton posited that women must also be tough-minded and persistent; all the while being aware and prepared for the stiff demands of the job and also is able to balance family and work.

Coursework in educational administration classes, according to Tillman and Cochran (2000) is usually taught by white-male faculty and derived from the experiences of white-male superintendents. They posited that in order to shift this practice, universities might purposefully recruit and retain a more diverse faculty and that those faculty members could collaborate with public school-based leaders to identify potential mentors for minority or female students with leadership aspirations. Likewise, Tripses, Hunt, and Watkins (2013) conducted an online study of 873 district superintendents in the state of Illinois to ask superintendents about the knowledge and skills they needed from their preparation programs in order to be successful. The respondents stated that there is a need for strong preparation in finance, law, curriculum and instruction, human resources, politics including collective bargaining, instructional and ethical leadership, and community relations and communications.

**Shift 2: Attitudes of the Gatekeepers.** One of the most common and well known barriers to career advancement is that of the selection process used by most companies (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009). In 1961, President John Kennedy established the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW, 2015) and appointed Eleanor Roosevelt as the chairperson. Shortly after her appointment, in 1962, Mrs. Roosevelt died. However, a report was issued in 1963 documenting considerable discrimination against women in the workplace. The report made recommendations for improvement, which included fair hiring practices, paid maternity leave, and affordable child care. In fact, the AASA (2000) stated that there is a certain amount of truth in the reason of unfair hiring practices for superintendent positions, although no substantive data beyond case studies, exists to support this. The hiring practices of women superintendents is brought into question as this study compares the number of women in those positions to that of men and child care is far from affordable, especially in this era. The PCSW was terminated in October 1963 after the submission of its final report (President's Commission on the Status of Women, 2015).

In a study conducted by Tallerico (2000) of search consultants and their role in the hiring of minorities in educational leadership, several gatekeeping processes were present - a) their view of an ideal candidate for superintendency usually paralleled that of white males, b) minorities typically do not make it past the initial screening phase, and c) if the minorities did pass the initial screening, they underwent more scrutiny during the interviews. Just a year earlier, Kamler and Shakeshaft (1999) conducted a study on the role of gatekeepers in promoting or preventing women from attaining the superintendency. Their study revealed that consultants noted that few women were applying and those that did apply lacked the qualifications needed for the position. The consultants speculated that the women did not apply because they were not

in a position to move due to either their spouses' career or their loyalty to their own positions. Additionally, they hypothesized that many had not served as a high school principal, which was a prerequisite, as viewed by almost half of the consultants. Kamler and Shakeshaft concluded that the presence of female board members is essential to ensure that women have a fair chance to be appointed to the superintendency.

School board members are generally elected, but can be appointed in some instances. However, they are typically as diverse as the community in which they serve. The goal of the school boards is to be leaders and champions for public education in their states and communities (National School Board Association, NSBA, 2016). Alarming, the NSBA's website indicates that 26% of the school board members were members of a minority group in large districts and 44% were female. Seventy-five percent of board members do not receive pay for their services. One would hope that with an almost equally divide of men and women board members, that we would see an increase in the number of women superintendents.

Tallerico (2000) suggested seven ideas to promote equity in the superintendency for board members, commonly referred to as gatekeepers and headhunters. The ideas include balancing the screening and interview committee membership by sex and race/ethnicity whenever possible; advancing applicants with evidence of educational accomplishments and leadership potential; focusing on competencies and skills rather than lifestyle, family, or other issues irrelevant to job performance; viewing curricular and instructional expertise as strengths for leadership positions; obtaining references from members of women's and minority educators' professional organizations; intervening to halt any discussion related to one's physical appearance; and asking the same interview questions to all candidates. It is important for those in positions of selecting and hiring educational administrators to look beyond gender or those



who look different from the majority of past superintendents and focus more on skills, expertise as educators, and leadership potential to promote equity. Men still hold the majority of school board positions. A three-state study of female superintendents done by Sharp, Malone, Walters, and Supley (2004) indicated that only 9.9% of female superintendents reported that male board members seemed supportive.

**Shift 3: Support.** Many researchers have observed that women had a less developed mentoring system than men (Glass, 2000; Haar, Raskin, & Robicheau, 2009; Kamler, 2006; Marina & Fonteneau, 2012). Moreover, other researchers (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Shakeshaft et al., 2007) noted there are a lack of mentors and professional networks for women superintendents and indicated that aspiring women superintendents require positive, encouraging mentors and career environments that are supportive in order to reduce job anxiety. Gupton (2009) stated that men and women can serve as mentors, especially since there are so few women in the role of superintendent to serve as mentors. Additionally, research by Singh, Vinnicombe, and Kumra (2006), found that a lack of access to organizational networks is seen as a key barrier for women that desire to obtain top leadership positions.

Support has continued to be an important factor for women moving into administration. In fact, many researchers found that family support and mentoring made the difference in encouraging women to excel from the classroom to leadership (Alston, 1999; Brunner, 2003; Enomoto, Gardiner, & Grogan, 2000; Grogan, 1996, 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Jackson, 1999; Mendez-Morse, 1999, 2004; Young & McLeod, 2001). Pounder (1987) suggested that women be encouraged to become members of search teams for administrators and that professors of educational administration could encourage women by assuring school boards those women can be competent administrators. Brown and Irby (1996) and McDaniel (2002) argued that

women in educational administrative programs have particular and unique needs, concerns, and challenges, which could be addressed in leadership preparation programs.

The relationship between the superintendent and the school board that supervises him or her is a central aspect of the superintendency. One of the issues may be that school board members are overwhelmingly male. In fact, in 2002, Hess found that almost 62% of school board members were male, as compared to 38% females. The education sector lacks recent school board demographic information (The Whitehouse Project, 2009) and they suggest this as an area of future research. School boards, hiring firms, and search committees need to acknowledge that the less than 30 percent of women superintendents and more than 76 percent of women teachers are grossly disproportionate. These entities could help guide school districts to more equitable hiring and promotion practices to close the gender gap in leadership.

In order to change institutional norms and practices, current and future educational leaders could play an integral part by creating awareness of imbalances and establishing a culture that is open to the leadership and advancement of women in superintendency (Tallerico, 2000). This would occur in three stages according to Tallerico. In line with the first stage, this study is intended to provide a baseline by examining existing information on demographic landscape patterns of female superintendents in traditional public school districts in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas.

Tallerico's second stage is to use the analysis of the data to set targets for improving the diversity among the districts' leadership. For example, in this study, if females are predominately in certain types of districts, the sharing of this data with the appropriate constituencies might entice them to get involved in the process of leveling the field for female superintendents to be equally represented in all district sizes and types and in greater numbers.

Tallerico states that the “third strategy involves creating systems for grooming high-potential leadership talent, with diversity outcomes structured into the process” (p. 141), which she suggested can be done through a combination of strategic mentoring and succession planning.

This third stage has three phases according to Tallerico (2000); the first as described below:

Applied to educational settings, it means, first, having all current administrators identify three individuals with the potential to succeed them in their position: (a) one person who could step into the job, on an emergency basis, virtually immediately; (b) a second who could grow into the position in three to five years; and (c) a third individual who is a woman or person of color (p. 142).

The second phase then becomes critical to provide encouragement and support by creating those opportunities for those individuals to expand their skillset and gain additional administrative experience. The third and final phase is to provide connections to other school leaders and administrators to foster those informal networks and communication.

Another promising systemic approach to fostering and maintaining diversity in the superintendency is through providing on-going support to new superintendents that will hopefully help with retention and perhaps advancement to larger districts. Additionally, changing the discourse that happens when there is negative talk about prospective female applicants to the superintendency is important. Tallerico (2000) suggests that acknowledging and emphasizing the strengths of current pools of female candidates to counter the myth that the pool of prospective candidates is weak.

Mentors can be used as a tool for overcoming barriers and mentors can include family members, college professors, administrators, other superintendents, other aspirants to the

position, community members, parents, and even former administrators. In fact, several studies (Jackson, 1999; McDade & Drake, 1982; Pavan, 1999) found that strong familial ties were strong motivators for women having high expectations.

To further support women superintendents, based on their study of top-level female school administrators in the United States, Gupton and Slick (1996) made recommendations for school districts, communities, state departments, federal governments, higher education, and professional organizations. A few of the recommendations are: 1) School districts might transition from merely writing good policy to actually practicing fairer treatment of women as they seek administrative positions in education. 2) State legislatures could provide funding and support to local school districts for nurturing the inclusivity of underrepresented groups of people in leadership positions. 3) The federal government could provide more adequate funding for research and development of projects and programs related to the advancement of women in educational administration. It would take a concerted efforts of local school districts, state, and federal governments to work closely together to end this system of gender bias.

**Shift 4: Access versus equity.** Even during the peak of percentage of women superintendents, an inequity continued to exist. There are many schools being consolidated due to low enrollment and student choice, making some districts large and thus those larger districts may not be attainable for female superintendents. Blount (1998) collected data that found patterns that females attained superintendency positions in more county (intermediate) positions, which had less prestige, lower salaries, and less control of school affairs at the building level. On the other hand, Blount stated that city, especially large city, superintendents enjoyed the prestige and high salary, and complete control of the school systems. In 1950 there were over 3,000 intermediate school systems but by 1990, that total had dropped below 1,000 (Blount). As

a result of this change, the reorganization of school systems in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many females lost their jobs and were in other positions within the schools.

Glass (2000) reported that 75% of the elementary classroom teachers are women, yet nearly 75% of superintendents did not teach at the elementary level prior to moving into administration. Since the majority of women are at the elementary level, they do not have the same access to the administrative pipeline as do the males that work at the high school level. Nearly all respondents in Glass' study were once building-level principal or assistant principals, the typical gateway to the superintendency. Furthermore, since most elementary schools do not have assistant principals, this gives women an initial disadvantage from the natural ascends from classroom into administration.

Federal legislature and the women's movements appear to have had little effect in increasing the percentage of women in educational administration, despite women continuing to earn advanced degrees in increasing numbers. For example, statistically, the number of women obtaining degrees in educational leadership has more than tripled from 11% in 1972 to 39% in 1982 (Ortiz & Marshall, 1988). According to the NCES, in 2012, females earned twice as many Master's degrees in Educational Leadership than males; 12,069 and 6,656 respectively. Moreover, the NCES reported that the number of Doctorate degrees earned by females and males were 2,248 and 1,307 respectively. The fact is clear that more women are qualified and have the credentials than are actually going into the profession of superintendency. So why are there still so few female superintendents in our public school systems in this country? Despite being qualified for the position of superintendent, affirmative action was actually intended to get women and people of color in the door to compete with the dominant white men who often times found ways to lock the doors to those unlike them (Thompson, 2000).

Although women's obvious progress in the area of educational achievement is heartening, a less encouraging picture emerges if we examine the percentage of women filling the positions of public school superintendent in the United States and leading in large city districts with equal pay. If women are leading in districts that are lacking a national profile; ones that have less visibility, they are receiving less pay than their male counterparts that are leading larger districts. In fact, the most recent figures on superintendent salary indicate that females still earn an average of \$4,000 to \$18,000 less than their male counterparts (Wallace, 2014). A major factor in determining the salary for the superintendent is based on the scope of the position. For instance, how much pressure and responsibility the position entails helps determine the salary as well as district enrollment (Wolverton, 1999). In 1960 women superintendents earned on the average 61% of what a male in a comparable leadership position earned. Over the last 45 years though, that pay gap has narrowed. For example, in 2002, some women earned 76% of what men earned in the same position (Willinger, 2004), that may not be true for the differential for women of color.

It is difficult to compare salaries from one area to another due to the differences in the cost of living throughout the United States as well as varying state, local, and property taxes. Salary is a major reason many superintendents leave suburban and rural districts to become superintendents in large school districts (Brunner, 1998). For example, former Los Angeles Unified School District in California, John Deasy earned a base salary of \$330,000 in 2014, with an increase months later of \$20,000 more from accrued vacation days. This district had more than 930 schools with 667,000 students. On the contrary, Dr. William Johnson, superintendent of Rockville Centre Union Free School District in New York, was likely the highest paid school superintendent with a base salary of \$321,700 and more than \$567,200 in total compensation.

The district Johnson led had only seven schools with a mere 3,540 students. Although there are improvements in women gaining the position of superintendency, there is a salary gap for the position. It is evident that there will be salary variability between states and sizes of districts.

Another struggle that women continue to have as a roadblock to leadership is the social capital. Social capital, according to Bourdieu (1972, 1986), is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. These relationships are important especially when ascending to the top leadership position in the public school, which is heavily male-dominated. It can be difficult to penetrate those social spaces as a woman in this field and build those relationships necessary to gain the skills, dispositions, and knowledge it takes to become a superintendent. “Whether social capital is seen from the societal-group level or the relational level, all scholars remain committed to the view that it is the interacting members who make the maintenance and reproduction of this social asset possible” (Lin, 1999, p. 32).

Koschoreck (2001) agreed that equity begins with leadership, particularly with the superintendent who sets the vision and has the opportunity to use hard data to highlight historical inequities in the system. Additionally, school boards, headhunters, search firms, and university professors ought to be willing to pursue policy implementations that are directly linked to those same inequities. Cooper (2009) stated that educational leaders and other stakeholders must be willing to facilitate and engage in hard dialogue about gender, race, culture, class, language, and inequality with their staff and families and then make decisions that exemplify their commitment to equity” (p. 719).

One of the most obvious examples of sex segregation can be found in the field of education (Young, 2005). In the United States, as previously stated, females make up the majority of the teaching force but not the majority of the leadership positions in schools and school districts. Young posited that at the turn of the century, increased media attention, parental pressure, and practitioner emphasis has led to a policy effort to focus on the negative impact of affirmative action on public institutions, the lack of male role models in schools, and the difficulties boys face in school. This shift has in turned resulted in a backlash of decreased emphasis being placed on the problems associated with women and educational leadership. She stated that a backlash occurs when advances have been small, before changes are sufficient to help many people. Young went on further to extend thanks to the efforts of the women's movement, feminist scholars in educational leadership, and leaders like Jack Culbertson of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), and women in educational leadership positions for their advancements, although gradual but clear and optimistic. However, inequities still exist and if one compares the advancement to the inequities, gains have been relatively small and not necessarily sustainable. Skrla (2003) argued that women still do not equal men in terms of their representation in leadership positions or in terms of the relative respect they receive as leaders. Moreover, discrimination still exists in terms of salary, benefits, recruitment, hiring, and promotion. For example, women principals tend to be hired more frequently at the elementary level, while women superintendents are relegated to less desirable districts that are either small and rural or urban and troubled (Logan, 2000; Young, 2005).

### **Chapter Summary**

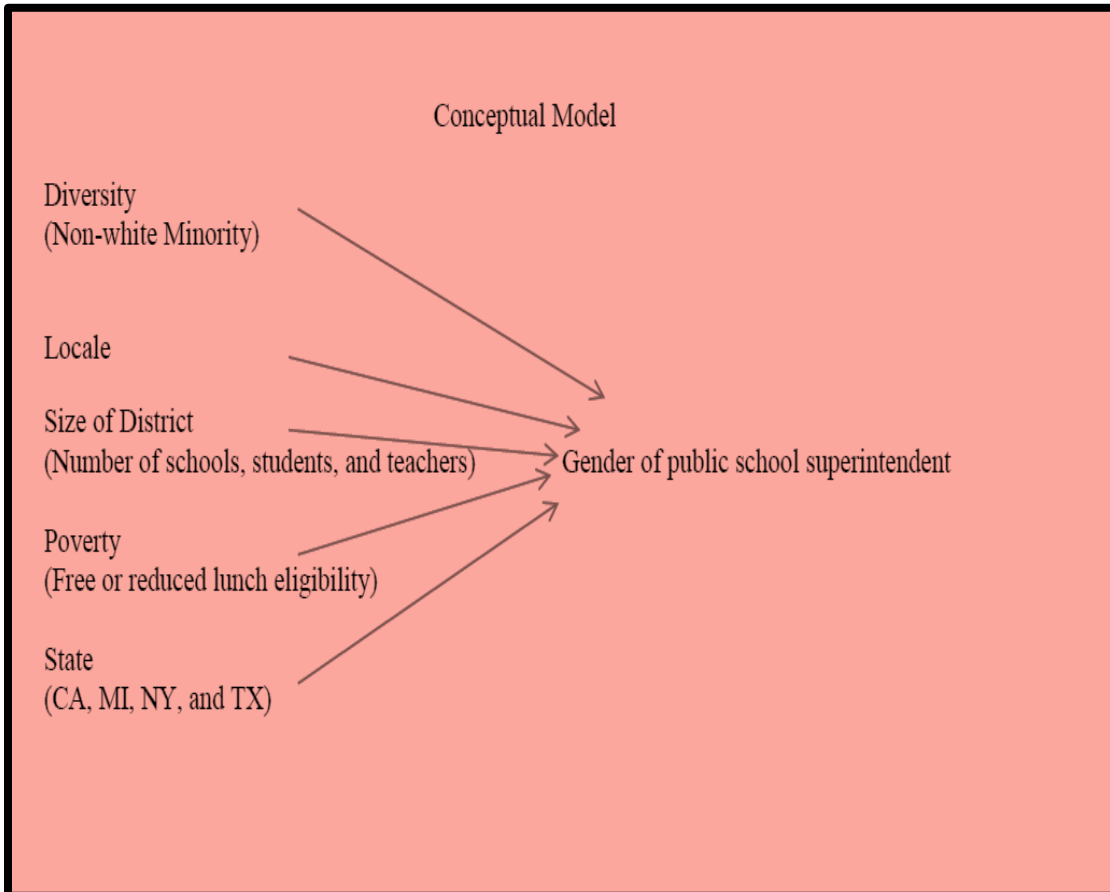
The highest authority within a public school district lies at the superintendent level. Grogan (2005) stated the superintendency as the executive level position at the top of the



educational hierarchy in the United States. Their multi-faceted roles include those of financial budgeting, curriculum and instruction, transportation, food services, facilities, and community involvement. Even though women continue to acquire more advanced degrees from educational leadership programs, fill more central office and school principal positions, and are in the pipeline to superintendency, there is still not equity in numbers (Katz, 2004; Pew, 2008; State Board for Educator Certification, 2016; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). In fact, the superintendent position has been held predominately by men since its creation in the late 1800 (Blount, 1998), and they are still disproportionately white and male (Hess, 2002).

The underrepresentation of women in the superintendency are being measured against ideals that have historically served men best (Grogan, 1996). This phenomenon was examined through the lens of Bourdieu's social reproduction. Even though school administration programs enroll more women than men, the data continues to show that there remain a low number of women employed as superintendents. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) argued that these low statistics for female superintendents indicate that "aspiration is not the issue; opportunity is" (p. 108). Barriers to females' advancement, not competence, are of primary concern when it comes to increasing the numbers of women in the superintendent position (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Kowalski et al., 2011). In order to change institutional norms and practices, current and future educational leaders should play an integral part by creating awareness of imbalances and establishing a culture that is open to the leadership and advancement of women in superintendency (Tallerico, 2000). Tallerico and Hodgkinson & Montenegro (1999) stated that our children need to see teachers and leaders that are more like them in leadership roles which are being socially responsible. In order for them to observe this, school boards, professors, search committees, community members, and lawmakers, all need to join forces and be conscience in

the decisions to give women a fair chance to lead our school systems in all district types and sizes.



### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the demographic profiles of traditional public school districts and the gender of the superintendents in four of the largest states: California, Michigan, New York, and Texas. My two research questions are: What are the demographic profiles of public school districts in the California, Michigan, New York, and Texas where women are superintendents?; and how do the demographic profiles of districts with women superintendents compare to those districts that are led by men in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas? The goal of this study is to answer these questions using quantitative methods.

In an effort to avoid “gender blind or gender biased” analysis of quantitative data, this study will utilize data from national databases “to support the notion that women and men are not treated equally in society” (Sprague & Zimmerman, 1989, p. 79). Data for this study will be extracted from several sources. Those sources are the National Center for Education Statistics, California Department of Education’s website, Michigan Department of Education, New York State Department of Education, Texas Department of Education, and the Civil Rights Data from the federal government’s website. This data will be combined into one spreadsheet and then analyzed in SPSS, using Chi-square and binomial logistic regression.

#### **Data Sources**

The concept of secondary data analysis appeared in literature nearly 50 years ago (Andrews, Higgins, Andrews, & Lalor, 2012). Glaser (1963, as cited in Andrews, Higgins, Andrews, & Lalor, 2012) defined secondary data as data that already exists and was originally collected for other purposes. Furthermore, Heaton (2004) went on further to say that it is “a research strategy which makes use of pre-existing quantitative data for the purposes of

investigating new questions or verifying previous studies” (p. 16) and can be used to verify, refute, and refine existing research (p. 9). The most common reason given by Fielding (2004) for using secondary data is to reanalyze the data from a new perspective with a view to gaining new insights.

According to their website, “The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations. NCES is located within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences. NCES fulfills a Congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally” (NCES, 2015).

The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)’s database is fully accessible to the public with hundreds of data elements. It is a mandatory data collection and is authorized under the statutes and regulations implementing Title VI of the Civil rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and several other mandates. Data will be extracted from CRDC on race/ethnicity, English Language Learner status (ELL), and disability. State, charter, component, federal, supervisory union, regional districts, and other education agencies school types were excluded.

### **Research Design and Procedures**

Data from the four states, each in a different quadrant of the United States, was extracted from the National Center for Education Statistics, each state’s Department of Education’s website, and the Civil Rights Data collection site on [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov), and then analyzed in SPSS. All the public school districts in each selected state, the number of schools in each district, the number of students, the gender of the superintendent, the percentage of students eligible for the

free/reduced lunch program, the diversity of the student population, and the U.S. Department of Education's assigned locale codes were all entered in the SPSS software.

*Locale code.* A locale code is an indication of the district's location relative to a populous area and is weighted by the size of its membership. The locale codes are 11, 12, and 13 for city large, midsize, and small respectively; 21, 22, and 23 for suburb large to small; 31, 32, and 33 for town fringe, distant, and remote respectively; and 41, 42, and 43 for rural fringe, distant, and remote respectively. For example, the Paramount Unified School District in California is labeled a large suburban district. In Michigan, the Memphis Community School District is a rural distant district while White Pigeon, also in Michigan, is identified as a town fringe district.

*Free/reduced price lunch eligibility.* Free/reduced price lunch eligibility data was extracted from the NCES website. The following items were selected to generate the table with only the four states that was selected for this study. The school year *2013-14* was selected. Under enrollments, the following items were selected: students in special programs, total FRLP, and students in public school. The four individual states (CA, MI, NY, and TX) were then filtered and a table was created. The table was then exported to Excel and custom sorted by state. Finally, the data was compiled into a spreadsheet with all the other data from the other sources.

*Size.* For purposes of this study, the size of the district is based on enrollment size. School districts range from very small to very large. A very small district has less than 500 students, a small has 500-999 students, a medium size district has between 1,000 and 4,999 students, a large district has 5,000-9,999 students, and a very large school district has more than

10,000 students enrolled. However, the NCES identifies the district also by the number of schools that make up the district.

*Diversity.* The students' racial ethnic background was used to determine how much diversity is in the school district's population. For this study, I recognized the percentages of each race-ethnicity but for ease of determining the diversity, all non-White students were combined to determine if the district was considered a low or high minority district.

The analysis was done using Chi-square, a test used to compare observed data with expected data from the hypothesis that women superintendents are more prevalent in smaller, rural, low socioeconomic districts with high diversity. Cross-tabulation was used to examine the relationship between the nominal variables. The data was further analyzed through a binomial logistic regression to predict a dichotomous outcome (male or female superintendent) by one or more variables (size, diversity, and locale of the districts). To answer the research question about the demographic profile of districts in which women serve as superintendents, I ran a binomial logistic regression with a significance level of  $p \leq 0.05$  to determine if the gender of the superintendent can be generalized based on certain conditions, such as size of district, diversity of students, and locale code.

## **Research Questions**

Although this study is exploring the fourth aspect of the mixed methods study done by Gupton and Slick (1996), I explored the following two research questions specifically looking at:

Q1: What are the demographic profiles of public school districts in the California, Michigan, New York, and Texas where women are superintendents?

Q2: How do the demographic profiles of districts with women superintendents compare to those districts that are led by men in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas?

The specific variables I will be comparing are the racial/ethnic composition of the student population, number of students, number of teachers, percentage of students eligible for FRLP, locale code, and gender of the superintendent for the all the districts in all four states.

## **Reliability and Validity**

For quantitative studies, reliability and validity are important aspects to ensure consistency and accuracy. These values need to be closer to one to assume a high reliability. To safeguard that the test measures what I expect it to measure, I will utilize conclusion validity to confirm if there is a relationship between the gender and the demographic composition of the traditional public school districts in which women serve as superintendents. Conclusion validity, originally labeled statistical conclusion validity, is the degree to which conclusions reached about relationships in the data are reasonable (Trochim, 2006). For example in this study, I looked at the relationship between the gender of the superintendent and the demographic profiles of the districts they lead and wanted to reach a conclusion. Based on my data, I concluded that there was a positive relationship between the gender of the superintendent and the size and diversity of the districts. Therefore, conclusion validity is the degree to which this conclusion was credible.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter opened with an introduction and a succinct description of the data sources. It then outlined the study's design as quantitative and explained how it will be used in the investigation of women in the position of superintendents and the demographic profiles of the districts they lead. Subsequently, the research questions were stated and descriptions of the sample were outlined. This chapter concluded with how reliability and validity were ensured.



## Chapter 4: Results and Analyses

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the demographic profiles of traditional public school districts and the gender of the superintendents in four of the largest states: California, Michigan, New York, and Texas. The study was guided by two research questions: What are the demographic profiles of public school districts in the California, Michigan, New York, and Texas where women are superintendents? How do the demographic profiles of districts with women superintendents compare to those districts that are led by men in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas?

The initial variables were: (a) number of students (b) number of teachers (c) poverty level (d) number of schools (e) locale of the districts, (f) diversity of the students. However, the number of schools and teachers were not used in the binomial logistic regression because of multicollinearity between these two variables and the number of students. In other words, they were highly correlated and could artificially inflate the nature of the analysis. The number of students was used because I wanted to account for the percentage of students that are living in poverty, or more specifically those who are eligible for the free/reduced price lunch program. Moreover, a new variable was added to the model to compare the demographics between California, Michigan, New York, and Texas between men and women. The states were added to the new model because there appeared to be differences in each state's percentage of female superintendents and I wanted to investigate those variances more closely.

Descriptive statistics were run initially to see the profiles of districts for men and women in terms of locale. As far as the statistical tests used in this study, the primary one was binomial logistic regression, often referred to simply as logistic regression. A logistic regression yields adjusted odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals. This test was used primarily for its ability to

control for various potentially confounding factors that affect the relationship between the predictor variables and the dichotomous categorical outcome variable, the gender of the superintendents. For non-normal distributions, a Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare men and women. Additionally, I ran independent samples t-tests for normally distributed variables to compare men and women. The results will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

The sample consisted of 3,169 public school districts across the four states. The vast majority of the districts were designated as either large suburban (n = 659) or rural distant (n = 738). Large city, midsize city, midsize suburban, and small suburban each had 100 or less designations. The other district types and numbers were as follows: small city (n = 109), town fringe (n = 158), town distant (n = 235), town remote (n = 167), rural fringe (n = 397), and rural remote (n = 374). Interestingly enough, women superintendents were more represented than men only in the district types that were less frequent in the sample and least represented in the two district types with the greatest frequencies (large suburban and rural distant).

### **Descriptive Statistics**

**California.** The California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) is a system that collects and shares demographic data about students, staff, schools, and districts and makes it available to those entities and the general public as well. California had 975 traditional public school districts in the 2014-15 school year, with over 8,700 public schools serving over six million students. There were a little over 295,000 teachers in those public schools. California has three types of school districts – elementary, high school, and unified. Elementary districts contain only elementary schools; high school districts contain only high schools, and unified districts contain both elementary and high schools. Its largest school district is Los Angeles

Unified district with an enrollment of almost 647,000 students while its smallest two districts are Blake and Lincoln Elementary, each having a mere five students enrolled. In fact, there are a total of 23 districts with fewer than 25 students enrolled in their respective district. The wide disparity between the enrollment sizes of the districts makes California an ideal state for this study.

California has one of the nation's lowest percentages of rural schools and students, but one of the highest percentages of small rural districts and the seventh largest absolute rural student enrollment (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014). Moreover, California educates the second largest percentage of rural minority students in the nation. (Johnson, et al, 2014.) This same report by Johnson and his colleagues reported that the state had over 341,000 rural students compared to the national median of just over 141,000; 61% of rural minority students compared to almost 27% nationally; and almost 9% rural adult unemployment rate in comparison to the 7% average in the US.

EdSource, the pre-eminent multi-media education platform for the state of California, produced a report in 2007 that described that California's 978 school districts range dramatically in size from a mere five students to 727,319 students. Most of these students are in districts that range from enrollments of 1,000 to 49,999 where the 10 largest districts educate 22% of the state's public school students. The report also identified that 71% of California's superintendents are male and 84% are white, although currently, the percentage of males have dropped to 62%. Additionally, California's administrators, which include principals and superintendents, are generally well educated, with 77% holding a master's degree or higher, including 7% with a doctorate. The majority (58%) of administrators is female, yet 75% of the state's teachers are female. Not all of California's school districts have a superintendent position

exclusively; some smaller districts are led by superintendents/principals that heads both a school district and a school. Of those serving dual roles, 38% of them are female and 87% are white.

**Michigan.** Michigan's data system, the Michigan Longitudinal Data System tracks education inputs and outputs. There are three types of publicly funded districts in the state. First, there are Local Education Agencies (LEAs), which are essentially public school districts. Second are Public Charter Schools (PSAs) but are excluded from this study. The third type are Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) that help relieve individual school districts of the responsibility of operating individual special education programs, also excluded from this study. As a result of these exclusions as described above, Michigan had 541 LEAs for the 2014-2015 school year, but 12 of them have since closed, hence why only 529 Michigan districts are included in this study. The state has almost 3,000 schools serving over 1.5 million students and employing slightly over 101,000 teachers in its schools during that same year.

Johnson et al. (2014) detailed in their report that Michigan has over 305,000 students who attend rural schools, making it one of the largest absolute rural student enrollments in the nation but just one in five of all its public school students. More than four in ten rural students live in poverty and no other state has a higher rural adult unemployment rate. Johnson et al. stated that in general, states with a high percentage of rural schools are those where sparse population or challenging terrain make it difficult to transport students to consolidated regional school in non-rural areas, and those where there has been less push to consolidate or successful resistance to consolidation.

**New York.** New York State Department of Education reports it has 733 public school districts; 4,505 public schools; 207,379 public school teachers; and serves over 2.5 million K-12 students. Eight percent of its learners are English Language Learners (ELL), 17% are students

with disabilities, and 54% are economically disadvantaged. New York City Public Schools is the largest public school district in the United States. With more than one million students, it is almost 50% bigger than the Los Angeles Unified School District and twice the size of the Chicago Public Schools district. New York City is an especially appropriate location to study the systemic impact of small schools because of the long history and vibrancy of its small-schools movement (Iatarola, Schwartz, Stieffel, & Chellman, 2008). Despite having the largest urban area in the nation, the state of New York still enrolls more than 325,000 students in rural districts (Johnson et al., 2014). Its rural student population is relatively homogenous with only one in 10 students identifying as non-White (Johnson et al., 2014).

New York Council of School Superintendents reported that women only accounted for 30% of the state's public school superintendents, yet they accounted for 80% of the educational workforce. As a result, the organization began an initiative within The Council called the Women's Initiative to support those women already leading and to identify those women in education that have leadership potential.

**Texas.** Texas, the largest of the four states analyzed in this study, has 1,024 public school districts, over 8,000 public schools, and serves about 5.1 million students (Texas Education Agency, 2015). It employs about 320,000 teachers. The average percentage of economically disadvantaged students is almost 59% and 18% of the students are labeled as ELL. Its largest school district is Houston with over 211,000 students and its smallest school district is San Felipe-Del Rio Consolidated Independent School District with just over 10,500 students, again a vast disparity in the sizes of Texas' public school districts. The Texas Association of School Board (TASB, 2016) reported that the Texas public school system is growing at a much faster rate than other public school systems in the nation. For example, the Texas Education

Agency (2011) reported that between 1998-99 and 2008-09, enrollment increased by more than 20.4%, compared to 5.9 percent nationally. Texas spends \$8654 per pupil in public education, ranking 48<sup>th</sup> among all states.

With nearly 900,000 rural students, and growing at a rate of 30,000 students per year in recent years, Texas is poised to become the first state with over one million students in rural school districts. Almost half of these students identify as a minority, and one in 14 is an English language learner (Johnson et al., 2014). The state's rural school districts are slightly larger than the national median; yet transportation costs relative to instructional costs are the lowest in the continental U.S. (Johnson et al.). The percentage of rural adults in Texas with a high school diploma is slightly less than the national rural average, but the unemployment rate is almost a full percentage point at 5.7% below the national average of 6.6% (Johnson et al.).

A June 2016 article published by HR Exchange for the Texas Association of School Boards Human Resources stated that the number of male superintendents outnumbers females nearly five to one with only 19% (n = 195) of Texas superintendents female. On the other hand, females represent 77% of Texas' teachers. This trend holds true for all type of Texas school districts. That same article posited that over one-quarter (n = 256) of all Texas superintendents have a doctoral degree and of those holding doctoral degrees, 25% (n = 64) are female. This phenomenon indicates that a higher proportion of female superintendents are pursuing this advanced degree than males.

Texas has 327 medium-sized districts, those with between 1,000 and 4,999 students, and they are led by 23% female superintendents. The state has 105 large districts with over 10,000 students but only 12% of the superintendents that lead these are female. Of the 10 major urban districts in Texas, none have female superintendents. Of the 78 major suburban districts, only

12% have female leaders ( $n = 9$ ), but the 444 rural districts match the state overall statistic of 19% female superintendents. Lastly in the June 2016 publication, it was reported that female superintendents were twice as common in districts with more economically disadvantaged students. More specifically, in 942 of the 1,024 Texas districts, 25% of superintendents were female, compared to only 13% female in the less economically disadvantaged ones.

## Results and Findings

**Chi-square Analysis.** Inferential statistics were used to compare those districts led by men and those led by women to answer research question 1 - What are the demographic profiles of public school districts in the United States where women are superintendents? Table 1 describes the research sample by locale ( $N = 3165$ ). This number is slightly less than the total sample used because the remaining four districts had either missing data or there was a co-superintendent situation with a male and a female serving jointly in the position. For example, in California's Paramount Unified district, Michigan's Memphis Community district, and White Pigeon district, male and female co-superintendent situations existed. The other district's diversity data was missing and unavailable at the time the data was analyzed in SPSS. The missing data accounted for less than one percent of the total sample of 3,169.

Table 1

*Frequency of Superintendent's Gender Based on Locales of the Total Research Sample*

Locales	Frequency								Total
	CA		MI		NY		TX		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Lg City	16	34	2	0	0	1	3	27	83
Mid City	12	37	5	3	1	1	3	18	80
Sm City	14	30	7	18	6	12	2	20	109
Lg Sub	92	143	25	81	84	155	14	65	659
Mid Sub	22	20	2	22	3	7	7	17	100
Sm Sub	11	18	1	16	3	10	1	6	66

Town Fringe	14	41	9	25	6	29	7	27	158
Town Distant	20	43	8	21	13	39	29	62	235
Town Remote	13	24	8	21	5	10	17	69	167
Rural Fringe	58	80	11	47	29	67	14	91	397
Rural Distant	46	77	31	100	49	129	47	258	737
Rural Remote	32	31	12	51	11	17	46	174	374
Totals	350	578	121	405	210	477	190	834	3165

*Note:* N = 3165. Descriptive data represents the frequency of female and male superintendents in various locales within the total research sample. There were four districts that had a male and a female as co-superintendents.

In California, Michigan, and New York, women superintendents were frequently in large suburban and rural distant districts. For example, in large suburban districts in California, there are 92 female superintendents of the total 350 female superintendents in the state; 25 of the 121 female superintendents in Michigan; and 84 of the 210 female superintendents in New York. In Texas though, female superintendents were more prevalent in rural distant districts ( $n = 47$ ) and rural remote districts ( $n = 46$ ) of the 190 female superintendents in the entire state. Women outnumbered men in a few cases - slightly more in midsize suburban in California and in large and midsize city districts in Michigan. In fact, there were twice as many women superintendents almost twice as many, respectively, in those two locales in Michigan. The overall percentages of female superintendents by state were as follows: California 38 percent; Michigan 23 percent; New York 31 percent; and Texas 19 percent. Women superintendents represent slightly more than half the percentage of men superintendents. Women superintendents in Texas on the other hand represent less than a quarter of the percentage of men superintendents. California and Texas will be discussed further in this section and also in the conclusion section.

Figure 1 displays a visual of Michigan district superintendents by gender and combined locale types, regardless of size or physical location in reference to a large urban area. It is clear from figure 1 that ratio of female to male superintendents is not equitable in Michigan, especially



in rural, town, and suburban districts. The number of female superintendents in city districts was 14 as compared to 21 male superintendents in the same locale type. Male superintendents outnumbered females by more than two times in all district locales except city. In fact, they were represented more than four times than women in suburban districts. Female superintendents were represented almost half that of men in all size cities. Figure 2 shows Michigan's districts by gender and enrollment size, with the most obvious underrepresentation of female superintendents in Michigan seen in large districts (enrollment from 1,000 to 4,999) where the number of men is more than eight times that of the number of female superintendents.

Figure 1. Michigan Superintendents by Gender and Locales

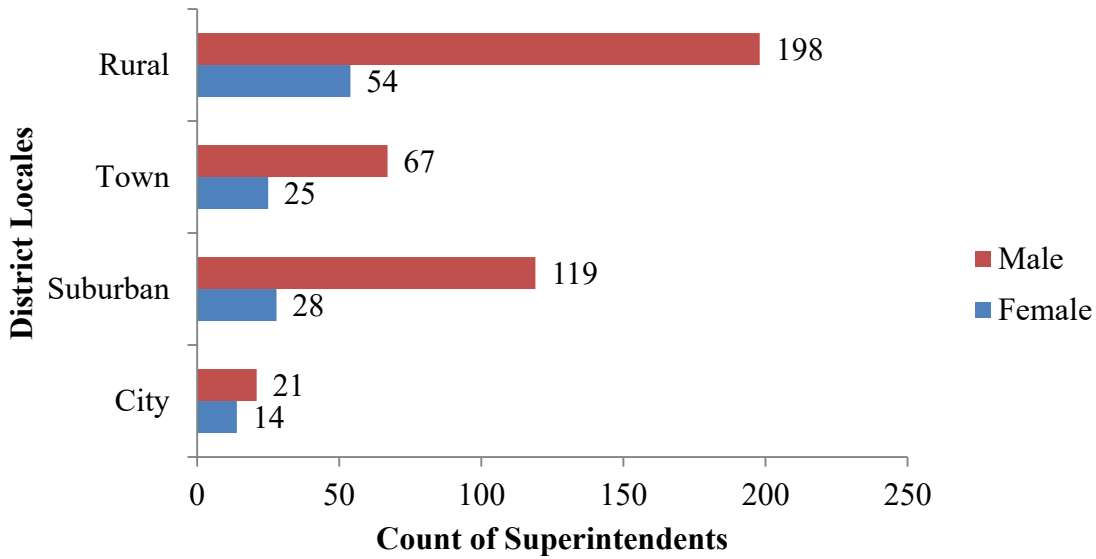
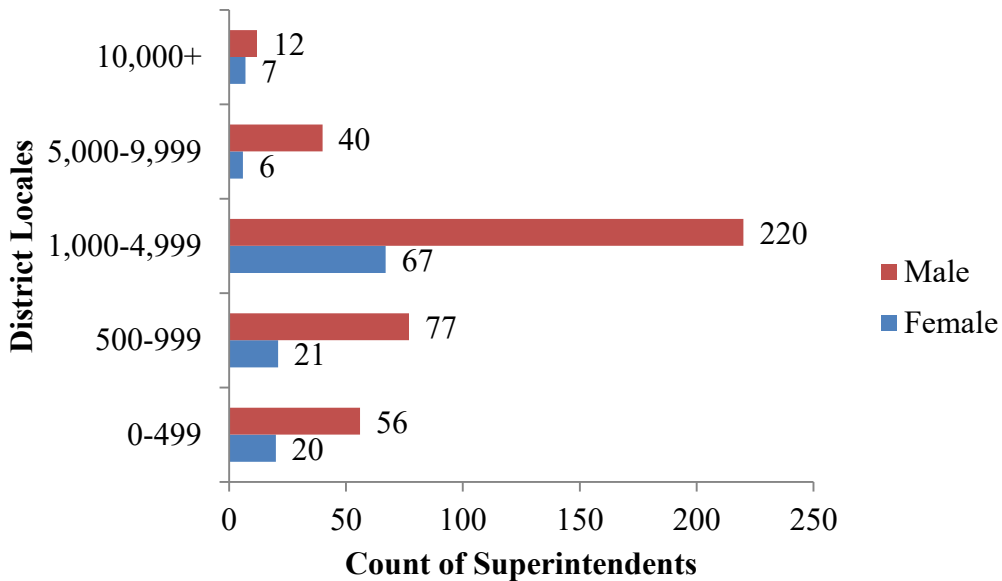


Figure 2. Michigan Superintendents by Gender and District Enrollment Size



New York's superintendents data by gender and locales of district is represented in Figure 3. It is evident that female superintendents are almost equally leading in rural and suburban districts. The number of male superintendents is three times that of female

superintendents in town locales and at least two times more in cities and in rural areas. Male superintendents were represented two times more than women superintendents in suburban locales.

Figure 3. New York Superintendents by Gender and Locale

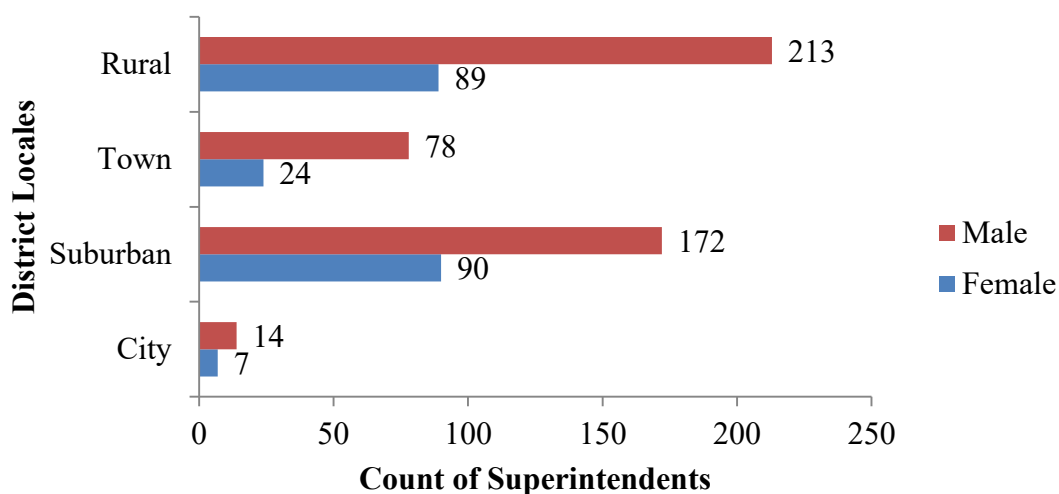
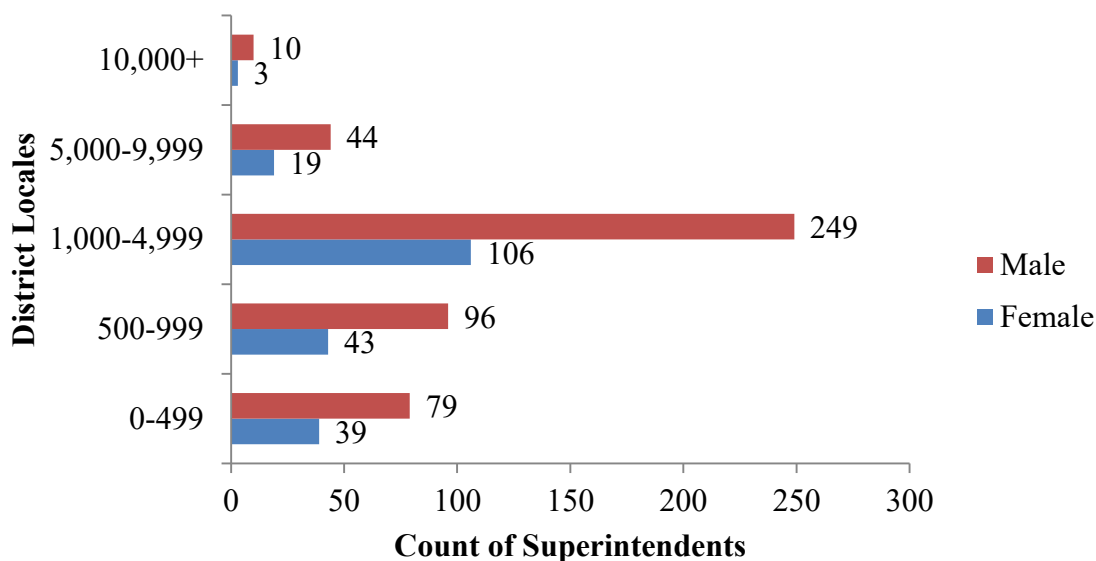


Figure 4 illustrates the state's district enrollment size by gender. Conclusively, there were twice as many male superintendents in most district sizes except very large (enrollment of 10,000 or more), where that number is triple that of female superintendents. Of the 13 very large districts, not even half of the superintendents are female ( $n = 3$ ) while 10 of those districts were led by male superintendents.

Figure 4. New York Superintendents by Gender and District Enrollment Size



Of the four states used in this study, two of them appeared to be dissimilar in the number of female superintendents, although they had similar numbers of districts and students per state. Female superintendents were more prevalent in California and least likely to in Texas. More specifically, almost 38 percent of the total superintendents in California were females and only 19 percent of the total superintendents in Texas were females. These differences compelled me to look more closely at both states' demographics and possible policies that would explain these statistics. The other two states, Michigan and New York, had female superintendents that were comparable to the national level of 27 percent. Michigan had almost 23 percent female superintendents while New York had almost 31 percent female superintendents.

**California and Texas Demographics.** Looking closer at the two states with the most and least female representation of public school superintendents, I was intrigued to dive deeper. I wanted to compare the states' demographics and other aspects as well that might contribute to the variance. The number of women superintendents in California is almost three-fourths that of men superintendents, yet in Texas it is substantially lower with women superintendents represent less than one-fourth that of men. Data retrieved from the 2015 Census Bureau reveals that the

population was 39,144,818 in California and 27,469,114 in Texas that year where females just slightly outnumbered the males in both states (50.8% in each state). This data does not show a marked difference in the gender of the population between the two states.

California has 928 public school districts and 38 percent of the superintendents are females. Female superintendents outnumber male superintendents in only two district types, midsize suburban and rural remote. However, when districts types are combined, regardless of size and physical distance to a large urban area, female superintendents do not outnumber male superintendents. In other words, Figure 5 shows that combining all size city locales together, all suburban locales, all town locales, and all rural locales; the numbers are more evenly distributed than those locales in Texas.

Figure 6 gives a visual of the district enrollment size by gender. Both genders are more represented in medium sized districts (enrollment from 1,000-4,999) than any other size district. Strikingly apparent though, male superintendents nearly twice the female numbers in the large districts (enrollment from 5,000-9,999) and is more than two times the numbers of female in very large districts (enrollment of 10,000 or more).

Figure 5. California Superintendents by Gender and Locale

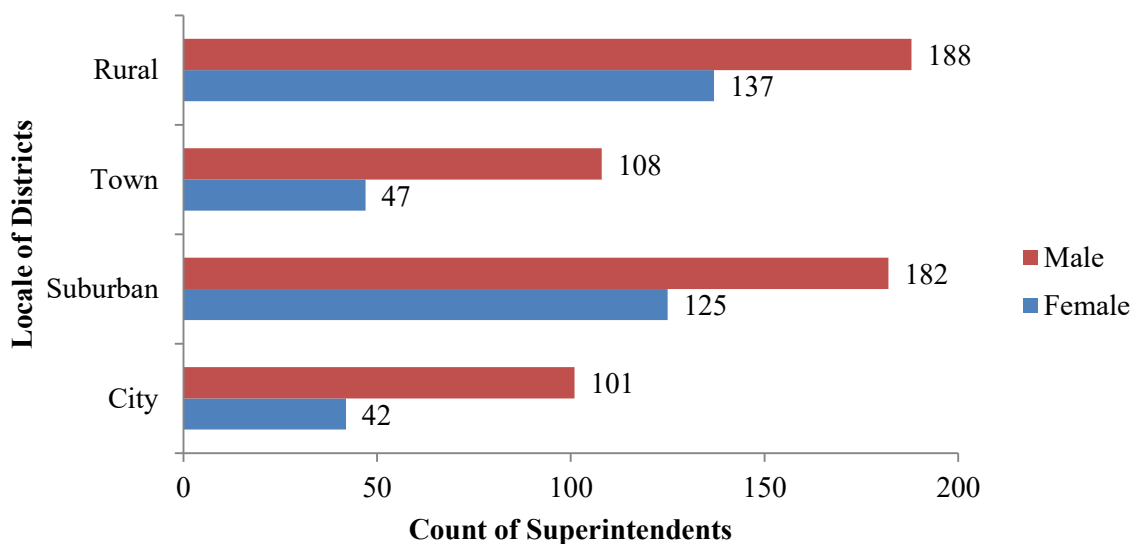
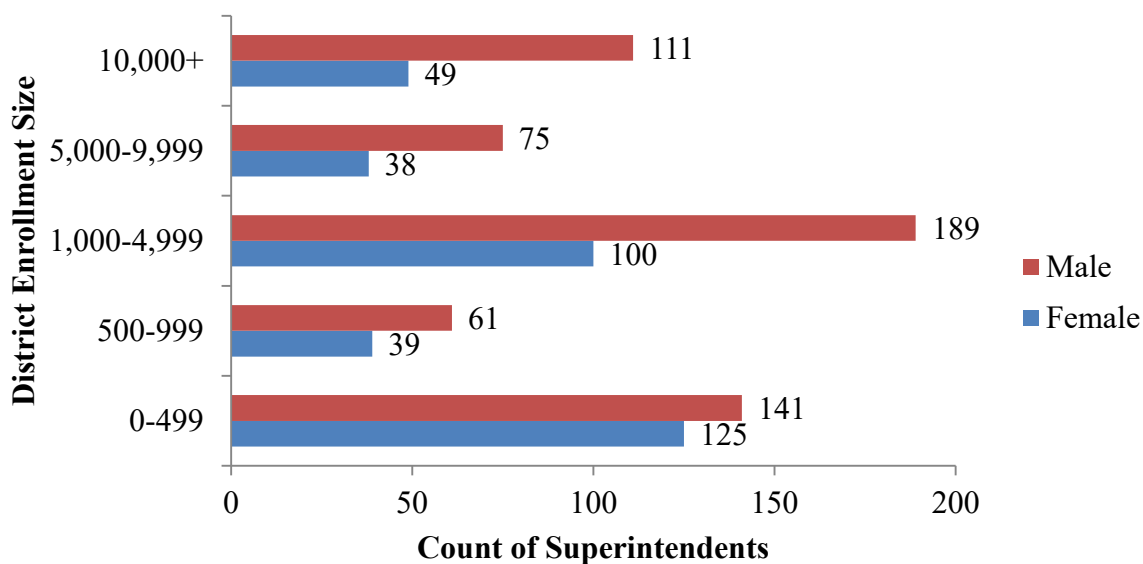


Figure 6. California Superintendents by Gender and District Enrollment Size



The Texas Association of School Boards detailed in its June 2016 article that in Texas, male superintendents outnumber female nearly five to one – only 19 percent of Texas superintendents are female. While 77 percent of teachers in Texas are female, the majority of public school district superintendents are male and this hold true across all types of Texas districts (Figure 7). District enrollment sizes vary greatly also in Texas for male and female

superintendents as shown below in Figure 8. Of the 1024 Texas superintendents, over 250 of them hold doctoral degrees, and 25 percent of those degree holders are female. Compare this to the 19 percent of all female superintendents. This indicates that a higher proportion of female superintendents are pursuing higher degrees than the males.

Medium-sized districts, those with between 1,000 and 4,999 students, have the highest proportion of female superintendents. This represents 327 districts, 23 percent of which have female superintendents. The largest districts, those with over 10,000 students, have the smallest proportion of female superintendents (12 percent). When it comes to locale, there are markedly fewer female superintendents in the largest metropolitan districts and no female superintendents in the 10 major urban districts in Texas. Twelve percent (nine) of superintendents in the 78 major suburban districts are female. The 444 rural districts in the state match that of the state's overall percentage of female superintendents (19 percent). Poverty, as described by students' eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, occurred in 58 percent of the 1,024 districts in Texas. Female superintendents in Texas were twice as common in those districts, 25 percent as compared to only 13 percent female presence in the less economically disadvantaged districts.

Figure 7. Texas Superintendents by Gender and Locale

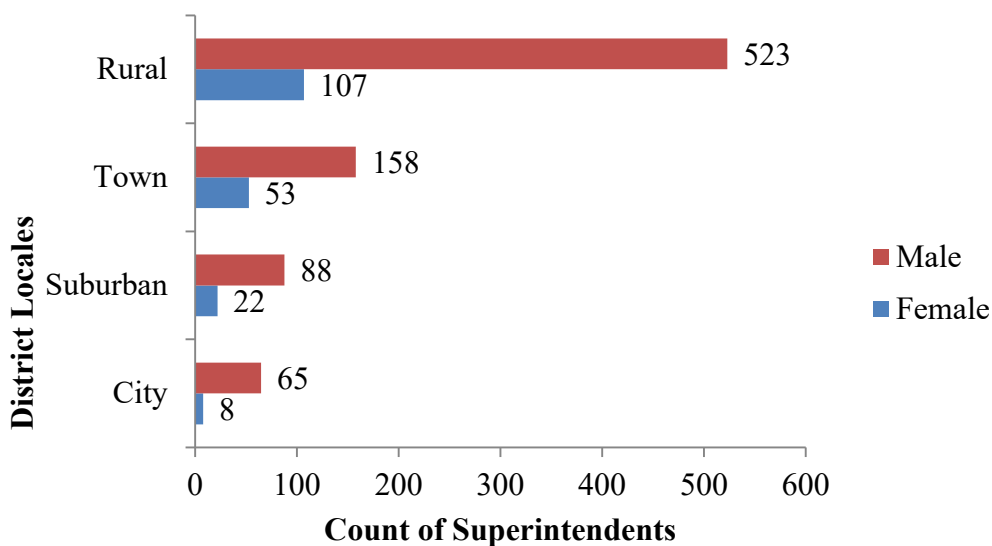
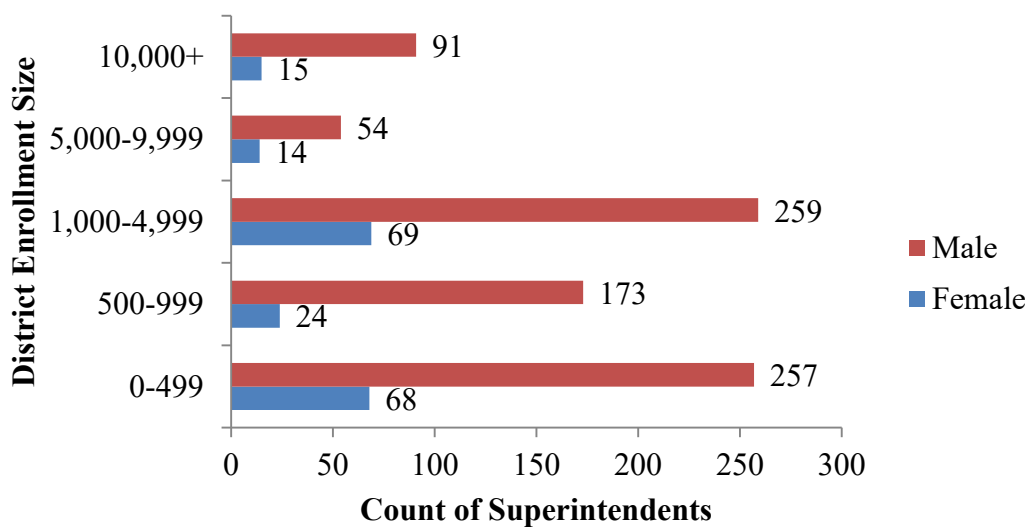


Figure 8. Texas Superintendents by Gender and District Enrollment Size



**Binomial Logistic Regression.** The binomial logistic regression attempts to predict the probability that an observation falls into one of two categories of a dichotomous dependent variable based on one or more independent variables that are either continuous or categorical. In other words, I attempted to find the likelihood of a superintendent being a female when certain demographic characteristics existed. This test revealed that women were less likely to be superintendents in Michigan, New York, and Texas than in California when controlling for all



other variables. More specifically, women were 0.49 times less likely in Michigan, 0.73 times less likely in New York, and 0.38 times less likely in Texas to be superintendents than in California (Table 2). The binomial logistic regression model did not fully support my original hypothesis in that it indicated that there was no statistically significant effect for poverty, locale of the public school districts, or the number of students. However, it did support that for every one unit increase in minority (diversity), the chances of a female being superintendents increase by 0.5%, when controlling for other variables.

Male superintendents tended to be in larger school districts more frequently than female superintendents. However, female superintendents tended to lead in higher poverty districts as compared to male superintendents and non-white minority (diversity) was also significantly higher for women,  $p < .001$ . The mean diversity for male superintendents was 38.28 and the mean for female superintendents was 42.49.

Table 2

*Variables in the Equation*

	<i>B</i>	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp( <i>B</i> )
CA			85.167	.000	
MI	-.571	.143	15.879	.000	.565
NY	-.156	.128	1.487	.223	.856
TX	-.988	.112	77.387	.000	.372
FRLP Eligible	.002	.002	1.212	.271	1.002
Stu	.000	.000	5.841	.016	1.000
City Large			13.058	.290	
City Midsize	-.122	.372	.108	.742	.885
City Small	-.089	.353	.064	.800	.915
Rural Distant	-.050	.317	.025	.875	.951
Rural Fringe	.026	.317	.007	.935	1.026
Rural Remote	.224	.329	.461	.497	1.251
Suburban Large	.175	.292	.360	.548	1.191
Suburban Midsize	.314	.360	.760	.383	1.369
Suburban Small	-.259	.408	.404	.525	.772
Town Distant	.146	.329	.197	.657	1.157
Town Fringe	-.319	.349	.835	.361	.727
Town Remote	.075	.348	.046	.830	1.078
TotalNonWhiteminority	.005	.002	5.000	.025	1.005
(Constant)	-.849	.325	6.847	.009	.428

*Note.* N = 3165. Variable(s) entered: ST, FRLPEligible, Stu, Locale, TotalNonWhiteminority

## Chapter Summary

A binomial logistic regression was used as the primary analysis that yielded adjusted odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals. To compare men and women, a Mann-Whitney U test was used on non-normal distributions, which were essentially all the initial variables except for diversity. This test showed that there are significant differences found between male and female superintendents for district size, as represented by number of students, teachers, and schools. Furthermore, for every increase in minority percentage, the chances of a female being

superintendent increased by 0.5% when controlling for other variables. There was no statistically significant relationship between locale and the gender of the superintendents.

Likewise, for every increase in the number of students, there is a minute increase in the odds of a female being superintendent. An independent sample t-test was performed on diversity to show that the percentage of minority was significantly higher for women,  $p < .001$ .

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the relationship between the demographic profiles of traditional public school districts and the gender of the superintendents in four of the largest states in the country: California, Michigan, New York, and Texas. The study was guided by the following two research questions:

1. What are the demographic profiles of public school districts in the California, Michigan, New York, and Texas where women are superintendents?
2. How do the demographic profiles of districts with women superintendents compare to those districts that are led by men in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas?

Using quantitative methodology, the gender of the superintendents and the districts' demographics of locale, size, diversity, and poverty variables were identified and compared.

### Discussion

There may be other reasons why female superintendents are more prevalent in California than in Texas. One of the reasons might include a school board or community not intentionally preferring a male candidate over a female one, but their subconscious preferences might play a role. Also, women may self-select to stay out of leadership roles due to family considerations or the time investment that is required. Often times, moving into superintendency might require relocation and becoming a superintendent of a larger district often requires multiple relocations. Looking deeper into possible reasons, I first considered state policies in both California and Texas.

The California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, an independent state agency, is making a conscious effort to ensure equity and access in several areas, including in the workplace and employment. So much so that they are celebrating 50 years of substantial impact

on the state policy affecting gender equity. This impact has occurred in households, in the workplace, and in leadership for the state's women and girls. The Commission recognizes that despite significant gains, gender equity still remains elusive for many women and girls. Among the immediate goals, the Commission plans to grow the number of women and girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education (STEM), and expand the number of women in the labor force (2015). According to their website, these goals will occur after they build a readily available, comprehensive database of California policies, programs, state and federal laws, and other resources relevant to women and girls. Their vision is to move forward through public hearings and educational forums, research, outreach, and collaboration with other state and local agencies, women's organizations, businesses, and even the general public to meet achievable goals for women and girls.

Some of the notable benchmarks The California Commission reached were: 1) from 1965-1975, The Commission led the discussion to create childcare infrastructure for working families and took the first steps toward eliminating discriminatory language from state law. 2) From 1986-1995, they issued reports about pay inequities for women. 3) The Commission, from 1996-2005, helped pass the California Family Rights Act and the Paid Family Leave Program and played a key role in increasing the appointment of women to leadership, policy, and administrative positions. This is a viable reason why female superintendents are closing in the gap between their numbers and those of their male counterparts. So, now let's see what initiatives Texas have currently to ensure equity and access for women.

It appears to be evident by the fact that so few women are superintendents that the gender equality laws in the state of Texas is far behind California initiatives. My suspicion was confirmed as I research any initiatives in Texas that was ensuring for equality for women and

found none on the state level. In fact, an analysis done by a personal finance company, WalletHub, in Texas posited that Texas is the fourth worst state in the nation for gender equality. WalletHub gathered their data from the U. S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and NCES, just to name a few. This analysis calculated, using 15 relevant metrics, to identify California and New York in the top 10 best states for equality and Michigan and Texas near the bottom, although Michigan fared slightly better than Texas. As I examined the state 85<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of 2017 for Equality Texas, there appears to be no support for women's equality. In reality, Equality Texas is a foundation that only supports issues surrounding the LGBTQ community.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The findings of this quantitative study should be interpreted with caution because the results are mitigated by several factors. First of all, this is just a snapshot in time of the gender of the superintendents and the districts' demographics. Second, this study was delimited to only four states and the demographics and statistics may be vastly different from the remaining 46 states. Because of this limitation, findings cannot be generalized to the remaining districts (roughly 11,000). Third, superintendent turnover happens so quickly that the superintendents included in this study may have changed. Fourth, research shows that schools are closing while others are being built, which may affect the district sizes. Fifth, public school students are leaving public schools to attend charter and private schools. Lastly, there is no national database that identifies the gender of public school superintendents so the gender was obtained from either the state's Department of Education or the district's website.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study of the demographic profiles of K-12 public school districts that are led by women can be useful to aspiring female and male superintendents, policy makers, school boards, colleges and universities' education preparation professors, and current superintendents. Aspiring superintendents may find hope in their chances of gaining their first superintendency and gain confidence that the numbers of female superintendents are rising, albeit slowly and inconsistently from one state to another. Bolla (2010) stated that aspiring female superintendents need to be aware of district size differences to determine their best option. Policy makers may use this study to support and mandate more rigorous superintendent preparation and mentoring efforts are present at all colleges and universities that have educational leadership programs. Professors can use the study findings to also help support

aspiring leaders and perhaps extend this study to any future leader wanting to follow trends in other states. School boards or hiring firms might benefit from training on equity in their hiring practices. Finally, current superintendents may see the benefit in becoming mentors to aspirants and even allow the aspiring leader to shadow them.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this exploratory study identify the demographics of public school districts that are led by women in only four states and this study contributes to the current literature. However, future research studies might include analyzing the district profiles of other smaller states to compare to these larger ones. Additionally, perhaps collapsing some of the locale variables show great effect sizes than the 12 used in this study. For example; instead of large city, midsize city, and small city; all city districts could be lumped together as simply *city*; just as town distant, town fringe, and town remote could be combined to be just *town*. There is certainly room for more research in the area of identifying the landscape of district profiles across the entire country.

In an effort to pull all the conclusions together, it is necessary that I explicitly address the original research questions. What are the demographic profiles of public school districts in the California, Michigan, New York, and Texas where women are superintendents? Women superintendents were more prevalent in high diversity districts and smaller school districts. There was no relationship between the locales of district and the gender of the superintendents. How do the demographic profiles of districts with women superintendents compare to those districts that are led by men in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas? Women superintendents only outnumbered men in midsize suburban districts in California, and in large and midsize cities in Michigan. Data did show that men led more in large and very large school



districts (enrollments greater than 5,000 and 10,000, respectively) in all four states. Although this study may not provide ample data to support why the disparities exist in the numbers of women superintendents in California and Texas, it should be evident that women's equality and equity require a collaborative effort of all stakeholders. This collaboration is evident in California and almost non-existent in Texas.

For example, in California, access is easily available through a mentoring program offered by the Association of California School Administrators, the ACSA Mentor Program. It is coordinated by retired administrators. The relationship the protégés and mentors foster is one that is geared around collegiality, support, and collaboration. The mentoring program coordinators and participants recognize that new leaders need support from those who have gone through the ranks.

On the other hand, Texas law does not direct any specific source to provide training to first-year superintendents and so formal mentoring training program is in place (McNulty, 2002). This phenomenon calls into question how effective the law will be in achieving its goal of training and supporting new superintendents in Texas. Therefore, for this law to be effective, there needs to be relevant and beneficial programs in place and must be accessible for new superintendents.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to identify the demographics of public school districts that are led by women and compare those to districts led by men in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas. The theoretical framework was based on Bourdieu's (1973) social reproduction theory, which focused on the relationship between education, family, and social class. The methodology involved an exploratory quantitative study with included data gathered from

national databases, Department of Education databases in the four states, as well as districts' websites.

The results of this study revealed that there were significant differences in the numbers of men and women superintendents in the four states. There was no relationship between locale of district and the gender of the superintendent. Additionally, women were more likely to be superintendents in California than in any of the other three states – Michigan, New York, or Texas. Men tended to lead larger and less economically disadvantaged districts. This study only partially supported my hypothesis that women would be more prevalent in public school districts that were higher diverse schools with low socioeconomic status; while not supporting that the locales were any different for females as for males.

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*report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 111–156). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

## Appendix A

### Curriculum Vitae

Brenda Joyce Skeete

#### EDUCATION:

**University of North Florida:** Doctor of Educational Leadership, GPA 3.89. Dissertation on *The Identification of Demographic Profiles of K-12 Public School Districts Employing Female Superintendents in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas* (Anne K. Swanson, Chair).  
Expected graduation: April 2017

#### Courses Taken

EDA7190 Evolving Idea of an Educational Leader  
 EDA7420 Foundations Research: Educational Leadership  
 EDA7192 Leadership: Group/Team Context  
 EDF7635 Cultural/Social Foundation of Educational Leadership  
 EDS6050 Instructional Leadership  
 EDA7262 Educational Leader III: Organizational Theory and Design  
 HSC6560 Aging Health Multicultural Society  
 EDA7193 Educational Leadership IV: Leadership Change  
 EDF7215 Psycho-Social Aspect and Learning and Instruction  
 HSA6225 Long-Term Care Administration  
 EDA7400 Quantitative Methods  
 EDA7410 Qualitative Methods  
 GEY6623 Aging and Health Policy  
 EDA7945 Practicum: Leadership Assessment/Development  
 HSA6813 Aging Capstone  
 EDA7979 Research Seminar: Educational Leadership  
 GEY6990 Aging and Mental Health  
 EDA7194 Seminar in Educational Policy  
 EDA7421 Inquiry into Research in Educational Leadership  
 HSA6198 Health Information Technology  
 EDA7980 Doctoral Dissertation Research

**University of North Florida:** Master of Education, GPA 3.94, August 10, 2007. Passed Florida Educational Leadership Examination (all parts) 2007. Professional License DOE#923002.  
Expires 6/30/2018.

#### Courses Taken (39 credit hours)

EDF6480 Foundation of Educational Research  
 EDF6607 Education in America  
 EDA6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership  
 EDA6215 Developing School/Community Resources  
 EDG6625 Curriculum Leadership in Schools

EDA6196 Leadership/Learning Organizations  
 EDS6130 Human Resource Development in Education  
 EDA6232 Law and Ethics in Educational Leadership  
 EDA6242 School Finance  
 EDA6191 Team Leadership  
 EDA6271 Technology in Educational Leadership  
 EDA6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership

**University of North Florida:** Bachelor of Arts in Middle School Mathematics (76 credit hours), Cum Laude GPA 3.51, May 2003. Professional License DOE#923002. Expires 6/30/2018.

**Colquitt County High School:** (Moultrie, GA): High School Diploma, June 1984. Graduated with distinct honors (top 15% of graduating class).

### **HIGHER EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT:**

**University of North Florida:** Graduate Research Assistant, May 2015 to March 2017.

#### Course Co-Taught:

EDF7545 Philosophy of Education – This doctoral course is an investigation into the basic assumptions and ideas of education, human nature, and human society, with emphasis upon the epistemological, ethical, and value dimensions of education.

#### Online Training

Certificate of Completion – Teaching Online Seminar 4100: Teaching Online Tool Essentials, University of North Florida, Nov 2015.

Certificate of Completion – Think About It: Adult Learners, University of North Florida, Mar 2016.

#### Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)

Completed Group 2 Social Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel, University of North Florida, Aug 2015, Expires Aug 2018.

Completed Social and Behavior Responsible Conduct of Research, University of North Florida, Aug 2015.

### **PUBLIC EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT:**

**Polk County Public Schools, Bartow, FL:** Regional Math Coach, Mar 2017 to Present

**Englewood High School, Jacksonville, FL:** Math Interventionist, Nov 2012 to June 2013

**Greenbrier Middle School, Chesapeake, VA:** 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Teacher, Dec 2007 to June 2012

**Englewood High School, Jacksonville, FL:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Algebra Teacher, July 2003 to Oct 2007

**OTHER EMPLOYMENT:**

**CSX Intermodal, Jacksonville, FL:** Accounts Receivables/Accounts Payables Clerk, Jul 2000 to Aug 2002

**Bank of America Auto Leasing, Jacksonville, FL:** Auto Leasing Representative, Jan 1998 to Jun 2000

**Owens and Minor, Jacksonville, FL:** Accounts Receivables/Accounts Payables Clerk, Nov 1996 to Dec 1998

**HONORS AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:**

Member, UNF LSCSM Faculty Search Committee, 2017

Member, UNF LSCSM Doctoral Steering Committee, 2014 to 2015

Member, The National Society of Leadership and Success, 2013 to Present

**PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

Co-Presenter (with Matthew Ohlson, PhD) of Collegiate Achievement Mentoring Program (CAMP Osprey), University of North Florida, May 2016

**Community Service:**

Greater Beulah Missionary Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL: President of Deaconess Ministry, Jan 2014 to Mar 2017

Greater Beulah Missionary Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL: Secretary of Women's Missionary Ministry, Jan 2014 to Dec 2016

Greater Beulah Missionary Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL: Acting Vice President of Pastor's Aide Board, Jan 2014 to Mar 2017

**Professional References:**

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