Purpose: The gender gap in educational leadership is a national social justice issue. Despite efforts to increase the number of female superintendents in the US, numbers are increasing only slowly. This article investigates the career paths and perspectives of current and aspirant superintendents in Pennsylvania. Research Design: The research study employed a mixed methods design using an electronic survey with both quantitative items and qualitative open-response items. Findings: The gender gap continues to exist in Pennsylvania and may be perpetuated by a disinterest in the superintendency by women who perceive the position as unavailable via their preferred career path. The insider pathway was preferred and perceived as most optimal, but more superintendents and assistant superintendents followed outsider career pathways. Women were more likely to acquire the superintendency as an insider, were not well-known in new districts, and both preferred and perceived insider career pathways as more optimal. Aspirant superintendents chose insider pathways due to reputation and relationships, and superintendents due to application requests and district familiarity as their driving factors. Outsiders saw new ideas and perspectives as reasons to apply externally while current superintendents named opportunity. Conclusions: Similarities and differences in career planning preferences by men and women aspirant superintendents indicates an understanding by women of the insider pathway's potential to overcome bias regarding women in leadership roles. As this career path is frequently not an option, women must choose not to aspire or to prepare themselves for possible gender bias in hiring when applying as outsiders.
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Gender and the Superintendency: The Role of Career Pathways

“It is the collective push for social justice at all levels in public schools that constitutes the world worth making, the world worth living in.”

–Susan Chase (1999, p. 223)

Gender equality in educational leadership, and the under-representation of women in school district leadership, continues to be a significant social justice issue. The increasing understanding of differences in the approaches that men and women bring to decision-making and problem-solving together with the benefits that derive from inclusion of these diverse approaches in organizational planning craft only the starting point for equality concerns (Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger, & Baumgarten, 2007; Folkman, 2015; Swers, 2002; Rhode, 2003). Women in top leadership positions are needed to inspire and mentor female teachers to take up the challenges of leading schools and districts, and to provide visible role models for female students developing leadership skills (McKinsley & Co., 2010).

Recent estimates based on a national survey (Finnan & McCord, 2016; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011) and statistics from states that included gender when recording data about their current school district leaders (Sampson and Davenport, 2010) indicated that the number of women holding top educational leadership positions slowly increased from 13.7% nationwide (Glass & Franceschini, 2007) to approximately 25% nationwide. The cause of this slow increase continues to remain unclear. While some analysts suggest that qualified women simply do not aspire to the position for a variety of reasons (Williams, 2003; Glass, 2000), others claim ongoing discrimination against women who do aspire (Kim and Brunner, 2009; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Young and McLeod, 2001; Skrla,
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Both camps acknowledge that contextual factors such as the expectations and demands attached to the leadership role, the opportunities available for career planning and development, and the compatibility of pursuing professional and personal lives within a specific educational environment will influence career decision making.

Men and women must interpret the importance of contextual factors in the process of their career planning. This article presents the findings of a study that examined differences in the perceptions of male and female assistant superintendents in the state of Pennsylvania aspiring to the superintendency. The study focused on one aspect of career planning—the choice by aspirants to pursue an insider route to the superintendent’s position in their current or neighboring local district or look beyond local contexts to districts where aspirants would be viewed as an ‘outsider’.

In addition, the study sought the understandings of practicing superintendents regarding the advantages and disadvantages of these two routes for men and women based on their own experiences. The experiences of current superintendents and the perceptions of aspirant superintendents produce the findings from this study, which inform career-planning recommendations for female assistant superintendents with the ultimate purpose of promoting gender balance in educational leadership.

Conceptual Framework and Literature

Female Assistant Superintendent Career Choices

The belief that women pursuing careers in educational leadership understand potential challenges, stereotypes, and biases they may face guides this study. The authors grant that women will use these understandings to select career options that they believe will counter challenges and play to their strengths. Smith (2011), examining the career decisions of 40 female
teachers in the UK, noted the importance of acknowledging women’s agency and examining the interrelationship of the individual women within her social context. Smith argued that to limit an analysis of women’s under-representation in leadership positions to internal and external barriers to progression “…would be to deny women’s agency. Women can, and do make decisions for themselves, and take steps to shape their own lives and careers…” (p.2) including that relating to whether or not to consider formal leadership positions.

A number of studies indicated that women find alternative career paths that do not necessarily follow the vertical, hierarchical model (Schein, 1971) of secondary school principal to assistant superintendent to superintendent traditionally used by men to access the US superintendency (Kowalski, et al., 2011; Glass, 2000; Tallerico, 1999a, 1999b). Kim and Brunner (2009) found 50% of the women in their study followed an alternative career pathway to the superintendency that did not include the high school principalship at all. Polinchock (2013) and AUTHOR and OTHER (YEAR) described a plethora of career pathways taken by female superintendents with no dominant pattern, and with many using school district central office positions to obtain assistant superintendent positions. These studies supported the hypothesis that women assistant superintendents consider both choosing to aspire to the superintendency and positioning themselves for the superintendency if they chose to aspire.

Challenges to Female Superintendents

Glass (2000) offered five suggestions for the gender discrepancy in educational leadership: (1) lack of credentials, (2) lack of fiscal experience, (3) disinterest, (4) hiring reluctance, and (5) late entry. Glass suggested that although more than half of women in educational administration graduate programs are women, only about 10% of those in doctoral programs are opting to acquire a superintendency certification (Glass, 2000). Unfortunately, this
statistic relies on data over 15 years old. Kim and Brunner (2009) suggested misleading information supported Glass’ assertion and suggested that biases in hiring were responsible for fewer female superintendents rather than fewer certifications. Kim and Brunner (2009) described bias as seen in the research of Kamler and Shakeshaft (1999) interviewing hiring consultants involved in superintendent searches. One consultant in this study noted:

If a woman exhibits certain characteristics, and this is not too different than the certain characteristics the board would in a male consider an indication of strong leadership, she will be too male, unsympathetic, and uncaring. On the other hand, if she is a woman and shows too much femininity, she is too weak, too soft… Women are always walking this fine line of trying to be both formulas. (p. 56-57)

School boards expect women to be both masculine and feminine and develop biases against women related to gender-normative expectations.

Glass (2000) further claims a lack of financial experience by female applicants that prejudices their promotion prospects. Contradictory to this assertion, most state superintendency certification programs require some kind of financial training or budgeting course and/or test on fiscal skills. Brunner and Yong-Lyun (2010) and Polinchock (2014) indicated many female superintendents follow alternate pathways to the superintendency that include central business office positions. As these positions often require use of district-wide fiscal skills, alternate route superintendents might even have greater district-level financial experience than traditional route superintendents.

Nonetheless, Glass (2000) revealed pertinent concerns with other potential explanations of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. Those women who managed to make it to or near the top of their field in education remained limited by more explicit biases in hiring
practices with school boards who were often reluctant to hire female superintendents (Tallarico, 1999a). Aspirant superintendents perceived that school boards considered women less capable of managing a school district and that many of the connections associated with the “old boy’s network” remained unavailable to women (Glass, 2000; Tallarico, 1999b). Moreover, mentoring, repeatedly cited as key to entry into the superintendency, remained easily accessible to men while requiring persistent seeking by women in educational leadership pathways (Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010). Even with these challenges, women find ways to enter the superintendency.

**Insider/Outsider Paths to the Superintendency**

One choice both women and men must make when seeking the superintendency is whether to apply as an insider (within the school district where they currently work and are known) or an outsider (in a district outside their own where they are less known or not at all known). Carlson (1961, 1972) first considered insider-outsider career paths to the superintendency in a study of male superintendents. Referring to insiders as place-bound and outsiders as career-bound, he examined the benefits and hiring patterns of both. Place-bound superintendents benefited from knowledge of and in the district, experienced longer tenures, and had a good reputation in the district; however, they suffered from difficulty initiating change, faced challenges in developing authority over teachers, experienced limitations in group management due to district history, and experienced a forced need to tighten existing policies and procedures. Districts usually hired place-bound superintendents when they were satisfied with the way the school system was functioning and did not see a need for change. Conversely, career-bound superintendents benefited from higher salaries and better benefits due to a heightened bargaining position on hiring, increased flexibility early in their tenure, and
opportunity to make change with less aversion. They suffered from a mandate to make change (even when change seem unnecessary), an expectation to implement new rules and policies, a need to expand central office staff, and a feeling of expendability in the district. School boards hired career-bound superintendents when a need for change was clear or when schools were not performing at acceptable levels. In addition to these findings, insiders often had the benefits of not needing to relocate, shorter commute times, and being well known in their districts while outsiders often suffered from the inverse of each of these.

Carlson went on to categorize the behaviors of male insiders and outsiders:

The insider…adapts or modifies his performance to fit the office. ... The place-bound superintendent seems to derive status from the office; he does not bring status to it. …He performs within the framework established by the predecessor rather than by creating a new framework. The performance of the outsider, on the other hand, does add something to the role. The office is modified rather than the person. His performance changes the office and … holds possibilities of increasing the status of the office. (Carlson, 1961, p. 227).

Carlson offered that the office of the superintendent affected and molded insider superintendents, but the outsider superintendent affected and molded his or her office instead. Considering the presence of gender biases in the hiring process, the malleability of either the professional or the profession seems important. As such, school boards customize insider superintendents to the needs of the district, while outsider superintendents customize the position to their own needs and those of the district themselves. School boards may consider the benefits and risks of hiring a female based on who or what will be the target of change.
For those that do aspire, Maienza’s (1986) study of women’s access to the superintendency through the lens of Kanter’s (1977, 1993) organizational mobility still has relevance. Kanter proposed that mobility in organizational careers is dependent on three factors: (1) opportunity, (2) power, and (3) relative representation. Opportunity means being in a place where one can be noticed and have access to information. Power denotes the ability to gather resources, use these effectively, and to get things done. Power is increased when one’s tasks are visible and highly relevant to the goals of the organization. Relative representation refers to the degree to which an individual is represented in the organization by others like him or herself. If not of a particular group, individuals may still gain access through “extraordinarily visible competence, strong alliances, or changing priorities in the organization” (Maienza, 1986, p. 61).

These three factors suggest that for a woman, the insider route would have an advantage over the outsider route when selection for promotion is dependent on a desire for proven ability in the context of a specific school district.

Dawley, Hoffman, and Smith, (2004) also hypothesized that the insider route would be more advantageous to female applicants in helping them overcome the societal perceptions that leadership is a male trait. They note:

In the case of female leaders, we argue that being an insider is an advantage. People tend to rely on past experiences or stereotypes when a situation is new, ambiguous, or stressful. Because of this, people are less likely to rely on stereotypes when they deal with a person that they know well or if they are in situations in which they have had previous experience. Thus, the more well known a female successor is to her organization, the more likely that she will be judges on previous impressions and performance, not on stereotypes (p. 681-682).
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When extended to female superintendent aspirants, gender biases and stereotypes may be more easily overcome by a woman who is well known or an insider in the district. Hiring committees may judge known female leaders more on previous impressions and performance than by gender stereotypes, than those who are less known or completely unknown to school board hiring committees.

Current Data On Insider/Outsider Appointments

Current data on the frequency of insider/outside appointments is limited to either single and frequently large urban school districts (Cuban, 2016; Matthews, 2002) that typically appoint outsiders, or the national survey of school superintendents conducted by AASA (The American Association of School Administrators) in 2010 (Kowalski et al., 2011). This survey, based on the responses of 1,800 superintendents from the 14,176 school districts in the USA, found the 66.2% of the superintendents responding to the survey obtained their current positions by following an outsider route. Kowalski also noted that outsider hires had increased since the previous survey undertaken in 2000 from 68 to 71% in districts with fewer than 300 students. In districts with 25,000 students or more, outsider hires remained constant at approximately 59%. However, these figures do not indicate whether the respondent superintendents obtained their first positions using an insider or outsider pathway nor any differences by gender.

The Pennsylvania Superintendency

Pennsylvania provides a unique environment for research into the superintendency for a variety of reasons. First, PA has a total of 501 school districts each with their own superintendent and many with additional assistant superintendents. These districts are often small and close together providing many opportunities for inter-district networking and communication. As such, those in educational leadership can promote themselves to more than one district. Furthermore, a
professional might move to a new school district without having to physically relocate and without increasing their commute time. Second, PA has a percentage of female superintendents greater than the national average with 29% females (as compared to 24.1% nationally) as of the 2014-2015 school year (PDE, 2015). Finally, there has been a turnover in the superintendency within PA with 104 new hires for the 2014-2015 school year. A cursory Google news search in March 2016 revealed at least an addition 16 new hires since the end of the 2014-2015 school year. With a large number of districts in close proximity, a sizeable female superintendent population, and plentiful turnover, PA provides an ideal population of school leaders for research into gender differences in insider/outside superintendency career pathways.

The Study

The purpose of the present study is two-fold. First, the study seeks to understand how men and women aspiring to the superintendency perceive the insider versus outsider career tracks in relations to achieving their goals. Second, the study investigates whether gender differences exist in hiring patterns of insiders/outsiders by school boards through an examination of current PA school superintendents’ first superintendent positions. The research questions are as follows: (1) Which career track (insider or outsider) do assistant superintendents aspiring to the superintendency in PA consider the most optimum when seeking their first superintendent’s position and why; and is there a significant difference between male and female choices? and (2) Which career track (insider or outsider) did current superintendents in PA follow to gain their first superintendent’s position, what influenced their choice of track, and is there significant difference between the choice of male and female superintendents?

By answering these questions, this study contributes to the understanding of the ongoing underrepresentation of female superintendents. In addition to providing recommendations for
women aspiring towards the superintendency, findings will continue to highlight the underrepresentation of women and the need for gender awareness, sensitivity and equity in school district leadership hiring practices.

**Research Design and Methods**

The study employed a mixed methods design using survey-based quantitative and open-ended question qualitative methodology. This approach was selected because it allowed researchers to simultaneously collect multiple choice responses to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses, and collect open-ended responses to investigate emergent trends in the data.

**Participants**

A list of all superintendents and assistant superintendents in the state of Pennsylvania, obtained from the PA Department of Education (PDE), directed a search for the email addresses of those administrators. Of the 748 administrators, 687 active email addresses were obtained through school district website searches of which 460 were superintendents and 228 were assistant superintendents. Each potential participant was emailed up to three times with a request to participate in an online survey. After 2 months of data collection time, 295 of the 687 emailed responded to the survey resulting in a response rate of 43%. Of these respondents, 100 identified as assistant superintendents or central office staff and 195 identified as superintendents resulting in individual response rates of 44% and 42%, respectively.

**Survey**

Researchers developed a survey inquiring about participants’ career pathways to or towards the superintendency, their preferences and perceived advantages by career path, commuting changes, and familiarity in districts. The survey, designed and administered through Qualtrics Software, comprised of mostly multiple choice (quantitative) items, but also some open
response (qualitative) items. The survey items differed based on previous answers which identified the participants by job position, first time superintendent status, insider or outsider career path, and interest in the superintendency and are presented in Table 1. Before sending the survey to potential participants, researchers conducted a pilot study with 10 university students and faculty (included a current assistant superintendent and retired superintendent).

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

After the survey response period ended, data were extracted from Qualtrics and imported into SPSS for analyses. Data were dummy coded and missing data were not included in analyses. Descriptive statistics, chi-squared tests, and t-tests were used as appropriate to investigate the findings. Additionally, a post-hoc power analysis was conducted using G*Power and effect sizes were calculated with eta squared tests.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative survey items were analyzed using a deductive approach (Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2014). Responses were coded into topics based on the main ideas presented in each response. These codes were generalized into themes by considering the purpose and congruency of the ideas presented. Themes were triangulated for credibility by comparing them to the research, review by a panel of experts (two superintendents and two assistant superintendents), and secondary coding by an independent party. Furthermore, support for each theme was confirmed by direct quotations from survey responses.
Limitations

As is typical of any location-based study, results may only describe PA superintendents and aspirants and not generalize to the population at large. Similarly, this study suffered from low power due to a small sample size as is typical of administrative research.

Findings

A total of 290 superintendents and assistant superintendents responded to the survey without missing data. Of the participants completing the survey in full, 92 identified as assistant superintendents resulting in a 40.4% response rate (228 contacted) and 192 identified as superintendents resulting in a 41.7% response rate (460 contacted). The participants were 66.6% male (193) and 33.4% female (97) with 66.2% (192) superintendents, 31.7% (92) assistant superintendents, and 2.0% (6) central office of building level personnel. Superintendents were 75.0% male and assistant superintendents were 48.9% male. Ages and years in current position were generally equally distributed across genders while identified position was more frequently superintendent for males but equally distributed for females. Specific data is presented in Table 2.

Assistant Superintendents

A total of 96 assistant superintendents responded to the survey with 75% interested in becoming a superintendent in the future and 25% uninterested. A chi-square test of independence examined the relation between aspirations towards the superintendency and gender. The relation between these variables was significant, \( \chi^2 (1) = 5.02, p < 0.05 \), with gender explaining 5.2% of the variance in superintendency interest, \( \eta^2 = 0.052 \). More male assistant superintendents (85.1%) than female assistant superintendents (65.3%) were interested in becoming a superintendent.
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There were a total of 39 assistant superintendents who had applied for superintendent positions with 23.1% applying only in their current district, 53.8% applying only for positions in another district, and 23.1% applying for positions both inside and outside of their current districts. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between aspirant superintendent application history and gender. Although more male aspiring superintendents (31.8%) applied both inside and outside of their districts than females (11.8%), gender and application history were unrelated overall, $\chi^2(2) = 2.33, p > 0.05$. In order to increase sample cell size for the highest level of test accuracy, data were dichotomously dummy coded to a strict insider (stay in current district) or outsider (nearby or residency change district) application history and “both” responses were removed. After dichotomous data coding, the relation remained insignificant, $\chi^2(1) = 0.159, p > 0.05$.

Seventy-two assistant superintendents indicated aspirations towards the superintendency. When asked about their preferred career paths, 48.6% preferred to stay in their current district, 20.8% preferred to accept a position in a nearby district, 4.2% preferred to move to a district that required a residency change, and 26.45% had no preference. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between assistant superintendent career track preference and gender. The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 7.66, p = 0.05$. More female (65.5%) than male (35.0%) aspiring superintendents preferred a position in their current district while more males (30.0%) than females (9.4%) preferred a position in a nearby district. This relationship explained 3.7% of the variance, $\eta^2 = 0.037$. In order to increase sample cell size for the highest level of test accuracy and possible effect size, data were dichotomously dummy coded to a strict insider (stay in current district) or outsider (nearby or residency change district) preference and no preference responses removed. The significant relation between career track
preference and gender was maintained after dichotomous data coding, $\chi^2(1) = 6.80, p = 0.05$, and the effect size was increased to account for 12.8% of the variance $\eta^2 = 0.128$.

The same sample was asked where they thought they had the best chance of becoming a superintendent: 41.7% responded inside their current district, 18.1% responded in a nearby district, 8.3% responded in a district requiring a change of residency, and 31.9% responded with equally optimal chances in any district. A chi-square test of independence examined the relation between aspirant superintendents’ perception of the optimum career pathway and gender and indicated these were unrelated overall, $\chi^2(3) = 6.01, p > 0.05$. Nonetheless, more male aspiring superintendents thought applying in a nearby district (25.0%) or district requiring them to change their residence (12.5%) than females (9.4% and 3.1%, respectively) would be most optimal. Conversely, more female aspiring superintendents thought applying in their current district (46.9%) would be most optimal as compared to males (37.5%) or thought the career pathways were equally as optimal (40.6% female and 25.0% male). In order to increase sample cell size for the highest level of test accuracy, data were dichotomously dummy coded to a strict insider (stay in current district) or outsider (nearby or residency change district) perception of optimality and “equally optimal” responses dropped. A chi-squared test of independence after dichotomous data coding revealed a significant relation explaining 8.4% of the variance between the perceived optimal career track and gender, $\chi^2(1) = 4.11, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.084$. Summaries of quantitative data for each question is shown in Table 3.

Data for qualitative open-ended questions inquiring about why assistant superintendents perceived the insider or outsider pathway as optimal produced different factors. Female insiders perceived reputation, relationships, and familiarity in that order as the most prominent contributing factors towards making the insider pathway more optimal. Male insiders perceived
reputation, familiarly, and relationships in that order as the most prominent contributing factors. Female outsiders perceived a need for new ideas as the top contributing factor and perceived experience, new perspectives, and personal factors as equally contributive towards the optimality of the outsider career path. Male outsiders perceived a need for new perspectives as the top contributor, followed by equally contributive new ideas and experience as contributing most towards the outsider path’s strengths. Those responding qualitatively for perceiving the nearby district career pathway as most optimal were small in number, but females responded with the most contribution from location, qualifications, and reputation; while males perceived the age of the current superintendent in their district, networking, and then experience and location as equally important. Counts of all the themes for males and females by insider, nearby district, or outsiders are displayed in Table 4.

Superintendents

A total of 189 superintendents responded to the complete survey. Of these respondents, 51.9% reported taking an insider pathway to their first superintendency position and 48.1% responded as taking an outsider career path. Furthermore, 119 superintendents were acting in their first superintendency position, with 59.7% of these first-time superintendents previously employed in their current district in some capacity. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between superintendent career pathway and gender. Although more male superintendents (51.4%) took an outsider pathway than females (38.3%), gender and superintendent career pathway were unrelated overall, $\chi^2 (1) = 2.43, p = 0.05$. These results are inconsistent with superintendent reporting of their previous employment in the district. A chi-squared test of independence demonstrated that previous employment in the district and gender were significantly related, $\chi^2 (1) = 3.70, p = 0.05$. These inconsistent results could be a factor of
time or a small effect size, $\eta^2 = 0.031$. The insider or outsider career pathway asked all superintendents about their first superintendent position, but the previous employment question only asked superintendents currently in their first superintendent position about their previous district of employment.

Of the 91 outsider superintendents responding, 20.9% considered themselves well known in the district where they gained employment while 79.1% did not. An independent-samples $t$-test was performed to examine the relation between how well known a new superintendent was in a district and gender. The relation between these variables was significant, $t(72) = 5.03$, $p < 0.05$, with 6.5% of the variance in how well known a person was in a district explained by gender, $\eta^2 = 0.065$. More male superintendents (26.0%) than female assistant superintendents (0.0%) were well known in an outsider district where they gained employment as a superintendent for the first time. A chi-squared test could not be used on this data due to the lack of responses from women who self-identified as well-known. As such, data were dummy coded dichotomously to create a faux continuous outcome variable.

Of the 55 superintendents reporting an outsider career pathway to their first superintendency, 47.3% reported their commute time increased, 21.8% that their commute time decreased, and 30.95 that their commute time remained the same. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between outsider superintendent commute time change and gender. Although more females (63.6%) had increased commute times than males (43.2%) and more males (34.1%) had unchanged commute times than females (18.2%), decreased commute times were generally equal between the genders. As such, gender and outsider superintendent commute time were unrelated overall, $\chi^2 (2) = 1.58$, $p > 0.05$. 
Of the 90 outsider superintendents responding, 36.7% relocated for their accepted position and 63.3% did not. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between outsider superintendent relocation and gender. No significant relationships were found, $\chi^2(1) = 0.11$, $p > 0.05$.

Most superintendents believed their career pathway choice helped them achieve their current positions. Of the 95 insiders, 94.7% thought the insider pathway was helpful. Of the 89 outsiders, 70.8% thought the outsider pathway was helpful. A chi-square test of independence that examined the relation between perception of career pathway helpfulness and chosen career path found it to be significant, $\chi^2(1) = 18.82$, $p < 0.05$, and explained 95.2% of the variance between perception of career pathway helpfulness and chosen career path, $\eta^2 = 0.952$. Insiders perceived the insider career pathway as more beneficial towards their career goals than outsiders. There were no significant relationships when career pathway benefit was examined in relation to gender using chi-squared tests for gender and insider benefit, $\chi^2(1) = 0.281$, $p > 0.05$; outsider benefit, $\chi^2(1) = 0.22$, $p > 0.05$; or benefit of insider versus outsider, $\chi^2(1) = 1.33$, $p > 0.05$.

Quantitative data for each question is summarized in Table 3.

Data for qualitative items inquiring about factors contributing towards superintendents’ chosen career pathways indicated that female insiders perceived familiarity followed by both application requests and a drive to help in that district as contributing factors towards their career pathway choices. Male insiders reported application requests followed by familiarity and then a drive to help in their district as their contributing factors. Female outsiders stated opportunities were most contributive to their outsider career pathway choices. They responded with equal emphasis on application requests, better districts, poor relationships, and location as contributive. Male outsiders responded with opportunity much more often as a contributing factor, followed
by better districts and poor relationships. Counts of all the factors identified by males and females and by insider or outsiders are displayed in Table 5.

Discussion

The Gender Gap

The gender gap persists in educational leadership in the state of Pennsylvania. The response rate of female administrators in this study aligned with and confirmed state data indicating that 29% of superintendents are female. Additionally, the study confirmed that female assistant superintendents are less likely to be interested in aspiring to be superintendents than their male peers (Glass, 2000; Munoz, Mills, Pankake, & Whaley, 2014). Such a discrepancy is alarming because it provides a clear mechanism for the perpetuation of the gender gap in educational leadership. If women remain uninterested in the superintendency, education leadership and the decision-making involved will continue to be driven by male understandings, priorities and approaches, while reinforcing stereotypical beliefs that only men can lead effectively. Researchers must begin to investigate why this disinterest exists and how to attract more women to top-level leadership positions in education.

The lack of interest in the superintendency by women demonstrated in the present study gains further meaning when considered as a factor responsible for the gender discrepancy in leadership. Previous studies have indicated that women enter the superintendency later in their career than men and this perpetuates the gender discrepancy (Glass, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2011; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010). However, our study did not confirm this trend with 54.2% of female superintendent respondents and 47.2% of males making up the 46-55-year-old age range. This equitable pattern continued through the over 55 range with
35.4% females and 31.3% males, which ultimately accounted for over 75% of the sample in the over 46 age range.

It is possible, however, that women began their leadership journey at later ages. Assistant superintendents did not mirror the consistent age patterning by gender although no significant differences were present. Most women were in the 46-55 age range (51.1%) while most men were in the 35-45 age range (42.2%). Women and men made up 31.9% and 37.8% of the 35-45 and 46-55 age ranges, respectively. Again, over 75% of each group were in two age ranges, but the 35-55 age range is very broad when considered in the context of career development. This delay in possible superintendency entry age for women was mirrored in data from the state of New York (The New York State Council of School Superintendents [NYSCoSS], 2016) demonstrating possible generalizability of findings. In their report, NYSCoSS wrote:

Where the differences [between men and women] remain stark are the significantly higher proportion of unmarried/unpartnered women, and the higher proportion of men with school-aged children. Given the time and stress demands of the superintendency, much more work needs to be done to understand these differences and whether (or perhaps, how) traditional gender roles around family responsibility impact the pathway to the superintendency (p. 6).

Although this study only begins to explore the effects of those pathway and how to work around any related biases, the presence of related findings confirms the need for more research investigating such impacts.

Cultural changes presented a possible mechanism for age similarities despite gender in educational leaders previously unseen in the superintendency. As the NYSCoSS (2016) study indicated, family responsibilities were no longer defaulted for the female household leader. In
fact, the typical American nuclear family consisted of dual earners often sharing many parental responsibilities (Lindsey, 2015). These dual earning families often engaged in egalitarian marriages where, “partners share decision making and assign family roles based on talent and choice rather than traditional beliefs about gender” (Lindsey, 2015, p. 235). As both men and women share previously feminine duties, effects of the maternal wall (see Williams, 2003) may become weaker, allowing women to enter leadership roles earlier, or a parallel paternal wall could create limitations to entry into the superintendency for men in the future. Indeed, only male superintendents cited family as a factor contributing towards their superintendency career pathway choice. One assistant superintendent described his current disinterest in the superintendency as follows:

There are currently several positions available in districts throughout Pennsylvania. I have three daughters in school and I do not wish to pull them from school to relocate. Nor do I wish to become a weekend Dad! I will not sacrifice taking care of my own children to move away to take care of everyone else's children. My "Dad cap" is more important to me than a "Superintendent's cap" at this point in my life.

As familial gender roles continue to blur, more flexibility may emerge in the career pathways of both men and women in education.

**Perceptions of Optimal Career Pathways to the Superintendency**

Data from the present study provided interesting insights into views of superintendency career pathways and inconsistencies between perceptions and practice. Assistant superintendents generally perceived the insider pathway as most effective (41.7%), but nearly a third believed insider or outsider pathways did not create an advantage or disadvantage (31.9%). Nonetheless, the remaining 25% perceived a nearby district as more helpful than an outside district. Assistant
superintendents preferred the pathways in the same pattern the strongest preferences for the insider pathway, followed by no preferences, a preference for a nearby district, and finally a preference for an outside district. Oddly, application histories suggested assistant superintendents did not consider optimality or preference when applying as more than 50% of assistant superintendents applied only as outsiders whereas only about 25% either preferred or thought the outside or nearby district pathway was most optimal. A similar number of assistant superintendents applied in both districts as responded with no perceived optimal career pathway, but less than 25% applied as insiders despite a majority of responses preferring and seeing that pathway as most optimal.

To better understand the application history, preferences, and perceptions of assistant superintendents in comparison to superintendents; data were analyzed as just insider or outsider. When considering application history dichotomously, an even more blatant difference in insider/outsider differences became present with 70% of applications outside the district. When compared with 66% and 61% insider preference and perception of optimality, respectively, one cannot ignore the inverted pattern. Assistant superintendents applied for the superintendency in ways inconsistent with their preferences and perceptions for a best chance at success. Perhaps these assistant superintendents did not achieve superintendent positions because of these application patterns. Imaginably, more opportunities for outsider applications might exist for assistant superintendents as individuals are only located in one district, but can apply in any of the remaining 500 districts within the state as an outsider. Qualitative data helped to explain these inconsistencies. Insiders typically noted reputation as the most pertinent reason to apply in district while outsiders cited new ideas and perspectives. If an individual did not feel they had
yet acquired a strong enough reputation or had different enough ideas, they might choose to apply in a way inconsistent with their perceptions.

Gender differences in assistant superintendent perceptions presented a similar story with some notable concerns. Significant gender differences in assistant superintendents’ preferences, but not application histories suggested women experienced considerations but not practices towards applying for the superintendency differently than men. While men almost equally responded as preferring an inside, nearby district, or having no preference; women responded as strongly favoring the insider pathway, followed by nearly half as many without preferences and very few choosing a nearby or outsider pathway. Considering the optimal route dichotomously, gender appeared significant: males equally chose the insider or outsider pathway while females strongly saw the insider pathway as optimal. No significant differences by gender were found in application histories although these were again inconsistent with preferences and optimality perceptions.

The preference and perceived optimality of the insider route by females was not surprising. Women rising through an insider pathway may experience less gender bias due to past experiences and reputations that dismantle typical gender stereotypes (Dawley Hoffman, & Smith, 2004). Studies demonstrated women led in more effective manners and especially so in domains that would build such reputations and make an impression during interactions with others. Folkman (2015) noted:

The bias of most people is that females would be better at nurturing competencies, such as developing others and relationship building. While this is true, the competencies with the largest differences between males and females were taking initiative, practicing self-development, integrity/honesty, and driving for results….while men excel in the technical
and strategic arenas, women clearly have the advantage in the extremely important areas of people relationships and communication. They also surpass their male counterparts in driving for results. (pp. 168-169)

Women make impressions, and impressions overcome biases.

Perceptions of why each pathway would help were consistent with the literature as well. Women rated reputation, relationships, and familiarity (in that order) as the most common reasons they saw the insider pathway as more advantageous. One woman said: “[I have a] long history of successful work in multiple roles in my current district [that] would overcome any bias against my non-traditional background.” She demonstrated a clear understanding of the advantage of reputation over bias. Men noted the same top items, but rated familiarity over relationships. One man simply responded that, “reputation and knowledge of the system,” provided him an internal advantage. Although both genders understood that impressions were most related to insider advantages, women noted relationships more often than men.

A focus on gender-based strengths was less apparent in those considering the outsider or nearby district pathway as most optimal. Men saw a lack of history and new perspectives as most helpful followed by both new ideas and experience in the field. Meanwhile, women noted most often new ideas followed by new perspectives, experience, and personal reasons. One must note that fewer women responded to the open-response question for outsiders, so these patterns may not be as indicative of females overall as that of male respondents. Here, men and women cited quite similar reasons for the strengths of the outsider pathway. Both genders understood the traditional hiring of an outsider when a district wanted to enact change (Carlson, 1961) and perceived advantages in that pathway in a consistent manner.
Those men perceiving their best chance toward the superintendency through a nearby district mentioned the age of the current superintendent as the motivating factor while women noted reputation, experience, and location equally. Men considering an insider path considered the likelihood of the current superintendent leaving. One man responded: “[I have better chances in a nearby district] because my current Superintendent is young and effective. He has a long career here if he wants it.” Women noted both reputation (a high insider factor) and experience (a high outsider factor). One women wrote: “I have a strong background in education including experience at all levels in K-12. I have a quality professional reputation. I also have central office experience in a high performing school district.” This woman discussed both strong experience and reputation that if seen in a nearby district could overshadow any stereotypical gender biases. Overall, women and men considered advantages based on career pathway in ways consistent with the literature on the advantages and disadvantages of insider/outsider pathways.

Patterns in Career Pathways to the Superintendency

The insider and outsider pathways were generally equally employed by superintendents when entering their first superintendent position. Interestingly, gender differences only existed when asking current first time superintendents about their career pathways rather than when asking all superintendents about their first superintendency position. As the typical contract of a superintendent in Pennsylvania is 3-4 years, this might reflect a longitudinal change in the career pathway choices of males versus females. This might also relate to a confusion in the wording of the questions as one question asked about previous employment within the district and the other asked about taking an insider or outsider pathway, see Table 1. If the longitudinal change is responsible, the data would indicate that in the past 3-4 years more females were hired as internal candidates than external candidates while men were hired equally internally and externally. This
could be indicative of women understanding and choosing more effective career paths, more internal candidates being hired overall (61% of first time superintendents in the study were hired internally as compared to 39% of second or more time superintendents), increased gender bias by school boards when hiring external female candidates, fewer external applications either overall or by women only, or simply an increase in women hired (26% of first time superintendents in the study were female as compared with 23% of second or more time superintendents). Despite the reason for this possible change, a gender difference in career pathways for first time superintendents suggests an advantage of the insider pathway for females aspiring towards the superintendency.

Females explained this advantage as related to familiarity with the district, their drive to help, and requests to apply by school boards or retiring superintendents. The application request factor was similarly noted as most important in males choosing insider pathways suggesting districts might be pre-selecting internal hires for superintendent. One women wrote:

I, in fact, did not apply for my position. Being closer to retirement age than many first time superintendents, I was in agreement with our Board to conduct an outside search for the superintendent. (I was the Assistant Superintendent at the time.) However, after many months of this process, I was approached by the Board to assume this position. At that time, I agreed to step in for a three-year contract and shift our focus to hiring an Assistant Superintendent from the outside. We are currently grooming him to be the next superintendent.

Internal grooming of future superintendents could result in an inflation of internal hires and create a false perception or statistical indication of advantage in the insider route; however, a lack of such advantage for males suggests a real difference might still exist. Males also cited
familiarity and a drive to help as contributing factors in their chosen insider career paths: “I had experience with the district - understanding the district's culture and expectations from the community. I demonstrated an ability and desire to lead and help the district continue to move forwards and help students and teachers succeed.”

Outsider superintendents typically cited job opportunity (or a lack thereof in their current district) as the factor most contributing to their career pathway choice and indicated they would have preferred an insider position:

The superintendent at my previous district will be there for several more years. I had been an assistant to the superintendent and assistant superintendent in that district for seven years. It was time to look for a superintendent's position. I would have stayed if the job would have been available.” –male response

A female respondent noted, “Inside position not open.” while another male respondent explained:

Many different factors. The Superintendency was not open in my district at the time; the Superintendency was something I was striving for at the time of my move. I was told I was going to make a great Superintendent. I felt it was the right time to make the move.”

Other responses included factors such as poor relationships, movement to a better or preferred school district, location, and family. These factors suggest aspirant superintendents considered the district fit as an educational leader and personal fit as an individual as well.

Open response items indicated location and school district quality were more important for men than women as shown in responses such as, “I liked the district and it decreased my travel time,” and, “Good district close to home.” It is possible only men had the opportunity to be selective about districts due to women’s need to overcome bias. One woman wrote, “You
generally have to overcome the way you are viewed. If you've worked in district, have done a great job, there is a concern that your area will not be sustained. I think it’s a perception issue.”

Nonetheless, data trends indicated that women experienced an increased commute time more often than men when becoming superintendent although neither gender typically relocated for a superintendency position.

More men than women reported being “well-known” when moving to the superintendency as an outsider. In fact, no women outsiders reported being well-known in their new district of employment as first time superintendents. Given that connections and mentoring experiences are often cited as influential in women’s leadership success (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2008), a lack of such relationships was surprising. Perhaps this is a remnant of the ‘old boys’ network and external networking among men remains stronger than that of women. Nevertheless, the advantage of relationships cannot be denied. Women and school districts should work towards making external connections that may result in larger percentages of outsider career pathway efficacy and hiring.

**Changing Perceptions of Pathway Efficacy**

Superintendents had different perceptions of the helpfulness of insider or outsider career pathways than assistant superintendents. Sixty-eight percent of assistant superintendents reported an optimal career pathway as compared to thinking career pathways were equally optimal. Conversely, 83% of superintendents reported thinking their career pathway helped them to their position. This was especially present in males with 59% of assistant superintendents and 85% of superintendents reporting career pathway helpfulness (females reported 75% of assistant superintendents and 83% of superintendents). This might indicate a change in perceptions of career pathway efficacy or optimality. Assistant superintendents may have perceived the career
pathway as less important, but after experiencing the superintendency hiring process found the pathway more assistive than originally considered. If true, aspirant superintendents should attribute more importance to their chosen career pathways and apply in concert with these optimal pathways in order to achieve success. The potential under-valuing of career pathways might be responsible for any disconnect between perceptions of optimality and preference and actual application history found in assistant superintendents aspiring to the superintendency. This is supported by the larger disconnect found in men, which coincides with the larger difference in pathway helpfulness in men between the assistant superintendents and superintendents.

Summary of Findings

The gender gap not only still exists in Pennsylvania, but also appears likely to continue if changes do not occur. Women were less interested in the superintendency, less likely to rise to the position through the more-available outsider career pathways, not well known in outsider districts, and both preferred and perceived insider pathways as most optimal. The insider pathway was both preferred and perceived as most optimal for gaining the superintendency and employed more often by current superintendents when rising to their first superintendency. Nevertheless, more assistant superintendents applied as outsiders. This level of disconnect was mirrored in the perception of helpfulness due to pathway by assistant superintendents as compared to the perceived helpfulness of superintendents. Those applying for the superintendency chose insider pathways due to reputation and relationships while those acquiring the superintendency noted application requests and district familiarity as their driving factors. Outsiders saw new ideas and perspectives as reasons to apply externally while those current superintendents viewed opportunity as their real reason for applying as outsiders. These results collectively indicate gender bias is still an issue in educational leadership, but shed light
on how both aspirant superintendents and school boards can proceed to counteract and alleviate this social justice challenge.

**Future Research**

Two pressing issues revealed by this study are the disconnect between preference and application and the disconnect between assistant superintendent and superintendent perceptions of career pathway helpfulness. These issues provide a plethora of future research directions including an exploration the differences in these perceptions and practices through both exploratory and theory-driven methodologies in order to build a well-explained and understandable image of the efficacy and meaning of the insider versus outsider career pathway model. Studies extending from the current data should increase sample size or employ a qualitative methodological design. As inequities are again confirmed in this study, future research must continue to explore gender bias in educational leadership and how this impacts a woman’s desire to aspire to the superintendency. One area of concern includes why women are less interested in the superintendency and how educational systems can attract women. Studies could explore traditional and non-traditional familiar gender roles in educational constructs as are related to positions of leadership. Moreover, studies should explore what drives a woman’s career path choices when she does aspire to the superintendency both in the aforementioned contexts and others.

**Implications**

This study revealed that the insider career pathway does, in fact, provide some benefit to female aspiring superintendents and aspiring superintendents overall. Following that women perceived this advantage highlights that women recognize bias and possible routes for overcoming the existing gender bias in the system. Men were both more likely to obtain outsider
career path positions and equally likely to obtain insider positions. This confirms the existence of a challenging success route for aspirant female superintendents, which may account for some of the disinterest in the position by females. Seeing that requests to apply were most often cited as a contributing factor for the efficacy of the insider career pathway by superintendents, aspirants could aim to create relationships and build reputations in their current districts that might influence others to request applications when positions open. Those who must consider outsider career pathways, reportedly most often due to younger current superintendents, must work towards enhancing their experience and ability to provide new ideas and perspectives to districts providing superintendency opportunities. Districts, especially those looking to hire outsider candidates, must work harder to attract women to superintendency positions. They might do this by reducing gender bias, offering familiarity and relationship-building interventions, specifically requesting female applicants apply, or mentoring women to build interest in those positions.

Finally, familial gender roles must be taken into consideration during the hiring and application process. School boards must consider biases created through such roles and avoid allowing these thoughts to impact decisions. Ultimately, biases exist on both ends of the hiring/application process and career pathways might be used to diminish the effects of such biases. Insider career pathways offer opportunity for all aspiring superintendents, but especially future female educational leaders.
GENDER AND THE SUPERINTENDENCY

References

AUTHOR & OTHER (YEAR).


Polinchock, J. A. (2014). *Female elementary principals' perceptions about access to potential career routes to the superintendency in Pennsylvania* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Theses and Dissertations (Paper 1596); http://preserve.lehigh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2596&context=etd


GENDER AND THE SUPERINTENDENCY


### Survey items and available responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Group: Available Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| With which gender do you most identify?                             | A • Male  
                                                          • Female                                                   |
| What is your age?                                                   | A • 25-35  
                                                          • 36-45  
                                                          • 46-55  
                                                          • Over 55                                                   |
| What best describes your current position?                          | A • Superintendent  
                                                          • Assistant Superintendent  
                                                          • Central Office Administration  
                                                          • Building Level Administration                              |
| Are you a first time superintendent?                                | S • Yes  
                                                          • No                                                          |
| How long have you been in your current position?                    | A • Less than 1 year  
                                                          • 1-3 years  
                                                          • 4-6 years  
                                                          • 7 or more years                                            |
| Are you interested in becoming a superintendent?                    | AS • Yes  
                                                          • No                                                          |
| Which of the following would best describe your superintendent application history? | AS • I have only applied for a position in my district.  
                                                          • I have applied for a position in another district.  
                                                          • I have applied for position inside and outside of my current district. |
| If you were to become a superintendent, would you prefer to:         | AS • Stay in your current district.  
                                                          • Accept a position in a nearby district.  
                                                          • Move to a district that requires you to change your place of residence.  
                                                          • No preference                                          |
### GENDER AND THE SUPERINTENDENCY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Group: Available Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where do you think you have the best chance of becoming a superintendent?</td>
<td>AS • In your current district. • In a nearby district. • In a district that would require you to change your place of residence. • Your chance would be the same in any district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think you have the best chance of becoming a superintendent in your current district/a nearby district/a district that would require you to change your place of residence?</td>
<td>AS Open Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you previously employed in your current district?</td>
<td>S* • Yes • No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Thinking back to your first superintendent position)</em>, did you take and insider (within your district) or outsider (outside your district) pathway to the superintendency?</td>
<td>S • Insider • Outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Thinking back to your first superintendent position)</em>, do you think taking the insider/outside pathway to the superintendency helped you obtain your position as superintendent?</td>
<td>S • Yes • No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Thinking back to your first superintendent position)</em>, how do you think applying as an insider/outside helped you obtain your position as superintendent?</td>
<td>S Open Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Thinking back to your first superintendent position)</em>, did you relocated in order to accept your superintendent position?</td>
<td>S-o • Yes • No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Thinking back to your first superintendent position)</em>, did your commute time change when you became superintendent?</td>
<td>S-o • My commute time increased. • My commute time decreased. • My commute time stayed the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Thinking back to your first superintendent position)</em>, what made you choose to apply for the superintendency inside/outside your district rather than outside/inside?</td>
<td>S Open Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Thinking back to your first superintendent position)</em>, were you well known in the district where you gained employment as a superintendent?</td>
<td>S • Yes • No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Italics indicate part of question dependent on previous answers. Group represents to which items were shown; A=all, AS=assistant superintendents, S=superintendents, S-o=outsider superintendents, S*={first time superintendents}
## Table 2

Descriptive Data by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Super.</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older than 55</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+ year</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Positions do not include data for central office personnel. These six respondents represent 2.0% of the total sample.
Table 3

Summary of Quantitative Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Insider</th>
<th>Nearby</th>
<th>Outsider</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Superintendent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application History (m,f)</td>
<td>23.1 (18.2, 29.4)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>53.8 (50.0, 58.8)</td>
<td>23.1 (31.8, 11.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference*</td>
<td>48.6 (35.0, 65.6)</td>
<td>20.8 (30.0, 9.4)</td>
<td>4.2 (5.0, 3.1)</td>
<td>26.4 (30.0, 21.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimal Application Route</td>
<td>41.7 (37.5, 46.9)</td>
<td>18.1 (25.0, 9.4)</td>
<td>8.3 (12.5, 3.1)</td>
<td>31.9 (25.0, 40.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application History</td>
<td>30.0 (26.7, 33.3)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>70.0 (73.3, 66.7)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference*</td>
<td>66.0 (50.0, 84.0)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>34.0 (50.0, 22.2)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimal Application Route*</td>
<td>61.2 (50.0, 78.9)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>38.8 (50.0, 21.1)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superintendent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Employment*</td>
<td>59.7 (54.5, 74.2)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>40.3 (45.5, 25.8)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Career Path</td>
<td>51.9 (48.6, 61.7)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>48.1 (51.4, 38.3)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes/Increased</th>
<th>No/Decreased</th>
<th>Unchanged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Superintendent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you apply for the superintendency in the past?</td>
<td>42.3 (50.0, 34.7)</td>
<td>57.7 (50.0, 65.3)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you interested in the superintendency?*</td>
<td>75.0 (85.1, 65.3)</td>
<td>25.0 (14.9, 34.7)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superintendent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you think your chosen pathway was helpful?</td>
<td>83.2 (82.6, 84.8)</td>
<td>16.8 (17.4, 15.2)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have to relocate for the superintendency?</td>
<td>36.7 (37.5, 33.3)</td>
<td>63.3 (62.5, 66.7)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you well-known in your new district?*</td>
<td>20.9 (26.0, 0.0)</td>
<td>79.1 (74.0, 100.0)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did your commute time change?</td>
<td>47.3 (43.2, 63.6)</td>
<td>21.8 (22.7, 16.7)</td>
<td>30.9 (34.1, 18.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Top percentages represent overall percentage of response in category. Bottom percentages represent the given responses by gender; overall (males, females). Italicized data indicate items recoded to insider or outsider only responses. Responses of “nearby” were grouped with “outsider” responses and “both” responses were dropped.

* = Significant difference by gender at the 0.05 level; n = number of responses for given item; NA = not applicable.
# GENDER AND THE SUPERINTENDENCY

## Table 4

*Count of Contributing Factors towards Assistant Superintendents’ Perceptions of Optimal Career Paths*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Insider</th>
<th>©</th>
<th>©</th>
<th>©</th>
<th>©</th>
<th>©</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputaiton</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No History/New Perspective</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request to Apply</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Ideas</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Current Superintendent Age</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Grooming</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residency/Location</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*Count of Contributing Factors towards Superintendents’ Chosen Career Paths*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Insider Male</th>
<th>Insider Female</th>
<th>Outsider Male</th>
<th>Outsider Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request to Apply</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive to Help</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better District</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Relationships</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predetermined</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Suggested/Mentored</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Natural Progression</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for Change</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>