

A look into the role of
educational
superintendent: a
lack of female
representati...



It has been reported that eighty percent of public school teachers are females, but only 24% of school superintendents are females (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). While other professions have seen an increase over the years, women in educational supervisory roles has remained stagnant. I want to examine the reasons why there are so few female superintendents running the nation's school districts. It is a problem in my estimation considering the amount of female teachers already in the field of education. What about the females in administrative positions? Are there reasons why female principals do not move into higher administrative roles?

One of the more common themes within the research is the barriers that exist for females when applying for administrative positions in education. Those barriers include gender bias, lack of career planning and career pathing, lack of mentors and networks, family responsibilities, limited mobility and recruitment (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). When we look at gender bias, Banuelos, 2008, as cited in Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015, interviewed 35 female superintendents in the state of California. What was interesting was that the researcher found some discrepancies between the surveys and interviews conducted after the surveys. The women did not mention gender bias as a factor in their surveys when talking about job experiences. In fact, they indicated gender bias as having very minimal emotional impact on their job experience. On the other hand, when it came to the interview process, many of those same women talked about the tremendous impact gender bias has had on their overall wellbeing. They said that certain biases that they experienced over the years left them depressed and sleep deprived. The reasons for not divulging this

information on the survey was denial and wanting to suppress negative experiences (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). Many regarded gender as impeding their progress more so than any other factor.

Wyland (2016) found similar results regarding biases that women face in leadership positions in education, specifically being a superintendent. There was an underrepresentation of females in the superintendent position in the state of Minnesota. The females that did go on to become superintendents reported that positive career influences, which included the importance of mentors, were crucial to success. The participants in the study by Wyland (2016) did say that gender discrimination and family responsibilities were some of the reasons for there being so few women to enter the position. It was reported that gender discrimination was inadvertently projected into the interview process based on the line of questioning that the female candidates received. When it comes to family responsibilities, especially women with young children, they may have to weigh career choices with family. Considering how time consuming the job can be, it may be the reason why women choose to steer clear of becoming a superintendent (Wyland, 2016).

Connell, Cobia, and Hodge (2015) found that the availability of mentors contributed to the success of a female entering into a superintendent role. Career planning could also begin in undergraduate programs and through all levels of graduate programs (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). Creating forums and other opportunities for students to interact with females in influential leadership positions could encourage potential future leaders in education, and remove some of the barriers to females in leadership

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(Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). These forums would be integrated into the career planning of higher education institutions.

Since the beginning of the inception of the position, superintendents have predominately been made up of males, more specifically white males. According to Muñoz, Mills, Pankake and Whaley (2014), 85% to 96% of superintendent positions in education are occupied by males. These specific authors (Muñoz, Mills, Pankake, & Whaley, 2014) were interested in looking at the career aspirations of female and male central office administrators and their reasons in pursuing a superintendent position. More specifically, do female and male central office administrators have the same aspirations when it comes to seeking out superintendent positions? Based on results of the 244 participants, males appear to be more interested in obtaining superintendent positions as compared to females. When asked about when the participants planned on applying for a superintendent position, females tended to leave that part blank. Based on their lack of response, the authors (Muñoz, Mills, Pankake, & Whaley, 2014) insinuated that it was something that they were not interested in or something that they were not thinking about doing. A reason for this is a lack of mentors for females interested in perusing higher levels of leadership. Even though the participants didn't explain their reasons for not wanting to apply for such positions, it does give rise to the importance of improving leadership programs in higher education. This includes recruiting female leaders in education to become mentors to those that are interested in leadership preparation.

While previous research looked at reasons for why women do not apply for superintendent positions, Robinson and Shakeshaft (2015) researched the <https://assignbuster.com/a-look-into-the-role-of-educational-superintendent-a-lack-of-female-representation/>

various health and stress related issues regarding the position. Could these factors be a reason for the discrepancies in gender and superintendents? The overall federal and state regulations and time required for the job were the largest factors that contribute to stress. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety, and chronic headaches were some of the health related issues associated with superintendent roles (Robinson & Shakeshaft, 2015). What was interesting was that they didn't find any significant differences in gender or race. Based on their findings, it is possible that the health and stress related issues are not reasons for women not applying for or interested in superintendent positions.

Osler and Webb (2014) took their own research on this topic a bit further. They broke their research down into gender and race regarding individuals who occupy superintendent positions. This study focused on African American women and their experiences that led to the acquisition of the position (Osler & Webb, 2014), specifically in designated Southern States. They asked the participants a series of questions and conducted lengthy observations. Out of the 115 school districts, there were only 3 African American female Superintendents. This study was particularly important because it gave the reader insight into what it took for these women to break through the barriers of a predominately white male position (Osler & Webb, 2014). Many do not have the desire to take on the burden of such a difficult and tedious position (Osler & Webb, 2014). They also don't have a desire to obtain that kind of power that comes along with being superintendent. The women in this interview seemed to imply that they had to learn to develop some masculine characteristics in terms of how people perceived how they

utilized their power (Osler & Webb, 2014). It was necessary for them to be assertive and aggressive in the early stages of their position, but more feminine forms were necessary to be successful once they were established in their roles. Some examples of these characteristics were providing more empowerment to staff and exhibiting compassion. Similar to many of the articles discussed previously, Osler and Webb (2014) talked about the importance of these women having mentors to assist them in their role as superintendent. A suggestion the authors made in recruiting more African American females to the superintendent position is to make clear connections between the superintendent and classroom teacher. This would allow for the classroom teacher to broaden her power and influence in the profession (Osler & Webb, 2014).

There are some common themes that seem to run across this literature review. The gender gap regarding those who occupy educational superintendent positions seems to be closing slightly. Some of the reasons for it not closing could be because of gender discrimination, lack of quality female mentors, or weighing job responsibilities versus family responsibilities. Health and stress didn't seem to be contributing factors. Based on current data trends, these factors would need to be considered further since most were not generalizable to the average population. Higher education programs could take note on how they develop leadership programs that foster growth in all genders and races.

Resources

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Connell, P. H., Cobia, F. J., & Hodge, P. H. (2015). Women's journey to the school

superintendency. *Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership*, 237-63.

Klatt, R. (2014). Young superintendents with school-age children: Gendered expectations,

effectiveness, and life quality in rural communities. *Journal of School Leadership*, 24,

452-481.

Muñoz, A. J., Mills, S. J., Pankake, A., & Whaley, S. (2014). Disparity in the superintendency. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 7, 269-278.

Osler, J. E., & Webb, R. L. (2014). An in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis to determine

the factors that affect the existence of African American women superintendents in the North

Carolina k-12 public school system. *Journal on School Educational Technology*, 10, 17-40.

Robinson, K. K., & Shakeshaft, C. (2015). Women superintendents who leave: Stress and health

factors. *Planning and Changing*, 46, 440-458.

Sperandio, J. (2015). Knowing the community: Women planning careers in educational

leadership. *Planning and Changing*, 46, 416-427.

Wyland, C. (2016). Underrepresentation of females in the superintendency in Minnesota. *Planning and Changing*, 47, 47-62.

A Look into the Role of Educational Superintendent: A Lack of Female Representation (Paramedic Method Revisions)

Public school teachers are eighty percent female, but only twenty-four percent are superintendents (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). Educational supervisory opportunities have only marginally improved regarding women. Why are there so few female superintendents running the nation's school districts?

Female teachers can face barriers when applying for advanced leadership positions. These barriers include gender bias, limited career planning or career pathing, no available mentors or networks, family responsibilities, and limited mobility and recruitment (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). When we examine gender bias, Banuelos, 2008, as cited in Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015, interviewed thirty five female California superintendents. The researchers found discrepancies when comparing the surveys and interviews. The women did not mention gender bias as a factor regarding job experiences when completing the survey. Their interviews reflected otherwise. The same women discussed the impact of gender bias on their overall wellbeing. They cited depression and sleep issues as symptoms of <https://assignbuster.com/a-look-into-the-role-of-educational-superintendent-a-lack-of-female-representation/>

these gender biases. The differences between the survey and interview findings were attributed to denial and desire to suppress negative experiences (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). Many regarded gender as impeding their progress more so than any other factor.

Wyland (2016) found similar results regarding biases that female educational leaders face, specifically in superintendent roles. Female leaders were underrepresented in superintendent roles in Minnesota. Positive career influences, which included the importance of mentors, were reported by women in such roles as crucial to success. Wyland's (2016) participants stated that gender discrimination and family responsibilities impacted the progression of women into these positions. Observations showed that gender discrimination was inadvertently projected through the line of interview questioning for female candidates. Family was a weighted consideration in career choice for many participants. Considering how time consuming the job can be, it may be the reason why women choose to steer clear of becoming a superintendent (Wyland, 2016).

Mentor access and availability contributed to the success of a female entering into a superintendent role (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). Career planning could also begin in undergraduate programs and through all levels of graduate programs (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). Potential future educational leaders could be encouraged through forums and interactive opportunities with female leaders resulting in the removal of some perceived barriers for women (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). Education undergraduate programs would integrate these forums in their curriculum.

Historically, white males have dominated the superintendent position. According to Muñoz, Mills, Pankake and Whaley (2014), eighty-five to ninety-six percent occupy the positions. These specific authors (Muñoz, Mills, Pankake, & Whaley, 2014) looked at female and male career aspirations and why they pursued superintendent positions. More specifically, do female and male central office administrators have the same aspirations? Results showed that males had a greater interest obtaining superintendent positions. Females left questions regarding superintendency blank. The authors (Muñoz, Mills, Pankake, & Whaley, 2014) insinuated that it was something that didn't cross the participant's minds. There aren't available mentors for females perusing higher levels of leadership. This gives rise to the importance of improving leadership programs in higher education. It includes recruiting female leaders as mentors to assist those that are interested in leadership preparation.

Robinson and Shakeshaft (2015) researched the various health and stress related issues regarding the position. Could these factors contribute to the discrepancies in gender and superintendents? Federal and state regulations were the major factors that contributed to stress, along with length of work day. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety, and chronic headaches were some health related issues associated with superintendent roles (Robinson & Shakeshaft, 2015). What was interesting was that they didn't find any significant differences in gender or race. Their findings indicated it is possible that health and stress related issues are not reasons why women avoid superintendent positions.

Osler and Webb (2014) took their own research a bit further. They divided their research by gender and race regarding individuals who occupy superintendent positions. This study focused on African American women and their experiences that led to the acquisition of the position (Osler & Webb, 2014). They asked the participants questions and conducted lengthy observations. The questions helped the reader understand the barriers women faced regarding a predominately white male position (Osler & Webb, 2014). Many do not have the desire to work in such a difficult and tedious position (Osler & Webb, 2014). They also don't have a desire to obtain the power that comes along with being superintendent. The women interviewed implied that they developed some masculine characteristics regarding how people perceived how they utilized their power (Osler & Webb, 2014). Assertiveness and aggressive behaviors were necessary when they first began their job, but more feminine characteristics helped once they established their work routine. These characteristics included providing more empowerment to staff and exhibiting compassion. Similar to articles mentioned previously, Osler and Webb (2014) discussed developing a mentorship program to help women become superintendents. Establishing clear connections between the superintendent and classroom teacher would also help in the recruitment process. This would allow the classroom teacher to broaden her power and influence in the profession (Osler & Webb, 2014).

There are some common themes that run across this literature review. The gender gap regarding those who occupy superintendent positions is closing slightly. It is not closing significantly because of gender discrimination, few female mentors, and weighing job responsibilities versus family

responsibilities. Health and stress didn't seem like large contributing factors. Based on current data trends, these factors should be considered further since most were not generalizable to the average population. Higher education programs should take note on how they develop leadership programs to foster growth in all genders and races.

- What is my thesis (i. e., what is the general idea I am trying to express, argue, etc.)?

What are the reasons for there being so few female superintendents in education throughout our nation?

- Is my thesis coherent? If not, why not? I would say that it is coherent.
- Is the thesis included in the introduction? If not, where is it? My thesis is included in the introduction of my paper.
- Do my paragraphs follow this main idea or thesis? If not, where do they diverge from the thesis? I feel like my paragraphs do follow the main idea and thesis.
- Do I have topic sentences? Do these topic sentences follow the thesis? If not, where do they diverge from the thesis? The topic sentences all tie into the fact that there are so few female superintendents in our nation's school districts.
- Why did I order the paragraphs this way? It just made the most logical sense. I just made sure that my literature review didn't veer from the thesis at hand.
- Is the order logical? Why or why not? The order is logical because it all ties into the thesis that was stated in the introduction of the paragraph.

- Does the conclusion summarize my paper in a different way than the introduction? If so, how so? No, the conclusion seems to adhere to the content in the rest of the paper including the introduction.

Resources

Connell, P. H., Cobia, F. J., & Hodge, P. H. (2015). Women's journey to the school

superintendency. *Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership*, 237-63.

Klatt, R. (2014). Young superintendents with school-age children: Gendered expectations,

effectiveness, and life quality in rural communities. *Journal of School Leadership*, 24,

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the factors that affect the existence of African American women superintendents in the North

Carolina k-12 public school system. *Journal on School Educational Technology*, 10, 17-40.

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Robinson, K. K., & Shakeshaft, C. (2015). Women superintendents who leave: Stress and health

factors. *Planning and Changing*, 46, 440-458.

Sperandio, J. (2015). Knowing the community: Women planning careers in educational

leadership. *Planning and Changing*, 46, 416-427.

Wyland, C. (2016). Underrepresentation of females in the superintendency in Minnesota. *Planning and Changing*, 47, 47-62.

A Look into the Role of Educational Superintendent: A Lack of Female Representation (Glossing Version)

Public school teachers are eighty percent female, but only twenty-four percent are superintendents (Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015). Educational supervisory opportunities have only marginally improved regarding women. The private and public job sectors continue to prove that gender inequalities exist.

Female teachers can face barriers when applying for advanced leadership positions. These barriers include gender bias, limited career planning or career pathing, no available mentors or networks, family responsibilities, and limited mobility and recruitment (Connell et al., 2015). Banuelos, 2008, as cited in Connell, Cobia, & Hodge, 2015, interviewed thirty five female California superintendents. The researchers found discrepancies when

comparing the surveys and interviews. The women did not mention gender bias as a factor regarding job experiences when completing the survey. Their interviews reflected otherwise. The same women discussed the impact of gender bias on their overall wellbeing. They cited depression and sleep issues as symptoms of these gender biases. The differences between the survey and interview findings were attributed to denial and desire to suppress negative experiences (Connell et al., 2015). Many regarded gender as impeding their progress more so than any other factor.

Wyland (2016) found similar results regarding biases that female educational leaders face, specifically in superintendent roles. Female leaders were underrepresented in superintendent roles in Minnesota. Positive career influences, which included the importance of mentors, were reported by women in such roles as crucial to success. Wyland's (2016) participants stated that gender discrimination and family responsibilities impacted the progression of women into these positions. Observations showed that gender discrimination was inadvertently projected through the line of interview questioning for female candidates. Family was a weighted consideration in career choice for many participants. Considering how time consuming the job can be, it may be the reason why women choose to steer clear of becoming a superintendent (Wyland, 2016).

Mentor access and availability contributed to the success of a female entering into a superintendent role (Connell et al., 2015). Career planning could also begin in undergraduate programs and through all levels of graduate programs (Connell et al., 2015). Potential future educational

leaders could be encouraged through forums and interactive opportunities
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with female leaders resulting in the removal of some perceived barriers for women (Connell et al., 2015). Education undergraduate programs would integrate these forums in their curriculum.

Historically, white males have dominated the superintendent position. According to Muñoz, Mills, Pankake and Whaley (2014), eighty-five to ninety-six percent occupy the positions. These specific authors (Muñoz, Mills, Pankake, & Whaley, 2014) looked at female and male career aspirations and why they pursued superintendent positions. Results, taken in Southeastern states, showed that males had a greater interest obtaining superintendent positions. Females left questions regarding superintendency blank. The authors (Muñoz et al., 2014) insinuated that it was something that did not cross the participant's minds. There are not available mentors for females perusing higher levels of leadership. This gives rise to the importance of improving leadership programs in higher education. It includes recruiting female leaders as mentors to assist those that are interested in leadership preparation.

Robinson and Shakeshaft (2015) researched the various health and stress related issues regarding the position. Could these factors contribute to the discrepancies in gender and superintendents? Federal and state regulations were the major factors that contributed to stress, along with length of work day. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety, and chronic headaches were some health related issues associated with superintendent roles (Robinson & Shakeshaft, 2015). Robinson and Shakeshaft (2015), did not find any significant differences in gender or race. Their findings

indicated it is possible that health and stress related issues are not reasons why women avoid superintendent positions.

Osler and Webb (2014) took their own research a bit further. They divided their research by gender and race regarding individuals who occupy superintendent positions. This study focused on African American women, from the Midwest, and their experiences that led to the acquisition of the position (Osler & Webb, 2014). They asked the participants questions and conducted lengthy observations. The questions helped the reader understand the barriers women faced regarding a predominately white male position (Osler & Webb, 2014). Many do not have the desire to work in such a difficult and tedious position (Osler & Webb, 2014). They also don't have a desire to obtain the power that comes along with being superintendent. The women interviewed implied that they developed some masculine characteristics regarding how people perceived how they utilized their power (Osler & Webb, 2014). Assertiveness and aggressive behaviors were necessary when they first began their job, but more feminine characteristics helped once they established their work routine. These characteristics included providing more empowerment to staff and exhibiting compassion. Similar to articles mentioned previously, Osler and Webb (2014) discussed developing a mentorship program to help women become superintendents. Establishing clear connections between the superintendent and classroom teacher would also help in the recruitment process. This would allow the classroom teacher to broaden her power and influence in the profession (Osler & Webb, 2014).

The gender gap regarding those who occupy superintendent positions is closing slightly. According to Robinson and Shakeshaft (2015), it is not closing significantly because of gender discrimination issues, few female mentors, and weighing job responsibilities versus family responsibilities. Based on current data trends (Muñoz et al., 2014), these factors should be considered further since most were not generalizable to the average population. Future research must focus on the characteristics that make up successful female leaders (Sperandio, 2015). Having this information will improve leadership programs and help potential candidates understand the nuances of females in leadership positions (Sperandio, 2015).

Resources

- Connell, P. H., Cobia, F. J., & Hodge, P. H. (2015). Women's journey to the school superintendency. *Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership*, 237-63.
- Klatt, R. (2014). Young superintendents with school-age children: Gendered expectations, effectiveness, and life quality in rural communities. *Journal of School Leadership*, 24, 452-481.
- Muñoz, A. J., Mills, S. J., Pankake, A., & Whaley, S. (2014). Disparity in the superintendency. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 7, 269-278.
- Osler, J. E., & Webb, R. L. (2014). An in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis to determine the factors that affect the existence of African American women superintendents in the North Carolina k-12 public school system. *Journal on School Educational Technology*, 10, 17-40.

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- Robinson, K. K., & Shakeshaft, C. (2015). Women superintendents who leave: Stress and health factors. *Planning and Changing*, 46, 440-458.
- Sperandio, J. (2015). Knowing the community: Women planning careers in educational leadership. *Planning and Changing*, 46, 416-427.
- Wyland, C. (2016). Underrepresentation of females in the superintendency in Minnesota. *Planning and Changing*, 47, 47-62.