Female Elementary Principals' Perceptions About Access to Potential Career Routes to the Superintendency in Pennsylvania

by

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to four, special people. First, to my husband, who is elated now that this odyssey has come to an end. Todd, your encouragement, sacrifices, and patience are without limits. Without your faith in me and your strength to give me the space and time I needed to achieve my goals, I would have never made it to this point. I thank you with all my heart.

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Abstract

A variety of factors contribute to women's underrepresentation in educational administration, particularly in positions that traditionally lead to the superintendency. This study examines the career pathways of female superintendent aspirants from the elementary principalship. A conceptual framework based on career development and motivation theories was developed to guide this inquiry. Using a convergent mixed methods design, a survey of a random sample of female elementary principals and interviews from case studies reveals that aspirants to the superintendency perceive district-level positions as accessible and advantageous to their career development. The results of this study support the use of alternative career pathways to the superintendency among female elementary principals who are historically underrepresented in top leadership positions. The implications of this study suggest that women develop aspirations to the superintendency and make career pathway decisions based on their career commitments and the value they imbue in gaining leadership experience in sentinel positions as opposed to following a traditional hierarchy to career advancement. Furthermore, the implications of this study include a re-envisioning of inquiries into women's access to the superintendency to shift from a gender-specific lens to include a focus on the role of diverse professional experiences and leadership development in superintendent preparation. Professional practices such as mentorships and professional networks would promote women's aspirations and attainment of school and district leadership positions.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The underrepresentation of women in school and district leadership positions persists (Aud et al., 2011; Brunner, 1999, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Glass, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sherman, 2005; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Young & McLeod, 2001). In 2008, the percentage of female teachers in American public schools was 75.5% whereas the percentage of female principals was 51.1% (Aud et al., 2011). Across the nation in 2010, the percentage female superintendents, the chief administrative position in a school district, was 24.1% (Kowalski et al., 2011). Women represent 75.5% of the teaching force but occupy slightly higher than 50% of principalships and less than 25% of superintendencies. Given their prevalence in teaching, women have not reached equitable representation in educational leadership positions, particularly as superintendents.

Studies have revealed several factors contributing to the phenomenon around women's inequitable representation in educational administration. These factors include women's experiences with internal and external barriers and perceptions about their leadership abilities. Internal barriers such as self-perceptions about job readiness or adequacy (Grogan 1996; Gupton & Slick; 1996; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Sherman, 2005; Tallerico, 2000a; Young & McLeod, 2001), responsibility to the nuclear or extended family (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Loder, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1989), and individual agency in career aspirations (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Eckman, 2004; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Ruhl-Smith, Shen, & Cooley, 1999; Young & McLeod, 2001) have a chilling effect on women's aspirations to upper-level administrative positions. External barriers such as limited sponsorship or

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mentorship opportunities (Bjork, 2000; Daresh, 2004; Grogan, 1996; Orr, 2006; Sherman, 2005; Young & McLeod, 2001), preferred experiences in educational leadership (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Ortiz, 1982; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b), normative gatekeeping practices (Chase & Bell, 1990; Kamler, 2009; Newton, 2006; Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop & Zeitoun, 2003; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b), existing power structures (Adkison, 1981; Grogan, 1999, 2000; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Ortiz, 1982; Sherman, 2005; Tallerico & Blount, 2004), and gender-based stereotyping (Brunner, 2000; Burkman, 2010; Grogan, 1996, 1999; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Rusch & Marshall, 2006; Skrla, 2000; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico, 2000b) limit women's access to networks that promote and provide access to the superintendency. Perceptions by school board members and the public about women's leadership abilities as lacking fiscal acuity and organizational management skills perpetuate a belief that women are ill-suited for the superintendency (Chase & Bell, 1990; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kamler, 2009; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Mountford, 2001; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b). For women who experience these barriers and perceptions, the superintendency may be unappealing and inaccessible.

Another factor that may contribute to women's inequitable representation in the superintendency is their career pathways. A career pathway is an established, hierarchical sequence of commonly held positions that leads to increased visibility and scope of responsibility (Ortiz, 1982). One conceptualization of a typical career pathway includes a route that flows from teacher, to principal, to central office administrator, to superintendent (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989). The notion of a typical career pathway derives from the routes successfully used by men to access the superintendency (Brunner & Kim, 2010;

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Shakeshaft, 1989). In 2000, a majority of male and female superintendents followed the typical career pathway (Kim & Brunner, 2009). However, further examination of the routes used by male and female superintendents reveals that alternative career pathways exist (Kim & Brunner, 2009). Male superintendents followed the typical career pathway that included a secondary principalship. Female superintendents used the typical career pathway commonly followed by men, and they also used routes that combined line authority positions, such as elementary and secondary principal and assistant superintendent, as well as staff positions in curriculum and central office. Men were more likely to move vertically and directly from a high school principalship to a superintendent position whereas women were more likely to move horizontally from elementary principalship to a central office position, such as a director or an assistant superintendent, prior to attaining the superintendency (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kim & Brunner, 2009). Male and female superintendents' distinct career routes suggest that they follow different career pathways to the superintendency depending on their prior administrative experiences as elementary or secondary principals.

The differences between male and female superintendents' career pathways derive from their entry ports into educational administration. In the 2010 national survey of male and female superintendents sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the most frequent first administrative positions for superintendents were (a) high school assistant principal—19.1%, (b) district-level director or coordinator—14.9%, (c) high school principal—14.1%, and (d) elementary principal—13.4% (Kowalski et al., 2011). When disaggregated by gender, the most frequent first administrative positions for male superintendents were (a) high school assistant principal, (b) high school principal, and (c) junior or middle school assistant principal. The most frequent first administrative positions for female superintendents were (a)

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district-level director or coordinator, (b) elementary principal, and (c) elementary assistant principal. Male superintendents' first administrative positions were in secondary school leadership—41.2% whereas women superintendents' first administrative positions were in elementary school or central office leadership—58.3% (Kowalski et al., 2011). Entry ports into educational administration determine which career routes in a career pathway would be available and accessible to an aspirant (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Ortiz, 1982). Women with entry ports concentrated in elementary and curriculum positions are less likely to access a career pathway via a secondary principalship.

As the most common route used by superintendents, the typical career pathway to the superintendency includes the secondary principalship (Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2011; Shakeshaft, 1989). Women who aspire to the superintendency and who are in elementary principal and curriculum positions are outside the typical career pathway. Thus, female aspirants' career pathway decisions are limited by the positions they perceive as accessible to them. Female aspirants' ability to access the superintendency from positions outside the typical career pathway raises a broad question: What do female aspirants perceive as potential routes to the superintendency?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the larger question of how female aspirants who are outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency perceive potential routes to the superintendency. Within the context of the state of Pennsylvania, this study explored how female elementary principals envision potential career routes to the superintendency, and how they perceive their ability to access positions. My specific research questions and sub-questions are:

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1. What proportion of female elementary principals in Pennsylvania aspires to the superintendency?
    a. How do female aspirants develop aspirations to this position?
2. How do female elementary principals envision their career pathways to the superintendency?
    a. Which positions in school and district leadership do they plan to pursue?
3. How do female elementary principals aspiring to the superintendency perceive their ability to access other school and district leadership positions?

Research site. The research site for this study was the state of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania is divided into seven regions with 29 intermediate units serving 500 public school districts (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2013, *Pennsylvania's school districts and intermediate units*). Among the 500 school districts, there is a distribution of urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Pennsylvania is ranked 10th in the nation for the number of public school districts (National Center of Education Statistics [NCES], 2011, *Number of public elementary and secondary agencies*), and the percentage of female teachers and principals approximates national percentages (PDE, 2013, *2012-2013 Professional personnel summary*; US Census Bureau, 2012). During the 2012-2013 school year, 45% of public school principals were women with 58.9% of women serving as elementary principals (PDE, 2013, *2012-2013 Professional personnel summary*).

In 2012, Pennsylvania had 28.2% female superintendents (PDE, 2013, *2012-2013 Professional personnel summary*), which is slightly higher than the national percentage of female superintendents—24.1% (Kowalski et al., 2011). School districts are categorized by locale—city, suburban, town, and rural—based on the resident population within the school district's

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boundary area and the school district's size—small, mid-size, and large—based on the number of students attending the schools within the district (NCES, *Rural education in America*). By locale, the highest percentage of female superintendents were in city school districts—41% and the lowest were in suburban school districts—24% (PDE, 2010*, Urban-centric and metro centric*). Thirty percent of female superintendents were in small and mid-size school districts whereas 23% were in large school districts. In Pennsylvania, women occupied superintendencies in small and mid-size school districts in urban locales whereas men occupied superintendencies in large school districts in suburban and rural locales.

Research design. This proposed study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design. A convergent parallel mixed methods design involves the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data, the independent analysis of data from both strands, the merging of results from both strands, and the interpretation of the merged results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This type of design employed a quantitative method strand and a qualitative method strand for data collection and data analysis. Quantitative data from a survey was used to determine the relationship between female elementary principals' aspirations to the superintendency and their perceived ability to access to positions in school and district leadership. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions on the survey and interviews from the case studies was used to explore how female aspirants to the superintendency envision their career pathways. The reason for collecting quantitative and qualitative data was to compare and corroborate the results from the two types of research strands to develop a more complete understanding of female elementary principals' career aspirations and perceived access to career pathways.

Participants. The participants in the quantitative strand included a simple random sample of 89 female elementary principals from a sample frame of 251 potential participants in

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the population of 938 female elementary principals (PDE, 2013, *2011-2012 Professional personnel summary*). Participants in the qualitative strand included a purposeful, critical case sample of two female aspirants, separate from the random sample in the quantitative strand, and one female superintendent. The three case study samples represented women in educational leadership positions who would, or have, experienced the phenomenon of accessing the superintendency from outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency.

Methods of data collection. The method of data collection included the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was collected using a survey instrument comprised of 11 questions and administered electronically through Survey Monkey to a sample of 300 female elementary principals. The survey instrument included multiple choice questions about demographics, career aspirations, and perceived accessibility to positions and multiple choice ranking, and open-ended questions about potential career route development. Qualitative data was be collected from three case studies through individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews using an interview guide and a record review of resumes and curriculum vita. The interview guide consisted of nine open-ended questions developed around themes from the literature that include career aspirations, sources of motivation, career decision-making processes, and career planning. Interview sessions were tape recorded, transcribed, and stored in a database.

Methods of data analysis. The quantitative and qualitative data results were analyzed separately. The methods for quantitative data analysis included quantitative procedures for analyzing responses to the survey using descriptive statistics. The researcher determined frequencies for the responses to the categorical questions. Response frequencies were compared among aspirants and non-aspirants and by age groups.

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The methods for qualitative data analysis included qualitative procedures for analyzing the open-ended responses from the survey and interview transcripts from the case studies. The recorded case study interviews will be converted into written interview transcripts. The interview transcripts and open-ended responses were read for (a) memos, or short statements, (b) recurring statements within the interview, (c) significant statements, and (d) statements or terms that coincide with the literature in the conceptual framework. Each data set was coded and analyzed for emergent patterns and themes and combined into a matrix that includes priori categories. The results from the record review were used to develop a descriptive profile of the case study participants.

The quantitative and qualitative data results were merged using procedures described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) that involve (a) reducing the quantitative and qualitative data, (b) transforming the qualitative data quantified units, (c) correlating and comparing the quantitative and quantified qualitative data in a category matrix, (d) integrating the combined data for analysis, and (e) interpreting the results of the merged data.

A comparative method was used to interpret the merged results to address the research questions in the study. Once the quantitative and qualitative were reduced and correlated through the merging procedures, the researcher will use a side-by-side comparison to analyze the similarities and differences between the quantitative data from the survey to the transformed qualitative data from the case study interviews. This analysis included the identification of congruencies and discrepancies between aspirants who participated in the survey and in the case study interviews to understand how aspirants envision their career pathways to the superintendency through other school and district leadership positions, and how they perceive their ability to access these positions. The researcher identified themes from the merged results

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and compared them to the demographic characteristics of the survey participants and the case study participants. This analysis involved comparing participants' age with aspirations to the superintendency, envisioned career routes to school and district leadership, and perceptions about the ability to access these positions. The interpretation of the merged data results involved reviewing the quantitative and qualitative data results separately for additional information and connecting merged data results with emergent patterns and themes.

Significance of the Proposed Research

Understanding female aspirants' potential career pathways to the superintendency is important to educators for several reasons. First, changes in the present and future labor force may provide increased opportunities for women to access the superintendency or a position within the career pathway to the superintendency. Recent studies about the American superintendency suggest that impending retirements will create vacancies (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011). In a study sponsored by the AASA about the American school superintendency, 51% of the superintendents surveyed plan on remaining in the superintendency after 2015, suggesting that nearly half the superintendent positions will be vacant within the next two years (Kowalski et al., 2011). Over the past decade, the national percentage of female elementary and secondary principals has increased from an average of 44.2% to 51.5% (Aud et al., 2011). Women outnumber men in graduate programs in educational leadership (Bjork, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004) thus, creating a pool of female candidates with diverse experiences in educational administration through alternative career routes (Bjork, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Impending superintendent retirements and women's increased representation in educational administration expands the field of potential candidates to fill superintendent

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positions or other positions within the career pathway to the superintendency. Efforts in candidate recruitment (Newton, 2006; Normore, 2006; Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009), succession planning (Kamler, 2009), and school board preparation and education (Kamler, 2009; Tallerico, 2000b) should address the diversity of women's experiences in educational administration as a potential asset.

Second, the significance of examining women's experiences "on their own terms" is critical for advancing a contemporary understanding of women's continued inequitable representation in the superintendency (Grogan, 1999, p. 523). Women's experiences in the field of education continue to reflect gender-related differences. Beginning with teaching experience, female superintendents have 10 or more years of classroom teaching experience than do male superintendents (Glass, 2000; Glass et al., 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011) and over two-thirds of elementary teachers are women (Aud et al., 2011). Given women's concentration in elementary education, many women enter educational administration as elementary principals and curriculum personnel (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2011). Furthermore, women in elementary education have fewer opportunities to access positions in the typical career pathway to the superintendency, such as the secondary principalship (Bjork, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Glass, 2000). Additionally, women who attained superintendency positions report encountering gender discrimination, and female superintendents cite gender discrimination as a limiting factor to accessing the superintendency (Kowalski et al., 2011; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Skrla et al., 2000). Gender-related differences continue to impede women's access to the superintendency and limit career mobility. Yet, understanding how current female aspirants mitigate these factors in their career pathways informs how women could access the superintendency, despite these limitations.

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Third, within the past decade, education reform legislation has transformed the role of the school and district leader (Reeves, 2006; Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010) to emphasize evidence-based practice in educational leadership (Kowalski, 2009). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 calls for increased accountability for student learning and emphasizes instructional leadership at the school and district levels. The recent demands of school and district leaders to become instructional leaders as well as fiscal and organizational managers create new avenues for career pathways that could potentially lead to the superintendency (Bjork, 2000; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Lambert, 2003; Newton, 2006; Orr, 2006). Furthermore, the role of the superintendent encompasses competencies in multiple leadership styles that emphasize collaboration within the organization (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007) and attention to the complexities of culturally and academically diverse student populations (Kowalski, 2009; Normore, 2006). In *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study*, Kowalski et al. (2011) found that superintendents identified instructional leadership one of the top three areas of emphasis for school boards. The emphasis on instructional leadership in the superintendency suggests that viable candidates for this position have expertise in establishing the conditions for an instructionally conducive environment by facilitating a climate of academic focus and professional collaboration that produces positive student outcomes (Fuller, Young, & Baker, 2011). Superintendents must use evidence-based practices and data-driven decision making to address the accountability demands for student achievement associated with NCLB (Kowalski, 2009). Individuals aspiring to the superintendency would recognize that career pathways with an emphasis on instructional leadership are indispensable for the 21st century superintendent. Thus, the common barrier female aspirants experienced with teaching-centered

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professional experiences and alternative leadership styles may become assets in the emerging landscape of school reform (Bjork, 2000; Gruian & Annis, 2008; Young & McLeod, 2001). Because of the paucity of research about women in educational leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011), exploring how women access the superintendency from outside the typical career pathway can contribute to an under-examined area of research about women in educational administration.

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Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

A conceptual framework is a system of connecting concepts, assumptions, beliefs and existing theory used to examine a phenomenon (Maxwell, 2005). This conceptual framework provides a rationale for this study into how female aspirants who are outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency perceive potential routes to this position. This conceptual framework draws from research about women's representation and progress in educational administration, applications of career development and motivation theories, and career pathways in educational administration. The first section of this conceptual framework includes a review of studies about women's representation in school and district leadership positions. The next section grounds factors surrounding women's career opportunities to, decisions for, and aspirations to educational administration in career development and motivation theories. The final section examines the typical and alternative career pathways to the superintendency and women's entry ports in educational administration.

Figure 1 illustrates women's career development process from teaching to aspiring to educational administration juxtaposed with existing structures that limit women's access to the superintendency. The female aspirants' perceptions about their ability to access potential routes to the superintendency become the nexus between their career aspirations and the existing power structures that limit their career mobility.

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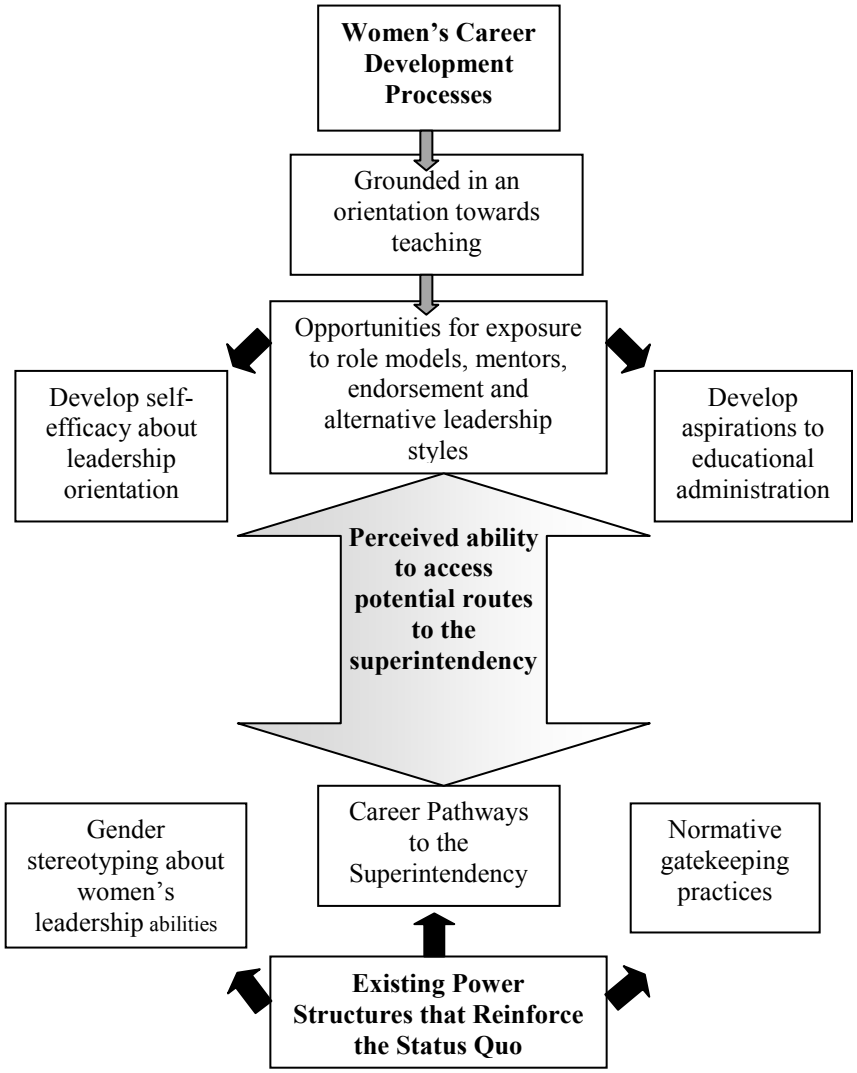

Figure 1. Conceptual model of factors affecting women's career development.

Women's Representation in Educational Administration

Since the early 20th century, women have dominated the field of education as teachers (Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). Over an 80 year period from 1905 to 1984, women constituted 71.5% of all public school teachers (Shakeshaft, 1989). Based on available figures compiled by

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the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) from 1986 to 2006, 72.9% of all public school teachers were women (2009, 2010).

Historically, women have been inequitably represented in school and district leadership positions (Brunner, 1999; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Glass, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft; 1989; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Since the late 1920s, the percentage of female principals declined from 31.5% in 1928 to 10.2% in 1985 (Shakeshaft, 1989). Yet, in the mid 1980s through the mid 1990s, the percentage of female principals across the United States increased from 24.5% in 1988 to 34.5% in 1994 (Fiore & Curtin, 1997, Chapter 2). Furthermore, the percentage of new female principals increased from 41.2% in 1988 to 48.1% in 1994 (Fiore & Curtin, 1997, Chapter 2). From 2000 to 2008, the percentage of female principals increased from 44.2% to 51.1% (Aud et al., 2011). Since the decline after the late 1920s, women's representation in the principalship has steadily increased from 10.2% in 1985 to 51.1% in 2008.

Women's representation in the superintendency followed a similar pattern to women's representation in the principalship. Between 1930 and 1970, the percentage of female superintendents declined from 11% to 3.4% (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). In the period between 1972 and 1985, the percentage of female superintendents was at or below 3% (Shakeshaft, 1989). In the period between 1992 and 2000, the percentage of female superintendents increased from 6.6% to 14% (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). By 2006, women constituted 21.7% of superintendents (Brunner & Grogan, 2007) and further increased to 24.1% in 2010 (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Since the 1990s, the percentage of female superintendents has steadily increased; however, the only available source of data is from the studies sponsored by professional organizations (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

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Despite women's increased representation in school and district leadership positions over the past two decades, men continue to dominate top positions in educational administration. Recent studies (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Glass, 2000; Grogan, 1999; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b) about women and educational administration examine their representation in terms of accessing the superintendency and equitable representation in educational administration.

Yet, what constitutes equitable representation for women in educational administration is not clearly defined. In a review about the patterns of scholarship about women and gender in educational administration, Bjork (2000) notes that scholarship about women's representation and experiences in educational administration lacks conceptual clarity about the definition of equitable representation. Early research about women and educational administration defines equitable representation as parity between the number of men and women in school and district leadership positions (Grogan, 1999; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). However, more recent scholarship focuses on women's experiences in gaining access to educational administration as opposed to basic comparisons between the number of men and women in school and district leadership positions (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Shakeshaft et al., 2007).

Recently, equitable representation for women in educational administration has come to include women's academic and professional preparation in educational administration and their viability in the candidate pool. In an examination of female aspirants' and superintendents' discourse about their experiences in pursuing and attaining superintendency, Grogan (1996) found that women acknowledged the importance of advanced graduate and doctoral degrees as

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necessary credentials for accessing top positions in educational administration. In a study about women's success rates in attaining principal positions after completing an educational leadership program, Riehl and Byrd (1997) found that despite adequate qualifications to access a candidate pool, women were less likely than men to advance to an administration position. Mahitivanichcha and Rorrer (2006) examined how the confluence of structured time, ideal worker norms, and sexual division of labor constrain women's access to educational administration and women's choices to pursue the superintendency. Mahitivanichcha and Rorrer contend that although women's representation in graduate programs and school leadership positions increased, such efforts did not translate into women attaining proportional advancement to top administrative positions such as the superintendency. In a qualitative study about a district-based leadership program intended to develop candidates for administrative positions from within the district, Sherman (2005) found that women who participated in the program experienced limited access and advancement to administrative positions. Although the number of women who have pursued advanced graduate and doctoral degrees, requisite credentialing, and site-based leadership opportunities has forged their access into the candidate pool for administrative positions, these efforts have not translated into an increase in the number of women successfully attaining administrative positions.

Another view of women's equitable representation in educational administration suggests that women's representation should be proportional to the number of teachers at the elementary and secondary levels. In a quantitative study about the success rate men and women transitioning to school administration after completing and educational leadership program, Riehl and Byrd (1997) found that men were twice as likely as women to move into school leadership positions. Following 99 participants—60 men and 39 women—in a representative,

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national sample from 1987 to 1989, Riehl and Byrd found that 29% of the participants who moved into principalships were female. However, these new female principals were concentrated in elementary positions. In terms of equitable representation in proportion to prior teaching experiences, 17% of new secondary principals were female, although they comprised 58% of the teachers at the secondary level. Consistent with other research about women and school leadership (Glass, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Rusch & Marshall, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1993), women's access to school leadership positions is limited to and concentrated in the elementary principalship.

Recent data about female teachers and principals reveals inequities in women's representation in school and district leadership positions. According to the most recently published figures by NCES about teachers' characteristics in American public schools, women outnumber men in the teaching field (Aritomi & Coppersmith, 2009). In a recent compendium of results from the U.S. Department of Education's 2007-2008 School Staffing Survey, Aud et al. found that in 2008, women constituted 75.5 % of all teachers in public schools in the United States. By school level, women constituted 58.7 % of all teachers in secondary schools and 84.4% of all teachers in elementary schools. Among the 75.5% of female teachers, 27.1% were secondary teachers and 72.9% were elementary teachers. In 2008, women constituted 51.1% of all principals in public schools. By school level, women constituted 28.5% of all principals in secondary schools and 58.9% of all principals in elementary schools. Among the 51.1% of female principals, 14.1% were secondary principals and 85.6% were elementary principals. While women represent 75.5% of the total teaching force in public schools, they represent 51.1% all principals in public schools. In comparison to all teachers and principals, female teachers and principals are concentrated in elementary schools. Yet, the concentration of women in

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elementary schools is even greater among the total percentages of female teachers and principals. Recent trends show that women are approaching equitable representation in school leadership positions; however, they are densely concentrated in elementary principalships.

Over the past two decades, women have made steady gains in accessing the superintendency; however, this upward trend does not approach their overall representation in the teaching force or educational administration. In the most recently published figures about the school district superintendency by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), 24.1% of superintendents across the nation are women (Kowalski et al., 2011), which is a sharp increase from 14.1% in 2000 (Glass et al., 2000). However, women's actual representation in the superintendency continues to be imprecise in the absence national statistics about the population of superintendents (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). For example, relying on voluntary survey responses, AASA captured less than 15% of the estimated population of superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Although women's representation in school and district leadership positions has increased, they have not reached equitable representation in terms of their overall representation in the field of education. Since the 1990s, the percentage of female principals as increased from 34.5% to 51.1%, and the percentage of female superintendents has increased from 6.6% to 24.1%. Women have consistently represented over 70% of the teaching force in the past and present century, yet less than 50% of the principals and less than 25% of superintendents have been women.

Factors in Women's Progress in Educational Administration

Women have made slow progress in gaining access to the school and district leadership positions. Although there has been a positive upward trend in women's representation in the

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principalship and superintendency since the 1990s, women continue to be inequitably represented in school and district leadership positions in comparison to their overall representation in teaching. Research about women's representation in the superintendency has primarily focused on topics about women's access to the superintendency (Gupton & Slick, 1996; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b) and women's experiences in the superintendency (Brunner, 1999, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan, 1996, 1999; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). The experiences of women in the superintendency expose external forces that work as barriers that maintain the status quo, which promotes continued male dominance over top leadership positions (Adkison, 1981; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Chase & Bell, 1990; Eckman, 2004; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b), thus limiting women's access to the superintendency. These barriers include gender stereotyping and gatekeeping practices.

Gender-based stereotyping. Sex role stereotyping is a practice in which a commonly held belief about the gender roles of men and women are reinforced by a group (Adkison, 1981; Reskin & Roos, 1990). Sex role stereotyping manifests in occupational sex segregation where the division of labor for men and women into different work roles and tasks is based on stereotypes about male and female gender roles (Padavic & Reskin, 2002). Historically, occupational sex segregation determined women's career options in various segments of the workforce. Thus, women's access to certain jobs or professions depended on external forces such as labor shortages in markets and federal regulations aimed at abating sex discrimination (Reskin & Roos, 1990). As an external and limiting force, occupational sex segregation has been a persistent barrier to women's access to school and district leadership positions.

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Occupational sex segregation. On a larger scale, labor markets reflect practices of occupational sex segregation. Thurow's (1972) queuing theory describes the convergence of mutual desirability between employers and employees in the workforce. As certain occupations become less attractive to the traditional workers, non-traditional workers gain access to these occupations. Reskin and Roos (1990) expands upon Thurow's queuing theory to encompass job queues and gender queues. According to Reskin and Roos, job queues are essentially gender queues since employers and employees stratify and designate the characteristics of certain occupations by sex role stereotypes. Furthermore, Reskin and Roos assert that women gain access to non-traditional, male-dominated occupations during labor shortages due to job growth. While the confluence of federal regulations and litigation, decreased sex discrimination, and job preference led to increased access for women in male-dominated occupations in corporate settings and other industries, men continued to corner managerial and vertical growth positions and garnered higher wages for similar work.

Reskin and Roos (1990) describe the job queues and gender queue phenomenon in three distinct phases. First, in the re-segregation phase, female workers in non-traditional positions increased. Second, in the integration phase, an equal proportion of men and women occupy positions in the workforce. Third, in the ghettoization phase, the traditionally dominant workers leave positions in the workforce and these positions become dominated by the newcomers. A specific example of ghettoization in education is the predominance of female teachers and principals in elementary schools, suggesting that men find these positions less desirable.

Tallerico and Blount (2004) applied Thurow's (1972) queuing theory and Reskin and Roos' (1990) job queues and gender queues theory to their analysis of women and the superintendency. In a study of longitudinal data about the superintendency in the United States,

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Tallerico and Blount (2004) found that men dominated the superintendency during the period from 1910 to 1998 with a notable increase of women superintendents, between 3% and 15%, in two distinct phases. Tallerico and Blount conducted a content analysis of a published annual of superintendents across the United States and applied occupational sex segregation theory to their analysis of these two phases. Tallerico and Blount suggest that the increase in female superintendents in these two phases was a response to the social and political forces that influenced the labor markets. Drawing from Thurow's (1972) queuing theory about the mutual relationship between the employer's desirability for an employee and an employee's attraction to a position, Tallerico and Blount suggest that as the superintendency became less desirable to the men, women were able to gain access to this position, further noting that female superintendents often held positions in smaller or rural school districts.

Tallerico and Blount (2004) further examined the two phases of increased women's representation in the superintendency within a historical context informed by occupational sex segregation theory. During the first phase from 1910 to 1930, the women's suffrage movement provided increased advocacy for women attaining the superintendency as one of the few positions available to women. During the second phase from 1970 to 1998, the effects of the women's movement and the Title IX Education Amendments of 1972 spawned both awareness and activism about women's underrepresentation in the superintendency. Tallerico and Blount suggest that social and political forces such as the de-politicization of the superintendency beginning in the 1930s, the impact of the GI Bill on increased credentialing for men, and the consolidation of school districts in the 1950s led to a decrease in the number of female superintendents between 1930 and 1970. Despite these intermittent gains and the effects of social and political forces, women were unable to maintain a steady and upward trend in their

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representation in the superintendency. Furthermore, female superintendents held positions in smaller and rural districts, suggesting the effects of Reskin and Roos' (1990) ghettoization phase of job queues and gender queues. While Tallerico and Blount's (2004) study is limited to women's representation in the superintendency up until 1998, their findings present "cautions about drawing overly optimistic conclusions" about women's progress in accessing the superintendency (p.647).

Effects of sex role stereotyping. Other studies about women's progress in the superintendency focus on the effects of social and political legislation aimed at abating the discriminatory practices that limit women's access to the superintendency. Adkison (1981) suggests that the efforts of legislation to create equal opportunities for women may have had a greater impact on women's aspirations to positions in educational administration as opposed to changing the actual practices in hiring women. Grogan (2000) suggests that these efforts failed to help women break through the glass ceiling to top administrative positions.

One factor that trumped legislative efforts is the power of sex role stereotyping as a form of sex discrimination. Studies about women and educational administration in the wake of Title IX legislation purport women's experiences with sex role stereotyping as significant barrier for women aspiring to and accessing superintendent positions (Grogan, 1996; Lynch, 1990; Skrla et al., 2000; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). Adkison (1981) cites the socialization of men and women from an early age about the nature of gender-ingrained suppositions about men's and women's management and leadership abilities. Sex role stereotyping is reinforced by the characterization of teaching for women as a "careerless" profession where women lack aspirations to administrative positions or commitment to their careers (Adkison, 1981, p. 337). Such perceptions are further reinforced by the organizational structures in schools that favor male

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aspirants over female aspirants (Glass, 2000; Grogan, 1999; Lee, Smith & Cioci, 1993; Rusch & Marshall, 2002; Tallerico, 2000a; Ortiz, 1982).

Despite the efforts of legislation to mitigate sexual discrimination, perceptions bound by sex role stereotypes hampered women's desire to move into educational administration and limited opportunities for women to be socialized into administrative roles (Adkison, 1981; Burkman, 2010; Shakeshaft, 1989). Furthermore, women depended on male sponsorship for access to these opportunities, and the few women who broke through the glass ceiling to top administrative positions confront the effects of tokenism (Adkison, 1981; Ortiz, 1982). Tokenism, or being the single representative from group, can have a detrimental effect on the individual and the group (Martin, Price, Bies, & Powers, 1989). The female administrator would experience undue pressure to meet extraordinary expectations as a representative of the group (Chase & Bell, 1990; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Tallerico, 2000a). Instead of being identified as a role model for other women considering administrative positions, the sole female administrator's status can mask the presence or persistence of sex discrimination practices (Martin et al., 1989; Moreau, Osgood, & Halsall, 2007; Skrla et al., 2000).

In a descriptive study about women and the superintendency, Brunner and Grogan (2007) found differences in how aspiring and non-aspiring female respondents rated factors related to sex role stereotyping as barriers to the superintendency. Female aspirants rated sex role stereotyping factors such as lack of managerial skills, political astuteness, and fiscal acuity as more significant barriers to accessing the superintendency than female non-aspirants did. Brunner and Grogan suggest that female aspirants would be acutely aware of these barriers as a result of their experiences in pursuing positions whereas female non-aspirants may not have experienced these factors within the context of career mobility.

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Female aspirants' awareness of sex role stereotypes contributes to their decision to pursue the superintendency. Mahitivanichcha and Rorrer (2006) identified three constraints—structural time crisis, ideal worker norms, and labor queues—that limit women's options and decisions to enter and remain in the superintendency. The structural time crisis refers to conflicts between the expectations about the superintendent's visibility and accessibility in the position and women's commitments to family. The ideal worker norm advances the traditional view of a superintendent as a married man. Female aspirants would confront limited access to the superintendency because of later entry points into educational administration and stunted career paths that lead to the superintendency. The market structure of the superintendency further disenfranchises women because of perceived lack of commitment due to pauses in work and family commitments. Lastly, Mahitivanichcha and Rorrer suggest that labor queues work against women's access to the superintendency. Drawing from job attraction theory, labor queues, as defined by Reskin and Roos (1990), are gendered views of ideal employees and ideal employers based on trends in labor markets and stereotypes of male and female workers. Assumptions made by school board members about women's ability to fulfill the roles and duties about the superintendent coupled with women's shorten career ladders and limited options for mobility reify constraints that limit their access to the superintendency.

Even as women attained superintendent positions, sex role stereotyping persisted in their experiences. In a qualitative case study involving current and former female superintendents' experiences with sexism in their positions, Skrla, Reyes, and Scheurich (2000) found sex role stereotyping in the school board, school, and community members' expectations about their leadership, management, and communication abilities. Manifestations of sex role stereotyping included assumptions about the female superintendents' lack of knowledge in facility and

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operations management and inexperience with finances. Other experiences with sex role stereotyping included a presumption that the female superintendents have malleable personalities and are not assertive. Skrla et al. suggest that the reticence on the part of the participants to share their experiences reflected a larger issue about silencing women's experiences with sexism in the superintendency within the culture and profession of educational administration. Other studies support these findings about tacit silence around issues of sex role stereotyping as a form of sexism (Brunner, 1999, 2000; Kowalski & Stouder, 1999; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Rusch & Marshall, 2006; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Skrla, 2000).

Gatekeeping practices. Normative practices that maintain the status quo govern the typical career pathway to the superintendency (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Sherman, 2005; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Gatekeeping is a normative practice that restricts access to career mobility. Gatekeeping theory (Lewin, 1947) suggests that candidates flow through channels controlled by individuals who uphold the normative expectations of the institution or society. Furthermore, gatekeeping practices would suggest that a female aspirant successfully attaining a superintendent position is as much a matter of access as it is of choice (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Tallerico, 2000b).

In superintendent searches, the gatekeepers are school board members and search consultants. School board members are elected members of the community who are predominately male (Czubaj, 2002; Shakeshaft, 1987; Skrla et al., 2000; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b). Their primary function is to hire superintendents and evaluate their performance and to make policy. Because school board members represent their communities, they are subject to

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scrutiny; therefore, the superintendent's performance is a reflection on the school board members involved in that individual's appointment (Chase & Bell, 1990).

Many school boards secure the services of search consultants or consulting firms to assist in the superintendent search and hiring process (Kamler, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2011; Tallerico, 2000a). Because of the increased demands on public school superintendents and the complexity of the position, school boards rely on the expertise of search consultants to supply a viable pool of candidates (Chase & Bell, 1990; Kamler, 2009; Normore, 2006; Tallerico, 2000b). Most search consultants are predominately white men, retired superintendents, or university professors in education (Chase & Bell, 1990; Czubaj, 2002; Kamler, 2009; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b). Search consultants work with the school board to determine the characteristics of a desired superintendent, to find and screen a pool of viable candidates, and to facilitate the interview and selection process that typically lasts between three to five months (Kamler, 2009; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b).

Search consultants work with school boards to develop search criteria based on their vision of a superintendent. School boards expect a superintendent to be an expert in all facets of district functions, which include fiscal, facility, and personnel management and curriculum, assessment, and program leadership. Furthermore, ideal superintendents are politically astute and savvy communicators with internal and external publics. Kamler (2009) asserts that school boards value a superintendent whose communication skills motivate action over articulating a vision. Echoing these values, superintendents reported in the 2000 and 2010 AASA studies that they were hired because of their personal characteristics and leadership abilities (Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011).

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Historically, school boards value a set of experiences in prior administrative positions. School boards prefer candidates with prior experience in the superintendency (Kamler, 2009; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b); however, school boards value experience as a high school principal and/or assistant superintendent, particularly in novice superintendents (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner, & Kim, 2010; Glass, 2000; Ortiz, 1982; Tallerico, 2000a). In terms of women's access to the superintendency, the school boards' preference towards high school principal and/or assistant superintendent experience creates a filter that reinforces the status quo (Adkison, 1981; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico, 2000a) because fewer women than men are high school principals. Although recent examination into the career routes of superintendents reveals that alternative career pathways exist for men and women (Brunner & Kim, 2009; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft et al., 2007), many female aspirants continue to lack the typical and hierarchical sequence of preferred administrative experiences.

The preferred experiences of a superintendent extend to the messages communicated about the qualifications and competencies listed in superintendent job postings. In a quantitative study about the relationship between recruitment messages and job attraction, Newton (2006) found that recruitment message content and district size influenced men and women's attraction to a position. Using hypothetical job postings emphasizing three characteristics of leadership behaviors—instructional leadership, managerial leadership, and political leadership—for districts of varying size, male and female participants rated their attraction to the postings. While male and female participants' rated instructional leadership most positively, female participants rated instructional leadership behaviors significantly higher than managerial or political leadership behaviors from their male counterparts. Although Newton's analysis extends to the importance of message recruitment content for male and female candidates, Newton's findings suggest that

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school boards, as gatekeepers, control the message about their expectations for viable superintendent candidates. Rather than filtering out applications from the candidate pool, recruitment message content that emphasizes managerial and political behaviors over instructional behaviors has the potential to discourage female candidates from applying.

Discourse, or the language, used by school board members and search consultants reinforces a male-dominated view of the superintendency. In a qualitative study, Chase and Bell (1990) examined gatekeepers' discourse about female superintendents. Chase and Bell interviewed 50 gatekeepers, 44 school board members and six search consultants, using two interview protocols—gender neutral for school board participants and gender-specific for search consultants. Their findings revealed that the participants' discourse, unintentionally, reinforced gender bias towards female superintendents. The school board members' descriptions of female superintendents' selection and performance promoted comparisons between expected male and female behaviors that reified preconceptions about women. Search consultant participants' language revealed that experiences with one female candidate influenced and reinforced assumptions about all female candidates. In their analysis, Chase and Bell assert that gatekeepers exercise their predispositions towards female superintendents through narrow assumptions grounded in male-dominated societal contexts. Although Chase and Bell did not extend their analysis to female superintendents' interactions with gatekeepers, their analysis concludes that supporting female superintendents is tantamount to challenging the status quo that perpetuates male dominance over the superintendency.

Tallerico (2000b) applied Lewin's theory of gatekeeping in a qualitative study about the current practices of equity for women and people of color. From semi-structured interviews with an equal number of superintendent candidates, school board members, and superintendent search

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consultants, Tallerico found that the characteristics for a successful candidate for a superintendent position reinforced a set of unwritten practices that promote innate bias towards women. Gatekeepers' practices such as (a) the value of hierarchical positions in leadership; (b) the assumptions about women's management and leadership abilities; and (c) the emphasis of good chemistry in face-to-face interview limited women's access to the superintendency. In sum, these practices reassert the comfortable and conventional view of a superintendent as a white male. Women were disadvantaged because they often lack experience as secondary principals, which limits their advancement past paper screening. Furthermore, in the interview process, male school board members and male search consultants expressed diminished feelings of ease and comfort with candidates that did not reinforce and resonate with their archetypical view of a superintendent. Although Tallerico's findings are limited to a case study within one state and the limited representation gender and race of the sample participants, these findings suggest the persistence in maintaining the status quo by individuals who control access at all levels of superintendent searches and interviews.

Kamler (2009) conducted a qualitative study about the differences in search consultants' processes over 10 years. Kamler replicated her method with two samples of search consultants in 1992 and 2002. Kamler's findings revealed that in comparison to the 1992 sample, the 2002 sample engaged in more activities related to educating the school board members about the superintendent search process and filtering candidates presented to the school board for interviews. Because the search consultant controls the filtering process of applicants to the candidate pool at all levels of the search, the search consultant acts as a principal gatekeeper. Furthermore, the 2002 sample noted a shift in school board members' dispositions towards experience to encompass candidates who rose through administrative ranks as opposed to

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seeking only experienced superintendents from other districts. Kamler's analysis suggests that the redefinition of experience to include other administrative positions expands the pool of viable candidates, thus increasing access for women. Furthermore, Kamler discusses succession planning as an innovative practice for school boards to cultivate candidates within the district.

Despite efforts to mitigate practices that reinforce gender bias towards women, female aspirants' and female superintendents' experiences demonstrate overt that and covert gender-based stereotyping persist. Women's slow progress to the superintendency illustrates how societal forces and contexts influence the opportunities for, and the aspirations of, women. As gatekeepers, school boards and search consultants control women's access to the superintendency at various levels of the search process. Search consultants work with school boards to identify the characteristics of their ideal superintendent while exerting control over the process. Efforts to promote women's access to the superintendency deconstruct the traditional image of the superintendent; however, within in a male-dominated context, barriers continue to work against female aspirants to maintain the status quo.

Women's Career Development

Previous studies and literature (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Tallerico, 2000; Winter, Rinehart, Keedy, & Bjork, 2007) are grounded in theories about career development and motivation. Theories about career development and motivation provide a context for understanding how factors such as career orientation, career endorsement, role models and mentors, and exposure to transformative leadership styles influence women's aspirations and decisions to enter educational administration.

Career development theory. Career development theory suggests that internal and external mechanisms concomitantly influence women's career opportunities, decisions, and

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aspirations (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Socialization into gender roles and about gender-type occupations influences women's career development in educational administration. Adkison (1981) suggests that socialization about sex role stereotypes diminishes women's aspirations to pursue careers in educational administration; however, subsequent research has extended to broader factors that inhibit women's career aspirations to school and district leadership positions (Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Young & McLeod, 2001).

Women's career development depends on which career opportunities are available to them through socialization into societal norms about gender roles. Women's entrance and proliferation in the teaching profession is an early example of women's career development. In the 19th century, the feminization of the teaching profession occurred when the shortage of male teachers provided access for women (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Beginning in the 19th century, teaching was one of the few legitimate professions women could pursue outside the home. Teaching closely aligned to societal norms about acceptable female behavior and women's gender role as nurturing care-givers. Thus, societal norms and gender roles channeled and limited women's career opportunities. Hence, women's slow progress into male-dominated occupations such as management, medicine, and finance illustrates the persistence sex role stereotyping in women's career opportunities (Reskin & Roos, 1990).

Women outnumber men in graduate educational leadership programs (Bjork, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004) and attain credentials for administrative positions (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Sherman, 2005). Since the 1990s, women's representation in school and district leadership positions has risen; however, women continue to be inequitably represented

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school and district leadership positions. Although women have access to the candidate pool, few women choose to pursue administrative positions (Sherman, 2005). Be it opportunity or choice, many women who move into educational administration do so as elementary principals or curriculum personnel (Kowalski et al., 2011; Ortiz, 1982; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Young & McLeod, 2001). Furthermore, as women gain access to the superintendency, they tend to be in smaller, rural districts with less attractive contracts than their male counterparts (Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

From a young age, socialization plays a key role in how women develop career aspirations and make career decisions (Coogan & Chen, 2007; Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2003). According to Gottfredson's (2002) theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation, gender-type boundaries that define occupations as male or female develop as early as six years of age. Identifying occupations with gender-type boundaries influence women's career choices as well as other career aspirations such as prestige and interest (Junk & Armstrong, 2010). Furthermore, exposure to messages about gender roles de-emphasizes girls' emphasis on pursuing careers and creates self-limitations on the types of occupations they would pursue (Betz, 1994). Women's identification with teaching as an extension of the female role as care-giver and with administration as an extension of the male role as authority figure (Shakeshaft, 1989) is a latent and persistent example of gender-type occupations in education.

Socialization about gender-type occupations and gender roles perseverates for female aspirants in educational administration. Studies about female aspirants reveal tendencies towards administrative positions in curriculum as opposed to building leadership positions. In a qualitative study involving 15 female participants in a district-based aspiring leaders program, Sherman (2005) found that female aspirants envisioned themselves in positions closely aligned

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to instruction, such as lead teachers or curriculum specialists, as opposed to principals. Citing perceived disconnects between predominate leadership style expectations and their preferred leadership styles, female participants expressed self-limitations in their abilities to become principals, which in turn, diminished their interest in and aspiration to school and leadership positions. Similarly, Young and McLeod (2001) found that many female participants in a graduate program in educational leadership pursued administrative degrees to enhance their teaching expertise and facilitate student learning. Furthermore, perceptions that school leadership requires an emphasis on building and organizational management as opposed to instructional leadership lessened interest in pursuing the principalship. Absent exposure to and experience with alternative leadership styles, female aspirants with an orientation towards teaching and learning reinforce traditional perceptions about school leadership and impose self-limitations on their career aspirations (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Sherman, 2005; Young & McLeod, 2001).

Socialization about gender roles produces work and family role conflicts that affect women's career development decisions. Reconciling and negotiating conflicts between work and family roles are a persistent factor in women's decisions to pursue career and remain in educational administration (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Eckman, 2004; Grogan, 1996, 2000; Gupton & Slick, 1996, Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Moreau et al., 2007; Pavan, 1999, Shakeshaft, 1989). Women with child-rearing responsibilities experience interruptions in their careers and delayed entry into administrative positions (Eckman, 2004; FeKula & Roberts, 2005). Women also assume many of the responsibilities for managing the home (Shakeshaft, 1989). In a qualitative study of women in female-dominated and gender-neutral professions, Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, and Wentworth (2007) found that the

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participants were able to reconcile messages about careers and family responsibilities due to more accepting societal norms about dual income family arrangements. However, participants experienced internal conflicts in balancing career advancement opportunities with their family roles. Loder (2005) examined how female principals and aspiring principals negotiated the demands of work and family responsibilities. Loder found differences in how pre- and post Civil Rights era women approach and reconcile conflicts and in how black and white women relied on extended family networks for support. Women with support systems and strategies for balancing work and family conflicts are positioned to enterprise on opportunities for career advancement and mobility.

Motivation theory. Motivation theory provides a framework for examining how women develop career aspirations and make career decisions in educational administration. Motivation theory explores why individuals consciously or unconsciously behave and act in interpersonal and social contexts (Deci, 1975; Gruian & Annis, 2007; Mountford, 2001). Broadly defined, motivation is the internal and external forces that energize, direct, and sustain human behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The fulfillment of innate needs and the process of interpreting internal and external stimuli are "factors that give an impetus for action" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p.3). Two approaches to motivation include a content approach and a cognitive approach. The content approach to motivation theory involves the internal and innate drives and needs in individuals as well as the ensuing behaviors that are the result of a stimuli response to the environment through reinforcement (McClelland, 1987). The cognitive approach to motivation theory concerns the individual's thought processes that lead to actions and choices (Deci, 1975). Within the cognitive approach to motivation, goal-setting theory, expectancy-value theory, achievement

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motivation theory, self-determination theory, and self-efficacy theory inform how motivation affects women aspirants' decision-making processes.

Cognitive view of behavior. Deci (1975) describes a cognitive process model of behavior that describes how an individual processes stimuli into the motivation to act. The first element in this model includes internal and external stimulus input. The second element includes an awareness of potential satisfaction that provides energy from primary and secondary needs, affective states, and emotions. The energy from these drives lead to establishing goals. In this third element, goals are the translation of an awareness of potential satisfaction and the expectation of achieving satisfaction. The fourth element involves goal-directed behavior where the individual chooses actions that will lead to the achievement of the goal. The fifth element includes intrinsic, extrinsic, and affective awards for achieving the goal accompanied by satisfaction. Within this process model, the individual uses feedback from actions and results to adjust, modify, or continue behaviors.

Goals and achievement. Motivation theories pertaining to goal development and achievement concern the cognitive processes the individual undergoes when engaged in goal-directed behaviors. First, goal-setting theory holds that individuals consciously set goals and direct behaviors toward achieving these goals. Locke & Latham (2006) suggest that individuals consciously establish levels of performance, or goals, to achieve a desired outcome. Conditions that foster goal achievement require commitment to the goal, reasonable level of difficulty, and absence of goal conflict. Second, expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) states that depending on the individual's expectation of success and the value of the goal, the individual will choose behaviors that will most likely lead to the successful outcome of the goal. Goal-setting theory and expectancy-value theory provide a context for examining women aspirants'

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career pathway decisions. For female aspirants, the process of selecting a goal and the ensuing behaviors would assume that they are expecting a successful outcome from their actions.

Achievement motivation theory advances that the individual seeks to achieve goals and to avoid failure. In Atkinson's (1964) conceptualization of achievement-related behaviors, the individual's actions are a result of an intrinsic need to feel competent in achieving success and avoiding failure. McClelland's (1987) perspective of achievement is that the individual strives for success while pairing cues and affective experiences. McClelland (1987) describes the three types of needs—achievement, authority, and affiliation— for motivation and behavior. All individuals possess each of these three needs, but with varying degrees of dominance over behaviors. An achievement motivated individual sets realistic goals and seeks regular feedback on task performance or goal achievement. An authority motivated individual seeks to influence other individuals and possesses a strong desire for success and prestige. An affiliation motivated individual seeks interactions, relationships, and popularity. McClelland (1987) suggests that an achievement motivated individual consistently sets and achieves attainable goals, and Atkinson (1964) suggests than the individual would have heightened motivation when the goal is moderately difficult. Achievement motivation theory would suggest that women aspirants believe they can attain an educational administrative position and would be highly motivated to pursue this goal.

Self-determination theory. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests that individuals act out of volition, intentionality, and will. Self-determining behaviors are flexible with the individual choosing to control one's environment and outcomes through internally modulated control of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985) focus on the degree of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on the individual's need for

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relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Intrinsic motivation is the tendency to seek and conquer new and novel challenges while exercising one's capacity to explore. Intrinsically motivated individuals experience competence in their ability to deal with their surroundings and autonomy within their environment because the drive for their action is self-authored. Extrinsic motivation deals with the self-regulation of motivation by internalizing external stimuli and integrating it to a level of personal endorsement. To develop a sense of ownership and autonomy for the action, extrinsic motivation stimuli flow through a process of connecting to self-worth, personal value, and assimilated needs.

Cognitive evaluation theory and organismic integration theory are sub theories of self-determination theory that focus on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation respectively (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Cognitive evaluation theory explores the factors related to intrinsic motivation in goal-directed behavior. Intrinsic motivation is a need for competence that leads individuals to challenges that they can conquer and that are related to their competencies (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Organismic integration theory explores the contextual factors that affect extrinsic motivation that foster or reduce the individual's ability to self-regulate behaviors as autonomous and self-directed. The origin of motivation as intrinsic or extrinsic is less significant if the individual is able to experience a sense of competency and autonomy with actions. Self-determination theory and the sub theories relating to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation would support female aspirants' need to experience autonomy, or a sense of authorship, over the career pathway decisions they make.

Self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986, 1995, 1997) suggests that efficacy, or the individual's beliefs about the ability to execute an action, influences how the individual is motivated and how the individual acts. Self-efficacy guides the individual's

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behaviors in goal selection and in the degree of effort put towards attaining the goal. Rooted in social cognitive theory (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002), the individual uses personal experience, reflection, and role models to shape the process of developing a goal (Bandura, 1997). The relationship between self-efficacy and motivation is powerful factor. Strong self-efficacy leads to increased degrees of self-motivation. As successful goal achievement increases in frequency and magnitude, the individual's sense of self-efficacy is reinforced. In tandem with the individual's self-efficacy, feedback from successful actions and supportive persons amplifies the level of self-motivation to continue an action. Thus, the cognitive power of the female aspirant's perceptions about her abilities, response to feedback, and proximity to a goal would foster and sustain motivation.

Developing career aspirations. Women aspiring to educational administration are motivated by factors closely aligned to their orientation in teaching and learning. Female teachers tend to be caring and child-centered as well as have an understanding about learning and student achievement (Bjork, 2000; Grogan, 1999). Female aspirants typically have 10 or more years of classroom teaching experience (Bjork, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Glass, 2000; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Young & McLeod, 2001), masters degrees in specialty areas (Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Sherman, 2005; Ortiz, 1982), and administrative credentialing (Kim & Brunner, 2009; McDade & Drake, 1982; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Sherman, 2005). Female aspirants typically enter into educational administration later in their careers (FeKula & Roberts, 2005; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989) and are intrinsically motivated by the rewards they imbue from this career decision (Ruhl-Smith, Shen, & Cooley, 1999).

Female aspirants' self-concept is rooted in teaching and influences their motivation to become administrators. Super's life span theory (as cited in Herr, 1997) suggests that an

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individual's occupation is an external manifestation of one's self-concept while identifying with various, dynamic life roles throughout the life span. Normore (2006) posits that female aspirants enter educational administration from a sense of service, wanting to make a difference, and extending their influence over schools and instruction. Female aspirants see themselves as change agents (Bjork, 2000) and possess a vision for education (Grogan 1996; Stephens, 2009). Thus, women's aspirations to educational administration function as an extension of their self-concept as teachers in their desire to create learning environments and improve school systems through their influence over educators within the organization.

Furthermore, women envision themselves as collaborative and relational school and district leaders (Bjork, 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Normore, 2006). Many female principals have experience as elementary teachers (Bjork, 2000; Glass, 2000). Elementary education tends to focus on instructional pedagogy, curriculum development, and professional collaboration (Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop, & Zeitoun, 2003; Young & McLeod, 2001). Female aspirants relate to principals who exercise similar leadership styles (Tas, 2010) and collaborative school cultures (Eckman, 2001; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Newton, et al., 2003).

Along a similar vein, social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 2002) suggests that individuals exercise control, or agency, over career choices from a belief about one's capacity to achieve a goal. Embedded within their aspirations to educational administration, women would have developed a belief in their abilities to achieve a goal (Bandura, 1986, 1987). Dickerson and Taylor (2000) examined the relationship between women's beliefs about their abilities to perform leadership tasks and their selection and preference towards leadership tasks. In a convenience sample of 81 female graduate students, Dickerson and Taylor used trait inventories

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to measure the participants' global self-esteem and task-specific self-efficacy. Participants selected a leadership or subordinate task and rated their preference towards completing the selected task. Dickerson and Taylor found that female participants with high task-specific self-efficacy were more likely to select a leadership task, and female participants with low task-specific self-efficacy preferred subordinate tasks. Their findings suggest that confidence in one's abilities to be successful in a task influences one's preference towards a task. While Dickerson and Taylor's findings are limited to self-perception ratings of leadership abilities predicting interest in a task, their discussion includes the potential and positive effects of role models as an intervention for low perceptions about self-efficacy. These findings complement other research about the roles of mentorship and sponsorship for aspiring and novice administrators (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Daresh, 2004; Eckman, 2004; Grogan, 1996; Howley et al., 2005; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Normore, 2006; Orr, 2006) the importance of role models in cultivating women's aspirations to school and district leadership positions (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Lee et al., 1993; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Sherman, 2005; Singh, Vinnicombe, & James, 2006; Young & McLeod, 2001).

Self-concept and self-efficacy influence female aspirants' attraction to specific school and district leadership positions. Job attraction theory (Rynes & Barber, 1990) suggests that job attributes and an applicant's individual characteristics are variables influencing the applicant's reaction to a posted vacancy. Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop, and Zeitoun (2003) found differences between how male and female applicants favored the job attributes of a principalship. Using a stratified random sample of principals, Newton et al. provided role-playing scenarios of fictitious principal vacancy postings that described four job attributes (a) instructional leadership, (b) salary, (c)work hours, and (d) job security. Participants were asked to rank their willingness

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to seek each position scenario as though they were seeking their first administrative position. Newton et al. found two significant differences in how male and female participants rated scenarios including salary and instructional leadership and no significant difference between their ratings of work hours and job security. Male participants favored salary whereas female participants favored instructional leadership. In their analysis of the findings, Newton et al. note that the female participants were predominately elementary principals and that their current job functions included an emphasis on instructional leadership features such as supervision, curriculum, and pedagogy. While Newton et al.'s findings are limited by the responses of practicing principals who are knowledgeable about the functions of the position as opposed to aspiring principals, their findings suggest that attraction to job assignment level is a function of gender because of the inherent features of leadership at the school's level. Thus, female aspirants' attraction to school leadership positions with an emphasis on instructional leadership coincides with their efficaciousness and their self-concept as instructional leaders.

Aspirations to the superintendency coincide with an individual's age. In a study about principals' attraction to the superintendency, Winter, Reinhart, Keedy, and Bjork (2007) found that a potential aspirant's age, credentials, and self-efficacy were important predictors in considering the superintendency. Prompted by the concern about an impending superintendent shortage, Winter et al. (2007) conducted a statewide survey of all principals in Texas using a descriptive and discriminate analysis of predictors related job requirements and characteristics with anticipated satisfaction. Winter et al. (2007) found that younger principals with superintendent certifications and high self-reported

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capability of success were more likely to consider the superintendency. Although their analysis did not extend to gender as a variable to the predictors, Winter et al. (2007) emphasize age as a salient predictor of attraction to the superintendency. FeKula and Roberts (2005) examined the relationship between gender and age in pursuing the superintendency in a proportional stratified random sample of men and women who earned superintendent credentials in Pennsylvania. FeKula and Roberts (2005) found that a significantly lower proportion of women pursued the superintendency and began pursuing the superintendency at a later age than men did. FeKula and Robert's (2005) findings did not extend to women's perceived motivators or inhibitors for pursing the superintendency or their administrative experiences. In a national, descriptive study about women and the superintendency sponsored by AASA, Brunner and Grogan (2007) found that 40% of the women respondents in assistant and deputy superintendent positions aspired to the superintendency. Brunner and Grogan (2007) found that female aspirants entered educational administration and held central office positions at a younger age than non-aspirants. As Winter et al. (2007) found an aspirant's age is a predictor in pursuing a superintendent position and FeKula and Roberts (2005) found women pursued the superintendency at a later age than their male counterparts did, Brunner and Grogan's (2007) findings suggest female aspirants to the superintendency move into positions closely aligned to their career goals at a younger age. While women may develop aspirations to the superintendency later in their careers, Brunner and Grogan (2007) found that female aspirants began to pursue the credentials and positions closely aligned to career routes that have the potential for accessing the superintendency.

Making career decisions. Women's self-efficacy and motivation promote their aspirations to educational administration (Brunner & Grogan, 2007, Grogan, 1996; Gupton & Slick, 1996) and lead to goal-directed behaviors. Goal-setting theory holds that individuals

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consciously set goals and direct behaviors toward achieving these goals. Locke & Latham (2006) suggest that individuals consciously establish levels of performance, or goals, to achieve a desired outcome. Female aspirants' efficacious experiences coupled with a desire to pursue school and district leadership positions lead them to act with the volition to achieve their career goals. However, women's career decision-making processes are not fueled by measures of success and desire alone.

In a qualitative study of women's career aspirations to and experiences in educational administration, Young and McLeod (2001) examined why women decide to enter educational administration. Young and McLeod conducted interviews and record reviews of a purposive sample of 20 female graduate students and administrators enrolled in graduate educational leadership programs within one state. Young and McLeod found that women's career aspirations developed from their career commitments, positional goals, and leadership orientation. The participants' decisions to enter educational administration were firmly rooted in their desire to facilitate the learning process and their orientation towards a collaborative and inclusive leadership style. Young and McLeod suggest that women's decisions to enter educational administration relates to their primary reasons for entering education. Furthermore, women's career aspirations are dynamic, and their aspirations develop through their experiences and their reactions to their experiences. Women's career decisions are nested within their self-concepts as educators and teachers, thus motivating them to enter educational administration to broaden their scope of influence over learning.

Young and McLeod (2001) also found that three factors guided women's decisions to enter into educational administration. Contingent on their experiences with positive role models, endorsements from respected administrators, and exposure to transformative leadership styles,

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female participants in the study did, or would, enter educational administration. In their analysis of the findings, Young and McLeod suggest that women's decisions to enter administration are, in part, a combination of their career goals and commitments in education and their experiences as teachers with influential individuals who share their leadership orientation. Young and McLeod's profile of motivators that influence women's decisions to enter administration resonate with other studies about the importance of role models and mentors, endorsements from educational leaders, and exposure to transformational leadership styles.

Role models and mentors. The corpus of research about women and educational administration posits that role models and mentors play a significant and integral role in women's decisions to enter, to remain, and to advance in educational administration. Role models provide female aspirants with a template of a successful female administrator (Kowalski & Souder, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1989; Shakeshaft, et al., 2007). Mentors, unlike role models, establish personal relationships with aspirants and novice administrators and provide guidance and encouragement to them as they become acclimated and socialized into their positions (Daresh, 2004). Identification with a role models and mentors' leadership style (Normore, 2006; Young & McLeod, 2001) is critical for female aspirants' and administrators' sense of self-efficacy in their career aspirations and goals. Furthermore, female role models and mentors reinforce female aspirants' self-efficacy towards their leadership orientations (Lee et al., 2003; Shakeshaft, 1989; Young & McLeod, 2001) as well as model how to negotiate power structures (Eckman, 2004; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Sherman, 2005), and to achieve their career goals (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan, 1996; Sherman, 2005). These experiences with female role models have the potential to affect their decisions to enter educational administration.

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Female teachers report higher degrees of satisfaction and identification with principals who practice collaborative leadership styles (Eckman, 2004; Lee et al., 1993; Tas, 2011). Young and McLeod (2001) found that female graduate students, should they decide to enter administration, would pursue elementary principal, curriculum, and high school assistant principal positions. None of the graduate students expressed interest in the high school principalship. Young and McLeod attribute the participants' identification with elementary principal and curriculum positions because their current administrative role models predominately occupy these positions, and participants can readily identify with their leadership orientations.

Mentors support novice administrators by providing a sense of professional competence, improving their communication skills, and guiding them through the rigors of applying professional practice in new settings (Daresh, 2004). For female aspirants, mentors facilitate the socialization process into administrative roles by broadening their understanding of the position through internship experiences (Howley et al., 2005; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Sherman, 2005), and by navigating existing power structures (Adkison, 1981; Burkman, 2010; Tallerico, 2000a). Formal and informal mentors provide novice superintendents with insight into the challenges of their role and experienced superintendents with invaluable opportunities for self-reflection and growth (Orr, 2006). Successful women in school and district leadership positions laud the importance of positive mentors in their career development (Kowalski & Stouder, 1999; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Young & McLeod, 2001), and they advise female aspirants to seek, secure, and cultivate opportunities to develop mentorship networks (Brunner, 1999, 2000; Gupton & Slick, Tallerico, 2000a).

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Endorsement. Endorsement, or encouragement from a respected colleague, administrative role model, or mentor, is a key component in women's motivation to pursue an administrative position or to advance to another position. Many women enter teaching without expressed plans for moving in educational administration (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kowalski & Stouder, 1999; Ruhl-Smith et al., 1999; Young & McLeod, 2001). Furthermore, many women with credentials for administrative positions are reluctant to leave teaching (Riehl & Byrd, 1997). Normore (2006) describes the "tapping on the shoulder" as a powerful influence on women with unexpressed aspirations (p.51). Endorsement provides clear affirmation and encouragement in the female aspirant's leadership abilities, which reinforces her self-efficacy and commitment to career goals. Endorsement is especially important to encourage women to pursue secondary principal and superintendent positions where few role models exist (Eckman, 2004; Howley et al., 2005: Young & McLeod, 2001).

Leadership Styles. Exposure to transformational and alternative leadership styles through role models and preparation programs empowers female aspirants. Achievement motivation theory advances that the individual seeks to achieve goals and to avoid failure. In Atkinson's (1964) conceptualization of achievement-related behaviors, the individual's actions are a result of an intrinsic need to feel competent in achieving success and avoiding failure. McClelland's (1987) perspective of achievement is that the individual strives for success while pairing cues and affective experiences. Female aspirants' exposure to transformational and alternative leadership styles provides them with a paradigm and approach to leadership that is intuitive and natural. To feel successful and competent, female aspirants' exposure to diverse leadership styles confronts the perception of a single, male-dominated style of leadership. Researchers (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Sherman, 2005;

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Young & McLeod, 2001) suggest that women's leadership orientation closely reflects a transformational leadership style. Transformational leadership is a construct where administrators use relational skills to motivate and to inspire teachers and other leaders to embrace the school's mission and goals for student achievement (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Transformational leaders focus on providing direction, redesigning organizations, and collaboration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997). Female aspirants identify with administrative role roles who espouse similar leadership orientations (Lee et al., 1993; Tas, 2011). Furthermore, Young and McLeod (2001) suggest that women with a proclivity towards administration need exposure to transformational leadership styles to validate the viability of alternative and successful approaches to leadership.

Successful female administrators incorporate attributes of various leadership constructs. Their leadership styles are androgynous, as opposed to male or female, and reflect their goals, organizational contexts, and their personalities (Orr, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) identified five leadership behaviors common to women: (a) relational, (b) social justice, (c) spiritual, (d) learning, and (e) balanced. Grogan and Shakeshaft suggest that women lead from a collective leadership orientation that promotes collaboration and communication with members of the organization to create a cognitive shift toward shared goals and to nurture sustainability. Yet, potential female aspirants report little or no exposure to curricula in educational administration programs that includes alternative approaches to leadership (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Sherman, 2005; Young & McLeod, 2001). Thus, to abate female aspirants' and administrators' disenfranchisement because their leadership orientations through myopic program preparation, graduate programs (Grogan, 2000; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011) and district-based

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professional development should incorporate curricula that include diverse leadership styles (Normore, 2006; Sherman, 2005).

Women's aspirations to educational administration and their decisions to pursue school and district leadership positions are influenced by socialization into gender-type occupations and opportunities to advance career goals. Women in education have an orientation towards teaching and experiences with role model, mentors, and alternative leadership styles that bolster their self-efficacy in their leadership roles. Female aspirants develop the confidence to pursue their career goals and commitments through endorsement from mentors and exposure to leadership orientations that resonate with their own. Female aspirants' motivation to pursue educational administration and advance their careers, particularly to the superintendency, derives from their desire to broaden the scope of their influence over the teaching profession and its learning environments.

Career Pathways to the Superintendency

Typical career pathway to the superintendency. The typical career pathway to the superintendency is well established in studies about the superintendency. In an ethnographic study of school administrators in a single state between 1975 and 1979, Ortiz (1982) describes the typical career pathway to the superintendency as a route that flows from teacher, to assistant principal, to secondary (middle school or high school) principal, to assistant superintendent, and to superintendent. The route, or positions held, to the superintendency is a hierarchical pathway in two significant respects. First, the individual's upward movement from school level leadership positions to district level leadership positions includes a greater scope of responsibility. Second, with upward movement, the individual exerts increased influence over the functions of the school system. Individuals that move through this hierarchical pathway gain

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increased authority over teachers and school staff as well as increased access to the individuals responsible for the central functioning of the school system.

Ortiz applies Schein's (1971) conceptualization of mobility within the organization to describe how the increased responsibility and influence over the functions of the school system align to the typical career pathway to the superintendency. In Schein's conceptualization of mobility, movement within a school system is vertical, circumferential, or radial. Vertical movement involves a change in rank and level that results in a new position title and authority over others in the organization. Vertical movement may include becoming a department chair or department coordinator where the individual has a new position and authority over other teachers while maintaining teaching responsibilities. Circumferential movement involves a change in the individual's position title, scope of authority, and nature of work. Circumferential movement may include transitioning from a teacher to the principal where the individual attains a new position title, line authority over teachers and staff, and assumes administrative responsibilities. Vertical and circumferential movements in the typical career pathway to the superintendency include positions that have increased authority over the functioning of the school by virtue of the individual's position within the organizational system. Radial movement involves a change in the individual's centrality, or proximity, to organizational leaders such as the superintendent and the school board. Radial movement may include committee functions where the individual has access to the superintendent and the school board and can exert influence over key decision makers in the school system.

In the typical career pathway to the superintendency, Ortiz (1982) suggests that secondary principals experience vertical, circumferential, and radial movements within the organization, thus socializing secondary principals within this hierarchical route to the

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superintendency. This socialization process involves the secondary principal's transition from a teaching position to a principal position, a vertical and circumferential movement, which denotes a shift in focus from students and teaching to adults and administrative duties. Secondary principals' administrative duties extend beyond the academics to include extra-curricular activities, a radial movement, which afford the secondary principal increased visibility and access to community members and organizational leaders, such as the superintendent and school board.

Ortiz (1982) further distinguishes which individuals in line authority positions are within the hierarchical route to the superintendency. Line authority positions, such as elementary and secondary principals, deputy or assistant superintendents, and directors, require administrative credentialing and have direct authority over individuals within their area of responsibility. Deputy and assistant superintendents and directors are likely to move into the superintendency as a result of their interactions with and proximity to the superintendent and the school board and influence over the school system. Secondary principals are likely to move into the superintendency as a result of their visibility and leadership presence with various academic and extra-curricular programs at the high school. However, elementary principals are less likely to move into the superintendency because the functions of their positions provide less visibility and centrality. Elementary principal positions are more likely to be "permanent" or terminal positions in educational administration (Ortiz, 1982, p.23).

Ortiz's description of the typical career pathway to the superintendency emphasizes a hierarchical route with line authority positions that have increased visibility in leadership and centrality to the superintendent and school board (1982). Assistant superintendents and secondary principals are more likely to move into the superintendency than elementary principals

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are because of opportunities for organizational mobility. However, Ortiz's identified these positions based on existing patterns of movement from qualitative data sources. Furthermore, Ortiz did not extend her inquiry into administrators' perceptions about the accessibility of these positions, nor did she probe how administrators deliberately developed career paths.

Recent studies (Glass 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2011; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b) about career pathways to the superintendency have identified the secondary principalship as a key position within the career pathway to the superintendency. Specifically, AASA-sponsored decennial studies about the American superintendency since 1971 have included descriptive data about superintendent characteristics, superintendent positions, and school district demographics from a sample of the population of school district superintendents across the United States. In the 2000 (Glass et al., 2000) and 2010 (Kowalski et al., 2011) studies, superintendents indicated that the high school principalship was the most frequently held administrative position, 47.2% and 45.5% respectively. Having experience as a high school principal is significant in the career pathway to the superintendency because of the position's increased visibility (Glass, 2000; Tallerico, 2000a) and favorable perceptions of by school boards (Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b).

However, the results from the two most recent AASA studies about the American superintendency reveal a notable difference between male and female superintendents' experiences in the high school principalship. In 2000, 51.2% of male and 18.5% of female superintendents had experience as high school principals (Glass et al., 2000). In 2010, 54.5% of male and 25.8% of female superintendents had experience as high school principals (Kowalski et al., 2011). Yet, the 2000 and 2010 AASA study results reflect an average of 17% of the population of all school district superintendents across the United States as a result of sampling

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methodology (see Glass et al., 2000) and voluntary responses (see Kowalski et al., 2011). Thus, the reported frequency of experience in the high school principalship by superintendents may not accurately reflect the full range of administrative experiences of all superintendents, and especially female superintendents.

Alternative career pathways to the superintendency. Over two decades later, Kim and Brunner (2009) re-examined Ortiz's model of the typical career pathways to the superintendency in their descriptive analysis of the results in two national studies about the American superintendency-*The Study of the American Superintendency 2000: A Look at the Superintendent in the New Millennium* (Glass et al., 2000) and *Women Leading School Systems: An Uncommon Road to Fulfillment* (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Kim and Brunner found that 49% of male and 50% of female superintendents in both studies followed the typical career pathway from teacher, to principal, to central office administrator, to superintendent. However, Kim and Brunner identified two differences in how male and female superintendents moved along this career path. First male superintendents typically followed two career pathways: (a) 49% followed teacher, to principal, to central office administrator, to superintendent and (b) 33% followed teacher, to principal, to superintendent. Female superintendents typically followed three career pathways: (a) 50% followed teacher, to principal, to central office administrator, to superintendent; (b) 17% followed teacher, to central office administrator, to superintendent; and (c) 16% followed teacher, to principal, to superintendent. While 50% of female superintendents followed the typical career pathway followed by men, female superintendents equally followed a career pathway that did not include the principalship.

Second, Kim and Brunner (2009) found differences in male and female superintendents' routes, or positions held, within the career pathway. When conflated with Ortiz's (1982) model

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of the secondary principalship within the typical career pathway to the superintendency, Brunner and Kim found that 65% of male and 35.2% of female superintendents had experience as secondary principals. Male superintendents' routes tended to be vertical and hierarchical resulting in a succession of line authority positions that increased in scope of responsibility and influence over the school system. Male superintendents were twice as likely as female superintendents to move from the principalship to the superintendency. Female superintendents had experiences in elementary and secondary schools as teachers or principals, and 48.3% entered educational administration as elementary principals. Female superintendents' routes tended to zigzag between line authority positions, such as assistant principals, principals, and assistant superintendents, and staff positions in central office, such as coordinators and supervisors. Fifty percent of female superintendents served in intermediary positions as central office administrators, such as directors and assistant superintendents, whereas 34% of male superintendents served in similar intermediary positions. While Kim and Brunner's findings ameliorate the differences between male and female superintendents' routes, their study did not extend to male or female superintendents' perceptions about the ability to access to positions in school and district leadership or their rationale for assuming different positions within the career pathway to the superintendency.

Entry ports to educational administration. All career pathways to the superintendency begin with a first administrative position, or entry port. These entry ports in educational administration fall into two categories. First, the job category determines whether a position is a line authority or staff position. Second, the job location determines whether the position is in an elementary or secondary school or district or central office. Common entry ports with line authority include building administrative positions such as elementary and secondary assistant

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principal and principal positions (Kowalski et al., 2001; Ortiz, 1982). Common entry ports in staff positions in district administration include coordinator, supervisor, and director (Kowalski et al., 2001; Ortiz, 1982). The scope and responsibilities of an administrative position involves responsibilities for managing school or district functions and supervising teachers and staff (Ortiz, 1982). Factors such as the size of the district and the organizational structure of the administration determine the number of administrative positions and the requisite credentialing for these positions (Ortiz, 1982).

An individual's entry port in educational administration is predictive of one's career mobility to the superintendency (Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009). The decennial studies sponsored by AASA include descriptive data about superintendent characteristics, especially prior administrative positions. In the 2000 and 2010 decennial studies about the superintendency, the three most common first administrative positions reported by superintendents were (a) high school assistant principal, (b) district director/coordinator, and (c) high school principal (Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011).

However, male and female superintendents report differences in the job category of their first administrative position. In 2000, 78% of male superintendents and 57.2% of female superintendents reported that their first administrative positions were line authority positions in schools (Glass et al., 2000). A decade later in 2010, 73.9% of male superintendents and 59.8% of female superintendents reported that their first administrative positions were line authority positions in school leadership (Kowalski et al., 2011). Over 70% of male superintendents entered administration through line authority positions while under 60% of female superintendents did. Although the overall percentage of female superintendents also increased

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from 13.2% in 2000 to 24.1% in 2010, a slightly higher percentage of female superintendents entered administration through line authority positions.

Differences between male and female superintendents' job location as well as the job category of their first administrative position exist. First, male and female superintendents report differences in the job location of their first administrative position. In 2010, the three most common first administrative positions reported by superintendents were (a) high school assistant principal—19.1%, (b) district director/coordinator—14.9%, and (c) high school principal—14.1% (Kowalski et al., 2011). Yet, when disaggregated by sex, male and female superintendents reported differences in the school level and location first administrative positions. Male superintendents' three most common first administrative positions were (a) high school assistant principal—21.7%, (b) high school principal—17 %, and (c) middle school assistant principal—12.5%. Female superintendents' three most common first administrative positions were (a) district director/coordinator –28.4%, (b) elementary principal—18.2%, and (c) elementary assistant principal—11.7%. Upon entering educational administration, male superintendents' first positions were concentrated in secondary schools whereas female superintendent' first positions were concentrated in central office and elementary schools.

Based on the first administrative positions reported by superintendents in the AASA studies in 2000 and 2010, male superintendents commonly entered administration through line authority positions in secondary schools whereas female superintendents entered through a combination of line and staff positions in elementary schools and central office. Recent trends in the career pathways reported by superintendents suggest a slight shift from the typical career pathway via a succession of line authority positions through a route that includes the high school principalship to a broader range of administrative positions that include line authority and staff

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positions in secondary and elementary schools and central office. However, the career pathways reported by superintendents in the AASA-sponsored studies are limited to pathways used by superintendents and may not reflect the intended and planned career pathways of individuals currently aspiring to the superintendency.

An individual's entry port into educational administration determines which career routes will be accessible as the individual advances through a career pathway to the superintendency. The typical career pathways include a route through the secondary principalship to top leadership positions in district administration. While a majority female superintendents use the typical career pathway commonly used by men, alternative career pathways through school and district leadership positions have been used by female superintendents. One factor that contributes to the differences in male and female superintendents' career pathways is their entry port into educational administration. Women who commonly enter educational administration through elementary principal or curriculum positions have limited access to the typical career pathway. While recent studies about female superintendents and the superintendency suggest that they are successfully using alternative career pathways, women continue to be inequitably represented in school leadership positions that have the greatest access to the typical career pathway to the superintendency.

Summary of Conceptual Concepts

Women continue to have inequitable representation in school and district leadership positions. Factors that can be attributed to their slow progress include gender stereotyping and gatekeeping practices that perpetuate a bias towards women's perceived leadership abilities. Yet, many women who do pursue educational administration begin their careers in elementary principal and curriculum positions. Elementary principalships appear to be a natural fit for

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women with an orientation towards transformational leadership styles and their contextual experiences in elementary education. However, few female aspirants move directly from an elementary principalship to superintendency as men may do from a secondary principalship. Women's initial attraction to elementary principal positions validate their career goals and commitments at that time, but as women develop aspirations to the superintendency, they reach a milieu between their current position and their career goals. Exploring how female aspirants from outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency envision their career pathways to this position will contribute to a more complete understanding about how women may potentially access the superintendency.

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Chapter 3

Method

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the larger question of how female aspirants who are outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency perceive potential routes to the superintendency. Within the context of the state of Pennsylvania, this study explored how female elementary principals envision potential career routes to the superintendency, and how they perceive their ability to access positions. My specific research questions and sub-questions were:

1. What proportion of female elementary principals in Pennsylvania aspires to the superintendency?
    a. How do female aspirants develop aspirations to this position?
2. How do female elementary principals envision their career pathways to the superintendency?
    a. Which positions in school and district leadership do they plan to pursue?
3. How do female elementary principals aspiring to the superintendency perceive their ability to access other school and district leadership positions?

Research Design

This study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design. A convergent parallel mixed methods design involves the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data, the independent analysis of data from both strands, the merging of results from both strands, and the interpretation of the merged results. This type of design employs a quantitative method strand

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and a qualitative method strand for data collection and data analysis. Quantitative data from a survey was used to determine the relationship between female elementary principals' aspirations to the superintendency and their perceived ability to access to positions in school and district leadership. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions on the survey and interviews from the case studies was used to explore how female aspirants to the superintendency envision their career pathways. The reason for collecting quantitative and qualitative data was to compare and corroborate results from the two types of research strands to develop a more complete understanding of female elementary principals' career aspirations and perceived access to career pathways.

The methods sections of this study includes an overview and rational for selecting a convergent parallel mixed methods design, the quantitative strand methods and procedures, the qualitative strand methods and procedures, the procedures for merging quantitative and qualitative data results, a researcher identity profile, and the procedures for validity.

Overview of convergent parallel mixed methods design. A mixed methods design combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures to address a research problem where one data source is insufficient, exploratory findings can be generalized, and one method's results can enhance the results of the others (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A mixed methods design enables the researcher to enrich interpretations of data results by using quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis that will lead to a more complete understanding of the research problem or phenomenon. The researcher can triangulate results, develop new explanations for results, and contextualize results. A researcher using a mixed methods design considers (a) the timing of data collection for each strand, (b) the level of

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data interaction between each strand, and (c) the priority, or weight, of each strand in the interpretation of the results.

The characteristics of a convergent parallel mixed methods design include (a) the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data using procedures associated with each type of research, (b) the independent analysis of data from the quantitative and the qualitative strands, (c) the merging of the results from both strands, and (d) the interpretation of the merged results. The benefits to using a convergent parallel mixed methods design are the efficiency of concurrent data collection and the separate analysis of data from each strand. The challenges of using a convergent parallel mixed methods design include developing interpretations from two separate data sets with different sample sizes and reconciling contradictions between the two data sets.

Rationale for selection. The rationale for selecting a convergent parallel mixed methods design for this study was that this design is best suited for exploring the larger question about how female aspirants who are outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency perceive potential routes to this position. First, this design supported the pragmatic nature of this study. Studies (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989; Ortiz, 1982) about women and the superintendency reveal that female superintendents follow the typical career pathway and alternative pathways to the superintendency. The typical career pathway, which is commonly followed by men, includes a succession of line authority positions that includes a secondary principalship. An alternative career pathway combines line authority and staff positions, and for women, this often includes elementary principal and curriculum positions. Female elementary principals aspiring to the superintendency could consider either pathway; however, their perceptions about their ability to access school and district leadership positions

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that potentially lead to the superintendency would contribute to the understanding about women's career pathways in educational administration.

Second, the research presented in the conceptual framework outlines a need to examine how women outside the typical career pathway develop aspirations to the superintendency and envision their career pathways. Studies (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan, 1996; Sherman, 2005; Young & McLeod; 2001) about women and educational administration suggest that women develop aspirations to the school and district leadership positions as they encounter people and opportunities that promote self-efficacy and reinforce their career and leadership orientations. In this design, the separate and independent data analysis for the quantitative and qualitative strands provided the researcher with results from a survey from a sample of female elementary principals and with results from interviews from critical case studies of female administrators experiencing this phenomenon. Combining the survey results from female elementary principals with the case study results from female aspirants and a superintendent who entered educational administration as elementary principals enabled the researcher to corroborate emergent patterns from quantitative and qualitative results. Women's aspirations to the superintendency may evolve as they encounter experiences with factors that reinforce and inhibit their career goals. This design allowed the researcher to examine women along a continuum of career development that would enhance understanding about female administrators and their career pathways in educational administration.

Quantitative Strand. The purpose for the quantitative strand was to determine the relationship between female elementary principals' aspirations to the superintendency and their perceived ability to access other positions in school and district leadership. The research questions that were addressed in the quantitative strand were as follows:

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1. What proportion of female elementary principals in Pennsylvania aspires to the superintendency?
2. How do female elementary principals envision career routes from their current position?
3. How do female elementary principals perceive their ability to access other school and district leadership positions?

Method. The method for the quantitative strand was a cross-sectional survey design where data is collected from a sample of the target population of female elementary principals in Pennsylvania. The purpose for using a cross-sectional survey design in this study was to collect data about female elementary principals' aspirations to the superintendency, their plans to pursue other school and district leadership positions, and their perceptions about their ability to access these positions.

The sample frame was the population of 938 female elementary principals, which was accessed through the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website (http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/professional_and_support_personnel/7429). The percentage of female elementary principals in Pennsylvania is 58.9% (PDE, 2013, *2012-2013 Professional personnel summary*). The names and email addresses of the sample frame were collated from the public record. The sampling procedure was a simple random sample. A simple random sample involves the independent selection of one participant from the population with all members of the population having an equal chance of selection and without the possibility of reselection (Patton, 2002). Using a table of random numbers, each female elementary principal was assigned a random number in Excel to generate a sample of 300 participants who were invited to participate in the survey. The desired sample size was 75 participants to complete the survey in order to yield results with a level of precision at 10%, a

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confidence level of 95%, and the degree of variability of 30%. The researcher assumed the probability that female elementary principals in the sample may not aspire to the superintendency based on the literature reviewed in the conceptual framework; therefore, the degree of variability used in the sample formula was 30%. In this formula, the desired sample size *n* was calculated by dividing the estimated population variance by the sum of (a) the level of precision divided by the confidence level and (b) the estimated population variance divided by the population:

$$n = \frac{P(P-1)}{\frac{A^2}{Z^2} + \frac{P(P-1)}{N}}$$

To determine the number of participants to include in the survey n_o, the researcher divided the desired sample size by the estimated response rate of 25%.

$$n_{\mathrm{o}} = \frac{\left(\frac{P[1-P]}{\frac{A^2}{Z^2} + \frac{P[1-P]}{N}} \right)}{R}$$

The sample ratio for the number of participants in the survey is 29% and for the estimated response rate was 7.3%. A sample representing 10% or more of the population reduces the potential for sampling error (Fowler, 2009) and increases the ability to generalize the results from the sample to the population (Patton, 2002).

Instrument. The instrument for this study was a survey that includes single and multiple answers, multiple choice questions and an optional open-ended question (Appendix A). The survey was comprised of 11 questions. Questions 1 through 4 included demographic questions about age clusters, race and ethnicity, highest degree earned, and Pennsylvania professional certifications. Questions 5 was a multiple response, multiple choice question about the

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participants' perceptions about the accessibility of school and district leadership positions. Question 6 was a multiple choice question about plans to pursue other positions. Only participants that indicated that they plan to pursue other positions continued with the survey. Questions 7 and 8 were multiple choice questions about career plans. Question 9 was a multiple choice question about aspirations to the superintendency. Only participants that indicated that they have aspirations to the superintendency continued with the survey. Question 10 was a ranking scale for the order of positions the respondent plans to use to access the superintendency. Question 11 was an optional open-ended question for elaborating on the responses to question 10.

The survey questions were developed from the literature and underwent informal reviews by the following experts: (a) a personnel director to provide feedback for clarifying the demographic questions and position categories; (b) two female superintendents about the language used in the survey questions language and question validity; and (c) a retired female elementary principal to provide feedback about the progression of the questions.

Procedures for data collection. Data collection included an electronic survey using Survey Monkey. Electronic data collection through email and web surveys is efficient and requires minimal steps for completion (Fowler, 2009). The data collection included the following procedures. First, the survey participants selected for the sample received an email of introduction about the purpose of the study and the method of data collection. All Pennsylvania school district superintendents received an email describing the survey to increase the likelihood of completing the survey and to preserve the anonymity of the participants selected for the sample. Second, approximately three days later, the members of the sample received an invitation to participate in the survey that will include a PDF letter of introduction and informed

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consent about the survey and a link to the survey. This introduction and informed consent letter (Appendix B) included an introduction of the researcher, purpose of the study, invitation to participate in the survey, procedures for accessing the survey via Survey Monkey, and an informed consent statement. The introduction and informed consent letter specified the following: (a) participation in the survey is voluntary, (b) individuals may decline to participate, (c) participant responses will be collected anonymously, (d) notification of risks and benefits associated with participation, (e) participants may decline to answer question(s), and that they may opt out of any questions, and (f) participants may withdraw consent or discontinue participation at any time. To complete the survey, participants were invited to follow the Survey Monkey link. Prior to data collection through Survey Monkey, the participants acknowledged that they have read the introductory and informed consent letter and agree to the statements about their participation by clicking an affirmative response which activated the survey. The survey did not activate without an affirmative response. The survey will remained active for three weeks, and the participants selected for the sample received three email reminders to complete the survey. To prevent duplicate responses from one individual and preserve anonymity, the Survey Monkey settings were activated to prevent multiple responses from one computer. If the response rate for completed surveys fell below 25% at the end of the survey window, the researcher would have revised the sample by replicating sample selection procedures and excluding female elementary principals already selected to participate in the first sample.

Data Analysis. Data analysis included quantitative procedures for analyzing responses using descriptive statistics. The researcher determined frequencies of the responses to the

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categorical questions. The researcher compared aspirants' and non-aspirants' responses to the survey questions as well as compared the responses to the questions by age groups.

Qualitative strand. The purpose for the qualitative strand was to understand how female aspirants' to the superintendency envision their career pathways. The research questions that were addressed in the qualitative strand were as follows:

1. How do female administrators develop aspirations to the superintendency?
2. How do female elementary principals envision their career pathways to the superintendency?
    a. Which positions in school and district leadership do they plan to pursue?
3. How do female aspirants perceive their ability to access other school and district leadership positions?

Method. The method for the qualitative strand involved three critical case studies. Case studies "make the point" about a particular phenomenon (Patton, 2002, p. 236). Critical care studies can used to illustrate or illuminate a particular phenomenon that may be present in a larger group or population (Patton, 2002). Case studies are used in the social sciences (Patton, 2002), and researchers (Brunner & Grogan, 2004; Grogan, 1996) examining women in educational administration use similar procedures for selecting sample participants. Tallerico (2000) used a case study approach to a study about gatekeeping practices in a single state. Tallerico's rationale for selecting this approach was to contextualize the data from interviews with three groups of participants—female superintendents, search consultants, and school board members. Each participant group experienced the phenomenon of gatekeeping within the context of their membership role. Skrla, Reyes, and Scheurich (2000) used case studies to

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examine the experiences of female superintendents with sex role stereotyping, bias, and discrimination. Skrla et al. used intensity cases to illustrate the persistence of this practice and the silence that surrounds it.

Critical cases studies were selected for this study because each of the case study participants represents stages of aspiring to and accessing the superintendency from a position outside the typical career pathway. The first case study involved a female elementary principal aspiring to the superintendency. The second case study involved a female aspirant who entered educational administration as an elementary principal and has moved into an assistant superintendent position. The third case study involved a female superintendent who began her administrative career as an elementary principal. Key informants helped to identify individuals that are, or have been, elementary principals and have aspirations to the superintendency.

Procedures for data collection. Each case study included a record review of resumes and curriculum vitas and a semi-structured interview. Case study participants were contacted via email and asked for a convenient time for telephone contact. The initial contact included an introduction of the researcher, purpose for the study, reason why the key informant identified her as a potential participant. Individuals received an introduction and informed consent letter that included an introduction of the researcher, purpose of the survey, invitation to participate in the study, information about providing records for review and scheduling an interview, and procedures for volunteering or declining to participate in the study. The introduction and informed consent letter (Appendix C) specified the following: (a) participation in the survey is voluntary, (b) individuals may decline to participate, (c) participant responses will be collected anonymously, (d) notification of risks and benefits associated with participation, (e) participants may decline to answer question(s), and that they may opt out of any questions, and (f)

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participants may withdraw consent or discontinue participation at any time. Individuals gave signed consent to participate were included in the study.

Each case study participant was contacted for an individual, face-to-face semi-structured interview using an interview guide comprised of nine open-ended questions developed around the research questions and themes in the extant literature. The interview guide (Appendix D) included topics about career aspirations, sources of motivation, career decision-making processes, and career planning. Interview sessions were tape recorded, transcribed, and stored in a database. Case study participants had the option to review the transcribed interviews.

Data analysis. Data analysis included qualitative procedures for analyzing the open-ended responses to the survey in the quantitative strand and interview transcripts. First, the audio recording of the interviews in the case studies were transcribed into a written format. Second, each case study interview transcript was read for (a) memos, or short statements, (b) recurring statements within the interview, (c) significant statements, and (d) statements or terms that coincide with the literature. The researcher developed a contextual description of the case study participants' experiences developing aspirations to and planning a career route for access to the superintendency. Third, the researcher developed a list categories, or codes, for describing and classifying the data from the interview transcripts. These categories emerged through the content of the interview transcripts and the literature reviewed in the conceptual framework. Fourth, the interview transcripts were reviewed and coded according to the list of categories. The researcher drew comparisons between the coded statements to interpret themes across the interview transcripts. Fifth, the researcher developed a matrix that included the themes in the coded responses along with significant statements and represents the case study participants' experiences in developing aspirations to and planning a career route for access to the

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superintendency. The researcher used a recursive process of reviewing the content of the coded statements with the categories among all responses to the questions and statements in the interview transcripts. Results from the record review were used to develop a descriptive profile of the case study participants' professional experience and educational background for the narrative analysis of the results.

The open-ended responses were read for (a) memos, or short statements, (b) recurring statements between responses, (c) significant statements, and (d) statements or terms that coincide with the literature. Priori categories from the literature in the conceptual framework were used to code statements. The coded statements were analyzed for patterns and themes that related to the case study interview transcripts and the literature and added to the matrix.

Merging data. In a convergent parallel mixed methods design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently and analyzed separately using the procedures suited for each method. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) describe the procedures a researcher uses to determine in what ways and to what degrees the two sets of results relate. The researcher may identify related, parallel, or convergent themes and content between the two sets of results. Merging involves comparisons among and between the data results to interpret the results of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods questions. Merging may involve further data analysis with one strand to extract additional information that would enrich the overall combining of the two sets of results.

In this study, the researcher gave priority to the qualitative data results. The researcher made comparisons between the two sets of data, triangulated common themes in the data, and illustrated how the combined data related to the purpose of the study.

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Procedures for merging data. The procedures for merging the quantitative and qualitative data were as follows. First, the researcher reduced quantitative data using descriptive statistical analysis. These data were represented in a table that included the frequencies for responses to questions related to demographic background, timing for and aspirations to other positions in school and district leadership, and career routes to the superintendency. The qualitative data were reduced by developing a chart with the participant's profiles and categories from the coded statements. Second, the qualitative data from the case study interviews and open-ended responses were transformed into a chart of quantified frequencies of responses by category. Third, the quantitative data were correlated with the transformed qualitative data by developing a matrix that represents patterns in the frequencies of reduced quantitative data and transformed quantitative data, thus consolidating both data sets into a combined data set. Fourth, the researcher compared the career pathway development and perceptions about the ability to access positions in school and district leadership from the quantitative data from participants in the survey and the qualitative data from the case studies participants. Fifth, the researcher integrated the combined data about developing and accessing career routes to positions in school and district leadership by synthesizing themes about how aspirants develop career routes to the superintendency and their perceptions about accessing other school and district leadership positions. Last, the researcher analyzed the merged data to develop interpretations about results from the combined and integrated strands.

Data analysis for merged results. A comparative method was used to interpret the merged results to address the research questions in the study. Once the quantitative and qualitative were reduced and correlated through the merging procedures, the researcher used a side-by-side comparison to analyze the similarities and differences between the quantitative data

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from the survey to the transformed qualitative data from the case study interviews. This analysis included the identification of congruencies and discrepancies between aspirants who participated in the survey and in the case study interviews to understand how aspirants envision their career pathways to the superintendency through other school and district leadership positions, and how they perceive their ability to access these positions. The researcher identified themes from the merged results and compare them to the demographic characteristics of the survey participants and the case study participants. This analysis involved comparing participants' age with aspirations to the superintendency, envisioned career routes to school and district leadership, and perceptions about the ability to access these positions. The interpretation of the merged data results involved reviewing the quantitative and qualitative data results separately for additional information and connecting merged data results with emergent patterns and themes.

Researcher Identity Profile

One strategy for establishing credibility in research that includes qualitative inquiry is the inclusion of the researcher identity profile (Creswell, 2007). The researcher identity profile provides the context from which the researcher approaches the research problem by drawing from personal experiences that contribute to the interpretation of the data. The researcher identity profile establishes the researcher's connection to the research problem and the lens used to interpret results, thus reducing bias (Maxwell, 2005).

I am a graduate student and a district-level director who has aspirations to the superintendency. I began my administrative career as a building-level supervisor in a high school and moved to a district-level supervisory position with broader scope of responsibility for programs, personnel, and budget and opportunities to interact with principals, school board

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members, community members, upper-level district administrators. However, I did not enter education as a high school English teacher with any intentions of entering administration. Through a series of conversations with my former department chair, I developed an interest in educational administration only after he recommended I should pursue the credentials after recognizing my frustration with the absence of instructional leadership and professional development in my former school district. After pursuing my administrative certifications, I hoped to become a high school assistant principal, but never a high school principal. A college professor recommended me for the English supervisor position in district where I quickly became involved in various aspects of program development. When a middle school principal position became available in the district, I applied for it and interviewed with the superintendent. I was interested in this position because I recognized that I had a limited scope of influence over all aspects of the school as a curriculum supervisor, and I began to see how an effective school principal could be an instructional leader. I did not get the middle school principal position, but I did make an impression on my superintendent who met with me to discuss my career goals. At that time, I thought I would ultimately want to become a curriculum director, and I saw a principalship as a valuable experience. When the position as a district-level supervisor became available, my superintendent asked me to move to this position so I could get district-level experience. It was not until I was in this position for at least a year that I realized I wanted to pursue a superintendency. My experience in central office afforded me the opportunity to work closely with directors, the assistant superintendent, and the superintendent. I was fortunate to have the assistant superintendent, my direct supervisor, as a mentor not only for this position, but also as a sponsor and a supporter of my ultimate career goals.

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I recently became a district-level director in a neighboring school district. In this cabinet-level position, I gained tremendous experience in a broader scope of district leadership, particularly in personnel, finance, and community relations. By working closely with the superintendent, I have gained insight into the daily functions of the superintendency, particularly the in demands of the position.

Like many women's experiences in the literature about women and educational administration, I did not enter teaching thinking I would one day be an administrator, or enter administration thinking I would one day want to be a superintendent. These aspirations developed through my professional experiences in my positions. Once I recognized that my scope of influence over substantive and sustainable change in a school or in the district was limited, I developed an interest in other school and district leadership positions. These aspirations were also fueled by the encouragement, honesty, and endorsement I received from my mentor. Once I believed I could be successful and my skills and talents as an instructional leader were recognized and praised by my super-ordinates, I embraced my aspirations and have been actively planning my own career route that includes a principalship or an assistant superintendency.

However, as a female administrator, I do experience conflicts with the internal and external barriers present in the literature. As a wife and mother of two teenagers, I have to balance my work life with my family life, and at times, find it difficult to be equally present and dedicated to both roles simultaneously. My career aspirations did not develop until a third of the way through my career in education, and I find myself in a position outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency, similar to female elementary principals. I have experienced overt and tacit gender stereotyping throughout my career as a teacher and an administrator;

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however, I am not certain that it has affected my pursuit of other positions in educational administration. I recognize that bias may exist, especially from school board members or administrators who have limited experience with female administrators. Yet, as a researcher and aspirant, I believe that women need opportunities and mechanisms that support and nurture their career development in educational administration. Women may never reconcile every internal and external barrier that inhibits their career aspirations and access to top leadership position in education. However, women can recognize their potential as educational leaders and consider successful models for career pathway development that honor the complexity of their lived experiences and professional orientations.

Validity

Validity includes procedures for ensuring the quality of the data, results, and interpretations of a research study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). In mixed methods studies, the researcher attends to the threats to validity in the quantitative and qualitative strands in the overall design of the study. First, the researcher designed a quantitative and a qualitative instrument for data collection. The survey that was used to collect quantitative data and the interview guide that was used to collect qualitative data were designed from themes in the literature review outlined in the conceptual framework. The researcher used informal reviews for both instruments. For the survey instrument, the researcher sought informal, expert reviews by (a) a personnel director to provide feedback for clarifying the demographic questions and position categories; (b) two female superintendents about the survey question language and question validity; and (c) a retired female elementary principal to provide feedback about the progression of the questions. For the interview guide, the researcher sought an informal, expert

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review by female administrator adept at conducting qualitative interviews for program evaluation.

Second, the researcher acknowledges her bias as a female aspirant to the superintendency, without experience as an elementary principal. The researcher averted bias in the interpretation of the qualitative results using by member checks, expert audit, and the triangulation of data results with the quantitative data results. The researcher provided the case study participants with a typed transcript of the interview. The participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts and amend if needed. The researcher used an expert audit of the case study results. The expert auditor is a former superintendent with expertise in instructional supervision and has instituted networking programs in professional organizations to increase diversity among Pennsylvania superintendents, particularly women. The expert auditor reviewed the transcripts, data, and analysis involving the case studies to ensure the integrity of the interview responses is not compromised. The researcher triangulated the results from the case studies with extant literature about women and educational administration, career development motivation theories, and emergent patterns within the case study results. The researcher also considered convergent and divergent patterns in the quantitative results from the survey as well as the qualitative results from the open-ended survey question and case study interviews to ensure these results aligned to purpose of the research study and addressed the research questions.

Third, the researcher avoided making illogical comparison between two sets of data from the quantitative and qualitative strands by using direct quotations from the data. The researcher also used an expert audit to affirm that the comparisons between the two sets of data corroborate and extend emergent themes and address the study's research questions. The expert auditor is

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an educational administrator who has expertise in qualitative and mixed methods research methodologies.

Limitations

The researcher acknowledges the following limitations in the design of this study. First, the target population for this study is female elementary principals who are also outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency. The results from this study may not extend to all female administrators' career aspirations, perceptions. Second, the survey instrument in the quantitative strand includes questions about career pathways and perceptions about access to other positions in school and district leadership. Thus, the results from the survey will not extend to explanations about these perceptions. Third, the sample population for the case studies in the qualitative strand includes only aspirants to the superintendency with experience as elementary principals. Thus, the results from the case study interviews will not extend to the career development decisions and experiences of female non-aspirants to the superintendency or aspirants who entered educational administration through other entry ports.

By selecting a mixed methods design, the researcher combines quantitative and qualitative strands of data collection and analysis and merges the results from these two strands to interpret the overall results of both strands. By relying on the merged data for the interpretation of the results of a mixed methods study, limitations exist in the analysis of the data in the quantitative strand and in the case study design and data transformation in the qualitative strand.

First, in the quantitative strand, data analysis from the survey responses will include descriptive statistical procedures that describe the population of female elementary principals in Pennsylvania and will not include inferential statistical measures of probability or significance.

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Thus, the results from the quantitative strand cannot be generalized to all female principals and female administrators. Second, in the qualitative strand, the selection of the case study participants involved three participants who each represent female aspirants on continuum of career development. The researcher selected one case study for each stage along the continuum—an aspiring female principal, an aspiring female assistant superintendent and former elementary principal, and a female superintendent and former elementary principal— and will not include two or more case studies that complement these stages along the continuum. Thus, the research would not be able to compare the experiences of multiple female aspirants at similar stages in their career development. Third, the merging procedures for a convergent parallel mixed method design include transforming the qualitative data into quantified units of frequencies. The transformed qualitative data has less flexibility and depth of the content, thus diminishing the integrity of the qualitative results in comparison to a qualitative case study method.

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Chapter 4

Results

This chapter includes three separate presentations and analyses of the results of this study. First, the quantitative results from the survey include descriptive statistics and analyses of the findings. Second, the quantitative results from the case studies and open-ended responses to the survey include thematic analyses. Third, the merged results from the quantitative and qualitative data include a conflation of the overall results into themes and the overall analysis.

Quantitative Strand Results

The sample in the quantitative strand included 89 female elementary principals in Pennsylvania who completed responses to the categorical questions in the survey instrument. The survey collected data about demographics, career aspirations, envisioned career routes, and perceptions about accessing positions.

Demographics. The sample included 86% white (n= 80), 7.5% black or African American (n= 7), 1.1% Hispanic or Latina (n= 1), and 1.1% Native American or Pacific Islander (n=1) female elementary principals. The sample included 69 women 41 years of age or older - 77.5% and 20 women 40 years of age or younger- 22.5%. The mode age range was 51 years of age or older. Fifty-seven percent of the women held at least one master's degree, and the percentage of women with a doctoral degree completed or in process was 33.3%.

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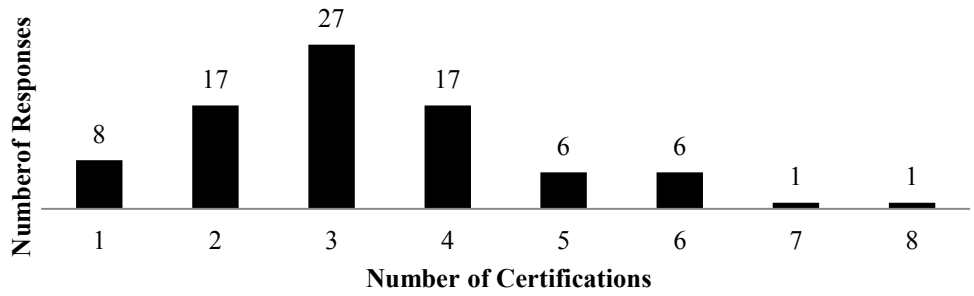

Figure 2. Range of reported number of certifications.

Figure 2 represents the range of teaching and administrative certifications reported by the female elementary principals in the sample. The mode of the range was 27 certifications. Seventy percent of the women had three or more certifications. Among the 272 reported certifications, 132 were teaching certifications and 140 were administrative certifications. The distribution of teaching certifications included (a) pre-K through 6 elementary- 60%, (b) 7-12 secondary content area- 13.8%, and (c) K-12 specialist- 15.9%. The distribution of administrative certifications included (a) elementary principal -22.1%, (b) secondary principal- 7.9%, (c) K-12 principal-37.1%, (d) K-12 supervisor-10.7%, and (e) superintendent- 22.1%. Consistent with other studies (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007; Sherman, 2005) about women's career development in educational administration, the female elementary principals in this sample acquired multiple teaching and administrative credentials. Forty percent of the women hold additional administrative certifications that are not required for their current position as elementary principal.

Career aspirations. The percentage of female elementary principals who indicated that they plan to pursue another position in school or district leadership is 32.6%, and 67.4% do not

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do not have plans to pursue another position. The sub-set of female elementary principals (n=29) who were position seekers include 21 superintendent aspirants and 8 superintendent non-aspirants. The percentage of female elementary principals who indicated an interest in the superintendency was 24% of the total sample and 72% of the sub-set of position seekers.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Position Seekers' Career Movement

	Superintendent Aspirants (n=21)			Superintendent Non-aspirants (n=8)			Total Position Seekers (n=29)		
	F	p	P	*f*	p	P	*f*	p	P
Next Position									
Assistant Superintendent	11	.52	52	3	.38	38	14	.48	48
District-level Director	6	.29	29	2	.25	25	8	.28	28
District-level Supervisor	0	-	-	3	.38	38	3	.10	10
Superintendent	4	.19	19	0	-	-	4	.14	14
Timeframe									
Currently pursuing	6	.29	29	1	.13	13	7	.24	24
Within 1-2 years	2	.10	10	4	.50	50	6	.21	21
Within 3-5 years	11	.52	52	2	.25	25	13	.49	49
Within 6-10 years	2	.10	10	1	.13	13	3	.03	3

Table 1 represents the sub-set of position seekers' anticipated next position in their career routes in district leadership and the timeframe for pursuing this position. Among all position seekers, the most frequently reported next position was the assistant superintendent. None of the position seekers indicated that they plan to pursue a secondary principal position. When disaggregated by interest in the superintendency, the most frequently reported next position among superintendent aspirants was the assistant superintendent position while the superintendent non-aspirants most frequently reported the assistant superintendent position and district-level supervisor positions.

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The most frequently reported timeframe for pursing this next position among all position seekers was within 3 to 5 years, which was consistent with superintendent aspirants. Superintendent non-aspirants plan to pursue their next position within 1 to 2 years.

Table 2. Frequency of Position Seekers' Rationale for Career Movement

	Superintendent Aspirants (n=98)			Superintendent Non-aspirants (n=42)			Total Position Seekers (n=140)		
Rationale	*f*	p	P	*f*	p	P	*f*	p	P
Know of a potential vacancy	3	.03	3	1	.02	2	4	.03	3
Encouraged by supervisor	6	.06	6	4	.10	10	10	.07	7
Encouraged by colleague	6	.06	6	3	.07	7	9	.06	6
Believe position is attainable	14	.14	14	7	.17	17	21	.15	15
Have the requisite certification(s)	12	.12	12	6	.14	14	18	.13	13
Have the necessary professional experience	17	.17	17	6	.14	14	23	.16	16
Believe it will provide valuable experiences	12	.12	12	6	.14	14	18	.13	13
Have an interest in the position's functions	16	.16	16	8	.19	19	24	.17	17
Believe position can lead to top positions	7	.07	7	1	.02	2	8	.06	6
Believe hiring bodies perceive it as a requisite for top positions	5	.05	5	0	-	-	5	.04	4

Note: Participants could select more than one rationale.

The most frequently reported rationale for pursuing the next position in their career pathways among all position seekers was (a) interest in the position's functions and responsibilities followed by (b) having the necessary professional experience, and (c) believing the position is attainable. The least frequently reported rationale among all position seekers was (a) knowing of a potential vacancy followed by (b) believing hiring bodies perceive it as a requisite for top positions. Position seekers' rationales for selecting the next position reflected interest in the position and the probability of success as opposed to an awareness of the professional experience preferred by hiring bodies (Kamler, 2009; Newton, 2006; Tallerico, 2000a). Female elementary principals seeking other positions tended to plan their career routes based on their perception of their ability to attain the position and their qualifications for the position.

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Further examination of Table 2 reveals differences between superintendent aspirants and superintendent non-aspirants rationales for pursing the next position in their career routes. Superintendent aspirants most frequently reported having the necessary professional experience as a rationale for pursing the next position while superintendent non-aspirants most frequently reported having an interest in the position's functions and responsibilities. Another difference among the superintendent aspirants' and non-aspirants' rationales included statements that suggest career advancement (provide valuable experience and lead to a top position). Twenty-four percent of superintendent aspirants reported rationales related to career advancement whereas 16% of superintendent non-aspirants reported these rationales. These differences between superintendent aspirants and superintendent non-aspirants suggests that superintendent aspirants considered their next position in terms of their ultimate career goals. Since the most frequently selected next position for all position seekers was the assistant superintendent and this position is common in career routes to the superintendency (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Ortiz, 1982), the superintendent aspirants' rationales aligned to their desired career goal outcomes.

The 21 position seekers who were superintendent aspirants identified four potential career pathways to the superintendency:

- District-level Director→ Assistant Superintendent→ Superintendent 61.9%
- Assistant Superintendent→ Superintendent 23.8%
- District-level Director or Assistant Superintendent→ Superintendent 11.1%
- District-level Supervisor→ District-level Director→ Assistant Superintendent→ Superintendent 5.5%

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All positions seekers planned to access the superintendency through district leadership positions. The district-level director position was present in 78.5% of the position seekers' career pathways. The most frequent career pathway involves a three-step route from a district-level director, to an assistant superintendent, to the superintendent. The anticipated career pathways of the position seekers reflected an alternative career pathway through district leadership (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft et al., 2007).

Accessibility. Female elementary principals were asked to indicate which position(s) in school and district leadership they believed they could successful attain. Among the total sample, the three most accessible positions in school and district leadership included (a) district-level director- 23%, (b) district-level supervisor -16%, and (c) assistant superintendent-15%. When comparing responses between the two sub-sets of female elementary principals who are position seekers and non-seekers, the responses differed. The position seekers' three most frequently reported accessible positions were (a) district-level director-10%, (b) assistant superintendent- 7%, and (c) district-level supervisor-7%. The non-seekers' three most frequently reported accessible positions were (a) district-level director-13%, (b) district-level supervisor-9%, and (c) middle school principal-9%. Among position seekers and non-seekers, the middle school principal and high school principal positions had greater accessibility than did the middle school assistant principal and high school assistant principal positions. A possible explanation for this perception about the accessibility to secondary assistant principal positions is that the women had experience as elementary principals and would be over qualified for assistant principalships.

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Table 3. Frequency of Perceived Accessibility to Positions by Women's Age

Number of Responses	Age <40 (n=81)			Age >40 (n=229)			Total (n=310)		
Position Seekers	*f*	p	P	*f*	p	P	*f*	p	P
Assistant Superintendent	4	.05	5	19	.08	8	23	.07	7
Business Manager/CFO	0	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	-
District-level Director	5	.06	6	25	.11	11	30	.10	10
District-level Supervisor	4	.05	5	17	.07	7	21	.07	7
High School Assistant Principal	0	-	-	3	.01	1	3	.01	1
High School Principal	0	-	-	8	.03	11	8	.03	3
Middle School Assistant Principal	1	.01	1	3	.01	3	4	.01	1
Middle School Principal	2	.02	2	8	.03	1	10	.03	3
Superintendent	2	.02	2	16	.07	7	18	.06	6
Non-seekers									
Assistant Superintendent	5	.06	6	19	.08	8	24	.08	8
Business Manager/CFO	1	.01	1	3	.01	1	4	.01	1
District-level Director	14	.17	17	25	.11	11	39	.13	13
District-level Supervisor	7	.09	9	22	.10	10	29	.09	9
High School Assistant Principal	6	.07	7	9	.04	4	15	.05	5
High School Principal	9	.11	11	11	.05	5	20	.06	6
Middle School Assistant Principal	7	.09	9	13	.06	6	20	.06	6
Middle School Principal	11	.14	14	17	.07	7	28	.09	9
Superintendent	3	.04	4	11	.05	5	14	.05	5

Table 3 represents how the total sample of position seekers and non-seekers perceive their accessibility to each position by age. For all female elementary principals 40 years of age or younger, the three most accessible positions included (a) district-level director -23%, (b) middle school principal-16%, and (c) district-level supervisor-14%. For all female elementary principals 41 years of age or older, the three most accessible positions included (a) district-level director-22%, (b) district-level supervisor-17%, and (c) assistant superintendent-16%. The district-level director position was the most frequently accessible position reported for both position seekers and non-seekers among both age groups. Further analysis of Table 3 reveals the difference in percentage of female elementary principals by age that perceived the superintendent position as accessible. The percentage of female elementary principals 40 years

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of age or younger was 6% whereas the percentage of female elementary principals 41 years of age or older was 11%. Older female elementary principals may perceive the superintendent position as more accessible because of their experience in in the field of education as well as the increase in women in top leadership positions over the span of their careers.

A pattern emerged when the perceptions about position accessibility were examined for position seekers and non-seekers by age. The three most frequently reported positions for all position seekers and non-seekers 41 years of age or older were (a) district-level director, (b) assistant superintendent, and (c) district-level supervisor. However, the perceptions about position accessibility among non-seekers 40 years of age or younger differed from the other three groups. The non-seekers 40 years of age or younger reported the middle school principal and high school principal as the second and third most accessible positions respectively. These results suggest that non-seekers 40 years of age or younger perceive secondary school leadership positions as accessible from the elementary principalship.

Summary

The percentage of female elementary principals in the total sample who have an interest in the superintendency was 24%. Among the sub-set of elementary principals who plan to pursue another position in school or district leadership, the percentage of female elementary principals with interest in the superintendency increased to 72%. Female elementary principals aspiring to the superintendency planned to use a career route that includes only district-level positions. District-level leadership positions were most frequently reported as the anticipated next position as well as the positions within the career pathway to the superintendency. The most common rationales for pursuing district-level positions included (a) having an interest in the position, (b) having the necessary professional experience, and (c) believing the position was

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attainable. The perceptions about the accessibility of positions in school and district leadership differ among female elementary principals by age. While the district leadership positions were the most frequently reported accessible positions among the total sample, female elementary principals 40 years of age or younger also perceived secondary school leadership positions to be accessible in greater proportion to those 41 years of age or older.

Qualitative Strand Results

The qualitative strand results developed though a system of organizational, substantive, and theoretical categorization of significant statements coded in the interview transcripts and open-ended statements from the survey. Applying Maxwell's (2005) approach to categorizing analysis, significant statements were organized by anticipated topics from the literature. The significant statements were color-coded by categories that retained the participant's emic language and description of the experience. In-vivo codes, which inlay meaning from the conceptual framework to the significant statements, were developed to interpret the results from the interview transcripts. These coded statements were used to develop the emergent themes presented in the results. The emergent themes were developed by connecting patterns of discourse that converged and diverged from the literature.

The results of the qualitative strand represent 458 coded statements within the three case study interviews and 15 open-ended responses to the survey. The coded statements were categorized into four common threads: (a) a narrative of their career development, (b) identification of key positions within their career pathways, (c) reflections on professional experiences, and (d) beliefs about leadership. The respondents to the open-ended questions addressed career development and key positions as it related to their anticipated careers articulated in the survey.

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Case Study Profiles

Loretta-Elementary Principal. Loretta has been an elementary principal in a suburban school district in southeastern Pennsylvania for four years. Prior to her appointment to the elementary principalship, she served as a supervisor of gifted instruction for three years and as a gifted education specialist and primary teacher for 18 years in the same school district. Loretta received a master's degree in educational leadership with a K-12 Principal certification early in her teaching career. She decided to wait until her children were in high school before actively pursuing administrative positions. During her tenure as a teacher, she was actively involved in leadership roles within the teachers' association, serving as the head advocate for teachers' association and as the association president. Loretta developed her aspirations to the superintendency once she became an elementary principal. Loretta intends to move from the elementary principalship to a district-level director or assistant superintendent position as the next position in her career pathway.

Abigail-Assistant Superintendent. Abigail is an assistant superintendent in a suburban school district in central Pennsylvania. She began her career as an elementary teacher in a neighboring state where she taught primary and intermediate grades for 10 years. During this time, she became involved in curriculum and professional development as a teacher-leader. Prompted by principals and assistant principals who served as influential role models, she pursued a master's degree in educational administration and became an elementary assistant principal. After two years, she became the principal of another elementary school within the county-based school system in this state. After three years as an elementary principal, Abigail moved to Pennsylvania to assume the principalship of an elementary school where she served for eight years. When the director of curriculum and instruction position became available within

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the district, she moved into that position. After serving as the director of curriculum and instruction, Abigail was promoted to her current position as assistant superintendent in the same district. Since this promotion two years ago, Abigail had completed her doctoral work and anticipates pursuing the superintendency in her current district or possibly a neighboring district.

Rebecca-Superintendent. Rebecca began her teaching career as a primary and intermediate elementary teacher in another state. She immediately pursued a master's degree in educational administration and aspired to become a principal. After moving back to her home town, she worked for a social services agency and developed relationships with the school district. She joined the district as an intermediate elementary teacher and filled a one-year vacancy for the director of curriculum who was on leave. From this position, she became an elementary principal and high school assistant principal in the same district for three years. During this time, she began her doctoral studies. She was able to move back to the director of curriculum position and served in that position for eleven years. During the search for a permanent superintendent within the district, she was approached by the acting superintendent and select school board members to apply for this position. Rebecca was named superintendent, and she has served in this position for six years.

Open-ended survey respondent profiles. Fifteen female elementary principals completed the open-ended survey question regarding their rationale for the career route they planned to pursue from the elementary principalship to the superintendency. Twelve of the respondents are over 41 years of age. Nine of the respondents had completed graduate study beyond a master's degree with 2 respondents holding a doctoral degree. Four of the respondents were currently pursuing the next position in their career pathway to the superintendency.

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Common threads. The open-ended survey responses contained two common threads: (a) key positions in career pathway and (b) broaden scope of knowledge and experience. First, the women expressed that the next position they planned to pursue mirrored the pathway used by superintendents in their district or by whom they knew. Sixty percent of the respondents identified the positions in their planned career pathways as key positions needed to access the superintendency. Three respondents commented on the available positions within their district, which suggests an intention to remain within their current district. Second, the respondents noted that their planned career routes would allow them to gain experience for the superintendency. One responded stated that she would gain "the requisite skills for the superintendent position" by following her planned career pathway. While the open-ended respondents did not elaborate within their responses, these two threads weaved into the emergent themes developed through the case study interviews.

Emergent themes. The results of the case study interviews and open-ended survey responses revealed two emergent themes about how women with experiences as elementary principals envision their career pathways to the superintendency. *Developing a career pathway* focuses on how the women processed and contextualized their experiences and the influences that led them to want to pursue the superintendency. *Accessing positions in school and district leadership* focused on the indicators of career development that could lead to successfully attaining the superintendency.

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Table 4. Frequency of Women's Coded Responses by Theme

	Open-ended Responses			Principal			Assistant Superintendent			Superintendent			Total
Theme	*f*	p	P	*f*	p	P	*f*	p	P	*f*	p	P	*f*
Developing a Career Pathway													
Experiences and career aspirations	0	-	-	9	.2	20	12	.3	30	19	.5	50	40
External influences on career aspirations	0	-	-	6	.2	20	24	.7	70	5	.1	10	35
Internal factors and career aspirations	0	-	-	11	.1	10	57	.5	50	40	.4	40	108
	0	-	-	26	.1	10	93	.5	50	64	.4	40	183
Accessing Positions in School and District Leadership													
Making career decisions	12	.2	20	14	.2	20	22	.4	40	13	.2	20	61
Developing professional preparation	3	<.1		33	.2	20	43	.3	30	57	.4	40	136
Confronting external factors	3	<.1	10	10	.2	20	16	.4	40	14	.3	30	43
Recognizing personal characteristics	0	-	-	9	.3	30	11	.3	30	15	.4	40	35
	18	.1	10	66	.2	20	92	.3	30	99	.4	40	275

Table 4 represents the frequency of responses for each theme and sub-category with the theme. In 40% of their discourse, the women described how developing a career pathway resulted from (a) the experiences that promote self-efficacy and career aspiration, (b) the external influences on their aspirations and career development, (c) and the internal factors that affect their aspirations and career development. In the other 60% of their discourse, the women revealed that accessing positions in school and district leadership involved indicators such as (a) making career decisions, (b) developing professional preparation, (c) confronting external factors, and (d) recognizing personal characteristics.

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Developing a Career Pathway

Experiences and career aspirations. The narratives of the case studies revealed that as each woman successfully attained a position in school or district leadership, she developed confidence in her leadership skills as well as her knowledge of instructional pedagogy and organizational systems. Each woman's discourse included reflections on how the experience in past positions helped her to prepare for a more challenging position. Loretta described her experience as gifted education specialist as an area where she developed a broader understanding of developmental learning and scheduling a building. Loretta also reflected on her experience as the teachers' association head advocate as a critical experience by working with administrators and supporting teachers' professional growth. Abigail described how she viewed her progression from an assistant elementary principal, to elementary principal, to director of curriculum and instruction, to assistant superintendent as moving from "impacting an entire building" to focusing on "what's happening in all our classrooms, all our environments" to "the greatest level of moving an entire district." Loretta's and Abigail's self-efficacy developed as they as gained confidence in their knowledge base and leadership skills within their respective roles.

Once a sense of self-efficacy developed from these experiences, the women sought other positions that could broaden their scope of responsibility and influence over the school systems. Learning how to balance the facets of leadership from feelings of isolation, to confronting personnel and legal issues, to resolving complex conflicts within the organization is a crucial aspect for being successful in of top-level leadership positions. Each woman spoke to how she resolved this balance in her professional life. Specifically, Loretta and Rebecca identified

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collaboration with trusted colleagues and seeking the advice of experts as strategies for resolving the challenges they experienced in their leadership roles.

Yet, in considering the superintendency, the women expressed resolve in balancing the challenges of leadership for the opportunity to exert greater influence over the organizational system to promote student learning and achievement. Abigail summarized her career aspirations by stating:

> So it really was with doing what I really loved and wanted…and then opportunities became available and were offered to me. And I think with each job that I have had, I have loved even more. So it's really, I think, my focus is just where I can make the most significant difference. If that's where I am supposed to be, then that's where I need to be.

Abigail's aspirations to the superintendency represented her sense of "calling" to a position where she could make a positive impact for students. Along a similar vein, Rebecca described her reaction to a school board member's question about her candidacy for the superintendent position. Rebecca stated that if she was not the successful candidate for the position, she would "go right back and be in the curriculum office because I really love curriculum." Rebecca continued with, "I think I am making a good difference. But I think, that by being a superintendent, I can make those curriculum things happen too." Abigail's and Rebecca's aspirations to the superintendency developed from a lens of servant leadership. Both women expressed that the source of their motivation was grounded in their work for schools and with students and was not dependent upon a position title.

External influences on career aspirations. In their career development narratives, each woman recounted how endorsement and encouragement from a supervisor were important influences over their decision to pursue school and district leadership positions. Abigail recalled

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how a conversation with the assistant superintendent when she was a teacher led to her first position as an assistant elementary principal:

> The district, at that time, chose to come in and do climate surveys of some select people in regard to what was happening in the building, and where they felt they really needed to take the building and make some movement. So, at that point in time, I was doing interviewing with the area superintendent, and he was asking questions such as, "What do you think could happen within the building to better help us to establish collaboration, environment, of teamwork, focus on achievement…" And at the end of the interview…he said to me, "Where are you in terms of the leadership program?" And I said, "Well, I've completed it all, and I just transferred to this school as a second grade teacher. I'm very happy." And he said, "I'm putting your name forward to become, to be part of the administrative pool in terms of leadership academy in the district." And I thought, "Well, that's very kind of you…thinking, well maybe in a few years when they call, and if I'm ready, then you know, what a nice compliment." So, I ended up going home that night to share with my husband and I'm like…oh, they put my name in the leadership pool. I had a great interview with a phenomenal area assistant superintendent. We had this great dialogue about how could really turn this school around. And a week later I got a phone call for an interview as the …for an assistant principal position in an elementary school. And I thought, "Isn't that interesting. Oh…OK…I will probably be a few years, but I'll go ahead on the interview and it will be good skill building." And interviewed and was called the next week. They said we're appointing you for the Board…at the...at the school board meeting.

At that time, Abigail did not recognize the opportunity to share her vision for the school with the assistant superintendent was a career-defining moment. Abigail's experience coincided with how the other women in the case studies either entered or advanced in educational administration. These formal or informal, serendipitous or strategic, conversations with supervisors and mentors led to opportunities for recognition or advancement. For each woman, the recognition by supervisors and their subsequent promotion led to the opportunity to apply for, and ultimately attain, administrative positions.

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The encouragement of colleagues and friends was also noted as well as the support of family members to pursue leadership positions. The women identified mentors whom they relied on for career advice as well as for assuming their leadership roles. Loretta shared how relied on her sister who is an assistant superintendent in another state for advice as well as other colleagues in district leadership positions. Rebecca remarked on her relationship with her superintendent when she was a curriculum director. The superintendent exposed her to the functions of central office that extended beyond curriculum development into areas such as managing school finance and working with constituencies. Having role models whom they could emulate helped the women assume their leadership roles and develop their aspirations to advance in educational administration.

Internal factors and career aspirations. Each woman situated her aspirations to school and district leadership within her leadership orientation. Loretta expressed her keen focus on "doing what's best for kids." Abigail spoke about the role of collaboration with teachers and other administrators in developing curriculum and implementing effective instructional practices. Rebecca shared examples that resonate with a leadership for learning orientation as described by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011). Rebecca stated that:

> And, you know, I really think that the…that understanding how kids learn and how you have to teach is really what matters most regardless of what administrative position you're in. You can learn the management things. Or, you have enough support staff to help you in terms of the management of things. But if you don't have a clear idea of what the instructional design in a classroom should look like. How to really weave reading and writing into every content area. If you haven't studied those standards. If you haven't done that stuff, having all those other things, is meaningless in comparison. So where I always try to concentrate my efforts, even in terms of course work and those kinds-of things. You have to take the school law and you have to take some of that other stuff. But what I always…what I really wanted to understand what should be going on in that classroom. That that's where it

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> really mattered. And so that any administrative position I would be in would be about knowing, learning, understanding the classroom. So, I'd say that was…that was really tried to keep my focus.

Rebecca's vision about leadership involved maintaining a sharp focus on effective instruction and student learning.

Career goals developed from internal sources of motivation to develop school systems that resonated with core beliefs about effective school systems. The women sought the superintendency to extend their influence over the organization system focused on student learning and achievement. None of the women expressed seeking the position for its own sake. Abigail was adamant about a potential superintendency:

> If they, philosophically, met my set of beliefs. The kids really come first, and it would really need to be a cohesive, collaborative team where we empower each and every person regardless of who they are to really collectively move a district forward.

For Abigail, seeking the superintendency depended on a philosophical match. She values her beliefs about effectiveness leadership; therefore, she would be selective about the existing conditions of a district she would choose to lead. Each woman shared a commitment to student learning and a self-awareness of her leadership orientation. These two factors not only influence their career aspirations, but also the types of organizations they would seek to lead.

Accessing Positions in School and District Leadership

Making career decisions. Each woman could identify a specific career decision in her career pathway that served as an entry port to school and district leadership. First, each woman connected her in involvement in teacher leadership roles, such as writing curriculum and

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delivering professional development, to a foundational experience for developing aspirations to formal leadership roles. Loretta explained how she decided to become a gifted education specialist so that she could broaden her knowledge of curriculum and instruction across the elementary continuum. Abigail spoke of her experiences in writing curriculum and delivering professional development as additional roles that demonstrated her potential leadership qualities to her supervisors. Rebecca spoke of her involvement in a student assistance program with an outside agency forging her relationship with school district leaders. The decision to enter school leadership developed from their experience in teacher-leader roles. In order to access their first administrative positions, these women promoted their burgeoning leadership skills, which gained the attention their school and district leaders.

Second, assuming positions in district-level curriculum leadership afforded each woman the opportunity to develop a K-12 perspective on teaching and learning, leadership experience at elementary and secondary levels, and proximity to central office leaders. Abigail explained how she approached the curriculum director position:

> My goal was to prove to these secondary folks that I did know instruction. I wasn't just a little elementary person. I can relate to you. It's not about content as much as it's about what we're doing in the classroom environment to really to promote higher level thinking and what not.

Coming from an elementary background, Abigail actively worked with secondary teachers and principals to establish her credibility. Loretta shared how her experiences as a K-12 gifted supervisor helped her to learn the functions of the district office as well as how the leadership skills necessary at this level differs from the skills needed for school leadership. Rebecca focused on her work with program implementation and district initiatives as a curriculum director as a position where she learned about managing complex change in school systems. By

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building relationships with school leaders, the teachers' association, parent and community members, and the superintendent, she learned how to modulate her leadership approach. Rebecca believed this experience allowed her to develop the competencies needed for the superintendency. Throughout their narratives, each woman identified a district-level curriculum leadership position as one of the sentinel position in their career development.

Developing professional preparation. Throughout their discourse, the women reflected on how each position in their career pathway allowed them to gain leadership experience, to hone their professional acumen, and to feel efficacious in their leadership roles. The most significant preparatory position for each woman was district-level leadership experience in K-12 curriculum. Loretta shared how a supervisory position is "tremendous because it gives you the opportunity to go to every building that's in your district." Abigail spoke of "having that experience as the K-12 director of curriculum and instruction was critical, just to see the alignment." Abigail reflected on the sum of her experiences as they related to her, or anyone's, preparation for a superintendent position from an elementary principalship:

> …would I have been ready to jump from a building principal to an assistant superintendent from elementary, I never would have done it. I would have thought why would I do that without enough experience? I need to immerse myself in the secondary program. I need to know the curriculum. I need to know what makes the high school tick. I need to know the all dynamics of it. I need to know… So I felt that I would… I would… I would hope that anyone would see where their lack of experiences are and try and immerse themselves in them before they would get to another level.

For Abigail, she would not have felt prepared for her current role as an assistant superintendent, nor would she have believed she was ready for a superintendent position without her experience as a district-level director.

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Along a similar vein, Rebecca spoke of how her experiences as a principal and as a curriculum director influenced her expectations for the principals as effective, instructional leaders in her district:

> …you would sit in meetings with folks who you knew didn't know. And it was so easy to pull the wool over anybody's eyes. If you don't know what going on in that classroom you can really help those teachers improve. You can. And that's your job. A big part of your job is to help people improve. So how are you going to help them improve if you don't know what they're doing… It was not just making as teachers better, but was making those administrators better. So they could speak with authority about things to teachers. So they could sit in parent meetings and be a viable member of the team….Those principals have to be able to speak with authority about what's happening in the classroom.

Rebecca's perspective on the role instructional leadership developed from her experiences working with principals as a curriculum director. In her work as a superintendent, she recognized the principals' need for professional growth as instructional leaders. Because of her experience in curriculum and instruction, she was able to establish an expectation for principals' competency as instructional leaders as well as for providing training and support as a superintendent.

In the context of effective leadership knowledge and experience for the superintendency, Abigail and Rebecca identified their district-level director positions in curriculum as the position where they gained the most knowledge about effective instruction and student learning all levels, an understanding of organizational structures of elementary and secondary schools, and access to the superintendent and other key positions in district-level leadership. Superintendents need to have a deep knowledge base about curriculum and instruction as it affects student learning, models of professional development for teachers and administrators, and organizational leadership within schools and school systems.

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Another critical area of professional preparation involved developing effective communication and interpersonal skills. Building trust within the organization and with the outside community requires adeptness in various modes of communication. With personnel, school and district leaders need to foster a trust among their colleagues to support how messages are communicated as well as received. This requires asking questions and assessing the climate before, during, and after communicating a message or directive. Loretta spoke of her growth in effective communications:

> I think that you need to understand, and I'm not sure I fully did when I started this position, that you never finish everything. And that you're never, no matter what you, going to make everybody happy. Always…whatever…I think, I wish that I knew, and I know now, you need to be careful with…it's not always good to put something out there unless you run it by someone you can trust. Because things that you say, or you have an understanding of…you want to make sure that someone who isn't in the same place you also understands it. Because you can put out an email and say this is what I want to do, and if the person who's reading it doesn't get it, it can cause a major meltdown in your faculty. That's an important thing…you need to find someone you can trust.

Loretta's comments demonstrated how learning to communicate to a faculty requires a thoughtful and methodical process for ensuring the message is clearly received and understood by the faculty.

In a broader sense, communication skills are a critical component of effective relations between the superintendent and school board. Rebecca shared how she communicates with her school board members, faculty, and community. She established a set of norms for communication with the school board that ensured they are continually informed. These norms extended to how she manages recommendations from individual school board members and redirects them to the appropriate venues for discussion and action. When communicating with

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the faculty on sensitive issues such as school district consolidation, she shared how she acknowledged their emotional responses to reassignments and provided clear goals for the purpose and rationale behind administrative decisions. When communicating with parents and community members, she provided a context for administrative actions. Rebecca spoke from the perspective of being "the head advocate for kids." Her communications from her office reflect this stance:

> And sometimes you have to come across not… 'You know, we have to shut down your school.' That doesn't sound like I'm advocating. But the reality is, if we don't shut down that school with seventy kids in it, we're gonna have classes of forty, and I can't do that. So I have to advocate for the big picture here. And I'm in bring your kids to a lovely school, where there's going to be twenty-two in their class. They're gonna have more opportunities because it's a bigger campus this with more things. And so, I want you to see that really, this is an exercise in advocacy because I have to look at this big picture. I try to do things too…like I started this year; it's been really, very positive I do a positive phone call thing. So the buildings give me across the gamut, and I call, and just leave messages, you know, about…. So it's that effort of trying to make the superintendency not just a…it's not just about being an administrative walk. It's about being a real person who really cares about the education that… that… and if they can really believe that…

In Rebecca's communications about difficult and controversial issues, she established rapport through empathy, maintained a focus on students, and delivered information with honesty. In particular, Loretta and Rebecca shared examples of how they developed effective communication skills through their experiences that enabled them to feel successful in their respective positions. Furthermore, their understanding the internal and external constituencies worked to mitigate the pitfalls dealing with multiple perspectives and misconceptions faced within organizations.

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Another area of professional preparation included using networking skills from within and outside the district. Each woman shared that finding a trusted colleague within the organization was essential to a successful tenure. By attending professional learning seminars, school and district leaders stayed abreast of current research and practices as well as engaged in collegial discussions about how other leaders and school systems manage similar issues. Networking provided a venue to make professional contacts and extend one's reputation in circles outside the school district. Abigail spoke about networking as an "opportunity to see and learn the strengths from people outside your own little world and to be able to put them all together to add your own strengths." By remaining informed and developing relationships with colleagues outside the district, these women could open avenues to positions in other districts.

Confronting external factors. External factors affected how the women access school and district leadership positions. Recognizing how opportunities for upward mobility, access to decision makers, and perceptions about elementary experience influenced the career decisions these women made. Each woman attained a school or district leadership position from within the district. The women's performance in their current roles, demonstrated leadership skills and knowledge base, and anticipated success influenced how supervisors provided them with opportunities for upward mobility within the organization. When asked about her perceptions about moving into the superintendent position if it becomes available in her district, Abigail responded with the following:

> I do. This will be my fourteen year here. So, and certainly, I think, just what I've been able to demonstrate in terms of school improvement, dedication, commitment, motivation, innovativeness, to the Board from serving for in multiple roles. I've been a principal for eight years, two years as director of curriculum, and these years here, I think that will give me access to

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> then say…Certainly when they open it up, they understand my track record of commitment, and my track record of what I've been able to do in the district as well too.

Abigail believed that she has the potential to move into the superintendent position because of her demonstrated performance and experiences in school and district leadership. Rebecca shared a similar experience with her appointment to the superintendent position. During the superintendent search, the interim superintendent identified her to the school board as their candidate. Although she had not yet applied, the interim superintendent recognized that Rebecca's performance as the curriculum director and her history with the district made her the most qualified candidate for the position. At major points in their career pathways, having access to gatekeepers benefited the women's advancement. In many instances, these individuals functioned as mentors who identified the women as potential candidates for positions or encouraged the women to pursue these positions.

However, when opportunities for upward mobility do not exist, the women expressed that looking outside the district could be an option. Another external factor the women confronted was the perceptions by supervisors and gatekeepers within in the organization about elementary experience. Loretta expressed that her district is "male dominated" in top leadership positions coupled with a lack of elementary representation in district leadership. She continued:

> So I think that as much as I hate to say it, elementary administrators, elementary personnel, for sure, are not looked at with the same level of perhaps-knowledge base that middle school and secondary are. So I think that could hold people back. So from that perspective, you'd almost have to go…if you were looking at that route, you'd have to go…you may end of having to do the route of the district office of an elementary curriculum coordinator and them move up from there to a bigger position, which shows you've earned your stripes and you know what you're doing.

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Loretta expressed that despite her demonstrated performance, her elementary background would prevent her from accessing the assistant superintendent position without intermediary experience as a director or similar experience in another district. Abigail echoed similar concerns; however, in recognizing her lack of experience in the secondary level, she approached the director of curriculum and instruction position as an opportunity to broaden her range of experience. While the women believed that their elementary teaching and principalship experience was vital to their professional preparation for the superintendency, they acknowledged that hiring bodies prefer secondary experience and/or a broader range of experiences.

Recognizing personal characteristics. The women's discourse included reflections and beliefs about age, gender, and personality as factors that can promote and inhibit access to school and district leadership positions. First and foremost, the women were cognizant of their personal identities outside their professional life. These identities guided their career pathways decisions, but also influenced their perceptions about readiness for school and district leadership positions. In particular, Abigail focused on the breadth of experience that is necessary to be an effective leader:

> And I think that what you really see is the kind of folks that want the role. They want the title, and they're OK with 'I'm the leader in charge and I lead by my title and I'm not concerned with knowing every aspect everything going on around me because I'm just going to delegate that and someone else will take care of it…' I've also seen folks who are… just really young folks. You know, there in their early or late thirties or early forties saying, 'That's it. I want to be the superintendent.' And I value every year of my twenty-eight years to say, 'You know what, I want all different positions. I did all different things. I've taught in different schools. I've taught in… different leadership positions. I really tried to stay on the cutting edge in every way I can, so I didn't jump to quickly.

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For Abigail, chronological age was not as critical a factor for readiness for the superintendency as was the professional experience and maturity that comes with age.

The women reflected on gender as a factor in accessing school and district leadership positions. The women were not gender-bound; rather, each woman expressed how she used her female identity to empower her. When asked about why people may not be attracted to top leadership positions in school district, Rebecca focused on the nature of the positions. She found that many principals thrived in a similar role as did teachers:

> And I think that if you don't, and you like a black and white world, which I think a lot of teachers like a black and world. So, you really look at principals come out of the teacher ranks, what do the teachers like? What time am I supposed to be there? And what am I supposed to bring? You know, they like structure. They like it. That's why a lot of them stay as teachers because they like structure of school.

Rebecca did not differentiate between men's and women's attraction to district leadership. Rather, she believed that aspirations to top positions in district leadership attract individuals who are comfortable being autonomous and self-directed in positions that exist in a continuous state of flux and lack of resolution. When asked specifically about why few women aspire to top leadership position, Rebecca focused on how women interact with one another in leadership roles:

> One of the things that I tried to do here is also, and I think that all women in positions, should try to do, is advocate for one another. And, you know, that's been one of maybe, in sometimes, one of the most disheartening thing has been that some of your, and I don't wanna say toughest critics, because I'm not afraid of criticism, but unwarranted criticism come from other females. I guess that the only other thing that I'd say is I try to build a culture…and that's what you're doing, you're changing the culture; you're doing these things, of women being in roles of advocacy for other women. That we're here to support…to support good work we have her. And, and not to say we don't

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> support males either, but just to say that…that we know that sometimes women will not support other women just because they're women. And that, that it is disheartening…that is very disheartening to me. So that's something that in an effort to try to say, 'How do we build this culture where we as females, we support one another in these things?' Where we don't do this? Where we're a little more cautious even with this 'behind the back' stuff. Or the 'mean girl' stuff…has…has no place if you're gonna be in positions like the principalship, like the directorship, like the superintendency. But, the 'mean girl' stuff's gotta go. And that you'll still have some people, at times, who will try to function in that realm, and that that can be…can be a difficult area too.

Rebecca spoke candidly about her experience with women in educational leadership. Significantly, as women's representation in leadership positions increases, her call to promote advocacy for women, among women, exemplifies how barriers to accessing top positions may also be attributed to detrimental behaviors that promote negative stereotypes about women. While acknowledging a lack of female role models, the women shifted the focus to promoting quality leaders. The emphasis on women supporting one another as leaders and not reifying stereotypical behaviors were ways to increase women's representation in top leadership positions. Ultimately, personality is the crux of leadership aspirations leading to accessing school and district leadership positions. Finding balance between their professional and personal lives was a constant struggle. Along a similar vein, Rebecca described the nature of district leadership as a circuitous flow without a defined end or point of accomplishment. She postulated that many teachers and principals who thrive in a professional environment that have a product or task orientation are not attracted to district leadership positions, such as curriculum or the superintendency, where the environment has a process orientation dictated by managing change, external forces, and response to crises.

Summary

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The two themes that emerged through the case studies of women with elementary principal backgrounds, two women aspiring to the superintendency and one female superintendent, were *developing career pathways* and *accessing school and district leadership positions*. Throughout their narratives, the women identified how their experiences in district-level positions in curriculum promoted their aspirations to pursue the superintendency. These positions served as professional preparation for the superintendency by developing their interpersonal communication skills with multiple constituencies, knowledge of organizational systems, and K-12 instructional leadership. Accessing positions in school and district leadership resulted from the recognition and endorsement of supervisors and mentors who promoted their demonstrated and potential leadership skills. While acknowledging the continuous struggle to balance all facets of leadership in their professional lives, the women expressed self-awareness of their leadership orientation and commitment to student learning. Aspirations to the superintendency developed from their motivation to promote a positive culture of learning as well as their resiliency to confront the internal and external factors that make the superintendency a challenging and demanding position.

Merged Results

The combination of the results from the quantitative and qualitative strands of this study create a broader understanding of how female elementary principals develop aspirations to the superintendency and envision their career pathways in terms of perceived access to positions.

Aspirations to the superintendency. The qualitative results from the case studies addressed how these women developed aspirations to the superintendency. Aspirations to the superintendency emerged from two factors- influences and experience. The first factor involved the external influence of mentors and sponsors and the internal influence of career commitments.

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Mentors encouraged the women to pursue positions in educational administration. By recognizing their leadership aptitude, the mentors' encouragement ignited a desire to purse positions where the women could realize their leadership potential. Sponsors promoted the women's candidacy for positions, thus creating opportunities for women to enter educational administration and advance their careers to top leadership positions. The role of mentors and sponsors had notable effect on women's aspirations to positions in educational administration, particularly the superintendency, consistent with other studies (Howley, Adrianavio, & Perry, 2005; Normore, 2006; Sherman, 2005). Furthermore, these external influences resonated with the women's career commitments in the field of education. Decisions to enter educational administration are situated in women's orientation towards teaching and learning (Bjork, 2000; Young & McLeod, 2001). As elementary principals, their orientation towards teaching and learning led to a desire to broaden their scope of influence over school systems. Their aspirations to the superintendency derive from personal beliefs effective leadership in education.

The second factor in developing aspirations to the superintendency evolved from professional experiences where the women developed into efficacious leaders. The women attributed their success in the principalship as a motivating factor for pursuing district-level positions with a broader scope of influence over the school system. When setting their career goals, the women were attracted to positions that they believed were attainable as well as where they would be successful. These findings are consistent with other studies about developing career aspirations (Young & McLeod, 2001) and setting goals (Deci & Ryan, 1985; McClelland, 1987).

Envisioned career pathways. For the women in both strands, the career pathways the women envision depended upon the school and district leadership positions they perceive as

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accessible to them. Specifically, the quantitative results revealed that the superintendent aspirants planned to follow a career route using district-level leadership positions. Superintendent aspirants indicated that positions in school leadership such as the middle or high school principal position are accessible; however, aspirants' planned career pathways include the district-level director position or assistant superintendent position. The results of the quantitative strand are consistent with other studies about women's career pathways (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, et al., 2007).

To further explore the phenomenon of women's career pathway development, the results of the qualitative strand revealed that women with elementary principal backgrounds identified district-level positions in curriculum as key positions in preparation for the superintendency. Although studies about women's career pathway development (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989; Young & McLeod, 2001) identified district-level positions common positions within women's career pathway, the extent to which these positions were a function of access or of value has not been examined.

Theme	Central Concepts	
	Qualitative Results	**Quantitative Results**
Developing Career Pathways	• Promoted self-efficacy and aspirations • Sponsored by supervisors and mentors • Motivated by career commitments	• Necessary for advancement • Encouraged by peers and supervisors • Interest in the position's functions
Access to District-level Positions	• Developed a K-12 perspective of teaching and learning • Provided preparation for the superintendency • Increased proximity to top leaders	• Perceived as most accessible position • Viewed as a necessary position for career advancement • Used by other aspirants

Figure 3. Comparison of central concepts in themes within the qualitative and quantitative results for superintendent aspirants.

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Figure 2 illustrates how the central concepts of the qualitative results compare to the quantitative results in terms of career development and access to district-level positions. Superintendent aspirants developed their career pathways using positions that promoted efficaciousness in their leadership skills and professional knowledge. Their motivation to pursue positions in school and district leadership stemmed from a desire to gain professional experience through positions that they believe will benefit their career development. However, the case studies revealed that the influence of supervisors and mentors who sponsored their career advancement through recognition and promotion had a stronger bearing on the superintendent aspirants' career development than did the encouragement from peers and supervisors noted by survey aspirants. This suggests that the superintendent aspirants in the case studies augmented the influential people who have affected their career development. Furthermore, the superintendent aspirants in the case studies spoke to their core beliefs about student learning as a source of motivation for pursing the superintendency. The aspirants in the survey focused on their interest in a position as a source of motivation for pursing a position within a career pathway to the superintendency.

In terms of position access, the superintendent aspirants in the case studied shared the value of district-level positions in curriculum for broadening the scope of understanding about instruction and student learning. The superintendent aspirants surveyed acknowledged that district-level positions are a requisite for the superintendency; however, they did not express the potential value of the experience gained through that position for the superintendency.

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Furthermore, the superintendent aspirants in the case studies recognized that district-level positions provided increased access to the echelon of gatekeepers who can promote their career advancement as well as expose them to the functions of central office leadership.

Position	Qualitative	Position	Quantitative
Principal	"you need to be able to explain and really have a true understanding of the curriculum"	Principal	"gain central office experience prior to pursuing the superintendency"
Assistant Superintendent	"begin to see the whole systems piece…how each department , each area's resources have to really fit together"		"stepping stone to the superintendency"
Superintendent	"…how do we maintain that (excitement for school). So how, how do we take that everywhere?"		"ladder of success"
			"logical progression in terms of gaining greater perspective of central office"

Figure 4. Significant statements about selecting district-level leadership positions.

In Figure 3, the significant statements made by the superintendent aspirants in the case studies and open-ended survey responses about the selection of district-level positions revealed the differences in how each group of respondents perceive the value of district-level positions. The statements by the superintendent aspirants in the case studies illustrated how the experience in district-level positions provided insight into organizational systems at a macro level. In contrast, the statements by the superintendent aspirants in the survey demonstrated how district-level positions provided experience for the superintendency, but with minimal elaboration on the nature or the value of the experience.

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The overall results of the study revealed that female aspirants to the superintendency envisioned career pathways using district-level positions. While the aspirants perceived these positions to be more accessible to them than school leadership positions, they believed that district-level positions provide vital professional knowledge and experience that will prepare them for the superintendency. However, their ability to access these positions was not the sole factor for selecting these positions. The superintendent aspirants developed incremental confidence as they became successful in each position along their career pathways. By acknowledging the limitations of their elementary backgrounds, the aspirants viewed district-level positions as an opportunity to fill the gaps in their professional knowledge while embracing their leadership orientation. The motivation to pursue district-level leadership positions resonates with the aspirants' desire to have a positive impact on student learning as well as to achieve their career goals.

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Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how women who were outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency develop aspirations to school and district leadership positions, envision their career pathways, and perceive their ability to access positions in school and district leadership. How women developed aspirations to the superintendency coincides with how they developed their career pathways in educational administration. The implications of this study include a re-envisioning of women's career pathways and professional practices that enhance women's career development.

Career development theory suggests that internal and external factors influence women's career opportunities, decisions, and aspirations (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Studies about women in educational administration (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1989; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Tallerico 2000a, 2000b) have focused on the internal and external barriers that inhibit their career mobility, particularly in accessing the superintendency. Specifically, women have limited access to the traditional career pathway to the superintendency via the high school principalship (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Ortiz, 1982) because of their elementary teaching and administrative experiences (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kamler, 2009; Tallerico, 2000a). Recent studies (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kim & Brunner, 2009) have examined women's career pathways and have revealed that alternative career pathways to the superintendency exist and are more frequently used by female superintendents.

This study reveals that these female aspirants who are outside the traditional career pathway to the superintendency deliberately choose to use an alternative career pathway via

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district-level positions. While their perceptions about the accessibility of school and district leadership positions affect their career routes, these female superintendent aspirants make career choices based upon the value they imbue from the professional experience they would gain in these positions. In this milieu between accessible positions and preferred experience, they enterprise from the opportunity for career advancement and exert agency over their career decisions.

District-level positions provide superintendent aspirants with opportunities to develop their communication skills with broader internal and external constituencies. In district-level positions, female superintendent aspirants learn to balance the various facets of organizational leadership such as school finance, curriculum development, professional development, personnel, and student services. In terms of preparation for the superintendency, these female superintendent aspirants' proximity to critical stakeholders, such as the superintendent and school board members, grants them access to the complex functions involved managing and leading public school districts. Female superintendent aspirants confront unique barriers to accessing the superintendency as a result of their elementary experience (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Tallerico, 2000a). By using district-level positions as a career route that leverages their expertise in the foundations of teaching and learning, these female superintendent aspirants can enhance their credibility and mitigate assumptions about the deficits in their professional background. While deepening their understanding of instruction and curriculum across the K-12 spectrum, these female superintendent aspirants validate their leadership orientations.

These female superintendent aspirants are attracted to positions that conform to their career commitments and that align to their intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. Deci and Ryan (1985) define intrinsic motivation as the willingness to seek and conquer new challenges while

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experiencing autonomy over one's self-authored goals. Bandura (1986, 1995, 1997) defines self-efficacy as the individuals' beliefs about the ability to achieve a goal and the subsequent effort put forth to attain the goal. These female superintendent aspirants are guided by career commitments to improve student learning and advance school systems seek positions where they can exert their influence over these career commitments as opposed to positions that are narrowly defined by a traditional hierarchy.

Women's aspirations to the superintendency develop as they gain confidence in their leadership abilities, experience success in their current positions, embrace their leadership orientations, and reinforce their career commitments. These female superintendent aspirants' career decisions evolve as they develop self-efficacy and achieve their goals. The concomitant of their career decisions and career goals are influenced by the self-efficacy they derive from their professional experience. Furthermore, these female superintendent aspirants' expressed their career goals in terms of being in a position where they have the broadest influence over student learning and achievement and school systems. While becoming a superintendent is a goal, it is not the sole driving force behind their career decisions. Rather, these female superintendent aspirants envision their career pathways as a series of opportunities to fulfill their innate needs and to achieve their career commitments to students as opposed to a sequence of positions that lead to the superintendency.

These female superintendent aspirants' perceptions about access to district-level positions extend beyond resignation to the only career route available to them. They modulate their access to these positions into an opportunity to prepare for a superintendent position where they can actualize their career commitments to student learning and achievement and broaden their influence over school systems. As the authors of their own career pathways, the rationales for

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these women's career-making decisions shift to a broader understanding of how aspiring superintendents envision their career pathways. Furthermore, these women gained experience in multiple areas of educational leadership, particularly in curriculum and instruction, which is often deficient in the traditional career pathway.

Implications

The implications of this study re-envision how researchers of educational administration can explore areas related to career pathway development and educational leadership. First, the corpus of literature around women in educational leadership has focused on the internal and external barriers that have limited their access to superintendency as a gender-based phenomenon. While the women in this study reveal the viability of alternative career pathways to the superintendency, they also elucidate that the driving force behind their career decisions rests in their motivation to achieve their career commitments as educational leaders. Understanding the convolution behind women's career pathways to the superintendency extends beyond gender-specific inquiry. Therefore, an emergent focus in research should examine the impetus for women to advance their careers in educational leadership and the process they use to make career decisions.

The second implication of this study is a shift in focus about women's access to educational leadership positions to include the role of experience within a career pathway to the superintendency, particularly elementary-level experience. These women's perceptions and experiences reveal that diverse experiences in school and district leadership provides a new context for examining preparation for the superintendency. The conventional perceptions about the requisite experience for the superintendency narrowly focused on positional leadership, such as the principalship. The women in this study identified desirable career routes as positions of

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influence, specifically in curriculum and instruction, where they could advance school systems through professional learning, effective communication, and collaborative leadership. Future studies that examine the role of experience at the elementary and secondary levels as well as at the school and district levels in terms of preparation for the superintendency, access to the superintendency, and successful tenures in the superintendency could expand the conventional understanding of the requisite knowledge and experience needed for this position. Furthermore, to gain insight into women's access to the superintendency, the role of professional experience as a context for leadership development should be examined through the lens of career pathway decisions and the rationales of superintendent aspirants. While this study examined the experiences and perceptions of female aspirants in positions outside the typical career pathway to the superintendency, examining male aspirants in similar positions could reify the devolution of hierarchical career pathways in favor of experiential career pathways.

The third implication of this study suggests that these women exerted power over their career pathways by authoring their own career routes through positions that broadened their influence over school systems. Despite barriers and obstacles, they charted a successful course of positions to gain experience and credibility to attain their career goals. These women found a way to minify their professional deficits by demonstrating their strengths as instructional and collaborative leaders. Within the context of this study, power shifted from their nonnative status to power over their aspirations and ensuing career pathways. As future studies examine the career pathways of superintendent aspirants, particularly for those in competition with the status quo, a new narrative may emerge that advances the understanding about accessing the superintendency for female aspirants.

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Professional Practices

The implications of this study on professional practices include the re-visioning of women's career development in educational administration and the development of professional networks for potential female superintendent aspirants. First, women's career pathway development differs from the traditional career pathway to the superintendency. The corpus of literature around women and educational administration identifies the internal and external barriers women confront in aspiring to and pursing school and district leadership positions. Because of their limited access to positions within the traditional career pathway to the superintendency, female superintendent aspirants pursue alternative career routes via district-level leadership positions. However, these positions do not diminish women's professional experience or credibility. Rather, these positions serve as a vehicle to expanding their leadership development through valuable experiences in the management and leadership functions of public school districts. If school boards and search consultants are committed to finding qualified candidates with a breadth of knowledge and experience focused on student learning and achievement, they should consider candidates who have diverse experiences in building-level and district-level leadership.

Second, professional networks can provide female teachers and administrators with opportunities to explore the positions in district-level leadership. Since a majority of the women in the field of education are concentrated at the elementary level, networks should market to potential candidates. Professional organizations can provide opportunities for learning about the role of curriculum and instructional leadership in school districts. District-based programs that offer formal mentorships and apprenticeships allow teacher leaders to develop their leadership skills and confidence in their abilities as well as expose them to the alignment of these positions

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to their existing career commitments. For female aspirants in school and district leadership positions, opportunities to engage in career visioning and job shadowing with female role models who used alternative career pathways can cultivate future leaders. By understanding that women's career development and aspirations to school and district leadership positions evolves as they develop confidence by experiencing success and endorsement, professional networks and programs should adapt to women's proximal zone of readiness to consider positions in school and district leadership that may lead to the superintendency.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument: Female Elementary Principals' Career Pathways

1. What is your age?
    a. 30 or under
    b. 31-35
    c. 36-40
    d. 41-45
    e. 46-50
    f. 51 or over
2. What is your race or ethnicity?
    a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
    b. Asian
    c. Black or African American
    d. Hispanic or Latina
    e. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
    f. White (not Hispanic or Latina)
    g. Other (please specify)
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    a. One master's degree
    b. Two master's degrees
    c. ABD (completed all doctoral requirements except for the dissertation)
    d. Doctoral degree
    e. Other (please specify)
4. Which Pennsylvania teaching and administrative certification(s) do you hold?
    a. Early Childhood
    b. Elementary K-6
    c. K-12 Content Area
    d. K-12 Reading Specialist
    e. Middle School/Subject Area 7-8
    f. Secondary School/Subject Area 7-12
    g. Special Education K-12
    h. District-wide Supervisory Certificate, Curriculum and Instruction
    i. District-wide Supervisory Certificate, Pupil Personnel Services
    j. Elementary Principal K-6
    k. Principal K-12
    l. Secondary Principal 7-12
    m. Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility
    n. Other (please specify)
5. Accessibility to a position means that you believe you have, or foresee, the opportunity to pursue and successfully attain a position. Which position(s) do you believe are accessible to you? Check all that apply.
    a. Assistant/Deputy Superintendent

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b. Business Manager/Chief Financial Officer
c. District-level Director (curriculum or student services)
d. District-level Supervisor (curriculum or student services)
e. Director of Personnel
f. Director of Technology
g. High School Assistant Principal
h. High School Principal
i. Middle School Assistant Principal
j. Middle School Principal
k. Superintendent
l. Other (please specify)

6. Are you considering moving to another type of position in school or district leadership?
   a. Yes
   b. No

   (Only respondents who select "yes" will proceed with the survey.)

7. Which position in school or district leadership do you plan to pursue next in your career?
   a. Assistant/Deputy Superintendent
   b. Business Manager/Chief Financial Officer
   c. District-level Director (curriculum or student services)
   d. District-level Supervisor (curriculum or student services)
   e. Director of Personnel
   f. Director of Technology
   g. High School Assistant Principal
   h. High School Principal
   i. Middle School Assistant Principal
   j. Middle School Principal
   k. Superintendent
   l. Other (please specify)

8. When do you plan to pursue this position? (embedded from question 7)
   a. I am currently pursuing this position
   b. Within the next 1-2 years
   c. Within the next 3-5 years
   d. Within the next 6-10 years

9. Check the reason(s) why you plan to pursue this position (embedded from question 7)?
   a. Know of a potential vacancy
   b. Encouraged to pursue this position by a super-ordinate
   c. Encouraged to pursue this position by a colleague
   d. Believe it is a position you can successfully attain
   e. Have the requisite certification(s)
   f. Have the necessary professional experiences
   g. Believe it will provide valuable experience
   h. Have an interest in the position's functions and areas of responsibility
   i. Believe it is a position that can lead to top district-level leadership positions

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j. Believe that individuals responsible for the hiring of top district-level leadership positions perceive it as a requisite position
k. Other (please specify)

10. Have you ever considered becoming a superintendent at some point in the future?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Uncertain
    (Only respondents who indicate "yes" and "uncertain" will proceed with the survey.)

11. As you envision your career pathway to a superintendent position, in what order would you plan to pursue any of these positions in school and district leadership? Rank the positions (1= first position, 2= next position, etc.) in the order you plan to pursue them.
    a. Assistant/Deputy Superintendent
    b. Business Manager/Chief Financial Officer
    c. District-level Director (curriculum or student services)
    d. District-level Supervisor (curriculum or student services)
    e. Director of Personnel
    f. Director of Technology
    g. High School Assistant Principal
    h. High School Principal
    i. Middle School Assistant Principal
    j. Middle School Principal
    k. Superintendent
    l. Other (please specify)
        i. Please specify: _____

12. Explain why you plan to pursue these positions in this order?

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Appendix B

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM FOR SURVEY

Female Elementary Principals' Perceptions About Access to Potential Career Routes to the Superintendency in Pennsylvania

You are invited to be in a research study of women's aspirations and access to school and district leadership positions, particularly the superintendency. You were selected as a possible participant because you were randomly selected from the population of all public school female elementary principals in Pennsylvania. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Jennifer Polinchock, doctoral candidate in educational leadership, under the direction of Dr. Jill Sperandio, assistant professor in the Graduate School of Education.

The purpose of this study is to explore how female administrators develop aspirations to other positions in school and district leadership, their career pathways in educational administration, and their perceptions about the ability to access these positions.

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to complete a survey about your potential career plans in educational administration and perceptions about the accessibility to positions in school and district leadership. The survey responses will be collected anonymously through Survey Monkey. The link to the survey is included within the email you received with this informed consent notice. In order to activate the survey, we ask that to affirm your understanding of this informed consent notice in this first question of the survey. The survey will be active for two weeks, beginning on the day you received this notification. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, and it includes multiple choice questions, a ranking scale, and an optional open-ended question. Participants will be able to amend responses in the survey up until it is completed.

Participation in this study presents minimal risk to the individual participant's personal or professional reputation or standing in the community and education profession. The individual participant will receive no direct benefit or compensation for her participation in this study; however, the participant's responses will be used to contribute to the knowledge and understanding about women in educational administration and their career pathways.

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The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Lehigh University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Jennifer Polinchock and Jill Sperandio are conducting this study. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them at Lehigh University, 610-758-3392, (email: jis204@lehigh.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact Susan E. Disidore at 610-758-3020 (email: sus5@lehigh.edu) or Troy Boni at 610-758-2985 (email: tdb308@lehigh.edu) of Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study by indicating my affirmation to activate the survey.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

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Appendix C

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

Female Elementary Principals' Perceptions About Access to Potential Career Routes to the Superintendency in Pennsylvania

You are invited to be in a research study of women's aspirations and access to school and district leadership positions, particularly the superintendency. You were selected as a possible participant because mutual colleagues referred you to us based on their knowledge about your professional experiences and career aspirations. This study will include three case studies of two women aspiring to the superintendency and one female superintendent in Pennsylvania. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Jennifer Polinchock, doctoral candidate in educational leadership, under the direction of Dr. Jill Sperandio, associate professor in the Graduate School of Education.

The purpose of this study is to explore how female administrators develop aspirations to other positions in school and district leadership, their career pathways in educational administration, and their perceptions about the ability to access these positions.

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to participate in a case study interview. The case studies will involve a face-to-face interview at a location and time convenient to the participant. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. The topics for the interview include professional experiences in education, developing career aspirations, and career pathways; however, the participant is welcome to respond to any topics that emerge through the course of the interview. The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. Participants will have the opportunity to review the transcripts and amend content as necessary. Participants will be asked to share their resumes and curriculum vitas with the researcher so that she may develop a profile of the case study participants' educational background and professional experiences for study.

Participation in this study presents minimal risk to the individual participant's personal or professional reputation or standing in the community and education profession. The individual participant will receive no direct benefit or compensation for her participation in this study;

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however, the participant's responses will be used to contribute to the knowledge and understanding about women in educational administration and their career pathways.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. The identity of the case study participants will be anonymous, and participants will be provided with pseudonyms in the study. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The audio tape recordings will be maintained solely by the researchers until they are transcribed, and after which the audio tapes will be destroyed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Lehigh University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Jennifer Polinchock and Jill Sperandio are conducting this study. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them at Lehigh University, 610-758-3392, (email: jis204@lehigh.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact Susan E. Disidore at 610-758-3020 (email: sus5@lehigh.edu) or Troy Boni at 610-758-2985 (email: tdb308@lehigh.edu) of Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your record

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study and to be audiotaped.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

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Appendix D

Interview Guide for Case Studies

1. Please describe your professional preparation for and experiences in educational administration.

2. What led you to want to be a superintendent? Were there experiences or people who contributed to these aspirations?

3. When you decided that you would like to pursue the superintendency, how did you begin to plan your career? What professional activities did you consider? Whom did you speak with about your career plans?

4. As you think about your career pathway to the superintendency, which positions did you believe you wanted to pursue? Why did you consider these positions?

5. What has been, or what do you anticipate will be, your ability to access these positions? Are there any factors that inhibit your ability to access to these positions? Are there any factors that support your ability to access these positions?

6. As an aspirant, or superintendent, what would be your advice to women considering positions in school and district leadership and ultimately the superintendency?

7. What do you wish you would have known about your career in educational administration before your began as an elementary principal?

8. One of my areas of inquiry in this study is about women accessing the superintendency from the elementary principalship. In what ways do you believe your career pathway, or intended career pathway, provides you with knowledge and experience that supports for candidacy for a superintendent position?

9. Do you have any additional information that you would like to share with me?

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