

Kansas Female Superintendents: Historic Barriers and Prospects for the Future

By

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Abstract

Although women have dominated the public education workforce, limited access to senior leadership remains evident. In Kansas, over 78 percent of teachers are women, but less than 15 percent of women serve as school district superintendents. There is a disproportionately smaller representation of women achieving the superintendency in the state of Kansas. Furthermore, the number of women occupying the superintendent position continues to be less than the national norm of 25 percent.

The purpose of this study was to investigate, through the lived experiences of ten female education leaders in Kansas, their career aspirations, barriers, and challenges to reaching the top district administration level, the superintendency. This study sought to elaborate on and provide a critique of how scholars traditionally conceptualized the experiences of women and to describe possible connections related to the disproportionately smaller representation of females, including the intersectionality of gender, social norms, race, and opportunity, found within the school superintendent position. To this end, the research questions are as follows:

1. How does the number of female educational leaders who aspire to the superintendency relate to the total number of superintendents?
2. What perceived (or real) barriers exist that discourage or inhibit female educational leaders from pursuing superintendency positions (e.g., age, family status, years of experiences, school district type, size, community type, degree attainment, initial interest, race, social norms, gender identities, encouragement)?
3. How does the number of female second-tier district administrators relate to the number of female superintendents? What factors may encourage females to remain in second-tier district administrator positions rather than pursuing the superintendency?

The research questions are addressed through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with principals, mid-level district administrators, and superintendents in the state of Kansas.

Furthermore, a qualitative research design was most suitable to examine and understand the female leaders' personal reflections of experiences and opportunities, as well as the meaning that they derived through those experiences from their perspectives. Themes were developed inductively using categorical content analysis to focus on specific content themes within the narrative. As evidenced by the literature, it was critical to investigate the progression of leadership development to identify and develop future female leaders in education.

The findings indicate there are few women who initially aspire to the superintendency position. Furthermore, women are beginning to overcome some of the barriers; however, many of these barriers persist today. This inquiry is important because it allows us to examine the barriers within the superintendency in order to provide a new perspective to the body of literature that has historically been grounded in almost exclusively white, male, and heterosexist epistemologies. Future research might include a more statistical approach to assessing the rate of career aspiration, as well as methods to overcome the barriers rather than navigate them.

Acknowledgments and Dedication

As I am nearing the end of my doctoral education journey, I find myself filled with gratitude. There were a number of people who provided a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. First and foremost, I am thankful to God for giving me strength, knowledge, patience, ability, and opportunity to undertake this study and to persevere through all of the challenges. Furthermore, I would like to thank Him for opening and closing doors when necessary to ensure I complete my studies in a timely manner. I learned to truly walk in faith throughout this process.

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“The Lord bless you and keep you;
²⁵ The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
²⁶ The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.”

Thank you very much, everyone!

Carissa Miles, March 2019

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In an effort to draw on the experiences of women leaders in education, this study seeks to elaborate and provide a critique of how scholars traditionally conceptualized the experiences of women and the possible connections related to the disproportional representation of females found within the school superintendent position. Comparatively, the concept of systemic gender inequity is not unique to the field of education alone. In the 1980s, the phrase “a glass ceiling” was first introduced in an effort to illustrate the invisible and artificial barriers that women experience when advancing up the corporate ladder to management and executive positions. The term is designed to illustrate a “barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up in the management hierarchy” (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990, p. 200). The Glass Ceiling Commission, established in 1995, noted that women filled only three to five percent of senior management positions in Fortune 500 companies. It was in this study that the commission noted a compensation gap as well. Since the commission’s first report, several additional studies have been conducted and mirror the commission’s 1995 report. For example, the American College of Healthcare Executives noted in 2000 that only 11 percent of women serving as healthcare executives had achieved CEO positions, compared to 25 percent of their male counterparts. The Center for American Progress released a 2014 fact sheet stating that women makeup 54.2 percent of the financial services labor force but make up only 12.4 percent of executive officers, and none are CEOs (Warner, 2014). Women also make up 78.4 percent of the labor force in health care and social assistance, but only 14.6 percent are executive officers, and again, none are CEOs. In medicine, only 15.9 percent of women serve as medical school deans. In information technology, women only hold 9 percent of management positions. Furthermore, in the legal field, 25 percent of women serve as non-equity partners and 15 percent

of equity partners even though they make up 45.4 percent of associates. Therefore, education is not the only field where a significant gender gap exists. Gender in top positions of power and authority remains unbalanced across a variety of fields.

In order to better understand the lack of women in top levels of leadership, the explanations and solutions are commonly analyzed and explained in terms of supply and demand (e.g. Gabaldron et al., 2016; Gupta and Raman, 2014; Reskin, 1993; Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979). Rather than applying literal economic connotation to “supply and demand,” researchers also connect ideas of supply and demand to “individual choice and motivation” and “external bias and systemic discrimination.” Supply explanations typically address the actions and motivations of employee candidates (Gabaldon et al., 2016; Reskin, 1993). These researchers often seek to explain the varied career paths through analyzing gender differences in values, attitudes, and gender role expectations (e.g. Niederle and Verterlund, 2007), as well as addressing common themes of work-family conflict due to gender differences in family responsibilities and accompanying gendered norms (e.g. Bertrand, Goldin, and Katz, 2010; Halrynjo, 2017; Miller, 2011). Demand explanations, on the other hand, address the action of employers, emphasizing different forms of conscious and unconscious discrimination, such as statistical or taste-based discrimination, prejudice, implicit bias, and homosocial reproduction/in-group preferences (e.g. Cook and Glass, 2014; Gabaldon et al., 2016; Reskin, 1993; Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979).

Statement of the Problem

Compared to their peers, women face a number of identity, role, work-family, and institutional barriers that influence their accumulation of career-related capital, thus affecting their ability to build an advantage and compete in the school leadership labor market (i.e.

superintendent position). While there is a disparity in the number of female superintendents compared to male superintendents, there is no shortage of women in the teaching profession. Using the supply and demand model, organizational theory, and the feminist perspective to increase the understanding of why some women do not aspire to the superintendency, this study seeks to gain further insight into the career pipeline of female leadership and administration in education.

Purpose of the Study

Drawing on the experience of women leaders in education and the varied explanations of gender equality, this study seeks to elaborate and provide a critique of how scholars have traditionally conceptualized the experiences of women in the profession. A closer look at explanatory accounts reveals that few employ the market analogy in the literal sense, as nearly all scholars recognize the role of gendered norms and practices and the intervening effects of societal pressure (Krook, 2009). As such, the argument developed within this study does not seek to push aside previous work; rather, it aims to build on, synthesize, and reformulate elements that remain largely implicit in existing accounts. The goal is to better capture the full range of suspicions present in earlier studies. In an attempt to understand patterns of gender disequilibrium in the superintendency, an argument is created by first outlining the basic contours of the model of supply and demand. The second section assesses this metaphor using two sets of theoretical tools: institutionalism, which raises questions about the appropriateness of the market analogy, and feminism, which provides an additional lens for analyzing the gendered dimensions of the labor market. Through the use of the previously mentioned multiple theoretical underpinnings, this study seeks to provide a practical perspective regarding the disproportional representation of women in the superintendency. Therefore, the conceptual framework utilized

within this study allows the natural progression of the phenomenon within the research to be constructed rather than simply found.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it will potentially help increase the representation of women in educational leadership. Findings from the research have the potential to influence the number of female doctoral students interested in district leadership leading to a greater number of female district administrators. This may likely lead to a ripple effect which in turn could provide additional role models for women seeking advanced leadership positions in education. Furthermore, this study has the potential to provide human resource departments with greater insight into possible causes and effects of inequitable recruitment and hiring practices. The researcher sought to illuminate the perception of female educational leaders who have ascended to the head district administrative role because there is a need for a gendered perspective on the superintendency, and because there is also a need to understand the superintendency from the perspectives of the women who are successfully accomplishing it (Skrla, 2003).

Research Questions:

The research questions that will guide this study are as follows:

1. How does the number of female educational leaders who aspire to the superintendency relate to the total number of superintendents?
2. What perceived (or real) barriers exist that discourage or inhibit female educational leaders from pursuing superintendency positions (e.g., age, family status, years of experiences, school district type, size, or community type, degree attainment, initial interest, race, social norms, gender identities, or encouragement)?

3. How does the number of female second-tier district administrators relate to the number of female superintendents? What factors may encourage females to remain in second-tier district administrator positions rather than pursuing the superintendency?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Historical Context

The historical context of both female pioneers and the evolution of the superintendent position must be analyzed to address why such a gender inequity continues to exist. Griggs (2014) reported on social injustices spanning several decades, including voter inequity, wage inequity, and gender inequity in the workplace. Historically, men have dominated leadership, both in and out of education. In the 1800s, teaching made the shift from a male-dominated field to a female-dominated profession. Women received noticeably lower wages even during this period (Griggs, 2014). This remained largely uncontested as societal expectations still called for men to be the breadwinners of the family structure. By the 1900s, women made up more than seventy percent of the teaching population, but this average did not extend into school leadership (Blount, 1998). Due to the dramatic increase of women in the profession, the profession began to be viewed as “women’s work.” As this shift occurred, men continued to seek positions of power and supervision, as that career trajectory was the norm. Even in the beginning, gendered roles conformed to the very patriarchal system and society (Young & Skrla, 2003). The hierarchical order within the patriarchy called for women to take care of and teach the children, while men were to take on administrative roles and provide (female) teachers with support. Societal views, as indicated above, continue to extend into the educational realm, thereby creating structural inequities and barriers for women in the superintendency.

The position of superintendent first appeared in Buffalo, NY and Louisville, KY in 1837 (Grieder et al., 1969). By 1850, thirteen large cities established the occupation of superintendent of schools (Kowalski, 2005). Since the creation of those first positions, the superintendency has been defined and institutionalized as men’s work (Shakeshaft, 1989; Blount, 1998; Grogan,

1999; Skrla, 1999; Skrla et al., 2000). The perceived skills of the position perpetuated this stereotype. The role emphasized management, and the objective was to improve overall school system operations by prioritizing time and efficiency (Tyack and Hansot, 1982). With the managerial aspect of the position emphasized, the position remained almost exclusively male-dominated for decades. Research consistently highlighted the same group of female superintendents who were early pioneers countering this gender-stratified position (Björk, 2000; Blount, 1998). In 1874, Phebe Sudlow, who was a celebrated teacher and principal, was selected as the first woman superintendent of schools in Davenport. Even in the early days of education, men were paid more than women for essentially performing the same duties. When Sudlow engaged in negotiations, she reportedly told the men of the board of education, “Gentlemen, if you are cutting the salary because of my experience, I have nothing to say; but if you are doing this because I am a woman, I’ll have nothing more to do with it.” Sudlow quickly became a trailblazer. Another trailblazer, Betty Mix Cowles, became superintendent of schools for Canton, Ohio, between 1850 and 1855 after convening the first Women’s Convention in Ohio. Then, in 1885, Carrie Chapman Catt attained the superintendent position in Mason City, Iowa before leading the National American Women’s Suffrage Association. Leading a call for equal pay, Grace Strachan served as the superintendent of the New York City schools starting in 1906. Later, Ella Flagg Young became the superintendent of schools in Chicago, Illinois in 1909. Björk (2000) explained that these histories “not only is contributing to a more complete picture of women in school leadership but also is stimulating considerable debate within the field of educational administration, particularly discourse on the role of women in the superintendency in the 21st century” (p. 8). These early pioneers challenged gender norms, educational attainment expectations, salary standards, and the status quo of educational leadership as a whole.

According to Tyack and Hansot (1982), the first thirty years of the twentieth century were the “golden age” for women. The bureaucratic structure of schools was going through a transformational process, and the creation of administrative positions for women, such as lead teachers, principals, and supervisors, spurred movement within the system. Shortly thereafter, there were few men available due to the war, and women were hired in their absence albeit paid significantly less (Shakeshaft, 1989). After WWII, women exited public school administration allowing men returning from war an opportunity to pursue educational administration with support from the GI Bill (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). As a result, from WWII to about 1970, the number of women in the superintendency dropped from nine percent to three percent (Blount, 1998). However, the 1970s brought in gender equality as a national issue. In 1972, Title IX of the Civil Rights Act sparked the possibility of making a significant impact on women in educational leadership, as it prohibited gender discrimination. Following Title IX, the Women’s Educational Equity Act of 1974 sought to correct the sex-based inequalities in the nation’s educational system; yet, women’s representation in the superintendency did not increase. In 1971, women in the superintendency position hit a low of 1.3 percent (Bjork, 2000). Shockingly, a decade later, the percentage actually decreased to 1.2 percent (Cunningham and Hentges, 1982). The percentages pointed to school and gendered leadership problems, and researchers began rapidly seeking answers to the educational administration dilemma (Gross and Trask, 1976; Schmuck, 1976, 1980; Shakeshaft, 1979, 1987, 1989; Biklen and Brannigan, 1980; Hansot and Tyack, 1981; Arnez, 1982; Ortiz, 1982; Marshall, 1984, 1985; Shakeshaft et al., 1984; Biklen and Shakeshaft, 1985; Bell, 1988; Edson, 1988).

State of the Current Superintendency Discrepancy

The percentage of female superintendents remained below ten percent until the 1990s, when it doubled from 6.6 to 13.2 percent (Glass, 2000). As the study of women in administration grew, so did the percentage of women who achieved the superintendency. However, to be proportionally represented, eighty percent of the school superintendents should be female given that eighty percent of the teachers were women during this time. In the 1990s, the Census Bureau identified the superintendency as the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States (Glass, 1992). Further studies conducted by the American Association of School Superintendents (AASA) found that in 2000, 13.2 percent of superintendents were women (Glass et al., 2002). The AASS conducted a Mid-Decade Study in 2015, which found that 27 percent of the superintendents were female. Currently, the 2017-2018 Superintendents Salary and Benefits Study continue to show an increased growth trend.

The 2017-18 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study marks the sixth edition of a nationwide study, employing a revised survey instrument. The survey tracked the demographics, salary, benefits, and other elements of the employment contracts of school superintendents throughout the country. In 2017-18, the study was based on 1,172 responses. The survey was distributed online and relied on superintendents responding to fifty items with the understanding that the report of findings would contain no personally identifiable information. The findings from the report are rich with information and serves as a useful snapshot of the salary and benefits of superintendents for the 2017-18 school year.

Here are the findings regarding the state of female superintendents gained from AASA's 2018 survey:

Table 1

2017-2018 Superintendents' Gender and District Enrollment:

Gender	Less than 300	300 to 2,499	2,500 to 9,999	10,000 to 24,999	25,000 or more	Omitted district size	Total
Male	92 (10.3)	528 (60.4)	190 (21.3)	40 (4.5)	24 (2.7)	7 (0.8)	891 (76%)
Female	29 (11.0)	141 (53.4)	62 (23.5)	17 (6.4)	8 (3.)	7 (2.7)	264 (23%)
Omitted	0 (0.0)	9 (52.9)	2 (11.8)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.0)	6 (35.3)	17 (1%)
Gender							
Total	121 (10.3)	688 (58.7)	254 (21.7)	57 (4.9)	32 (2.7)	20 (1.7)	1172 (100%)

Note. Data from “2017-18 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study,” by L. Finnan and R. McCord, 2018 (<http://www.aasa.org/research.aspx>).

In 2017, males made up 76 percent of the superintendents, while women were only 23 percent of the superintendents nationally (see Table 1). Consistent with nationwide school district enrollment data, the majority of superintendents are from intermediate size districts (300-2,499 students) with no recent appreciable change in the profile by gender of superintendents serving in each enrollment band.

Table 2

2017-2018 Superintendents' Gender and District Description:

Gender	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Omitted district description	Total
Male	44 (4.9)	210 (23.6)	634 (71.2)	3 (0.3)	891 (76%)
Female	22 (8.3)	66 (25.0)	175 (66.3)	1 (0.4)	264 (23%)
Omitted	1 (5.9)	1 (5.9)	15 (88.2)	0 (0.0)	17 (1%)
Gender					
Total	67 (5.7)	277 (23.6)	824 (70.3)	4 (0.3)	1172 (100%)

Note. Data from “2017-18 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study,” by L. Finnan and R. McCord, 2018 (<http://www.aasa.org/research.aspx>).

Both genders serve across all district types; however, the majority of women serving as superintendents are found in rural districts (see Table 2). When asked to describe the setting of their district, approximately 70 percent of the respondents, regardless of gender, indicated that their district is best described as rural while about a quarter describe their district as suburban. This is very closely aligned with data from the National Center on Education Statistics, which

showed that 5.7 percent of districts are urban, 22.9 percent are suburban, and 71.5 percent are town or rural. There are minimal variations notable along gender lines, with the only significant discrepancy being that there are only slightly more female superintendents serving in urban districts than males.

Table 3

2017-2018 Gender and Average Age of Superintendents:

Gender	Minimum	Descriptive Data on Age		
		Maximum	Mean	Median
Male	31	80	51.7	52
Female	28	71	52.8	53
Omitted Gender	34	65	49.2	48.5
Total Across Genders	28	80	51.9	52

Note. Data from “2017-18 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study,” by L. Finnan and R. McCord, 2018 (<http://www.aasa.org/research.aspx>).

There are differences between gender and the average age in the superintendency (see Table 3). The median age for female superintendents is 53, one year older than their male counterparts (see Table 3). Note, this difference decreased by one year since 2016. Despite dramatically outnumbering males in the teaching workforce, it takes women slightly longer to break into leadership, and they often enter the position with more work experience than men. Consistent with earlier versions of the study, the mean and median age for female superintendents is greater than their male counterparts. This supports the findings of other AASA studies on the superintendency where females tend to enter the role later and have greater experience in teaching and other education positions.

Table 4

2017-2018 Superintendent Base Salary and District Enrollment by Gender:

Supt. base salary	Less than 300		300 to 2,499		2,500 to 9,999		10,000 to 24,999		25,000 or more	
<i>Gender</i>	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Minimum	32,710	39,400	30,000	47,379	102,648	93,559	140,000	154,500	130,650	90,831
10%	63,000	65,000	93,200	90,163	125,000	130,000	147,000	159,000	133,000	89,831
25%	78,056	73,185	103,200	105,000	145,000	140,000	165,000	165,000	205,180	193,500
Median	96,750	94,000	117,523	124,240	165,000	165,000	182,227	185,000	260,000	259,982
75%	109,061	100,000	134,000	139,634	190,000	189,000	227,245	198,000	295,694	285,000
90%	130,000	121,447	155,000	166,428	218,100	229,000	238,523	220,000	340,000	295,000
Maximum	242,328	133,000	299,000	298,135	297,000	295,000	272,000	243,000	405,000	316,820
N	92	29	538	141	190	62	40	17	24	8

Note. Data from “2017-18 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study,” by L. Finnan and R. McCord, 2018 (<http://www.aasa.org/research.aspx>).

There are variations in which gender outperforms the other in terms of salary (see Table 4). Male superintendents out-earn their female counterparts in two tiers of district sizes: districts serving less than 300 students and district serving 25,000 or more students. In terms of median salary, women pull ahead in districts serving 300 to 2,499 students and districts serving 10,000 to 24,999 students. However, the first group makes up 12 percent of the superintendents reporting, and the latter group makes up 1.5 percent of the superintendents. The only tier with comparable pay are the districts serving 2,500 to 9,999 students. Consistent with previous years, salaries increase as district enrollment increases.

Table 5

Gender and Racial/Cultural Group of Superintendents, 2018

	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	White (not Hispanic)	Other	Omitted Racial/ Cultural Group	Total
Gender									
Male	3 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	12 (1.3)	14 (1.6)	0 (0.0)	850 (95.4)	9 (1.0)	2 (0.2)	891 (76)
Female	3 (1.1)	1 (0.4)	10 (3.8)	7 (2.7)	1 (0.4)	239 (90.5)	3 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	264 (23)
Omitted Gender	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (29.4)	1 (5.9)	9 (52.9)	17 (1)
Total	6 (0.5)	2 (0.2)	24 (2.0)	21 (1.8)	1 (0.1)	1094 (93.3)	13 (1.1)	11 (0.9)	1172 (100)

Note. Data from “2017-18 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study,” by L. Finnan and R. McCord, 2018 (<http://www.aasa.org/research.aspx>).

People of color are grossly underrepresented in school leadership (see Table 5). Women of color are far less likely to hold superintendent positions than their white counterparts. School leaders of both genders are overwhelmingly white (not Hispanic) (see Table 5).

Career pathways vary among educational leaders and are influenced by a multitude of factors that include, but are not limited to, an individual’s demographic characteristics such as age, family concerns and mobility, gender, sexism, mentors, network, and educational preparedness (Bjork, et al., 2003). Kowalski et al. (2011) concluded that the general career path to the superintendency is the teacher to principal path. The traditional career path for most superintendents reflects state certification requirements and involves entering the education profession as teachers. In a way, the pipeline toward the superintendency seems rather prescribed in its very nature. Typically, the most commonly held positions by women are district-level directors, coordinators, supervisors, elementary school teachers, and elementary school principals (Kowalski, et al., 2011). Anecdotal evidence indicates that women stall at the second-tier district administrator level with few reaching the head superintendency position. There appears to be a masculinized pipeline that breaks somewhere between mid- and upper-administration for women specifically. One argument suggests that the pipeline leaks between

elementary and secondary building leadership. Statistics continue to show higher percentages of female building administrators at the elementary level than the secondary level (Kowalski, et al., 2011; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Seeing how less than a third of superintendents come from an elementary administrative background, one might suggest that elementary principals are not in a pipeline that will lead them to the superintendency. To provide evidence for this theory, Glass (2000) found that only 18 percent of female superintendents possess secondary building administrative experience. Research continues to show that the most likely position leading to the superintendency is that of the high school principal (Bjork et al., 2000; Farmer, 2007). Some studies point to the idea that the high school principal role most closely aligns with the skills necessary for running a school district. Preliminary research suggests women are interested in educational leadership. Glass (2000) stated that women comprise more than fifty percent of educational administration and/or leadership graduate programs and fifty percent of doctoral programs; therefore, indicating women are interested in pursuing roles in educational administration and advancing their careers. However, there seems to be a gap between the pursuit and the acquisition of the position.

While there is an ongoing shortage of women in the superintendency, the percentage of minority women in the position is dismal. Alston (2005) emphasized people of color represent 10.9 percent of the nation's teachers, 12.3 percent of the nation's principals, but only 2.2 percent of the nation's superintendents. For almost as long as there has been research focused on women in educational administration and the pursuit of the superintendency, there has been parallel research highlighting the challenges for aspiring and sitting superintendents of color (Arnez, 1982; Ortiz, 1982; Chase, 1995; Enomoto et al., 2000). There has also been research focused on Hispanic/Latina superintendents, specifically by Méndez-Morse (1997, 1999, 2000), Ortiz (1999,

2000), Manuel and Slate (2003), Quilantán and Menchaca-Ochoa (2004), and Couch (2007). In a study by Revere (1985), the respondents overwhelmingly felt that a combination of racism with sexism was the reason so few women of color held superintendencies.

Supply and Demand Explanation of Gender Inequality

Much of the literature centers on the economic explanation of gender inequality in the labor market: supply and demand. Some researchers focus on the supply-side and the determinants of female labor participation, while other researchers examine the unequal treatment of female candidates and employees, which is systematically reflected in career opportunities, lower earnings, and occupational disadvantages against women. Norris and Lovenduski (2005), for example, observed that the supply of female candidates was strongly shaped by ideologies of gender, which lead women to have fewer resources of time and money and lower levels of career ambition and confidence. They also provided direct evidence of the gendered nature of demand, which causes selectors to evaluate female aspirants as less competent or pass them over for selection due to unsubstantiated concerns. Paralleling the literature on feminism and institutions, these patterns indicate that sex, understood as biological differences between women and men, and gender, the social meanings given to these biological differences, distort the operation of the labor market that exclude women, regardless of their actual desires and qualifications to come forward as potential employee candidates. This is not a unique phenomenon. Rather, these disparities remain relatively consistent across several fields of work, including educational leadership.

Some mystery still surrounds the idea of supply-side factors. It is difficult to apply quantitative, statistical data to intrinsic, internal motivation factors. The majority of new and emerging research focuses on gender differences and competitiveness, which might impact wage

negotiation skills (Gneezy et al., 2003; Gneezy, et al., 2008, and Niederle and Vesterlund, 2007). Other than the focus on the wage gap using quantitative-focused explanations, most research is argued from an ethnomethodological view. For the last two decades, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the barriers women face in workplace advancement (DiDonato & Strough, 2013; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). In the workplace barriers line of research, the assumption is women are able to compete, and they want to compete, at the upper levels of their organizations at least as much as their male counterparts (DiDonato & Strough, 2013; Jones & Palmer, 2011; Orser et al., 2012). The leadership capabilities of women are not being debated here. Eagly et al. (e.g., Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992) have accumulated substantial evidence in support of women's leadership capabilities equaling, and in some contexts surpassing, men's leadership capabilities. Rather, it is the second question—whether women aspire to compete at the upper levels as much as men—that is the focus of the present study. With a few exceptions (e.g., Glancy, 2010; Hewlett, 2002; Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007; Schruijer, 2006), the question of gender equivalence in regards to the desire to lead in the upper levels of organizations have been historically neglected.

Demand-side research tends to concentrate more on the employer than the employee. The unequal treatment that women face in the labor market is often explained as the result of systemic gender discrimination, largely before and occasionally occurring after their entrance into the workforce. More specifically, the pre-employment discrimination tends to be justified as a result of the social archetypes and the deeply-rooted stereotypes regarding gendered social roles, which lead women to specific educational and professional choices (Ridgeway, 2001). Arguments stemming after the acquisition of a position shift in focus. After their entrance into

the labor market, women face professional and wage discrimination. The first is highly associated with the fact that women are often concentrated in low profile job positions, compared to their male counterparts, even if they have the same qualifications as men, and women rarely rise up the hierarchical leadership pyramid. Several intriguing experimental studies were conducted focusing on the demand side of employer discrimination. These studies used field experimental methods in which fictitious male and female job applicants were given identical resumes, some finding evidence of employer discrimination (Neumark, Bank and Van Nort, 1996; Pager, 2007; Correll, Benard, and Paik, 2007) and others not (Carlsson, 2011). While elaborated in relation to candidate selection, this approach can be adapted to fit a wide range of other political and social trends, as ideas about formal and informal institutions can be expanded to encompass a variety of gendered rules, practices, and norms.

Supply-side Explanation

Women's status has changed substantially over the past few centuries. Women are now more educated than men and enter the workforce not simply to provide a second source of income for their family, but also, in many cases, to achieve personal fulfillment and a satisfying career (Bensidoun & Trancart, 2018). However, even with the increase in women participation of advanced degrees and white-collar jobs, persistent gendered wage gap employment opportunity gaps continue to exist. In an effort to explain the gap, researchers have begun to look at less measurable factors at play. While some point to external factors (e.g. discriminatory hiring practices, status differences, etc.) from a demand perspective, others call for a more internalized look at the individual candidate and choice. In fact, several researchers argued that gender differences in personality, values, and attitudes may play a significant role in the attainment of

top leadership positions (Bensidoun & Trancart, 2018; Buser, Niederle, & Oosterbeek, 2014; England, 2010; Krook, 2009; Sheran, 2007).

Non-cognitive variables (i.e. preferences and personality traits) may determine individual career choices – even if chosen through the notion of constraint. In fact, constraints may turn into preferences. For example, Bertrand et al. (2010) conducted a study revealing statistically significant gender differences in negotiation skills and in attitudes toward risk and competition. Bertrand et al. (2010) concluded that because gender roles are injunctive, women who deviate from the traditional female role (e.g. acting assertively) risk incurring social backlash which puts them at a disadvantage to be competitive labor market participants. For example, as Rudman et al., (2012) showed, these backlash responses are not due to the perception that these women are not appropriately warm, but to the fact that they are challenging the gender status hierarchy by acting “too dominant.” Psychological research has also echoed this finding noting gender disparities in personality traits and preferences. Hakim (2004) highlighted the importance of values and attitudes in employment decisions, career choices, and in pay levels when personal goals and preferences are involved. Her preference theory does not necessarily demonstrate causality; however, it does shed light on the conflict between women selecting careers and balancing familial expectations.

Women have traditionally engaged in three types of economically productive work: producing goods and services for the family, engaging in household services, and working for pay outside of the home. When focusing on the latter, it is critical to note that women and men have very different labor market experiences. Often, these experiences are shaped by deeply established belief and value systems. Psychologists and sociologists have long understood the key importance of personality traits, social preferences, and social norms that factor decision-

making. The illusion of choice must be addressed. In a study by Bensidoun and Trancart (2018), the preference expressed by individuals likely influenced by gender stereotypes or social norms, left women feeling a “duty” to invest in the family sphere, while men have the privilege of investing in the work sphere. For example, several studies recounted that female superintendents were less willing to relocate in order to obtain a superintendent position because of family or a spouse’s job and because of the difficulty balancing the demands of the superintendent position and family responsibility (Derrington and Sharratt, 2009). Balancing the work demands of a superintendent and the home expectations of a spouse and family is difficult, if not impossible. According to Derrington (2009), women with children in grades K-8 are rarely superintendents. The average superintendent spends more than fifty hours a week at work, including night meetings and sporting events (Glass, 2010). This type of work week is often not appealing to younger women and people who prefer a better balance between work and family. Not only do these women have to balance two sets of expectations: role-related and gendered-related, but they often face a greater emotional cost. Women have not been successful in offsetting their increasing responsibilities in the workplace with decreased obligations at home (Loder, 2005). In fact, Loder (2005) shared that women carry a greater share of the home and child responsibilities and receive less family or spouse support than their male colleagues. A few researchers hypothesized that these feelings may lead to certain career choices over others, as well as to inequitable wages, by encouraging those who invest in the work sphere to press harder for a job change or wage increase in order to satisfy their ambition (Fortin, 2008; Grove et al., 2011).

Bensidoun and Trancart (2018) found that women are, on average, significantly less optimistic, express career ambitions less frequently, and are more risk-averse than men.

Interestingly, these gender differences persist even after controlling for differences in skill sets.

Women who do become superintendents tend to spend more years as classroom teachers before moving into the administrative ranks. Glass (2000) found that men start the process of advancing through the career ladder (e.g. assistant principal, principal, central-office administrator) around age 27, while women begin closer to their early-thirties. According to Glass et al. (2000), 40 percent of male superintendents reported spending five or fewer years as classroom teachers; whereas according to Brunner and Grogan (2007), 41 percent of female superintendents reported spending 11 or more years as classroom teachers. In explanation, Glass (2000) suggested that one possible explanation for the discrepancy could be that many women enter the career ladder later due to childbearing and taking time away from the position for child-rearing. Furthermore, the American Association of School Administrator's (AASA) ten-year studies consistently shows that women superintendents are older than their male counterparts with comparable years in the superintendency. Furthermore, in a study by Akerlof and Kranton (2000), conclusions were drawn that the identity of individuals and their desire to comply with the social norms prevailing in their social groups may influence the economic decisions via the utility associated with them. The lag in initiating career movement could plausibly be related to a woman's feelings of optimism, personal levels of potential, and overall risk.

Moreover, unconscious bias impacts decision-making regarding family life and employment for both men and women. This often translates into either a covert or overt notion of constraint, duty, and responsibility. England (2010) believed that continuous gendered socialization effects taken-for-granted assumptions (e.g., which jobs one even considers), identities, and preferences. Simply, the outside social forces change one on the inside. England (2010) argued that people do not choose the contrasting social forces that formed their preferences, identities, and assumptions (Browne and England, 1997). In fact, she argued that

gender itself internalizes into preferences and assumptions about the course of action.

Additionally, personal construct theory, developed by psychologist George Kelly, would argue that the mental constructs that individuals use to interpret the world around them and make choices are a result of systemic oppression. Postmodern feminists share this perspective.

Another area of research emphasizes the sociologically inspired lens of work-family conflict due to gendered differences in family-responsibility: career interruptions due to childbearing (Bertrand, Goldin, and Katz, 2010). In a study, Pirouznia (2009) reported that family responsibilities constitute a powerful barrier that often blocks women's pathways into administrative roles. The factor that female administrators may not be as mobile as their male peers because of family situations that include their spouses' jobs is often cited. Traditionally, women have assumed the primary responsibility for the rearing of their children; thus, employers often perceive conflicts between the child-rearing responsibilities of working mothers and their job responsibilities (Pirouznia, 2009). Additionally, work-family scholar Pamela Stone has shown that the "opt-out revolution" is less a function of women rejecting the workplace than real labor market constraints "pushing" women out of their jobs. Workplace policies and practices continue to lag behind demographic and lifestyle changes in families (Roos, 2010). Ignoring the interdependences between women's career and family choices could lead to an incomplete picture regarding the female experience. Macroeconomists have become increasingly interested in the dynamics of labor supply and family issues, such as fertility and marriage (Greenwood et al., 2003; Caucutt et al., 2002; Conesa, 2000, and Mullin & Wang, 2002). Serving as a framework and using macro-level data to calibrate findings, life-cycle patterns of marriage, employment, education, and birth control estimate the variation of women's career and family choices trajectories. Sheran (2007) concluded that women's overall schooling and birth control

choices are significantly influenced by their educational attainment level, marital status, cost of childcare, and their work in the labor market.

Supply explanations of the disproportionate representation of women in leadership roles address the action of (potential) employees (Gabaldon et al., 2016; Reskin, 1998). Supply barriers include not only the size of the available labor market, but also the candidates' personalities, attitudes, values, beliefs, and motivations, as well as the opportunity structure which is historically dependent on deeply ingrained gender-role socialization (Axelsdóttir & Halrynjo, 2018). Therefore, supply explanations may relate to both individual and structural conditions, but with the source being located outside the organization itself.

Demand-side Explanation

Once job candidates come forward, their selection as possible candidates depend on the evaluation of their abilities, qualifications, and experiences. However, these assessments are strongly shaped by the preference and opinions of the dominant actors – most commonly men. While it seems that the general public would prefer that the decisions are based on merit, it is impossible for selectors to know all candidates on a personal level. This translates into the “need” to use characteristics as a proxy measure. Whether covert or overt, these information shortcuts may take the form of discrimination, in which candidates are judged positively or negatively on the basis of characteristics associated with their group.

Women in school administration inhabit a traditionally male profession that has evolved minimally from the managerial, command and control model of the early twentieth century. The educational system paralleled the traditional home. Therefore, the gender structure allowed the dominant male to take charge and remained largely unquestioned. Society continues to hold traditional ideas regarding the ideal leader as one who displays forceful masculine qualities,

associated with the behavior of men in formal positions of power. Helgesen (1990) placed blame on mindset factors contributing to women's inability to advance. For example, women who self-promote during the selection process often encounter significant gender biases. Women who demonstrate these same behaviors are usually perceived by stakeholders, such as the school board, community, and school staff, as arrogant, bossy, and ultimately, less hireable (Evers & Sieverding, 2014; Fisk, 2014; Northouse, 2007; Rhode, 2014; Sandberg, 2013; Kanter, 1977), but when men demonstrate these advocacy behaviors, stakeholders perceive them as strong, independent, and capable of making difficult decisions (Northouse, 2007). The Skyline Group (2015) examined 28 leadership competencies (e.g. executive presence, emotional control, planning, and organization, etc.) and found women were perceived as less effective leaders when they "act like men" for 57 percent of the leadership competencies studied. In fact, their research suggests that many employees really do view assertive women in leadership as bossy. Society's stereotypical view of women and men continues to frown upon women who advocate for themselves (Evers & Sieverding, 2014; Fisk, 2014; Northouse, 2007; Rhode, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). Whether they are promoting their strengths in seeking the position of superintendency, asking for a higher salary, or simply demonstrating assertiveness and confidence, society deems these types of behaviors as appropriate for men and not for women (Evers & Sieverding, 2014; Fisk, 2014; Northouse, 2007; Rhode, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). This mentality quickly translates into socialized gendered norms.

Political factors also serve as a means of keeping women out of the head superintendent position. Lewin's gatekeeping theory, as discussed in Tallerico's study (2000), stated that there are many channels that reflect "in" or "out" decision points (gates) in the search process. These gates are controlled either by a set of impartial rules or by persons with differing degrees of

power. Qualified women are actively seeking the superintendency; however, the gatekeepers (i.e. school boards and search consultants) are not letting women in at the same rate as men. Search consultants, one form of gatekeepers, rely on networks of friends, professional associates, and associations when developing a group of candidates to present for consideration to a school board (Kamler & Shakeshaft, 1999). In the context of superintendent selections, the impartial rules may be a set of academic or certification standards used as a minimum requirement to screen all applicants. Headhunters often control this part of the process.

After the initial screening process is completed, the gates are open and power shifts to board members to make these “in” and “out” decisions. From here, norms embedded in the culture and influences interact to determine how and when gates are closed or opened along the way (Tallerico, 2000). In Comeaux’s narrative study (2009), female superintendents reported experiencing blatant discrimination by school board members who felt that women should not be in the role of the superintendent. Some reported criticism that they were not viewed as financially savvy as men and others felt micro-managed by their boards for every expenditure. Tallerico (2000) found that school board members prefer strong disciplinary and other non-instructional technical expertise of male applicants, even if through gendered biased subjectivity, and spent longer amounts of time questioning the competencies of females. This experience of exclusion for a woman can hinder her effectiveness as a superintendent.

Historically, male dominance in management positions is understood as gendered organizational practices and recruitment norms (Acker, 1990). Complicating the masculinity, decision makers often reserved more attractive positions, including leadership positions, for in-group members (Powell and Butterfield, 2002), leading to what Kanter (1977) called homosocial reproduction. Sociologists apply this theory when predicting which employers may display in-

group bias by giving preferential treatment to those they perceive as similar (Turner, Brown, and Tajfel, 1979; Gorman, 2005). In turn, this results in in-group members having better evaluations, creating barriers for those out-of-group members to join these networks. Reliance on informal networks for recruitment perpetuates segregation because social networks tend to be segregated (Braddock and McPartland, 1987). Furthermore, because women remain in the minority in management circles, the male stereotype withstands and hiring men becomes normalized (Powell, 1988). This preference inertia goes both ways. Gorman's (2005) study of women in U.S. law firms with female hiring partners are more likely to hire female job applicants. Moreover, Gorman speculates that in-group preferences are likely to be greater when the hiring partners perceive themselves to be underrepresented.

"The Good Ole Boys' Club" (Hill & Ragland, 1995) refers "to an invisible network of males and male-dominated attitudes" (Ryan, 2012) with the purpose of keeping women from attaining certain social or professional positions (Shakeshaft, 1999). In 1996, Gupton and Slick reported the findings of their study and stated that women in educational leadership identified the Good Ole Boys' Club as the predominant barrier for gaining access to top leadership roles. In a replication of their 1996 study, roughly 80 percent of the female participants reported being a woman as their greatest obstacle in attaining a position in educational leadership (Morrison, 2012). In essence, roughly 25 years later, women report they are still fighting the "Good Ole Boys' Club." In organizational contexts, associational biases feed the process of "cloning" by actors from higher status groups. As Kanter (1977) pointed out long ago, the inherently uncertain conditions of exercising power encourage powerful organizational actors to favor those who are socially similar and whom they feel they can rely on. This exercise of power can be found along all status levels of actors.

In addition to discrimination and exclusion from networks, the lack of supportive institutional environments (i.e. lack of female presence and mentoring) was emphasized as a demand-side barrier (Gabaldon et al., 2016). Many researchers stated that female superintendents receive inadequate professional development and mentoring opportunities, leaving them at a disadvantage during both the initial stages of their superintendency and beyond (Grogan, 2005; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Kachur-Reico & Wallin, 2010; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Lemasters & Roach, 2012; Morrison, 2012; Ryan, 2012). Ryan (2012) emphasized, “It is not always just what you know but who you know as well” (p. 128). In addition, she advised female superintendents to “create a cocoon of positive and influential masters of the craft who can assist you personally and professionally” (Ryan, 2012, p.128). Supportive mentoring discourse served two purposes; first, to offer support to the woman, with the mentor acknowledging and celebrating her work and second, to communicate positive comments to others about the woman superintendent. For example, the mentor may use a school board meeting to publicly praise the mentee, the female superintendent (Perkins, 2014). In this case, the mentor holds a kind of “gatekeeper power” (Perkins, 2014). In other words, depending upon what the mentor actually communicates to others, the mentor essentially holds the power to deny or allow entrance to other opportunities and social acceptance (Perkins, 2014).

Research also indicates another external barrier to the superintendency is women’s career pathway. The ascent to the top of school leadership is compared to a labyrinth (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011) because of the variety in the career paths of female superintendents. Wolverton and Macdonald’s (2001) research outlined two main causes for the lack of females in the superintendency. First, more high school principals are men than women, and many believe the high school principalship is the position that most clearly resembles the superintendency.

Lemasters and Roach (2012) also studied the career pathways of female superintendents and reported the majority of elementary school teachers were women, and when those women moved from the elementary classroom to administration, they typically moved into an elementary principalship. This pathway, however, does not typically lead to the superintendency and could even represent a barrier for women seeking the top school leadership role (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Lemasters & Roach, 2012). A more common pathway for women gaining access to the superintendency is service at the district or central office level as specialists or supervisors (McGrath, 1992). Second, the expertise of search consultants is valued by school boards and these firms are regularly used when districts are searching for a superintendent. These consulting firms typically seek high school principals to recruit applicants for these positions. Thus, recruitment strategies may contribute to the gender gap as white males are likely to benefit because men currently occupy assistant superintendencies and secondary principalships in far greater numbers than females (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). The issue of merging gender and politics with regard to the superintendency has been somewhat overlooked, especially considering the degree to which power and politics impact the office of the superintendent as a whole (Bjork, 2008; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011).

The Critique of Supply and Demand

Organizational theory draws attention to status-based inequalities in the workforce. Stainback et al. (2010) explain that there are three generic forces always at play, which provide a framework for workplace inequality and organizational divisions of labor: inertia, relative power, and external pressures. While these three forces vary in their relative influences during different moments, it is essential to understand how they impact the workforce. Once organizational structures and practices are established, they become resistant to change (Stinchcombe, 1965).

Educational leadership roots are deep and remain largely unchanged. Inertia is the tendency for organizational practices to resist change. Once created, implicitly gendered organizational structures and procedures spread through institutional processes and persist through bureaucratic inertia (Baron et al. 2007; Phillips 2005). One example of continuing inertia is one's effort required on the job. Gorman & Kmec (2007) examined data that found women report greater required work effort than men. They speculate that because of evaluation bias favoring men's work performance over women's, women must be more productive to receive a comparable evaluation. External pressures adopt or preserve organizational strategies, routines, and practices (e.g. hiring practices, evaluation techniques, etc.). Relative power encompasses both political struggles and status processes operating within organizations. Status-based processes of exclusion and inclusion governing the distribution of valuable opportunities are also central to the production of workplace inequality (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993). By focusing on the recent theoretical and empirical findings regarding the influence of these pressures, one can gain a greater understanding of inequalities stemming from common organizational processes.

Furthermore, within the scope of organizational research is the theory of internal labor markets. This particular model theorizes that large organizations are structured in a way that external recruitment occurs primarily through ports of entry near the bottom of the organization, and that internal promotion processes provide access to jobs at higher levels of the hierarchy. Significant research has centered on the idea that organizational roots of gender inequality stem from the internal model. Although gender equality has continued to improve over the years, the proverbial glass ceiling still exists. Studies suggest that the "glass ceiling" metaphor (Powell and Butterfield, 1994; Yamagata et al, 1997; Petersen and Saporta, 2004) focuses on the barriers for women in internal promotion practices. The glass ceiling idea suggests the percentage of females

declines over increasing levels of hierarchy. In education, the majority of people deem school superintendents as the most powerful and influential position in school districts. The continued disproportional representation rates between the genders found in the superintendency indicate that the glass ceiling has yet to be shattered. According to Wallace (2015), the proportion of females in the superintendency increases by only 0.7 percent annually. This statistic is significant, as it would take approximately eighty years for female administrators to be proportionately represented in public school leadership. Stainback et al. (2010) share insights from organizational scholars (Edelman 1990, Sutton et al. 1994) who state that standards for organizational operation are likely to follow prevailing rules, beliefs, and customs that are deemed legitimate. When workplace diversity tends to form into such a normative environment, personnel practices begin to reflect governances that arise from such structures and pressures. In an effort to challenge and change the participation percentages of female superintendents in educational organizations, it is critical that common career barriers be identified first.

There are certain internal and external factors that continue to plague this gender discrepancy that cannot be explained by the economic model of supply and demand alone. Supply and demand are used to describe relations between sellers and buyers of a given product. Assuming perfection competition and complete information, it predicts that as price rises, the supply of the good will increase at the same time the demand for it will decrease. However, institutional economic theories note that there is always some degree of market imperfection, as competition is frequently flawed at the same time that information is often incomplete (Krook, 2009). Social norms are deeply embedded and inertia is holding the bureaucracy in place, which is why the supply and demand explanation cannot be applied in the literal sense.

Institutional stability is often used to explain how and why institutions lock the expectations of the behavior of individuals into relatively predictable, self-reinforcing patterns, even in the face of major changes in background conditions (Pierson, 2000). This suggests that the dynamics of candidate selection, for example, are not likely to respond to instantaneous adjustments of supply and demand. Stainback et al. (2010) state that “although the organization is the immediate context for inequality generation, organizational theory is clear that organizations are situated within, and organizational actors are responsive to, environmental contexts.” Organizational theory, supported by explanations of coercive pressures and institutional inertia, illustrate why so little change has happened for women, which has little to do with simple supply or demand explanations. Across the country, gender bias and sexism challenges continue to plague female authority figures. Statistically, superintendents almost always come from teaching backgrounds according to Wallace’s research (2015). Therefore, when the majority of teachers are female, it is intriguing to ask why the male teaching population tends to be of the select few who ultimately rise to higher leadership positions. It clearly has not been solved with minor tweaks to the supply or demand of qualified applicants. The reflection of stagnation results from proportional inequities stemming from historical contexts embedded in social and cultural norms. These contexts have changed minimally over the past century (Munoz, et al., 2014).

The institutionalist would argue that the metaphor of supply and demand is not an either-or situation. Rather, supply and demand factors are intricately woven within and on top of each other. Rosabeth Kanter (1977) developed a theory that explained who gets ahead and who does not, who gets heard and who does not, and who has the freedom of action and who does not. In fact, gender shapes a person’s experience from birth and structures the distribution of roles in

organizations and society. The notion for opportunity and power must acknowledge that there are constantly both supply and demand factors at play, and that one does not exist without the other.

The Feminist Critique of Supply and Demand

Gender and gendered power relations are the major defining features of most organizations. Organizations are not just structured by gender but pervaded and constituted by and through gender; at the same time, organizational realities construct and sometimes subvert dominant gender relations. When gender is referred to it is usual to think of men and women and relations between them; these are certainly part of gender but not the entirety of gender.

Therefore, it is critical to consider the feminist perspective when addressing gender inequity in educational leadership. Organizational theory, while helpful in understanding complex systems within education, have historically lacked the ability to go into depth regarding women's voices and feminist perspectives. In fact, these voices were virtually absent from the early scholarship on organizational theory (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Feminism and feminist organizational theory not only provides a theory for or about women but rather focuses on creating equitable opportunities and conditions for all people to survive and thrive (Fishman-Weaver, 2017).

Feminist theory operates on three assumptions regarding gender: (1) gender is a social construct, (2) gendered differences in patriarchal societies disempower women (Acker, 1990), and (3) sexism, gender discrimination, and gender bias in organizations is not always overt (Acker, 1990, 2006). These three assumptions have implications that impact women in all fields. In the United States, gender continues to be understood primarily in limiting binary distinctions between women and men. This binary contrast is often built into the organizational structure, such as the glass ceiling metaphor. While these assumptions held by feminist theorists are often confused with "man-hating," it must be noted that this lens could potentially provide an

explanation as to why so few women reach the superintendency. In a study of women superintendents, Meirer and Wikins (2002) suggest that women face the glass ceiling effect evidenced by the shrinking proportion of women at each level: teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. After stating a myriad of statistics, their work and societal amendments easily echo three distinct feminist lenses: liberal, radical, and postmodern.

Liberal feminism is a theoretical frame that grew out of traditional liberalism. This framework examines issues of access and aims to mobilize legislative change (Donner, 1993, Wendell, Acker, 1990; Crotty, 2013; Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Liberalism is seen as the dominant ethos of contemporary society and so it indicates that liberal feminists are not challenging patriarchy but rather looking for the removal of barriers that prevent women operating effectively in the public sphere on equal terms with men. The liberal feminists feverishly hope that women will gradually begin to fill more roles in organizations, including leadership roles (e.g. superintendents), which will in turn shift policies to those that are more equitable. However, liberal feminism is often criticized for being reactive in nature.

Radical theorists highlight the imbalance of power in patriarchal organizations, in which school systems and the American society are so deeply entrenched. Radical feminism proposes a different framework for creating organizational change. Radical feminism was popularized in the late 1960s and 1970s. This framework holds tightly to the idea that sexism – the oppression of women – is the root cause. This ideology suggests that systems of power and oppression are so deeply ingrained in organizations that they must be completely deconstructed in order to fix the problem. Organizational theory only helps to further cement their ideas by explaining how wildly difficult it is to deconstruct existing hierarchies and bureaucratic organizational systems in order

to create new organizations that place gender equity at the center of the organization model. This process would require reconstructing morality, rationality, and employee relations.

Postmodern theorists explore a fluid perception of how gender and gender effects are created and manipulated. In fact, gender theorists differ from traditional feminism as they insist that all social constructs can and should be contested and examined (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Gender, unlike biological sex, is a social construct. Specifically, these theorists argue that gender is in an institutional system of social practices with the viewpoint that the gender system is deeply entwined with social hierarchy and leadership because gender stereotypes contain status beliefs that associate greater worthiness and competence with men than women (Ridgeway, 2001). In order to counter this system, postmodern feminists call for intellectual inquiry toward the status quo and seek to continually interpret human experience and organization (Flax, 1987; Halberstam, 1991; Fishman-Weaver, 2017). Rather than normalize the patriarchy, these theorists imagine new structures for schools and school leadership in an effort to operationalize new solutions and organizations.

Gendered organizational theory (i.e. feminism) provides a powerful platform for addressing the leadership gap across school districts nationwide. Meier and Wikins (2002) posits the need for various alternatives in order to achieve a more proportional representation of women in the district leadership position: legislative support (liberal feminism), reconstructing the superintendency (radical feminism) and conceptualizing discourse around leadership, mentoring, and organizations (postmodern feminism) (Fishman-Weaver, 2017).

Some researchers argue that institutional approaches fall short of providing strong explanations of economic phenomena because the supply-and-demand perspective proponents fail to recognize the gendered nature of the superintendency (Ferber and Nelson, 1993).

Moreover, that support for the supply-side “pipeline approach” implies a passive wait for women’s advancement and places the burden on the individual woman (Axelsdóttir and Halrynjo, 2018). Gendered organizational theory indicates this is a fallacy, as it only provides a limited view of how career trajectories are influenced. This critique lends leverage to the question of why women form a small minority of all administrative positions, even when they are the majority of the teaching force and the world’s population. One must acknowledge the possibility that the norms and practices of gender itself operate to lower both the supply of and the demand for female aspirants.

Summary of the Review of the Literature

When seeking to understand the lack of women holding top-level leadership positions, it is essential to provide a variety of possible explanations. Research often points to the supply-and-demand explanation, but occasionally, some researchers will allude to feminism and organizational theory to illustrate the gender discrepancy. However, there is a piece of information, even though seemingly simple, that is missing. There are minimal statistics on if women even want to attain the superintendency and/or advanced leadership positions. While much of the current literature on gender differences explores the disparities in wage earnings, a smaller amount of literature focuses on gender differences in regards to motivation and choice, which tends to investigate whether equally qualified men and women with similar observable characteristics have the same choice opportunities to advance in their educational leadership careers.

In public schools across the nation, the position of the superintendent has and continues to be dominated in numbers by men. Although the teaching profession is comprised of approximately three times more women than men, females in the superintendency comprise less

than 25 percent of those in the position (AASA, 2018). To better understand why women fail to attain the superintendency, this literature review was presented in five sections.

First, the historical context of women and the struggle for gender equity was presented as it relates to women in the superintendency. Despite legislation to ensure gender equity and prohibit gender-based discrimination, women have not reached equitable representation in such positions.

The second section of the literature review focused on current statistics and career pathways. While there are approximately 3.6 million full-time elementary and secondary teachers, 76 percent of them are women. Yet, only 22 percent of the superintendents are female. Generally, both male and females ascend the career ladders moving from teacher to principal to district office. However, it appears that men and women do so at varying rates and times.

The third part of the review explored supply and demand. Over the past few decades, a growing body of research has explored the effects of gender on occupational choices and career aspirations. Although women constitute more than half the population, they only constitute a small minority of top leaders in the world. The dominant metaphor for explaining this theory is the supply and demand model of candidate selection (Krook, 2009). Without a theory of gender, it is difficult to explain the pervasiveness of this pattern of women's access.

The next part of the review elaborated on organizational theory. The belief that women are subordinate and lack skills necessary to fulfill the requirements of the superintendent position created a resistance to change, which in turn, contributed to demand-side explanations. Gender discrimination in the form of hegemony, inequality, and oppression lead to gender roles and male dominance. Consequently, organizations are embedded in cultural and competitive fields that generate models for action and resource constraints that imprint routines, differently empower

actors, and steer innovation. Actors react to these divisions of labor, often using cultural knowledge, status expectations and beliefs, and prior experiences to make claims on organizational resources (Tilly, 1998; Tomaskovic-Devey et al., 2009). Such resources include class inequality outcomes such as salaries, wages, authority, and promotions. The organizational perspectives bridge the divide between logic, practice, inequality, and institutional history.

The final part of the review examined feminism and gendered organizational theory. The feminist theories may be viewed as a kind of patchwork quilt, taking bits and pieces from different perspectives and theories in an attempt to offer an account of women's social and political being that would be adequate to basic feminist principle. Feminism calls for quality leaders, including female leaders, to guide schools; therefore, it is important that potential female candidates gain a better understanding of the successful ascension to the superintendency.

A sociological perspective states that gender inequality stems from a complex mixture of cultural and structural factors. Despite changes during the late twentieth century, children were still socialized from birth into traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, and gender-based stereotyping incorporating these notions still continues today. When selecting careers, socialization and stereotyping still combine to limit the ability of girls and boys and women and men alike to imagine less traditional possibilities. Meanwhile, structural obstacles in the workplace and elsewhere continue to keep women in a subordinate social and economic status relative to men. Improving access of women to the school superintendency works toward eliminating biases about the face of leadership, questionable inequitable hiring practices, and shaping community belief systems, while also creating opportunities for those who aspire to the superintendency. The mechanisms behind social inequality can be viewed from a variety of

theoretical frameworks. However, it is essential to provide a practical implication and address the hidden penalties of gender inequities.

In conclusion, gendered, feminist, and critical organizational theories offer powerful frameworks for current and future school leaders to address equity issues in schools. Theorists must continue developing critical organizational theory for schools, and professional development policies must integrate such frameworks into their teaching. Educational leaders must practice difficult reimagining needed to make school systems more effective and equitable organizations where *all* stakeholders can thrive.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the disproportionate rate of female educational leaders' and their trajectory toward the superintendency. While there is an increasing number of women serving as building leaders, school district directors, and assistant superintendents, the number of female superintendents in the state of Kansas remains disproportional to their male counterparts. This chapter begins by stating the research questions for the study. Next, the methodology behind this study is explained, beginning with a discussion of the framework that will be utilized in the research and the rationale for why it was selected. The role of the researcher is explored in the next section of this chapter. Next, a description of the research that was conducted is given, highlighting the reasoning behind research design decisions. This also includes a description of the selection process used to identify female superintendents who participated in this study. The conclusion of the chapter includes collection and analysis methodology, analysis methods, and how the data will be reported.

Research Design

The researcher's primary purpose is to understand and illuminate the lived experiences, choices, motivations, and needs of female educational administrators. The study lends itself to qualitative research. Qualitative methods are effective when a researcher seeks to understand the process by which events and actions take place (Maxwell, 1996). Merriam (2001) stated that qualitative researchers in education "simply seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (p. 11). She stated that qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities; the world is not an objective thing floating on its own but rather a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly

subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. Research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends. In this paradigm, there are no predetermined hypotheses, no treatments, and no restrictions on the end product. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) articulated that qualitative researchers study in the natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. The researcher, using this method, then acted as the human instrument of data collection and analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 2001). In the exploratory study, the initial research questions framed the study, which focused on the historical barriers and theories centered on the idea of disproportional representation of female education leaders. Both the context and the participants' perceptions and experiences are integral to this study.

One method of qualitative research is a case study. A case study refers to the detailed account of a subject in an attempt to understand a complex issue, while also extending experience or adding strength to previous research. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide-use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Researcher Robert K. Yin defined the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984, p. 23). Today, case studies account for a large proportion of the research in a variety of fields, including psychology, history, education, and medicine. This study employed a qualitative multiple case study approach. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis allowed the researcher to reach an in-depth understanding of the complex factors that influence

the leadership opportunities of females in Kansas specifically. In addition to interviews, this research design includes a review of district and local documents as a method of gathering and triangulating data regarding the superintendent employment rates in Kansas.

In an effort to study the perceived motivations, needs, experiences, and challenges of Kansas school and district-level administrators, ten female administrative leaders were interviewed using an interview protocol script (see Appendix C) regarding their educational leadership careers. The descriptive case study involved multiple forms of data collection, including semi-structured interviews, state data collection, correspondence, and audio recording. As a case study approach allows for dense reporting of both methodology and data, Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert it is the research design most appropriate for naturalistic study. It is important to note that the purpose of conducting a set of case studies is to provide a wealth of feminine perspective on the superintendency, not to attempt analytic generalizability of conclusions, for as Robson (2002) cautioned, case studies and their outcomes are likely to be multifaceted and difficult to capture adequately within a simple theory. This study is too small to support generalizable claims but may suggest themes for further research.

Context of the Study

This study was completed within the state of Kansas. In the 2018-2019 school year, Kansas was comprised of 286 school districts. Kansas has 227 public school superintendents, of which 33 are female (14.5 percent). This was a decrease of 2 percent from the 2017-2018 school year, as reported by the Kansas Association of School Boards.

Participants

Traditional research seeks to draw general conclusions based upon aggregate data from representative samples, but naturalistic studies aim to transfer full, explicit, and detailed

descriptions of phenomena including context, and thus require a sampling procedure that is sensitive to the emerging relevance of insights and purposes in the study (Erlandson et al., 1993). For this study, a purposive sample (Erlandson et al., 1993) was identified for potential participation in the study and includes ten female building and district administrators in Kansas school districts.

Participation was voluntary, and participants could discontinue the interview process at any time. The participants came from various regions of the state and represent rural, suburban, and urban school districts. To further ensure trustworthiness of the research, the set of potential respondents represented a triangulation (Erlandson et al., 1993) of perspectives: three serving as building-level administrators, five serving as lower-level district-level administrators (two of which are former superintendents) and two currently serving superintendents. They were contacted by email, phone, letter, and/or in person and then asked to participate in the study. Furthermore, participants' certification credentials were verified via the state's online KSDE licensure website. After initial participants were selected, snowball sampling was utilized to identify additional study participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Setting

The settings of the interviews were modified slightly due to geographical restrictions. Therefore, Zoom was employed to connect with the building and district leaders who were located farther away from the researcher. This format allowed the researcher to still capture the non-verbal communication, as well as be able to make eye contact and change direction as necessary.

One hour interviews were scheduled at times and locations appropriate and convenient to the participants. The female educational leaders who agreed to participate in the study received

written notification of the date, time and location of the interview. Each subject was provided a copy of, read, and signed an informed consent document that explained the purpose of the study and ensured her participation was voluntary and could be discontinued by her at any time if she so chose. In an effort to avoid a research mortality threat, the researcher asked for permission to interview well in advance and make every effort to clearly explain the purpose, direction, and time requirements before beginning the interview process.

The participants each contributed specific experiential and reflective commentary in the hope that the results might benefit future women contemplating leadership in education, leadership preparatory programs, and/or hiring districts.

Instrumentation

The researcher used a variety of instruments—interviews, handwritten notes, voice recordings, email communications, etc.—to collect data, but the primary instrument in this naturalistic study was the researcher herself (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Thus, the quality of the study was highly dependent upon the skills of the researcher: the observer sought to maintain and improve the accuracy, validity, and reliability of observations through training and extensive preparation.

Face-to-face interviews were the preferred method, but technology was used in instances of geographical or time constraints. The interviews were recorded, but to ensure confidentiality, the researcher utilized letters of the alphabet instead of names and kept all tape-recorded responses and notes in her home on a password protected device. Furthermore, an interview log was maintained to supplement the taped interviews and recorded any and all follow-up questions.

Procedures

This study was submitted for approval to the University of Kansas' Institutional Review Board (IRB) with a full explanation of the researcher as the instrument and data collection processes. All data collected was protected and is currently being kept in a secure location for a minimum of three years after the completion of the study and then will be destroyed.

After IRB approval, all participants were sent introduction letters by email detailing pertinent information about the researcher and the research. Once respondents agreed to participate, they signed the consent to participate form and returned the form to the researcher. Then, an interview was promptly scheduled with the respondent.

The instrumentation for this study involves semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured standardization allowed the main questions to be asked in the same way to all participants, allowing for added validity, and the participant was put at ease by answering the "easier" questions first. The researcher asked questions in a manner that the participant felt comfortable, confident, and perhaps mentor-like. The open-ended interview questions were developed based on the information revealed in the review of the literature, as well as the research questions and sub-questions. The researcher intentionally focused on the respondents' voices to inform the field about their aspirations, motivations, challenges, and successes in their leadership roles, as they recall and know them. Multiple-choice questions, leading questions, and yes/no questions were not utilized, thus minimizing confusing, poor, or invalid responses.

Data Collection, Coding, and Analysis

Confidentiality was protected during the transcription and coding of interviews. All documents and records were handled by the investigator only and were stored in a secure environment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Informed consent documents are being stored separately

from transcribed interview data. Pseudonyms were used to name participant data files and to report findings in order to protect the anonymity of study participants.

All semi-structured, open-ended interviews were voice-recorded digitally using an audio-recording device and/or auto-recording software and transcribed soon thereafter by the researcher, verbatim, with attention to pauses and emphasis to avoid misinterpretation of the participants' intended viewpoints (Robson, 2002). During the study, data was collected through personal interviews, field notes, and the researcher's reflections. Personal interviews were the main source of information, while field notes and researcher's reflections provided insight into the data collected. Responses were initially grouped according to the questions asked. The data was scrutinized; each participant was coded in order to determine emergent themes relevant to the guiding research questions of the study. The data was then compiled using a critical charting method.

Data was then analyzed in several levels and represented multiple ways—visually, tabularly, and in narrative—therefore helping the reader to accurately and credibly experience the perceptions of the participants (Robson, 2002). The researcher employed a constant comparative analysis format. The data analysis employed systematic theming strategies utilized by naturalistic, flexible researchers (Erlandson et al., 1993; Robson, 2002). In order to first identify themes common to the participants, the researcher utilized a coding strategy commonly found within constant comparative analysis research. The first stage in the process is initial coding where the transcripts were read in order to identify key ideas or patterns. After recording key ideas from the interviews, the ideas were tallied to identify dominating patterns.

The second stage focused on coding, where the researcher refined the initial coding with the intent to identify emerging themes through the use of tallying while looking for repetition of

data. In an effort to cluster units of meaning to form themes and categories, colored highlighters were used. Creswell (2007) suggested reading and rereading the transcripts of the interviews several times. This helped to accomplish the second stage of data analysis.

The last stage of data analysis included thematic coding. The researcher analyzed the data by looking for connections between themes. The detailed narrative description of the themes told the story and explained the opportunities and challenges experienced by the participants in the study. Creswell (2007) referred to this final step as the “lessons learned.” The narrative in chapter four illustrates the experiences of the female education leaders as they worked to reach higher levels of educational leadership.

The researcher’s approach to the study, the ethic of care for the participants and their perspectives, and the need to provide full transferability of the data to readers of the study led the researcher to act as the instrument of this study. The researcher knowingly acted as an adaptable human instrument, critically reflective, and selected this qualitative methodology, which emerged during the study as the most appropriate method to achieve the purpose of the study. The researcher’s constructed learning, in the natural process of the study, informed subsequent inquiry and allowed the researcher to adapt her efforts.

The portraiture method advocates the conveyance of richness and texture of the data without distortion of the participant’s meaning to facilitate a “representation of social reality” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The portraits of the participants, individually and as a set, were presented as narrative case-study descriptions and employed a large amount of the interview response data from each participant, allowing a thick, rich, undistorted representation of superintendency as perceived by the female participants.

Ethical Considerations: Trustworthiness and Credibility

Robson (2002) states that many proponents of flexible, qualitative research design avoid the traditional terms ‘reliability’ and ‘validity,’ and instead prefer to rename them credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which might seem to some to support the view that qualitative studies are unreliable and invalid. However, Robson suggests that naturalistic researchers find alternative ways to operationalize the concepts of ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ that are appropriate to a flexible, qualitative inquiry (Robson, 2002).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined a number of techniques that can be used to establish the credibility of naturalistic studies, techniques that can persuade other researchers that the findings are worthy of attention. The techniques from Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) that were used supported the credibility of this study were member checks and prolonged engagement. For transferability, thick description was used. In an effort to establish confirmability, triangulation was used.

Strategies for Avoiding Threats to Validity, Trustworthiness, and Credibility

Trustworthiness and credibility can be thought of as two types of validity—two ways the research can be accurate, or true, or correct. The trustworthiness of a research inquiry refers to a combination of its truth-value, its potential application, the neutrality of its findings, and external judgments made about the consistency of its procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The credibility of a study refers to the measure of agreement on the findings of an inquiry, by the participants of the study, within the context of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness can be thought of as an external judgment of an inquiry, whereas credibility is an internal judgment of a study.

The researcher maintained trustworthiness by following similar procedures when interviewing each participant and asked the same set of main questions. Also, the researcher did not cherry-pick data or participants. All respondents who participated in the study were included in the study. Furthermore, by addressing rival explanations and providing neutrality of findings, the researcher provided another layer of internal validity.

Robson (2002) summarized three main threats to validity in naturalistic research: description, interpretation, and theory. Strategies to avoid these threats to validity are prolonged involvement, triangulation, peer debriefing and support, member checking, negative case analysis, the use of audit trails, referential adequacy materials, and the use of reflexivity to identify potential researcher bias (Erlandson et al., 1993; Robson, 2002). This study avoided these threats to validity by prolonging intensive engagement with the participants, careful member-checks of data during and after the interviews, peer debriefing and negative case analysis and support from colleagues, and the use of reflexivity to avoid researcher bias. Moreover, the researcher made a concerted effort to ensure the readers of this study receive exactly what the participants of the study conveyed.

Potential Contributions of the Research

The topic of women in leadership positions is highly researched. However, little research has been conducted on the journeys of women who aspire and have made it to upper levels of educational leadership. This study seeks to enhance the existing body of research by providing a qualitative research design that documents some of the experiences, aspirations, opportunities, and challenges regarding their current position as a woman in educational leadership. In many ways, it serves to provide a face and a story of the challenges and experiences these women have endured to get to upper levels of leadership

Summary

This chapter included a rationale for using a qualitative multiple case studies design, a context for the study, a summary of data collection methods, a description of procedures used to analyze data, and a list of validity measures.

This chapter focused on the procedures that were followed in this study. The research questions and sub-questions were answered during the interviews. The qualitative research design was the research design chosen for this study. This design was selected because it allowed the researcher to thoroughly examine the data and categorize the data in a manner that will be useful and replicable. The population for this study consisted of building and district administrators in the state of Kansas. The participants are certified administrators and possessed the knowledge and experiences that the researcher needed in order to conduct a meaningful study. The instrumentation for this study was semi-structured interviews. After completing the review of the literature, the researcher constructed a list of questions to use in the interviews with the participants. Raw data was collected, reviewed, and categorized into common themes. The findings will be presented in Chapter Four and demonstrates that the methodology described in Chapter Three was followed.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate the career aspirations and experiences of female administrators in the state of Kansas regarding the barriers and challenges associated with reaching the superintendency. Drawing on their perceptions and experiences, the study explored the intersectionality of gender, social norms, and opportunity gaps. The study was designed to reveal each participant's reality as perceived by the individual as it related to their individual career aspirations and leadership trajectory.

This chapter presents the findings for the following research questions:

1. How does the number of female educational leaders who aspire to the superintendency relate to the total number of superintendents?
2. What perceived (or real) barriers exist that discourage or inhibit female educational leaders from pursuing superintendency positions (e.g., age, family status, years of experiences, school district type, size, or community type, degree attainment, initial interest, race, social norms, gender identities, encouragement)?
3. How does the number of female second-tier district administrators relate to the number of female superintendents? What factors may encourage females to remain in second-tier district administrator positions rather than pursuing the superintendency?

The ten educational leaders in the study were serving as either head principals, mid-level district administrators, or as superintendents during the 2018-2019 school year. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted during the months of December, January, and February of the 2018-2019 school year. The findings in this chapter represent the overarching themes that emerged from the interviews. The narrative of each participant's career aspirations

and journey describes how gender identities, social norms, and at times, race informed their leadership development experiences.

State Data

Table 6: *Kansas State Data on Leadership Representation by Gender*

	Male	Female	No Response	Percent Female
Principals	471	365	151	47.3%
District-Level Administrators	326	713	91	68.6%
Superintendents	194	33	0	14.5%

Note. 2018-2019 Data from KASB's Chief Data Officer, Ted Carter, on March 3, 2019.

In 2018-2019, there were more male principals and superintendents than female principals and superintendents. Females dominated the mid-level administrator position by making up nearly 69 percent of all district administrators in the state of Kansas. However, only 14.5 percent of Kansas superintendents were women (see Table 6).

Trend data from 1995-1996 school year to the 2018-2019 school year indicates that the number of women participating at educational administration is increasing nearly annually across all levels of building and district administration. Twelve percent more women are building administrators in 2018-2019 than 23 years prior. The increase of women filling mid-level and top district administration positions is nine percent more now than it was twenty-three years ago. The largest increase in female leadership participation remains at the building leader level. Trend data also shows that nearly every year, there is an increase in female participation across all domains of leadership (see Table 7).

Table 7: *State Trend Data on Leadership Representation by Gender*

Principals					District Administrators					Superintendents				
School Year	F	M	Total	% F	School Year	F	M	Total	% F	School Year	F	M	Total	% F
1995-96	392	847	1239	32%	1995-96	857	540	1397	61%	1995-96	17	285	302	6%
1996-97	396	852	1248	32%	1996-97	927	551	1478	63%	1996-97	17	285	302	6%
1997-98	410	827	1237	33%	1997-98	880	533	1413	62%	1997-98	17	285	302	6%
1998-99	412	818	1230	33%	1998-99	842	490	1332	63%	1998-99	21	281	302	7%
1999-00	439	795	1234	36%	1999-00	914	502	1416	65%	1999-00	22	257	279	8%
2000-01	448	773	1221	37%	2000-01	887	477	1364	65%	2000-01	25	276	301	8%
2001-02	451	804	1255	36%	2001-02	917	470	1387	66%	2001-02	32	269	301	11%
2002-03	471	814	1285	37%	2002-03	925	482	1407	66%	2002-03	34	266	300	11%
2003-04	454	758	1212	37%	2003-04	949	494	1443	66%	2003-04	33	266	299	11%
2004-05	452	757	1209	37%	2004-05	938	482	1420	66%	2004-05	33	265	298	11%
2005-06	442	730	1172	38%	2005-06	915	460	1375	67%	2005-06	34	263	297	11%
2006-07	474	715	1189	40%	2006-07	909	469	1378	66%	2006-07	36	257	293	12%
2007-08	460	702	1162	40%	2007-08	921	488	1409	65%	2007-08	42	251	293	14%
2008-09	478	728	1206	40%	2008-09	964	506	1470	66%	2008-09	40	251	291	14%
2009-10	477	713	1190	40%	2009-10	966	502	1468	66%	2009-10	36	252	288	13%
2010-11	485	688	1173	41%	2010-11	937	486	1423	66%	2010-11	38	246	284	13%
2011-12	470	671	1141	41%	2011-12	929	459	1388	67%	2011-12	45	236	281	16%
2012-13	475	684	1159	41%	2012-13	909	453	1362	67%	2012-13	44	236	280	16%
2013-14	474	668	1142	42%	2013-14	925	486	1411	66%	2013-14	44	240	284	15%
2014-15	451	664	1115	40%	2014-15	779	376	1155	67%	2014-15	46	235	281	16%
2015-16	485	643	1128	43%	2015-16	826	409	1235	67%	2015-16	46	238	284	16%
2016-17	388	538	926	42%	2016-17	804	351	1155	70%	2016-17	47	226	273	17%
2017-18	451	563	1014	44%	2017-18	827	376	1203	69%	2017-18	44	209	253	17%
2018-19	365	471	836	44%	2018-19	713	326	1039	69%	2018-19	33	194	227	15%

Note. 2018-2019 Data from KASB's Chief Data Officer, Ted Carter, on March 3, 2019.

Demographic Profile of the Participants

The participants included ten female educational leaders in the state of Kansas: two leaders are currently serving as superintendents, two leaders were former superintendents but are now mid-level district administrators, an additional three participants are district-level administrators, and three leaders are serving as head principals. Each educational leader was

asked to provide background and demographic information during the beginning of each semi-structured interview. The demographic profile provided educational, professional, and personal histories as well as background information, such as ethnicity, marital status, family structure, and the number of children. The results of the demographic profiles are reported below (see Table 8) and includes information about the buildings and districts these women are leading, their career paths, and personal demographics.

Table 8

Demographic Profile of Educational Leaders in Kansas

Participant	Total Years of Teaching	Total Years of Assistant Principal	Total Years of Principal	Total Years of Mid-Level District	Total Years of Superintendent	Total Years in Education	Highest Degree Obtained	Race
Superintendent 1	3	3	5	14	2*	27	EdD	African American
Superintendent 2	19	3	0	4	7*	33	MEd	Caucasian
Former Superintendent 3 / District Administrator 1	13	0	5	6*	6	30	MEd	Caucasian
Former Superintendent 4 / District Administrator 2	4	6	11	5*	1	27	EdD	African American
District Administrator 3	1	2	8	2*	0	13	EdD	Hispanic
District Administrator 4	20	0	4	2*	0	26	EdD	Caucasian
District Administrator 5	9	0	0	7*	0	16	MEd	Caucasian
Principal 1	6	1	8*	0	0	15	MEd	Hispanic
Principal 2	9	0	1*	2	0	12	MEd	Caucasian
Principal 3	3	4	24*	0	0	31	MEd	Caucasian

** Denotes Current Level*

Professional Background Findings:

The women interviewed in the study reported that their ages ranged from 36 to 61 years old. Years of professional service varied greatly with leadership experience ranging from one year to twenty-four years. Regarding the educational background, all of the participants hold either a master's degree or a doctoral degree. Six hold master's degrees, four hold doctoral degrees, and one is currently pursuing her EdD (see table 8).

Table 9

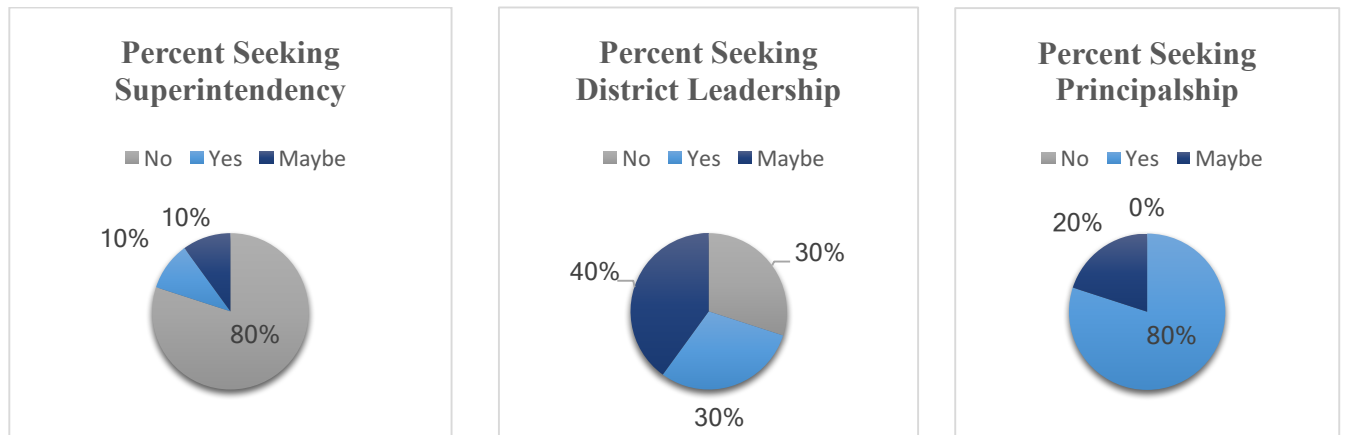
Educational Leaders' Current District Profiles, 2019

Participant	Locale	District
Superintendent 1	City, Large	6A
Superintendent 2	Town: Remote	3A
Former Superintendent 3 / District Administrator	Town: Distant	5A
Former Superintendent 4 / District Administrator	Rural: Remote	1A
District Administrator 3	City, Small	6A
District Administrator 4	City, Small	6A
District Administrator 5	City, Small	6A
Principal 1	Rural: Fringe	6A
Principal 2	City, Small	6A
Principal 3	City, Small	6A

The women participating serve in districts with student enrollment from 350 students to well over 50,000 students. The Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) divides schools based upon enrollment of grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 for competition and state and regional championships. The largest 32 schools in the state are class 6A, the next largest 32 become 5A, the next 64 become 4A, 3A, and 2A respectively and the remaining schools become class 1A. The participants' district sizes are classified from 1A to 6A school districts (see Table 9).

Figure 1

Initial Career Aspirations of Participants



Interestingly, only one woman started her career in education with the end goal set as the superintendent. Seven of the women considered mid-level district administration during the early years of their careers. All of the women considered serving as building administrators (see Figure 1).

Table 10
Summary of Career Paths

Participant	Elementary Teacher	Elementary Principal	Counselor	Secondary Teacher	Secondary Vice-Principal	Secondary Principal	Director	Assistant/ Deputy Superintendent	Superintendent
Superintendent 1	X	X					X	X	X
Superintendent 2				X	X	X		X	X
Former Superintendent 3 / District Administrator 1		X	X	X			X	X	X
Former Superintendent 4 / District Administrator 2				X	X	X	X	X	X
District Administrator 3				X	X	X	X		
District Administrator 4	X	X					X		
District Administrator 5	X						X		
Principal 1	X	X							
Principal 2	X	X		X			X		
Principal 3	X	X		X	X				

Six of seven women served as principals before moving to the district office. Regarding ascension to their positions, 100 percent of the women were promoted internally within their current district. While the career paths are varied in the group, both elementary and secondary teachers became building administrators. However, the most prominent path toward district administration stemmed from secondary backgrounds. These women moved to the upper administration levels after experiencing either secondary teaching or principalship (see Table 10).

Personal Background Findings

Table 11

Female Educational Leaders' Marital Status and Number of Children

Characteristic	n	%
Marital Status		
Married-First Time	6	60%
Married-Second	1	10%
Divorced	3	30%
Number of Children		
0	0	0%
1	5	50%
2	4	40%
3+	1	10%

Note: n=10

Regarding marital status, six leaders reported being married, one is married a second time after the death of her first husband, and three reported being divorced (see Table 11). Regarding children, every leader reported having children, although their ages ranged from two years old to adulthood. Table 11 summarizes the marital status and number of dependents of each participant.

Profile of Individual Women Leaders

Superintendent 1. Superintendent 1 (hereinafter S1) became superintendent in 2017. She has 15 years of combined district leadership experience. She was a student in the district that she is currently serving. In fact, she spent her entire student and professional life in the same district. She served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, director, assistant superintendent, and superintendent in the same 6A school district. She taught in the classroom for five years and then served as principal for five years. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Elementary Education, a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction, and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Administration. She is married and has two daughters.

Superintendent 2. Superintendent 2 (hereinafter S2) graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English Education in 1980. Due to her husband running a family farm, she waited two years before teaching English for eleven years in a neighboring school district. During this time, she earned her Master's in Secondary Education and shortly after received her building certification. In the same district where she was teaching, she progressed as assistant principal for four years. When she thought she had reached the principalship, she experienced disappointment as the job was handed to another candidate. Two weeks later, the superintendent called from the district where she resided and asked her if she would be interested in an assistant superintendent of curriculum position. She quickly received certification in district-level administration. Then, she served in that capacity for five years before becoming the superintendent in the same district. She has served in this capacity for seven years and is planning on retiring at the end of this school year. She is married and has two grown children.

Former Superintendent 3 / District Administrator 1. Former Superintendent 3 and District Administrator 1 (hereinafter S3/DA1) graduated from college in 1983 and married the same year. She taught middle school for thirteen years. After growing in concern for her students' lives outside of school, she decided to obtain a Master's in School Counseling. She immediately took a position in a 4A school district. She began to see how decisions were being made systemically, and with her understanding of social-emotional pieces of students, she decided to move ahead as a principal in the same district after becoming certified. After a combined nine years as principal and counselor, the participant became superintendent for six years in a small rural 1A school district. She found that her world was getting small and realized that her time working in the district was over, so she accepted a position as assistant

superintendent in a 6A district. She has served in this capacity for six years. She is married and has two children.

Former Superintendent 4 / District Administrator 2. Former Superintendent 4 and District Administrator 2 (hereinafter S4/DA2) began her student teaching in an urban district. On the second day, she discovered that she was ill-equipped to deal with diverse learners in the classroom. So, she halted her teaching plans and immediately obtained her Master's in Special Education. She taught in a high needs classroom for four years. During that time, she worked on her Master's in School Administration. She accepted a middle school assistant principal position and served in that capacity for six years. An opportunity to serve as principal arrived, and she joyously accepted. She ended up staying in that role for eleven years. During this time, she earned a Doctor of Education degree. She accepted a district-level position as Human Resources director, assistant superintendent, and then interim superintendent. Now, she is happy serving as the 6A school district's deputy superintendent. She is married and has teenager and two bonus sons who are college-age.

District Administrator 3. District Administrator 3 (hereinafter DA3) started her career as a high school teacher. Her husband serves in the military, so they had to relocate across the country shortly after she began teaching. During this time, she finished a Master's degree in Educational Administration. As they knew they would not stay long, she decided to take a temporary job as a community college adjunct professor. They relocated again and she accepted an assistant principal position for a year. Then, they were relocated back to Kansas, where she served as a secondary assistant principal. During this time, she received her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. She progressed to the principalship in two different districts (5A and 6A) for a total of eight years. Now, she has spent the last two years at the district office serving

in two different director roles. She is married, has a young son, and is considering growing their family once more.

District Administrator 4. District Administrator 4 (hereinafter DA4) holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from two Kansas universities. She worked for twenty years as an elementary language arts consulting teacher, Title I reading liaison, instructional coach, seventh-grade reading teacher, and a first- and second-grade teacher. She previously served as a reading specialist/Title I coordinator for four years in Illinois. After teaching, she accepted a position as an elementary school principal. She served in that capacity for four years. She now serves as a district-level director in a 6A school district. She is married with one grown child.

District Administrator 5. District Administrator 5 (hereinafter DA5) started her career by accepting a position as a paraprofessional educator. Pregnant during the time of her college graduation, she decided to take on a position as a Title 1 math para for a year. Then, she served as a first-grade teacher and an ELA teacher for nine years. Interestingly, this participant never served in an assistant principal role, nor a principal role. After teaching, she immediately moved to the district office and served as a coordinator, specialist, assistant director, and now as a director. She has spent the entirety of her career in one 6A district. In fact, she was a student and a product of that specific school system. During the time she was a teacher, the participant was a single mom of three boys. During the time that she served as a district administrator, she married and divorced.

Principal 1. Principal 1 (hereinafter P1) began teaching in an elementary school in 2005. She stayed in that 6A district for six years. During that time, she decided to earn a Master's in Educational Leadership and Administration degree with a cohort of colleagues and friends. Even though she did not intend to use her degree for another decade or so, she was approached

regarding an assistant principal position. She did that for one year before the district administration moved her to a principal position in a high-needs building. She served there for seven years. After experiencing some career frustration, she moved to a neighboring 6A district where she currently serves as principal of another elementary school. She had a child after her first year of teaching and then divorced in 2009. She has been the primary, single parent since that time.

Principal 2. Principal 2 (hereinafter P2) graduated in 1994 with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Teaching. She spent two years as a paraprofessional in a Title I reading position. Moving forward, she accepted her first certified teaching job in an elementary school after. After four years in that position, she decided to be a stay-at-home mom with her two children for seven years. It was never her plan to return to teaching. She even let her teaching license lapse. Unfortunately, her husband passed away unexpectedly spurring her to go back to teaching in a middle school for seven years. During this time, she remarried and completed a Master's degree in school administration. She then she moved to a district office position as a secondary curriculum facilitator. Afterward, she served as an elementary learning coach for a year. She is currently serving as an elementary school principal.

Principal 3. Principal 3 (hereinafter P3) is one of the study's more seasoned administrators. She started her college experience majoring in business, but she quickly realized desk work was not her end goal. Friends and family encouraged her to think about education. She completed a Bachelor's degree in elementary education with a minor in math in 1985. Immediately, she began working on her Master's in Educational Administration at a neighboring university while she was teaching middle and elementary school. She taught for three years and then moved into an assistant principal role in a K-8 building. She served there for four years.

Once the district built a new school, she had her choice between a K-4 and a 5-8 building principalship in a district in the Western half of the state. With a young child and a new marriage, she decided to serve as a K-4 principal. She was the youngest elementary principal in the state of Kansas. She served as the administrator for six years there. After her experience in a 2A and 4A district and a marriage on the decline, she decided to pursue other options. In an effort to move away from a bad marriage that was headed quickly toward divorce, she took a position as principal in a 6A district several hours away. She has served as a principal in the same building for the past eighteen years. She is now happily divorced and is a single mom of a grown son.

Findings: Major Thematic Strands

This section presents the major findings based on the coding procedures used in this study (see Table 12). This study employed a categorical-content analysis to focus on specific themes within the narrative. The following themes were developed from interview transcripts based on the questions found in the interview protocol (see Appendix C): intersectionality, motherhood, career choices and opportunities, leadership experiences, gender politics, and cultivation of future leaders. Lichtman's (2012) "Three-C's" coding process (i.e. code, categorize, and concepts) was utilized during the analysis phase. Raw data was transformed into critical elements through the coding, categorizing, and the development of conceptual themes. Furthermore, information gleaned from the literature assisted in identifying preliminary themes.

Table 12

Summary of Codes, Categories, and Themes

	Codes	Categories	Themes
<i>The employee/candidate = SUPPLY SIDE</i>			
Career ambition Confidence Acting assertively Ideologies of Gender Competitiveness (wage and negotiation skills) Personality Values Attitudes Family expectations Investing in family sphere Family support Risk-adverse Career interruptions – childbearing Gender-role socialization Greater amount of work/more productive	Confidence, Becoming invincible, Being challenged, Perceptions Family expectations Investing in family sphere Family support Career interruptions – childbearing Time requirements Networking, taking additional responsibilities, goal oriented, history of accomplishment, confidence, drive, goal(s) Perceptions, Balancing stereotypes, Striving to belong, Competitiveness (wage and negotiation skills), Greater amount of work/more productive	Gender social norms, race, age, motherhood, past experiences Timing for childbearing, emotional constraints, family support, time Value of opportunity, mentors, Professional growth, career goals, trailblazing Desire to belong, leaning into experiences, balancing stereotypes and reality, productivity	Intersectionality: You are who you are Motherhood – Unequivocally difficult Career choices/ Opportunity—mentorship: The value of an opportunity Leadership experiences: Playing the game,
<i>The employer = DEMAND SIDE</i>			
Search Committees Boards assume women are less competent Beliefs	Community, search committees, BOE desire for certain types of individuals,	Patriarchy – social beliefs and assumptions, gender norms, <i>Good Ol'</i>	Gender Politics

	Codes	Categories	Themes
Discriminatory Hiring Practices	negotiating contracts, salaries, promotions,	<i>Boys network, gatekeepers</i>	
Dominant actors	appearance,		
Masculine qualities	perceptions,		
Mindset	<i>Good Ol' Boys Club,</i>		
In-group members/network	In-group preferences/ hegemony		
Good ol boy club			
Inadequate PD and mentoring	Discrimination in forms of hegemony,		
HS principals	inequality,		
Recruitment	oppression. Therefore		
Evaluation techniques	outcomes: salaries, authority, promotions		

Critique of Supply and Demand – Institutional + Feminist Perspectives

Inertia = resistance to change	Perceptions,	Paving the way,	Cultivating future
Self-reinforcing patterns	time commitment,	Lessons learned,	leaders:
	thick skin,	Pay it forward	empowering others
	developing others,		
Not seeking legislative changes	disrupting status quo,		
Removal of barriers (liberal feminists)	female HR directors,		
Deconstruct existing hierarchies (radical)	appreciate the collective knowledge and wisdom of men,		
Remove status beliefs and interpret human experience (Postmodern)	making the superintendency more attractive to potential candidates		

Theme 1 - Intersectionality: You are Who You Are

Intersectionality considers different systems of oppression, and specifically how they overlap and are compounded. For example, the common statistic that women make 72 cents on the dollar that a man makes is often sprouted around by a number of organizations and news outlets. However, the singular focus on one identity – gender – is shortsighted and does not fully address the broader systemic problem. For example, if the woman does not identify as a cis-gender, falls within a race outside of White, and has a disability, then the likelihood of her earning 72 cents on the dollar is, in fact, quite less. The concept of intersectionality is meant to illustrate the social categorizations that are interconnected and daily struggles for people in regards to inequality and privileges that come with such multi-faceted identities. As the researcher studied the participants' backgrounds and stories, she felt that it was imperative to discuss the intersectionality that each of the female leaders face on a daily basis. They were frequently confronted with the assumptions and stereotypes associated with their gender, social and cultural expectations, race, and, at times, age.

Born This Way: Race and Gender. When considering the supply demands, as discussed in previous chapters, the internal motivation to apply and accept positions was complicated by the multiple identities that some of the participants experience. One former superintendent discussed how she is regionally limited in Kansas because of her race.

I share [the idea] that the reality in Kansas is there are literally very few places that I will apply. My options are limited. My (White) mentor asked me what I meant. I said, "Doc, I could never go to Jetmore...or..." He then questioned why I could never go. I said, "Well, those rural, western places provide more opportunity for White males." Race came first in that consideration, and then the next layer was gender. The reality is that in some places, it will be hard for a woman and a woman of color to be superintendent (S4/DA2).

Once a candidate accepted a position, she then felt a tremendous amount of pressure and responsibility to be successful. The need to succeed is a natural human desire, yet for Black women and Hispanic women, their success is beyond simple bragging rights or a pat on the back. Their success represents something bigger than their own personal victory.

As the first woman and the first African American to serve as superintendent in the [this larger] district, I can't let women down, and I can't let African Americans down. I have to show the world that we, too, can be successful women and African Americans in this type of role. So, I also feel pressure from that expectation to be the first of something, you got to open the door and bear the shoulders for that door to stay open so that people feel confident that women or African Americans can lead in this type of role. I am building capacity. So, that is a lot of pressure for a person to handle while also trying to stay focused on my family too (S1).

When asked whether they felt that being a woman or being an additional identity made their job more difficult or led to more discrimination, the majority of the women found it more difficult to tease the two identities apart. However, regardless of which identity was causing a problem, several of the women had strategies ready to deploy to counter any potential discrimination.

In order to counter the discrimination that I experience is to really just call it out in certain spaces and to ask those hard questions. Sometimes people are not aware that their biases are showing up either around gender or race. For example, I had expressed concern about leaving the district office alone late at night. A colleague challenged my concern, which had nothing to do with me being a woman, nor did it have to do with an unwillingness to stay late on my part. I am a professional. People say that they don't want to put a woman in a possibly unsafe position and press into the old age belief that women are weak. A more well-meaning method would be to initiate a conversation about what steps we need to take to change the conditions so her safety is not in jeopardy. I didn't want to be a victim of sexist rhetoric. So, I just call out some of those things in a diplomatic way, because sometimes people do not realize their biases are showing up. Sometimes they are really clear on it but do not expect you to inquire on where it is coming from. When assumptions come up, I just have real conversations about it and whatever is showing up in the room (S4/DA2).

Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages. It takes into account

people's overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of the prejudices they face. When it comes time to apply for a certain position, some women face additional challenges in finding communities that will accept them as they are.

I feel like I am held back occasionally by the networking that current superintendents participate in, the meetings that occur outside of the meetings, and the fact that there have been historically more male superintendents who are now part of these superintendent search firms who are then typically calling people they know, which continues to seem to be those who are male and predominantly white. I have to take into account location and regional differences in Kansas. There are just some places that I am just not willing to go. As a White person, you might be able to go [to western Kansas] to build up your resume and come back [East]. However, it would be a whole different experience for a person of color (S4/DA2).

Perceptions: Countering Age. Age discrimination is difficult to talk about and even more difficult to prove. Most commonly, women described experiencing age discrimination as a feeling and point of frustration in their early careers.

I have a fabulous relationship with our HR director, but every once in a while, I've left his office saying, "Okay, dad! Thanks!" because of that fatherly role that he tries to take on. He's admitted that he has to intentionally remember to stop looking at people based on their age. He has a kid almost as old as I am. I think those biases are there especially for older males – not all of them, but some of them (D3).

The participants nearing retirement provided advice to younger women seeking the superintendency.

Younger women need to know the importance of having confidence in ourselves that we can be district leaders. Yes, it's a traditionally male job, but we can do it. I have made a point, because I'm heavy on curriculum, to step outside my comfort zone. I have made a point to learn about buses, insurance, etc. Even if I don't like it, I don't want to ever go to the board and act like a dumb blonde. Female leaders just need to realize that 'yes, we can learn it!' (S2).

Invisible to the Invincible. Society teaches many women from childhood the virtues of being humble, nice, accommodating, respectful, and quiet. So, when women strive to make an impact and change the status quo, they are often seen as bossy and aggressive.

When you listen to my mother talk about me as a child, she'll say that I've always been bossy, especially to my little brother. My mother always saw this bossiness as potential for leadership. It took me time to make a leap into being bold and taking the lead, even though it was likely always part of who I am (S1).

In a masculinized profession that is predominantly held by White men, women had to be strategic about how to enter the workforce when coming as their true selves. Three participants discussed the amount of effort it took to initially gain credibility and earn trust amongst stakeholders. Based on the conversations about race and gender, all participants overwhelmingly expressed that both social constructs influenced their development as leaders. The three minority female leaders felt that being African American or Hispanic and female were not mutually exclusive categories; on the contrary, they contended that both background characteristics influenced their development into the leaders they are today.

I actually followed a male administrator who had been here for thirteen years, so I wondered how this more affluent community would welcome me into their school community after going from a White male to a Hispanic female. I was wondering how that would be perceived or taken from a systemic level (P1).

In the beginning, some of the fathers challenged me a little more than I was expecting. It seemed they thought of me as a little pet. They would be condescending in their tone when talking to me. Furthermore, being a bilingual female and Hispanic, sometimes I find that who I am makes people want to put me in a box. When I first came to this school, there were some parents talking. They instantly wondered if I was going to make the school into a bilingual school site. I had never even touched or discussed that. I am also very conscientious about being a single woman administrator too. I think that adds another layer of difficulty (P1).

Working the system: Gender. When asked the question about how their gender shaped their development as leaders, the participants confessed that being a woman meant they would always have to work harder. They knew they would always be challenged and they would always have to confront and overcome stereotypical perceptions. These thoughts were grounded in the realization that things are different for them, as women, compared to their male counterparts.

I think you have to work harder than your male counterpart. I think you have to do more research and put more into it and do twice the homework they had to do. However, at the end of the day, you are better off for it. I've thrown many ideas out there, and I'm not given credit for it. A male will pick it up and take full credit, and so you have to be okay and comfortable in that. I read recently about women on President Obama's team. They had similar experiences and knew that the men would take good ideas, run with it, and take the credit. So, they made a point to be a team amongst themselves. When someone threw an idea out, they rolled that idea back to the originator. It's not really about who had the idea, it's about moving ahead, but you can't be about all the credit (S3/DA1).

Confidence: Prepare to be Tested. Recently, Serena Williams was in the news for her claims of being drug tested more than any other of the tennis athletes. She never failed a test, yet she felt targeted by ongoing testing. She wondered if it was because she was a strong, black female athlete rather than driven by genuine concern. Four of the women interviewed spoke directly to the need for self-confidence, as it was a commonplace to be not only tested by colleagues and the district, but also by community stakeholders.

I recently had a heated conversation with another director here. We have been friends in the past, but he just exploded one day. I can tell he is just frustrated with where he is in the district. We've been at odds the last couple of months. What finally came out of the explosion was him declaring, "You don't know what it is like to have to try for positions, because you just keep getting promoted!" It hurts when people think you don't get your job based on merit. I'm not just some amazing political strategist that conned my way into the job (DA3).

Self-confidence is a personal characteristic identified by seven of the ten women. Many divulged how their confidence allowed them to seek and accept feedback and criticism.

We can be barriers to our own selves. Sometimes, we create our own barriers for not being able to feel like we can. If we don't know thy self or feel the confidence in ourselves, we can be our own worst enemy (S1).

I used to work with this lovely lady. She always encouraged me by saying, "Don't be a weak sister." To this day, I use this line on myself. I can tackle any tough situation with a mental cheerleading thought: 'Come on, don't be a weak sister.' (S2).

Notions of gender and the way a person's gender is interpreted by others are always impacted by notions of race and the way that person's race is interpreted. For example, a person is never received as just a woman; how that person is racialized impacts how the person is

received as a woman. Notions of blackness, brownness, and whiteness always influence gendered experience, and there is no experience of gender that is outside of the experience of race. In addition to race, the gendered experience is also shaped by age, sexuality, class, and ability; likewise, the experience of race is impacted by gender, age, class, sexuality, and ability resulting in differing levels of privilege.

Privilege results in issues, roadblocks, and glass ceilings that the privileged party does not experience, which allows them to move through life more easily and safely than those facing more obstacles along the same path. This can be hard to see since the privileged person likely still has to work very hard to achieve success in their chosen endeavors.

I understand, or at least am continuing to develop my understanding as a White person, what that privilege has afforded me. So, I feel that there is a perception still that there is more power associated with maleness than femaleness, which is maybe why I like to come off as unnecessarily strong sometimes in an attempt to demand more respect. I am still learning to navigate those structures and confines (DA3).

Theme 2 - Motherhood: Unequivocally Difficult

Women's increased involvement in the economy was one of the more significant changes in the labor market during the past century. As earlier chapters mentioned, there has been a substantial increase in women participating in the workforce. Recently, economic scholars started exploring whether or not women anticipate the employment effects of motherhood. The findings echo the voices of the female participants interviewed. College-educated women, in particular, underestimate the demands of parenthood and the difficulties of combining working and parenting (Kuziemko et al., 2018). In the same cost-analysis study, researchers found that the cost of motherhood fell for most of the twentieth century because of inventions like dishwashers, formula, and the birth control pill. But that's no longer the case. This study cited that the cost of childcare has increased by 65 percent since the early 1980s. Eighty percent of women breastfeed,

up from about half. The number of hours that parents spend on childcare has risen, especially for college-educated parents, for whom it has doubled. “We do have children to take care of. I was never the breadwinner in our family, so if we needed someone to be home with our children, that would have to be me (P2).” Societal expectations, family support, and individual choice drive the consequences, both positive and negative, for women choosing to be both mothers and educational leaders.

Right Time for Childbearing and Childrearing. Of the ten women interviewed, all are mothers. Women decided to begin their journey toward the principalship and onto the superintendency at different junctures in their motherhood experience. None of the women became superintendents when they were mothers with young children, and nearly all of the participants cautioned against that.

For me, I found that my children needed to be older before I could take on this job. I could not have done this job before this time in my kids’ lives. I probably even should have waited a few more years. This may just be part of my family structure, but I just don’t want to miss anything. That is why I didn’t pursue anything before now. I don’t know how people with little kids do it (P2).

All of the women discussed how having child(ren) altered their career plans and timeframe. The following narratives illustrate the difficulty in finding the perfect time.

I think to have children and then the responsibility as a mom always has to be something that you take into consideration when you are trying to take on jobs that take more of your time. So, sure, I did take into consideration and those were conversations that I had with my family because there are responsibilities that I have to take care of it home and then being in a job where you really are on call all the time. In this job as the superintendent, my contract even reads 365 days of the year 24/7. So, you have to make sure that those decisions are made with your children, future or present, in mind (S1).

Honestly, I am not interested in the superintendency any more. I’ve had districts reach out to me to hire me. I managed to do one year of it. Now, I understand that my son needs me more right now. I know there are people who do that whole work/life balance, but I know what type of child I have and the amount of time that I put into my work now. I can’t. I survived it for a year, but ... I can’t make a bigger sacrifice than what I am making now (S4/DA2).

I was so disillusioned when having my first child. I was only going to take four weeks of maternity leave, and in my head, I was just going to bring him to work and put him on a nice little blanket on the carpet. Later, I realized that was ridiculous. I thought it would be so easy. That was not at all what happened. I'm comfortable in my position now (D3).

When I decided to take the superintendency, my daughter was going into her senior year of high school. Because of the area that I was in, I felt like I had to bring my family with me to also be students in the district to show that community that I was invested in the community and schools. Ultimately, I moved my family her senior year. My son was in his last year of middle school too, so it was very tough. It was a very hard year. I don't know now in retrospect that I would have done that. But, we did. We survived, and we learned resilience and that moving isn't the worst thing in the world. They made new friends that they wouldn't have had otherwise (S3/DA1).

Childbearing and childrearing influenced mobility possibilities for several of the women.

While no one mentioned the notion of constraint, they did discuss that their options were limited by the ability to relocate their families. One superintendent asked how women are even expected to approach such conversations. One participant explained that patriarchal family structures are to blame.

We're not going to move when my husband is also an administrator. What am I supposed to do? Family structures are not in the place where a woman is welcomed to come home and say, 'Honey, our family is moving!' How do you overcome that hurdle? (S2).

Whether early in their careers or at the end, the participants shared how location can be both a challenge to overcome and a blessing in disguise.

I didn't really want to move at the time because of family and young children. I wanted the kids around their grandparents. I also wasn't unhappy with what I was doing. I was quite happy with what I was doing. I didn't feel the need to make a change. ... Thirty years later, now I have no desire to retire, but it is kind of exciting to consider. I always keep my options open. I'm at a different place than I've ever been in that my children are grown. I am not landlocked somewhere. I can move and do something completely different (S3/DA1).

Emotional Constraints. The women illuminated on their experience of trying to find peace and acceptance early in their careers when still managing to juggle work and home. For many working moms, the feeling of having a fulfilling career while raising a happy, healthy family can feel impossible at times.

When I'm home, I'm thinking about work, and when I am at work, sometimes I am thinking about home (DA3).

"Mommy guilt" was a common feeling shared throughout the interviews. It was a pervasive feeling that they said could strike at any time and at any stage during motherhood. From leaving a new baby in an unfamiliar daycare to helping an adult child through cancer, each mother experienced a form of guilt that seemed suffocating at one time or another.

There is an expectation a basketball star's mom to serve as a team mom. A good example is when my middle son started high school, and he was playing JV varsity basketball as a freshman. The coach was looking for a team mom. The coach called me and asked me to shadow the current team mom. Oh! I couldn't do any of it! I couldn't organize a team dinner or get the sign-up list out in time. Plus, that's not really how I want to spend my time as a parent. Those aren't the things that are super important to me, but there was still guilt associated with not being able to do something with my kids to support them. I've missed so much, like their games or orchestra concert. There's absolutely guilt (D5).

But I do feel guilty because sometimes I'm at someone else's program when I should be at my own daughter's program. I feel guilty when I walk in the door, and I'm supposed to be cooking, and I'm supposed to be interacting with her, and I'm sitting here checking the weather to see if we will have to shut down school or responding to somebody who made a threat to a high school, which I am problem-solving. I just feel like sometimes I'm not getting all that I can to my family (S1).

When asked whether or not the women thought their children's fathers felt the same level of guilt, they responded with a resounding no. "I guess my kids' father misses things, and I don't think that he feels a sense of guilt (DA5)." This disconnected feeling extends beyond fathers and onto male colleagues.

Women are, in my opinion, better at juggling and figuring out that balance. Sometimes it takes a long time to figure out that balance. When I think about some of my male colleagues that I'm close to, there has never been a question about evening events or whatever. They aren't having to figure out their plans, like daycare or who is covering this or that or what to attend or not (P3).

Boundaries, specifically unapologetic boundaries, are something that the women struggled to set, especially at the beginning of their careers. Whether boundary setting stemmed from guilt, fear, or pride, each mother commented on the expectation that they felt to be it all.

Family Support. The interviews resulted in participants with a wide range of family support. Only one participant mentioned poor family support.

As far as family, I really don't have the strongest family support network. My mom did help occasionally, but a lot of times I just paid for sitters. Whether I was headed to a school function or a board meeting, I just had to call in someone else to come in and sit with my child (P1).

The wonderful thing that I had was huge family support. My husband and I had both of our families living nearby. Especially my husband's mother – she worked in the home, and she wanted the kids to stay with her. So, they stayed with her, and I never had to worry who they were with or what was going on. My parents were both working, but they were happy to take the kids on the weekends. I love the relationship they have with their grandparents. They are really close because of that. That was really helpful. I don't know if I could have done all of that if I didn't have that family support (S3/DA1).

The majority of the women attributed their success to their husband and the strength of their family dynamics.

I have just tried to let my husband help to be mommy instead of me. That still bothers me, but I know that my daughter is fine. She be like, 'I'm fine. I got you, mom.' I'm so proud of them both. They are such confident young women and very smart. You know you are always afraid when you see what happens to other people's kids when they don't pay enough attention to their kids. I just don't want that to happen to my kids, but I know it won't because my husband is the bomb (S1)!

Beyond family support, the family structure was also mentioned as an important key to their success and finding the work/home balance.

We have a nontraditional family. I was the one that worked full time, and my husband was the one who did most of the childcare and picking up the kids. He was self-employed, so he could leave when he wanted to and take care of all those things. I think living in a small town and during our generation, it takes a really strong man to do that (S3/DA1).

Time Requirements. Another challenge that the participants discussed was how leadership positions take a lot of time and can be a toll on the family. The superintendent, for example, is constantly on call, expected to be visible in the community, available to all stakeholders, involved in a variety of community, and present for a multitude of school functions. In fact, each mid-level manager and building administrator mother explained that time

was one of the requirements of the position that would need to change in order for the position to be more attractive to her.

As a building or district leader, you are to be responsible and jack of all trades, but master of none. So, I struggle with that because I can tend to be a perfectionist. I'm starting to see myself being happy doing one thing really well rather than trying to do everything. So, if the position was shifted and there was an ability to really gate-keep and guard your time, then I would be really excited about that. The superintendency gets so distracted with different things. With the superintendency, you are trying to manage your board, and there are all those other factors that are just big distractors from the work we do. We teach, and we reach kids every day. So, if that shifted or if that position could truly be a leadership position, then I would be more intrigued (DA3).

Additionally, since women typically take care of the children and home, some of the participants expressed that leadership roles takes away from their family. The following narratives portray the internal turmoil mothers feel when trying to also be successful leaders.

I'm a pleaser, so if something needs to be done, I will volunteer to do it even when I really don't have the time. So, one of two things happen: I lose time with my family and I get a quality project done, or I spend the time with my family, and then I don't have a quality project done. From my perspective, it's always a give-and-take. Which gets the best of me - work or home? Then, there are times when, frankly, that none of it gets my best (DA5).

Last night, I got home at 7:30, and my teenagers were all waiting for me to see what was for dinner. I was like, seriously, people? Which is probably my own fault, but we follow those traditional roles (P2).

It was hard to be a single mom and to do my job here. It was hard for me to balance. As my son got older, there were things that he resented. He spent a lot of time just hanging out in my office. He will tell you about that now as an adult and how hard it was for him (P3).

I sometimes feel bad for my husband. I have often books, phones, and computers in the bed, and he will fall just asleep on the couch. I just feel like I've taken over and changed all the dynamics in my home (S1).

One mentor attempted to encourage a participant to take a leap and continue her education so that she will be in a better position to reach her career goals. When the participant explained that she worried about missing more time with her child, the mentor said, "Some

moms go out and play Bridge or go out and have cocktails with friends, but you'll just go to class. That's just the way it is. You'll just do it differently (P1)."

On the other hand, two superintendents and a principal felt that their position allowed their child(ren) and family to flourish. It was approached almost like a learning and empowerment opportunity.

I think being a single mom and in a situation where it's 100% on my shoulders, I found motivation in wanting to be an example for my daughter. I wanted her to show what it looks like to be a woman in the 21st century, and that I can be a single mom and a principal. You know, decades ago, that wouldn't have been possible. I just wanted to show her you can be a woman, and you can do it all (P1).

I tried to make my kids understand why I may not have always been there. I looked at it as role modeling. What am I modeling for my kids? That was always the most important. I would tell them that I had to be gone because there are kids there who no one else would come for them, and I need to be there for them. I tried to build empathy in my own children to understand that was why. I really don't think they missed out. I hope not (S3/DA1).

Even though the time requirements of successful leadership often drew stress and anxiety, the participants each spoke to the balance of work and family and how they managed to do so in their own worlds.

You just make it happen. You hustle. It is non-stop. That's one thing when you're taking on a leadership role at home and at school, the buck stops with you all the time. You are responsible for many things on your shoulders. I think that being a single mom and principal, I've had to do a lot to remind myself to relax in order to find that balance in my life and to give myself permission to have the balance (P1).

Theme 3 - Career Choices and Opportunities: The Value of Opportunity

The Value of Opportunities. The third theme outlines career choices and opportunities. Each of the women discussed what sparked their move toward the advanced leadership positions, shared various trailblazing stories, and illustrated the value of opportunity and a chance to succeed. Furthermore, each leader discussed the role of mentors throughout their leadership journey and the idea that mentorship can expand beyond one's own race and gender. The leaders

illustrated a variety of experiences, both negative and positive, and the effects these experiences had on their professional growth and subsequent choices.

Sparkling Upward Movement. Only one of the women interviewed initially began teaching with the superintendency in mind as her final professional destination. Rather, many of the women shared that at some point during their teaching career that it was time to make the leap to either the principalship or the district office. While the most common career trajectory was from teacher to principal, one of the candidates moved directly to the district office.

A series of encouragers, both professional and personal, guided the professional pathway of the majority of leaders through both moments of uncertainty and victory.

I really loved leadership and the big picture, but I worried that I was too young. He [previous principal] told me to stop [worrying]. He encouraged me to pursue what I dreamed of right then. He used himself as an example. I knew that he had that ability because he was 6'2" and a dude. ... He pushed me. I think the common thread in the mentorship is the encouragement and breaking through some of those pieces (DA3).

When the previous superintendent announced his retirement, the board expressed they wanted a diverse pool of candidates including women and people of color with experience. So, I found a yearbook that showed all of the superintendents in Kansas. I realized that if other states look like Kansas, the likelihood of us finding anyone outside of a White male is slim to none. That was eye opening for me. At that moment, the retiring superintendent asked me what I was going to do about it. I was just telling him that there were not a lot of candidates, but he started asking me questions like, "How would you prepare yourself to be a candidate?" He understood the fact that the likelihood was small, but he turned the problem back to me. I told him that I didn't have any interest in being a superintendent. He posed some really good questions around myself and honestly creating a [professional] goal. What did I have to lose? I applied. I got it (S4/DA2).

Many leaders noted that White men occupied the leadership positions prior to their current role as principals, mid-level administrators, and superintendents. Two leaders expressed that White men exclusively granted the opportunities afforded to them. The men served as mentors and set the stage for the women to access the superintendency.

... the superintendent called me, and asked if I would take a curriculum [assistant superintendent] position? ... I felt like I was gifted that position. So then, it came time for him to retire. I owed the man. He gifted me the superintendent's job too because he went to the [school] board and insisted they hire me. I've been in this role ever since (S2).

One leader shared an interesting analogy of why she is comfortable in her mid-level administrative position.

I was actually watching this documentary about backup singers, and they interviewed one of Mick Jagger's backup singers who actually won this really great award. She was phenomenal, and a thousand times better than even the most famous singers we know. She was interviewing her asked her if she ever wanted to go out on her own because she's so talented. The singer said, "No. Being a backup singer was the greatest thing ever because you get the experience to be onstage and singing, but I also get to walk to the store and nobody knows who I am." I thought that was a really interesting way of putting it. ... I feel like there's some sort of value and being in a mid-level leader for that reason. The blame doesn't stop here, so there's a lot you don't have to shoulder. But at the same time, it just depends on which group you are with and what sort of standard they are holding you to. In general, the superintendent takes the brunt of that (DA5).

One of the interviewees shared similar sentiments. In fact, she was interviewed for a magazine prior about how many educational leaders feel that second place is best.

Many leaders feel that second place is best – they've decided being an assistant superintendent is better than being the superintendent. There are so many things involved in being a superintendent that people do not understand. The first one is working with the board. It is critical and takes an enormous amount of time. ... That is a very tough territory. So, a lot of people do not go into education to do that. They either like the curriculum or working with kids. There are some really good things about being superintendent, but as assistant superintendent, you get to stay in the area you enjoy working in. You get to stay working in areas of real interest to you. I like that. As a superintendent, I had to do things like crawl up on the roof and to see whatever the situation was. I had to learn about winter fuel for the buses and making sure we were getting the right winter fuel in the buses. 'Oh, yuck!' (S3/DA1).

Two of the elementary principals felt that they did not have a true chance at ever achieving the superintendency because of their perceptions regarding the superintendent trajectory.

In the elementary world, there's an unspoken rule that women belong more in the primary grade levels with the little kids. I think could be a barrier. For example, if I wanted to apply for a superintendent position, then they could say, "Well, you didn't have secondary experience." Well, nobody would give me that secondary experience (P1).

However, a superintendent brilliantly countered this thought while discussing individual drive and the power of self-confidence.

I think part of it is that I like a challenge. I thought it was such a vote of confidence that perhaps others had more confidence in me than I did. Why not believe if they believed in me? I need to believe in myself, and I need to [apply for the superintendency] for me and for my district. I felt like I had a lot to contribute (S2).

The interviewees ranged in both age and number of years in the profession. Leaders in their first year elaborated on their more recent experiences, and leaders near retirement added an additional layer of reflection and gratitude.

I'm at the end of the journey. I have this sign behind my desk. It says, "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." I am so thankful that I've had the opportunity to get outside of my comfort zone. If I hadn't, I would never have had the experience that I've had. So, I am jumping off into retirement, and that may really be the edge of my comfort zone, but boy, I love being stretched (S2).

Trailblazing. Institutional racism continues to influence the power and privilege structure of leadership across the states. For true opportunity to be available for all, a racial lens assists in gaining a better picture of what opportunities are available for all women of all ethnicities across Kansas. Three women spoke to the racial and gender disparity from their perspective. One leader recognized the fact that there are "zero Hispanic female superintendents in Kansas right now (P1)." Another leader shared that her district is preparing for their sesquicentennial anniversary and how her relatively new position is an illustration of the depth of gender and racial inequality.

We will be celebrating our 150th next year, and we, in this history of this district in 149 years, and there has never been a woman nor an African American to serve in this role. ... What I will say, is if you look at it, 149 years and you not had a female as a superintendent..., I would probably venture to say that that's a little strange to me. ... The [teaching] field is dominated by women, but all the leaders you see are men (S1).

Julia Gillard, Australia's first female president, declared shortly after assuming her role, "What I am absolutely confident of is it will be easier for the next woman and the woman after that and the woman after that and I'm proud of that." This sentiment was echoed through the testimony of every superintendent interviewed.

There is a bias that is a part of our systems in education that do not allow women and women of color and individuals of color to be afforded opportunities just because of how the system was created. My hope was to disrupt that system in as many ways as possible so that when I am applying for a job, I don't have to think about how many men, women, or people of color they have as that sometimes what it comes down to when decision making (S4/DA2).

Mentorship. In reflecting upon their career experiences and choices, the women were asked about their mentors and the roles they played in their professional journeys. This led to descriptions of how relationships with mentors influenced their career development, how they learned from observing a variety of skillsets in regards to leadership practices, how opportunities led to their careers, and how their willingness to grow professionally empowered them to move forward to upper levels of educational leadership.

Many women leaders commented on mentors who stem from outside the profession and similar gender identities.

I met a fascinating lady last year at an event that I was attending. She later followed up with me and has designated herself my mentor. She used to be the vice-president of ABC News. ... She was very powerful within the ABC organization around communication crisis events. She self-appointed herself as a mentor of mine. ... She reaches out and calls me to ask my input on different things. She now teaches a class at Harvard and frequently requests my input on being a woman leader and a woman of color in particular. She will bounce ideas off of me. Otherwise, she has been a great sounding board (S4/DA2).

One of the women identified the fact that she has no true mentors. Rather, she has many encouragers. There are not neighboring districts that geographically match the size, demographics, and needs that would lead to meaningful and deep guidance.

I would call him an encourager, but I really didn't have very many people that mentored me. I mean, usually, when you think of a person who mentors you, you know you spend lots of time with them. They do a lot of coaching you, and things of that nature. I did not have very many mentors, but I had a lot of encouragers, but not people that really specifically I could call back on and say this person mentored me (S1).

All of the women interviewed either receive or received state-issued mentors. The value that those appointed mentors provide or provided vary greatly. Referencing the lack of effectiveness with the Kansas Educational Leaders Institute, four of the women commented the need to align mentors by gender and district demographics more intentionally. One of the early career principals commented:

I attend the Kansas Educational Leaders Institute (KELI) through Kansas State University. So, I do tons of conference call. ... Just yesterday, I participated in a conference call. There were only three females out of a group of about twenty participants. Then, when I go to the meetings, I see some females, but that is a very small percentage. I think this can be attributed to the smaller rural areas where there is still that mindset where they desire and believe they need a male who would might be more managerial (P1).

The frustration with the lack of intentionality on behalf of KELI to assign mentors that fit the leaders' individual needs extended beyond just the principalship. One superintendent also echoed similar concerns stating:

I find there to be very little mentorship in the state as it relates to [support]. They have this thing called KELI. It's a leadership institute where they assign the new folks to a superintendent, and I think that's great. I think the person I had was fantastic, but again, not a woman. ... So again, I always go back to its very difficult to find female mentors within the state to be able to support me. ... I think it's [KELI] great, but take into consideration who you give mentors to. If you have a female superintendent, you should give her a female person. If you are going to do mentoring, it needs to be someone that's closer to you [regionally] (S1).

Theme 4 - Leadership Experiences: Playing the Game

Inclusiveness: Desire to Belong. For decades, social psychologists emphasized the human basic need of belonging. Intrinsic motivation often stems from an affiliation with others and social acceptance. Leadership is no exception in this social phenomenon. When self-

preservation and social comparison begin, the deep desire to belong to a group can lead to changes in behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes as people strive to conform to the standards and the norms of the group.

Most times, when I go in buildings or rooms or places, I am the only African-American. Period. It's kind of like I have to insert myself into conversations. Once I've done that and now people so comfortable with me, it's okay. But at first, it was very difficult to go into a room of people who made me feel invisible at times. Because I didn't want to continue to feel that way, I would push myself and insert myself in places. Then, some people would then begin to make me feel comfortable, and then I felt like other people help escort me in other places (S1).

In Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, belongingness is part of one of his major needs that motivate human behavior. The hierarchy is usually portrayed as a pyramid, with more basic needs at the base and more complex needs near the peak. The need for love and belonging lies at the center of the pyramid as part of the social needs. While Maslow suggested that these needs were less important than the physiological and safety needs, he believed that the need for belonging helped people to experience companionship and acceptance through family, friends, and other relationships.

I think when I first get involved with a group, it seems a little challenging and daunting to me because it is a lot of a *Good Ol' Boys Club*. There's a lot of talk about "when I was coaching this or that..." I don't have anything to drive from there. However, I almost always invariably find my niche of people. ... It seems like now no matter where I go, I know someone and it feels okay (S3/DA1).

Leaning In. For many of the women interviewed, it took some time to grow into their own selves and feel comfortable in their own skin. The following narratives support the strength exhibited by these women when, in spite of the realization that being a female presented obstacles, they chose to embrace their true identity.

I hate blazer-coat pantsuits. To this day, I have a closet full of them, but I haven't worn them for several years. In my early years as principal, I found that all of the men put their cell phones on the little clip case on their belt. I was wearing my two-piece little blazer coat, and I had not only a radio but also this bulky cell phone. I looked like a dude. It lasted half a day. I realized then that I was trying to be something that I was not. I hadn't

yet figured out my niche. I struggled to find what to wear, because as the principal you are walking all the time. I would try to wear heels, and then I would try to wear flats, but those didn't look good. So, I really had to find my identity. Now, I wear whatever I want in this role (DA3).

I noticed a couple of years ago that I when I was interjecting into professional conversations, I kept saying things like, "I'm sorry, but..." I felt like to speak, I needed to apologize my way into the conversation. There were also other confidence-lacking comments that I was using too regularly, and so I made a shift in how I communicate. It's important to me to not play into the submissive role as the woman. My opinions and thoughts are important - even if I didn't think they were at the time. I realized how I was interjecting into conversations was playing into that sort of poor female narrative, and that had to change (DA5).

Balancing the Stereotypes: Playing the Game. The key to effective game play involves an awareness of the opposing team and the techniques utilized by those more advanced. Clothing and outward appearance is something four of the women mentioned specifically.

As a woman, I watch specific women - powerful women when they come in certain spaces. I watched the Governor's inauguration. She wore pants. You may think that sounds crazy, but [pants] gives you that feeling of authority: 'I'm in the space with you all,' and 'I can hang with the big boys.' Pants send the message that 'I can engage in these conversations with you. I have skills. I have the knowledge, and I'm credible sitting here with you.' Strategies that I have deployed to gain credibility extend all the way to my attire, my body language, and my confidence that I have to have. I've learned and read about other influential females in other businesses and in politics, and I utilize their strategies when I sit across the table from my colleague who more than likely are male and white (S1).

A male superintendent will wear a shirt and tie, or they can get by with funky shirts with a school logo [polo shirt]. I always feel like, especially if I'm at any professional gathering, I need to dress professionally, so that people will take me serious. ... I don't want to be perceived as that stereotypical ditzy blonde. If you want any credibility with your community or your staff, you need to be professional about how you conduct yourself (S2).

Beyond appearance alone, five women spoke to the importance of balancing their actions and words as a mechanism for preventing their voice from being silenced. However, their approach to bringing their thoughts and opinions to the table vary greatly.

Typically, I really do seek to understand first when I am part of a group that is mainly [composed of] men. I listen a lot of first, and listen and listen some more. Then, I bring my creativity thread that runs through me. Usually, I just wait until the moment's right.

Only then do I present something that is creative, exciting, and new. I try to make a connection that maybe they haven't thought of yet (S3/DA1).

This idea contrasted a few of the other women who felt that they were more demanding.

Why do I think I need to be soft? I am very gruff. I am very much a speak-the-truth person. I don't think before I talk. I mean I care about other people, but I don't think a lot about what someone else is going to feel a result of what I'm saying. To connect with groups, I have felt like that it is necessary for me to be more cognizant and a little bit more vulnerable. However, that feisty side of me comes out when I'm around male colleagues. I find that the rougher edges pop up as almost a defense mechanism (DA5).

I would say that in my experience, at times, being vocal and passionate about things do not bode well for some people. That's been a really interesting learning curve. ... A lot of it has to do with navigating the personalities of the people who work above you. That's a hidden thing that. ... The more people you have over you with lots of different personalities, the harder that is to navigate (P3).

All five of the superintendents, past and present, spoke to the balance of how one must present herself.

It's being strong, but not too strong, because you could be perceived as a b i t c h if you don't be careful. You don't want to come across too in-your-face, but you also have to be able to stand your ground. You also have to be able to have the confidence to be able to make the tough decision, and employ people who feel confident that you can [make the tough decisions] (S1).

The younger leaders all cautioned against actions that might be perceived by others as being too bossy or flirty, which may result in igniting the rumor mill.

I think that I have to be careful. We were two young administrators of different genders in a building, so we had to be more careful. We went out to lunch once, but I was super pregnant then. I thought no one would assume or think anything. We were also careful about riding in cars together. I just didn't want to appear to be anything more. ... The superintendent of that district sat us down the first week and told us to not to have an affair out of the blue. We were dying of embarrassment. I thought it was so awkward. So, we were really, really careful even with him being happily married (DA3). This caution and fear of misperception extended through all levels of leadership.

I feel like I'm a very friendly person, but I've been told that comes across as flirty. In an effort to not appear flirtatious, I try to keep it more stoic or more professional when I'm in a room. I have to act differently than what I do in a social setting. I definitely don't want to be taken the wrong way, but more importantly, I want to be taken seriously (P1)

Three of the women commented on the testosterone-filled arena where sexual comments and jokes were the norm. However, two women went into detail regarding sexual harassment they experienced on the job.

I've felt very uncomfortable with some sexual comments made about me by higher positioned district administrators. When I went to Human Resources about it, it was downplayed – especially, I noticed, by other male higher-ups. Then, I got harassed a lot by another male administrator who was very inappropriate when talking about me to others. Unfortunately, he was one of the superintendent favorites. ... I even went to a school board member about it once, and he dismissed it as simply miscommunication. He totally downplayed it. The district administrator would introduce me as the “J-Lo” principal and often looked her up and down. Gross! That's those type of experiences where it still feels like a man's world. It's not okay when it happens. I think that those events have also made me not want to dress a certain way. I should have the freedom to dress however I want, right? That's not the case if I want to avoid harassment (P1).

Inside jokes and team activities are a common place amongst close friend groups, and educational professional learning communities are no exception. However, women had to learn to either ignore or engage in conversation and outside of school social events. Eight women discussed the importance of golf and how an activity often led to inclusion or exclusion. The following narratives portray that balance of social networking and perceptions.

I've noticed is that because they [male education leaders] were coaches together, they then rose to principal together. They have a comrade that I'm outside of. They are more relaxed and can laugh and joke. I don't feel like I can be part of those inside jokes. I do think that it is more from the social angle that they already have a network when they become superintendent, because they were at league meetings together over the years. Maybe if I would have had principal experience, that dynamic would be changed. I don't have any coaching stories, and they have a long history and lineage of familiarity (S2).

Some of the male superintendents are more open, but a lot of them appear to know each other through their conversations. I don't golf. Could I golf? Absolutely, but I don't. Some of the conversations that they are having casually, but you aren't really invited to that space because either you don't do it [play golf] or they assume you don't do it. So, you just find yourself in some spaces not making the connections or doing the things that others may have more opportunities to do so (S4/DA2).

Productivity: Work Requirements. Eight women discussed how they felt like they had to work twice as hard as men to be perceived by others as competent, effective, and capable.

They shared how this feeling began during graduate school, and the retiring superintendent shared that she never felt like this unspoken expectation never stopped.

Early on, I saw there were different expectations. I felt like I had to work twice as hard to be perceived as competent. When I entered a master's program, my peers were mostly male. Rather than working to learn the material on their own, they would literally ask me for their notes daily. There has been a transition of people filling the seats in those programs. I love it now when I teach post-graduate classes and see mostly females. It's been ten years, so that it is exciting that it has shifted. I still feel today, that I intellectually was better equipped for the position, but my male peers found jobs faster because the community and staff desired a man - a football coach, strong and burley. We've evolved, but those were my peers then (DA3).

I was interviewing for jobs at the principal level. Interviewing is not my forte. So, I went to a female principal in the district and asked for some advice. A lot of her advice was about how you have to portray yourself stronger as a woman than a man does in an interview because it is just assumed that men can handle things and women have to prove themselves (P2).

Every participant discussed the importance and role of communication in their position.

Communication not only supports the overall function of the building or district, but also sends a message regarding one's credibility.

I think you have to be able to prove yourself in a hot situation – that you can handle it. You can talk about it, but you have to have a situation and people *see* you do it. Communication, I think, is very much looked at and picked apart. Definitely, if you are a crier, this is not for you. You cannot cry – ever. You have to have thick skin (P2).

Theme 5 - Gender Politics: Shackled to Mindset

Patriarchy: Gender Norms. Many of the challenges and difficulties the participants experienced in both the pursuit of the superintendency and maintaining the position can be attributed to patriarchy. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the public school system and the superintendency have historically been dominated by white male leaders. The patriarchal institution of the public school system has made it difficult for women to attain the superintendent position because it is perceived to be a man's job. Additionally, while the superintendent position is usually considered to be a man's position, the curriculum position is

considered to be a woman's position. In fact, of the three principals who mentioned they would like to move to the district office, they all declared curriculum and instruction was their dream job.

I didn't get into teaching and education because I wanted to be a manager. I knew if I were to ever move up, it would be in line with curriculum and instruction. I wasn't trained to be a budget analyzer, I was trained in pedagogy and child development. The position of the superintendent extends well beyond the scope of academic instruction (DA4).

The participants stated they were aware they are operating in a male-dominated field and that sometimes people do not know how to approach a woman school or district leader.

I've noticed that even if there is facility work that needs to be done, the maintenance men want to come in, and they want to talk to 'the man' regardless of whether I was the head principal or not. I'd say 'walk with me!' Even the fire marshal...it was so hysterical that it got to be a running joke. He would come in and go straight to the assistant principal. I corrected him twice. He continued to go to my assistant principal. I wanted him to understand [my role in the building]. He kept saying that he was there to see the principal, and our receptionist would get me. He was shocked every time, and said, "Oh! I meant the other guy." He was a Good Ol' Boy, and I could hardly stand it. So, there are still pieces of that that I just learned to not let bother me (DA3).

All of the women acknowledged that the profession is a man's world and is driven by a predominantly male culture. The women discussed their level of comfort living in a man's world.

I also noticed in the last few years so many more women superintendents. I always pay attention to that registrar to see how many women are out there. They are really paving the way for others. I think there is still a perception that it is a man's world. My whole life, my career choices, have been in the man's world. Even as a teacher, I taught Social Studies – typically a man's world. Now, counseling wasn't so much, but then I moved into technology. The technology piece is a man's world. I felt like I've always lived in that kind of world, and I don't mind it at all. I really haven't felt put down or intimidated (S3/DA1).

Even though the number of women in educational administration has increased, people still do not think of it as a "woman's job." However, there is an increasing number of communities and school boards who are requesting diverse candidates and women to apply.

I have been part of hiring conversations where they are considering what it may look like to the outside. For example, if there are three males at one high school, the search committee makes a point to consider whether or not they should hire a woman as a fourth. It seems to be more out of a concern for what it would look like if we hired another White male at that school. Gender equity is an interesting topic in terms of recruitment and hiring. I do think it's the responsibility of the organization to have some of those conversations like I'm suggesting. Sometimes it rubs me the wrong way, because I'm not sure like what does that mean? Does a female get hired because you just don't want to have a fourth male? Do I want to get hired because of that reason (DA5)?

However, the opposite is sometimes true as well. Two candidates specifically talked about opportunities they lost out on because there was already a female administrator in the building, and in one case, a female of the same race.

In a previous district, myself and another AP applied for the same job. It was an assistant principal at an elementary school. The principal on that campus was an African American woman. Now, I know you were going to look at both of us candidates from a leadership perspective, anyone would tell you that I was the strongest. They hired the other candidate. I was pretty upset, but even more so when I found out why. I had a good relationship with someone at the district office. She later came to me and told me that it really came down to race, and that the community wasn't ready to have two women of color running one campus together (S4/DA2).

I don't know if it is an equitable practice in place today or if there has been any intentionality in ensuring gender equity. For example, in a middle school with a female head principal, there have been conversations along the lines of "Should you really be hiring two women?" I'm not sure if there has a conversation on the reverse side? Do you ever hear questions about whether or not two men should be running a building? I've also had similar conversations with race. Should a black principal hire a black assistant principal? I think that is interesting because we don't have those conversations about white males (DA5).

The women also expressed that getting an administrative position is probably more difficult for a woman than for a man. The women mentioned the difficulties stem from different areas, including traditional mindsets, gender role expectations, family expectations, and gatekeeping. Their comments mirrored both the supply and demand arguments of why fewer women achieve the superintendency.

I think for a long time, it was absolutely easier for a man to get promoted. It seemed like a natural progression for a male to move through the system and become a

superintendent. Now, it seems like there's a little more awareness, and it comes back to what I was saying about equitable practices and hiring here in this district. It may not be as easy for a man anymore because more people will be aware and called out in today's society. There is now a call for a public relations balance. I don't feel like there's a genuine experience all the time. [For example,] we're going to interview a pool of candidates, and hire the best candidate. I think you really do want to hire the best candidate, but there's all these little layers around the social norms and social justice. I don't think women have an equal shot either way. It is also my perception from hearing my family member speak from his role at KASB. Districts are looking for really diverse candidates, even our bigger districts in the western part of Kansas as they becoming more diverse (DA5).

In addition to expressing difficulty attaining the position because they are women, the participants also talked about challenges they have faced in the position that they attributed to being female. They felt that sometimes they are treated differently because they are women.

I think that there is sometimes a feeling with staff, who I am leading, that they have a greater sense of security in male leadership than female leadership. I tend to see it more in secondary levels because of things like discipline and feeling secure with angry parents. It is the physical sense of safety and security. I lived that. I've always had male assistant principals. So, after I would earn my stripes with some credibility, they would say comments like, 'We love you instructional focus,' and that 'We love that our assistant principal takes care of discipline.' Well, I take care of discipline too. My AP and I would laugh because I was tougher on kids in general. I operated under the buck-stops-here mentality, but he would chew the naughty kid out, make a scene, and then he would let them off. It was really funny that I've never been able to shake that sense of security (DA3).

In addition, the women talked about the importance of showing their board that the superintendency is not solely a man's job. While the superintendency has long been a patriarchal position, the women were optimistic about the future for women in the position. One superintendent discussed the power of having good board relations.

I have a great board. This very morning, a board member stopped by because he had a little issue. If you're a board member, you get these emails and texts. He didn't know how to handle the situation. I said to him, "Look, let me be the bad guy. Let's keep you out of it." I said that I'll be happy to be the bad guy. He responded that he doesn't have any doubts because I am a strong woman. I just thought – okay, very good. There's no question here. I think that is what you want (S2).

Good Ol' Boys Network. Another barrier for women in the educational leadership is the *Good Ol' Boys* network, which all of these women agreed still exists and operates. The *Good Ol' Boys* network can be described as a close-knit group of men that resembles a private men's club. One might even experience the language and coding commonly found in the workplace (ex. 'dropping the ball') that has stemmed from the dominant group. The network then becomes a gatekeeper as mentioned in previous chapters.

The *Good Ol' Boys* club still exists, intentionally or unintentionally. You also see it, not just in Kansas school districts, but in some of the firms that recruit superintendents. Some might be saying that we want someone with experience. However, most of the time, the people leading the firms are former superintendents, and they are then calling up the people they know who have experience – and ninety percent of the time it is a White male. They kind of skip the lines where you don't get those opportunities. This doesn't happen just with superintendent positions, but it extends to the next layer of assistant superintendents. It is important to watch that group because they are the people who are being groomed to be superintendent. You'll see a few more women, but not significantly so – especially not women of color. In Kansas last year, there were four African Americans who became superintendents within two years. However, that was it. When I left and the superintendent of a neighboring district left, the demographics shifted. They replaced us both with men (S4/DA2).

Here is how it works. Leadership recruitment has to do with who you like and who you want to work with. I can see, for example, I know a lot of great curriculum directors who I would love to work with. I wouldn't hesitate, if I have an opening, to call and say I want you to apply. I want to hire you. So, for me, that's a comfort level. I know they are really qualified. I think that happens that males do the same thing. Also, it makes sense if there are more men in the field, they are going to call who they know. I don't know if we should blame them. If that's who they want around them to work with, they're going to call their colleague who they talk with or coach with. Now, if they're smart, which this is what I do, I hire somebody to fill my weaknesses. At the end of the day, though, to me it shouldn't matter what gender, it should be who's going to make us more successful (S2).

While the women all believe this network still exists, they discussed that they think the network is losing power at least at some level.

When I got my administrative licensure, I did it with mostly males who were middle school and high school principals in the surrounding area. Some of them were really quality classmates, and some of them felt like the *Good Ol' Boys*. I was really surprised how many of them in the room made me think of the *Good Ol' Boys* network. We know that white males are the most privileged in our society. In my role, I sit in many equity

conversations around that fact. Because of this position, I maybe naively feeling like it's shifting a little. At least, there is a desire to not appear that there's a *Good Ol' Boys Club* (DA5).

In addition to feeling occasionally ostracized by the male-oriented activities for superintendents and male education leaders, the women expressed that they have struggled finding a way to socialize with the group in an authentic and meaningful way.

I think when I first get involved with a group, it seems a little challenging and daunting to me because it is a lot of a *Good Ol' Boys Club* remaining still today. There's a lot of talk about "When I was coaching this or that..." I don't have anything to drive from there. However, I almost always invariably find my niche of people. It took some time, but now it seems like now no matter where I go, I know someone. That helps me feel better and more accepted (S3/DA1).

Another topic that came up is that many of the events that are organized for superintendent conferences are still based on activities men like to do together – golf, drinking, etc. The women expressed frustration with the fact that these activities have not changed to reflect the increased number of women attending the conferences. Additionally, the women mentioned having to navigate the conferences very consciously of their actions and attitudes.

Let's say they were going out for dinner at the end of a day at a conference or something, I don't ever invite myself. I try to wait to see if maybe they will invite me. I never want to be pushy about trying to be included in that group. Again, I don't I don't want to come across as some ditzy woman who wants to hang out with the guys. That's just not how I perceive myself being a professional. Now, if they say, 'Hey, come on, we are going to go.' Then, I feel like that's okay. Maybe I'm more sensitive about that than others, but I do think that you know you have you just have to be careful about those lines. Truly, it's so nice as a superintendent to be in a group of superintendents just because you can kind of let your hair down, and everybody understands why you need to. Now, I'm not saying dance on the table, but... You can talk shop or not and laugh and relax. I do try to be careful about whether they want to they want me to come along or they don't (S2).

Gatekeepers. Appreciating that patriarchy is a deep-rooted construct, it means that even within a modern context, it keeps creating obstacles for women to succeed, even if they work on merit. It gives priority to men and the dominance manifests both within homes and in broader society. Furthermore, patriarchy finds its strength in that it manages to adapt and find expression

even in the changing of social and political spaces, and fundamentally, the buy-in from women to maintain this 'phenomenon'. When considering what is holding Kansas back specifically, one former superintendent addressed the reality of operating in the Bible Belt. "Religion is what I suspect, especially in central and western Kansas." (S3/DA1). Alternatively, in a very politically correct way, many of the women commented on the possibility that perhaps the pool was dry.

I'm not going to say they didn't embrace women. Perhaps they didn't have quality people to apply. I don't know that, but what I do know is that they never had [a female superintendent before me]. So, I was hoping that the application process would be fair, and that they would be open to something different and something new. They were because they hired me. I didn't see that there were any issues with the process per se of how I was being hired, but I just knew the culture of the city and the culture of the district. The culture was clearly female leaders were not something that was actively sought after. Again, maybe there was no one available, I don't know. But for me to be the first out of 149 years it ... is interesting, and very strange (S1).

It is becoming ever more transparent as networks share information that undermine the control and authority of "gatekeepers" and empower the "gated." One candidate discussed the Me Too movement (S4/DA2) and how that was beginning to really challenge mindsets and acknowledge the disequilibrium of power. The women acknowledged a shift was beginning regarding breaking through the metaphorical gate.

You might think of our small rural community and assume they are probably pretty conservative and wouldn't want a woman. But, we have a woman state representative, we have a woman county commissioner, and we have me serving as district superintendent, so I think it's all about your community and what their standards are. I don't want to say only standards, but I think it's their mindset. Alternatively, I just think that if there ever was a community that doesn't believe in having a female superintendent as a leader, the female could never carry out her job effectively (S2).

When engaging the subject of patriarchy, we rarely acknowledge the contribution women make in endorsing this system. It is in the public and exclusive spaces where patriarchal mannerisms manifest, and men are placed on pedestals, even in their absence. One superintendent discussed how the gatekeepers continue to maintain their power through the consent of the gated.

We cannot ignore the power of the community support. To be honest, why didn't other women or other men ... or anybody come to the board or any board – not just in this city – and say, 'We would like to have a female in this role.' I mean, they come and say they want everything else! So, I would say the lack of expectation that there be a woman or even anyone of color in the superintendency continues to hold women back. Since there was no expectation for them to do come forward and ask for an equal chance, equal chance didn't happen for over a hundred years. To me, those are all the things that people did not do or advocate for are barriers (S1).

When asked what really was breaking women from the shackles of the *Good Ol' Boys* network and from status quo hiring practices, the women discussed the importance of a quality Human Resource (HR) department. Two women spoke about female leaders of their HR departments and how the women are working to change the oppression, overtly or covertly, of female candidates.

I think our HR director is a champion for the best fit. I think she probably does a better job of reaching and pulling people up who she recognizes they need to be pulled up. I've seen her do that for staff of color as well. I think having the right people in the human resources department is huge. There are sometimes men in those positions who have those biases. Women are challenging mindset and tackling gatekeepers of the past (D3).

Theme 6 - Cultivating Future Leaders: Empowering Others

Paving the Way. The women in this study conveyed, through recounting their experiences, some of the subtle biases and overt inequities that are present in the upper school and district administration roles. These women have persevered and performed competently in an environment where doubts of their capabilities are prevalent and less-than-favorable assumptions are present. Even through their confidence and resiliency, they still have had to lead under greater scrutiny and higher expectations than have their male counterparts. When asked what advice they would share with women pursuing the superintendency, they shared anecdotes of lessons learned and examples of how to prepare to rise above the challenges and perform with tenacity.

Lessons Learned. Despite the confidence exhibited by these successful female leaders, they shared how self-promotion did not come easily to them and is not typically viewed as a feminine characteristic. They caution aspirants to the superintendency to ensure that they do not understate their knowledge and skill in an effort to exhibit humility, especially during the interview and negotiation process.

I also had some initial, very public issues about my salary. The person before me did not have a doctorate degree and made a certain salary. I came in, and I took the job at the same salary that he had when he left. People felt like I should have taken less because I supposedly didn't have the same experience, but I did. I also had significantly higher education. I was taken back by this expectation. To me, that's sexist and racist because you want me to now take less money because supposedly I have less. In fact, he didn't have the credentials that I had. I'm not a money person. I don't really care about it, but I just thought that was, once again, 'strange' that I was challenged since none of my predecessors faced similar questioning and doubt.

The importance of being true to yourself was also highlighted. All of the women discussed how they had to find their niche and grow comfortable in their own skin. They mentioned once they achieved this, they found contentment and relief.

I think back to my first job where it was very hard to navigate because they had a male principal who retired from that district. He had been with them for a long time. There was a time during that first year where I wondered if my staff would give me a chance. Even from a board level, I wondered why they had hired me. It was my own personal questioning because I really wondered why they were willing to give me a chance. Once I found my footing, the subsequent years were significantly easier (P3).

I realized that I was trying to be something that I was not. I hadn't yet figured out my niche. I struggled to find what to wear, because as an assistant principal you are walking all the time. I would try to wear heels, and then I would try to wear flats, but those didn't look good. So, I really had to find my identity. Now, I wear whatever I want in this role, and I love it (DA3)!

I have to give myself permission to be assertive and not feel sorry and unapologetic. I used to feel bad for that, but then I realized dudes are like this all the time. Why can't I be like that? Another situation occurred when a lady from payroll was visiting with me. I began explaining and justifying my salary. She stopped me and told me not to explain myself. She said that men are not expected to explain themselves, and I shouldn't either. I realized then that I shouldn't feel bad about my salary too (P1).

The women provided suggestions for balancing life, family, and stress. Interestingly, the women did not make excuses for their choices, but owned them as their own and emphasized that reflection and self-awareness kept them truly balanced.

Having a child what changed a lot in my life. I have a 2.5-year-old, and I had him while I was a middle school principal. I purposefully waited to have him until the right time. I thought I was being so smart by waiting until later in my career. I discovered there is really no good time. Emotionally, I struggled as a new mom and principal. I found that it's not that I couldn't do both well, I just wouldn't. I had a hard time being gone all day, then staying late at work for a band concert, and then come home to a baby who was already asleep for the night. It had been so easy for me to love, love, love working fourteen hours days until I had someone else that needed me more. That is when I really started trying to take a step back and really just realign myself. It maybe not be what I want, but it is where I am needed at the time. This is really where this trajectory of stepping back occurred. I used to be super career minded. I still am to some extent, but now there is more of a work/life balance. (D3).

The most experienced superintendent recommended a graceful, yet powerful exit to any position:

It is critical to leave on a high note. When exiting with grace, you have more leverage. For example, as I retire here, I'm really mad at myself that I didn't negotiate harder for pay raises. I would like the board to recognize my hard work over the years. Maybe it is my gender, or maybe it is my age, but I never felt that it was easy to negotiate for myself. I would negotiate for everybody else, but not myself. I think that women tend to underestimate their worth, and men tend to overestimate their worth. I wish the board would show me their appreciation. I always have received nice compliments and evaluations from them, but it never came with money. So, as I retired here, I'm preparing to negotiate an exit package. I may not have received appropriate raises throughout my tenure, so perhaps they owe me a little something as I exit (S2).

Pay It Forward. One of the last questions asked was in regards to a lesson or lessons they learned as a woman in a leadership position. All of the participants spoke of challenging experiences that they overcame by showing determination and rising above their own fears because others depended on their leadership. Recognizing the importance of providing wisdom to others, the women shared their very personal experiences and the knowledge they acquired in the process.

Many women found wisdom and support through a variety of organizations and professional memberships.

I have found tremendous support through KSSA. I was fortunate enough to be president one year, and so I made really good friends with area superintendents. Not only was I involved in KSSA, but I also participated in the Kansas and Missouri superintendents' leadership forum in Kansas City. They have been vocal about diversity, women, and how we can get more women interested in the superintendency (S2).

There are some professional groups that I need to become a member of, and I should go out and get some professional development as well as network with others outside of the state. Now, we do have a Council of Superintendents, but that's really like a principals meeting. We do have the Kansas Missouri Superintendents, but again, it's mostly Kansas superintendents, and not many of the Missouri people participate. I still struggle to come across leaders who are women or look like me [African American]. Now, I still find knowledge from people that don't look like me and that are not women (S1).

Many years ago, I would participate in United School Administrators conferences. When I first started in my position, I found their conferences to be helpful (P3).

There are professional organizations starting to target female leaders in Kansas. They are hosting a variety of conferences in the area and are working feverishly to support women and their advancement in the profession.

I'm really excited the state is having their first Women's Conference coming up soon. I'm excited to go. I'm going to sit on a couple of panels and facilitate some groups. They've called and asked me to do that. I'm hoping that this won't be the first nor the last event of its type. I'm hoping that this will be an opportunity for me to meet other women across the state that I don't know. I'll maybe even gain some colleagues where I can call on them in times of need. I want to challenge the state's women to form better networks with one another because it is lonely out here when you don't have your sister-girls to call on and to hang out with. I just think that we miss out when we don't reach out, and we get in our own grind. It just becomes lonely and stepping out is a good way to counter that (S1).

Summary of the Analysis of the In-Depth Interviews

This chapter presented the qualitative data collected through responses to in-depth, semi-structured interviews of ten female education leaders in Kansas. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. The researcher chose to conduct the analysis without software. Each transcript was read multiple times, and inductive analysis was used. This approach required

the researcher to immerse herself in the details of the data to discover important categories, codes, and themes. Some themes became apparent during the interview, and others were discovered while listening to the audio recordings and reviewing the transcriptions. However, analysis evolved from blocks of text relating to each theme and excerpts that were shortened to exclude irrelevant discussion, repetitions, and unnecessary digressions. This second stage of analysis also involved noting when the women returned to a theme within their story and organizing the excerpts accordingly. The final stage of analysis involved looking for commonalities and differences between the participants in relation to each theme.

The findings from this study describe how ten women navigate through the barriers that exist within the male-dominated position of school and district leadership. The evidence was identified by examining the women's experiences and then by grouping barriers around common themes. The analysis of the interview transcriptions revealed six major themes: intersectionality, motherhood, career choices and opportunities, leadership experiences, gender politics, and cultivation of future leaders. Within the theme of intersectionality, the following categories emerged: race, age, gender, and confidence. Within the theme of motherhood, the following categories emerged: childbearing and rearing, emotional constraints, family support, and time restraints. Within the theme of career choices and opportunities, the following categories emerged: the value of opportunities, factors sparking career movement, instances of trailblazing, and the power of mentorship. Within the theme of leadership experiences the following categories emerged: inclusiveness and the desire to belong, seizing various opportunities, balancing common stereotypes, and productivity within the workforce. Within the theme of gender politics, the following categories emerged: facing patriarchy and traditional gender roles, discussion of the *Good Ol' Boys* network and gatekeeping. Within the theme of cultivating future

leaders, the following categories emerged: paving the way for others, sharing important lessons learned, and paying it forward to future leaders. Through analysis, the researcher determined these factors to be significant components to ascending to the superintendency. The research questions were discussed as they related to the responses from the participants during the interviews. The results for the first research regarding the number of female leaders who aspire to the superintendency was addressed partially through the interviews, but also through data gathered from the Kansas State Department of Education and the Kansas Association of School Boards. The results for the second and third research question, which addressed career aspirations and pathways, personal demographics, and barriers and factors associated with career ascent or descent were derived from the questions asked through the interviews. The findings from the transcribed participants' interviews provided insight to the research questions discussed in previous chapters.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings, the outcomes of the data analysis, and a discussion of the results. The chapter ends with conclusions and implications for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to identify historic barriers and personal experiences in achieving the superintendency. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as related to the literature on women in educational administration, and what implications may be valuable for aspiring superintendents, postsecondary education preparation programs, and policy makers. The interpretation of the findings is from a postmodern feminist perspective and grouped around common themes that cut across the data and emerge from the study. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for future research, and a brief summary.

The chapter contains a discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the following three research questions:

- (1) How does the number of female educational leaders who aspire to the superintendency relate to the total number of superintendents?
- (2) What perceived (or real) barriers exist that discourage or inhibit female educational leaders from pursuing superintendency positions (e.g., age, family status, years of experiences, school district type, size, community type, degree attainment, initial interest, race, social norms, gender identities, encouragement)?
- (3) How does the number of female second-tier district administrators relate to the number of female superintendents? What factors may encourage females to remain in second-tier district administrator positions rather than pursuing the superintendency?

Summary of the Findings

Although women have dominated the public education workforce, a disproportionately smaller representation of female superintendents to their male counterpart remains. In Kansas,

over 78 percent of teachers are women, but less than 15 percent of women serve as school district superintendents. Moreover, the number of Kansas women occupying the superintendency continues to be less than the national norm of 25 percent. In an effort to investigate the disproportional representation of women in public school administration, this study explored the career aspirations and experienced barriers and challenges in reaching upper administration positions. This study sought to elaborate and provide a critique of how scholars traditionally conceptualized the experiences of women and to make possible connections related to the disproportional representation of females, including the intersectionality of gender, social norms, race, and opportunity found within the school superintendent position.

The research questions were explored through the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with principals, mid-level district administrators, and superintendents in the state of Kansas. Furthermore, a qualitative research design was best suited to examine and understand the female leaders' personal reflections of experiences and opportunities, as well as the meaning that they derived through those experiences from their perspectives. Additional statistical information was collected through the Kansas Department of Education and the Kansas Association of School Boards.

In regards to research question one, this study found that the women who aspire to the superintendency nearly mirror the number of women currently serving in the top district administration position. Only one of the ten women initially aspired to reach the superintendency. Women currently make up less than fifteen percent of all Kansas superintendents. The majority of women began teaching with a focus primarily on curriculum and instruction. However, the women represented in this study make up only one percent of all female Kansas district and building administrators. Therefore, this particular study was too small

to draw any significant conclusions regarding the number of women who aspire to the superintendency in Kansas.

In regards to research question two, both supply and demand factors as presented in the second chapter could be identified from each participant's shared experiences. The female leaders shared their individual challenges working within a masculinized profession. They identified and elaborated on the existence of gendered organizational practices and recruitment norms which are still prevalent in a variety of Kansas communities. Historic gatekeepers (e.g. school boards, community norms and expectations, search committees, etc.) continue to be a hurdle for many women applying. Furthermore, all women identified the *Good Ol' Boys Club* to still be operating, although many mentioned that it is slowly fading with increased attention on equitable hiring efforts. Once women reach upper administration levels, the participants noted that the inherent challenges they faced decades ago, in some instances, are still in place. For example, mentoring programs are still driven by male actors, which do not necessarily meet the unique needs of women in leadership. Another example includes the perceptions that others hold of the interviewed leaders and how those perceptions affect their actions or decision-making. The women shared experiences where they had to change their tone of voice so that they did not appear to be bossy or insensitive and that they had to be conscious of what they wore to work and even how they wore their hair. However, many women placed less value on the demand-side barriers. Rather, more value was placed on the difficulty navigating the supply-side factors of career aspiration and attainment.

As both the data and the interviews indicated, more women than ever before are participating in district and building leadership. However, supply-side barriers continue to be the focus for many aspiring superintendents. Several participants mentioned knowing colleagues

who were unable to continue on or advance to the next position due to family constraints. Between childbearing and childrearing and having difficulty being mobile without a spouse's career being put on hold, many of the women expressed that, situationally, they were almost stuck in their current roles and positions. The interviews illuminated the idea that individual career choices are most often made through the notion of constraint. The participating women felt that they could not advance up career ladders while their children were young and feared being away from the home for too long or too late. The emotional cost for many women was too great to even be interested in the superintendency. The duty of home, even with the best of intentions to find balance, continued to override career drive for many of the participants. Furthermore, the women discussed not wanting to participate in the politicized position of the superintendent and found comfort and joy focusing on one area of need, most often curriculum and instruction, rather than a career of "people pleasing." Interestingly, issues of years of experience, district type, and degree attainment levels were not a focus or a sticking point for any one of the participants.

In regards to research question three, current and trend state data shows that there are significantly more female second-tier district administrators compared to the number female superintendents. This is not a new phenomenon. However, if second-tier district administrators are typically considered those who are being groomed for the superintendent position, then the breakdown appears to be occurring between these two positions. As mentioned previously, the women interviewed discussed the disillusionment that often happens when a person moves to the superintendency. Women in this study identified politics, lack of self-efficacy, board relations, time management, and district culture as being common reasons as women phase out before reaching the superintendency.

Discussion of the Results

This research study was designed to elaborate on and provide a critique of how scholars have traditionally conceptualized the experiences of women in the education administrator profession. As mentioned in chapter one, the goal of the study was to better capture the full range of suspicions present in earlier studies. Earlier studies connected ideas of supply and demand to “individual choice and motivation” and “external bias and systemic discrimination.” In an attempt to explain the varied career trajectories and disproportional number of women in the superintendency, a number of researchers identified possible barriers (Bertrand, Goldin, and Katz, 2010; Gabaldon et al., 2016; Halrynjo, 2017; Miller, 2011; Niederle and Verterlund, 2007; Reskin, 1993; and Turner, Borwn and Tajfel, 1979). The women interviewed echoed the historic barriers presented in earlier studies. The more seasoned women, especially, noted that while change has happened during this professional journey, much remains the same. The *Good Ol’ Boys Club* is still in existence. Search committees, school boards, and community values are still dictating who receives job calls and offers. It appears that the *Good Ol’ Boys Club* is entrenched in its own form of cultural capital, which in turn, creates economic capital. Families still require time and attention that have ceased to lessen with the increase of labor market participation. Guilt still finds mothers who are “stuck” at work, and social status beliefs have yet to wane. Women are educated, qualified, and eligible. In fact, none of the women brought up a potential barrier or experience that they have encountered that fell outside of the research that already exists. As no new barrier was identified, the focus turned toward understanding why and how women are not making the leap from mid-district administrator to superintendent.

The study revealed that the answer to where exactly the pipeline is leaking is likely multifaceted. One could conclude that it is all and none of the barriers listed throughout the chapters. Caution must be exercised when placing women into a single story and attaching them to a single identity. Career aspirations and barriers cannot be explained by taking into account single categories. Each leader lives a multi-dimensional and complex life. Women can experience privilege and oppression simultaneously. As an example, a wealthy white female educator who is married to the governor may have privilege and opportunity that a white male educator in rural Kansas may not. Grogan (1999) reported that gender and race are powerful factors in the way women have been formed as individuals. Intersectionality, including gender, social norms, and race, was an important lens to use while addressing areas of a potentially leaky pipe.

Furthermore, the disproportional number of female superintendents in Kansas is likely due to a combination of supply and demand with institutional pressures forcing members to conform to certain norms and expectations. Institutionalism, a theoretical tool in understanding the basic contours of the supply and demand model, assists in explaining the scope of the gender imbalance. As mentioned in previous chapters, the lack of supportive institutional environment will result in discrimination and exclusion. For example, research participants pointed to the need for strong gender equality policies and a strong female presence in the human resource departments as mechanisms for correcting the imbalance. Moreover, individual and structural conditions, with the source located outside the institution itself, can also explain the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency role. For example, the women in this study spoke to the division of family responsibility and professional responsibility removes many women from the very opportunity of career advancement. This study echoed the findings in

Derrington and Sharratt's (2009) study. The institutionalist perspective (i.e. conversations of in-group preferences, hegemony, isomorphic tendencies, etc.), suggests that perhaps it is not a leaky pipeline, but rather a gender filter causing a disproportional representation of women in the highest educational leadership seat.

Kansas is unique in that the majority of the districts are small and rural. There are far more school districts in Kansas coded as rural than any other designation. There are unique needs of rural school districts that frequently lack the personnel and resources needed to compete effectively for federal competitive grants and receive formula grant allocations in amounts too small to be effective in meeting their intended purpose. Funding is a significant hurdle for rural districts in Kansas. These districts simply cannot afford to hire additional administrators. Rather, superintendents are wearing many hats (i.e. elementary principal and superintendent simultaneously) and are tasked with more work for less money. This is not a very attractive situation for many aspiring superintendents, even though the positions may be available. Moreover, as Kansas continues to entertain the conversation of consolidation of school districts as a cost-savings effort, the open positions in western Kansas grow increasingly unattractive for those who are risk-adverse. Also, the limited opportunities for families within small communities tend to put the brakes on moving forward with position advancement and relocation efforts.

There is a contrast between equality of opportunity and equality of results. Equality of opportunity simply describes individual choice and equal rights under the protection of laws. However, equality of results suggests that every gender ratio should be literally equal. If few women are interested in the superintendency, then perhaps the second research question itself becomes flawed. The second research question assumes that there are inherent barriers that discourage female education leaders from pursuing the superintendency. If the vast majority of

women are not interested, then perhaps the pipeline is not leaky at all. Rather, there is simply a false assumption that there must be an equality of results or a predetermined quota that must be obtained. If that were the case, it will take women in Kansas 199.3 years to reach the proportional representation of female superintendents to the percent of female teachers (calculated by nine percent growth divided by the past 23 years equal to by 78 percent rate goal growth divided by the unknown number of years it will take to reach proportional representation). On the other hand, if the focus shift turns to what equality means in terms of opportunity and decision-makers genuinely base decisions on merit, then fundamental discussions of true equity can clarify what is most likely happening in Kansas.

The study also revealed that the career aspirations of women involves not only internal motivation and access to leadership opportunities, but also mentoring that recognizes and supports a woman's leadership potential. The women in this study deemed others' encouragement and belief in their ability to successfully manage the various leadership positions as a critical component in a woman's level of success. Glass et al. (2000) documented that three quarters of the female superintendents in their study noted that networking and relationships granted them entry to higher level leadership positions. All ten participants studied here reported that their supervisors and professors prepared them for new leadership roles by providing guidance and allowing them access to a variety of opportunities that led them to their next administrative level. Through their mentors' encouragement, support, and faith in their abilities, these women gained the courage to apply to leadership positions. This finding coincides with results from previous research (Glass et al., 2000). These findings are consistent with Bjork and Kowalski's (2005) study, in which the majority of the women were mentored into their position.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study provided useful information about the career aspirations and experienced barriers and challenges in reaching the superintendency, this study was exploratory in nature and was limited by the small number of participants. Smaller sample size raises the issue of generalizability to the whole population of the research. Suggestions for future research includes conducting a quantitative study that not only secures a larger percentage of the population, but also can elaborate on research question one: How does the number of female educational leaders who aspire to the superintendency relate to the total number of superintendents? This could be completed through simple electronic surveys sent out statewide to female principals, second-tier district administrators, and superintendents in the state.

Furthermore, additional limitations of the study were identified. The study collected data from personal interviews; therefore, the findings relied entirely on participants' self-reports. As with any self-report instrument, honesty, integrity, willingness to respond, and interpretation of the questions impacted the responses. The results of this study might not be generalizable to states other than Kansas. Researcher bias was also a limitation given that the researcher is a mother and a white female public school educator in Kansas, and, therefore, her perceptions and personal experiences might have mirrored those of the participants.

Delimitations

This study only involved participants in Kansas and encompassed districts across the state with diverse student enrollment and demographics. Leaders came from a variety of communities representing both traditional and progressive mindsets. The women participating held different religious beliefs, which assisted in removing the possible Bible Belt bias. Moreover, the study was limited to practicing female building and district administrators in Kansas public schools. Assistant principals were not petitioned, as they are likely still attempting

to break into leadership roles, and retired superintendents were also not lobbied for participation. Private, parochial, charter, and magnet schools and districts were not considered for this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although limited by the small number of participants, this study adds to the evidence of gender-based discrimination. Even though such discrimination is well known, the findings are important because they share the success of female superintendents. The findings also highlight their resiliency and determination as they were empowered by the clarity of their convictions. They refused to compromise their values in seeking and maintaining their leadership positions, including, but not limited to, the superintendency. Women encountered greater stereotypical expectations as they advanced in leadership roles. These findings suggest that it is necessary to support and mentor women as they continue to develop leadership skills and climb the career ladder.

While the feminist perspective would state that the male voice can be heard throughout the previous scholarly work, future research would benefit from hearing the male perspective directly from males. It is difficult to make claims if half of the population's voices are being ignored or overshadowed. It would be interesting to hear whether men attribute the *Good Ol' Boys Club* with their promotions or if they also feel like they struggle with the work life and home life balance and feelings of guilt similar to that of women.

Furthermore, women are beginning to overcome some of the barriers; however, many of them are still present. This inquiry is important because it allows us to examine the barriers within the superintendency in order to provide a new perspective to the body of literature that has historically been grounded in almost exclusively white, male, and heterosexist epistemologies.

Future research might include a more statistical approach to assessing the rate of career aspiration, as well as methods to overcome the barriers rather than navigate them.

In addition to addressing the limitations of the study, both the conceptual framework and verbiage may need to be addressed. There is a growing movement to address identities and preferences that are not gender conforming. Literature surrounding women in the superintendency may be problematic as some might perceive it as a way to validate the patriarchy by separating expectations into binary, masculine, and feminine expectations. Even though the women in this study conceptualized their experiences around binary expectations for men and women, it must be noted that not all gender identity conforms to the masculine or feminine norm. Most research on employment gender inequality focuses on the differences between men and women. This only serves to reinforce a binary conception of gender. Future research would benefit by addressing the lived experiences of those who identify as non-binary and incorporate language that honor such voices.

Conclusions

Limited research is available on the impacts of gender, social norms, race, and intersectionality on a women's career ascension in education, specifically regarding the superintendency. Consequently, this study provides a framework for understanding the career aspirations and perceived barriers and challenges in reaching the top district administrator position, specifically related to Kansas public education. Moreover, this study confirms previous research in the areas of gender discrimination, typical career paths of female superintendents, the critical role of mentors, and women's confidence in their ability to achieve success, even when faced with opposition, and individual drive and ambition. Additionally, this study extends previous work by revealing valuable advice to aspiring female superintendents on how to

navigate the system and become successful superintendents and by sharing strategies for overcoming traditional barriers, thus increasing the proportion of females in the superintendency. The study also extends previous work by adding ten voices of female building and district administrators from the state of Kansas to the limited literature on this topic. Their diverse stories of their experiences revealed challenges and successes in their career attainment and highlighted commonalities across race and women's experience with social norms.

The findings from this study benefit women aspiring to the superintendency and inform leadership programs and associations that seek to encourage and prepare females to pursue the superintendency. By serving as a reference point for post-secondary institutions, educational leadership organizations, administrative mentoring programs, and state departments of education who members and staff seek to identify and prepare outstanding leaders for the nation's public school system, this study provides insight on historic barriers while providing inspiration and hope of a future. As research indicated, the most common route to the superintendency begins at the secondary teaching level. One potential strategy to disrupt this pipeline includes current educational leaders developing and devising unique opportunities in order to develop leaders and leadership skills for teachers at the elementary level that mirror those currently offered at the secondary level (i.e. learning coaches in every building, department chairs, athletic coaches). Ideally, the findings from this study will inform educational leaders to replicate an environment that encourages and promotes equal opportunities for women at all stages of educational and professional growth. As one participant encouraged, "Yes, you can absolutely be a superintendent down the road. The journey is yours!"

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Appendix A

Invitation Letter

Research Study Invitation Letter For Female Education Leaders In Kansas

Study Title: "Kansas Female Superintendents: Historical Barriers and Prospects for the Future"

Dear __,

My name is Carissa Miles, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Kansas in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department. I would like to cordially invite you to participate in my qualitative study regarding district leadership in Kansas.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the female education leaders in Kansas by exploring their career aspirations and experienced barriers and challenges in reaching the school and district leadership positions. By utilizing the lens of data collected during interviews with women who are current educational leaders, this study seeks to expand previous research conducted in the field of educational leadership and how it relates to the disproportional representation of female leaders found within the profession. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for a brief interview.

If you choose to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed consent form and survey and return in the postage paid envelope provided.

Should you be selected for an interview, you will receive a telephone call from me directly to arrange a date, time and private location of your choice for the interview. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will proceed no longer than 90 minutes. If deemed necessary, I will also request and conduct a follow up interview with you, by telephone, for clarification.

Participation is confidential, and your identity will not be revealed. The interview will be audio taped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will only be reviewed by myself, who will transcribe and analyze them. They will then be destroyed. Furthermore, you may withdraw from the study at any time. Taking part in the study is your decision. You may also quit the interview at any time or decide not to answer any question you are not comfortable answering.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at cmiles@ku.edu or (620) 242-8232 if you have study related questions or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration,

Carissa Miles
3212 Sherwood Dr.
Lawrence, KS 66049
(620) 242-8232
cmiles@ku.edu

Appendix B

Informed Consent Statement

Study Title: “Kansas Female Superintendents: Historical Barriers and Prospects for the Future”

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Although gender equality has continued to drastically improve over the years, a glass ceiling still exists. The purpose of this study is to investigate the career aspirations and perceptions of female administrators regarding the barriers and challenges in reaching the top district administration level. By utilizing the lens of data collected during interviews with women who are current administrators, this study seeks to expand previous research conducted in the field of educational leadership and how it relates to the disproportional representation of female superintendents found within the profession.

PROCEDURES

You will be asked to participate in one interview composed of approximately fifteen questions. The interview will last approximately one hour. There may be an audiotape used during the interview; however, you have the option of having the taping stopped at any time. The researcher will be transcribing the recording shortly after the interview. No other person will have access to the recordings, and the recordings will be destroyed upon completion on the transcription process.

Sample questions include:

- What is the highest organizational level position that you aim to achieve?
- Which personal or professional factors do you perceive as barriers in your current professions?
- What approaches (if any) have been successful to overcome the barriers?

RISKS

Participants will be asked to share their personal information (experiences) and thoughts/perceptions related to employment in the profession. However, the information gathered will not pose significant risk or harm to any of the participants.

BENEFITS

Although the participant may not directly benefit from the study beyond providing service to the profession, the study may provide valuable information for the research community and the general profession.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher(s) will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form, you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form. You may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Carissa Miles, 424 JRP, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045.

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call Carissa Miles at (620) 242-8232 or e-mail cmiles@ku.edu

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature, I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Participant's Signature

Date

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

- Format: semi-structured interviews
- Formulated according to a specific target group
- Inform participant about the approximate length and recoding
- Inform participant about the main idea of the interview, making sure the participant feels comfortable with the purpose and her role in the project.
- Inform participant about the researcher's role
- Inform participant about anonymity and confidentiality
- Ensure that everything is clear and understandable

Interview Script:

[Interviewer states:] *I truly appreciate you taking the time to share your story with me. To review, the purpose of this study is to share any barriers encountered and support systems you used while obtaining and now while serving in your current position. The questions are written to elicit this information but share stories or experiences as you see fit throughout the interview. Additionally, I encourage you to be as honest and open as possible for purposes of research and since your identity will remain anonymous.*

As a review of our process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via letter and signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for the purpose of this study. Please remember, this interview will be recorded and transcribed, and you will be provided with a copy of the complete transcripts to check for accuracy in content and meaning prior to me analyzing the data. Do you have any questions before we begin? [Begin to ask interview questions]

Background Questions:

1. Share a little about yourself personally and professionally.
 - a. Professional probes: How old were you when you first became a teacher? How old were you when you first became an educational leader? How many years were you a classroom teacher? What certifications do you hold? What is the highest earned degree you hold? What is your formal title? How long have you held your current position?
 - b. Family probes: What is your marital status? How many dependents do you support? Has having children altered your career goals and/or timeline? Do/did you have geographical mobility?
2. What positions did you hold prior to serving in your current capacity? For how long in each position (*Listening for: teacher, lead teacher, SPED teacher, counselor, activities director, assistant principal, principal, district administrator, etc.*)?
 - a. Probe: Can you provide an overview of your employment history including details of key decisions that were made and routes followed?
 - b. Have you spent your entire educational career in one district?
 - c. How long did it take you to obtain your first administrative position once you were certified and actively sought the position?

Career Aspiration Content Questions:

3. What is the highest organizational level position that you aim to achieve? Why or why not?
4. What drives your career aspirations currently and in the past?
5. Have you accepted or decline promotions in your current district? (Why?)
6. Are you interested in applying for a different administrative position in the future? If so, what kind of position would be the most attractive to you?
 - a. Probe: Do you expect to obtain an upper leadership position in your current district (Why or why not?)
7. In your experience, have you noticed equitable opportunities for both men and women to apply for higher administrative positions?
 - a. In general, do you feel that it is easier for a male to get promoted and access the highest positions than for a female?
 - b. Have you felt that being a woman has made it harder for you to get ahead in your career?
8. What elements did you identify as being important to establishing legitimacy and credibility?
9. While attaining the position of [superintendent], what ways do you feel that it was challenging to navigate the existing professional community of educational leaders?
 - a. Do you believe there is an old boy network in Kansas that helps individuals get administrative positions?
 - b. What personal or professional support system(s) did you use to overcome this/these barrier(s)?
10. What about administration would you like to see changed for it to be a more attractive position for you and others?

Career Barrier Content Questions:

11. Have you experienced discrimination in any form? What strategies did you deploy to manage thins?
12. What rules, spoken or unspoken, explicit or implied, could be perceived as barriers to your advancement?
 - a. What personal or professional support system(s) did you use to overcome this/these barrier(s)?
13. What social structures or expectations, inside and outside the organization, could be perceived as barriers in attaining your current position?
 - a. What personal or professional support system(s) did you use to overcome this/these barrier(s)?
14. Please share any other barriers, personal and/or professional, that you experienced while you were attaining the [superintendent position].
15. What social structures or expectations, inside and outside the organization, could be perceived as current barriers for females serving as superintendents today?
 - a. What personal or professional support system(s) did you use to overcome this/these barrier(s)?
16. Can you describe any challenging moments or experiences as a female leader?
17. How do people perceive you? How do these perceptions affect your actions?

Concluding Questions:

18. Is there anything else you wish to tell me that I have not already asked?
19. Would it be okay if I contact you again in the event of supplementary questions?