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Understanding the Public Education Gender Gap Amid Secondary and Central Office Administrators

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College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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UNDERSTANDING THE PUBLIC EDUCATION GENDER GAP
AMID SECONDARY AND CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS

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Concordia University (Portland)
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in
Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

Despite advances in political movements and societal awareness, there is still an obvious gender discrepancy among U.S. public education secondary school and superintendent positions plaguing our nation. Data indicates that most middle and high school classroom teaching positions are filled by women and yet more campuses and districts are led by men. The literature review uncovered two main categories that lead to this gap: external and internal factors. Societal bias, stereotypes, and hiring practices are among the external causations of this margin. Likewise, work life balance and self-desire to combat old organizational structure impact women internally from assuming advanced leadership positions. Based on this information, and two guiding questions addressing women's challenges and perceptions were explored, and an anonymous survey of current and aspiring leaders from three Houston, Texas area public school districts was administered. The results demonstrate a connection to the two categories discovered through the literature review and key findings were generated to gain more understanding into the gender gap. The study includes direct comments and experiences provided by the study group. More importantly, the study provided viable insight into steps and further study options that can be generated to continue the conversation addressing a more balanced leadership profile.

Keywords: gender, public education, secondary, female leadership

Dedication

This dissertation started out as a dream that was made into a boundless reality because of the support and motivation of my family. When the opportunity was presented to return to school with the prospect to obtain my doctorate degree, I was immediately encouraged without hesitation. Countless Saturdays and evenings were spent in front of a computer or highlighting literature with no complaint issued and encouragement being constantly granted. Logan and Luke, thank you for tolerating late dinners and for allowing me to be a selfish mom in achieving one of my greatest dreams. For Tiffany, this dissertation is, deservedly, half yours. Thank you for being my greatest fan and for always reminding me why I started this journey in the first place. The pride you have for me and my accomplishments is simply magical but you are the true hero of this story.

Mom and Dad, I dedicate this study to you for starting me on this path and for teaching me at such a young age that an education is precious. Lynn, for being the big brother that every girl needs and the person that I still hope to grow up and be like one day. Cheryl, for believing that my “not that kind of a doctor” degree is still exceptional, important and something to be proud of.

I also dedicate this study to the women who chose or will someday elect to become leaders in public education. You are the inspiration and the heart of this piece of work. You balance personal with professional and challenge adversity to make a difference in the lives of children each day, and for this; you are honored and respected.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

Although substantial progress has been made in narrowing the gender gap among leaders in public education, research indicates that there is an underrepresentation of female leaders assuming United States, secondary principal and superintendent positions (Mertz, 2002).

Although the number of women who are completing advanced degrees and obtaining the correct requirements to become secondary principals and superintendents, the number of women that are undertaking the demands of these positions are outweighed by their male colleague. Thus, secondary campuses and district level positions are being filled with more men than women and, thus, a gender gap among public education leaders is created.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

Current statistics and raw data as to the number of female administrators compared to male leaders were challenging to locate. Generally, the data was not separated by grade level or by gender. For example, Superville (2016) wrote that women make up 76% of teachers and 52% of principals but the author compiled all principals, elementary and secondary, all into one percentage. This information off-skews current data due to the assumption that most elementary principals being female. The most recent information was found to be from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and they report 58% of middle school campus principals are male and 42% are female. Further, 70% of high schools are led by a male principal (NCES, 2013). Based on this data, little to no progress has been made in the U.S. since the passage of Title IX enactment decades ago. Men are still assuming the most coveted positions of high school principal and superintendent over women despite the passage of gender discrimination

laws. Further, the NCES state that most high school educators are female with 58% occupying teaching positions (NCES, 2013). At the central administration level, 75% of superintendents are male (Superville, 2016). In short, there are more female teachers educating secondary students and more males leading campuses and districts.

Females who obtain the proper qualifications and who attempt to pursue principal or superintendent positions are often faced with challenges and barriers. The obstructions generally fall into two categories, external and internal impediments. Some examples of external barriers are: societal bias, hiring inequalities, role conflicts, and lack of networking opportunities. Some internal barriers include: work and personal life balancing, lack of motivation, and perceptions of organizational effectiveness.

In response to organizational and accountability pressures, the modern-day leader is being examined and evaluated for effectiveness. Just as the times have changed, workers and professionals are looking to their leaders to evolve with the times. With the influx of a more transformational leadership style, women are being viewed through a different scope due to certain characteristics that are generally attributed to women. Women are often viewed as having nurturing and collaborative leadership styles which is catching the attention of organizations that are looking to improve morale, boost efficacy, and decrease turnover (Eagly, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Certain myths have prevailed that have fostered a culture of possible bias and ineffectiveness and the reported underrepresentation of female, secondary and central office administrators may be a byproduct of these myths and assumptions. Tyree (1995) conducted a substantial literature review and examined management students and ultimately identified two

main ideals: women do not have the required skills or stamina to be a successful leader and teachers, and communities do not adequately support female leaders. These thoughts perpetuate the gender gap and do little to help alleviate the division. Thus, women who indicate a desire to be a principal or a superintendent run the risk of facing barriers and obstacles that their male counterparts may not endure or face as significantly. Those barriers can be categorized as either external or internal and all run the risk of contributing to the underrepresentation of female public education leaders (Tyree, 1995).

Purpose of the Study

The rationale behind this study is to anonymously survey with women who have achieved success as a campus or central office leader and of those who have the desire to be a campus leader at some point in their career. The surveys offer insight into their experiences, beliefs, and perspectives and offer discernment into the possible causations of the existing gender gap that is present in public education leadership. Once insight is gained through an in-depth questionnaire, completed by women, there is a greater understanding of what women experience while being a leader or what prevents them from pursuing advanced positions. After awareness is generated and processed, the potential for growth and understanding come to the forefront. It is then that the gender gap can begin to shrink and students are exposed to the best possible leader despite one's gender.

Research Questions

A literature review on women in public education leadership positions confirmed the existence of an underrepresentation of female secondary and central office administrators in the field of public education. Two research questions were generated to assist this study in gaining more direct understanding into the causes and effects of the educational leadership gender gap:

1. How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level?
2. How do female secondary campus and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

As women become more vocal about workplace bias and salary inequalities, their plight cultivates an awareness that begins to spark conversations and ignite reform. Research concerning female educational leaders and the gender gap that affects them is critical. As the glass ceiling movement begins to become a topic of discussion, research offering insight into women's experiences will only offer sustenance to the dialogue that is being exchanged between individuals and within organizations. It is essential to understand the obstructions that are placed before women so that they can be eradicated, or steps can be made to prevent them from causing substantial interference. In addition, the women that are interviewed could offer their perspectives to other aspiring female leaders and bring awareness as to how they overcame the barriers that they faced.

Definition of Terms

To certify the best possible comprehension of this study, it is critical to define the terms that are frequently used throughout the research study that are essential to the topic.

Administrator. An employee of a school district who is assigned to evaluate individuals and execute leadership responsibilities.

Central Office Administrator. Public school employee who hold positions off campuses at the executive level and typically have "superintendent" or "director" in their title.

Flash Drive. Portable, computer storage device.

Independent School District. A collection of campuses (elementary and secondary) within one geographic location that has a single governing body.

Non-Administrative Positions. Employees who are not classroom teachers but do not evaluate teachers or are required to hold a state principal certification or advanced degree.

Secondary School. The term that categorizes the schooling after elementary school; typically grades 6–12.

Superintendent. The highest executive employee of a school district and is charged with overseeing all campuses, employees and departments.

Underrepresentation. A term that implies a significant or disproportionate ratio among two groups.

Principal. The highest-ranking employee of an individual campus and is responsible for the overall function of the organization.

Public School. A school (K–12) in the United States that is funded with tax dollars and regulated by a state board of education.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

As with any study, there are assumptions, delimitations, and limitations that exist within this study. This study was conducted in a geographically exclusive locale and therefore only represents the findings of a specific geographical location. However, it is assumed that this micro-population served as an accurate representative of the greater Texas and Southwest region of the U.S. Still, it should be noted that this study was conducted via several school districts in and around Houston, Texas. Female leaders of three suburban school districts were chosen as the study population because of their reputation for innovation, academic success, diversity and accolades for academics as well as extracurricular achievements. Also, it is important to note

that the participating school districts bring unique traits that allowed for this survey to be diverse and effective. District A is comprised of more affluent households and experiences less diversity than the other two participating districts. In addition, District A is the only one of the participating school districts that is led by a female superintendent. District B is located the closest to Houston proper and experiences a high minority and lower socio-economic population than the other two districts. In addition, District B is the smallest district of the population sample group. District C is the most rural of the districts and is geographically the furthest away from the metropolitan city. These factors led to these districts being the ideal location to conduct a survey research study that has the possibility of offering positive impact to other school districts in the region and across the country in future years.

Summary

Despite the passage of anti-discrimination laws and the advancement of women into leadership positions at record numbers, the nation continues to suffer from an underrepresentation of female leaders and public education is not immune to that adopted norm. The data that was collected throughout this study tapped into the barricades that inhibit or obstruct women from executing the duties and responsibilities of their positions effectively. Thus, an understanding was presented that created more dialogue and conversation as to why the gap exists and how women perceive themselves as leaders.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Women have played a critical role in the progression, evaluation, and education of America's children for decades. For years, women have devoted themselves to educating the nation's youth and preparing the world for its future. However, they are vastly underrepresented when it comes to secondary and central administration level public education leadership positions (Grogan et al., 2010). Women are qualified and teach students in U.S. classrooms, but often face barriers to career advancement that their male counterparts are often subjected to. In 1909, the Chicago Public School System appointed Ella Flagg Young to the elite position of Superintendent. This appointment made her the first female Superintendent of a school district of that size in the United States. When this female trailblazer assumed her position, she confidently proclaimed that women were "destined to rule the schools of every city" (Hansot & Tyack, 1981, p. 1). Although Flagg Young's proclamation was profound and encouraging, this statement has failed to become a reality.

Female educational leaders have a plethora of effective qualities and are well armed to lead campuses and school districts to acclaimed success, yet the barriers are often too much of a burden for many women to attempt to overcome. Further, when women do overcome the gender gap that exists in U.S. public education organizations, the standards and pressures are often too cumbersome for many of them to withstand. Despite having preferred qualities, societal standards and systemic organizational biases often are deterrents to a woman's decision to pursue and/or continue in leadership. Some of the desired qualities include: capacity for innovation, emotional intelligence, and ethical behaviors. Bailey (2014) wrote that in the current age of more organizations embracing transformational leadership styles, women generally hold

traits such as empathy, collaboration and emotional intelligence that are desirable and out succeed men in form feminine working environments such as social services and education. Goleman (2011) observed that women have a leadership advantage when it comes to the four categories of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, emotion management, empathy, and social skill) and that organizations are realizing the importance of hiring high emotionally intelligent individuals. Although female leaders have not escaped ethical scandals (e.g., Martha Stewart, Marissa Mayer [Grandoni, D., 2013}]), Riggio (2013) noted that women leaders are more sensitive to ethical issues and tend to prefer the implementation of more business ethical codes. The Pew Research Center (PRC) (2015) issued survey results that offer insight into gender and leadership. The PRC reported that the public does not see substantial gender differences when it comes to leadership; surveyed majorities believe men and women are innovative, intelligent, ambitious, honest and decisive equally.

The study topic. There are two major categories of obstacles that women face when attempting to advance to leadership positions in education and which are causes to the current U.S. gender gap; external and internal barriers. External barriers that are discussed and presented in this chapter include: societal bias and stereotypes, hiring inequalities, education mirroring societal gaps, role conflict, educational structure, and networking and mentoring. Internal barriers explored in the literature, including: work/life balance pressures, lack of motivation and perceived organizational effectiveness.

The context. The pipeline to educational leadership has not advanced much in the last few decades. Generally, a principal reaches their position after serving stints as initially a teacher and then as an assistant principal. State to state laws and requirements vary, but most principals had to spend at least three years in the classroom before the state issues an

administrative certification (Bierly & Shy, 2013). Naturally, some principals bypassed the assistant principal role but served in some type of leadership capacity (e.g., coach, specialist, director) prior to assuming a principal position. However, research indicates that many school districts are focusing on principal pipeline improvements and advancements. Bierly and Shy (2013) noted that current stepping stones to principalship fall short of creating guiding standards that properly prepare future leaders because middle management positions offer no real supervisory authority and are not effective.

Although many women's path to leadership is similar, data and research indicate that there are some differences. Skrla et al. (1999) deduced that men are forty times more likely to shadow the traditional principal pipeline and progress from teacher to superintendent than women. Women leaders tend to cluster into elementary schools. Research accounted that 14% of secondary school principals and 38% of elementary school principals are female (Brown & Young, 1997; Pounder, 1988). Also, Pounder (1988) documented female principals are more apt to lead campuses with smaller than one thousand student enrollment size. In addition, women are more apt to progress through the ranks with stops in positions that are more curriculum and instructionally based (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Logan, 2000).

The significance. Women have the skills and characteristics to be effective leaders of today's schools and districts. Women are effective classroom educators and have the leadership qualities needed to lead a campus or district. However, many women do not pursue the opportunity for advancement because the struggles and barriers are just too great. The Wallace Foundation (2015) addressed the principal pipeline or pathway to advanced leadership through their video series in which superintendents explain their path from classroom to their current position. The pipeline to leadership starts in the classroom and if many women fill U.S.

classrooms, then a gender leadership gap should not be prominent. Kennard (2012), the Pew Research Center (2014), and Smith and Smits (1994) identified that to provide a more balanced educational system; women should be encouraged to pursue leadership opportunities and add, not replace, more feminine styles of leadership to balance masculine styles that are already present. Current U.S. school systems are experiencing insurmountable pressures which include increased accountability measures and higher academic achievement. These standards need to be accomplished in a world that is changing through fast evolving technology means and cultural and family dynamic transformations (Ahmed, 2011). The narrowing of the gender gap provides an opportune time for women to confront barriers and for systems to open the door for more balanced leadership systems and styles.

The problem statement. For women who desire to be educational leaders, external and internal barriers challenge them throughout their pursuit of such positions (Ahmed, 2011; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Kiamba, 2008; Stufft & Coyne, 2009). Due to three Houston, Texas area school districts' underrepresentation of secondary principals and superintendent figures (n.d.), this study attempts to implement a survey research study of their female leaders. The exploratory survey research study compiled data in a manner that presents insight into the obstacles that contribute to the educational leadership gap so that current and future female teachers or mid-level administrators can prepare for the challenges. Hopefully after the women's stories have been heard and explained, future women leaders can be better equipped to confront the burden of the current gender gap.

There are essentially two questions that this study seeks to answer: (a) How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level? (b) How do female building and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders?

The organization. This literature review is categorized into several main sections that include: a conceptual framework that argues that women are qualified and yet there is still a gender gap in the United States, and a literature review of the external and internal barriers that contribute to such gap. External and internal barriers are defined and a plethora of sources cite published examples and to support claims and warrants. It is critical to note that specific statistics vary in terms of the number of male to female classroom teachers and male to female leaders. However, the margin of differentiation is not substantial to refute the claim that women leaders are underrepresented in U.S. public educational organizations.

Conceptual Framework

Background. A person who demonstrates effective leadership qualities and abilities are highly valuable assets to any organization. Organizations thrive and flourish with a solid leader at the helm. However, as society and U.S. culture changes and shifts, desired leadership traits and qualities have also evolved. Eagly (2007) reported that new, modern day terms that define good leadership are: future-oriented, foster follower commitment, strong mentors, creativity contributors and encourage the development of plans to achieve goals by empowering subordinates to take ownership of their potential (p. 2). With this leadership transformation occurring within organizations, society would embrace the ideal of a leader that does not necessarily embody a more traditional set of norms. Eagly (2007) wrote that in many ways the Powerful Man Model (male coaches) that has typically been used has been phasing out and employees are more attracted to a mentoring or service oriented leader. If this ideal is true, now is the optimal time for women to actively pursue leadership positions.

Women as qualified leaders. Women have a myriad of qualities that make them desirable and effective leaders. Women and men tend to be different from each other and

execute varying leadership styles based on those distinctions. Coughlin et al. (2005) suggested that women's positive leadership performance is based on biological and inherent traits that make them effective leaders and dedicated hard workers. WoJahn (1985) reiterated by stating women tend to work things out more with their employees, are more into team development and are generally less categorized than men (p. 46). The Pew Research Center (2015) published a report on survey results that reflected a positive majority view on female leaders. The center reported "most Americans find women indistinguishable from men on key leadership traits such as intelligence and capacity for innovation, with many saying they're stronger than men in terms of being compassionate and organized leaders" (p. 1). Also, the Pew Research Center poll respondents indicated that they perceived women to have an advantage over men when it comes to being authentic and virtuous (p. 3). In regards to the public education sector specifically, Zheng (1996) discovered through research that public-school teachers, in fact, feel that female principals are more effective leaders than their male counterparts and colleagues. Adler et al. (1993) concluded that there is no difference or less effectiveness between the two genders. Whitaker and Lane (1990) concluded that women have a greater concern for instruction, students' academic performance ranked higher when led by a woman and female principals were more concerned with helping challenging students. Konner (2016) wrote in his novel the evolution of women and how their leadership has been stifled and how balanced the world would be if society put an end to male supremacy. In conclusion, women who are seeking secondary educational leadership positions are equally qualified and have desirable leadership traits and characteristics than their male counterparts (Whitaker & Lane, 1990).

The gender gap. Women are qualified, capable and even desired leaders. Despite many efforts to level the leadership playing field, women are still on an uneven playing field when it

comes to obtaining leadership positions in the United States. Women face barriers and challenges when it comes to leading organizations and thus, there is a prominent gender gap that exists in most organizational systems. Player (2013) cited a shift in family dynamics and the passage of gender legislation have made strides to narrow the gender gap in organizational positions, but the largest margin of inequality still exists in the role of leadership (p. 1). Women make up 50.8% of the U.S. population and achieve nearly 60% of undergraduate and graduate degrees that are awarded. Women make up 47% of the labor force and almost 60% of the college-educated labor force (Warner, 2014). Despite being accountable for 52% of the professional working force in the United States, there is a substantial underrepresentation when it comes to leadership. Warner noted that only 14.6% of executive officer positions and less than 9% of the top wage earners are women. Even though women make up close to 80% of the health care and social assistance labor force, less than 13% serve as board directors. To date, a woman does not hold a single health care or social director CEO position. More disturbing, Warner notes that although the gender gap may be a universal condition, the United States ranks 60th in terms of women's political liberation on the Gender Gap Index (Warner, 2014).

Unfortunately, U.S. public education suffers from the same gender leadership misalignment as the rest of the nation. Although public education mirrors the same disparities as the corporate world, the fact that women make up 76% of America's teaching force and only 20.5% of middle school principals is of concern (Hudson & Rea, 1996, p. 2). Within public education organizations, high school principals and superintendents are deemed as being the most esteemed leaders. Researchers have discovered that U.S. high schools and superintendent positions are the positions where the most gross underrepresentation is prominent (Hudson & Rea, 1996; Mouton, 2011).

It is hard to dispute the ideal that there is a looming gender gap between male and female leaders in America. Although the last few decades have made significant strides to narrow the leadership gender gap, the working world still has miles to go in overcoming the challenges and barriers that result in gender perforation. Sands and Kolb (2001) wrote that women occupy 50% of managerial and specialized professional positions that are held in organizations. Naturally, that is progress and should be welcomed, embraced and celebrated. However, as Ahmed (2011) stated that despite positive trends indicating gender gap closure progress, since the ratification of Title XI and the Women’s Educational Equity Act in the 1970s, public education has not experienced the improvements as the pioneers of the laws had hoped (p. 1).

To conclude, although women are advancing and progressing, the public education sector is experiencing a lag in the narrowing of the leadership gender gap. Porat (1991) reiterated, “Female administrators in education are still small in number. North American culture remains largely male-oriented, and male principals continue to be the norm” (p. 412). The Department of Professional Employees (2014) claimed data indicated that sex more than any other factor such as age, experience or background effect the position a woman will assume despite the large numbers of females holding teaching positions.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

Women in the United States must overcome obstacles and barriers in their pursuit of leadership positions in public education. Although many women spend their days teaching in classrooms, they are vastly underrepresented in the principal or superintendent offices (Dowell & Larwin, 2013; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 201; Katz, 2008). Some of the barriers that a woman faces are rooted in external challenges that they have no control of. In turn, they are left to choose to attempt to overcome the barrier or try to completely knock it down and transform the system

standing in their way. External challenges are impactful because they represent organizational systems and structures that limit women's opportunities and impact their professional performance. School systems across the U.S. are built on traditional structures and are rather similar across the country and resistant to change (Holzman, 1993). Therefore, the women that choose to advance are confronting on a deep-rooted system that presents challenges and barriers to whomever attempts to transform it.

The barriers that women face within themselves, internal barriers, are equally as cumbersome and troubling. Women often must make choices that affect their families and personal lives if they decide they want to advance to higher career platforms. Although women are choosing to undergo the tribulations of obtaining advanced degrees, in proportion to men, many are still choosing to receive the education but not aspire to the positions of leadership that they qualify for (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Gupton & Slick, 1996). Motivation is also a critical obstacle that women are battling. Women are left to consider if the effort will be worth the pressures or if they will be given an opportunity to prove themselves. These internal conversations affect women's choice to pursue administrative positions.

Research has indicated that there is an underrepresentation of female public education administrators in the United States (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Dowell & Larwin, 2013). Although state to state, region to region, rural to metropolitan and socio-economic data rates vary, there is substantial data to support the claim that there is a prominent gender gap among educational leaders in America. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2013) affirmed this claim through the previously referenced statistics that can be found in Chapter 1. If nearly 76 % of educators are female, then there is an obvious under representation among secondary and higher level public school leadership positions (Grogan et al., 2010). More revealing,

Grogan et al. claimed that approximately half of all public education principals (elementary and secondary combined) are female and yet only 28% of secondary principals are women. These numbers establish a discrepancy between elementary and secondary leaders based on gender (Grogan et al., 2010). Ahmed (2011) composed that the barriers that women have confronted while pursuing upward, leadership positions fall into two categories: external and internal (p. 2).

External Barriers

There is a plethora of research that indicates that there are numerous external barriers that prevent, challenge or discourage women from obtaining or seeking leadership positions (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Shakeshaft, 1989; Taylor, 1995). These external barriers can be assumed to have a critical impact on the established leadership gap among secondary and higher level leadership positions in US public education organizations. External barriers for the sake of this gender study examination are defined as something in one's environment or society that prevents one from reaching a goal.

Societal bias and stereotypes. Research indicates that there is a bias or discrimination on the United States society that contributes to the gender gap that exists among leaders in the public education sector (Coughlin, 2005; Eagly, 2007; Wingard & Hollihan, 2007). Eagly (2007) wrote:

In the United States, women are increasingly praised for having excellent skills for leadership and, in fact, women, more than men, manifest leadership styles associated with effective performance as leaders. Nevertheless, more people prefer male than female bosses, and it more difficult for women than men to become leaders and to succeed in male-dominated leadership roles. (p. 1)

Eagly affirmed the societal bias that exists for women seeking leadership positions. Most workplace bias is generated from an overall societal feeling or impression of gender roles (Eagly, 2007). Coughlin et al. (2007) highlighted Helen Fisher, renowned biological anthropologist and Senior Research Fellow at the Kinsey Institute, recalled, that bias may derive from biological and cultural differences (e.g., skills and abilities) that have been inherent and ingrained in our thinking for centuries and can be contributed to biological rendering. This highlights the warrant that societal bias and gender stereotypes run deep and as society evolves as separate genders, a different frame of mind and thought process enter as we biologically advance and respond to our surroundings. Biases exist because they are rooted in past experiences and circumstances. However, gender trait acceptances are evolving, as is our professional world, but not at a rate to narrow the existing leadership gender gap (Acker, 2006, p. 447).

Often, women face gender-related stereotypes that affect their pursuit of leadership positions. Women are typically described as: emotional, motherly, and nurturing (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010; Schmuck, 1975). Rarely, are these traits considered to be desirable qualities found in a leader. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2010) claimed that connecting leadership to mothering risks marginalizing women not for being real leaders but merely caretakers of young children (p. 84). However, Anderson wrote that women are also labeled as being shared decision makers, team builders and interconnected which are traits that are desired in today's educational reform efforts (1993).

Hiring inequalities. Although the U.S. has made strides and efforts to eliminate hiring discrimination practices, there is evidence to support that unequal hiring practices are still currently executed by organizations. Acker (2006) explained that women were subjected to the

lack of promotion based on discriminatory practices and promotional policies. In addition, Meyer (2014) published a report from the American School Superintendent Association (ASSA), which demonstrated significant disparities between the maximum base salaries of male and female public education leaders. Again, although legislation and policies have attempted to resolve hiring discrimination, case studies and personal accounts deem that hiring practices in public educational organizations still contribute to the current gender gap. Dunlap and Schmuck (1994), Ferguson (1984), and Gupton and Slick (1996) devoted their publications to women's stories and personal experiences to shed light on the lingering gender gap. Although the authors' writings are anecdotal, they expose the covert hiring and promotional practices that exist in educational leadership.

The financial compensation gap is another inequality that leads to a gender gap. Pew Research Center (2015) reported that survey results indicate that women who have full time careers and professions generally earn 77% of what their male counterparts earn. That means that women would have to work an additional 60 days a year to match the pay of male peers. Family interruptions and time taken off from work to care for children or family is a possible explanation for the gap. Additionally, the AASA reported in 2014 that although male and female superintendents start off making approximately the same salary, men max out at a higher salary than women (Meyer, 2014). This is probably a result of men negotiating salaries more with school boards than their female counterparts.

Education mirrors society's gaps. Education does not appear to be the only profession that faces the burden and challenges of gender gaps. In short, education mirrors the gender leader inequalities that already exist in the U.S. Schmuck (1975) wrote that the underrepresentation of female school leadership is not a unique phenomenon because most of

American is run by men. America has been confronting the societal gender gap for nearly half a century since Schmuck's publication. Estler (1975) first presented the "Discrimination Model" in 1975 to acknowledge and attempt to explain the root cause of women's leadership positions. Because of Estler's studies, Title XI and the Equal Pay Act were passed and have attempted to narrow the margin. However, research indicates that many of these practices still occur while be it rather overtly. Kurtulus and Tomaskovic-Devey (2012) reported the results from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission study on female top level management influences versus lower-level positions in U.S. organizations. The authors determined that women in top leadership positions diminished over time which in turn suggested that women generally play more of a transitory role in their professional advancement (Kurtulus & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012).

Although progress has been made, Warner (2014) discovered that despite the advances in pay gaps and "occupational segregation" women were still underrepresented in managerial positions. Current debates and discussions about Yahoo's CEO, Marissa Mayer and her work from home controversies, Jennifer Lawrence pursuit of equal pay for actors and Hillary Clinton running for President of the United States are all glaring arrows that point to a modern day and current existence of workplace bias and discrimination (Grandoni, 2013). The interesting aspect of education mirroring society is that women dominate the first steps of the educational career ladder by being the classroom teachers (Warner, 2014). However, Schmuck (1975) proclaimed that society believes that women are the better managers of students and men are better managers of teachers. As Warner (2014) wrote, the lower level positions are, for most professions, equally divided out. Conversely, males hold more managerial and leadership positions even if women are presented at the lower stages of the progressive career ladder (Warner, 2014).

Role conflict. Women face role challenges that often ignite added pressures and burdens that men do not necessarily confront. Sanchez and Thornton (2011) explained that women that hold or desire administrative roles experience what the authors refer to as “role conflict.” This ideal refers to certain organizational logistics or organizational styles and patterns that can deter one from fulfilling the position’s professional requirements effectively. Such logistics include time commitment and level of energy needed to execute duties properly (Sanchez & Thornton, 2011).

Educational structure. Each organization has structure, layers, and levels that make them functional; educational systems are no different. Witmer (2006) proclaimed that “Power, authority, and influence are inherent in a hierarchal structure and are important in its operation” (p. 76). Within hierarchies come authority and leaders in those positions generally have a great sense of power. Traditionally, principals and superintendents are considered the highest hierarchal positions in educational settings and therefore are authorized with the most amount of authority within the organizational structure. The ways in which this phenomenon affects women are varied. The traditional career movement pattern in educational administration is generally from teacher to principal to superintendent. Possible stages of career movement could be assignments as director, specialist, or assistant superintendent (Shakeshaft, 1989). If this is the adopted mode of advancement, then women are automatically at a disadvantage. Elementary campuses employ many female principals and yet superintendents rarely come from an elementary teaching or leadership background. Since there is a limitation of the number of female secondary principals, the pool for school boards to hire from is shallower. Further, a study conducted by Brunner and Grogan (2007) suggested that 40% of women who hold positions in central office administration have plans or desires to achieve the position of

superintendent. Seventy four percent of the authors' sample had either achieved or were taking steps toward obtaining their superintendent certification (Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

Bush (2003) presented that educational organizations are constructed based on an androcentric model of beliefs. Androcentricity is a belief that the current world is shaped from a male perspective because males are the ones who initially created the organizational structure of public education. This type of perspective leads to discrimination and does not provide an equal working environment for women. Further, Bush (2003) claimed that educational administration is based on control and hierarchy and does not consider curriculum expertise and values which are traits attributed to female educators.

Networking and mentors. Due to the lack of females in educational management positions, the resources in which aspiring women can connect, network, and designate mentors is challenging. The absence of role models who can provide encouragement, advice, and professional guidance is limited and therefore contributes to the gender gap that exists in public educational leadership. Hart (1995) conducted a study that addressed women's formal socialization and reported that none of the surveyed participants reported receiving the benefits that come from career socialization.

Women who desire to become educational leaders benefit from organizational norms and influence that affect the structure in which they wish to lead. Networking allows for professional relationships to be constructed and collaboration to be enhanced. In addition, networking allows for interpersonal relationships to be established, which assist in personal pedagogies or educational beliefs being developed and cultivated. Gupton and Rosairo (1998) postulated that women need professional settings in which they can create and improve on their talents that prepare them for assuming leadership roles. Since more men function as educational leaders

than women, the opportunity for them to gather and network is critical to closing the existing gender gap and opening the door for more female opportunities.

Internal Barriers

In contrast to the external barriers that have a direct effect on the establishment of the gender gap that exists among secondary and higher level administration leaders, there are also internal barriers to positional obtainment. For sake of this study, internal barriers are defined as something within one's personality, character make-up or personal life that prevents them from reaching their goals. Internal barriers are generally more individual and personal to one's specific experiences or circumstances.

Work and life balance pressures. Per researchers, Dana and Bourisaw (2006), women are widely considered to be the more nurturing sex; with nurture comes child and family responsibilities. Per societal norms, women are often the caretakers of their children, aging parents and spouses. Thus, women who seek or desire position advancement or leadership opportunities often must choose between work aspirations and life situations. Therefore, work and life balance have a significant effect on women pursuing and accepting career advancing opportunities (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) further noted that many women originally chose education because the school calendar was more family-friendly than a lot of other career choices; parents would not have to pay for day care during the summer months and holidays and travel opportunities existed. However, the higher one advances up the educational career ladder, the less time is available on their calendars. Even when women choose to pursue leadership positions, they often experience challenges that men do not traditionally endure (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Pirouznia (2011) argued that women struggle to balance the weights of both leadership position responsibilities and caretaking, and often

succumb to depression or job performance requirements. Women are challenged by both home and work responsibilities and one often suffers as a result (Pirouznia, 2011).

Further, Weber et al. (1991) argued that most public education leadership positions such as principal and superintendent require advanced degrees. Often, the burden of time and financial constraints negatively impact a woman's decision to pursue career ladder advancement. Going back to college to obtain a higher degree is not feasible for many female educators because they have children to raise or the cost causes too much of a stress on family budgets. In addition, many married women or women with children cannot afford to take a sabbatical from teaching to reenroll in school to obtain a Master's or Doctoral degree. In the education sector, advanced degrees are generally required and the leadership option diminishes. The recent influx of online learning and degree programs should positively impact women pursuing degrees (Haynie, 2015). However, even though women would learn at home, the responsibilities are still a challenge and barrier. Weber et al. (1991) pointedly described women as being twice a victim because of the conflict that exists between professional and parental careers.

Lack of motivation. Lack of teacher motivation to pursue advanced positions goes hand in hand with many of the previously mentioned external factors and the internal factor of work/life balance. Based on the stereotypes, gender bias and home life pressures, many women are not motivated to pursue educational administrative positions. Gerdes (2003) studied women's stress levels and the source of those stressors of women who occupy and seek educational administrative roles. The author also reported that women expressed cultural and social expectations of them as the leading cause of their high stress levels (Gerdes, 2003).

If data suggests that most of society wants a male leader despite the positive attributes that women bring to their campuses and districts, then the lack of motivation to seek those

leadership positions is understandable. The stress and challenges of leadership positions can cause one to question pursuing a position if they are not wanted or desired for it in the first place. In contrast, individuals are unique and each person offers their own style of leadership based on their beliefs, education, and experiences. However, the establishments of bias and societal stressors add to the already existing challenges and responsibilities that leaders endure. Finally, many women currently occupy assistant principal positions or mid-level roles such as curriculum coordinators, assistant superintendent, director, etc. Women may be content in these positions and do not want to add to their already long list of duties and responsibilities (Gerdes, 2003).

Perceived organizational effectiveness. How women perceive themselves and how confident they feel in their leadership abilities can affect a woman's decision to pursue certain positions. Kennard (2012) published a study conducted by Talent Innovations, a human resources and hiring organization, in which participants were asked to rate their performance and then gender performance. Kennard's findings demonstrated that men were more likely to rate other men higher than their female counterparts in such areas as, grasping complexities, and innovation (2012). More interesting, Kennard asserted that women were more likely to give themselves lower scores in the areas that men perceived them as being less effective in. In short, perception of their effectiveness is a magnified reflection of men's views of them (Kennard, 2012).

A challenge to studying leadership gaps is that historically, studies have used masculine terms (authoritative, task oriented, and confident) and behaviors to describe effective leadership (Antonaros, 2010). Thus, many women attempt to assume more male associated characteristics rather than be true to themselves. Often, these results in women not being perceived as genuine or not being as effective in their leadership ranks. Although male dominated traits assisted men

in obtaining and excelling in leadership positions, many women are now able to benefit from the rise in more transformational leadership styles. In short, past studies have not demonstrated favorable female leadership qualities. However, the emergence of more transformational attributes (friendly, kind, and considerate), women have more opportunities to excel as leaders (Antonaros, 2010).

Review of Methodological Issues

Background. Gender gap concerns, sex discrimination and the underrepresentation of women have been at the forefront of discussions and debate for decades. The writing and passage of Title IX, the amendment passed in 1972 that protects people in public educational programs from discrimination that receive Federal financial assistance, demonstrates there has been a need for protection for almost 45 years. The passage of Title IX was a direct result of documented discrimination, data and research studies. Despite the efforts of Federal protection, subsequent studies conducted in the years since acknowledge that there is still a need for analysis and mark a demand for ongoing attention and research based on lingering issues (Title IX and Sex Discrimination, 2015).

Methodological approaches. Current and up-to-date methodological approaches have been located and studied. Most approaches to the topic of gender gaps in society and education historically have been of the quantitative, descriptive style (Henderson, 1997; Mertz, 2006; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014; Pew Research Center, 2013, 2015), or of the case study and interview based (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Gupton & Slick, 1996) approaches. Both methods are effective and have critical benefits to studying the educational gender gap. Multiple forms of data collection methods provide information that establish the claim that there is a discrepancy between male and female administrators. However, the best

methodological approach to this study is a survey research method. Without survey research studies, the existence of a gender gap or female underrepresentation simply becomes hearsay. Once the data determine that a gap exists, survey research methods offer insight into the causes and manner in which to approach promotion and leadership. Small sample survey research and data results (Pew Research Center, 2013, 2015) have been especially insightful and informative to opinions and experiences of female perspectives. Survey research studies must be executed with ethical standards, proper design and meet the needs of the study without bias or objectivity (Pew Research Center, 2013, 2015) to be the most effective.

In the years before Title IX (the anti-discrimination for public school schools mandate) was passed in 1972 and the subsequent years, there was a specific need to assemble data that reflected the current numbers and trends. The purpose of the data immediately following the passage of Title IX was to simply count the numbers of male and female leaders and then compare it with the previous number recorded. However, as females have made progress since Title IX's granted protection, the purpose of more recent studies has been to measure progress and the nature and extent of it (Mertz, 2002). Consequently, survey research approaches to studying gender gaps in public education have become the most prominent and impactful methodological means to gathering data in recent years (Warner, 2014). Insight into women's experiences and choices offer the most impactful data collections sources because numbers just demonstrate that a gap is evident; opinions and reflections of individuals allow for a researcher to draw conclusions based on common responses (Mertz, 2002).

Strengths. Methodological approaches each have their own strengths and weaknesses. Anonymous surveys allow for researchers to have direct understanding into one's thoughts processes and experiences. They also allow for readers to experience empathy and sympathy

into a person's understandings and make their stories relatable and can evoke compassion. A strong survey research study with a meaningful sample satisfy the purpose of identifying the challenges that dissuade a woman from becoming a leader. Additionally, this study approach can provide information to women who may desire to pursue upward career movement later in their career.

A survey research study allows for the reader to receive a descriptive reasoning to an ideal or concept. The data that is demonstrated is put into words rather than mere speculation or assumption. Participant perspective is an important aspect when a researcher is trying to make sense of a concept or matter (Henderson, 1997). Survey research survey responses also allow for a lot of information to be assembled and unbiased data to be generated anonymously. If a participant does not feel comfortable answering the question being asked, they could abstain and not submit an answer for the question. This method of research allows for authentic answer responses and the opportunity for a more complete set of data to be accrued. Open ended survey responses provide objectivity and depth which is critical when trying to determine the causes of a systemic educational gap among leaders (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Weaknesses. As with strengths to the methodological information, there are also weaknesses that were located. One such weakness is there is a lack of reliable and nationwide specific figure or informational points in regards to the numbers of male and female administrators and leaders. Although numerous studies have produced specific percentages of male to female administrator ratios, the numbers fluctuate based on the study's demographics and the geographical locations in which the study was conducted (Criswell & Betz, 1995; Natale, 1992; Sands & Kolb, 2001; Wolverton, 1999). In other words, most gender gap studies have been centralized studies in which a region or county has been observed rather than spanning the

continental United States. However, despite the discrepancies, data still reveals that there is substantial cavity between the number of female educational leaders and their male professional equivalents regardless of location.

An additional weakness to survey research method is the amount of time that needs to be devoted to ensuring that accuracy, coding, and fidelity are utilized throughout the study. Properly surveying and gaining valuable insight into one's professional experiences can be lengthy when executed effectively. Multiple surveying procedural steps (designing an unbiased survey, recruiting viable and willing participants and then analyzing the results) can offer valuable insight but the process can be lengthy when conducted successfully. In addition, because of the time constraints that are needed for the professionals to properly offer insight, the question sample size cannot be overwhelming. In other words, the researcher should not design a survey that is too time-consuming for participants to complete within a reasonable amount of time.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Fortunately, the literature review provided consistent and similar information in regards to the gender gap in education. Just as the women's advancement to leadership positions have evolved and grown so has the research surrounding and addressing the gap. When the topic of women being underrepresented in leadership positions first became a matter of discussion, research was difficult to decipher; Jones (1990) discovered that most articles published did not designate or establish gender when addressing educational leadership or were conducted by male researchers and written from their point of view. However, Murphy et al. (2007) contended that although race is generally linked to gender articles, research attention is focused on gender only discrepancies rather than gender/race issues.

Thus, trends are easier to track, causations are more manageable and factors are more apt to be addressed. Current trends indicate that women in leadership positions are certainly on the rise (Ahmed, 2011; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Growe & Montgomery, 2002; Mullen, 2009). Additionally, research has synthesized into two major categories of study: personal and organizational barriers, and testimonial hindrances to top level positional obtainment.

Hindrances and organizational barriers. Several researchers have devoted their studies to the topic of female personal and organizational barriers that prevent them from pursuing or obtaining top leadership positions in education (Henry, 2010; Jones & Palmer, 2011; Pirouzina, 2011; Stufft & Coyne, 2009). What researchers were able to discover are that many women experience attempting to pursue educational promotions are challenged by internal and external barriers. Internal barricades can be addressed by individual change whereas external concerns mandate organizational change (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Many of the external barriers are caused by perceptions that males are better leaders (Mertz, 2000), organizational desires for a tough male leader (Lougheed, 2000) and social expectations that women are responsible for child rearing and home priorities (Sands, 2001).

In conjunction to external barriers, women also face internal struggles that impact their decisions to seek leadership positions. Researchers determined common themes of women's struggles by interviewing and obtaining insight into individual women's experiences. Women reported poor performance perception based on gender bias, lack of mentoring and support systems, and overt beliefs that women are ineffective campus or district leaders (Gramke, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Katz, 2008).

Through studies, researchers have determined and identified hindrances to promotion within U.S. public school systems (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Kariuki, 2008; Mullen, 2009).

Much of the literature reviewed for the present study notes the barriers to female leader advancement through the stories and strategies shared by women who have overcome the barriers and obstacles (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Gupton & Slick, 1996). From these studies, women demonstrated an overall opinion that gender, more than any other factor, affected their path to leadership. However, it is worth noting that the literature review unveiled stories from women who had already attained success in obtaining a management position.

Critique of Previous Research

Research discovered during the literature review process proved to be abundant and credible. Survey research studies proved to support the claim that there are fewer female leaders at the secondary and central administrative levels of public education in the U.S. (Brunner, 2005; Mertz, 2002; Pew Research Center, 2013; Zheng, 1999). Although most studies were regionally executed, common trends were certainly noticed; internal and external barriers and hindrances. For example, Mouton (2011) reported the claims of the gender gap among secondary principals in Texas, Hudson and Rea (1996) issued results of teachers' attitudes toward male and female leaders within the Kansas City metropolitan area, and Henderson (1997) disclosed the experiences and perspectives of female principals in East Tennessee. Although each of the studies was conducted regionally, the results had common threads that proved consistent among each other (e.g., bias, stereotypes, work and life balance, overt hiring practices, and lack of mentoring or support).

The data collected throughout the literature review process proved to be believable and worthy of trust because most of the claims came as a result of survey responses. A person's word and perceptions in regards to a subject is valuable and critical to understanding the guiding

research questions of the study. Skrla et al. (2000) claimed that women often feel pressure to remain silent when presenting their feelings and/or thoughts about gender perceptions because they are intimidated and did not feel comfortable addressing negative observations toward them. Personal responses and survey's help curb the need to be silent and provide a platform of openness and a safe place to express one's thoughts and experiences. Trust, topic belief, and unbiased questioning aid in obtaining accurate insight and data (Ahmed, 2011).

Summary

Female workers who wish to seek advancement opportunities experience hurdles and roadblocks that men do not necessarily face. Women educators are no different than other professional females in their struggles toward opportunity. Some of those impediments are a result of external barriers and societal norms and stereotyping. Studies conducted reveal such external barriers to advancement include: societal bias, stereotyping, hiring inequalities, a societal gender gap, role conflicts, educational structures, and networking and mentoring (Ahmed, 2011; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Growe & Montgomery, 1999).

Internal barriers were also shown to impact women's advancement chances. Women report that they often struggle with trying to balance being an educational leader and a mother or even greater is society's opinion that women cannot steady both roles. The literature review indicated that the most overwhelming internal barriers are: work and life balance and a lack of motivation (Jones & Palmer, 2011; Kiamba, 2008; Pirouznia, 2011; Stufft & Coyne, 2009). Based on the completed and conducted literature reviews, which presents external and internal causations and the challenges women might experience in their decision to pursue leadership positions and the experiences of women who have overcame the barriers. There is significant sense that an investigation of several Texas school districts' aspiring and current female and

would produce socially impactful findings. Therefore, it is claimed that the literature review has afforded enough support to pursue a research study to answer the following queries: (a) How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level? (b) How do female building and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders?

Due to the information and insight that was discovered through the literature review, further conversations and data collection can open greater dialogue to the challenges that women face when pursuing critical leadership positions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

While the literature review demonstrated that there is research and information addressing the gender gap and career barriers that exist in public education (Ahed, 2011; Dowell & Larwin, 2013; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Kiamba, 2008; Stufft & Coyne, 2009), much of the published studies utilized a method designed to support the authors' theories. This study was conducted using a research study approach with a multifaceted perspective to educational leadership gender gaps. This explanatory study design allowed for data to be reflected upon through a survey research approach permitted for critical and personal input through a series of online, anonymous survey questions. Also, this study aided in connecting ideas to facilitate in the understanding of the cause and effect relationship of female leadership and to gain an understanding as to why the gender gap occurs. This chapter explains the rationale and execution of the study as well as how the data was collected and analyzed.

Research Questions

1. How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level?
2. How do female building and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders?

Purpose and Design of the Study

The intention of this study was to explore the barriers and facilitators that women experience when pursuing or contemplating career advancement in several Texas public school districts. This survey research study was important because it investigated women in leadership occupying top-level, entry-level and non-administrative positions within three Houston

suburban, public educational organizations. The researcher hopes that this study brings awareness to the struggles of women leaders, reduced negative perceptions of female leaders and established a collaborative culture of learning for the students of the public-school districts; an unbiased atmosphere can only benefit children and improve teacher efficacy. In addition, this study was conducted from survey research approach that included current data in regards to current statistics of administrators and leaders. To obtain the best possible insight into the experiences and perceptions of female leadership in and around the Houston area, this study attempted to answer the previously mentioned, guiding research questions.

An exploratory, questionnaire method was adopted to execute this study because it was the most effective means of answering the “why” of gender under representation (Yin, 2003). This method was also chosen because a questionnaire approach allows for the participant to effectively provide insight, opinions and experiences without the fear of taking too much of a personal risk. This method also allowed for greater participation and an enhanced understanding of the challenges and barriers that women leaders have endured or may undergo in the future (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It is essential to conduct the study in this manner because of the sensitivity and the personal individuality that the topic addresses. Each woman who has risen through the ranks to be an administrator has a story to tell, positively or negatively, and insight to share and a survey research study method was determined to be the most effective way to achieve this information.

Research Population and Sampling Method

The target population of this study consisted of approximately 30 public school educators who are currently qualified based on the state of Texas’ requirements to be an administrator. The specific target group included current high level, campus, secondary administrators as well

as mid-level assistant principals. In addition, district level leaders such as Associate Superintendents and Curriculum and Instruction professionals were included in the sample population. Finally, the study population contained individuals who have completed the requirements to be a certified Texas administrator or principal but have yet to be promoted to those specific leadership positions. The rationale behind this practice was directly related to the examination and investigative questions and that many queries are based on participant perspective and personal experiences.

Instrumentation

To effectively execute this study and offer it in a survey research format, current administrator data was collected and analyzed. The researcher analyzed each secondary campus within the three sample school districts and presents the current data that provide a current and accurate representation of female leaders within three geographically connected school districts. The district administrator information was compared to the gender demographics of the secondary educators that the district employs.

An effective instrumentation plan is a critical tool to utilize prior to conducting a study. The four questions that were used to design an instrumentation plan were: how to gather data, when to gather data, where to gather data, and how to analyze the received data (Blankenship, 2010). The data was gathered in an anonymous questionnaire manner. It was critical that the study group participated in a blind survey so that professional risk was eliminated as much as possible. A blind study practice assisted in removing possible dangers from the participants and organizations such as exposure to potential discrimination in hiring practices or professional perceptions based on their responses. Study participants were asked a series of questions that were generated based on the two guiding research questions and administered via the online

survey software, Qualtrics. This manner allowed the researcher to ask questions that were insightful and critical to the understanding of the two guiding questions. The questionnaire was emailed to qualified participants and a manageable and reasonable amount of time was utilized to provide ample amount of completion time to the study group. The data was collected in a setting where the participant deemed to be the most comfortable to them. Once the data collection was completed and assembled, the researcher analyzed and amassed the results based on trends and coinciding responses. It is critical to note that participants were asked to provide consent through Qualtrics by clicking on the link to the survey but prior to beginning it and supplying electronic permission.

Data Collection

Information was acquired once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and participating school districts approved the research and the information was kept until the completion of the researcher's graduate studies and for the duration of three years post publishing. All participants partook in the same protocol and were asked the same questions. Participants were provided with background study information and the study's purpose prior to being offered the invitation to participate in the study. Also, the participants were asked to agree to participate electronically by clicking "I agree" prior to starting the questionnaire. In addition, participants were informed of the risks that they could face by participating in the study. Such risks included: someone determining their identity based on the information that they provide and the data stored on the encrypted flash drive being lost, stolen or revealed. The questions the participants were asked were based on the two guiding research questions and the purpose was to delve deeper into the results that the current gender data demonstrated. Finally, the participants were thanked for their time, support and assistance. After the transcription and throughout the coding process, the

participants' responses were stored on a personal flash drive that was password encrypted and only the researcher knew and/or had access to and was stored securely in the researcher's safe when not in use.

Identification of Attributes

Certain attributes were identified to aid in the understanding of this study. Since the study was conducted in a small region of the country, certain attributes were defined so that this study could be more globally understood and interpreted. Perception, underrepresentation, challenges and success were specific attributes that directly correlated to this study. The following were definitions that were directly related to this study and assisted in comprehension:

Perception. How one sees or understands a situation, event, act or belief; what one feels is accurate or correct.

Underrepresentation. A clear incongruity between the quantity of women and the number of men that occupy certain professional positions.

Challenges. A perception, bias, viewpoint, district policy or building level practice that causes a disruption to ones' plan or action.

Success. An individualized belief that one has achieved a goal or designated organizational position.

Data Analysis Procedures

Once the questionnaires were conducted and completed, it was critical to effectively analyze the data that had been assembled. The open-ended responses were evaluated and arranged based on common attributes. After reviewing the answers and responses that were generated through the data collection, any information that was not pertinent to the study was eliminated and discarded. Throughout the review process, common thoughts or universal

explanations were notated. This technique focused the study and allowed for themes to emerge. Based on the research of Baxter and Jack (2008), pattern matching and data linkage to the research questions were the utilized data analysis method. Also, notable participant reflections or anecdotes were noted so that they could be reported and presented in the findings chapter. Special attention was given to data that produced and supported the challenges that were presented in the literature review. Qualtrics software was utilized to specifically record the participant responses and answers.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

To maximize data collection fidelity and to attempt to reduce sample bias, an explanatory research design method was determined to be the most appropriate way to study educational leader gender gaps. What is most appealing about this method of study was that a survey research study method would offer the most accurate insight into the challenges and perceptions of women in several Houston area suburbs' experiences and beliefs. Cross checking their survey questions with the themes that were uncovered in the literature review only strengthened the validity of the data and provided the most accurate understanding of the challenges that women face while executing their current professional duties.

Validation

Credibility. Truth and trustworthiness in this study were critical to its success. To offer the most credible data possible, there were several measures that were taken to enrich the credibility of the study. The words that subjects recorded or answered were anonymous and this led to an increase of the credibility of the responses because the threat of discovery risk was eliminated. The study participants were more open, honest and offered more accurate insight because this study was electronic and without identifiable information. In addition, the study

population was a diverse body of varying Houston area districts that were close in proximity to each other. The district sizes variance and the student population were different to allow for more authentic responses and data.

Dependability. Conducting a study that was reliable was equally as essential as conducting one that was trusting. The greatest source of dependability came from the aspect of anonymity component of the study. Designing the study around this ideal increased the reliability because the answers that were supplied and generated came directly from the participants and were free of identifiable risk. This framework strengthened this study and made it a dependable source of information.

Expected Findings

This study expected to find results in three specifically identified and surveyed organizations that mirrors or reflects national trends toward educational leadership gender bias. Data was expected to show that the perspectives and opinions of employees of the three participating school districts were similar to much of the research and information that was unearthed during the literature review portion of this study. Successful female leaders of these public educational organizations were expected to share thoughts and offer insight of their challenges and barriers that were aligned with the same information that was already voiced through other regional and national organizations.

Ethical Issues in the Study

Conflict of interest assessment. Utilized participants came from a variance of backgrounds so that conflicts of interest were subdued. Neither the researcher nor the participant benefited financially or personally from this study. The researcher served as principal survey creator and simply recruited and submitted the survey's to qualified participants. It was essential

to assess the risk and opportunity of conflicts of interest that could have arisen because of this study. The researcher was an employee of one of the organizations being surveyed but conflict was not being an overall concern because the study was anonymous and other school districts employees were asked to participate as well.

Researcher's position. Due to the nature of the study topic, it was challenging not to encounter or exhibit some natural bias. However, this study attempted to not jeopardize the integrity of the study by surveying a variety of participants with a myriad of experiences. Also, interview questions were predetermined and carefully considered for partiality prior to the administration of the survey.

Ethical issues in the study. All efforts were taken to reduce ethical breaches and/or concerns in regards to this study. Participants were informed of the rationale and were asked to voluntarily participate. Confidentiality was explained and upheld and was made binding by clicking the agreement button prior to the initiation of the survey. All efforts were taken to preserve the anonymity of the participants through the execution of an electronic survey and through the elimination of identifiable information as the survey was being created. In addition, data was preserved and protected in a manner that was consistent with the sociological standards code of ethics. Finally, privacy concerns were reduced because the study was conducted via anonymous means and because the women surveyed did not have to supply identifiable information then power differential trepidations were reduced or eliminated.

Summary

To gain understanding into the underrepresentation of secondary and central administration females within three neighboring educational organizations, an exploratory, survey research method was implemented. The information gathered through the questionnaire

and open ended responses were analyzed and common themes were aligned and reported.

Throughout the process, professional and ethical standards were practiced and executed. Chapter 4 discusses the results and data that were generated by the questionnaire and summarize the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Quantitative Results

Introduction

Current data linked to the gender gap in educational leadership is seemingly pointed towards a positive narrowing of the margin of separation. Although the gap still exists, it appears the numbers of women that are assuming secondary and central administration leadership positions are increasing but are still outnumbered by male leaders (Nogay & Beebe, 2008). Because of this data discovery, this study was designed to gain insight into the perceptions of current and aspiring female leaders. After a substantial literature review and research analysis, it was determined that an anonymous study of both current and aspiring female leaders would offer considerable awareness into the perceptions and insight of female educational leadership experiences. Data demonstrates that the gender gap is shrinking so a current study into women's perceptions of current day concerns is critical to understanding how far women have come and what can continue to encourage a reduction in the underrepresentation of female leaders in education. This study has been designed and executed around two guiding research questions: (a) How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level? (b) How do female building and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders? In addition, this study has been divided into several sections to effectively organize and display the data results.

Description of the Sample

Participants for this study were invited to participate based on several pre-qualifying conditions; participants needed to be female, possess a principal certification based on the state of Texas requirements and be currently employed by one of the three participating districts. After determining the target population based on website and district directory profiling and after

cross verification by the State of Texas Board of Educator Certification database, a list of potential participants was generated. In all, 26 participants from the three participating school districts were recruited out of 60 potential participants. Each participant was invited to participate in an online, anonymous survey in which 21 questions were asked based on the two guiding research questions. After the completion of the designated timeline, 26 female leaders from three Houston area districts contributed to the survey by answering the questionnaire. This information resulted in a 43% return rate of the recruited survey group.

The three participating districts presented data that reinforced the diverse populations and demographics of their size, students and leader gender (Table 1). District A, being the largest sample district, produced the largest number of participants with 33% of the recruitment group participating in the survey. District A is approximately made up of 60% minority students and 63% of District A's middle and high school teachers are female. However, 45% of their secondary principals and assistant principals are women. District B is the smallest of the survey group with of approximately 90% of their student population being a minority. Sixty percent of District B's middle and high school teachers are female and 42% of their campus leaders are women. District C, the district furthest from Houston proper and is the most rural of the sample group, with a 75% minority profile. Like District B, 60% of District C's secondary teachers and 40% of their campus leaders are women. The data generated a mean of 75% of the participating districts served students who were categorized as being a minority.

Table 1

Participating District Demographics

Participating District	% Student Minority	% of Female Secondary Campus Leaders
District A	60	45
District B	90	42
District C	75	40

Based on the results, most of the sample group had between 16 and 20 years of experience in education. However, the participant group consisted of women with 0–5 years all the way up to over 25 years of service. Also, 52% of survey responders were in positions at the campus level (Principal, Assistant Principal, etc.).

Table 2

Mark which one best applies to you:

Answer	%
0–5 years educational experience	6.90%
6–10 years educational experience	6.90%
11–15 years educational experience	3.45%
16–20 years educational experience	44.83%
25+ years educational experience	37.93%
Total	100%

Nevertheless, the participants ranged from campus leadership positions to central administration roles. Therefore, the study results presented varying insight from a cross section of experience and positions which contributed to study validity and the reduction of survey bias.

Research Methodology and Analysis

A survey research study was the most effective and practical method to answer the guiding research questions and to achieve the goal of this study. This method allowed for subjects to provide information and understanding without the pressures of gender related career concerns. Also, this method allowed for a greater sample size due to the minimized time commitment required and because it could be completed anytime and anywhere that the leader was most comfortable.

After clicking the box to agree to participate in the survey, respondents were asked three questions in regards to their years of experience, current position and the school district that they are employed by. After agreeing to partake in the study and the demographic information, contributors were asked a series of 12 reflection/insight questions that required them to compose their thoughts in an input box. The questions asked provided discernment into their experiences, challenges and opinions of themselves and women in leadership. Next, the study group was asked six Likert scale type questions in which they had to choose varying degrees of agreement or disagreement. Finally, the survey concluded with a final written box that allowed them to input any additional thoughts or comments and then was thanked for completing the survey responses.

After the survey timeline was complete and a viable survey group had emerged, the results were analyzed and studied. After studying various survey research design methods, an analytical theory approach was designated as being the most effective process to utilize. The

analysis portion of the survey began with analytical coding. Due to the survey including open-ended responses, it was critical for the researcher to get an initial feel for the categories that were emerging in the data set. Analytical coding was used to initially establish what the responses indicated. The first step in the coding stage was to read through the data several times to become overly familiar and intimate with the information presented. From there, the researcher could determine common or correlating data from the survey responses. Because of this examination, common concepts emerged and categories were generated. The categories would eventually turn into the six key findings that are discussed later in the Chapter 5.

Once the analytical coding process was completed, the researcher implemented a theoretical coding method to expand the results further and to study the data more intently. Since the analytical coding focused primarily on defining the existing concepts, the theoretical coding allowed for a confirmation that the results truthfully represented the participant responses and it allowed for relational patterns to transpire. The two guiding research questions were used to help lead the theoretical coding aspect of the data analysis. This coding method provided a more direct approach to the survey responses and assisted in making sure that all present aspects were identified and how the analytical coding identifiers were connected.

The final stage of the data analysis portion of the study was to implement a selective coding method to tie the analytical and theoretical coding together. The analytical coding identified categories within the participants' responses and theoretical coding designated themes among those categories. With these two coding methods established, selective coding allowed the researcher to associate the themes around the two guiding research questions. In short, the selective coding aspect of the data analysis portion of the study allowed the researcher to take the

previously code categories and themes and associate them together to fit the two guiding research questions.

In addition, data was collected to show the current teacher and secondary administrator gender demographics based on the three districts used in the study. Also, the Likert item questions were also analyzed and data was extracted based on the responses. First, the answers were coded into three categories: agree, disagree or no opinion. Although the answer choices provided survey participants to respond strongly, the answer choices were initially coded as just “agree”, “disagree” and “no opinion” to get a baseline determination of the respondents’ overall feelings. Once this category was designated then the answer responses were further analyzed to determine the strength of the answer based on the original discovery. The responses were then counted and compared to conclude whether an overall determination could be made. In other words, if five out of the nine responses were designated as “strongly agree” then it was safe to label the majority response as “strongly agree”. The next subsection summarizes the findings followed by a presentation of the results.

Summary of the Findings

With two guiding questions at the forefront, this study set out to gain understanding into challenges that women have experienced in secondary and central office leadership positions and how female leaders perceive themselves. This study of three Houston, Texas area school districts produced data that led to a deeper understanding of female educator challenges and perceptions. Also, the study validated what the Chapter 2 literature review presented and confirmed the hypothesis in Chapter 3 which predicted that the study affirms the internal and external barriers that contribute to the underrepresentation of female secondary and central office administrators and leaders.

First, the Texas Education Agency’s website (n.d.) was researched to compile campus gender staffing statistics based on the 2015–16 Texas Academic Performance Reports. These reports list the number of male and female teachers assigned to secondary campuses. Based on observations, the three participating districts averaged 61% of their secondary teachers were identified as female educators (Table 2). This discovery supported the research that determined that most secondary students are taught by female teachers. Further, this data also supported U.S. statistics previously documented that place the national average of secondary female educators at 58% (NCES, 2012).

Table 3

Participating District Teaching Gender Analysis

Participating District	% Female Teachers
District A	63
District B	60
District C	60

Finally, the survey participants produced information based on the two guiding questions that can be categorized to fit into either one of the following questions: (a) How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level? (b) How do female building and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders? Embedded in each subsection are data reports that address women’s perceptions of themselves and past and current challenges. Finally, a final section is devoted to women’s advice to future administrators and information regarding how they balance work and life.

Presentation of the Data and Results of Research Question #1

As mentioned, the data collected from the survey participants that directly addressed challenges and barriers can be disseminated into overcoming challenges and self-perception of themselves as leaders. The following sections are devoted to the data that was generated through the study, questionnaire process. This first segment presents data that addresses the first guiding question: How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level? Specific questions in regards to obstacles and challenges were asked to the study participants. Per the study results, 81% of the female leaders surveyed felt that women experience challenges that many of their male counterparts do not when obtaining leadership positions.

Table 4

Women experience challenges that many of their male counterparts do not when obtaining leadership positions?

Answer	%
Strongly agree	42.31%
Somewhat agree	38.46%
Neither agree nor disagree	7.69%
Somewhat disagree	7.69%
Strongly disagree	3.85%
Total	100%

When asked the survey question, “Can you provide an example of a barrier that has affected you professionally?” participants submitted responses that were insightful and directly correlated to

the first guiding research question. One woman transcribed, “Unfortunately I have been affected professionally in a negative capacity because of the perceived ‘good old boy’ system. High ranking central office personnel place “friends” into positions that, in my opinion, are not qualified to have.” In regards to hiring barriers, another respondent wrote:

I think that being a female has limited the number of interviews for administrator positions over the last few years. There are so many applicants for positions, and I believe that secondary campuses will only consider male applicants to replace any open position, while female applicants are only interviewed if the vacancy was left by a prior female administrator.

Another survey participant mentioned that her marital status has affected her advancement and stated that since her colleagues know that she is single that they appear to automatically dismiss her because they expect that she will not be able to balance work and life. Another participant wrote, “I think that there were some people who were apprehensive about working for a female...is she strong or weak? Especially after following a strong male leader.” All but one survey participant noted a challenge or barrier that has affected them. One respondent wrote, “None at this time, I have yet to pursue a higher position, and I got the previous positions I applied for.” Additionally, several responders mentioned that male coaches seem to get advanced positions over qualified women. These statements suggest that secondary campuses respect the athletic coaching position and more than likely perceive them as disciplinarians and therefore recruit and hire them as leaders. It can also be rooted in the belief that athletics and sports are critical at the high school level and their coaches assume more exposure and natural leadership positions as a result.

Next, study partakers were asked if they had ever experienced any challenges that they would label as gender specific. The results indicated that 50% of the responders submitted answers of “no”, “not really” or “not sure.” However, the other half of participants did provide examples of gender specific challenges. One responder wrote, “As part of our campus administrative team, it is kind of understood that I will remember birthdays, Secretaries Day, etc. I’m not better at remembering and planning celebrations just because I am female. This unofficial role for me is challenging because I do not naturally think about birthdays, etc.” Societal perceptions that women are the doers and planners are challenging barriers to their advancement. Likewise, another participant submitted, “Mainly when hearing people talk about women.” They often say “she is too emotional.” Even further, one woman wrote, “Women are weaker on handling discipline. Which is crazy because many moms are the strong arm at home usually...I know I am.” Such assumptions in regards to women’s character, values and leadership styles can greatly impact either their choice to attempt to obtain a greater leadership position or effect their opportunity to achieve a promotion.

Next, participants were asked what their greatest professional challenge was currently. Respondents cited issues like, “parents,” “commute,” “paperwork” and “changing leadership.” However, some answers that were supplied did make mention of blatant or possible gender related challenges. One responder wrote, “Working with a talented group. I can do everything that they can do. However, politics often play a role in who gets to do what.” To reinforce that statement, another participant expressed, “Making the step from campus administrator to district administrator; competition is fierce.” Unfortunately, confidence and self-belief were noted as a current challenge as some women referenced balancing motherhood and work and their own self confidence that they can be an effective principal or leader; either some women do not want to

withstand the competition or they do not feel as if they have what it takes to separate them from the others.

Finally, when asked why they thought there was an underrepresentation of secondary and central office female leaders, the answers were transparent and seemingly honest. Only one participant wrote that they were not sure why but affirmed that she felt that high schools should be run by a male principal. The study participant wrote, “I believe a strong male administration presence is needed at the high school level. Even though I am a female, I think that campuses should have no more than half of female administrators. There are many things that require a male presence, in terms of fights, drugs, etc. with male students. Also, male students tend to respect male administrators more than females.” The other responders submitted responses that addressed societal bias, work/life struggles and women’s desire to remain in the classroom so they do not have to make choices between parenting and leadership. One woman wrote, “I believe that people struggle with the thought of a woman in leadership positions. I think that they still associate it with control and power as opposed to leadership and direction. Also, it is hard to commit both to a campus and a family unless one has a great support system.”

Additionally, another leader claimed:

I think there are a variety of reasons. Despite changes in societal expectations, women are still viewed as the primary caregivers and secondary administration, particularly at the high school requires many evenings and nights away from family. In addition, from my experience not as many women have applied for secondary principal positions as men.

Some responders referenced the coaching bias and male networking opportunities as a potential reason for the gender gap. One participant stated, “Many principals come from coaching roles.

Coaches are usually leaders and motivators and also very visible to central administration.”

Further, another woman wrote, “I believe there are still the familiar stereotypes than men make better leaders. I also believe that the "good old boy" network still exists.” These statements reaffirm the external challenges of societal perceptions of women as well as the notion that exposure to positions that hire administrators can influence who gets placed into certain leadership positions.

It is also worth noting that some women stated the reason for the leadership gender gap may also be directly to their own beliefs, values or personality disposition. One participant eluded that women can be their greatest enemy and many do not think that they can be both a mom and a school leader, or they just assume that a man will be chosen over them so they elect not to even pursue the opportunity. Additionally, the thought of adding another responsibility to an already crowded plate can be a possible deterrent for some women. One participant wrote, “Women tend to be afraid to leave comfortable positions because they are afraid of the unknown. We have so many other obligations taking on even one more thing sounds overwhelming.”

The guiding question of how women have overcome gender challenges in public education was questioned and answered through the research study. True to the literature review, external and internal barriers were expressed through the survey data. The next section addresses the study findings correlating to the second guiding research question.

Presentation of the Data and Results of Question #2

Alongside the collection of the first guiding question of experiencing challenges, participants were also asked to provide insight into the second study leading question: How do female building and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders? Study participants were asked a series of both open-ended questions as well as Likert scale based queries. This is an

essential component of the study for several reasons. Women's perceptions of themselves can dictate their career advancement decisions. Also, how women see themselves as leaders can offer insight into how they see leadership positions in general. When asked to define their strong leadership quality, the answers submitted painted an interesting picture of the survey population group. Characteristics such as inspiring, committed, fair, whole picture visualizer, risk taker, problem solver and flexible were mentioned. One responder considered herself to be an effective public speaker and another reported being about to motivate the unmotivated. Other adjectives found in the data analysis were: integrity, encouraging, analytical, and strategic. One woman reported her strongest leadership quality as her "strong desire for children to not only have the opportunity but actually receive a quality education." This question opened insight into how women see themselves as leaders. Although the submissions varied, all the participants mentioned at least one quality and often including several in their answers. One responder wrote, "Good listener, big picture/visionary who can provide details to a plan and not just the picture, strong desire for children to not only have the opportunity but actually receive a quality education." Along the same lines, another participant proclaimed, "Being able to see the big picture (forest through the trees), bringing people together with a common vision, building capacity individual while growing teams, develop processes and procedures." How women perceive themselves as leaders is critical to understanding possible causations to the existing gender gap.

Once there was an establishment of overall leadership quality assessment, the next question addressed how the women perceived themselves as work and life balancers. Since the literature review unearthed that many women do not choose to pursue leadership opportunities because of the burden the time and responsibilities place on families, it was essential to include a

question that addressed this matter. As Table 9 indicates, 74% of responders strongly or somewhat agree that they maintain a beneficial work and life balance. The data also indicated that whether the women felt as if they maintained an effective work/life balance, that they had feelings about it one way or the other rather than neither agreeing or disagreeing. Although most women reported that they balance and maintain a healthy work/life balance the data indicated that not all women felt this way and answered the Likert based question accordingly.

Table 5

I maintain a healthy work/life balance:

Answer	%
Strongly agree	37.04%
Somewhat agree	37.04%
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%
Somewhat disagree	18.52%
Strongly disagree	7.41%
Total	100%

When asked how they manage balancing work and life the responses provided mixed reviews of honest practices. Almost all the respondents noted that the balance is tough but that support systems and effective time management practices seem to assist in their success. Some survey takers mentioned not taking work home with them and keeping a tight schedule to keep them on task so that work stays at work. Other participants noted a strong family support system and at least two leaders mentioned incorporating their family into their evening duties so that they can still be together. One study participant wrote, “When I am home with my family and children, I

try to focus on that. I limit my work calls and emails so I can enjoy the time I have with them. This makes it easier when I am away from them to focus on the work that I do.” Another participant acknowledged the importance of a strong family support system when she stated, “As a woman it is definitely more difficult. The strain of being a mother and balancing work and home often brings guilt. I have a husband that works to help me at home so I can fulfill commitments at work.” Another participant stated worthy advice by submitting, “It is tough, but I do not bring work home with me. I try to leave things that happen at work, at work. I hug my kids and refocus on what is most important. It can be easy to get sucked into the job 24 hours a day, but that would not be fair to my own kids.” Additional responses recognized the struggle and expressed personal activities that have worked in their maintenance of balance of work and family.

In regards to strategizing career changes and pursuing leadership opportunities, the survey participants selected comparable answer choices and overwhelmingly agree that they pursue and strategize their careers. Eighty one percent of surveyed women felt as if they pursue leadership opportunities when chosen. Yet, not even 70% of the female leaders say that they strategize career move. The women surveyed varied in their opinions of plotting career moves and although the majority of them provided a response of “somewhat agree,” not all of the women felt this way with a strong number of women suggesting that they do not strategize career moves.

Table 6

I pursue leadership opportunities:

Answer	%
Strongly agree	34.62%
Agree	30.77%
Somewhat agree	15.38%
Somewhat disagree	7.69%
Disagree	3.85%
Strongly disagree	7.69%
Total	100%

Table 7

I strategize career moves or changes:

Answer	%
Strongly agree	26.92%
Somewhat agree	42.31%
Neither agree nor disagree	3.85%
Somewhat disagree	23.08%
Strongly disagree	3.85%
Total	100%

Many respondents agreed that they strategize career moves. To further probe into this question, participants were asked why they chose to leave the classroom to pursue leadership

opportunities. Several responders mentioned that they were encouraged or recruited to explore leadership openings while others claimed that it was the only way to make more money. For example, one participant wrote, “Wanted to impact kids in a different way. I like working with adults and students to solve problems that impact the educational setting.” Similarly, one woman submitted a response that she decided to leave the classroom because she felt that she “could offer more to help students in all aspects of their education. I also felt I could do more to help teachers grow and develop.” An additional survey participant stated that she felt discouraged by her current leaders and felt as if she could be more effective so she pursued a position that would allow her to have greater impact on her organization. Other participants acknowledged that they chose to leave their current position at the encouragement of a mentor. This matter was then followed up with a question that directly addressed the presence of a mentor in their career.

When asked about their support system and mentors, the respondents reported positive responses and the presence of an inspiring mentor. One hundred percent of the respondents reported feeling an overall feeling of support by their staff and stakeholders. One woman wrote, “For the most part, yes. I think that there are still some men who may not prefer working for a woman or women that are threatened by me.” Another study participant wrote that directly spoke to the nature of the study topic: “Yes. Regardless of my gender, I feel supported, and I do not feel that gender effects how others view my intelligence, ideas, or capabilities.” Further, most participants referenced a mentor, some male and some female, that encouraged, motivated and supported them either in the past or currently. One leader wrote, “As a teacher, I had a very supportive, encouraging principal who not only provided me a lot of professional growth opportunities outside of my normal roles and responsibilities, she encouraged me to pursue my advanced degree and get into administration. I still call her to this day!” Another contributor

mentioned that she had several mentors through her various positions that filled her with confidence that she needed to hear and participated in deep conversations without judgement. One study partaker noted a male mentor who helped her see strengths that she did not have. Further, one female leader learned about how to be an effective leader from some but also from those that, in her opinion, were not effective and wrote, “From some I learned how to have my voice heard. Others, I learned what not to do. All of them helped me see strengths I didn't know I had.”

To bring completion to women’s perceptions of themselves as leaders, participants were asked if they plan on progressing even further in their career as public education administrators. The survey data produced mixed results with many women appearing to be complacent or comfortable in their current positions. However, some did mention desired to be a campus principal or central office administrator one day. Some respondents noted that they may pursue advanced opportunities once their children were grown, etc. One survey submission response was, “Yes, but maybe not for a few years. Family is placed on the backburner already, and it’s not fair to them.” Another participant wrote that she valued the growth that her current position can provide and stated, “Yes-but not now. I would like to spend several more years in my current position to learn and grow before I consider options. However, I can see myself in positions that expand what I currently do.”

Advice to Current and Future Female Leaders

The survey also yielded answers and advice to current and aspiring female administrators based on several questions that were asked in the survey. Overall, the submitted answers were encouraging and inspiring. Participants were given the opportunity to offer advice to other women who were considering a principal certification or advanced position. Many of the

submitted responses offered words of encouragement and positive phrases like “go for it” and “be the best you.” Some women advised to keep moving toward goals even if setbacks occur. One woman advised to go into the interview or application process knowing that it may not happen on their first or second attempt but not to let that discourage them if they truly wanted the position. Another leader advised, “Be confident and make sure it is not the title that you are seeking but the responsibilities.” Several participants advised them to get to know themselves as a leader and to not compromise their values for the sake of a position. Finally, one leader scripted advice as to understanding the politics behind positional placement. She wrote, “It is very much about who you know. Start to form relationships with building principals in areas you’d like to work now.”

Summary

This study was conducted over a several month period and included close to 30 female leaders from three diverse, yet geographically related, public education school districts in the Houston, Texas area. Participants were asked to complete approximately 20 written reflection and Likert scale formatted questions about their perceptions, experiences and opinions about being a female leader in secondary education. With close to 40% of the recruitment group electing to participate in the study, the results were analyzed and arranged into themes based on the two guiding research questions: (a) How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level? (b) How do female building and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders? Findings from the literature review in Chapter 2 were substantiated through the study and emerging themes emerged that mirrored much of what was derived from the intense study of literature. Some of the notable themes were: work/life balance, societal perceptions of women’s roles and duties and family obligations. In

addition, survey partakers were asked to reflect on their leadership perceptions and qualities and positive and hopeful responses were generated and recorded. Women offered advice to aspiring leaders and informed them of how they balance the pressures of work duties and home responsibilities. With this said, understanding the data is essential but what matters equally is what is done with the information and how are the written recordings and answers used to further reduce the margin of the educational leadership gender gap. Chapter 5 offers recommendations as to what can be done with this data and the surveyed women's words to progress and move forward.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the reported data and overall conclusions to the study. In addition, this chapter includes recommendations for future study and suggestions for further research. Included in this chapter are a summary of the findings along with some discussion of what the findings indicate and if the data generated supports the earlier literature review. The chapter concludes with some implications and some recommendations for future practice, policy, and theory. The intention is that the conversation on the gender gap among secondary and central office leaders continue so that progress can be made in leveling the playing field of future leaders and to better serve students with gender diversity.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges and perceptions that female leaders in secondary and central office administration endured. A recruitment group of current and future leaders were established, and an approximately 20-question survey was created to collect insight into the two guiding questions of challenges and perceptions. The survey was electronically sent out using the Qualtrics software and 43% of the recruited women participated and completed the survey. The survey results submitted mirrored much of what the literature review unearthed in that most female leaders perceive they overcome challenges that men do not have to surpass and offered examples. However, many women participants expressed feeling supported by their colleagues and have a strong support system to assist in their hurdles. For the most part, the study group felt they have had a mentor in their career to encourage and/or guide them to further leadership positions and felt they are generally able to balance work and life balancing obstacles.

The study was well represented by several women from three diverse and geographically connected school districts in the Houston, Texas area. The percentage of women who elected to participate in the survey of the recruitment group indicate the surveyed women valued the study topic and saw worth in completing the survey.

Discussion of the Results

Six key findings emerged from the data results collected that impact a woman's decision to pursue a principal or central office leadership position. The first key finding is that although the women surveyed felt that they can balance the challenges of effective work and life balance, there are still sacrifices and trade-offs that women experience. The women surveyed provided examples of family obligations or circumstances that did not encourage or lend to a leadership position. Principal and other educational leadership roles often require longer hours and an extended school year which does not make family responsibilities easy to achieve. Survey results indicated that women may put off pursuing advanced positions until their children are older, or that they must be creative in managing their motherly responsibilities and their professional roles. It is worth noting that the participants expressed opinions that directly supported the information that was unveiled during the literature review (Pirouznia, 2011). The study results indicated that women choose to delay obtaining advanced degrees needed to become a certified Texas principal or advanced leadership positions because of the increased evening and summer time demands that principal and central administration roles require. These roles are generally delayed because of their current and previous commitments to family obligations.

The second key finding was that there is gender based obstacles in regards to educational leadership that impact either hiring or their confidence in pursuing principal or district leadership

positions. Women reported the burden of the “good old boy” system or men being offered positions because men are considered the stronger sex to lead a campus or district; men are more respected leaders or they are better at executing the increased discipline that is required on secondary campuses. This key finding directly correlates to the information that was published by Coughlin et al. (2007) in regards to organizational hiring inequalities based on societal perception. Just as the literature review and Coughlin et al. (2007) noted, it appears that current hiring, male leaders either tend to prefer to hire their male colleagues or feel as if women do not make as effective leaders as men. Despite whether school boards or human resources departments do pursue male leaders for secondary and superintendent positions, the perception is still out there that they will not hire a woman for the position so women do not choose to pursue open roles. This discernment can lead to a gender gap as women may be less inclined to apply or pursue principal or superintendent positions because they lack to the belief that they could obtain the position.

A third key finding is that there may be a gender gap because women simply choose not to pursue advanced positions due to a variety of reasons. Participants cited being comfortable in their current roles and choosing not to confront more challenging roles which correlated with the research published and presented through the literature review (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010; Schmuck, 1975). The survey also produced data that supports women being more fulfilled by roles as educational nurturers and not wanting to confront the political aspects that advanced positions can entail. To conclude, the women reported that they may choose advanced careers in the future but based on their current self-satisfaction or family constraints make them complacent for the time being. This impacts the gender gap in several ways. First, with procrastination there arises a chance that the further in their career that they become, the more complacent a woman

can be and therefore not pursue advanced opportunities. Secondly, if women are not actively trying to move toward a principal or central office position, then a natural effect would be that the open positions are then going to men, which would lead to a gender gap.

A fourth key finding was that a portion of the surveyed women believed that secondary campuses are better suited to be led by men and that women may not have the personality set required to be effective. This finding directly supports the information presented during the literature review by Meyer (2014). Several participants cited that women may not have the emotional state or the strength to prohibit their emotions from getting in the way of their decision making. Despite the lack of females at the head of the campus, female assistant principals are serving in positions on campuses and their support is beneficial and required. Male principals can be more effective because they command greater respect of the students and this is not a direct result of job execution, but is effective simply because of the societal perception. These types of perceptions lead to women either not choosing to upwardly advance in education or that some women may face challenges or gender based obstacles that their male counterparts do not have to endure.

The fifth finding generated from the study was the overall feeling of positive support that women receive once they obtain leadership positions and the existence of a strong mentor. Once women achieve a role or position of leadership, they express support and acceptance. This is encouraging data, as well as the data presented in the literature review by Gupton and Rosairo (1998), to report as the alternative could have impactful consequences on the future reduction of the gender gap. In addition, the existence of a mentor is a contributing factor in the success in position obtainment for women. Finally, women's performance and effectiveness are encouraged with the support and assistance of a mentor. This is an encouraging key finding as to

it promotes a support system and networking opportunity for possible leadership candidates. In short, the gender gap cannot be lessened if women do not actively pursue available leadership opportunities.

A final key finding was that the age of the survey participants affected their pursuance of advanced positions. Several women noted that they were too old to attempt a principal position or that younger women are more desirable for leadership roles than older women. Based on their age, they were comfortable in their current roles and felt that they were too far into their careers to make changes or pursue other opportunities. This finding was also presented in the literature review by Weber et al. (1991) as causation to the gender gap in public education. The literature review and study show that once women reach a certain age, the chances of their election to pursue leadership positions diminish.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

In October, 2016, the Houston Chronicle published an article titled, “1 in 5 Districts Led by Women” (Webb, 2016, A7). In this article, Webb discusses the underrepresentation of female superintendents in Texas citing that although the numbers of women have increased since last studied in 1999, merely 7% of Texas superintendent positions are filled by women. Consequently, the article states that women struggle with rising to the top because of school board hiring bias and are perceived of being “too emotional” (Webb, 2016, A7). The study conducted reinforced what the Houston Chronicle reported at the same time this dissertation was being composed.

The completed Chapter 2 literature review (Bierly & Shy, 2013; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Logan, 2000) indicated that the gender gap exists because of either internal or external barriers. Based on the results from the survey participants, the literature review and current

perceptions and challenges are aligned and notable discrepancies between the literature review and the study do not appear to be present. Participants, as well as the research (Mertz, 2002), cited specific perceptions of both types of barriers and sourced examples to support their personal challenges. External barriers such as hiring inequalities, gender bias, and social perceptions were determined to be a factor in the three sample districts. Women reported inexperienced athletic coaches and men with less experience being placed in positions above them or other qualified women applicants. Study contributors also supplied insight into perceptions of them being single mothers or being married to spouses that were the breadwinner and not needing the pay increase as factors. External influences such as societal bias and perceptions of male versus female leadership were also noted and mentioned through the data results.

Internal barriers such as work and life balance were also referenced and noted by the surveyed women leaders as well. Women wrote through their survey answers their responsibilities as a mother impacted their decision to pursue advanced professional positions. The women surveyed reported that they either do not seek positions of advancement because of their family obligations or that they must make choices that lead to a healthy balance. Additionally, women surveyed indicated that they toil with their own desires and the perceptions of society to be successful or obtain higher positions within educational organizations.

Limitations

Although the data results mirror historical statistics of a national norm, this study was limited to the perception, both societal and self-filling prophecy like, and challenges of the women leaders of a small geographical location of Houston, Texas. Based on location norms and values, the data generated is indicative of the experiences and beliefs of women in a specific

location. Despite the varied approach to a variety of district demographical composites, the reported submissions are that of small southern state's population. In addition, although the sample group provided valuable insight and information the findings generated may be insufficient to apply to the overall beliefs and experiences of a broader context. Finally, due to the sensitivity of the subject matter and despite all efforts to provide an anonymous platform, it can be concluded the women surveyed may have felt apprehension of expressing additional information in regards to bias or hiring discrimination.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy and Theory

The implications of this study can have substantial impact on the future reduction of the gender gap in public education. Although this study is geographically specific, it can easily be replicated by human resources departments, campus and central office leadership, and school boards and educational unions to determine specific results of their domain or location. The results of this study mimic national norms, beliefs and practices and can be used for several beneficial practices, or ignite the creation of their own study. This study can be used to examine hiring practices and lead to the creation of systems to maximize the placement of the most qualified candidate despite gender and increase the recruitment of potential female leaders. Districts and organizations can use this study to examine core beliefs and ideals as to what they want in a leader despite gender. This can lead to the design and creation of a portrait of a leader and of the type of leader they want leading their organizations that fit into the diversity of modern times.

Also, this study implies the need for a strong female support system and networking platforms in public educational settings. Based on the responses from the participating leaders, women can benefit from formal networking events and the development of strong mentoring

practices. Opportunities where aspiring female leaders can connect and shadow successful women are needed for the gender gap to be reduced. Women can benefit from the opportunity to discuss concerns, increase self-confidence and useful tools to overcome challenges from other women who have conquered similar barriers in their quest to obtain further leadership positions. Successful women can assist in alleviating anxiety, offering encouragement and providing ways to manage work and life obstacles.

Finally, this study can serve as a conversation starter for changing the negative gender norms that can exist and lead to the underrepresentation of women leaders in education. This study can serve as the gateway for diversity training and professional development opportunities that can bring awareness to perceptions about women as leaders. Ideals such as women are the weaker sex or not as strong on discipline can be reduced with awareness and conversation. Also, notions that women can or should not have to necessarily choose between being a mother, wife, or principal can be reduced with deeper conversations and less conventional practices or norms.

Recommendations for Further Research

While the data and information generated from this study are critical and substantial, these results will not reduce the gender gap in education. Therefore, this study should serve as the platform for greater study and research. This study can be extended in several different ways to produce greater insight and increase awareness.

This study can be expanded to dive deeper into those women who possess qualities to be effective educational leaders and seek insight into what prohibits them from pursuing advanced positions. This study mostly encompassed women who are already successful, so for the future leadership statistics to change, it starts with those women who have not achieved success. Once

their insight is gained, then greater information will be brought forth to gain more substantial insight into women's choices.

Also, this study can be expanded to examine the leadership qualities of successful secondary campuses and public school districts to determine if there is a dominant gender or the existence of a gender underrepresentation. A study such as this can be insightful and thought provoking as it entails generating data from both genders to understand the specific leadership qualities of successful administrators.

Finally, this study can also be expanded to specifically interviewing or studying women leaders who have proven to be effective, respected, and successful. A study of a small sample of women that can include personal conversation and intimate experiences can serve as a guidebook and inspiration for current and future female leaders. Any opportunity for women to learn from women who have paved the way and are successful and respected can only offer encouragement to aid in the reduction of the gender gap.

Conclusion

Current trends offer substantial hope that the crevice of the public education leadership gender gap is dissipating. Data indicates that more women are being hired as middle and high school principals' than there were twenty years ago, despite the underrepresentation. Although, only 7% of Texas superintendents are women, the numbers still indicate that advancement has occurred since last studied in 1999 (Webb, 2016). However, increase does not mean equal. There are still more men serving as secondary principals and district superintendents than women. The discrepancy is specific to middle and high school campuses and the highest organizational position of superintendent. For progress to be made and for the gap to be filled, it is essential to understand women's perceptions and specific challenges. Melvin Konner (2016)

discusses the importance of organizations embracing the leadership qualities that women can provide and even goes as far as calling for an end to male supremacy. It is important to note that effective male, educational leaders are valued and needed. However, effective women should also be able to pursue available positions if they desire and should be awarded the same opportunities of their male counterparts. Fantastic things can happen in the lives of children if the gender gap continues to lessen and women pursue more leadership opportunities and can equally lead alongside of men.

This study set out to answer the two guiding questions: (a) How have women overcome challenges to achieve secondary leadership positions at the building and district level? (b) How do female building and district leaders perceive themselves as leaders? Thanks to the women who supported this study and chose to sacrifice their time, greater insight into these two questions was achieved. The insights and anecdotes supplied by the study population should serve as a starting point for greater conversation. Once the discussion and awareness begin, then it is only then that true change can start to occur; the girls sitting in classrooms today or the young women studying to be future educators deserve the opportunity to achieve the goals that they may one day desire.

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APPENDIX A: IRB Permission Letter



DATE: October 24, 2016
TO: Danielle Taylor, M.Ed.
FROM: Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB)
PROJECT TITLE: [970158-1] Understand the Secondary Leadership Gender Gap in Public Education
REFERENCE #: EDD-20161005-Jimenez-Taylor
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: October 24, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE: October 24, 2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB) has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

You are responsible for contacting and following the procedures and policies of Concordia University and any other institution where you conduct research.

This study is to collect data (information) using an electronic web-based survey tool, called Qualtrics.

Your request for a waiver of written documented informed consent has been granted. The waiver is granted because the biggest risk of this study would be that written consent would require that they provide their name. In your Qualtrics survey, the first page presented to the participants must include a description of the study and a request for their informed consent. The recruited individual may use a checkbox or other similar action to indicate that they consent to participate and take the survey. Consent is an ongoing process and requirement; as such, the participants must be able to skip questions in the survey.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. The form needed to request a revision is called a Modification Request Form, which is available at www.cu-portland.edu/IRB/Forms.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please email the CU IRB Director directly, at obranch@cu-portland.edu, if you have an unanticipated problem or other such urgent question or report.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of October 24, 2017.

You must submit a close-out report at the expiration of your project or upon completion of your project. The Close-out Report Form is available at www.cu-portland.edu/IRB/Forms. Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. OraLee Branch at 503-493-6390 or irb@cu-portland.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB)'s records. October 24, 2016

APPENDIX B: Questionnaire Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

Currently, I am a doctoral candidate working on my dissertation that addresses the gender gap that exists among secondary public school educators and central office administrators. I am pursuing my Ed.D. degree from Concordia University – Portland with the assistance of my committee chair, Dr. Mark Jimenez.

My study focuses on the underrepresentation of female leaders in public education and what factors contribute to the unproportioned ratio. The goal is to gain greater understanding as to what causes the gender gap and then what can aspiring, female leaders understand from the women who have already achieved a leadership position. You have been identified as a female leader and/or administrator that meet the state of Texas administrative certification requirements and are therefore a study participant candidate.

The input and insight that you provide through this electronic survey will be invaluable to this study. As a result of the successes' that you have achieved, the data that you can provide will greatly enrich and benefit my study.

As a fellow administrator, I understand that the time you have is precious. Therefore, this survey was designed to take a minimal amount of your time and should take no longer than thirty minutes to complete.

This study has been approved by an Institutional Review Board and critically analyzed to make sure that safeguards have been implemented to protect your welfare, privacy and civil liberties. Please know that your answers are anonymous and any comments or additional information that you provide will not be presented in any manner in which can identify you.

If you agree to participate, please click the following link to begin the survey. Thank you for your time and assistance. Please know that this dissertation and study could not be achieved without your help so thank you again.

Sincerely,

Danielle L. Taylor

APPENDIX C: Questionnaire

Dissertation Study - Gender Gap in Secondary Education

Read and check the box below if you consent and want to take this survey.

Research Study Title: Understanding the Gender Gap in Secondary and Central Office Public Education Administration

Principal Investigator: Danielle L. Taylor
Research Institution: Concordia University – Portland
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mark Jimenez

The purpose of this survey is to gain a better understanding of the existing gender gap among secondary and central office public school administrators. This is an anonymous survey. The participants will come from at least three different school districts. This Qualtrics survey will ask you approximately 15 questions about your beliefs, perceptions and experiences of female leadership in education. Doing this online survey should require about 30 minutes of your time. Your responses will not be linked to your name or any other identifying information. The principal investigator will not know how any person responded to the anonymous survey. There are no significant risks in taking this survey, since it is anonymous. Information you provide will help establish a greater understanding of the gender gap. Your participation can benefit a campus and organization within the Texas public school system. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating.

If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Danielle Taylor at taylordan504@aol.com If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranche@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

Please click on this box to begin this survey. This indicates your consent.

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q1 Mark which one best applies to you:

0-5 years educational experience (1)

6-10 years educational experience (2)

11-15 years educational experience (3)

16-20 years educational experience (4)

25+ years educational experience (5)

Q2 Which choice best corresponds to your current position:

Central Office Administration (Superintendent, Cabinet Member, Program Director, Assistant Superintendent, etc.) (1)

Campus Level Administration (Principal, Assistant Principal, etc.) (2)

Campus Leadership (ALT, Department Chair, Team Leads, etc.) (3)

Q3 Why did you make the decision to leave the classroom and to pursue a leadership position in education?

Q4 Do you have aspirations to move into any positions or roles higher than your current one? Why or why not?

Q5 Research has indicated that there are fewer female secondary principals and superintendents than male, why do you think this is so?

Q6 Can you provide an example of a barrier that has affected you professionally?

Q7 As a woman, have you ever experienced any challenges that you label as gender specific?

Q8 Do you feel supported by the staff and stakeholders of your campus or department?

Q9 How do you balance work and life?

Q10 Have you had a mentor that encouraged you? If so, what was their impact on your career?

Q11 What would you define as your strongest leadership qualities?

Q12 What advice would you offer a woman who is seeking principal certification or an advanced position?

Q13 My biggest professional challenge right now is:

Q14 I maintain a healthy work/life balance:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q15 I pursue leadership opportunities:

Strongly agree (1)

Agree (2)

Somewhat agree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Disagree (5)

Strongly disagree (6)

Q16 I strategize career moves or changes:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q17 I struggle with making choices or trade-offs in order to be a successful female leader:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q18 I think women have to work harder to prove themselves worthy of leadership positions:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q19 Women experience challenges that many of their male counterparts do not when obtaining leadership positions?

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q20 What district are you currently employed in?

Q21 Any other comments, thoughts or insight that you would like to share:

Appendix D: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Digital Signature: dltaylor

Name: Danielle L. Taylor

Date: 05/04/2017