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Voices of Female, Rural Superintendents as They Implement California's Local Control Funding Formula Policy

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The University of San Francisco

VOICES OF FEMALE, RURAL SUPERINTENDENTS AS THEY IMPLEMENT
CALIFORNIA'S LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA POLICY

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Claudia Coughran
San Francisco
May 2016

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Voices of Female, Rural Superintendents as They Implement California's
Local Control Funding Formula Policy

The notion of improving U.S. schools and the educational leaders who guide and oversee U.S. schools, has a historic background; yet research to accomplish the improvement is rooted in urban schools and male educational leaders, particularly the superintendent of schools. National and state leaders have used education policy to improve student achievement for decades. California played a pivotal roll in the national trend for numerous years; most recently with the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) policy passed in 2013. The purpose of this study was to listen to the voices of female rural superintendents as they implemented California's LCFF policy.

This qualitative study included 9 participants from rural local education agencies (LEAs) in Central and Northern California. Each participant participated in a 1-hour, semistructured interview in her office. Also, I observed each participant as they facilitated a meeting. The third piece of this triangulated research design included the review of each LEA's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). All data were collected, analyzed, and coded to align with Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory. This emerging theory identifies five themes through which female educational leaders generally lead: relational leadership, leadership for social justice, leadership for learning, spiritual leadership, and balanced leadership.

Data from interviews, observations, and LCAP indicated strong evidence supporting Grogan and Shakeshaft's diverse collective leadership theory. All participants exhibited multiple data points in more than one of the leadership themes identified in the

theory, with relational leadership being the most pervasive, followed by leadership for learning and social justice leadership. Balanced and spiritual leadership had scant data points, leading me to question why. Further research in the areas of rural female superintendents was recommended in addition to extensive research to support Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) emerging theory. Particular attention to examining the presence or absence of balanced and spiritual leadership was also suggested.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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May 20, 2016
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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Top US students fare poorly in international [Programme for International Student Assessment] test scores, Shanghai tops the world, Finland slips.

—Barshay, 2013, para. 1

As U.S. test scores lag, study shows violence, poverty, teen pregnancy are high.

—E. Brown, 2015, para. 1

U.S. student performance on international exams has fallen compared to other industrial nations in recent years, a fact policy makers and others often cite in arguing that U.S. public schools need rapid reform in order to maintain their global competitiveness

—E. Brown, 2015, para. 1

U.S. students improving—slowly—in math and science, but still lagging internationally

—Desilver, 2015, para. 1

Minnesota student test scores show little change despite vow to improve

—Matos & Howatt, 2015, para. 1

Public Media's American Graduate initiative alerts America to dropout crisis

—Dowdall, 2015, para. 1

These quotations represent a small sample of recent headlines and press regarding the status of public education in the United States. It has become difficult for any American to escape the publicity and media coverage about the perceived lack of quality in U.S. public education, particularly since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act

of 2001 (NCLB; Michelman, 2012). Education reform has been part of the average U.S. lexicon since the launch of Sputnik in 1957, yet research on reform initiatives has focused on urban school systems (Smylie & Wenzel, 2003), and research on educational leadership to implement reform initiatives has been characterized as performed by men, about men, and for men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Studies of how specific education policies are implemented are rare, particularly when addressing recent changes in public school funding in California (Knudson, 2014). The present study highlights the voices of female rural superintendents as they implement California's recent Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) policy, closing a gap in current education literature.

In 1957 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics launched Sputnik, "the world's first artificial satellite" (Garber, 2007, p. 1), much to the embarrassment of the United States (Powell, 2007; Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns, & Lombard, 2009). Americans were shocked as the common perception was that the United States was second to none in all things (Powell, 2007). How could this happen? "How could a technologically backward country like Russia beat the acknowledged world leader into space? ... The Russians beat us into space because they have better schools" (Bracey, 2011, para. 8).

Twenty-four years later, Secretary of Education Bell, concerned about "the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, para 2), chartered the National Commission on Excellence in Education to research the problem and report back with "practical recommendations for educational improvement" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, para 1). *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative*

for Educational Reform (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was the result.

A Nation at Risk presented multiple indicators that U.S. schools were not preparing students for the future including that (a) many 17-year-olds did not possess the higher order intellectual skills educators should expect of them; (b) business and military leaders complained they had to spend millions of dollars on costly remedial education and training programs, and (c) The College Board's SAT demonstrated a virtually unbroken decline from 1963 to 1980 (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). These findings were similarly used as a rationale for NCLB in 2001, as well as the impetus for recent Common Core State Standards (Bennett et al., 1998; Rothman, 2012).

The focus of *A Nation at Risk* was directed at reform for classroom teachers and was widely considered ineffective (U.S. Congress, 1988); therefore, the new reform efforts of NCLB legislation focused on school-level reform directed by teachers' supervisors and school leaders: the principal (Elmore, 2000). School leadership research sought to determine the role of the principal in transforming schools, particularly schools serving the neediest students in the United States (D. B. Collins, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Floch, Taylor, & Thomsen, 2006; Fullan, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McLester, 2011; NCLB, 2002). Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 specific principal leadership behaviors, grouped in nine qualities, needed to turn low-achieving schools into high-achieving schools through a meta-analysis. These include, in order of correlation with student achievement:

1. situational awareness;

2. discipline; outreach; monitoring/evaluating;
3. culture; order; resources; knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment; input; change agent;
4. focus; contingent rewards; intellectual stimulation;
5. communication;
6. ideals/beliefs;
7. involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment; visibility, optimizer;
8. affirmation;
9. relationships

From this body of work, an entirely new category of research was born called *turnaround research* (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005).

As turnaround research developed, education leaders and academics continued to seek additional methods and strategies to support all children to reach their full potential. Of particular importance was district leadership, particularly that of the district superintendent in bringing about systemic educational change (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009; Hanks, 2010; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Smylie & Wenzel, 2003)

Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a second meta-analysis, identifying six leadership practices or correlates found in superintendents who served in districts with high student achievement: (a) collaborative goal-setting that includes all relevant district stakeholders; (b) creating nonnegotiable goals focused on student achievement; (c) governing board alignment and support for nonnegotiable goals; (d) allocation and alignment of resources to support the goals; (e) continuous monitoring of the

nonnegotiable goals, and (f) defined autonomy of school principals to implement nonnegotiable district goals. It was unclear if these findings were applicable to district leaders across the United States or only to those in large urban school districts where the turnaround research was conducted.

The context where leaders' work is relevant to the leadership behaviors they use, particularly in contexts of school-district size and geographic location (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011). Additionally, "geography should not dictate educational quality" (Jimerson, 2005, p. 218). Rural superintendents experience additional leadership challenges because of the district's isolation, limited resources, and community resistance to change (Lamkin, 2006). The turnaround research was conducted in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and the Bay Area of California: all large, urban school districts (Barrett, Cowen, Toma, & Troske, 2015; Fullan, 2005; Jimerson, 2005; McDonald, 2014; Smylie & Wenzel, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Currently, 57% of superintendents in the United States serve in a rural school district while only 5% of superintendents serve in an urban district; thus, although many U.S. children attend school in an urban area, most superintendents lead in rural areas (Aud et al., 2013).

Superintendents' experiences are not the same across the country in that superintendents work in varied size school systems ranging from quite small to quite large (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). For example, "distinct differences exist in elements of practice according to school system size with small school districts doing things differently from large school districts" (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson 2011, p. 5). Further study is needed on superintendent

leadership behaviors based on the geographic location where the leader works, adding to the rationale for context specific research (Bredeson et al., 2011; Lamkin, 2006).

Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, and Reeves (2012) addressed the contextual variable of geographic location by studying the leadership practices and priorities of superintendents in rural Michigan, comparing them to Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent leadership correlates. Two important insights were revealed: most of what educators know about effective school-district leadership practice has been gleaned from studying urban and suburban school leaders; and the leadership practices of rural superintendents have generated little academic interest and even less scholarship (Forner et al., 2012). In today's accountability education culture, it is imperative to understand how effective leadership practices and priorities impact a quality, differentiated education regardless of where students live (Arsen & Mason, 2013; Jimerson, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; NCLB, 2002).

The gender of the leader was also determined to be a contextual variable (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Abundant scholarship regarding female leadership behaviors reveals women tend to be more inclusive than men in their leadership practices, particularly when implementing policy (Björk, Glass, & Brunner, 2005; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Gilligan, 1982; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Tallerico, 2000). The U.S. Census Bureau has characterized the superintendency as the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States (Björk, 2000). Because leadership and researcher positions in education are held overwhelmingly by men, research in the field has been characterized as being gender-biased (Björk, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Garn & Brown, 2008; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Tallerico, 2000).

Only in the last 20 years has research on female educational leaders been examined as an independent topic, compared with a research base spanning over 250 years on male educational leaders, culminating with the first American Association of School Administrators (AASA) survey administered exclusively to female superintendents in 2005 (Björk, 2000; Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011).

Fewer than 18% of districts are currently led by a woman. An inaugural study of female superintendents and central office administrators revealed if a woman is a district superintendent, she will most likely be assigned to a rural district (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). In rural areas, “female superintendents face exaggerated political problems compared to their male counterparts” (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 118).

Scholarship on female leaders in any field indicates that women lead differently from men (Gilligan, 1982) and these differences can be intentionally implemented in educational systems with positive results (Gupton & Slick, 1996). In 2011, Grogan and Shakeshaft introduced *diverse collective leadership* as a theory capturing five specific ways women lead: (a) relational leadership; (b) leadership for social justice; (c) spiritual leadership; (d) leadership for learning, and; (e) balanced leadership. Although these leadership tendencies are not gender exclusive, women typically exemplify them more often than men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011), yet how this emerging theory directly impacts rural, female superintendents has not been studied.

Finally, the impact superintendent leadership has on the implementation of federal, state, and local policy is critical to education reform, because the role of the superintendent is to implement education policy (Washington State School Directors’ Association, 2009). The strength of superintendents’ leadership is exemplified by their

implementation of policy (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). When policy is drafted, the creators are “often not sensitive to contextual variables such as leadership gender, district size, [and whether the district serves] rural or urban communities” (Bredeson & Kose, 2007, p. 3). A gap in the literature emerged as reform-research has been solely conducted in large, urban school districts (Jimerson, 2005; Johnson & Howley, 2015; Smylie & Wenzel, 2003) and scholarship showed that leadership research has historically been done by men, for men, and about men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Background and Need

Research on rural leadership is still emerging, although the majority of the nation’s school districts are located in a rural setting (DeYoung, 1987; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Provasnik et al., 2007; Stapel & DeYoung, 2011). Data gathered from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) for the 2010–2011 school year indicated that 32% of schools in the United States are in a rural area compared with 26% of schools located in urban settings (Aud et al., 2013). Educational reform research has focused on improving education for urban students on the premise that these large bureaucratic organizations impact more students (Borman, 2005, 2009; Coyle & Witcher, 1992; Elmore, 1995; Jimerson, 2005; Marsh et al., 2005; McGuinn, 2012; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Shannon & Bylsma, 2004). Student census data indicate that rural areas also have more local education agencies (LEAs) than urban areas—57% compared to 5%—meaning the number of rural superintendents outnumber urban superintendents by a factor of 10 (Aud et al., 2013). Yet even with these overwhelming data, rural leadership scholarship is scarce (Forner et al., 2012; Jimerson, 2005; Johnson & Howley, 2015).

Why California?

California's reputation as the most populous state with the most K–12 students and the second largest school district in the country overshadows the presences of the almost 700,000 students who attend rural schools (Jimerson, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). A report published by PolicyLink in association with the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (Flegal, Rice, Mann, & Tran, 2013) included a map of California's low-income census designated places that clearly shows the preponderance of locales in the rural sections of the state; particularly the San Joaquin Valley. A map of the eight counties that make up the San Joaquin Valley identified 525 disadvantaged unincorporated communities, representing 58,117 households by population density, further revealing numerous pockets of agricultural communities not included in the 2000 census. The report revealed 64% of these households are low-income households. Kidsdata.org (n.d.), a nonprofit organization funded by the Lucille Packard Foundation, showed that more than 600,000 children aged 6 to 17 live in the eight county San Joaquin Valley. The result is that almost 400,000 children live in unincorporated communities in the rural agricultural areas of California too small to register on the 2000 census.

The importance of California agriculture to the national economy cannot be understated. The \$43.5 billion agricultural industry accounts for 11.6% of total U.S. farm receipts, which makes California's economy the ninth largest in the world (California Department of Food and Agriculture, 2015). Consequences of not addressing the effective leadership behaviors of rural California superintendents, a third of whom are female, could negatively impact not only the upward mobility and employability of these

children and potential wage earners, but could also have a lasting economic impact nationally and globally, if these children are not able to reach their full potential (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Jimerson, 2005).

California is generally not the first state that comes to mind when referring to rural school districts. Even native Californians are surprised to discover that of the over 6 million children in California schools, almost 700,000 attend a school located in a rural area (Keaton, 2012). These numbers represent more students than the total number of students located in rural, suburban, and urban areas combined in 27 other states (Keaton, 2012). Although rural children only represent 10.9% of the entire student population in California, these children account for 5.9% of all of the rural students in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Rural California students would comprise the complete state populations of North Dakota and Vermont and few would argue the importance of these Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

These data bely the Hollywood picture of a typical California school and elucidate a potential disconnection between the literature and the needs of rural California education leaders and students, referenced as “the invisibility of rural education” (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014, p. 28). California is the quintessential example of a state where “rural students are largely invisible to state policy makers because they live in a state where education policy is dominated by highly visible urban problems” (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 28). Rural education should hold high priority for California policymakers, according to the 2014 Rural Education Priority Gauge Rankings (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 26). “If we hope to foster the intellectual development of our nation, then no group can be left out of our educational system” (Bryant, 2007, p. 10).

California ranked 24th in the United States for overall rural education priority, meaning education policymakers must remember that not all California school children attend school in an urban or suburban area (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 26).

Local Control Funding Formulas and Local Control Accountability Plans

In 2012, the California State Legislature enacted a new procedure to fund California schools: the LCFF (EdSource, 2014). One criterion of this new funding procedure specifically requires school districts to engage stakeholder groups—parents, students, and community members—in conversation about how their schools should be run and how funds should be spent (California Department of Education [CDE], n.d., 2016). In line with that thinking, “Superintendents considered community involvement and parent/family support as essential in relation to forging district missions and visions” (Kowalski et al. (2011) found that p. 6). This new policy offers superintendents an unparalleled opportunity to collaboratively involve stakeholders in the strategic decisions of their school system, revealing the superintendents’ leadership priorities (CDE, n.d.; EdSource, 2014;). Because of the embryonic implementation level of the state policy, no research detailed how this policy has been implemented or the potential information this implementation process can provide researchers about effective superintendent leadership, furthering the need for this research study.

A 2005 survey of female superintendents nationwide showed that if a woman was selected as a superintendent, she would most likely be serving in a rural school district (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). The present study sought to understand how the leadership of these superintendent women in rural California school districts impact stakeholders throughout the district and community, as they implement educational policy. According

to Klein et al., “It is important to independently study the attributes of women in educational leadership positions from their own perspectives and note that effective women leaders may do some things differently than the effective leadership styles developed by men” (2007, p. 660). This study filled this void. Background for the study was grounded in the work of researchers focused on the leadership of school superintendents, research on how geographics and gender impact leadership (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Budge, 2010; Lamkin, 2006), emerging research focused both on women as educational leaders (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; B. Richardson & Sandoval, 2007), female superintendents in rural districts (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011), and how these variables influence district policy implementation (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Elmore, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to attend to the voices of female superintendents in rural California school districts and to examine the extent that Grogan and Shakeshaft’s (2011) diverse collective leadership theory aligned with implementation of California’s new state LCFF education policy. The importance of education reform research continues to impact education policy, indicated by the recent reauthorization of NCLB legislation and the current national focus on Common Core State Standards (McDonnell, 2013).

Furthermore, the function of the superintendent is to implement education policy set forth by federal, state, and local officials, elevating the role of the district superintendent in impacting student achievement (Gersten & Carnine, 1981; Kowalski et al., 2011; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Superintendent of Schools, 2010; Waters & Marzano, 2006). The context of the school district in geography and district size impacts

leadership behaviors and policy implementation, as does the gender of the superintendent (Bredeson et al., 2011). Scholars have been slow to document the impact of female superintendents in rural areas (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the leadership practices of female superintendents in rural California districts?
2. How are LCFF and the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) policy implementations impacted by the leadership practices of the superintendent?
3. To what extent is Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory supported or rejected as these rural female superintendents implement California's LCFF and LCAP policy mandates?

Theoretical Framework

This study used Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory as the theoretical framework to frame the leadership practices of participants. These two foundational scholars of gender educational leadership research advanced a theory regarding effective female leaders wanting to impact change. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) sought to refine the definition of leadership by focusing "on what leadership is *for* and how best to draw on the power of [the] diverse perspectives" women bring to the field (p. 43). In diverse collective leadership, change accrues because leaders develop collaborative relationships among all stakeholders to challenge the status quo, bringing greater equity to marginalized students and creating an environment of social justice, buoying students sense of self-worth to effect change (Grogan & Shakeshaft,

2011, p. 43). Kowalski et al. (2011) described how this task can be particularly challenging:

On the one hand, parents seek to control the experiences, influences, and values expressed to their children in school at the same time that superintendents and school board members seek to determine the experiences, influences and values society wants reproduced through a common public school curriculum. (p. 15)

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) identified five themes to describe “what women leaders in education pay attention to: relational leadership, leadership for social justice, leadership for learning, spiritual leadership, and balanced leadership” (p. 5). Leaders focus *relational leadership* on how they conceptualize power. Women educational leaders exhibiting relational leadership see power as “horizontal rather than hierarchical” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 6), thereby strengthening relationships to center on people rather than power. These leaders’ decisions generally include the ideas and input of multiple individuals with primary concern centering on the quality of the outcome rather than credit for the idea. *Collegial, collaborative, facilitative, empowering, and caring* are adjectives describing relational leaders as they focus on “facilitating the work of others who share the power and authority to collaboratively craft” the outcome (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 10).

Social justice leaders are those who work to better serve students who “have not been well served by the current systems” (p. 13). Women, more than men, go into education in general and administration specifically to “change the lives of children, to make the world a fairer place, and to change institutions so that all children have a chance” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 10), thereby impacting the status quo. Female

administrators, regardless of their ethnicity, have a strong desire to enhance learning and amend policies to help students from traditionally underserved populations. Through education, churches, neighborhood activities, women using this approach involve the community in changes to students' success (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

A third theme, *spiritual leadership*, does not necessarily refer to religion but rather to leaders who use their connectedness to the world around them to improve the lives of others (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). These leaders frequently embody the social change they are fighting for, as these women have overcome substantial obstacles to be where they are. "The combination of being the representation of change and the struggle that it took to make that happen are dual achievements for these women" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 15). The women's success motivates them to continue to move ahead, even when a situation is challenging. Spiritual leadership behaviors may manifest as consciousness raising, searching for peace, and self-understanding, as these women use their experiences and knowledge gained to maintain a sense of interconnectedness with others and enhance the lives of others (Bailey, Koney, Powers, Uhly, & McNish, 2008). These leaders see their work as a continual, ongoing journey that empowers them, even in times of distress. A participant in a study conducted by Simmons and Johnson crystalized this sentiment, noting, "I can't stop because too many have suffered for me to get here" (2008, p. 234). Spiritual leaders live the way they believe life should be lived, although their position in leadership may constrain their ability to do so. In particular, women of color feel they are "not likely to get a second chance at the superintendency adding urgency to their work" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 16). These women lead with passion and hope "modeling a different professional language that portrays them as

skilled in leadership communication” (Simmons & Johnson, 2008, p. 239) and focused on children (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Leadership for learning, the fourth theme identified by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) references leaders whose primary focus is on student learning (p. 18).

Superintendents who put “instruction and learning at the center of their leadership mission are likely to push for instructional change that improves learning” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 18). As a result, these education leaders will develop and support staff development that encourages innovation and new instructional approaches. Reasons for this emphasis on curriculum and instruction may link to the increased time women spend in the classroom, compared to their male counterparts, prior to reaching formal leadership positions (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Many of these women learned leadership skills by performing as coaches, curriculum developers, or teachers, yielding leaders who are collaborative and collective in planning and visioning; each key necessities of California’s LCFF policy (Court, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; CDE, 2014).

The final theme identified in Grogan and Shakeshaft’s (2011) diverse collective leadership theory, *balanced leadership*, draws on the reality that female education leaders must balance their home and family lives with their professional lives in managing a school district. According to Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) “Managing households and caring for family members, often seen as the work of women, have brought a dimension to women’s leadership that can enhance their performance” (p. 23). Using key organizational skills creates a skill set that sets women apart from men, who rarely need to strike this balance (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse-collective-leadership theory created the framework for this study by identifying the leadership behaviors specific to female education leaders. Probing an emergent theory brought forth by pioneering researchers in the field of gender educational leadership enhances scholarship and practice in the field of education.

Limitations

This study was conducted in remote locations in California. Because of California's large land mass, locations were sometimes more than 500 miles from my home. These distances required me to incur overnight travel expenses as well as transportation costs, which was somewhat problematic. I was awarded a number of small scholarships that helped defray the costs. Additionally, I needed to engage significant logistical coordination, as I am visually impaired and unable to drive to research sites. This limitation was exacerbated as I needed to make multiple trips to one research site. Careful alignment of Amtrak and airline schedules, coupled with the generous support of my spouse acting as a driver, mediated this significant potential limitation.

A second limitation involved the location of participants. Participants were located in only seven of the 58 counties in California, making generalizations to other counties and states problematic. California is a vast and diverse state spanning close to 1,000 linear miles (DistancesFrom.com, 2016), which includes urban, suburban, and rural settings. All participants were women who live in remote, rural California areas, leading districts ranging from 133 to 2,678 students (CDE, 2015a), again limiting generalization to other areas in California or the United States (Creswell, 2012; Fowler, 2009).

Another limitation that could have occurred was that one or more participants could have dropped out of the study. Although a small sample size is warranted in qualitative studies, it can be problematic should too many participants drop out, thereby limiting the reach of the findings (Creswell, 2012; Fink, 2013). To safeguard against this potential limitation, I intentionally scheduled interviews and observations on the same day, thereby reducing the possibility of participants leaving the study. This strategy was successful and I collected interview, observation, and field note data on all nine participants.

A triangulation data collection approach, consisting of interviews, observations, field notes, and document review might have been a physical limitation, but because I was able to collect the same data from each participant, I was able to mediate this limitation (Creswell, 2012; Fink, 2013). Perhaps because I met participants through a trusted colleague, all participants graciously gave me access to their staff, documents, and any other data I requested.

Interviews also could have created a limitation if equipment used to record the sessions malfunctioned. I used an interview protocol to help safeguard the data, should the equipment become inaccessible. The equipment was in working order for all interviews.

Also, any interview has the limitation of responses having a social desirability bias whereby the participant slants their answer to appear more socially acceptable to the researcher (Creswell, 2012; Fink, 2013). Aware of this possible limitation, I crosschecked interview data with observation data, field notes, and the review of the district's LCAP. I noted inconsistencies between interview responses and observation results regarding

relational leadership for two participants. I discuss these inconsistencies further in Chapter 4.

Finally, qualitative researchers do not use researcher *bias* as a term, but do note that in qualitative research it is “interpretative and that the researcher should be self-reflective about his or her role in the research, how he or she is interpreting the findings, and his or her personal and political history [as it] shapes his or her interpretation” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). Not having ample time to appropriately reflect could also have been a limitation to the study. I intentionally took leave from my work obligations to ensure ample time for reflection and coding.

Educational Significance

This study is significant for the following four reasons: (a) research is limited on female superintendents in any setting; this information so critical to understanding how effectively female superintendents lead their systems; (b) research on effective rural school districts in California is also scarce; (c) educational research, particularly research on effective superintendents, has been conducted from the perspective of male urban superintendents, which discounts contributions rural female superintendents bring to the field; and (d) research on the behaviors used by effective superintendents as they implemented California’s LCFF and LCAP policies is emerging on the policy, enacted July 1, 2013; further discussion of the significance of this policy is warranted.

The AASA, creators of the preeminent research studies on the superintendency in general and superintendents in particular (Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000), has conducted a survey of U.S. superintendents every 10 years since the 1920s. Not until 1982 was the gender of the superintendent included in the AASA decennial study; the first survey

focused solely on female superintendents did not occur until 2007 (Björk et al., 2005; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Cunningham & Hentges, 1982; Glass, 1992; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Grady, 2010; Knezevich, 1971; Kowalski et al., 2011; Tyack, 1976). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted that, “When analyzing how change happens, neither scholars nor practitioners have paid sufficient attention to the influence of gender” (p. 88), suggesting that continued research is needed on how female superintendents lead change efforts in their districts.

A research query into the Education Source and ERIC databases using the key terms rural, California, superintendent, and leadership, with the additional limiters of the years 2000–2014, produced eight results. Two results were unpublished dissertations, four were articles from scholarly journals, one was a report, and one was a book on district change, indicating these terms are rarely used in an aggregate form. A query that changed the rural indicator to urban resulted in 26 responses. Yet, according to NCES (Keaton, 2012), in the 2010–2011 school year 679,294 children attended school in a rural area of California, representing more students than the combined number of students located in rural, suburban, and urban areas combined in 27 different states. Research on district leaders that impact almost 700,000 students is relevant and significant (DeYoung, 1987; Forner et al., 2012; Waters & Marzano, 2006)

Historically, education research has been a male-dominated arena in which men were the researchers and the participants (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Shakeshaft, 1989b) Currently, women represent approximately 18% of superintendents nationally (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011) yet, “to be sure, in a story in which white men dominate, white male voices are so strong that sounds from other

groups are impossible to hear” (Brunner & Grogan, 2007, p.5). For all administrators to serve children effectively, it is critical to “identify behaviors common to women that facilitate change” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 38). Women must provide understanding of their lives, rather than measuring their successes and challenges against those of men. Layer this male-dominated research perspective with the understanding that research on effective superintendents is predominately conducted in urban areas (Erwin, Winn, Gentry, & Cauble, 2010; Forner et al., 2012; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). From this broader viewpoint, a study of female superintendents leading in a rural area is a much-needed addition to the field of education.

Studies of policy implementation, particularly involving California’s recent LCFF and LCAP are sparse (Crowson, 2003; Elmore, 1980; Fuhrman, Clune, & Elmore, 1988). When conducting a query using the Academic Search Complete, Education Source, and ERIC databases with *policy implementation, California, and K–12 education* as keywords and the additional limiters of 2000–2014, only 17 responses appeared. Seven of the responses were not applicable, one was a report, one was a literature review, and eight were scholarly articles revealing the limited amount of research on current California education policy. Because the LCFF and LCAP policies are new, being signed in 2013, no responses addressed these specific policies. Beginning to understand how the new funding formula and its companion plan are impacting California school-district leadership can set the stage for future strategies regarding effective policy implementation that consider local environments and enhance students’ learning (Loeb & Plank, 2008).

Definition of Terms

The specialized nature of this study included numerous terms specific to educational reform. I defined the following terms to aid readers in fully creating their schema for in-depth comprehension of the research.

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): “An individual state’s measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards. ‘Adequate Yearly Progress’ is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts and schools must achieve each year” (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2005, para. 3)

California Department of Education (CDE): According to their website, “The California Department of Education (CDE) oversees the state’s diverse and dynamic public school system, which is responsible for the education of more than seven million children and young adults in more than 9,000 schools” (CDE, 2015, para. 1)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): The Elementary and Secondary Education Act which was first enacted in 1965, is the principal federal law affecting K–12 education. The *No Child Left Behind Act* is the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Second Education Act (NCLB, 2002, para. 12)

English-language learner (ELL): An individual who “has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to be denied the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in the larger U.S. society” (CDE, 2004).

Free/reduced-price lunch program (FRLP): The largest federal program for elementary and secondary schools, which, in 2012, provided meals to more than 31

million children. The percentage of students receiving a free lunch is often used as an indicator for students living in poverty (Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015).

Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP): The plan created by each LEA to describe how local funds will be spent. The LEA must submit the LCAP for initial approval to the County Office of Education by July 1, 2014 and then annually thereafter (EdSource, 2016).

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF): In June of 2013, the state legislature approved Governor Brown's LCFF, the most sweeping education funding reform in decades. The LCFF represents a historic shift in how California funds public schools. With a focus on local decision making, equity, accountability, and transparency, it lays the foundation for LEAs to improve student outcomes and close the achievement gap. The new system has an 8-year implementation plan, with 2013–2014 as the transition year (EdSource, 2016).

Local education agency (LEA): "LEA is a public board of education or other public authority within a State which maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State" (Philpott, 2010, p. 1172).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB): The short title for Public Law 107-110, whose purpose is, "to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education" (NCLB, 2002, para 2).

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA): "A triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. ... PISA is unique because it develops tests

which are not directly linked to the school curriculum” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, n.d., para. 1).

Rural designation, distant: A “census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster” (USDE NCES, n.d., para. 10)

Rural designation, fringe: A “Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster” (USDE NCES, n.d., para. 11)

Rural designation, remote: A “Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster” (USDE NCES, n.d., para. 12)

Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP): An initiative contained in Title VI Part B, which is, “designed to help rural districts that may lack the personnel and resources to compete effectively for Federal competitive grants and that often receive grant allocations in amounts that are too small to be effective in meeting their intended purposes” (USDE, 2005b, para 13).

Small Rural School Achievement (SRSA): The formula grant is awarded to eligible school districts to, “provide financial assistance to rural districts to assist them in meeting their state’s definition of adequate yearly progress (AYP)” (USDE, 2014, para 1).

Socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED): The aggregate group of students from low-income families. These are students without a parent or guardian who has received a high school diploma or students who participate in the FRLP (Philpott, 2010).

Student with disabilities (SWD): A group of students with disabilities who are eligible for additional services under the Individuals With Disabilities Act including infants, toddlers, children, and youth aged 3–20 (Philpott, 2010).

Title I: Title I is geared to assist U.S. students who are considered the most disadvantaged. Part A provides assistance to improve the teaching and learning of children in high-poverty schools to allow children to meet difficult State academic content and performance standards. Approximately 12.5 million students benefit from Title I in public and private schools (USDE, 2004)

U.S. Department of Education (USDE): “The U.S. Department of Education is the agency of the federal government that establishes policy for, administers and coordinates most federal assistance to education” (USDE Office of Communications and Outreach, 2010, p. 1).

Summary

Extensive education researchers showed that leadership impacts student success (Marzano & Waterset al., 2005). But researchers also showed that leadership is impacted by context, which includes the gender and geographical location of the leader. The purpose of this study was to listen to the voices of rural female superintendents as they implement California’s LCFF policy and its companion LCAP. The LCFF policy mandates that districts create a participatory, inclusive continuous improvement process requiring the leader to be collaborative and relationship focused. Women are more likely to lead their districts in ways that would support effective implementation of LCFF policy through relational, social justice, continuous learning, spiritual, and balanced leadership themes (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Grogan and Shakeshaft’s (2011)

seminal research resulted in their diverse collective leadership theory, which served as the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 2 details an abundance of research on educational leadership and its impact on student achievement at the principal and superintendent level. Studies of relational leadership, social justice leadership, leadership for learning, spiritual, and balanced leadership were reviewed as these are the tenets of diverse collective leadership, the theoretical framework of this study. Because this study examined the leadership of female rural superintendents as they implement California's new funding policy, I explored the history of superintendent leadership. I also review research regarding rural education, women in the superintendency, and policy implementation.

Included in Chapter 3 are descriptions and the rationale for the research design, setting, and population used in the study. Prior to conducting this study, I conducted a pilot study, which included lessons that informed this study. Chapter 3 concludes with details of the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis, and provides the background of the researcher.

A clear, concise report of the findings comprises Chapter 4. Descriptions of the nine participants and their settings begin the chapter, followed by responses to the three research questions. I include numerous tables to aid in comprehension of the findings. Chapter 4 concludes with a brief summary of the major findings.

In Chapter 5, I return to the purpose statement and research questions to discuss the findings in depth. I provide conclusions and recommendations for the profession and future research. Chapter 5 concludes with personal remarks on the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of study regarding superintendents has evolved throughout U.S. history (Björk, 2000; Callahan, 1966; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Kowalski, 2005; Skrla, 1998). Although the AASA has collected and analyzed descriptive superintendent data every 10 years beginning in 1922, the specific collection and analysis of data by gender did not occur until 1982 (Cunningham & Hentges, 1982). Not until 2007 did AASA publish a study that targeted exclusively women superintendents (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Relatively little knowledge has been discerned on the national level on female superintendents (Grogan & Brunner, 2005, p. 227).

This chapter focuses on four themes related to female rural superintendents. The first theme presents an overview of effective educational leadership, including research specific to educational reform and turnaround research. The first theme also includes a detailed review of the literature centered on the components of Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory.

Next is a brief history of effective superintendents, highlighting the role societal perceptions play in determining what it means to be effective in the superintendency. Following is a discussion of the role of context in impacting superintendent effectiveness, in particular the gender of the superintendent and the geographic location of the system. Additionally, I explore the specific challenges of superintendents in rural areas, and a review of the literature regarding female superintendents in a rural setting. The final theme of this literature review examines the role of the superintendent in policy implementation.

Educational Leadership Research

We need to get the right people, in the right seats on the bus.

—J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 44.

I have heard that quotation on multiple occasions in my consulting work with California school superintendents. In my background as a director of curriculum and instruction for a California county office of education, I facilitated numerous meetings, book studies, and personal conversations centered on what it means to be a leader who can “move the fly wheel” (p. 164) or “identify our hedge hog” (p. 90) or define “what we do better than anyone in the world” (p. 165). The J. C. Collins (2001) study focused on corporate CEOs and how they turned around or reformed their organizations from good organizations to great organizations. Operating from the premise that “Good is the enemy of great” (p. 1), J. C. Collins set out to answer the question, “Can a good company become a great company and, if so, how?” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 5).

The resulting criteria included a “fifteen-year cumulative stock return at or below the general stock market, punctuated by a transition point, then cumulative returns at least three times the market over the next fifteen years” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 6). Between 1965 and 1995, J. C. Collins applied these criteria to Fortune 500 companies, eliminating any company that was part of an industry experiencing growth during that period of time, and focusing on companies that “demonstrated the good-to-great pattern *independent of their industry*” (emphasis in the original; J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 6). The result was a list of 11 companies that showed the “good-to-great pattern” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 6).

Once the sample was identified, J. C. Collins located comparison companies to clarify how the successful companies were different from their peers. Using empirical deductions, the J. C. Collins team built a theory, derived from the analysis (2001, p. 10).

J. C. Collins revealed seven specific findings from the data analysis identifying specific commonalities among the good-to-great companies:

- Level 5 Leader—A “self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy” leader was at the top of each of the 11 good-to-great companies (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 12).
- First Who ... Then What—The Level 5 Leader first “got the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats—and *then* figured out where to drive it” (emphasis in the original; J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 13), which referred to the organization’s vision.
- Confront the Brutal Facts—Leaders had the “discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be” while maintaining “unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 13).
- The Hedgehog Concept—Leaders identified what the organization does “better than anyone in the world” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 13) and used this as their core business strategy; even if that meant changing their core business.
- A Culture of Discipline—Disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action create a culture of discipline where need for “hierarchy, bureaucracy, and excessive controls” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 13) are

unnecessary. Great performance is the combination of “a culture of discipline with an ethic of entrepreneurship” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 13).

- Technology Accelerators—Rather than using technology for its own sake, great companies “are pioneers in the application of *carefully selected* technologies” (emphasis in the original; J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 13) used with intention and purpose.
- The Flywheel and the Doom Loop—The good-to-great transformation was not a single action; rather, “the process of relentlessly pushing a giant heavy flywheel in one direction, turn upon turn, building momentum until a point of breakthrough, and beyond” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 14).

Of these seven findings, the Level 5 Leader was most relevant to this study of female superintendent leadership. J. C. Collins (2001) created an equation to conceptualize Level 5 Leadership: “Humility + Will = Level 5 Leader” (p. 22).

J. C. Collins (2001) revealed that these Level 5 Leaders were compelling modest. They “don’t talk about themselves. ... They’d talk about the company and the contributions of other executives as long as we’d like but would deflect discussion about their own contributions” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 27). Level 5 Leaders also displayed unwavering resolve, defined as a “an almost stoic determination to do whatever needs to be done to make the company great” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 29). J. C. Collins (2001) also noted:

The great irony is that the animus and personal ambition that often drive people to positions of power stand at odds with the humility required for Level 5 leadership. When you combine that irony with the fact that boards of directors frequently

operate under the false belief that they need to hire a larger-than-life, egocentric leader to make an organization great, you can quickly see why Level 5 leaders rarely appear at the top of our institutions. (pp. 36–37)

Reform and Turnaround Research

If these Level 5 leaders can reform corporations taking them from good to great, educators may try applying this approach in schools? NCLB mandated reform for failing schools and districts; if it worked for Walgreens and Phillip-Morris, maybe it would work for the nation’s most challenged school organizations. However, the work of the superintendent may differ in significant ways from the work of other chief executive officers, in that they must address the moral character of schools (Greenfield, 1995). Another challenge is that “the nature of the school staff as educated and independent, and the stormy context of school in general threatens the stability of the work of education” (Lamkin, 2006, p. 19).

In a report funded by the Wallace Foundation, Leithwood et al. (2004) noted that school site and district leadership “is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school, after controlling for student intake factors” (p. 6). In the introduction, The Wallace Foundation president noted, “There is nothing new or especially controversial about this idea” of leadership having an impact on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3).

What was new, were the specific questions Leithwood et al. sought to answer: (a) “What effects does successful leadership have on student learning?”; (b) “How should the competing forms of leadership visible in the literature be reconciled?”; (c) “Is there a common set of ‘basic’ leadership practices used by successful leaders in most

circumstances?"; (d) "What else, beyond the basics, is required for successful leadership?"; and (e) "How does successful leadership exercise its influence on the learning of students?" (2004, p. 4).

Findings from this review of the leadership literature revealed, "There seems little doubt that both district and school leadership provides a critical bridge between most educational reform initiatives and their consequences for students" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 70). Additionally, Leithwood et al. (2004) found, (1) "effective leadership has the greatest impact in those circumstances (e.g., schools 'in trouble') in which it is most needed", and (2) "This evidence supports the present widespread interest in improving leadership as a key to the successful implementation of large-scale reform" (p. 70). They ended their report by stating, "Efforts to improve their [superintendent and principal] recruitment, training, evaluation and ongoing development should be considered highly cost-effective approaches to successful school improvement" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 70).

In their final report of this series funded by The Wallace Foundation, Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) concluded, "Principal-teacher relationships, district leaders' interactions with principals, and policy decisions at the state level all are intertwined in a complex and changing environment" having a "direct relationship with student learning" (p. 282). This adds compelling support for this research study that is focused on how rural female superintendents exhibit leadership as they implement California's new funding policy, the LCFF.

Diverse Collective Leadership

In 2011, Grogan and Shakeshaft sought to “reconceptualize the work of leadership to engage the collective voice and to challenge the status quo in the name of equity and diversity” (p. 41). These ground-breaking researchers combined their shared knowledge, derived from over 40 years of joint experience in researching female educational leaders, and identified five approaches female educators use when leading. They dubbed this theory *diverse collective leadership* (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Diverse collective leadership is “leadership shaped by women” (p. 84). The five themes describe what women education leaders pay attention to and include: (a) relational leadership or “being in relationship with others in a horizontal rather than a hierarchical sense” (p. 6); (b) leadership for social justice whereby the leader talks of, “having entered teaching to change the lives of children, to make the world a fairer place, and to change institutions so that all children have a chance” (p. 10); (c) leadership for learning where the leader will, “introduce and support strong programs in staff development, encourage innovation, and experiment with instructional approaches” (p. 18); (d) spiritual leadership because the leaders see, “Spirituality as a source of personal strength as well as a way to understand connectedness to others, and to the greater world” (p. 13); and (e) balanced leadership where a leader is able to, “Manage households and care for family members, often seen as the work of women” but acknowledge that these responsibilities, “have brought a dimension to women’s leadership that can enhance their performance” (p. 23).

In direct opposition to traditional educational leadership approaches that focus on the individual style of the leader, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) are interested in

“focusing on what leadership is *for* and on how best to draw on the power of diverse perspectives” (emphasis in the original, p. 43) noting that “the literature has been built on the foundations of the kinds of leadership approaches that research attributes to women” (p. 44). Thus, women are in a unique position to impact school systems in a different way from their male counterparts because of their collaborative-leadership perspectives (Court, 2005). Additional background on the five themes of Grogan and Shakeshaft’s theory is warranted.

Relational Leadership

Relational leadership is one theme associated with female superintendent leadership and “can create an environment for change in schools that will benefit each of their constituencies” (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 2). Regan and Brooks (1995) “define five leadership attributes grounded in women’s experience: collaboration, caring, courage, intuition, and vision” (p. 2). These attributes collectively are referred to as “the feminist attributes of leadership” (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 2) and serve as the foundation for relational leadership.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) identified relational leadership as being in relationships that are horizontal rather than hierarchal. They further state relational leadership is about

facilitating the work of others who share the power and authority to collaboratively craft direction for the district. Perhaps the most important understanding that connects women leaders to others is the passion many women have for substantive change that addresses injustice in education. (p. 10)

To address these injustices, leaders use a “horizontal leadership approach [that] stresses the involvement of the many in the activities of the organization. It extends beyond the leadership team to teachers and the wider community” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 9).

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) aptly note that for women, “conceptions of power are closely tied to the importance they place on relationships” (p. 7) and as such, power plays a role in relational leadership. Researchers have characterized the lateral distribution of power ascribed to relational leadership as power with rather than power over others (Bailey et al., 2008; Brunner, 1994; Fennell, 1999; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). It is in the use of power to accomplish goals that relationships are formed with women superintendents “conceptualizing power differently and are [therefore] likely to seek to expand everyone’s power” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 6). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) clarified, stating, “Power used to help others strengthens relationships, while power used to control, damages relationships” (p. 7).

Although relational leadership may align with female leadership, Regan and Brooks (1995) noted, “Relational attributes of leadership are the creative integration of masculinist and feminist attributes of leadership” (p. 5). Relational leadership is a “functional whole-an integrative (both/and) form of leadership created through the seamless integration of both sets of attributes” (Regan & Brooks, 1995, p. 93).

The double helix metaphor advanced by Regan and Brooks (1995) represents the interplay between the feminist and masculinist attributes of leadership resulting in an outcome that is greater than either part alone. To bring about change in schools, Regan and Brooks suggested that men and women leaders need to access feminist-leadership attributes of collaboration, caring, courage, intuition, and vision. Relational leadership

skills are pivotal to ensuring the success of LCFF and LCAP implementation, as the community must be mandated to be part of the process (Knudson, 2014).

Leadership for Social Justice

A Fusion database search using the term *social justice definition* resulted in over 2 million hits. A single definition of social justice, much less social justice leadership is daunting. Rivera-McCutchen revealed, “While there is a general consensus that social justice leadership is about creating schools that are more equitable, one of the primary drawbacks of the theory relates to the tendency to narrowly define the concept” (2014, p. 748). This was exemplified by additional Fusion database searches using the terms *social justice United States* and *educational leadership*, which resulted in almost 800,000 hits, but when *rural* was added, the result was research situated outside the United States.

Maxwell, Locke, and Scheurich (2014), the only U.S. work from the abovementioned search, articulated,

although there has certainly been a steady expansion of the social justice-oriented theoretical scholarship in educational leadership, little of this, particularly in the social justice conversation in the United States, has been centered on rural social justice leadership in either theory or praxis, although the need for rural social justice has been explored in the international research literature. (pp. 482–483)

Maxwell et al. (2014) used an analytical framework of rurality, resilience, and social justice with each section, addressing place and relationship as the lens for their study. Their purpose was to begin to address the void articulated by Furman (2012, as cited by Maxwell et al., 2014) “who noted that to date, the literature offers few specifics about the actual practice of social justice leadership in K–12 schools and the capacities

needed by school leaders to engage in this practice” (p. 490). This omission “is specifically true for rural schools” (p. 490).

Five rural Texas superintendents were purposefully selected for the Maxwell et al. (2014) study based on “a central commitment to equity and social justice” as noted by the lead researcher’s insider perspective, and “demonstrated success with improving student achievement (p. 491). The study spanned a 2-year period of time whereby researchers interviewed each participant twice and observed them extensively. Three of the five participants were women and two of the five participants were Hispanic (one man and one woman). Four overarching themes emerged from the study: (a) size, (b) relationships, (c) place, and (d) challenges faced. All participants indicated they “had a strong preference for working in small rural schools. Each participant in one way or another shared a desire to have some control over this or her circumstances, both personally and professionally” (Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 493). Because their districts were small, “the rewards are great because you can see more immediate impact of your efforts” (Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 494).

Relationships was another theme emerging from the research. “Establishing relationships to community members is significant, and size is beneficial to establishing those relationships” (Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 494). All the leaders noted that “an important part of their job was not only establishing those relationships themselves but also facilitating that sense of community in their districts through relationships” (Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 495).

Place—the land and location—was “either a motivation ... or one that they grew to understand while in their positions” (Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 502). The place where

the superintendent worked created a personal identity through the community. According to Maxwell et al., “Nearly all the superintendents attributed the longevity that they experienced in their positions to the connections that they grew to have, grew to appreciate, and hesitated to forgo with the communities they served” (2014, p. 502).

Size and relationship also contributed to some common challenges for rural superintendent participants. “The smallness of the district frequently made for intense relationships that sometimes were not positive, often reflective of a legacy of cultural bias, economic inequity, and social inequality experienced by rural people” (Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 502). Addressing these challenges one at a time allowed participants to “not buy into a deficit thinking model” (Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 502). Finally, Maxwell et al. (2014) saw participants were “growing in their understanding of their role as an equity-oriented change agent or social justice leader” (Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 503).

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) indicated, “Women are likely to report that they entered the field of education because they wanted to ‘change’ the status quo” and as such, have a “commitment to social justice” (p. 10). Women of color and White women were “motivated by a strong desire to transform the learning conditions and opportunities for those who have been least well served by current educational policies and practices” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p.11).

Sanders-Lawson et al. (2006) were referenced by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) to argue “the life experiences of Black women leaders in education in the United States have prompted them to be focused on justice” (p.12) and use a collective-leadership approach to involve the community in rectifying social injustices. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) therefore defined social justice as “a passion for doing work that involves making

a difference in the lives of students who have not been well served by the current system” (p. 12).

Leadership for Learning

Leadership for learning puts learning—child and adult—”at the center of [female superintendents’] leadership mission” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 18). Grogan and Shakeshaft noted, “Women administrators are likely to introduce and support strong programs in staff development, to encourage innovation, and to experiment with instructional approaches” and to “stress the importance of instructional competence in teachers” (p. 18). Grogan and Shakeshaft identified “the importance of instruction as overlapping with the social justice agenda of many women administrators (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 18).

Many superintendents see professional learning communities (PLCs) as the first step to creating a learning-centered culture (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2009; Carpenter, 2015; Dufour, 2012; Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). DuFour, one of the practitioners most associated with PLCs, noted “The world’s best school systems use the professional learning community process to support the ongoing learning of their educators through professional development that is collaborative, data-driven and peer-facilitated. All of the activity focuses on improving student learning” (2012, p.18). According to DuFour (2004), a PLC is predicated on three specific tenets or “big ideas”: (a) “ensuring that students learn,” (b) “a culture of collaboration,” (p. 9), and (c) “a focus on results” (p. 10).

J. Richardson found, “The reach of the PLC concept is hard to over-estimate, especially given that there is no government mandate requiring schools to adopt PLCs”

(2011, p. 28). Marzano (as cited in J. Richardson, 2011), a noted educational researcher, identified the work of PLCs as “probably the most influential movement with regards to actually changing practices in schools” (p. 28).

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) identified two reasons women tend to use leadership for learning: “many women learn leadership from serving as curriculum coaches or in curriculum and instruction positions” (p. 19), and women have “spent more time in the classroom than men before they take formal leadership positions such as principal or superintendent” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 18). These truths associate women “with instructional leadership or learning-centered leadership in education” (p. 18). The NCLB Act “appears to have served women well” because they have the “expertise in instruction pedagogy” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, pp. 19–20).

Spiritual Leadership

A leader characterizes spiritual leadership “whose inner values motivate their leadership” (Doohan, 2007, p. 17). Doohan went on to state, “The concept of spiritual leader stresses the moral center of the leader, and mission, vision, goals, objectives, and strategies are always checked against the courageous inner mastery of moral commitment” (Doohan, 2007, p. 17). Harbron (2007) referred to this as a vocational calling and noted it is, “inspired by the higher moral purposes of serving and contributing to others” (p. 162). Fry described calling as “creating a vision wherein organization members experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference” (Fry, 2003, p. 695).

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted, “The idea of leadership grounded in spirituality is a strong theme found in research on women leaders—particularly in the

comments of women of color” (p. 13). Their research revealed “Both women of color and White women administrators discuss the relationship between spirituality and the ways they model behavior and inspire others” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 15). “It is their spirituality that gives them hope, increasing their resilience so that they can keep working for change” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 15).

Bass (2002) connected spiritual leadership to transformational leadership through emotional intelligences. Bass found, “transformational leaders are more behavioral and less emotional in coping with stress and conflict” (Bass, 2002, p. 115) and their internal locus of control meaning they are self-motivated. Most importantly, Bass stated that these leaders see a need for change, have a strong sense of responsibility and, establish difficult goals for themselves; that is, their goals in life are clear.

Avolio and Gardner (2005) classified authentic leadership as a “root construct” of transformational leadership as well as “charismatic, servant and spiritual leadership” (p. 328). Doohan (2007) tied authentic leadership to spiritual leadership as “authentic leadership is not something we do but something we are; it is a passionate response to the yearnings of our hearts” (pp. 18–19).

In their study of female African American superintendents, Simmons and Johnson (2008) sought to “gain a better understanding of their [the African American superintendent participants’] methods of communication, and their sources of determination and hope” (p. 224). Simmons and Johnson freely noted “It is our assumption these women use their spirituality to stabilize their hopes, and that they express these hopes through language that express their expectations” (2008, p. 224).

Simmons and Johnson's findings revealed that their participants communicated with "passionate language" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 16). "Even their diction, tone, and word choices clearly transmitted passionate overtones that defied assumptions about feminine silencing" (Simmons & Johnson, 2008, p. 233). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) corroborated Simmons and Johnson's work when they also noted these superintendents used "passion as a motivator both for themselves and for those with whom they worked" (p. 16). Passion is a key component of spiritual leadership, used "in hope of stimulating others to help act in a manner that moves the organization toward transformation" (Simmons & Johnson, 2008, p. 241).

Balanced Leadership

The term balanced leadership means different things to different researchers. Pepper used balanced leadership to describe the "skillful balance of transformational and transactional leadership styles needed to meet the [NCLB] expectations for accountability" (2010, p. 42). Christy (2009) referred to elementary principals who have "effectively balanced the instructional and managerial roles of the principalship" (p. 5). Using two extensive meta-analyses on educational leadership at the school level, Waters and Cameron created and copyrighted a Balanced Leadership Framework® to "help school leaders apply findings from our recent research on effective principals to their own leadership behaviors" (2007, p. 1).

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) however, defined balanced leadership as "striving for balance between responsibilities at work and at home" (p. 21). "Balanced leadership includes the notion that women are better able to perform their educational responsibilities if they have found ways to manage their home duties as well" as their

professional duties (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 23). Their extensive research led them to conclude, “women seem to be able to lead well when their responsibilities at home and in the office are in some kind of balance” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, pp. 23–24).

In 2014, Klatt noted “work–family wellness, balance, or life quality issues are rarely considered in even the most recent superintendent literature” as he sought to discover “how gendered expectations and ideal superintendent archetypes shape life quality in the rural superintendency” (p. 453). Secondly, Klatt sought to “provide a contextualized view of how two effective rural superintendents (one male and one female) who are younger than 50 and have school-age children work with barriers and supports to nurture personal/professional life quality in the superintendency” (2014, pp. 453–454).

Klatt operationalized the term balance as “a scale where if one side is up, the other has to be down; it is an either-or-concept” (2014, pp. 460–461). If work–life responsibilities were out of balance, conflict was resulted. Findings revealed “concerns about work–life balance in [the superintendency’s] demanding yet essential leadership role may be deterring the next generation of potential leaders, even those who have long aspired to job” (Klatt, 2014, p. 477). These issues are accentuated in rural settings and even more so for women (Klatt, 2014).

The History of Successful Superintendents

Researchers and educators have defined effective superintendent leadership in a number of ways, ranging from maintaining a balanced budget (Björk et al., 2005; Kowalski, 2005) to creating “learning-focused ‘partnership’ relationships” with schools

(Honig & Copland, 2008, p. 3). Examining how these definitions have shifted as the role of the superintendent has evolved requires placing effective superintendent leadership into an historical context (Brunner, Grogan, & Björk, 2002; Cunningham & Hentges, 1982).

The Early Years: From 1800–1900

A review of educational history revealed the significant impact of the social circumstances of the time. In the early 1800s, the first superintendents of schools served as clerks for the school board, as schools typically consisted of one room with a male teacher serving all children throughout a rural area (Brunner et al., 2002). Their primary responsibility was to care for the practical aspects of running a school and educating the students; superintendents were deemed to be effective if they aligned their work with educational needs and with the mores and preferences of the local community for the good of the country (Brunner et al., 2002, p. 214).

After the Civil War, the superintendent position was more highly regarded by the community, as now the role was a blend of a teacher and a scholar with the superintendent responsible for implementing the state's curriculum (Brunner et al., 2002; Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2005). At this point in history, superintendents considered themselves part of the teaching profession and even organized, becoming one of the two initial groups to form the National Educators Association (Grady, 2010). The school board carried out management functions (Kowalski, 2005).

The Industrial Revolution

Once the Industrial Revolution began in the early 1900s, emerging urban areas needed a leader of their schools who was able to manage complex business situations by

focusing on an industrial model emphasizing time and efficiency (Brunner et al., 2002; Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2005; Tyack, 1976). School districts became larger and the superintendent's primary function was as a business manager who, secondarily, also oversaw instruction. During this time period, "School board members focused more directly and intensely on resource management" (Kowalski, 2005, p. 5).

The role also became more political as various groups fought to increase or limit the power of the position, depending on their power base. Business and power elites wanted the superintendent on their side and mayors, city officials, and political bosses wanted to limit any power the superintendent might have (Brunner et al., 2002; Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2005). As more immigrants with different religions came into the United States, and thus into schools, religious education was contentious (Brunner et al., 2002; Tyack, 1976) with Republicans favoring uniformity and Democrats favoring tolerance for cultural differences (Brunner et al., 2002, p. 215). Compulsory education laws ensued with children assigned by age into grades (Tyack, 1976).

An effective superintendent prototype was a White man who led an efficient system. For example, "experienced practitioners recognize[d] that many of their leadership attributes became insignificant when budgets are not balanced, school facilities are deemed not to be safe, and personnel problems routinely result in litigation" (Kowalski, 2005, p. 7). Interestingly, many of the same criteria are used today in superintendents' evaluations (Roberts, 2010). Furthermore, the superintendent became the chief executive officer as organizations, including school districts, focused on decentralization and democratization, forcing leaders to balance leadership and management roles (Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2005).

The Great Depression

During and after the Great Depression, the role of the superintendent again shifted with social circumstances as the superintendent was now expected to be the education leader, “operating within the democratic framework” (Callahan, 1966, p. 209) and a statesman (Callahan, 1966, p. 210). Budgets were tight and the superintendent needed to connect with the community to obtain fiscal and political support (Callahan, 1966). This was a time when local politics became part of the superintendent’s responsibility, as coalitions and lobbies were needed to attract state funds (Kowalski, 2005). These new business values meant superintendents were less able to rely on community support (Kowalski, 2005). Administrators began to isolate themselves from the public, but generate educational resources from the community (Melby, 1955, p. 250). The effective superintendent would politically motivate policymakers, employees, and taxpayers to support the district’s initiatives (Howlett, 1993), much as they do today (Kowalski, 2005).

The Superintendent as Applied Social Scientist

In the mid 1950s, the discipline of social science began to emerge and with it, the role of the superintendent evolved further (Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2005). This shift, instigated by social and professional needs and powers (Kowalski, 2005), caused the need for the superintendent to be an applied social scientist whose effectiveness is measured by their ability to be effective “(Callahan, 1966). Callahan (1966) identified societal and professional forces that brought about this shift in the superintendents’ responsibilities: (a) growing dissatisfaction with Democratic leadership after WWII; (b) rapid development of the social science field; (c) support from the Kellogg Foundation in the form of grants to major universities to research school administration, and (d) a

resurgence of criticisms of public education in the 1950s, as the Cold War heated up, desegregation of schools was legislated, and the fear of losing the Space Race was fueled by the launch of Sputnik. Kowalski (2005) identified two additional social factors: (a) elevating the perception of school administration to a place equal to public administration and business management, and (b) infusing systems theory into administration-preparation programs so administrators were aware of the importance of how “external legal, political, social, and economic systems affect organizations” (p. 10). Researchers began to aver that administrators needed social sciences training to run districts and schools effectively (Kowalski, 2005). Superintendents had to balance between the public and their staff’s perceptions of their leadership, rendering them vulnerable to public opinion and causing them to require consensus in decision making (Kowalski, 2005). Superintendents are now expected to be leaders with responsibilities comparable to those of a CEO, not merely lower level administrators, and are most effective when they can navigate relationships with the school board, teacher’s unions, other represented staff, and the public (Brunner et al., 2002; Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2005).

No Child Left Behind: The Superintendent as Instructional Leader

With the passage of NCLB, the role of the superintendent made the shift to its requirements today: the superintendent as instructional leader and communicator.

Kowalski (2005) argued,

Engaging others in open political dialogue, facilitating the creation of shared visions, building a positive school district image, gaining community support for change, providing an essential framework for information management, providing

marketing programs, and keeping the public informed about education are the [new] expectations and definitions of success for today's superintendents. (p. 13)

Additionally, increasing student achievement with ever-changing demographics and diversity has become synonymous with "building a positive school district image" (Kowalski, 2005, p. 13) and it is the superintendent who is held responsible, by the public, and state and federal governments, when students are deemed unsuccessful in school (Brunner et al., 2002; Kowalski, 2005). Now more than ever the superintendent must collaborate with multiple groups and work through what may be opposing viewpoints from stakeholders about what is best for children. The superintendent must still perform CEO responsibilities such as balancing budgets, building facilities, and communicating with the public, but must also distribute leadership and have extensive knowledge about instruction (Brunner et al., 2002; Kowalski, 2005).

The Impact of the American Association of School Administrators

Created in 1865 as an organization for teachers who lead schools, the AASA merged with the National Teachers Association to create National Education Association in 1870 (Grady, 2010). Their importance and influence grew as more and more superintendents came under fire and were at risk of losing their jobs (Callahan, 1966). In the 1952 Yearbook of the AASA, the authors' noted the contentiousness of the 1950s and banded together, much as is done today, to provide each other support:

School superintendents never appeared more expendable than at this mid-century mark. Dismissals and forced resignations were paralleled by an almost equal number of physical break-downs, sometimes fatal. Dismissals in large population centers received extensive news coverage; those in small communities were less

widely reported. That superintendents served as hazardous in rural districts and in small population centers as in large seemed true on the basis of general observations. (“American school superintendency,” 1952, p. 62)

Now that the superintendent was firmly established as the leader of the school district, their needs and interests appeared to be different from those of classroom teachers. Thus, in 1972, AASA separated from the National Education Association (Grady, 2010). AASA’s mission and purpose focused on leadership and the running of school systems, and the influence and prestige of the organization increased (Grady, 2010). Although the organization had been preparing quantitative studies on the superintendency since 1922, it is in the 1970s that these decennial studies’ impact began to have influence. Now, these studies are considered the preeminent research on the superintendency in general and superintendents in particular (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Cunningham & Hentges, 1982; Glass, 1992; Glass et al., 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Grady, 2010; Knezevich, 1971; Kowalski et al., 2011; Tyack, 1976). In 1982, for the first time, the gender of the superintendent was included in the AASA decennial study and the first study focused solely on female superintendents occurred in 2007, almost 150 years after the first female superintendent of schools was appointed to a position in a large city (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Cunningham & Hentges, 1982).

Context Responsive Leadership

The idea that context impacts leadership is not new (Bredeson et al., 2011; Budge, 2010; Clarke & Wildy, 2004; Klar & Brewer, 2014; Seashore et al., 2010). Context can refer to district or school size (Clarke & Wildy, 2004), location (Budge, 2006, 2010), or a combination of multiple factors including organizational, occupational, personal, and

social contexts (Roegman, 2015). For this study, I used gender (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011), district size (Wright & Harris, 2010), and geographic location (Forner et al., 2012; Lamkin, 2006) as specific contexts that impact the leadership practices of a superintendent because leaders influence and are influenced by context (Bredeson et al., 2011, p. 2).

Bredeson et al. (2011) studied the ways superintendents' leadership style influences context and how context influences superintendents' style of leadership. Researchers sought to move beyond the initial layer of understanding about leadership practices and context suggested earlier to "a more holistic understanding of context, including the environmental, organizational, and psychological dimensions affecting leadership" (Bredeson et al., 2011, p. 3). Bredeson et al. studied 12 superintendents, six in Wisconsin and six in Sweden, in various configurations of school districts ranging from large urban districts to small rural districts in both countries. They aimed to determine how differences in context caused superintendents to differ in their perceptions of the nature of their work and how they express their leadership. They interviewed these 12 superintendents in structured, in-depth sessions lasting from 90 to 120 minutes. They asked about superintendents' backgrounds, roles, priorities, influences, collaborations, and professional learning advocacy (Bredeson et al., 2011). Findings pointed to the importance of context in leadership. The researchers identified five specific areas where context plays a pivotal role in superintendent-leadership behavior: (a) school district size; (b) organizational culture; (c) community characteristics and geographical location; (d) financial situations; and (e) political climate. One superintendent in the study noted, "In America, we really have two completely different sets of school systems" (Bredeson

et al., 2011, p. 10). Another noted small and large districts are like “different worlds. [Being a superintendent in a small district] is a quantifiably different job” (Bredeson et al., 2011, p. 10).

The significant differences between superintendents of small and large districts were replicated when considering the location of a school district (Bredeson et al., 2011). Geographic locations and their commensurate differences in demographics, local politics and culture, community values and expectations, and school-district needs comprised the significant differences. As a result of their study, Bredeson et al. professed “Context responsive leadership is expressed through action, the way the leader behaves, not any one predisposed style consisting of de-contextualized qualities or leader action” (2011, p. 20).

Because insufficient attention has accrued in studying relationship contexts and their effect on education leaders (Seashore et al., 2010, p. 96), this study is supported. Bredeson et al. averred “research needs to be conducted to determine more specifically how superintendents utilize and hone their context responsive skills in practice to advance district goals, particularly student development and academic performance” (2011, p. 21). The present study aimed to fill that need.

Women in the Superintendency

In 1909, Ella Flagg Young became the first female superintendent of schools in a large city: Chicago, Illinois (Blount, 1998). Yet, “The U.S. Census Bureau has characterized the superintendency as being the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States”: this finding was identified not in 1900, but in 2000 (Björk, 2000, p. 8).

B. Richardson and Sandoval's findings regarding superintendent barriers revealed that despite race and age inequalities in leaders, "the most continuous and startling inequities are between men and women" (2007, p. 54). From 1971–2003 the number of women represented in the superintendency grew from 1.3 to 18% while the percentage of women teachers fluctuated between 65 and 76% (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Glass, 1992; Glass et al., 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011). And, "Even though the percentage of female superintendents has increased substantially over the last two decades, at the current rate of change, it will take more than three additional decades before the percentage of female superintendents approaches parity with the percentage of male superintendents" (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009, p. 9). Exploration into possible reasons for the continued mismatch between the percentage of women in education as a whole and the percentage of women in the top educational administration position is grounded in a review and analysis of the literature that specifically focuses on female superintendents.

Evolution of Research on Women in the Superintendency

The research on contemporary female superintendents, while approximately 40 years old, has focused on empirical studies that address experiences of women since the 1990s (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Shakeshaft, who has studied female educational administrators for more than 30 years, identified six stages of research on women in educational administration, each with a different emphasis, approach, and outcome. Table 1, from Shakeshaft's 1989 article for *Educational Administration Quarterly*, illustrated these six different stages (Shakeshaft, 1989a, p. 327). These stages represent the

progression the research on women in educational leadership has undergone since the topic began to be researched in depth in the early 21st century (Shakeshaft, 1989b).

Table 1

Stages of Research on Women in Educational Leadership

Stage	Questions	Approach	Outcome
1. Absence of women documented Blount and others, 1970s and 1980s	How many women are in administration? What positions do they hold?	Surveys that count	Documentation of numbers by administrative position
2. Search for women who have been or are administrators Descriptive	What are the characteristics of the women who are in school administration? What is the history of women in school administration?	Surveys of women administrators. Historical research that uncovers great women.	Demographic and attitudinal descriptions of women administrators. Stories of former administrators.
3. Women as disadvantaged or subordinate	Why are there so few women leaders in schools?	Surveys of attitudes toward and of women. Surveys of experiences of women. Experimental and quasiexperimental studies of discrimination.	Identification of barriers to advancement in administration
4. Women studied on their own terms Qualitative, 1990s	How do women describe their experiences and lives?	Survey/interview/observational studies of women	A view of the world from a female perspective
5. Women as a challenge to authority	How must theory change to include women's experience? What effect does gender have on behavior and effectiveness in organizations? Are male-oriented theories germane to women leaders?	Analysis of theories/methods as appropriate for women	Reality that theories do not work for women
6. Transformation to theory	What are the theories of human behavior in organizations?	A range of approaches	Reconceptualization of theory to include experiences of men and women

Note. Used with permission "The Gender Gap in Research in Educational Administration," by C. Shakeshaft, 1989a, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 23, p. 327.

Just as the field of study regarding superintendents in general has evolved throughout U.S. history, so has the research on superintendent effectiveness as it relates to gender (Björk, 2000; Callahan, 1966; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Kowalski, 2005; Skrla, 1998). Specific collection and analysis of data for the decennial AASA studies by gender began with the study released in 1982 (Cunningham & Hentges, 1982); however, it is not until 2007 that AASA published a study specific to women (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Brunner and Grogan noted that, “Although studies of women superintendents have greatly increased over the past 15 [now 23] years ... relatively little national information has been available” (2007, p. 227). Little has changed since 2007.

Women in Educational Leadership Research

In 1989b, Shakeshaft revealed that when referring to educational leadership theory, “The underlying assumption is that the experiences of males and females [in administrative roles] is the same, and thus research on males is appropriate for generalizing to [the] female experience”(p. 148). Other researchers furthered Shakeshaft’s groundbreaking work to argue that not only does educational leadership theory and research assuming an androgynous experience, but that because the research has historically been conducted by men, about men, the questions, surveys, and studies are gender biased (Björk, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; Skrla, 1998). Results and conclusions, therefore, are incomplete and gender-normed to society’s expectations of male leaders (Björk, 2000; Lemasters & Roach, 2012).

Overview of Contemporary Female Superintendent Research

Jones (1990) analyzed 147 studies on education administration in the first 22 volumes of the journal *Educational Administration*. Of those, 42 articles, or 28.57%, mentioned gender. Of these, only 18 articles provided an effect size that was significant. Furthermore, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted that in the Jones' analysis, an additional 94 articles had the opportunity to include gender in their study, but did not.

Other indications of an absence of female-gendered educational leadership research include G. Brown and Irby's (2006) finding that research focused on women is generally found in unjuried dissertations and that even in dissertations overall, specific studies of women accounted for less than 9% of all leadership dissertations completed in the United States between 1985 and 2005. Additionally, Skrla's (1998) findings indicated that a gendercentric research analysis of educational leadership performed by men reinforces stereotypes of women not being able to do the job. Boone (1997) revealed that research on educational leadership uses research methods developed by men and fail to address issues women face.

Moreover, Grogan and Shakeshaft indicated that research "instruments developed by traditional leadership scholars to examine male leadership often leave out behaviors that both males and females use, but that are less valued by these researchers" further impacting the findings of leadership research as they apply to women (2011, p. 5). Björk revealed that "over the past several decades, research on women and gender in educational administration has illuminated how culture and professional norms have created masculine myths of the existence of the one best way of leading and have perpetuated expectations and gender bias in the superintendency" (2000, p. 14). Grogan

and Shakeshaft (2011) concurred and determined that gender-biased research conducted by men in a male-dominated profession cannot and does not account for the unique differences women bring to the position of superintendent.

The combination of the influence of gendered norms with the social circumstances and results of leadership research has negatively impacted societal perceptions of women as leaders in general, and as superintendents in particular (Björk, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Chase & Bell, 1990; Glass et al., 2000; Grogan, 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009, 2011; Lemasters & Roach, 2012; Shakeshaft, 1989a; Shakeshaft, 1998b; Skrla, 1998). Although it is currently unacceptable for researchers to debate whether female superintendents experience a different reality than their male counterparts (Brunner et al., 2002), the absence of transformative research (Shakeshaft, 1989a; Shakeshaft, 1989b) coupled with ongoing, pervasive sexism described by current practitioners (Dana, 2009; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Palladino, Grady, Haar, & Perry, 2007; Skrla, 1998) reveal women still have many barriers to overcome.

Barriers

Although the first female superintendent of schools worked in 1874, women, as a group, have been slow to obtain this top administrative position and many researchers attribute this to barriers they must overcome that men do not have to overcome (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; MacArthur, 2010). Researchers who study feminist educational leadership have general consensus that women face significant barriers when trying to reach the highest educational administrative position; however, whether these barriers are

rooted in societal perceptions or are self-imposed has not been agreed. Skrla (1998), Tallerico (2000), Orr (2010), and Kowalski et al. (2011) attributed the barriers to societal constraints whereas Derrington and Sharratt (2009) and Lemasters and Roach (2012) indicated a combination of societal and self-imposed barriers impact access for women.

Societal considerations identified by researchers include overt gender discrimination and sexism (Kowalski et al., 2011; Skrla, 1998; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000), gatekeeping by boards of education and superintendent recruitment agencies (Chase & Bell, 1990; Tallerico, 2000), and cultural norms that are nuanced and subtle, such as the demographics of the decision-making group that will hire those most like themselves, accompanied by “an overreliance on interpersonal feelings of connection” known as the “comfort syndrome” (Tallerico, 2000, p. 37).

Lemasters and Roach (2012) identified eight barriers women face when attempting to enter the superintendency: (a) limited time for career mobility; (b) career aspirations being placed behind family responsibilities; (c) family commitments being a priority over career advancement; (d) limited access to mentors in their organization; (e) exclusions from established network systems; (f) lack of sponsorships in their organization; (g) limited support systems in their organization; and (h) entering into educational administrative positions too late in their careers. Four of these barriers—limited access to mentors, exclusions from established network systems, lack of sponsorships in their organization, and limited support systems in their organization—are outside a woman’s control. Interestingly, the decision to place career aspirations behind family responsibilities, which is in a woman’s control, impacts the amount of time she has for other commitments. These commitments include career mobility, family

commitments (being a priority over career advancement), as well as the age a woman enters the administrative ranks. Derrington and Sharratt (2009) also noted challenges with a spouse relocating to accommodate the woman's superintendency, which can be a significant barrier to women advancing to the position.

Prototypes of Women Superintendents

Increasing numbers of women are overcoming self-imposed and societal barriers to advance to the top leadership position in school districts; enough so that researchers have developed prototypes to describe effective female superintendents. Amedy (1999) isolated three such prototypes in research on women superintendents. These prototypes revealed behavior-interaction patterns between a female superintendent and the board, parents, teachers, and other stakeholder groups, that greatly impact the longevity of each female leader in their assignment (Amedy, 1999).

Steel Magnolia. The Steel Magnolia prototype reflects a woman who uses a leadership pattern centered outside the school system. The superintendent works from in the community to build a power base and is therefore heavily involved in local politics. She is a driven woman who communicates through multiple modes: face-to-face, coming to community gatherings, church, telephone, and e-mail, so the community knows she is always accessible to them. Using this leadership pattern, she is successful and thwarts conflict often before it starts (Amedy, 1999).

Queen Bee. In contrast, the Queen Bee prototype works from in the school district. She makes her mark by working in a man's world while also seemingly effortlessly managing family obligations. She understands that to move her district forward, she must acknowledge the politics and find a way to work within it. She anchors her district and

builds connections in the district to solidify her power base. While promoting accountability, she tends to work in isolation. Again, she is perceived to be successful because she knows how to work the system (Amedy, 1999).

Battalion Chief. The Battalion Chief also works from in the school system; the difference is that she surrounds herself with people, generally from outside the system, who are loyal to her. She is a change agent who is not afraid or intimidated by those who seek to maintain the status quo. Additionally, she has a tight inner circle of supporters at the district office who are focused on organizational goals. Because the Battalion Chief is a change agent, she seeks to overturn the status quo because it is the morally right thing to do. The board that hired her will empower her and support her in these changes, as that is what she was hired to do. Eventually, she will change the district as much as she can before the status quo sector is successful in obtaining enough votes to oust the school board and she is replaced. Although some may see her as unsuccessful, she has brought the district as far as they could go under her leadership. It will be up to the next superintendent to extend the progress she has made for students (Amedy, 1999).

More recently, Gammill and Vaughn (2011) looked at female leadership historically and identified five prototypes linked to the social circumstances and perceptions of the times.

Ruth. The best way to describe the first successful female superintendents would be to consider them grandmother figures. Seeing it as their patriotic duty, these strong women stepped in to lead their school systems while the men were away at war. Because they did not see themselves as leaders, they “used influence rather than power relying on the ‘lady’ image amidst an agricultural environment”(Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 116).

These superintendents avoided conflict at all cost and assumed the blame for any troubles. Gammill and Vaughn wrote, “By not confronting conflict head on, Ruth unknowingly internalized the belief that she had failed and was truly just a substitute for a male” (2011, p. 117). Her preferred way of influencing the board was subtle with men being deferential to her because of her age and reputation. Frequently, Ruth had been a teacher of many of the male board members (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011).

Rachel. As U.S. society grew and changed, so did the prototype of an effective female superintendent. Rachel was a young, tough, White woman who led where the men did not want to go; often in large urban areas. She used her physical body as a source of power and would, “square off with tough kids and back them down”(Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 117). She was confident and persuasive with her board and many of the students saw her as their tough, older sister (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011).

Nancy. During the 1980s and beyond, young Black women were selected to fill the positions where men did not want to lead; again, generally in urban areas. Similar to Amedy’s Steel Magnolia prototype (1999), Nancy was connected to the community. She was seen as “one of them” and had the ability to rally the community to not give up hope for their kids. She was dedicated to turning around the poorly achieving school system and won her board over because she was seen as a luminary or visionary (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011).

Margaret. Margaret, a White woman with a passion for children’s education, was perceived to have a “deliberate but caring personality”(Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 117). She used social and cultural capital to accomplish her goals. Margaret could act like one of the boys and used this ability to build board relationships. Because she was from the

neighborhood, much like Amedy's Queen Bee, she knew the personal histories of the board members, so was accepted into their inner circle and thus earned their support (Amedy, 1999; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011).

Megan. A more recent prototype, is a White woman who uses her femininity to build her power base and achieve her goals. She sees her job as a collection of interchangeable roles she will navigate by being, "just feminine enough to soften her masculine resolve, ... to put innovative programs in place for students and raise test scores" (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 117). Politically, she wants what is right for children but knows that to obtain that, she must be savvy about negotiating the landscape, similar to Amedy's Queen Bee (Amedy, 1999; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011). She has the ability to temper her personal resolve by cloaking it in her femininity (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011).

All the leadership prototypes presented by Amedy (1999) and Gammill and Vaughn (2011) include women who are facilitators rather than dictators in policy implementation and are meticulous in their preparation and presentation. They are focused, visionary, and system-oriented. Additionally, all the prototypes illustrate women who are demanding, hands-on bosses. Common assumptions about these prototypes indicate that women depend on trusted male supporters to bring forth potentially controversial topics where their gender may inhibit others from hearing their message. Most of all, these women are politically savvy and know how to use their personal strengths to be successful (Amedy, 1999; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011). In their more recent study, Funk, Pankake, and Schroth described successful female superintendents as

“passionate, courageous professionals who act on their principles, do the right thing regardless of the circumstances, and are trusted by district stakeholders” (2002, p. 11).

Contemporary Female Superintendent Leadership

Since the passage of NCLB, student achievement has been at the forefront of school board member’s minds and, as stated previously, has given women an opportunity to step into superintendent positions that were previously closed to them (Grogan, 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Grogan (2000) identified five leadership behaviors, regardless of gender, that are essential to a superintendent’s effectiveness, defined as the ability to “survive in office long enough to effect change that promises better outcomes for all students in the future”(p. 131). These include: (a) being comfortable with contradictions, (b) working through others, (c) appreciating dissent, (d) developing a critical awareness of how children are currently being served and taking a stand of social justice, and, (e) adopting an ethic of care. These attributes directly align with research on how women lead (du Plessis, 2008; Grogan, 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). When considering where female superintendents started, progress has ensued.

Rural Superintendents

When examining the research on rural superintendents, one needs to understand the context of rural schools (Budge, 2006). Kannapel and DeYoung (1999) and Stapel and DeYoung (2011) conducted reviews of literature on rural schools, education reform, and education policy. Kannapel and DeYoung (1999) found “The centralization, bureaucratization, and professionalization of schools has resulted in a relatively uniform model of schooling, but this model has failed to deliver on many of the promises made to parents and communities in many rural and urban settings” (p. 67). Scholars in the 1990s

found that many leaders were using standard methods to answer standard problems (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). Adding to the challenge, much of the documentation in rural districts is inaccessible to practitioners. Over the past hundred years, urban strategies for reform have been imposed on rural districts (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999).

Kannapel and DeYoung (1999) distilled their contemporary literature into two, specific issues: who controls the schools and who do the schools serve? For rural superintendents to clarify these priorities for their district, effective rural superintendents recognized that urban strategies were ineffective and short lived, as they had little meaning in rural contexts (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). Jimerson (2005) called this condition “placism, discrimination against people based on where they live” (p. 211).

As a result of NCLB legislation and the more recent Race to the Top initiative, “education scholars must engage in highly empirical, outcomes-oriented research in order to remain policy-relevant” (Stapel & DeYoung, 2011, p. 28). However, the reports and publications generated to fulfill this mandate fail to attend to the rural context of their research (Coladarci, 2007) resulting in “rural education research that fails to make a rural case” (Stapel & DeYoung, 2011, p. 28). Coladarci (2007) contended that “far too often, it remains unclear whether the researcher has discovered a rural phenomenon or, instead, a phenomenon that is observed incidentally in a rural setting” (p. 3). To rectify this, Stapel and DeYoung advocate for rural-education research that is “sensitive to local practices” and “place-conscious” (2011, p. 28).

In 2006, Budge studied the impact of “rurality and place” (p. 2) on community leaders, including those in education. Rurality is a collection of “similar strengths and challenges” leaders face including (a) low population density and isolation, (b) school

and community interdependence, (c) oppression as a lived experience, (d) a history of conflict regarding purposes of schooling, (e) an “out migration” of young talent, and (f) a salient attachment to place (p. 2).

Budge (2006) also identified six habits of place “or practical ways of living”: (a) connectedness, (b) development of identity and culture, (c) interdependence with the land, (d) spirituality (ideology and politics), and (f) activism and civic engagement to define a “sense of place as tools for examining rural schools and communities” (2006, p. 3). A sense of place may have the most marked influence on the leaders’ and community’s beliefs about the purpose of school and how students should learn (Budge, 2010). Thus, a leader’s effectiveness may emerge from these considerations.

In a study of rural superintendents, Rey built on Budge’s (2006) research, seeking to “present an in-depth, contextualized analysis of what quality education means to rural superintendents and their constituents in rural districts and how this meaning is navigated and constructed through the superintendents’ leadership and interaction with the local community” (Rey, 2014, p. 510). Using a semistructured interview process, Rey met with two rural superintendents whose colleagues had identified them as exemplary.

Although both of Rey’s (2014) participants were women, Rey made no connection to gender in the findings. The two men asked to participate in the study had declined. Rey noted the physical characteristics of each participant, including their attire. For example, Rey described one participant as “a slight, soft-spoken, attractive White woman in her late 50s who favors classic styling and muted tones” (2014, p. 518) and the other as “a tall, slender, attractive white woman in her late 40s who appears to have

stepped off the pages of a Talbot's catalogue" (2014, p. 520). The relevance of these descriptions appears limited, if gender is not part of her study.

Rey's findings reveal these effective, rural superintendents "worked to create an aspirational culture in which education was the way out of poverty for their students, aspirations that were frequently at tension with their community values" (2014, p. 509). Because of tension and potential conflict with parents, these leaders bridged between mainstream culture and the values and perspectives of the local community about schooling. Rey (2014) added,

A critical pedagogy of place could provide superintendents with a process for parents and students to inquire into the economic and social issues of their communities and, perhaps in the process, come to see post-secondary education as a way to improve such critical issues and make their communities better places to live. (p. 531)

Rey's (2014) viewpoint aligns with Kannapel and DeYoung's (1999) finding that leaders must collaborate with local residents to ensure solutions address problems and are worthwhile. Considering the mandate of California's LCFF to engage parents in funding decisions (Knudson, 2014), rural superintendents must serve as the public face of their school districts, critically mandating collaboration with the local community (Tekniepe, 2015).

Rural California high school principals must "identify dominant leadership practices with specific attention given to instructional, distributed, and transformational leadership and leader-initiated school-community interrelationships for the purpose of improving student achievement and school success" (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009,

p. 2). A strong, modern leadership style will integrate distributive, instructional, , and transformative leadership styles. These various leadership styles help develop relationships with various community entities—businesses, parents, and organizations—collaborating to engage all partners in the community (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009).

When considering how best to support rural school districts, whether through policy, leadership, or scholarship, improvement projects that are truly rural (a) are grounded in sense of place; (b) value outcomes arising from individual situations, rather than predetermined, specified results; (c) invite contributions from those who are usually marginalized in community development and reform efforts; (d) are systemic, comprehensive, long-term, multifaceted; and (e) are grounded in and energized by a moral stance of rural communities and schools strengthening themselves (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). The rural superintendent, through their leadership, envisions and empowers schools to improve and thrive (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Women Superintendents in Rural Areas

Dr. Dana, what you should understand is that even though your leadership for this district has met every goal set by the school board in the past five years and you and your family fit in quite well in the community, the community does not want a woman superintendent. (Dana, 2009, p. 22)

Dr. Dana was leading a small, rural, Midwestern school district where “cultural norms regarding sex-role behavior are very strong. Those who choose to step outside cultural norms experience judgment and discrimination from members of the culture” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 160). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) noted,

Changing sex-role expectations is one of the continuous challenges women leaders face. Not only are women working as school district leaders struggling to change the image of the public school CEO to include women, but also they have gender structuring and prejudice to face throughout their leadership work. (p. 161)

This situation frequently results in the female superintendent, particularly in rural school districts, experiencing “the reason you’re hired is the reason you’re fired” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 176). Several scholars indicated that dismissal from the superintendency can result in depression (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Grogan, 2008; Palladino et al., 2007; Robinson-Hornbuckle, 1991) and “contemporary female superintendents still wrestle with cultural and personal views of womanhood” (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 120). Upon reflection about her own dismissal, Gammill revealed “I should have been more aware of external community based social constructions of gender and more introspective about the kind of woman I perceived myself to be” (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011, p. 120)

To address these uniquely female-leadership issues, Palladino et al. (2007) suggested that the academy incorporate the status of female superintendents in rural districts in leadership-preparation program for school administrators. Numerous studies noted that, regardless of a superintendent’s gender, the challenges in the position result in short superintendent tenures, large numbers of anticipated superintendent retirements, and difficulty identifying qualified superintendent candidates, especially in rural areas (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Glass et al., 2000; Kamrath & Brunner, 2014; Klatt, 2014; Kowalski et al., 2011; Palladino et al., 2007). Palladino et al. (2007) advocated further

study about female rural superintendents' self-sustainability through a constructive perspective.

Palladino et al. (2007) posed four research questions to frame their study on how female superintendents (a) implement and sustain change, (b) describe their leadership style, (c) build relationships, and (d) seek professional support and mentors. These scholars synthesized their findings into one word, "relationships," stating:

The participants identified inter- and intra-school relationships as the essential core of their resistance, success, commitment, and joy as rural superintendents. It was obvious our female participants responded to challenges and conflicts with proactive, genuine relationship-building that defused any connotations of survival. Communication and time invested with all constituents comprised the core of these relationships. (Palladino et al., 2007, p. 43)

This finding corresponds to Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) relational theme in diverse-collective-leadership theory, and to the mandates of California's LCFF policy (Knudson, 2014).

Policy Implementation

Equity has persisted as a central concern of educational policy (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1982, p. 5). Another major policy theme is "building capacity" with a focus on "organizational change" (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002, p. 7). Presently, a weak focus on rural locations leaves educators in those environments unsupported, thereby foregoing an opportunity to help students achieve (Barrett et al., 2015). The result is that "rural schools remain under-examined relative to their suburban and urban counterparts across a variety of reform dimensions" (Barrett et al., 2015, p. 1).

Summary

Throughout U.S. history, opportunities for women serving as superintendents have mirrored opportunities for women in society as a whole. Early in U.S. history, women were elevated to serve as superintendents when men were away at war. As women gained more rights through the women's suffrage movement, school systems hired more women to lead. When men returned from war, women stepped aside to let men fill superintendent positions. Later, as more and more women entered the workplace, women filled superintendent positions that men were reticent to fill, and today, as societal expectations for schools shift to a focus on curriculum, women are being tapped to lead school systems because of their perceived expertise in this area.

These societal perceptions have impacted how women lead as well, whether in the grandmotherly fashion common at the turn of the 20th century, or in a balanced leadership manner that uses all of the talents women bring to bear. In 1999, Amedy concluded that, as superintendents, female leaders are very much alone in their leadership position with few, if any, safe places to grow and make mistakes. Additionally, women must consider the perceptions others have regarding gender and power, explicit and implicit, and be extremely well prepared to be competitive, take the time and energy to intentionally build their power base, and be focused on measurable progress and accountability to validate their effectiveness (Amedy, 1999). A statement by du Plessis (2008) was reflective of 100% of the participants in a study that included all female superintendents in the Commonwealth of Virginia and summed the research examined for this review as well. du Plessis (2008) noted, female superintendent "leadership centered not so much on the reality of how they led, but rather how their leadership was

perceived by their community, colleagues, and school boards” (p. 58). How these perceptions can be continually nudged to recognize the strengths women bring to educational leadership is one area for further research.

This literature review exposed additional omissions in the research directly related to this study. In a report funded by the Wallace Foundation, Seashore et al. (2010) clearly revealed leaders’ relationships with all district stakeholders has a direct impact on student learning. For example, female leaders are challenged when few colleagues are clearly supportive. Relational leadership is one of the five themes advanced by Grogan and Shakeshaft’s (2011) diverse-collective-leadership theory.

Although I reviewed many areas of diverse collective leadership, relational leadership and leadership for social justice were most relevant to this study. Relational leadership is expressed by women leaders horizontally to facilitate the inclusion of all stakeholders into the decision-making process of the school or district (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Regan & Brooks, 1995). Power, then, is used in conjunction with stakeholders, rather than over them (Brunner, 1994; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Relational leadership is pivotal in implementing California’s LCFF as districts are mandated to include all stakeholders in decisions of how funds are allocated (Knudson, 2014), affording a direct link to this study.

Leading for social justice, another of Grogan and Shakeshaft’s (2011) leadership themes, plainly links women’s leadership to their desire to improve education for those most adversely impacted by the current educational system. One purpose for California changing their school-funding policy is rooted in equity, a key tenet of social justice

(Vasquez Heilig, Ward, Weisman, & Cole, 2014). Additionally, Maxwell et al. (2014) revealed the gap in the literature on rural social justice leaders, the setting of this study.

Context responsive literature showed gaps in research conducted in rural areas and research on women (Bredeson et al., 2011; Clarke & Wildy, 2004). Much of this review centered on women in leadership. Extensive literature showed the dearth of research using theoretical frameworks and instruments that are not from a male-gendered perspective, particularly at the superintendent level in rural school districts.

Policy implementation and the role politics plays for superintendents was the last area reviewed. Barrett et al. (2015) pointed out the need for continued research of policy implementation, particularly in rural areas. These gaps provide substantial evidence for the need for a study based on female superintendents in rural California school districts, as they implement LCFF policy.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, this study sought to attune to the voices of female superintendents in rural California school districts. Studies of female superintendents have previously centered on descriptive studies and rarely were designed to interact with multiple superintendents beyond a survey (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Studies of rural superintendents have also been scarce, particularly rural California superintendents (Barrett et al., 2015; Geivett, 2010; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). This study sought to fill that void.

The second purpose of this study was to examine the extent that Grogan and Shakeshaft's diverse-collective-leadership theory (2011) was revealed as California's new state LCFF education policy was implemented. Because of the short duration since the inception of diverse collective leadership as a theory, studies were unavailable. This promising new theory, advanced by two seminal researchers in women's educational leadership research, has great potential to empower female leaders at every level in education (Arar, 2012). Exploring the implementation of a new California funding policy helps answer another gap in the research.

Research Design

This study was designed as a qualitative study using responsive interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Creswell noted, "one objective of qualitative research is to present the complexity of a site or of the information provided by individuals" (2012, p. 209). Rural superintendents experience complex leadership challenges due to their setting (Gammill

& Vaughn, 2011), often working in school districts with only a couple of other administrators (Scott & McMurrer, 2015). Additionally, recent LCFF legislation mandates that all districts, regardless of size, engage stakeholders at every level in the continuous improvement process, requiring a rural superintendent to facilitate and oversee many interactions personally, rather than delegate the function to a staff member, further illustrating the complexity of the position and providing additional rationale for a qualitative responsive interview design (CDE, 2014; Creswell, 2012; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Scott & McMurrer, 2015).

In designing the study, I used the following steps outlined by Rubin and Rubin (2012) for high-quality qualitative studies:

1. Select a topic.
2. Formulate the research questions.
3. Determine if the proposed study is practical and feasible.
4. Identify locations for data gathering.
5. Choose interviewees with relevant knowledge and experience who can present a variety of views, and who are willing to talk to the researcher.
6. Craft interview questions.
7. Plan for accurate, thorough, credible data collection with rich, detailed descriptions.

Studies of leadership behaviors of rural superintendents, regardless of their gender and the state in which they were employed, have illustrated the need for additional research in rural locations (Boone, 1997, 1998; Byrd, 2001; Canales, Tejada-Delgado, & Slate, 2008; Forner et al., 2012). Participants in this study were female superintendents in

rural California school districts because they have “relevant knowledge and experiences” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 42), identified through a purposeful, homogenous sampling, as supported by Creswell (2012) and Rubin and Rubin (2012). Participants in the pilot study provided specific feedback regarding the interview questions. Grogan, a seminal researcher in the educational leadership of women and author of the study’s theoretical framework, also reviewed the interview questions (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Qualitative research design requires a researcher to engage in intentional procedures to assure the findings are accurate, thorough, and credible (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Rubin and Rubin, “To naturalist researchers, quality means that the results of the research are fresh and real. The conclusions are balanced, thorough credible, and accurate, and the final reports are rich with ideas” (2012, p. 60). To facilitate this outcome, I intentionally addressed each part of what Rubin and Rubin referenced as “fresh and real” results (2012, p. 60).

Rubin and Rubin (2012) indicated that for interviewing study results to be fresh and real, researchers need to “explore new issues or present old problems in a new way” (p. 60). To accomplish this, researchers “present the words of individuals who know about the issues from their own experience and knowledge; hence, they portray real people, real events, real experiences” by relying on first-hand knowledge rather than third-party information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 60). The goal was to assure fresh and real data by locating interviewees “with specific experiences relevant to your research questions and getting them to talk to you” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 61). To keep the data

fresh and real, I chose interviewees with first-hand experience who expressed their perceptions that provided themes and conclusions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

For qualitative research to be of high quality, “conclusions must grow out of the material reported in the findings” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 222). Qualitative studies must be designed to ensure conclusions are balanced, credible, and accurate (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Quality qualitative studies, particularly those focused on controversial issues, require the researcher to consider a wide range of perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Thus, I chose interviewees with diverse viewpoints and experiences. To design a balanced study, I interviewed two female rural county superintendents in addition to district superintendents. Implementation of a district’s LCAP requires plan approval from the County Superintendent of Schools or their designee (CDE, 2014). Because of a rural district’s small administrative staff, staff from a county office may work closely with a rural district superintendent to provide targeted, direct support in grant and plan writing (Scott & McMurrer, 2015). Therefore, county superintendents offered an alternative perspective on leadership behaviors, particularly as one of the participants was also the district superintendent.

Thoroughness is a cornerstone of a high-quality qualitative study, requiring rigorous follow through on innovative ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers “demonstrate thoroughness by looking for gaps and filling in missing information, seeking contrary data, and exploring alternative explanations” using a responsive, semistructured interview design (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 60) that engenders trust between the researcher and interviewee, thereby encouraging a more reciprocal discussion. To accomplish this, I established a flexible protocol, allowing the

conversation to evolve organically, with new questions and topics arising as needed. I created probing questions in two ways: I listed possible questions based on the responses of pilot participants, and devised probing questions as the interview progressed, ensuring to include breadth, depth, and detail in interviewees' responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

According to Rubin and Rubin, "A major strength of qualitative interviewing is that it produces highly credible results: every conclusion is tightly linked to solid evidence, all embedded in a context" (2012, p. 64). They cautioned, however, that, "credibility has to be built into the research design. You need to accurately and transparently report what you hear and how you did the analysis" while also checking and asking for details for every theme (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 64). Equally important is including an opportunity to "discuss with your interviewees their reaction to your tentative conclusions" into the research design (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 64). It is important for the researcher to keep in mind that, "Credibility comes not just from who you interview and how well you check what they say; it also comes from showing readers how carefully you have carried out the research" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 67). and that "Every major conclusion has to be backed up with evidence from interviews" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 68). Designing a high-quality study that is transparent and uses member checking, which will be more thoroughly discussed later in this chapter, will aid in the credibility of study conclusions (Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

According to Rubin and Rubin, "Accuracy requires great care in how you obtain, record, and report what you have heard" (2012, p. 64). I worked to design a study that would result in the most accurate data possible by recording each interview. I hired a professional transcriptionist to transcribe each interview and sent the transcript to each

participant to check for information that might have been “missed or misinterpreted or to bring up what they omitted and now want to add” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 64). I also took notes during each interview using an interview protocol.

Similarly, I used field notes from each participant’s leadership observation. Following each observation, I debriefed the participant to check for possible misunderstandings (Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To ensure accuracy in the collected documents, I checked the dates of the publicly accessible LCAP. I also verified the dates with the participant, because the legislation requires the plan be updated annually (CDE, 2014).

High-quality qualitative studies provide conclusions that offer, “a density of ideas in the writing, reflecting the complexity of the world the interviewees live in. Interviewees’ answers are rich if they present many related themes” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 69). Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that, “to obtain richness and nuance, examine in detail a variety of examples and themes, and explore alternative interpretations and perspectives” (2012, p. 60).

Aligned with Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011), I divided the theoretical framework for the study into five leadership themes exhibited by female educational leaders: relational leadership, leadership for social justice, leadership for learning, spiritual leadership, and balanced leadership. These themes served as a template for the interview and probing questions as well as for the coding of the responses of the interviewees (Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2013). Because, “detail, especially when combined with thoroughness, helps create nuanced understanding” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 69) I did “ensure richness by asking for several different examples for each point,

hoping that the additional examples will highlight a distinct aspect of what is being discussed” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 69). Intentionally designing for quality by addressing balance, thoroughness, credibility, and accuracy raises the likelihood that the research findings are rich, detailed, fresh, and real (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The Research Setting

This study took place in rural California school districts with fewer than 3,000 students. I chose California because of the variety of school districts in the state, the recent implementation of a new funding policy, and the prior knowledge I have about the state, having been a California public school educator at the school, district, and county level for over 25 years. The rural designation was based on the urbancentric metrics used by the U.S. Census Bureau (2012).

Population and Sample

Population

I selected nine female superintendents and superintendent/principals who are members of AASA for this study. The superintendent, particularly in small, rural districts, is the district leader and has the ability to significantly impact student achievement through the superintendent’s leadership priorities and practices (Reeves, 2002; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Wooderson-Perzan, 2000; Wright & Harris, 2010).

Sample

I used purposeful sampling to identify the specific participants for the study (Creswell, 2012). Creswell noted the intent of purposeful sampling is to “develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” while “providing voice to individuals who many not be heard otherwise” (2012, p. 206). Female superintendents, particularly those

leading rural school districts, have rarely had their voices heard, especially when policy implementation is the topic of discussion (Björk, 2000; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

The first step to purposeful, homogenous sampling was to identify rural public school districts in California (Creswell, 2012). There are 1,182 public school districts in California, 358 of which are identified as rural, using NCES urbancentric indicators and the U.S. 2010 Census definition of rural areas. NCES defines rural school districts as Rural/Fringe, Rural/Distant, or Rural/Remote, based on their proximity to an urban location (USDE NCES, n.d.). Of the 358 rural school districts in California, 153 are identified as Rural/Fringe, 134 are Rural/Distant, and 71 are Rural/Remote (NCES, 2015). Of these 358 rural school districts, 119 are led by female superintendents (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2007; CDE, n.d.).

The specific rural districts in California selected for this study were drawn from the membership list of the AASA. I identified 12 rural northern California districts that are headed by women. Attrition, retirements, and site constraints resulted in these numbers being reduced. Creswell cautioned researchers to limit the number of cases or individuals to be studied because, “the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site” (2012, p. 209). Nine superintendents agreed to participate in this study.

Pilot Study

Using Rubin and Rubin’s (2012) 7-step process for research design, I conducted a pilot study in February 2014. Two female rural superintendents in my home county agreed to participate in the pilot. One school district included Grades Kindergarten

through 8 and for the purposes of this pilot, was referenced as Tiny Elementary School District (TESD), whereas the other included Grades Prekindergarten through high school, identified as Peaceful Unified School District (PUSD). Both were pseudonyms engaged to maintain the confidentiality of participants.

Engaging in a pilot study provided an opportunity to identify potential problems with the protocols, interview questions, and design. Upon completion of the pilot study, participants graciously debriefed possible suggestions for the larger study with me. This process provided invaluable feedback to me to validate the study. The most valuable feedback provided by participants was the suggestion that the interview and meeting take place on the same day rather than during subsequent visits. I made great effort to make just one visit to each participant's district to diminish any potential disruption to the participant. I also learned that the topic was timely and appropriate, the research questions were aligned to the topic, and the study was practicable and feasible (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The time request of 1 hour was acceptable and having me observe a meeting they facilitated was not a burden to participants.

The data collected for this pilot included district goals, field notes, a 1-hour interview with each superintendent using a semistructured interview format, each district's LCAP, and observations of each leader while facilitating a meeting or study session. Superintendent/Principal Daisy from TESSD invited me to observe a faculty meeting while Superintendent Rose from PUSD welcomed me to a principal meeting/study session. All interviews were transcribed and coded to the research questions and theoretical framework components using NVivo. Field notes from the interviews and observations, as well as notes from the LCAP and district goals were also

coded and added to the NVivo data sets. Text search, text frequency, and node matrix coding were used, seeking patterns and trends in the data (Saldaña, 2013). After the data were transcribed using NVivo, I coded and analyzed each piece of data. The results of that analysis are listed in Table 2. These data reveal thought-provoking findings when compared to the research questions.

Research Question 1

What are the leadership practices of female superintendents in rural California districts?

Both participants in the pilot study strongly exhibited two of the five characteristics identified in Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse-collective-leadership theory: relational leadership and leadership for learning. Of the 159 data points I coded and analyzed, 74.2% of them fell into one of these two categories, with relational leadership occurring with the most frequently. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of data points in the pilot study.

Transcripts for the interviews, field notes, and observations, when collectively analyzed, revealed that these superintendents operate through a collaborative approach that is deeply connected to their various stakeholder groups. In crafting their district LCAP, Superintendents Rose and Daisy were personally involved in all parts of the process from planning to conducting feedback meetings with stakeholder groups, to actually writing the plan. Stakeholder groups included parents, students, teachers, classified staff members, community members, and board members. Superintendent Rose described her relationship with stakeholders, particularly board members, as "intimate."

She further stated, “I think that in an ideal situation, that it is a group of people really working together with similar ideals and similar goals [for students].”

Table 2

Aggregate Findings from District Goals, Field Notes, Interviews, Local Control

Accountability Plans, and Observations by Diverse Collective Leadership Characteristic

Data	Balanced	Learning	Social justice	Relational	Spiritual
District Goals					
PUSD	0	1	3	2	0
TESD	0	12	13	5	0
Field Notes					
PUSD	0	3	0	3	3
TESD	0	0	0	2	0
Interview					
PUSD	2	14	14	17	0
TESD	0	16	0	14	1
District LCAP					
PUSD	0	0	3	4	0
TESD	0	0	0	5	0
Observation					
PUSD	1	4	0	6	0
TESD	0	1	0	10	0
<hr/>					
Totals	3	51	33	68	4
	1.9%	31.4%	20.8%	42.8%	2.5%

Note. PUSD = Peaceful Unified School District; TESD = Tiny Elementary School District.

Research Question 2

How are LCFF and LCAP policy implementations impacted by the leadership practices of the superintendent?

Both superintendents exhibited collaborative leadership behaviors that enabled stakeholders with multiple perspectives to be not only informed, but involved in the feedback process identified in the LCFF legislation (EdSource, 2016). Both administered

surveys to teachers, classified staff, parents, and students in Grade 4 and beyond. Both held multiple information, input, and feedback meetings with various stakeholder groups to enable stakeholders to contribute to the improvement of their school. Superintendent Daisy, frustrated that she was not getting the feedback from all stakeholders, personally called parents and community members who agreed to be contacted on their submitted survey.

The LCAP for PUSD is part of every leadership meeting. School climate emerged as an important focus area for PUSD and thus was woven into the district's LCAP through the tracking of student discipline data. Of the 94-minute leadership meeting, 46 minutes centered on the quality and status of the collection of uniform student discipline data and how best to revise the data collection process. Even while welcoming everyone to the meeting, Superintendent Rose indicated this was a regular item on the meeting agenda. These examples reveal the importance of the LCAP to these leaders, as it was developed not by them, but in collaboration with their respective communities.

Research Question 3

To what extent is Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory supported or rejected as these rural female superintendents implement California's LCFF and LCAP policy mandates?

When referring to Table 2, it was evident in all data sets that both leaders use relational leadership behaviors. Furthermore, the only data points not coded were the district's actual LCAP's leadership for learning. It could be argued that the entire purpose of the LCAP is to support student learning. If that argument is advanced, then again, all of leadership-for-learning data points were exhibited by both leaders.

Diverse collective leadership theory identifies leadership for learning as a pivotal behavior of female educational leaders (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Superintendents noted, in their interviews, that learning (theirs, teachers', and students') is critical to student success. Superintendent Daisy revealed that her learning helps her remember how students learn and keep that at the forefront of her decision-making mindset. Grogan and Shakeshaft promoted through their research that, "Women educational leaders often make decisions based on the priorities of student learning" (2011, p. 19). The supporting rationale revealed that "many women learn leadership from serving as curriculum coaches or in curriculum and instruction positions, and all draw on their knowledge of teaching" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 19). Neither participant in this study had a formal background or position specifically in curriculum; the nature of a rural educational leader requires them to fulfill all functions in the district from transportation, to human resources, to curriculum. Both participants spent significant time as teachers prior to advancing into administrative roles; Superintendent Daisy spent 10 years as an elementary teacher and Superintendent Rose 20 years as an elementary teacher. Furthermore, "women have been associated with instructional leadership or learning-centered leadership in education because they have spent more time in the classroom than men before they take formal leadership positions such as principal or superintendent" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 18). This assumption was supported by participants' backgrounds.

Instrumentation

Because interviews are "active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results" (Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 698), I used a bank

of possible questions rather than asking each participant the exact same questions. Drawing on the study's research questions and theoretical framework, I generated a bank of possible interview and probing questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). All questions about the participants' leadership were framed in the context of the LCAP, which mandates annual revisions by July 1 of each year (CDE, 2014; EdSource, 2014). I modified and added questions, as needed, to accommodate the context of each school district's LCAP and the independent variable of each female superintendent. I recorded each interview and used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to capture each participant's responses (Creswell, 2012; Fink, 2013). The instrument was field tested in February 2014 through a pilot study, and in July 2015, Grogan, one of the primary authors of the theoretical framework, reviewed the instrument (see Appendix B), providing an external audit to enhance accuracy and credibility (Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Human-Subjects Protection

Prior to conducting the study, I applied for and received approval with the university's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) (see Appendix C). All researchers must obtain IRBPHS approval to, "protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who participate in the study" (Creswell, 2012, p. 148) and to "demonstrate to those you are studying, and to people who have responsibility for them, and to the instructional review boards that the research will be useful, that participation is truly voluntary, and that no one will be hurt" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 62). IRBPHS approval further indicates to the university and participants that no undue harm or stress will be placed on participants (Creswell, 2012). I asked each participant to sign an informed-consent agreement so that each participant was aware that I would use

pseudonyms not only for the names of participants, but also for the names of their school districts. The use of pseudonyms added an additional layer of participant anonymity and confidentiality (Creswell, 2012; Fink, 2013).

Data Collection

Study data entailed a triangulated data collection approach using semistructured, 1-hour, face-to-face interviews, each district's LCAP, and observations of each participant (Creswell, 2012). Creswell defined triangulation as a "process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection" (2012, p. 259). The combination of participant interviews, artifacts or documentation in the LCAP, and actual observation of the participants resulted in triangulation.

First, I obtained a list of northern California AASA female superintendent members. Upon noting the name of a colleague, I contacted the person by phone to determine if they were interested in participating in the study. The superintendent was interested in participating in the study, and offered to help me identify additional possible participants. The colleague, a county superintendent of schools, sent introductory e-mails to eight of her contacts, encouraging them to participate in the study. Four women agreed. Other participants drew from the AASA list, contacted by phone and follow-up e-mails.

Once I identified a participant, I arranged a mutually agreeable date for a 1-hour interview and 1-hour observation. I sent the interview question bank to each participant 1 week prior to the interview so the participant could review the questions (Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I used the interview protocol located in Appendix A to gather participant responses. A professional transcriptionist transcribed all recorded interviews.

Transcripts ranged from 27 to 47 pages in length for each 1-hour conversation. I used member checking, asking participants to read their transcript to check for accuracy, to assure transcripts were complete (Creswell, 2012).

Because the study was focused on superintendents' leadership as the LCFF and LCAP were being implemented, I reviewed copies of the district LCAP, available on each district website, prior to the interview (CDE, 2014; EdSource, 2014). Finally, I asked each superintendent to provide an opportunity to observe her in action during the facilitation of a meeting or study session. This may have taken place during the same visit as the interview or may have required me to return on another day to observe. I was a nonparticipant observer, collecting field notes using the observation protocol located in Appendix D, capturing themes and quotations from the meeting (Creswell, 2012; Fink, 2013). This triangulated approach drew from multiple data sources, enhancing accuracy and credibility (Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed and coded to the research questions and theoretical framework components using NVivo. Creswell defined member checking as a “process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (2012, p. 259) once the data had been professionally transcribed. I also coded field notes from the interviews, documents, and observations and added them to the NVivo data sets. I used text search, text frequency, and node matrix coding, seeking patterns and trends in the data (Saldaña, 2013). I included the following interview questions in the question bank. I asked all participants the first question from each set. Based upon their responses, I selected additional questions from the follow-up

questions. The pilot study confirmed that not all questions needed to be asked to every participant to obtain quality data. Questions in the interview bank aligned to the research questions, as noted here:

1. What are the leadership practices of female superintendents in rural California districts?
 - Briefly describe your background, career path, and how you became superintendent of this school district.
 - What role did other leaders play in the process?
 - What is a brief history of your school district?
 - Increasing or declining enrollment?
 - Positive/contentious issues in the past?
 - Please briefly describe or characterize the relationship between the district and the local community.
 - What do you do specifically that helps you grow and develop leadership talent in your district?
 - How do you recognize leadership talent? What specifically do you look for?
 - Once you recognize a talented individual, what specifically do you do next?
 - What do you do specifically to encourage or help these individuals develop their leadership skills? Examples?
 - What specifically do you do to build trust with the people that you work with?

- How do you build trust with your building principals?
 - How much authority or responsibility do you give your principals?
 - When and how do you limit their authority and responsibility?
 - How do they know where their authority stops?
 - Give example of a decision a principal can make and one they cannot make.
 - How do you build trust with board members?
 - How do you build trust with teachers?
2. How are LCFF and the LCAP policy implementations impacted by the leadership practices of the superintendent?
- Describe this community in economic, demographic, and geographic terms.
 - Increased or decreased FRLP enrollment?
 - Increased or decreased numbers of ELL students?
 - Describe the relationship between you and the board.
 - Describe the process your district used in creating your LCAP.
 - What was your role?
 - What roles did others play?
 - How involved was the board in the LCAP formation?
 - How was this process similar to or different from your previous budget-development processes?

- As you move forward with the implementation of your LCAP, what is working well? As you consider possible future revisions, what will you do differently? How did the process work for you and for your community stakeholders?
- When a conflict arose or arises now, what are the criteria used to make a decision?
- What process is used to resolve conflicts?
- How do you go about making student achievement the most important priority in your district?
- Describe specific actions or activities you do with your school board.
 - With your principals?
 - With your teaching staff?
 - With your students, parents, and community?
- What are the strengths and areas of growth of your school system?
- Describe your district's future challenges and prospects.
- When you reflect on your time in your current position, how would you characterize your overall effectiveness? Example?
- What are the two actions or activities you do as a superintendent that have contributed most to improving student academic performance in your district?
- What one word would you use to describe your tenure in your position?

3. To what extent is Grogan and Shakeshaft's diverse collective leadership theory supported as these rural female superintendents implement California's LCFF and LCAP policy mandates?

- Relational leadership;
- Leadership for social justice;
- Spiritual leadership;
- Leadership for learning;
- Balanced leadership

I used these data to illustrate connections to the theoretical framework and research questions (Saldaña, 2013).

Background of the Researcher

I have been a California public school educator for more than 25 years, teaching primary-age students in a large, urban school district in southern California, and teaching and administering K–12 students in medium and small rural districts in central California. I have a strong background and certification in working with students for whom English is their second language and have always served in schools and districts that qualify for Title I funding. For 10 years, I worked as a literacy specialist at the district level as well as 5 years at the county office in the area of curriculum and instruction. When I left the county office of education, I was the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Currently, I work as an independent educational consultant focused on supporting rural districts in creating an environment for continuous improvement. Experience as a Lead Evaluator for an international accrediting agency gave me extensive experience in system-level thinking whereby the organization's vision, mission, and goals are aligned to their budget,

curriculum, instruction, and assessments. I am also frequently called on to read grant applications for the USDE and have scored Race to the Top, Investment in Innovation, and Promise Neighborhood grants on numerous occasions.

These experiences have shaped me in numerous ways. For example, working at the county office of education, I gained a thorough background in compliance and evaluation. This may have created a biased skewing to interview responses toward a compliance mindset, because the county office of education must approve all LCAPs. My lack of experience as a superintendent may show a bias either toward or against women serving as superintendents. It is critical that I identify my potential biases so the findings are credible and accurate (Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this study, I listened to the voices of female superintendents in rural California school districts as they implemented LCFF policy. In Chapter 4, I describe the findings of the study beginning with a description of study participants and their settings. Following, I answer the three research questions using findings from the study. In the last section of this chapter, I reveal additional unanticipated findings, and summarize the major findings of the study.

Participant Profiles and Descriptions

I identified nine participants for this study. Although I did not ask participants their ethnicity or age, all participants appeared to be Caucasian and eight of the nine participants appeared to have backgrounds suggesting they were close to or considering retirement in the next few years. The female superintendents lead LEAs with student populations ranging from 133 to 2,679 students. One superintendent leads a county office of education in the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains and another leads an LEA where the county superintendent is also the school district superintendent with only one school district in that county. The remainder of participants lead in traditional school-district settings. Four LEAs are located in the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains, one is located in the high dessert east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, two are located in the San Joaquin Valley, and two are on the central coast of California. Eight of the nine LEAs serve predominantly impoverished students and NCES identified all as rural areas in central

and northern California. One third of participants serve as the superintendent and a school principal. Table 3 characterizes the participants' demographic information.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information

Superintendent	Time in position	Geographic location	Enrollment	District type	% free/reduced-price lunch
CS 1	6 years	Mountain Area Northern, CA	2,011	K-12	55.8
PS 1	2 years	Agricultural Area Central Coast, CA	133	K-8	48.1
Sup 2	9 years	San Joaquin Valley Northern, CA	2,678	K-8	75.4
PS 2	3 years	Mountain Area Northern, CA	292	K-8	61.3
Sup 3	2 years	San Joaquin Valley Northern, CA	1,443	K-12	66.9
CS 2	2 years	Mountain Area Northern, CA	1,869	K-12	52.0
Sup 4	7 years	High Dessert Northern, CA	189	K-12	77.8
Sup 5	3 years	Mountain Area Northern, CA	1,193	K-12	57.2
PS 3	2 years	Agriculture Area Central Coast, CA	292	K-12	64.0

Note. CS = county superintendent; PS = principal/superintendent; Sup = superintendent.

County Superintendent 1

If I had to have a phrase that frames my leadership style: It is not about me.

The first participant in the study was an experienced county office administrator. A county superintendent (CS) was included for two reasons: the county office of education is responsible for approving all of LCAPs in their jurisdiction, offering an additional layer of complexity to the study, and a CS has networks in numerous school

districts inside and outside their county. Of the 58 counties in California, female superintendents lead 18 and CS 1 has access to all these 18 women through her role as a county-office superintendent.

CS 1 has served at the senior leadership level at Mountain County Office of Education (MTCOE 1) for 8 years, 6 of those as an elected CS. In her role as a CS, she also serves as one of the lead superintendents on the state LCAP committee. She provides LCAP consultation services to other small counties throughout the state.

MTCOE 1 encompasses 3,030 mi² in the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains and includes numerous popular ski areas, yet also serves students in the surrounding high desert. CS 1 noted, “If I go to the school that is furthest north in the county, it takes me an hour and a half to get there. It’s the nature of the county, it is just very, very spread out.” MTCOE 1 has two school districts and a total enrollment countywide of 2,111 students, 519 of which are educated by county office teaching staff. Notably, the socioeconomic statistics of the two districts illustrate polar opposite economic situations. In one district, more than half of the students qualify to participate in the FRLP whereas in the other district, only 7% of students reach that threshold. These vastly different economic realities indicate one district has significantly different access to discretionary funds than the other district, creating an imbalance in power dynamics in the county (CDE, 2013).

CS 1 proved to be an invaluable resource to me. Through her network of contacts, she provided me with the names and contact information of four participants for this study. CS 1 e-mailed six of her colleagues, copying me on the correspondence, to provide an introduction to me and to the topic. Because of her assistance, I was able to identify enough participants to conduct the study.

Principal/Superintendent 1

I'm not someone who sits in my office and thinks about things, I want to get in there and experience it.

The principal/superintendent (PS) in Wine School District (WSD) has served in this position for 2 years. WSD is in a rural area of central California surrounded by grape vines and dotted with wineries covering 110 mi² across two counties.

The district began as a one-room schoolhouse with the original structure still standing on the district property as a reminder of the district's history. WSD is a single-school district with six full-time classroom teachers and one special-education teacher serving nine grade levels and 133 students in Grades K–8. The PS position is the only administrative position in the school district, requiring the administrator to administer diverse challenges including instructional leader, human-resource manager, community liaison, ELL coordinator, and Title I coordinator. WSD does not provide bus transportation so families must transport their children to school daily.

This is PS 1's first administrative position. She was promoted to this position from a teaching position in the district so knows the district and its families well. PS 1 described it this way:

It's really been a wonderful experience because I do know the school so intimately. As a first time administrator it's made [adjustment from a teaching to administrative position] a lot easier for me. The learning curve as far as getting to know staff members and the school culture is nonexistent for me. I just jumped right in.

Superintendent 2

Trust, respect and integrity ... that's what I pride myself on.

As superintendent of Gold Rush School District (GRSD), Superintendent 2 (Sup 2) has the longest tenure of any of the participants at 9 years. Unlike other participants, Sup 2 has served as a superintendent of two school districts prior to GRSD District.

GRSD is a K–8 district covering 13 mi². With 2,678 students, Sup 2 serves the largest number of students in the study and with more than 75% of the students participating in the FRLP, also some of the poorest. Located in the San Joaquin Valley, an area noted for agriculture, fields do not surround the district. Historically, the location rose to prominence during the gold rush and is also home to Native American families. GRSD is approximately 30 miles from the major freeway joining northern and southern California and a state university is 25 miles to the north of the district.

Sup 2 began her career as a high school foreign-language teacher. She became “more interested in the impact of students’ social, emotional needs and how it was affecting their learning” so she returned to school to become a counselor where she grew weary because “you weren’t really impacting the system.” She quickly discovered that “if I was going to have any chance of moving up as a woman, I needed a doctorate,” so she returned to school to obtain her Ed.D. “I found that as I got my degrees, I had the confidence to want to make more and more of an impact. The degrees give me the confidence I think, to be honest,” which aligns her mantra of “trust, respect and integrity.”

Principal/Superintendent 2

I just ran. I just started running. That is all I have done since I started. The 18-hour days of just running ... just running.

PS 2 began her career as a kindergarten teacher: “My dream job.” Her passion for supporting people, whether they are children or adults, is palatable when one steps foot on a school campus, which has led her to employ a maternal approach:

I feel like since I walked in the door, the students needed so much of me as a mom, as someone that they could love, as the counselor, the person who could set up structures. ... Sometimes I look up and there will be seven people deep, and it usually has nothing to do with academics.

PS 2 serves Mountain District 1 (MD 1), a rural district in the northeastern corner of California. MD 1 has three schools, two adjacent to one another and a third school in a remote location approximately 10 miles away. PS 2 is the principal for all three of these schools and is the sole administrator in this school district. The local political history has resulted in a community that “doesn’t trust the government or anything that is connected to the government, which makes it more challenging to add administrative staff; they just don’t see a need.” Her administrative assistant is also the only person in the human-resources, payroll, and instructional-technology departments, in addition to serving as the athletic director, leaving “little time for her to assist me.”

Because PS 2 previously worked as a CS in a neighboring county, she sees the necessity and role of support staff. In the past year, she has successfully added a teacher-on-special assignment position to address special education, safety, and discipline, and has proposed expanding the business office position to a full-time Chief Business Officer

(CBO). “Eventually I would like the [teacher-on-special-assignment] position to evolve into a full-time principal position and pay for that by reducing my salary and the number of days I work.” She is also requesting direct services in early childhood education from the county office of education, noting that because of the high levels of poverty in her district, 61.3% of the students participate in the FRLP. If early childhood services were terminated, there would be nowhere for these students to go, exacerbating the achievement gap. Results of these initiatives have yet to be resolved.

Superintendent 3

It’s about the learning; it is all about the learning for all kids. And it is about the learning for the adults. ... Can we get better?

The San Joaquin Valley of California is famous for its fertile soil and agricultural products. Along one of the major north–south highways sits a small town surrounded by agricultural fields. The local school district, Agricultural District 1 (AG 1), comprises an elementary, middle, and high school inside town limits, and one small, remote elementary school in an economically depressed location approximately 10 miles away.

Sup 3 has spent all but 1 year of her career working for AG 1. The entirety of her teaching was done in kindergarten and she also served as a mathematics coach, assistant principal, and principal in the district prior to serving as superintendent. Her children attended AG 1 schools for the entirety of their K–12 education as she lives inside town boundaries. Of the students in AG 1, 77% are Hispanic and 66.7% participate in the FRLP, one of the highest percentages in the study.

Sup 3 indicated that her main priority is to “keep the focus and pressure on what is going to have the biggest impact to meet our wildly important goals ... that constant

pressure to get better.” She used the word pressure five times in our 60-minute interview when describing her leadership style and expectations for administrators.

And a lot with me, is it best for kids? You know? That is how I have to look at it.

Okay, is this what is best for the kids? Not best for the adults. And is it going to stick with our three goals?

County Superintendent 2

“The innovation and the perseverance of the continuous cycle of learning, I think that is just key. ... I’m just never satisfied. There’s always going to be the person or the problem, the wicked problem I call it, that comes in and challenges your thinking.

MTCOE 2 is one of only seven county offices in the state where the CS is also the superintendent of the school district. MTCOE spans 1,450 mi² and includes a notable national park in its boundaries. MTCOE 2 serves 1,869 K–12 students at 11 schools, three of which have less than five students and one of which is completely online and enrolls most of its 98 students from inside the National Park. Elevations in MTCOE 2 range from 900 to 13,000 feet, making transportation challenging during the winter.

CS 2 is a product of the MTCOE 2 school system. Her gregarious affect and keen intellect quickly engaged me, resulting in more of a conversation with a dear friend than an interview with a graduate student. CS 2 never envisioned herself attending college, much less graduating from college and earning an advanced degree. “I’m the first and only, still, college graduate in my entire family. ... It just wasn’t discussed, there was no expectation for me to go to college.” Her aspirations were to be a preschool teacher and to marry her high school sweetheart. It was the director of the preschool where she was working who insisted she go on after earning her associate’s degree to earn a teaching

credential. “Without that kind of support and that kind of encouragement, people putting those kinds of ideas in my mind, I don’t know that I would have gone down that path.”

You have to persevere, you just have to. Every time you fall off, you have to get back up. When you get bucked off, you have to get back up. You only fail when you quit trying. So you have to have grit.

CS 2 appears to be the very embodiment of the word grit.

Superintendent 4

I started out in education as a volunteer in my kids’ classrooms and a school board member. I went back to school after my children were in school and chose education because I really enjoyed working with the kids in the classroom. And learning was a passion of mine. I really wanted to help change our society. I see public education as one of the most important things that we do as a collective.

The Eastern Sierra Nevada area encompasses two distinct topographical areas: mountains and desert. Desert School District (DSD) is clearly in the later category. DSD covers over 1,200 mi²; an enormous area for a school district of less than 200 students in Grades K–12. At the time of the interview, there was still snow on the ground from a recent storm, yet the air was arid. A quick Google search of the town revealed a contentious history between Caucasian settlers and Native Americans that still impacts school interactions today (Blalock-Moore, 2012). Almost half of the students enrolled in the district are Native American. More than 75% of all students participate in the FRLP, indicating less-than-ideal economic conditions for the residents in the area. The building housing the school is over 100 years old, which can make maintenance challenging.

Sup 4 has been serving as the superintendent of DSD for 7 years. She was originally hired as an interim superintendent from the county office of education and continued to do job at the county office of education while leading DSD. After 1 year, the DSD board asked her to stay on as the part-time superintendent and she has been serving as a part-time superintendent ever since. Sup 4 continues to be employed by the county office of education part time, in addition to her district superintendent position. Because she does not draw a full district superintendent salary, DSD has been able to hire a full time K–12 principal to assist with the daily running of the schools. The elementary and high schools are located on the same property in adjacent buildings.

Sup 4 has a varied and nontraditional background that informs her work as superintendent. She obtained her college degree as a mature student, attending classes once her own children were school age. While volunteering in her children's classrooms, Sup 4 ran and was elected to her local school board. This experience greatly impacts and informs her work as a superintendent.

I believe that it informs my opinion about how a school board member is thinking. And what they are really doing. So if a school board member brings something to the table that others might see as self-interest, I have a way of seeing through to their real concern and helping them frame it in a way that makes it more acceptable to the rest of the board. ... So I think it helps make me be more tolerant and patient with who the school board members are and what their role is in the community and appreciative of what they are doing, too. Because I know the time it takes.

Sup 4 has led a significant, long-term transformative school and district change initiative in DSD. Her extensive background in and exposure to state and national education reform efforts has guided DSD to create an instructional environment that is engaging and rigorous for each student in her purview.

Superintendent 5

To me, [change] has to come from the teachers. The teachers have to drive change if it is going to be deep and it's going to be thorough. It has to be principals in it together with them, but it has to be driven by teachers. It can't be top down. And it has to be multiyear focused. You cannot say, "Okay, we are doing this this year. Next year we're going to do this. Next year we do this other thing."

MD 2, the organization Sup 5 leads, is one of the two districts in MTCOE 1's jurisdiction. MD 2's attendance boundaries surround one of the state's leading ski resorts, yet 57.2% of the students participate in the FRLP, as most employment in the area is seasonal.

Sup 5 quietly, yet confidently leads her district by example. She has had a long and successful career working in much larger school systems in a variety of teaching and administrative positions from instructional assistant to assistant superintendent, prior to stepping into the superintendent position in MD 2, 3 years ago.

This is the culmination job of my career. Everything that I have done in education, I am able to bring to this job. Everything that I have learned along the way I have a use for in this position ... There is hardly a problem that comes forward that I worry about much, because I dealt with something similar before.

The district had a series of superintendents prior to Sup 5, none lasting more than a year. The most recent superintendent had been released from their contract leading to a very adversarial district culture. I think, just as a district, everyone hunkered down, had taken their own ground. And because of all the turmoil of superintendents and change, there wasn't trust in the leadership of the district. ... There was no leadership amongst the folks. They were all independent contractors watching out for themselves, trying to just hunker down and survive.

Prior to applying for the position, Sup 5 "did a lot of investigating on what was going on in the district and what were the needs of the district." She knew, "if I'm going to take this [position], it really has to fit within my skill sets, because there are very differing needs in different school districts, and I wouldn't be the perfect fit for some other school district." By all accounts, this position is a perfect fit for her skill set. "And I love it. I just love it."

Principal Superintendent 3

The new administrators, female administrators, with the high heels and the short dresses, have about got me flipped out. What the hell? We fought for this? Really? I broke into these different areas of [agriculture] and administration for you? Are you serious? That embarrasses me as a woman. ... Like, really? I mean, you can have a shooting, you can have a fight, you can have this or that, and you're going to trot out there in your spikes?

It doesn't belong here.

PS 3, like CS 2, grew up in the area she now leads. PS 3 left the area for the same reasons many people leave rural areas: for more opportunity. She explained,

I needed the money for my family; I was sending my kids to college and [a position outside the area] paid considerably more. I had a 20% raise, and I was a teacher with administrative duties, as opposed to being a full-time administrator working 60 hours a week or more, and with huge responsibilities, expulsions, etc. ... I was [out of the area] for 10 years and then I was going to retire so that I could come back over here. And this job came open and I have always wanted to come back here, and people encouraged me to do so. That is how I ended up here [as superintendent].

AG 2 is located on the central coast of California and is approximately 50 miles from a top rated, public university with top-notch programs in agriculture, engineering, and architecture. Yet proximity to the university has no direct, positive impact on the district or the small town that surrounds the district. The district does not receive student teachers or administrative interns, is too isolated to participate in ongoing university research projects, and because the remote location results in inconsistent Internet connections, residents are unable to access the online courses the university offers.

The closest medical and dental facilities to AG 2 are approximately 20 miles away as are the closest gas station and grocery store. The library in town, run by the county where the town is located, is open two afternoons a week. The district includes an elementary and middle/high school adjacent to each other and a K–6, one-room schoolhouse approximately 30 miles away in a neighboring county. The total K–12 enrollment of AG 2 is 292 students, 64% of whom participate in the FRLP; 73% are Hispanic, and 45% are ELLs.

PS 3 attended the university located 50 miles away and obtained her bachelor's and master's degrees from the top-tier agriculture program as well as a second master's degree in educational administration. This is her first principal position and her first superintendent position.

The opportunities for ag teachers were limited, especially female ag teachers. I think it was, I was either the first, I was the second female ag teacher in the county. ... I endured sexism. And I had to do it to feed my kids. And I don't try to be overdramatic, because I know there's a lot of other people, women, especially, and teaching is probably the least, education is probably the least of all the industry with the sexism. But it was still there. And it was definitely there in agriculture.

Two years ago, PS 3 was hired as the middle/high school principal and the district superintendent after her predecessor was released midyear. Shortly after beginning her assignment, it became apparent that an accounting error, resulting in a \$365,000 deficit, had forced the district to use more than 80% of their reserves to make payroll. Compounding this was inconsistency at the CBO position where the longest tenure of any previous CBO was 2 years. PS 3 is not deterred however.

It's been positive. Having this fiscal advisory person here helped us to identify exactly what happened and exactly—and help us identify how to get out of it ... this is helping. In the first week we were able to work together and produce stuff that made it clear to me what happened and I could explain it to people. And then how we can go forward.

Summary

The backgrounds of each of these women revealed traditional and nontraditional routes to the superintendency. Of the participants, 56% had an extensive background in curriculum and instruction and professional development. Although two-thirds of participants have been in their positions less than 5 years, all shared a love of children and mentioned, without provocation, how much they love their jobs. When asked to use one word to encapsulate their tenure as a superintendent, participants shared collaborative, engaged, open, nurturing, student-centered, charismatic, inspired, rewarding, and development. These words embody the leadership of these women.

Research Questions and Findings

I used a triangulated data collection process that included interviews, observations, and document review. Each interview was professionally transcribed and returned to the participant to verify the accuracy of the transcript. One participant returned her 43-page transcript with a correction of two names of individuals who supported her administrative journey. The remainder of participants found their transcripts to be accurate.

In addition to an interview, each of the nine participants also allowed me to observe them as they facilitated a meeting. I downloaded these observations and field notes, in addition to the interview transcripts and district LCAPs, into NVivo and coded to each of the five themes of Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory: balanced leadership, leadership for learning, social justice leadership, relational leadership, and spiritual leadership. I used NVivo's node matrix, text search, and text-frequency functions to identify themes and patterns in the data. The total number

of data points collected from all types of data equaled 1,114. I then used the data to answer the three research questions brought forth in Chapter I:

1. What are the leadership practices of female superintendents in rural California districts?
2. How are LCFF and the LCAP policy implementations impacted by the leadership practices of the superintendent?
3. To what extent is Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory supported or rejected as these rural, female superintendents implement California's LCFF and LCAP policy mandates?

The following are the answers to these research questions.

Research Question 1

What are the leadership practices of female superintendents in rural California districts?

To delve deeply into the 1,114 data points, I created aggregated and disaggregated tables. Table 4 shows the number of data points, by leadership theme, found in each type of data. These data indicate that 97% of the data points, regardless of the type of data, fall within three specific leadership behaviors: relational leadership, leadership for learning, and social justice leadership.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted that women bring a wide range of approaches and preferences to leadership that are not always valued by researchers, decision makers, and society in general. In reflecting on the role other people had in supporting her rise to the superintendency, Sup 5 articulated the impact of another

woman, her principal, in validating that she could be a successful educational leader, even if her style was different from her male counterparts:

The principal of the middle school that I worked under ... I look at her as really the first one that really spoke to me and said, you can do this as a woman. As a woman, we have a few different qualities, neither bad nor good, just a different style of how we do things. And it said to me my style would be fine.

Table 4

Aggregate Findings from Interviews, Local Control Accountability Plans, and Observations/Field Notes by Diverse Collective Leadership Characteristic

Data source	Balanced	Learning	Social justice	Relational	Spiritual
Interviews	12	161	75	210	15
LCAPs	0	126	110	157	0
Observe/notes	3	93	44	106	2
Totals	15	380	229	473	17

Note. LCAP = Local Control Accountability Plan.

Using NVivo, I identified patterns and trends in the aggregate data, then disaggregated the data to investigate if these patterns followed with each participant or if there were deviations. Of the nine participants in the study, six followed a data pattern similar to the aggregate data with relational leadership being their strongest leadership theme, followed by leadership for learning and social justice leadership.

When disaggregated, data examining CS 2's leadership revealed two themes as strongest: relational leadership and leadership for learning: each represented 39% of the data points gathered from her interview, observation, and LCAP review. Social justice leadership was her third strongest theme representing 20% of her data points. CS 2 also had the highest number of data points, regardless of the type of data, representing

spiritual leadership, as the five references during her interview represented 29% of the total spiritual-leadership data points.

Sup 2 also deviated from the overall trend of relational leadership, leadership for learning, and social justice leadership ranking first through third, respectively. Relational leadership at 47% was the primary leadership theme for Sup 2, but social justice leadership (28%) outpaced leadership for learning (25%) by just three percentage points, forming her second strongest leadership theme. Three-quarters of the students in her district qualify for the FRLP, perhaps justifying why she exceeded other participants in the social justice theme. Additionally, having earned her doctorate from a Jesuit University with strong social justice values, social justice is part of her educational background, thus very important in her leadership. Sup 2 shared, “Equity vs. equality ... the argument is alive and kicking here. ... It’s hard for some people to accept.”

Sup 3 was the lone participant in the study to truly deviate significantly from the aggregate data pattern. By far the strongest leadership theme for Sup 3 was leadership for learning, representing more than half of her overall data points. During her interview, Sup 3 shared the importance of lifelong learning for herself and her administrators.

It’s almost always that deliberate practice [of questioning yourself as a leader] that we saw on the video [regarding continuous improvement]. I am constantly, myself, reading and learning and then I roll that out to [the administrative team]. Even our administrative meetings, I always try to have a learning component so it always keeps them thinking, can we be better? And that pressure and trying to figure, okay, when do I need to back off, or do I need to keep going? Even yesterday, I had to toy with the idea of, do I keep going with them? Do I show

them that 1-hour video? Or have they had enough? So it's trying to balance those things.

Table 5 illustrates the data, disaggregated by diverse collective leadership characteristic and also by participant.

Table 5

Disaggregate Findings from Interviews, Local Control Accountability Plans, and Observations/Field Notes by Diverse Collective Leadership Characteristic

Participant	Balanced	Learning	Social Justice	Relational	Spiritual
CS 1					
Interview	0	23	2	30	0
LCAP	0	7	15	11	0
Observe	1	7	7	11	0
CS 1 Totals	1 (1%)	37 (32%)	24 (21%)	52 (46%)	0 (0%)
PS 1					
Interview	0	18	0	24	0
LCAP	0	2	8	0	0
Observe	0	2	2	13	0
PS 1 Totals	0 (0%)	22 (32%)	10 (14%)	37 (54%)	0 (0%)
Sup 2					
Interview	0	12	11	21	0
LCAP	0	19	27	39	0
Observe	0	7	6	13	0
Sup 2 Totals	0 (0%)	38 (25%)	44 (28%)	73 (47%)	0 (0%)
PS 2					
Interview	0	5	6	12	2
LCAP	0	8	8	18	0
Observe	1	17	8	13	1
PS 2 Totals	1 (1%)	30 (30%)	22 (22%)	43 (44%)	3 (3%)
Sup 3					
Interview	2	18	14	11	0
LCAP	0	17	3	10	0
Observe	1	17	8	3	1
Sup 3 Totals	3 (3%)	55 (52%)	23 (22%)	24 (23%)	0 (0%)

Participant	Balanced	Learning	Social Justice	Relational	Spiritual
CS 2					
Interview	1	12	12	18	5
LCAP	0	44	19	39	0
Observe	0	26	12	25	0
CS 2 Totals	1 (<1%)	82 (39%)	43 (20%)	82 (39%)	5 (2%)
Sup 4					
Interview	6	17	9	31	2
LCAP	0	10	3	16	0
Observe	0	3	0	2	0
Sup 4 Totals	6 (6%)	30 (30%)	12 (12%)	49 (50%)	2 (2%)
Sup 5					
Interview	0	29	5	22	4
LCAP	0	12	25	17	0
Observe	0	14	1	22	0
Sup 5 Totals	0 (0%)	55 (36%)	31 (21%)	61 (40%)	4 (3%)
PS 3					
Interview	3	27	16	41	2
LCAP	0	7	2	7	0
Observe	0	0	0	4	0
PS 3 Totals	3 (3%)	34 (31%)	18 (17%)	52 (48%)	2 (1%)
Totals	15 (1%)	380 (34%)	229 (21%)	473 (42%)	17 (2%)

Note. CS = county superintendent; LCAP = Local Control Accountability Plan; PS = principal/superintendent; Sup = superintendent

Researcher reflection on the data is a key characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 2006). As I reviewed the data shown in Table 5 and synthesized it with reflections from the interviews and observations, a question formed in my mind: What about the instances when I experienced or observed examples from participants that were in opposition to relational leadership or social justice leadership? How was that captured in the data?

To probe this new question, I examined the disaggregated data again, revealing that although participants indicated they practiced relational leadership in 44% of the

interview data points, I only witnessed or coded relational leadership in 22% of the observation data points. Similarly, social justice interview data points accounted for 33% of the total social justice data points and social justice observation data points represented 19% of the responses. Couple this with the reflective question raised earlier regarding what participants said in interviews with what was observed, and the rationale to explore the relationship between how participants described their leadership and what was observed was established.

Using this lens to probe the data revealed broad differences between interview responses and observations in social justice leadership data points, and relational leadership data points with two participants” Sup 4 and PS 3. Sup 4 had nine data points identified as social justice, yet did not exhibit social justice leadership during her observation. This revelation was even more dramatic when examining the relational leadership data points. Sup 4 expressed relational leadership 31 times in her interview, yet only displayed relational leadership twice in her observation. Similarly, PS 3 expressed social justice leadership 16 times in her interview yet even when given the opportunity to demonstrate social justice leadership in her observation, did not. PS 3 shared relational leadership in 41 occasions during her interview with only four instances observed in her observation.

Examining these data through this lens confirmed my initial impression following my session with each of these participants. Although Sup 4 only had a difference of nine points between the interview and observation data, this appeared significant because of the lack of any corroborating observational evidence coded as social justice leadership. I explore possible reasons for this divergence in Chapter 5.

Research Question 2

How are LCFF and LCAP policy implementations impacted by the leadership behaviors of the superintendent?

As noted in Chapter 1, the LCFF policy details a new structure for the funding of K–12 education in California. This structure mandates the inclusion of stakeholders into the budgeting decision-making process, particularly in the education of foster youth, ELLs, and children from impoverished homes. Every California school district—regardless of whether they are a basic aid district that receives supplemental funds—must engage all stakeholders, including students, into this process. Following these engagement opportunities, the district writes an LCAP and submits it to their county office of education for approval prior to being approved by the State of California. Two county office of education superintendents participated in this study. Their LCAPs are approved only by the state.

I asked all participants interview questions regarding the creation and revision of their district LCAP. Each district LCAP was coded to Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership themes and analyzed using the node matrix feature in NVivo. Observation data also provided a way to crosscheck the findings. Three themes emerged from the assimilation of interview, observation, and document data points: (a) participants were directly involved with the LCAP; (b) participants intentionally engaged and involved all stakeholders in the LCAP process, including school board members and students; and (c) monitoring the LCAP is part of how the LEA does business.

I observed strong evidence of direct leadership involvement in the LCAP in eight of the nine participants. Seven of the participants were the primary author of their LEA's

LCAP. PS 3 was not employed by her LEA at the time LCAPs were written and has not been involved in any ongoing revisions to the plan. LCAPs are 3-year, continuous improvement document that are revised annually. The LCAP found on AG 2's district website was updated in 2014.

Although CS 1 did not write her LEA's LCAP, she did write the LCAPs for the three charter schools MTCOE 1 authorizes. She noted, "I just thought that would be the best way that I could learn it, how to do it and what it is all about and the ins and outs of it" which is doubly important as the county office of education has the responsibility for approving the district LCAPs in their jurisdiction. CS 1 was involved in the LCAP process at multiple levels.

It's interesting because I'm much more involved in the LCAPs of my districts and charter schools than in my own county's LCAP. That said, on a statewide level, I am very involved in LCAP. I am one of the leads on the LCAP coordinating committee for [the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association] and I work with other small counties. I did a lot of that last summer, consulting. If their LCAPs were not going to be approved, I would work really closely with the state LCAP leader at CDE [to identify where the needs were]. On a state level, I'm really involved too. And I write the LCAPs for my charter schools myself. This [MTCOE 1] is the LCAP I almost have the least involvement with.

Participants who were in their positions when the LCAP was implemented in 2013 shared reflections of how they used the LCAP process to shepherd change initiatives in the district. Sup 5 explained:

[The purpose of the LCAP at] the heart and soul is very much in line with what I would do anyway. In a sense, it gave me license to do it. Especially as a new superintendent in a new school district, it gave me license to do it.

Similarly, CS 1 found the LCAP useful, stating,

We have taken the viewpoint here in our office that the LCAP is a tool. And we really want to use it, to make it a useful document that has practical application.

... We really do use it as a planning tool and as something to measure our data.

And PS 2 described how she used the LCAP to create change when stating

I am the only administrator in the district, so I created Joe's position during the LCAP process to help with some of the administrative duties. Joe is our student services and safety coordinator; he is not an administrator, but he is a teacher on special assignment.

In DSD, Sup 4 folded the LCAP into a preexisting work plan for their district turnaround support provider. "The way I have connected the two is that I have a goal in the LCAP that says we will implement the work plan. And so it just references right over."

Engaging all stakeholder groups in the LCAP process was another theme identified in the data. Participants facilitated input meetings, engaged site administrators in data discussions, prepared board presentations, wrote surveys, evaluated responses, and intentionally sought out the opinions of groups who sometimes feel left out or not consulted including unions and historically marginalized parent groups. Sup 3's comments encapsulated the feelings of the majority of participants when she noted, "I did roadshows with the LCAP and getting input from the stakeholders" to inform the plan.

PS 2, an experienced former county superintendent, was intentional in involving the school board in every step of the process.

[The school board] did give specific inputs. I collected specific input from the board about goals as they were being discovered [in the LCAP process]. The board participated in terms of giving input, but also helping to refine those goals as we kept working through them. We have a governance and administrative leadership planning day. So we look at metrics, we look at the input from the stakeholders that I have gained and gathered and then we decide on, what are the priorities, actions, and services in that? Our goals have pretty much stayed the same—the three goals—since we have started with the LCAP. We might tweek them a little bit, but we have not changed the goals.

All participants indicated the desire to be inclusive in the LCAP process, regardless of the statutory requirement. Sup 2 found the LCAP process to be very political and potentially contentious in her community stating,

I took a facilitator lead. I also worked very hard to be inclusive. ... To me, the LCAP is a very political process too. The special interests, they were pitted against this group [of teachers]. So every union meeting we talked about the LCAP. We talked about the process.

Part of the statute identified students as another stakeholder group that needs to inform the LCAP. Sup 2 stated,

For the first time ever we got a little bit of input from the sixth and seventh graders. That is a part of the process that I didn't think was appropriate for K-5.

Maybe with middle school you could do that a little more [than with younger students].

Because more than 50% of the students in DSD are Native American, Sup 4 made a conscious decision to include Native American parents through her regular Title VII Native American community meeting. She noted, “I built the stakeholder piece into meetings we already do” so that feedback and input were authentic and genuine.

A document found in the LCAP folder on GRSD’s website provided evidence of each stakeholder meeting following a similar agenda so input could be categorized and used to best inform the LCAP update. The document was titled “What dreams do you have for our children?” and included adjectives collected from various stakeholder groups (see Appendix E). The adjectives were then synthesized into three categories—life-long learners, good citizens, and work ethic—and used as an anchor for writing and updating the LCAP.

Three of the nine participants in the study were not the superintendent of their LEA when the first LCAP was written and noted their LCAP was not representative of their experiences in their role as superintendent. When asked about their involvement in the LCAP process, CS 2 noted,

When I first got here just a little over a year and a half ago—Well, let me start by saying I’m still trying to fill the educational services director position who is responsible for the LCAP. ... When I was preparing to interview for this position I looked at the LCAP and I just went, oh my goodness. It was basically activities. There were no goals. It was a huge list of activities. And when you added up the budget for it, it was more than the entire general fund for the district. It was done

with no collaboration. There were a lot of issues. I'm not faulting any one person. So I came in and I said, okay, we have to fix this.

Sup 3 shared a similar situation:

Our superintendent, we had a gentleman for a couple of years, he wrote the LCAP on his own with very little input. Myself and the business manager, we tried to attend some workshops with him to try to—but he would sit in his office and write, and just wrote gobs and gobs of pages. I was really happy when the LCAP template changed when I became superintendent, because I could start over. That do over, just getting really clear on what our metrics were because when I went through to try to figure out what we were measuring and where the data came from, like doing the annual update, a lot of it just didn't make sense. So trying to figure out where that data came from and then really looking at the actions and services that were in that first [LCAP] year, and determining were those the actions and services going to give us the biggest change? And so we rewrote those and took them out and added new ones. So it was kind of a restart when we got the new template.

The final theme that emerged from the data relates to how participants used the LCAP monitoring requirements as part of their district ongoing continuous improvement conversations. During observations of participants facilitating a meeting, eight of the nine participants either intentionally or unintentionally used the LCAP as a springboard for conversations regarding continuous improvement efforts. For example, Sup 3 and Sup 5 spent more than an hour sharing, facilitating, and teaching administrators in their district about how to read and interpret data used as an improvement metric on the LCAP. Sup 2

started her management meeting by asking attendees to write down verbs that indicated students are learning at deep levels. CS 2 gave her cabinet members a pop quiz to identify their LCAP goals as a way of reminding them that she needed their support and commitment before the larger group of administrators tackled the LCAP updates later that week. CS 1 stated,

In our discussions we do talk about LCAP all the time, at our executive leadership team meetings, we talk about it at our board meetings. We do try to involve everybody on the management level in giving input to the plan.

The LCFF policy and the resulting document, the LCAP, are not optional for LEAs. Regardless of how an LEA is funded, the policy mandates compliance with the statutory requirements. Participants in this study used the mandate as an opportunity to move improvement initiatives forward, include stakeholders in decisions regarding the education of students, and as a structure to monitor district improvement efforts. CS 1's comments are reflective of the group of participants as a whole,

It has been a really wonderful thing for us to say, okay, here are all of our ideas, here's everything we want to do, and here is how we're going to do it, and this is how we will improve student achievement for our kids.

Research Question 3

To what extent is Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory supported or rejected as these rural, female superintendents implement California's LCFF and LCAP policy mandates?

Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory describes female, educational leadership through five themes: balanced leadership, leadership for

learning, social justice leadership, relational leadership, and spiritual leadership. I intentionally designed interview questions to be open-ended, giving the participant latitude to respond as she deemed appropriate (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Grogan, one of the seminal researchers of the theory, reviewed and approved the interview questions prior to beginning the study.

Responses were professionally transcribed, input into NVivo, and coded by leadership theme. The total number of coded responses to interviews, observations and field notes, and documents totaled 1,124 coded data points. Table 5 represented the number and percentage of total data points, regardless of data type, represented by leadership theme. I examined the data in each theme represented in the diverse collective leadership theory seeking patterns to support or reject the theory. Two themes—balanced and spiritual leadership—had significantly fewer coded entries. Possible reasons for this will be explored in Chapter 5.

Balanced Leadership

Balanced leadership represents the relationship between work and home lives and represented only 1% of the data points. Sup 4 was the most conscious that she lacked balance between not only her work and home life, but also between the two positions she holds as superintendent of DSD and assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction for the county office of education:

I contract [as superintendent] for 96 days. And I have a 227-day contract. So [the superintendent position] is not even supposed to be half time. But it is hard—the lines blur. If I am in my office [at the county office], I might be taking a call, like the one that I just got, or if I am here, I might be taking a call from a district about,

how do you do this? So I don't set hours that are ... have boundaries. I think that makes it more possible. And there is quite a bit of crossover with what I do in both arenas. ... There have been several times during the last 8 years when I have said, I'm not sure how much longer I can do both. It might be nice to concentrate on one or the other.

Also of note, prior to the observation of CS 1's management meeting, she placed a conference call connection with her director of education services. The director was home with an ill child so CS 1, as a way of including her in this important meeting without requiring her physical attendance at the meeting, enabled the director to participate remotely. When I asked about the situation, CS 1 mentioned remembering how difficult it is when you have young children and are working, and wanted to ease the burden for her staff as much as possible. Also, because of their remote location, it's not uncommon for staff to be unable to come into the office because roads are frequently blocked with snow in the winter. CS 1 noted this was just one way she could help her senior staff fulfill multiple roles and obligations.

Leadership for Learning

Leadership for learning was the second most frequently coded theme of the participants in this study. Of the 1,124 data points, 34% indicated the superintendent demonstrates that learning is a lifelong journey and leads from this perspective. When analyzing the source of the data codes, leadership for learning was the only theme where the observation and field notes accounted for the highest number of codes.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted, "Women administrators are likely to introduce and support strong programs in staff development, to encourage innovation,

and to experiment with instructional approaches” (p. 17). Five of the nine participants actively engage their management team in ongoing, job-embedded professional development through a professional book study. CS 1 used professional learning as a way to build community among her leadership team.

The first year I was superintendent, we started reading, doing a book, we read a book together and we would discuss it. Everybody took a turn leading a chapter discussion. Then we went into different articles. The second 2 years everybody was assigned a month and somebody would share an article and we would all discuss it. It has really gotten us to a place where we feel comfortable if we have a difference of opinion. . . . I hope I am modeling for them how they need to work with the people they supervise.

Sup 5 meets with her leadership team twice a month; these meetings are strictly focused on professional development. Her team includes more than just her school administrators. All district office managers, regardless of whether they supervise other employees, participate in these professional development sessions through professional book studies.

I’m very, very focused on building leadership skills in the [leadership] team. . . . Developing leadership was really one of my priorities [when I first arrived here]. This is the third year of doing a book study. The first year we read *Lincoln on Leadership*. And that is a very easy book for an entry into leadership. Last year we read *Boundaries for Leaders*. That is an outstanding book. I am actually thinking of bringing it back next year. And then this year, I decided to read *Shine*

because it is a little bit different, and yet, we are at a different place, and I think they are actually getting a lot out of it, which I am excited by.

For Sup 5, these book studies are also a critical piece of modeling how to facilitate effective professional development sessions for site administrators. Her expectation is for the principals to be instructional leaders as well as building managers.

Well, I know that I expect them—I have actually put it, especially the principals, into feedback on their evaluation to be an active part in these meetings. Because at first the principals, sat back and didn't really participate. So they all know I have an expectation they participate in these meetings. And they have just been so good. You can see that today: there is an appreciation for each other.

Leadership for learning was also a strong leadership theme for CS 2. I observed CS 2 facilitate her cabinet meeting. The agenda for the meeting was structured including time allotments and speaker for each agenda item. The first agenda item was titled “Entertain, Inspire, Motivate and Teach!” led by the superintendent. CS 2 mentioned to meeting participants that for this meeting, she had selected a video to reinforce their moniker: entertain, inspire, motivate, and teach. The video told the 1986 story of Koh Panyee, a location off the southern tip of Thailand, and the how the children there overcame tremendous obstacles to create a soccer pitch on their floating village. The children not only built a floating soccer pitch, they practiced and improved their skills and entered a one-day tournament where they ended up earning third place. Eventually, the youth teams from Koh Panyee won the tournament for 7 consecutive years between 2004 and 2010.

After watching the inspiring video, CS 2 adeptly facilitated a discussion of how the video applied to leadership. She asked her team, “What connections have you made to the video and our team?” and “How does innovation play a role?” Additional strategies CS 2 used included paraphrasing and connecting the team’s comments to their local context. “People are noticing what we’re doing” was energetically agreed upon as a connection when discussing a contentious personnel challenge with a bus driver. CS 2 ended the learning section of their meeting by asking, “Where do you see the 6 [leadership] Cs in this?” which were printed on the meeting agenda. The 6 C’s listed were (a) critical thinking; (b) communication; (c) collaboration; (d) creativity; (e) commitment, and (f) compassion. Asking this question of the group connected the video to previous learning by this group, deepening their understanding not only of the video, but also of their leadership.

Sup 3 exhibited leadership for learning in 52% of her coded data points, 18 percentage points higher than the group’s mean. Sup 3 also showed her team a video. In contrast, however, her selection was a 57-minute recoding of a webinar by Dylan Williams titled Leadership for Teacher Learning. While the webinar was playing, Sup 3 made connections to her own experiences as a leader. At the conclusion of the webinar, Sup 3 also facilitated a reflective discussion with her team including questions such as, “Why am I showing you this?” and “How do we as teacher leaders keep the pressure on [teachers] to create deliberate [teaching] practices?” as seen in the webinar. Sup 3’s meeting and professional development time spanned more than 4 hours, by far the longest meeting observed. During our interview conversation the following day, she reflected on her thinking about whether to hold off on the video:

The deliberate practice that we saw on that video, I am constantly, myself, reading and learning and then I roll that out to them. Even our administrative meetings, we have those every other week, and you can see I could probably have them once a week, but I always try to have a learning component with that, so it always keeps them thinking, can we be better? And that pressure and trying to figure, okay, when do I—oh, I need to back off, or I need to keep going. Even yesterday, I had to toy with the idea of, do I keep going with them? Do I show that video? Or have we had enough?

Multiple participants shared they are always learning, whether from other people, their previous experiences, professional books and articles, or formal coursework and conferences. CS 1, PS 1, Sup 5, and PS 3 all indicated they have learned positive and negative aspects of leadership from previous supervisors. When considering how others had impacted her rise to the superintendency, PS 3 reflected:

I knew what superintendents I would work for, principals that I would work for beyond my duty day. And I knew the others I would do as little as possible for. And that had to do with feeling appreciated, feeling respected. ... I try really hard to model after the ones I respected ... [because] a really good leader will empower you.

PS 1, Sup 5, and CS 1 reciprocated this sentiment. PS 1 reflected, I feel like I've had examples of what I didn't want to emulate and many more examples of what I did want to emulate" as a leader, whereas Sup 5 noted, "there wasn't one [previous superintendent] I didn't learn from, good and bad ... and there was one I had no respect for. CS 1 felt that learning from others was pivotal in her leadership development:

Some people might think it's a strange attitude about people who been my supervisors, but I feel like you can learn from both good and bad. You can learn what to do and what not to do. And I have always been very open to that. Even when I have had a superintendent who was, who did not treat me well or who didn't back me up or did some really shady things, you learn that you don't do that.

PS 2 commented on the positive impact administrators had on her current leadership behaviors, when she was a teacher. "I would say [I had] amazing administrators who surrounded me. Really, really, truly, I learned so much from all of them." A peer from her academic coursework impacted Sup 4's leadership:

There was a woman in my former district. We connected outside of the cohort and tried to implement some of the things we learned about, like 360 degree [evaluations], the survey evaluations of administrators, and helped each other figure out questions [for the survey] and shared the results of those [360 degree evaluations] at coffee.

Conferences and other learning networks continue to be critical to Sup 2's learning and leading.

I didn't have the tech skills and there was no one to lead technology, so I went and joined the [Association of California School Administrators] course, their special tech academy. I participated in that and it almost killed me off because I had the least technology [in my district] of anyone. But I was committed. I'm going to do this. So I ended up with my little certificate. ... It gave me the vision to know what is possible. So 2 years after I finished that class, now our district

just went all Google: we have Chromebooks and iPads and we're really going down that road of more one-to-one [devices for each student]. ... I do believe that [appropriate use of technology] is one of the keys to the Common Core. You can use these [technology] tools to effectively integrate the teaching and learning.

Sup 3's reflection—"It's about the learning, it is all about the learning for all kids. And it is about the learning for the adults"—dovetails perfectly with CS 1's comment, "We are an office of education. [The adults in the county office] need to be learning." To sum up the depth of commitment these women have to learning, Sup 4 said, "Learning is a passion of mine."

Social Justice Leadership

Wanting to support marginalized, often invisible children is a strong driving factor influencing many women to enter the education field (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). "Women, more often the men, talk about having entered teaching to change the lives of children, to make the world a fairer place, and to change institutions so that all children have a chance" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, pp. 10–11). In her interview, Sup 4 expressed,

I started out in education as a volunteer in my kids' classrooms and a school board member. I went back to school after my children were in school and chose education because I really enjoyed working with the kids in the classroom. ... I really wanted to help change our society. I see public education as one of the most important things that we do as a collective.

CS 2 demonstrated the social justice leadership theme more often in her observation than any other participant. When comparing what she demonstrated with

what she said about her leadership in her interview, the number of observation data points were equal; she was the only participant to display this in the social justice theme. For her, social justice and exhibiting doing what is best for each student is not only part of her leadership, but also part of who she is as a person. Even today, she is cognizant of supporting each student in her purview:

How do I maintain that connection? Because that is why I get up every day. To make sure that I am supporting a student, students in the classroom daily. My decision has to matter for students in the classroom every single day.

The social justice theme was most evident in the LCAPs of the LEAs represented in the study and accounted for the highest number of the total social justice data points. The LCAP is a public document that reflects the budget expenditures of three classifications of students: (a) foster youth; (b) students living in poverty, and (c) ELLs (EdSource, 2014). The LCAP is collaboratively created with all stakeholder groups in the LEA, is approved by the LEA's board of education, also a public process, and is then posted to the LEA's website.

The LCAP for GRSD held the most social justice data points of all of the LCAPs reviewed. An example of an LCAP action from the GRSD LCAP was, "To close the achievement gap among significant subgroups, regular data analysis among teachers will result in targeted interventions to meet the identified needs of all students" (p. 19). This was representative of the specific actions this LEA was taking to support students.

MD 2's LCAP revealed targets for the closing of the achievement gap between White students and all other subgroups of students in completion of University of California/California State University requirements. Rather than setting the same growth

target for all subgroups, the district, under the superintendent's leadership, differentiated their targets so the gap would begin to close, if the targets were met. The LCAP included the statement, "The percentage of White students completing all [California public university] requirements will increase from 75% to 77%; the percentage of Hispanic students, English language learners, and low socio-economic students will increase from 40% to 50%" (p. 38). This practice demonstrates a recognition that non-White students will need additional resources to catch up to their White peers and that the LCAP will document not only the process, but also the progress.

Relational Leadership

Relational leadership was the strongest of the diverse collective leadership themes in this study. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) defined relational leadership as "being in relationship with others in a horizontal rather than hierarchical sense" and noted women use this theme to widen power rather than constrict power (p. 6). Grogan and Shakeshaft stated,

Women often describe power as something that increases as it is shared.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in order for many women to be comfortable with the notion of holding power, power needs to be conceptualized as something that is shared with others and that is not power over but, rather, power with. ...

Power used to help others strengthens relationships. (p. 7)

For eight of the nine participants in this study, relational leadership was their strongest theme. Sup 3 showed leadership for learning as her strongest theme with relational leadership as her second strongest theme. CS 1 leads from a relational theme,

as evidenced by selecting the word empower when asked for one word that described her leadership. She elaborated:

I use coaching [with my staff]—I try to use that as much as I can with my directors when they come in and have a problem. ... Well, what are you going to do about it? I will only give advice if I ask them if they want me to give them advice. And I will say, do you want to hear what I think? And sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. And I am okay either way. It's not my job to solve their problems. ... If I get called in to fix a problem, someone else is not doing their job. It is not that I won't fix it if I am put in that position where there isn't any other recourse, but that is not my job.

But I use those coaching strategies all the time, and I use them with my superintendents too. [The superintendent and staff] are very cognizant of the fact that we are the county office and we are here to support the districts. We are not here to tell them what to do. We are not here to tell them that they are not good enough or they are good enough, or whatever. We are just here to provide them support as they need it and as they ask for it.

CS 1's relational leadership extends to her work in the community:

Sometimes I feel like I am a cog in the wheel. And I have relationships with all the other agency heads. And it's my job to say, okay, foster youth, we're going to get this money so I need to pull in this agency and that agency and this agency. Okay, I'm getting this much money, you are getting that much money, let's do a mentor program. So I feel like in so many ways that is my job. My job is to find the right people for the right program, pull it together, and leverage the resources

to build everybody's capacity. ... That is really how I see it in so many ways because education touches everything. ... If you don't have those relationships, you can't have those conversations.

Sup 4 brings her prior knowledge as a school board member to her current work as a superintendent and relational leader.

I believe that [my experience as a board member] informs my opinion about how a school board member is thinking. And what they are really doing. So if a school board member brings something to the table that others might see as self-interest, I have a way of seeing through to their real concern and helping them frame it in a way that makes it more acceptable to the rest of the board. ... So I think it helps make me be more tolerant and patient with who the school board members are and what their role is in the community and appreciative of what they are doing, too. Because I know the time it takes.

Sup 5 had an equal number of relational leadership codes from the interview and the observation of her meeting. She shared her thoughts about the importance of focusing on the needs of her leadership team when making agenda decisions during facilitation of the meeting.

I wanted to make sure that the needs that [administrators] had brought forward [during the meeting], that we had adequate time to address those needs. So what will hurt us to wait 2 weeks? I'll meet with them in 2 weeks to do the other one.

For PS 3, relational leadership was coded almost twice as often as any other theme. PS 3 equates relational leadership with kindness. Her staff had been through a messy and painful transition when the previous superintendent was removed midyear. For

her, the first priority was to help all staff and students feel safe emotionally so that they could do their best work.

I started off with trying to make [the staff] feel safe. ... I remember the first time I talked to them, it's very important, [one of the] most important things we do is keep these kids safe. But then [the adults] need a safe environment too. You need, we need to take care of each other and be kind to each other. ... I try to model that. I mean, [the staff are] used to being screamed at, which I can't imagine somebody doing. There's no place for that. I think they all know that.

Intentional attention to finessing board relationships is critical to Sup 2's success and longevity in the districts she has led.

I've been here for 9 years. I have had longevity in my careers. But part of it, I think, is I work hard to make sure I do have relationship with the board. I think it is imperative that you pay attention to your board. I have an open-door policy; they can call me at any time. I try to make sure they have the information they need for the board meetings. So it is always a work in progress. No matter how much you work with the board, you can still get blindsided. We have no secrets. No surprises. We have a lot of mottos. They have a list of norms or something. Even though one of the norms is no surprises, you never know.

Multiple participants noted that their previous LCAP was created with no or little collaboration from stakeholders and that they wanted to change that culture. PS 2, CS 2, and Sup 3 all brought attention to this and noted that the previous LCAP was written by a man. Review of these LCAPs showed strategic, collaborative intentionality in the LCAP process they led. MD 1's LCAP identified how relational leadership was used to revise

the previous LCAP: “Our four goals from the initial LCAP work last spring were refined based upon stakeholder input.” Participants clearly sought to attain the input of all stakeholder groups and include it in the educational plan of their LEA, collaboratively distributing the power of who makes spending decisions for the children.

Participants in this study exhibited relational leadership in all areas of their work. Whether it was in facilitating a meeting, their written plans, or their description of their work, collaboratively and intentionally involving others in the decisions of the district is a cornerstone of how they work. These leaders strongly demonstrated how “This horizontal leadership approach stresses the involvement of the many in the activities of the organization. It extends beyond the leadership team to teachers and the wider community” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 7).

Spiritual Leadership

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted that women use “spirituality as a source of personal strength and well as a way to understand connectedness to others, and to the greater world” as leaders (p. 14). These researchers also noted the strong connection between social justice leadership and spiritual leadership for many women:

If change to bring about greater social justice is the end product for many women, then hope, spirituality, and belief in God is the motor that propels many of them to change the system. Being spiritual does not necessarily predict an interest in social change, nor is a social justice advocate required to be spiritual. However, many women administrators are both focused on social justice and reliant on what they describe as a higher power to help them in their fight. (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 13)

This definition is the embodiment of CS 2:

What I enjoy most about the job, I think, it's not a job—my work has never been a job to me. It has always been a calling. Always been a calling. So for me it is that giving and it is that support structure for: Why am I here?

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) also noted women of color and White female administrators acknowledge the importance of their spirituality to their success and ability to push forward, often in conflict filled and difficult situations. In addition, they stated, “Many women educational administrators report that it is their spirituality that gives them hope, increasing their resilience so that they can keep working for change” (p. 15). This is exactly what PS 2 described when addressing a very serious budget situation:

We have a new county sup who has been just sworn in a few weeks ago. He came from, straight from heaven. Truly did. ... He and I have had several meetings because we are truly the impoverished district in this county. We are the ones, when he thinks of poverty, he thinks of us. So I do reach out to him [for help].

Although spiritual leadership did not have as many coded data points as many of the other themes, when combined with social justice leadership, the theme was strengthened by these participants. Multiple participants used words such as blessing and call to refer to their positions and were tightly connected to both these themes. Sup 5 noted,

Well, this school district, too, had been through continual change. A lot of dysfunction. And that is what I had just been a part of turning around. Also very underperforming. I also know that it is not really rocket science to turn that around either. After talking with a colleague at the county office, and then there

was a gal who was the interim superintendent, talking with her, I decided to go ahead and apply. And, of course, ended up getting the job. And I love it. I just love it. ... I feel incredibly blessed to be able—I won't ... I will retire from here. I think the board knows I am not planning on going someplace else. I feel incredibly blessed to end my career this way.

The findings from this study strongly support diverse collective leadership as a theory female rural superintendents exhibited while implementing LCFF policy and the subsequent LCAP document. All participants used a collaborative, inclusive approach that intentionally included as many different stakeholder groups as possible in the decision-making process. Not all of the findings fit into one of the five diverse collective leadership themes. I identified four additional patterns in the data. I discuss each finding as it relates to the overall study.

Additional Findings

Findings from this study were not limited to the questions I posed. Upon closer examination of the data, four additional findings emerged: (a) courageous leadership; (b) additional barriers to the superintendency because of gender; (c) the importance of confidence, and (d) placement of these participants into LEAs that were in desperate need of significant, immediate change.

Courageous Leadership

As I was sorting and scanning the data, one surprising finding continued to surface: most participants spoke of needing to fire someone, usually at the senior management level, during their first year into their superintendency. J. C. Collins (2001) wrote of getting the right people on the bus and in the right seats as a characteristic of a

Level 5 Leader. Seven of the nine participants described this Level 5 Leadership characteristic in their interview, even though I did not ask a question about management turnover. CS 2 expressed frustration with a member of her cabinet team regarding their fiscal priorities:

When I got here, there was an assistant superintendent of educational services.

And I could tell immediately that it wasn't going to work out for us. So the person that was in that position had very—had no support or no good collaboration—the principals were frustrated. There were initiatives coming out right and left and no follow-through. And just the expectation that, here it is, you do it, and figure it out.

By the time I got here, all of the Common Core money had been spent. All of it.

Every penny of it. On devices for technology, with no plan on how to sustain it.

The way it was rolled out was: “Here it is.” Hit and miss on [professional

development]. We had stuff just sitting around and we had some teachers being

innovative and just this hit-and-miss [professional development]. And some pets

who were being given deep implementation, given those shining stars that had

been hand picked, cherry picked, to go to these very expensive trainings and

becoming like Q certified, Apple certified. We're talking all of the Common Core

money was gone by the time I got here. It was gone before the first year was up. It

was very frustrating. . . . It was gone. It was very frustrating. We had a

conversation and he chose to leave.

Sensing there might be a conflict or rift between senior leadership was also evident for Sup 5 when she began at MD 2: “I was very fortunate, the business manager was disappointed [they were not selected as superintendent], [so] he left shortly after I

came on board.” Although she did not fire the individual, she was pleased at his departure and used it as a springboard for building her team. CS 2 also used courageous leadership in the creation of her team:

The thing I have been focusing on the most since, so 15 months since I’ve gotten here, is creating a team. So I’ve had to invite people to find other areas of employment or other places of employment. Some I’ve had to make, some I have had some difficult conversations.

PS 3 showed her courage by remaining focused on maintaining civility in what had been a contentious environment.

I will bow up when needed and I haven’t been perfect at staying calm and nice, but I believe in it. I believe that it is just like your classroom, that you can yell and scream at them all you want, there are times you have to be stern, it’s no different than that. I feel like that is my job here and that’s why I let go of people [who are] not working with my mojo—I have let two people go here. Two big management positions. And I think I did that without turmoil. It was pretty quiet.

Sup 4 was an administrator at the county office of education prior to accepting her part-time superintendency duties. Thus, she was familiar with the practices of the districts in the county and had formed a rudimentary opinion of the site administrators:

The first assistant principal had already been selected [when I started as superintendent], and I assumed he had what it took [to do the job]. I will say that he did have some really good qualities and was working towards others. ... He had real good presence and he made an impression on the kids and parents and the teachers. But I think that when we got down to where the substance should have

been—he maybe didn't want to work as hard as he could have. ... I don't know I would have selected him knowing that. It did not take me long to get through the veneer.

Seven participants in this study exhibited the courage to move or fire a senior manager within the first year of their tenure. Although this may be unsurprising in other industries, it is unusual in education. This finding was even more surprising because I did not ask a specific question about management turnover. All the comments were made in the context of the original interview questions, usually while describing how they recognize leadership potential in their employees. I explore possible reasons for this in Chapter 5.

Gender Barriers

As discussed in this study's literature review, women frequently experience barriers to top-tier leadership positions because of their gender, and the women in this study were no different (Gammill & Vaughn, 2011; A. Richardson, 2004; Stephens, 2009). Seven of the nine participants shared an example of overt sexism with me, again, even though I asked no question about gender barriers or sexism. Sup 2 highlighted a specific barrier she needed to overcome on her journey to the superintendency:

I will share with you something that happened to me that does not happen to everybody. After I was here for 1 year, the former superintendent came on the board. Very commanding. And I don't think I was his chosen one by any means. But what I am seeing too, what happened there for 4 years then of my 9, it was hard to get anything new through because it was: Are you trying to say it was no good? It's worked for 22 years. ... Then you would have board [members] that

would look at him with his personality. When he got impassioned—and I always refused to get into, what do you want to call it, verbal battles in public. He got off the board after 4 years, but that was dicey to have to deal with someone—I'm not saying impeded the change, but took it as that it wasn't good. ... I believe in more of a collaborative approach and let's talk it through. I don't scream, I don't rant, I don't rave. I really don't raise my voice very often. I'm much more controlled. But I can be direct. That is not as respected sometimes.

Not all barriers were overt. Sup 2 also shared invisible barriers she has faced in her journey:

The real motivation for the doctorate ... was if I was going to have any chance of moving up as a woman, I thought I needed a degree. ... [Also,] if you had to stay in one place I think it would be very difficult for a woman to move up. And if you have children it complicates it, I think.

CS 2 reflected how locality and gender can complicate situations for women.

Being a superintendent can be very isolating, especially in a remote area. And I think especially as a woman too. It can be very isolating. So networking is your support system. You can reach out and find others that will support you.

Again, I intentionally did not ask questions regarding barriers the participants may have faced in their accession to the superintendency. The participants openly and willingly shared these while describing their backgrounds.

Confidence

Confidence emerged as an important character trait for two of the participants. For Sup 2, having the confidence she gained from advancing academic accomplishments prepared her for the challenges of her positions.

I found that as I got my degrees, I had the confidence, I think it was confidence to want to make more and more of an impact. The degrees give me the confidence I think, to be honest. Even though in my opinion a doctorate is more just reading and research and doing your exams and doing a little dissertation; I felt good about my accomplishment. And I think also the education gave me, I think, the confidence I could do [the job].

For CS 2, confidence helped her call on others without fear of looking inept.

I've gained that confidence over the years. And that is what you have to do. You have to be able to—you have to know who to pick up the phone to call, or call somebody you know and ask, who should I call about this? You have to be able to have the confidence to ask questions.

For these women, confidence has helped them be successful in a male-dominated position. It has given them the courage to stand up for their beliefs whether that is to their board, labor unions, or employees who need to move on to another position.

Challenging Transitions

One finding highlighted by Brunner and Grogan (2007) as they analyzed the first AASA study of female superintendents in 2005, was that women lead where men do not want to go. Although I was not intentionally looking to validate this finding, this finding was resoundingly supported by this study. Of the nine participants in this study, eight

entered an LEA that was in significant disarray. Three participants stepped into their position following the termination of their predecessor, two of those midyear firings. Three others realized early in their superintendency that the system was completely dysfunctional. Two additional participants learned their district was not going to be able to make their required 3% reserve set aside and found themselves submerged in a severe fiscal crisis complete with the county office taking over the business management of the district.

Sup 2 described how the budget crisis through which she lead her district impacted her work on the LCAP:

We have been through some major budget issues over the last 7 years. I walked in and 3 weeks after I was on the job we were in AB 1200, which is when you cannot meet the 3% reserves for all 3 years. [The county office] works with you but they aren't very nice. Going through the AB 1200 process and all the reductions, because there were different rules for all this stuff, we cut five administrators out of the district. Granted, we have declined [enrollment]. I think when I walked in we were 3,000 [students] and over the years we are 2,300 [students]. But you had the curriculum superintendent doing special ed and curriculum. It was just way too much. I thought there was no way, even though I also took on—she used to be the personnel director, I inherited all the personnel over here. We all took on two jobs. But I also thought [the LCAP] has to go right. We cannot afford people to not be on time. I took it over to make sure we had an LCAP written, we met all the timelines.

PS 3 is only in her second year as the principal/superintendent, is still putting the pieces together from learning her district has fallen below their 3% required reserve, and has not yet had time to consider the LCAP.

[The budget crisis] boils down to \$200,000 with what we got in more, and this and that. But the unexpected stuff is about \$300,000. When the recession hit they had a 12% reserve. So they didn't make cuts when the enrollment started going down. They didn't make cuts. They kept using the reserve. When I came here, there was still a 7% reserve. But, again, there were mistakes made in the formula that we thought we had corrected this year, and had not. And in October, my first year here, we recognized that [the previous superintendent who was fired midyear] overdid the [Americans With Disabilities Act], and that 7% reserve already by October was down to 3%. And we finished the year at 2.6% or something. Then we budget for five, have another enrollment issue, have special ed ... we are down to nothing. It's really unfortunate. My first year here, what probably was what made me not watch it more carefully is, we had more kids come in and everybody thought it was because of everything we were doing. But I knew it's not, it's too quick. It's the circumstances. People moved here and they can move away just as fast. And that is exactly what happened. We lost 6-8 kids at the high school. Gained it at the elementary, which helped, but we get more money for high school because it's necessary small schools. It's unfortunate because we were on a good path.

Sup 4 located over \$300,000 in lost funds as she was going through the stacks of papers left by her predecessor.

There were lots of interesting situations [when I started here]. Along with stacks and stacks of paper, and then when you got to the middle of the stack, here was the impact aid application, which I don't know if you are familiar with that or not, but it was worth \$300,000 to the district and had never been filed for the previous year. So I had to go back and file a couple years of those, and get caught up on other state reports. And actually it became, the secretary at the time, the administrative assistant at the time, and I would start joking wondering, who from CDE was going to call us today to let us know that there was a report that had never been filed?

While finding a district in disarray is not necessarily unique to women superintendents, this finding took me by surprise. The amount and severity of the turmoil these women walked into, sometimes without knowing, was startling to me. These participants most definitely took positions that required them to skillfully and immediately use their strengths just to keep their district running. An interesting aside is that seven of the eight participants who found themselves cleaning up a mess were following a male predecessor.

Summary of Major Findings

This study examined the leadership behaviors of nine female superintendents in rural northern and central California school districts as they implemented California's LCFF and LCAP policy mandates. I answered three research questions using a triangulated research design that included interviews, observation, and LCAP data. The first research question was answered by analyzing over 1,100 data points using NVivo. To answer this question, I analyzed not only interview data and their LEA's LCAP, but

also observation data of the participant facilitating a meeting. The purpose of observing the participants in a leadership setting was to reveal how their self-perception and public documents aligned with their actions.

Self-perceived leadership was revealed when, in the interview, I asked each participant to identify one word that characterized her leadership. The words identified were collaborative, engaged, open, nurturing, student-centered, perseverance, charismatic, development, and challenging. Five of these words represent relational leadership, three represent leadership for learning, and one represents social justice leadership, almost identical to the overall trends of the participants, and these coincided with other interview data for all participants. This finding was supported when I collectively analyzed interview and LCAP data, as six participants were relational leaders, two were balanced between relational and learning, and the ninth was strongly leadership for learning.

I was surprised to note that when examining observation data, it did not follow the same pattern as the other data types. The observation data revealed leadership for learning as the dominant leadership theme for these participants, with almost twice as many data points as the next closest theme. Relational leadership was the second most observed theme and social justice was far behind as the third most observed theme. Only three observations of balanced leadership and one of spiritual leadership were evident. Although seven participants had double-digit data points from their observations, two participants had five and four respectively. Possible reasons for this disconnection between what participants said and publicly posted in their LCAP and what I observed will be examined in Chapter 5.

The data related to the second research question revealed, overwhelmingly, that these participants relied on their relational leadership skills to create an inclusive, collaborative strategy and LCAP for the expenditure of their LCFF funds. Eight of the nine participants commented in their interview that the LCFF policy and subsequent plan is a tool to involve parents, the community, students, and teachers in the decisions about how best to educate children, and as Sup 3 indicated, “it is all about the kids.”

Examining the data to support or reject Grogan and Shakeshaft’s (2011) diverse collective leadership theory was the purpose of Research Question 3. The interview questions were specifically designed to expose participants’ leadership behaviors using open-ended questions so as not to color participant responses. I analyzed and coded all data to one of the five diverse collective leadership themes: balanced leadership, leadership for learning, social justice leadership, relational leadership, and spiritual leadership.

I learned that these nine participants overwhelmingly led using a relational leadership theme. Eight of the nine participants revealed relational leadership as either their strongest theme or tied for their strongest theme. Their second strongest theme was leadership for learning, followed by social justice leadership. These three themes accounted for 97% of the data points.

The findings from this study indicated these female superintendents overwhelmingly lead through one or more of the diverse collective leadership themes. Whether through their public documents, their own descriptions, or observation, these women were relational, learner-driven leaders who sought to widen their sphere of influence in the support of students. These women accepted positions in districts

experiencing severe fiscal challenges, low morale, and, as CS 2 said, “complete dysfunction” resulting in the release of three of their male predecessors. Seven participants fired a senior level manager in their first year on the job: all of those fired were men.

In the next chapter, I provide conclusions from the study. Also, I describe my analysis of the findings. Finally, I offer recommendations for future research, policy, and practice.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In Chapter 5, I summarize and discuss the findings presented in Chapter 4 by research question and literature-review theme. I also discuss additional findings with possible reasons. Following the discussion, I explore conclusions and implications. Recommendations for future research for the profession and the academy will complete Chapter 5.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to listen to the voices of female superintendents in rural California school districts as they implement LCFF and LCAP policies. I interviewed nine women from central and northern California school districts and reviewed each LEA LCAP. As part of a triangulated research design, I observed participants as they facilitated meetings to compare their actual leadership behaviors with how they said they lead, and reviewed the LCAP, a public document posted on their website. I analyzed and coded all data to the five themes of Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory. I discuss each research question individually in this chapter. Themes from Chapter 2 will augment the discussion, tying this study to the other research in the field.

Discussion

Research Question 1

What are the leadership practices of female superintendents in rural California school districts as they implement the LCFF and LCAP policy mandates?

Findings from this study revealed two interesting discussion points: participants' overall leadership behaviors, and specific diverse collective leadership behaviors and their implications. Both of these discussion points connect to educational leadership, the history of superintendents, and context responsive leadership themes addressed in Chapter 2.

Findings from this study clearly indicated that female superintendents continue to experience barriers when leading their districts (Lemasters & Roach, 2012). These barriers impact participants' leadership in three ways; (a) participants are continuing to lead in districts where men do not want to lead (Amedy, 1999; D. B. Collins, 2001; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011); (b) it is highly likely that a female superintendent will be fired in less than 5 years of signing their contract (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006), and (c) because of their isolation, participants may not be aware of how prevalent their circumstances are among their peers (Bredeson et al., 2011).

In Chapter 4, I identified an unexpected finding whereby participants were working in positions that not only men did not want, but also where men had previously led and left districts in significant disarray. Eight of the nine participants entered an LEA in trouble and most were unaware of that disarray prior to the beginning of their assignment. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I did not ask questions about the healthiness of their school system or the transition process inherent in a change in leadership; participants openly shared this information without prompting.

While reflecting on the interviews, I was reminded of the research performed in 2006 by Dana and Bourisaw in which the researchers concluded that women frequently face dilemmas men do not, making an already challenging job even more difficult. The

women in this study, although very qualified, were stepping into situations that their male counterparts were fleeing. Of the eight participants who walked into a challenging situation, seven followed a male predecessor. Previous research showed the difficulty of finding qualified candidates in rural areas, and superintendents are no exception (Ahearn, Harmon, & Sanders, 2006; Arnold, 2004; Chase & Bell, 1990). I did not ask the participants about who else applied for their position, as this was an unexpected finding; but previous researchers indicated that women generally lead rural or urban districts and that men overwhelmingly lead suburban districts; I infer that more women than men apply for these less desirable assignments (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Noelle M., 2011).

For women superintendents, “the reason you’re hired, is the reason you’re fired” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 176). In districts seeking to increase student achievement, a common reason boards bring women into a struggling LEA is that superintendents put practices and policies in place to change the status quo, including making a concerted effort to shift existing instructional practices. This is not always popular with teachers, parents, or students. These stakeholders may complain to school board members who either pressure the superintendent to ease up or are themselves not reelected, evolving into “the reason you’re hired is the reason you’re fired.” One participant was clear that she needed to read the signposts from the board so she could leave on her own terms rather than not having her contract renewed. The other participants, although not mentioning this specifically, were aware of the precarious line they walk in aiming to bring about change in a manner consistent with community values and sentiments toward change.

Isolation, both because of proximity and gender, also impacted the women in this study. Context responsive leadership has identified geographic proximity and gender as contexts that impact a leaders' behavior (Bredeson et al., 2011). The women in this study discussed the importance of intentionally seeking other women superintendents with whom to network. Multiple participants revealed their desire and intent to share their work with other women, leading me to determine the critical importance of women supporting female superintendents. All participants in this study were in rural areas; many of them were in remote rural areas. Women in leadership roles are not only foreign to some of the citizens in these locations, but are also not valued (Bredeson et al., 2011; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; MacArthur, 2010). A female superintendent in a rural area is already working harder and longer than her male counterparts. My experience in working with dozens of rural superintendents has shown me that, as with all rural superintendents, she is likely to also be overseeing or fulfilling the personnel, curriculum, and business functions in her LEA. Rarely is she able to leave her district, as she may also be a site administrator: One of the participants in this study was the only administrator for three schools in addition to being the superintendent. These leaders rarely have time to eat a sandwich much less read an article or attend a conference. This lack of support adds to the isolation already implicit in leading in a rural area.

One way of counterbalancing this isolation is for female superintendents to have a network of female peers with whom they can communicate. Whether through face-to-face or virtual means, intentionally carving out time to connect with other female superintendents is critical. Of the nine participants in this study, five were serving in their first superintendent position. Having a coach who is steeped in not only the barriers

women face in the superintendency, but also the challenges rural areas present, is critical for their success as leaders. Learning how to read the political climate can make the difference between being fired or having a chance to locate another position on her own terms. Executive coaching has been identified as a critical step in supporting new leaders, yet frequently the agencies that provide this service are reticent to offer their services in rural areas. Additionally, female superintendents need to be coached by other women. My experience with a male coach has shown it is not uncommon for them to not recognize the barriers women face. Female coaches are not only more likely to recognize barriers and dilemmas, but can validate the actions the new superintendent is experiencing and help her successfully navigate the challenges. When taking on a new assignment, female superintendents need to intentionally participate in coaching and networking opportunities. These supports will not only lead to their success, but also to the success of students in the district (Duncan & Stock, 2010).

Participants in this study also exhibited three diverse collective leadership themes in the implementation of their LCFF and LCAP policy mandates: (a) relational leadership, (b) leadership for learning, and (c) social justice leadership. Analysis of the interview and LCAP data revealed these data points also followed a pattern, with relational leadership being most pervasive, followed by leadership for learning and social justice leadership.

Observation data points followed a different pattern, however. These data identified leadership for learning as the strongest leadership theme almost 2 to 1 when compared with data points representing relational leadership. I observed social justice leadership, by comparison, in only 44 of the 354 total observed data points.

Because I have a deep background in accreditation work, validating interview and document evidence with observed evidence is embedded in my thought processes. What might be some reasons that leadership for learning was the strongest observed leadership theme? Why did participants so rarely exhibit social justice leadership, even when opportunities for social justice leadership arose? Why is the LCAP rich in social justice leadership evidence yet, again, this leadership theme emerged at a significantly different level? If participants are speaking of relational leadership, why was it observed at such a different level?

All participants in this study were public school teachers: two-thirds of them taught at the elementary level for at least part of their teaching career. Most participants spent a minimum of 10 years as classroom teachers prior to entering administration. Teaching is firmly embedded in their backgrounds and for five of them, is a cornerstone of their work with teams.

Brunner and Grogan (2007) noted that women serve as teachers for longer periods of time prior to entering administration than their male counterparts. Women also tend to enter the superintendency from a curriculum and instruction position rather than business, human resources, or special education. This could explain why, of the 380 leadership for learning data points, I observed 193 while participants were facilitating a meeting; teaching is not only part of what they do and how they see themselves as educators, it is central to how they lead and how they expect the members of their administrative team to lead. At their very core, these women are teachers and learners. Sup 5 summed up the feelings of many participants, “I had a lot of fun teaching, I loved teaching. So it was

hard to leave teaching, but always, always for me it was about this bigger circle of influence. And liking the bigger picture.”

I observed that five participants actively engaged their leadership teams in ongoing professional learning opportunities such as book studies, article reviews, webinars, and data reviews as a regular part of meetings. These superintendents not only saw themselves as life-long learners, their expectation was that their administrators would also be life-long learners and will model life-long learning for their staffs.

Another unexpected finding that arose from the data centered on the social justice leadership theme. Of all data points, I coded 21% to the social justice leadership theme: 110 from the LCAP, 75 from interviews, and 44 from observed actions during a meeting facilitated by the superintendent. Two questions surfaced as I analyzed these data; Why did the LCAP have the most social justice data points and the observations the least; and, Why were some participants silent when an opportunity to exhibit social justice leadership arose in their meeting?

The LCAP is a statutory mandate resulting from California Assembly Bill (AB) 97 and Senate Bill (SB) 91, passed in 2013 (CDE, 2013). This plan documents to all stakeholders how each LEA will expend the funds appropriated to them for the education of foster, ELL, and improvised learners. This statute instructs each LEA to engage all stakeholders in the educational decisions of all students, and these three groups of students in particular. The plan is to be collaboratively generated, approved by the LEA board of education, approved by the county office of education, and then approved by the state board of education. Once all approvals are garnered, each LEA must post their LCAP on their website (LCFF, CA Ed Code 52060-52077, 2013). The expectation of the

state and the public is that LEAs strive to meet the needs of each student in their purview, and that is the intent of the statute.

Social justice cannot be mandated. One need not look farther than the current presidential candidates to see examples of marginalized groups silenced or devalued to know that although it may no longer be socially acceptable to publicly post education policies that continue this history, a need for social justice leadership persists. As an experienced lead evaluator on over 30 accreditation teams across the country, I have observed multiple times when a superintendent said they wanted quality education for each of their students and then acted in a manner that completely disregarded their words. An example was apparent in this study: during a participant's meeting to discuss library expenditures, an instructional assistant who serves as the library assistant for the high school mentioned that having a library circulation who's copyright date averaged 1993 was not really problematic because history does not change. No one challenged this misconception. No one mentioned that history is written by the victor and depicts a strong colonization bias that raises the European conquerors at the expense of indigenous peoples. The superintendent did not even seem to notice the slight.

Later in the meeting when discussing Internet speeds, the participant said she did not feel the students in her rural district were "sophisticated enough to know the difference between the various types of websites." She added that she felt her students had no need for the Internet anyway. The realization that knowledge and research sophistication is taught was completely absent from any part of the conversation.

One answer for the difference between what participants said and did could be social desirability; the superintendent generally knows what is appropriate to say and

what needs to be present in their written documents, but either is unaware or uninformed that their leadership is working against social justice issues. Although I was unsurprised by the difference in stated social justice data points through the interview, LCAP, and the observed actions, I was most definitely disappointed.

Relational leadership data in relation to Research Question 1 indicated that participants spoke of the importance of relational leadership and felt they led through a relational leadership theme, yet this was observed at a 2:1 difference. Two participants exhibited the strongest relational leadership in their observations. In one of these women's meetings, participants were literally congratulating each other upon learning the result of an Office of Civil Rights case brought against the district by an employee. Prior to the official beginning of the meeting, members joked with each other and affectionately teased their superintendents about being the boss. The overt respect for their leader was palatable to me.

The other participant who exhibited very high levels of relational leadership came into her assignment upon the release of her predecessor, an unprecedented action for this district. According to this participant, morale was low and employees at every level were just trying to survive. What I observed, however, was supportive, collaborative interactions among the participant, her administrative team, and the team among its members. This participant intentionally used learning as a method to bring the team together. This was not the case for many other participants, however.

One participant genuinely felt she was building relationships with her team during her 4-hour meeting. She did not read the nonverbal cues her staff was showing as she "kept the pressure" on them. I observed members of her team texting their assistants that

the meeting was going to “go long.” Tension in the room was high, particularly when the superintendent asked if they could “go 1 more hour” to watch and discuss a 56-minute-long webinar. Upon debriefing with the participant, she did reflect that she made a conscious decision to keep the meeting going and thought the group was agreeable to her decision. In reality, the group most likely felt they needed to agree with their boss, regardless of what was going on at their school sites. Frustration, exhaustion, and anger were reflected on the faces of her participants by the end of the meeting. Had a coach observed this meeting, she could have suggested a break to debrief with the superintendent rather than moving ahead with a 4-hour meeting.

Last, two participants illustrated a unique finding when looking solely at the number of total observed data points. These participants were observed exhibiting leadership in only four and five total occurrences, respectively. While reflecting on the interview and observations of these two participants, I noted two very divergent observations in my field notes.

The first participant led in a quiet, yet intentional manner. In her interview she noted, “Some may feel I was too pushy in steering the district towards (expeditionary learning), and maybe I was. I wanted a different approach for our students.” The meeting she facilitated was with her principal and the two [expeditionary-learning] consultants who had spent the day providing staff development for the K–12 teachers. Perhaps the lack of overt leadership was more a result of the meeting type rather than an absence of leadership. This meeting was to debrief the professional development day the staff had just experienced. Thus, the meeting was really led by the two consultants even though the study participant was the facilitator. In analyzing all the data for this participant, she was

most definitely a leader who showed her relational leadership in different contexts than were observed, or she was empowering the meeting participants rather than exhibiting power over them.

The other study participant who exhibited low occurrences of leadership entered the superintendency after serving as a classroom teacher for more than 10 years. She had administrative experience as a high school assistant principal and may have been a strong leader in her past. Currently however, she appeared to be abdicating her leadership to others, thinking it was relational leadership. Her interview revealed a strong relational leadership theme; she actually had more data points coded as relational leadership from her interview than any other participant, at 41 entries. This participant made frequent references to being kind and nice and recounted previous supervisors who she did not respect because they would “yell in front of others.”

Yet she also noted,

It is my job to do what the board tells me; I work for them. This is not my school, it belongs to the community; so even if the board wants me to do something I don't agree with, I will do it because I work for them.

Combined with sidestepping social justice leadership opportunities in the observation, an interesting leadership pattern appeared. Lengthier observations would most likely shift this finding, particularly as she becomes more experienced in her superintendency.

Research Question 2

How are LCFF and LCAP implementation impacted by the leadership practices of the superintendent?

As stated previously, the intent of LCFF and LCAP policies is to not just to inform stakeholders about how their children are educated and what funds will be used to accomplish that learning, but also to empower these stakeholders in the decision-making process of their districts. To accomplish this, a leader needs to distribute power. Of the nine participants in this study, seven clearly exhibited what Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) referenced as *power with* rather than *power over* their stakeholders through intentionally and collaboratively engaging them in the decision-making process. These women sought the input of as many different stakeholder groups as possible to assure educational decisions aligned with the priorities of the educational and overall community. They asked stakeholders to complete surveys, presented at local club meetings, held chat-with-the-superintendent sessions at local coffee shops, created superintendent advisory groups, and even personally made phone calls to stakeholders who had expressed an interest in participating in the LCFF process. One participant talked about having a road show because she was visiting every Rotary, Lions, VFW, and PTA meeting in her attendance area in addition to basketball and soccer games, school-site council meetings, faculty and union meetings, and speaking with students. Participants were visible in their communities, approachable, and genuinely wanted to hear how their school district could improve in meeting the needs of each student, all characteristics of relational leadership. These superintendents may not have implemented every suggestion brought forth from the community, but every stakeholder felt heard: a characteristic of power with, rather than power over the LCFF process.

The remaining two participants exhibited polar-opposite behaviors in relation to power. One participant was trying to lead like a man by overtly and, at times aggressively,

exhibiting power over stakeholders (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). She has been in her position for less than 2 years and is receiving administrative coaching support from a neighboring female superintendent. Even though this participant has administrative experience as an elementary principal, because of the district's size, she is the only district administrator. Running a district not only involves more staff members than a school site, as a small district superintendent it involves leading all departments in a more direct manner. Further complicating the situation are the interactions with the school board. As a site administrator, the responsibility to interact with the board includes occasional presentations, polite conversation, and referring problem situations to the superintendent. Now, effectively navigating the local politics of the school board, community, teacher, classified staff, and student interests is critical to maintain her job. She is bombarded with decisions that need to be made, budgets that need to be analyzed, and meetings that need to be attended. Generally, female superintendents come from a curriculum and long-time teaching background. As a superintendent, her office is not even on a school campus, so it can be challenging and frustrating to keep children at the forefront.

Additionally, geographic isolation and gender isolation further complicate this participant's situation. Women have been raised in the same male-dominant society as men and have experienced the same gender-normed expectations. Attempting to lead as a woman using her female-leadership gifts along with socially accepted male-leadership traits in the most male-dominated position in the United States can be overwhelming. Coaching, as this participant is receiving from an experienced, rural, female

superintendent, is a critical first step in validating that power can be more effective when exercised *with* stakeholders rather than *over* them.

The other participant who deviated from the power with versus power over stakeholder findings completely abdicated power, acting as a pawn to the powerful in her district (Northouse, 2009). Again, the majority of her experience in education was in the classroom, having only serving as a site- level assistant principal for a high school. She worked as an assistant principal for 2 years before changing districts and returning to the classroom. Her motivation for changing districts was to gain more administrative opportunity and compensation, but the political climate in the new district did not allow her to follow that path. This participant was ready to retire when she learned of the principal/superintendent opening in the district she considers her home. She began her career as a teacher in this district and a board member strongly encouraged her to apply for the opening. The district had experienced the removal of the previous superintendent midyear and was being guided by an experienced, retired former principal/superintendent in the area as an interim.

What I found particularly revealing were the inconsistencies between this participant's self-awareness of her leadership and the reality of her leadership. As discussed in Chapter 4, a significant disconnection emerged between what this participant said, and what I observed. Her interview had numerous comments that pointed toward a relational leadership theme. The observation, however, revealed the exact opposite of that. This participant did not exercise power with or power over the stakeholders in the observation; she completely abdicated power. She, too, appears to be a victim of

isolation; again from the geographical location of the district where she serves and from others of her gender.

Unlike the previous example who sought administrative coaching support, this participant appeared not to recognize the void. She identified mentors who influenced her leadership who were male, strong, and powerful superintendents. One mentor in particular was quite familiar to me. My previous interactions with him resulted in me contacting the U.S. Office of Civil Rights for the flagrant, intentional discrimination of Hispanic students, an extreme example of power over stakeholders. Yet the participant in this study thought he was a wonderful leader that she would like to emulate. Her leadership style was *laissez-faire*, however (Northouse, 2009).

Isolation because of the remote locations of all her previous assignments, and being a women teacher in the heavily male agriculture sciences, has always been part of this participant's reality. Because she grew up in the remote school district she now leads and has never worked or lived in a location with more than 3,000 people, it is quite possible this participant is unaware of exactly what she does not know. Relying on male mentors with questionable ethics will not help her learn how to be a more effective leader or to realize the disconnection between her self-perception as a relational leader and reality. A female administrative coach who is familiar with the history of her district, but also the realities of female-leadership research, appears to be a critical link in supporting this participant to achieve a closer match between her perceived leadership and reality. To help her see the mismatch between her actual abdication of power and leadership and her perception that her leadership is relational is the function of a skilled administrative coach.

Both these ways of displaying or not displaying power can be problematic for students in their districts. Isolation because of the remote nature of rural districts, compounded with the isolation female superintendents already experience, must be addressed for students in their systems to reach full potential. Coaching by a skilled woman who is familiar with the challenges of isolation is a pivotal next step. Additional research in how female superintendents exhibit power with, power over, or no power with their stakeholders was clearly supported by this study.

The significance of adding participants' actions to the data analysis cannot be minimized. Analysis of participants' actions provided significant support to the efforts participants used to bring balance between home and work responsibilities for themselves and their employees, thereby adding to Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory. Considering the number of participants who exhibited at least one example of spiritual leadership provided additional support for the spiritual leadership theme in diverse collective leadership theory. Observing the actual facilitation of a meeting provided contradictory evidence of a participant's interview when considering relational leadership. Careful observation and recording of participant actions coupled with interview data aligned to the five themes that make up diverse collective leadership will continue to yield important information for researchers and practitioners in the future.

Research Question 3

To what extent is Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory supported or rejected as these rural, female superintendents implement California's LCFF and LCAP policy mandates?

In Chapter 4, I shared findings that strongly supported Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory. All participants exhibited behaviors in multiple leadership themes, whether an observed behavior, something identified in their LCAP, or data gathered in response to interview questions. Two leadership themes—balanced leadership and spiritual leadership—piqued my curiosity in noticing what was not said.

Balanced Leadership

Upon reflection, I pondered that when considering some of the findings, particularly in the balanced leadership theme, examining participants' actions in addition to their words might provide further insight and information. With this in mind, I returned to the interview transcripts and field notes to explore what actions participants showed that aligned to Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory. Findings that emerged from this second, deeper evaluation showed leaders committed to managing family pressures for themselves and their followers. Six of the nine participants' actions supported this finding, yet none of these would be evident if words were the only source analyzed.

Examples of actions shown by study participants that supported desires to balance family and work responsibilities were as diverse as the participants themselves. One participant enabled a director to use the conference-call capabilities in the office so the director could remain home with a sick child. Another held off her postsecondary education until after her own children reached school age. A third accepted positions in less-than-desirable locations because of the need for increased income as a single mother.

One participant even returned to the teaching ranks to spend more time with her teenage daughter before she left for college.

Many of these actions involved very difficult, personal decisions about prioritizing sometimes contradictory home and work responsibilities. Interestingly, these behaviors only became evident as exercising balanced leadership when actions were added to the analysis. The question in my mind was, why? Why, when it is clear the female superintendents in the study are facing decisions and realities about how to balance it all, were these challenges not verbally discussed? I turned to the literature for possible connections to this question.

One possible answer is the historic embedding in our culture that the superintendency is the domain of men (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009, 2011; Kowalski, 2005; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007). As recently as the late 1900s, the percentage of women in the superintendency nationally never grew beyond single digits, except in times of war. Even now, the latest data available show that less than 20% of school systems are led by women, making it the most male-dominated position in the United States (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As shared previously, the context of the rural locations of the participants in this study created an additional barrier for women, due to geographic isolation (Bredeson et al., 2011). The women in this study, whether intentionally or unintentionally downplayed or ignored the ongoing struggles they experienced, creating a balance between their home and work responsibilities further adding to their isolation.

These women appeared reluctant to overtly discuss these barriers, possibly because they are experiencing a similar reality to that of Dana (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Dana revealed that the gendered norms in her community clearly communicated that the community did not want to hear about any struggles she, or other female education leaders, were experiencing. The community's attitude was, this is what you wanted and is why you are a paid handsomely, albeit lower than men's salaries; figure it out or step aside.

The double standard inherent in this logic is clear. Men are responsible for their work lives while women are responsible for their work lives and their family lives. The literature is rich with examples of female leaders in all industries being judged as less than competent for having a photograph of their family on their desk (Ayman & Korabik, 2015; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; MacArthur, 2010). Sharing with an unknown researcher about how you provide opportunities for staff to live a balanced life or how they themselves live a balanced life may give a female superintendent pause. These women are very successful and have attained a position at the highest level, frequently overcoming many barriers along the way. Protecting their private and family life quite possibly has become ingrained in them as a self-protection reflex. Talking of a struggle, even to another woman, may be a risk these successful leaders are unwilling to take consciously.

Navigating the politics of the school board and broader community is a pivotal aspect of the work of a successful superintendent and are even more important for female superintendents. Chase and Bell (1990) suggested that recruitment agencies frequently used in superintendent searches are already reluctant to bring women candidates forward

to hiring school boards. Entrenched stereotypes of women at home and men at work accounted for most or all of the rationale analyzed in their study. These stereotypes may also create conscious or subconscious barriers for board members, as they evaluate the performance of the superintendent, creating a situation in which the participant may be thankful they were hired, not wanting to jeopardize that by voicing the balance challenge. Also, some members of the board may be waiting for female candidates to say something about the struggles, so they can point out why women should not fill the superintendency position. This is a politically charged issue, particularly in rural school districts (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Balanced leadership accounted for just 1% of the 1,124 total data points analyzed for this study. Why were there so few examples of the balanced leadership theme? I also reflected on this question throughout the data collection and analysis process and identified possible reasons for the absence:

- I failed to ask questions that allowed participants to share how they exhibit balanced leadership,
- I failed to code data that was reflective of balanced leadership,
- The participants were unaware of the balance or imbalance between their work and home lives, and
- Balanced leadership was perceived as a barrier to successful leadership and was either intentionally or unintentionally ignored in participant responses.

Although any or all of these reasons could explain the absence of a conversation about how these participants lead through a balanced leadership theme, upon reflection, I believe the most probable reason for a lack of balanced leadership data is grounded in an

unintentional response by participants to avoid discussion of their home lives, as previously discussed. This research demonstrates that barriers continue to be present, even after the women were hired. The actions of participants however, clearly reveal they are addressing the balance challenge every day.

Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership, as stated in Chapter 1, is not about religion per say. Spiritual leadership is revealed when participants report wanting to make the world a better place than it is now, or feel called to do this work by something outside of themselves. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) indicated that spiritual leadership and social justice leadership tend to be complimentary themes, meaning that women who indicate they want to disrupt the status quo through social justice issues are doing so because they feel called to that work. The authors noted, “many women administrators are both focused on social justice and reliant on what they describe as a higher power to help them in their fight” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 13). Separating these two themes for the sake of categorizing them seems meaningless to me.

Possible reasons for the limited number spiritual leader data points may include the following:

- I neglected to ask questions that allowed the participant to share how they exhibit spiritual leadership;
- I neglected to code data that reflected spiritual leadership;
- I neglected to set up an environment where the participant felt safe enough to divulge their spiritual beliefs and how that impacts their leadership, particularly as a public school superintendent;

- The number of spiritual leadership data points may be less important than the number of participants who demonstrated spiritual leadership in any form.

As with balanced leadership, it is quite possible that I did not ask a question that led participants to consider any spiritual leadership themes as a response. I did not want to lead the participants to respond in any one specific way and as such, may have neglected to provide an avenue for participants to share any deeply held spiritual beliefs.

Along this same line of thinking, answering questions for a research study is a formal activity. I asked participants to sign a confidentiality statement, outlined the research questions, and recorded participant responses. For some participants, perhaps this was not a sufficiently intimate environment to share their spirituality and how it impacts their work. This possibility could have been compounded by the notion that all of the participants are superintendents of public schools and, thus, may feel it is inappropriate to discuss faith, spirituality, or religion in this formal, recorded setting.

Coding differences may also explain the small number of spiritual-leadership data points. As previously stated, social justice and spiritual leadership link closely. It is quite possible that I missed an opportunity to code a data point as spiritual leadership. I coded all data points to as many themes as was appropriate, so would not have coded something as social justice leadership that should have been coded as spiritual leadership. Any one point could have been coded as both of these themes.

Upon additional reflection, I question if a larger number of spiritual leadership data points would indicate the depth of spiritual leadership among participants. Six of the nine participants had at least one data point in the spiritual-leadership theme. These data points emerged from participant interviews with the exception of one data point: PS 2

was wearing a cross, which led me to code a spiritual-leadership data point in the observed data set.

What would more spiritual leadership data points look like? What would these data points indicate? If a participant shared that they feel called to their position by a higher power, does it make it more persuasive if they are also wearing a religious symbol? Why or why not? Is it even relevant to how women lead to quantify this? It seems that the gift of qualitative research is that the research is about the voices of the participants rather than a total number of data points.

I conducted one final search for articles on diverse collective leadership theory prior to concluding the writing of this study. To date, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) have yet to publish additional work on their theory. No links arose to other studies about this theory or using this theory at the time this study concluded. Findings from this study serve as part of the inaugural research pool supporting this groundbreaking and very important theory.

Additional Findings

In Chapter 4, I revealed unanticipated findings from the data in the study. These data included the following:

- Participants exhibited courageous leadership by facilitating the removal of a senior leader within the first year of their superintendency,
- Multiple participants shared examples of barriers they experienced on their journey to the superintendency,
- Confidence was a key personality trait of these successful female administrators, and

- Most participants stepped into districts in distress.

Although these situations may not be unique to female superintendents in rural LEAs, the circumstances surrounding my learning of this data is unique. None of the interview questions specifically asked about these situations; thus, participants shared the information unprompted.

Courageous Leadership

In the initial interview reflections, I remembered that one participant had removed the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction from their position shortly after beginning her superintendency. This participant was the second interview I conducted. As the interviews continued, I continued to hear similar accounts of participants removing senior leaders from their positions in the first year after accepting the superintendency. I did not ask a question regarding their transition; participants volunteered this information when describing their employment backgrounds. Ultimately, seven of the nine participants recounted a time in the first year of their superintendency when they released a senior management team member from their duties.

In Chapters 2 and 4, I noted the work of J. C. Collins (2001) regarding the Level 5 Leadership practice of putting the right people in the right seats on the bus. The seven participants who removed or reassigned senior leadership members to other positions showed courage and a commitment to students. The reasons given for removing these individuals included ineptitude, misuse of funds, and speaking badly about the new superintendent with community and school-board members. These participants gave the individuals an opportunity to shift their perspective and when they did not change, fired them. All seven participants indicated the individual was not acting in a manner that

supported students. All seven participants also indicated that supporting students was their main priority. If the senior manager was not able to shift their actions to a student-centered approach, the superintendent mandated they move on.

I was not surprised that a superintendent replaced a senior manager; however I was surprised by how many participants felt a need to replace at least one, and in some cases multiple members of the senior management team in the first year on the job. One or two participants taking this action would have aligned with my background and experience with leadership transition. Frequently, making senior management changes is seen as a negative action toward the superintendent rather than a flattering action (Dana & Bourassa, 2006). These women wanted senior managers who put children's needs over adult needs. Multiple participants indicated that children were their priority, and the adults needed to act in the best interest of the children rather than the adults; if the dismissed leader was uncomfortable with that priority, they needed to seek employment elsewhere. That is courageous leadership and a key attribute of Regan and Brooks's (1995) feminist attributes of leadership, as well as Doohan's (2007) concept of a spiritual leader who makes decisions based on their moral center.

Gender Barriers

Most participants in this study, regardless of their age or number of years in education, again unprompted, shared an experience in which they were either denied a position or felt they needed to do something differently because they were a woman. For one participant, it was obtaining additional degrees earlier in her career so that she could move ahead. Another noted she was willing to take any job just to get the experience. For

a third, it was the constant harassment of her teaching peers who were always all men. Still another felt pressured to lead more like a man.

Again, these revelations were not prompted by a question from me and may not even be relevant to this study, but they are interesting. Frequently, participants began their story with phrases such as, “I’m sure others had it worse than I did” or “I’m probably making too much of this but” and then would share overt and covert examples of sexism. Why did participants share these stories with the researcher when I asked no question? Perhaps they were under the impression that because I am a woman and the study is about female superintendents, these experiences were relevant to the study. Perhaps participants felt comfortable with me and wanted to connect as one female administrator to another. Perhaps participants just needed to let someone know that their journey to the highest position in a school district was not an easy one. Although I do not know the motive behind these revelations, I appreciate them. Clearly additional research is needed in this area.

Confidence

Two participants believed that having a doctorate gave them the confidence to do their job and stand up to the demands of their job. This is not a huge revelation when considering that many superintendents have a doctorate degree. What stood out was an aside by one study participant, while having lunch with me:

The degrees gave me the confidence to be honest. Even though in my opinion a doctorate is more just reading and research and doing your exams and doing a little dissertation, I felt good about my accomplishment. ... It gave me the

confidence that I could do it. ... You have forks in the road, and the education gave me the confidence to pursue multiple options.

Her comment completely resonated with me. Shortly after completing her doctorate, this participant worked as an adjunct instructor at her alma mater.

I probably maybe could've had an opportunity to be a professor, but at that point I just went on [with my work as a superintendent]; I just had been offered a superintendency and that is what I wanted to do.

This woman looked at the options before her, now that she had earned her doctorate, and selected the path that best matched her goal. I felt she was reliving her journey as she is now at that same juncture, looking at multiple paths, and weighing which path would best match her goal, knowing that she now had the confidence gained from her education to support her.

Challenging Transitions

As stated in Chapter 4, almost all participants stepped into an LEA that was in fiscal disarray, regardless of the year they assumed their position. For those participants hired in the past 3 to 5 years, that revelation does not seem too surprising. Many, many LEAs suffered significant fiscal emergencies as a result of the Great Recession. It was not until I was writing Chapter 4 that I realized all but one participant who took over a distressed LEA followed a male superintendent. This may not be that surprising because, according to Brunner and Grogan (2007), nationally, men lead 82% of LEAs. The level of dysfunction these participants described was deep and historic; and for most of them, a surprise furthering of Brunner and Grogan's finding that women tend to serve in places men do not want to serve.

I was quite surprised that the outgoing superintendent left their school system in the conditions found by participants. One motivation for entering education generally is the desire to serve students; that is what superintendents tend to say when asked. Based on my background in accrediting school systems, the level of dysfunction throughout multiple areas of the LEA expressed by participants reveal leaders who were making decisions from motivations other than serving students.

One participant shared their predecessor's ironclad control, resulting in employees who were frightened to make independent decisions lest the superintendent criticize them. Another disclosed a predecessor who had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars earmarked for specific purposes on pet projects with no plan, implementation training, or accountability for the spending. These funds were designed to support a multiyear implementation of common core standards in mathematics and English-language arts and had been exhausted after the first year, significantly handicapping the incoming superintendent and the students she serves.

Female superintendents continue to face barriers not only in securing the position, but also in retaining their position. Isolation—geographic and gender—add to the leadership complexities these women navigate daily: balancing family and work responsibilities, the politics of the local community and the school board, or enacting policy changes to meet the needs of their most underserved students. One way to break the pattern of isolation would be for female superintendents, particularly in remote, rural areas, to secure the support of a skilled, female administrative coach. Breaking the pattern of isolation is key to the longevity of the superintendent and the success of the students she serves.

Conclusions

This study revealed some findings that were unanticipated and unique. Upon closer examination and reflection, these findings show the complexity and difficulty of the leadership role, particularly when the leader is a woman. Leading a school district, especially for women, requires tremendous courage: the courage to walk with confidence into an environment traditionally led by men, the courage to focus on the needs of students even when that is not popular, the courage to “put the right people in the right seats on the bus” (J. C. Collins, 2001), even if that means terminating senior leadership.

The rural, female superintendents in this study generally led from a relational leadership perspective whether they were facilitating a meeting, writing a public plan, or making budgetary decisions. The input of their leadership team, teachers, staff members, parents, students, and community members is not only important to them, it is part of who they are; they instinctively exhibit power *with* rather than power *over* stakeholders. The LCFF and LCAP legislation is designed to intentionally involve all stakeholders in educational decisions of the children in their community. These superintendents were not satisfied with merely telling stakeholders about how the funds would be spent; they wanted to empower stakeholders to be part of the LCAP process and the educational decisions of their district.

Participants in this study recognized their leadership was different from that of their predecessor and intentionally reassigned or released personnel who would not support their vision for students. For participants who inherited an LCAP, the documents reflected their predecessor’s leadership priorities, giving the incoming superintendent an opportunity to set a new course for their district. For participants who had been serving in

their position since the inception of the LCAP, the plan represents their leadership priorities, inclusively created by the educational community, not the superintendent.

For many participants, the first year in their position resulted in the intentional replacement, either through reassignment or release from their contract, of at least one member of their senior management team. These women courageously “confronted the brutal facts” by having the “discipline to confront the most brutal facts of their current reality, whatever they might be,” all while maintaining “unwavering faith that they can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties” (J. C. Collins, 2001, p. 13). For some participants, their brutal reality was a severely dysfunctional school system on the brink of bankruptcy. For others, their reality was a group of educators trying to avoid the fray. Regardless, These participants took steps to shift the priorities of their LEA to the needs of students through the collaborative creation or revision of their LCAP.

These participants also used learning as a tool, for adults as well as students, to refocus on the most important priorities. Most participants engaged their administrative team in ongoing learning opportunities to grow and stretch them as leaders. For many, this learning focus also served to bring their fragmented team together and improved morale. Participants in this study continued to see themselves as teachers, even though most had been out of the classroom for a number of years. They fought to attain their positions as superintendent and were well aware that they could be released should a new board come in that did not agree with their priorities. For most, this did not stop them from continuing to move their LEA forward because that is what was the right thing to do for students. These women showed integrity, tenacity, and intellect in their practices and interactions. They had the patience and strength to deflect and redirect naysayers and the

dedication to persuade stakeholders to see their vision for children. Whether through the “pressure” applied by Sup 3 or “play” advocated by Sup 5, the leadership practices of these superintendents strongly supported their vision for students.

Recommendations for the Profession

The results of this study shed light on changes needed in the areas of educational administration preparation programs, educational policymakers, and school boards, particularly in rural areas.

Recommendations for Educational Administration Preparation Programs

1. Include or enhance review of local, state, and federal education policy in the curriculum for administrative preparation programs.
2. Add diverse collective leadership as part of the educational leadership curriculum, validating balanced, relational, learning, social justice, and spiritual leadership for all administrators, regardless of gender.

Recommendations for Education Policymakers

1. Ensure legislation provides for differentiation opportunities for LEAs of all sizes and geographic contexts rather than requiring all LEAs to implement legislative mandates in exactly the same way.
2. Assure rural representation on all legislative committees, even in states where an assumption of urban education dominates the education conversation.
3. Continue differentiation in all local, state, and federal grant allocations, thereby providing competitive funds to LEAs that may not have the same access to resources as large urban districts.

Recommendations for Boards of Education

1. Provide equal opportunities for women to serve in leadership positions in all areas of the school system, not just curriculum.
2. Empower superintendents to implement shifts toward equity for each student rather than universal policies, curriculum, and instruction.
3. Provide superintendents with an administrative coach to ensure their success and thus the success of each student in the district.

Recommendations for Future Research

Studying female superintendents in rural California school districts led to findings that strongly supported Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory. I questioned if these findings would be the same for women in urban or suburban districts. Further research combining context responsive leadership with diverse collective leadership theory in a rural, suburban, and urban LEA is needed to answer that question in context specific and comparison studies.

No other researchers used the 2011 diverse collective leadership theory as the theory undergirding their published studies. Continuing to study this emerging theory and refining the methodology and data analysis processes would provide researchers and practitioners in the field vital information about female educational leadership, a research field in great demand. Careful attention to balanced and spiritual leadership themes may reveal why these themes were rarely raised in these interviews. Comparing results with those from other contexts may show practitioners how best to approach their assignment to ensure success.

Also no studies describe the implementation of California's LCFF and LCAP policies, put into effect in the 2013–2014 school year. Studies of female superintendent's leadership practices, particularly in rural areas are also scarce. This study serves to bridge these gaps and adds to the body of literature regarding rural education, women in educational administration, and LCFF policy implementation.

Additional research is warranted however, as this study not only represents a very small number of female superintendents, but also was limited to only seven California counties. Replicating this study in rural LEAs in counties across the state would provide additional data to understand how or if context impacts California's rural, female superintendents' leadership practices. Replicating this study in other states could broaden the very small body of research on rural school systems and the female educators who lead them.

Studies on the implementation of any policy are scarce, but California's LCFF policy is even more limited. Less than 10 reports and journal articles regarding LCFF were available at the time of this writing. None of these were specifically written on the implementation of the policy from a district perspective, as this study does. For districts to truly implement a different way of prioritizing funds, additional studies are needed on what has worked and what has not worked. Examining the differences between how urban and suburban LEAs implement this policy and how rural districts implement the policy may also reveal new understanding of contextual leadership.

This study did not attempt to address the impact of power on the leadership practices of participants. As I continued to explore the relationship between gender and power, questions surfaced about why the tenure of female superintendents tends to be

shorter than that of male superintendents. Questions about power and the perceptions of school boards about the hiring process emerged, further supporting Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) commentary on power and relationships. The connection between power, gender, and leadership, particularly in a rural context, is an area of need, as is research regarding the role of school boards in shifting the gendered norms entrenched in hiring practices.

Educational leadership programs and their impact on confirming or shifting gendered norms in the superintendency is also a much needed area of study. As this study showed, educational leadership continues to be studied through a male perspective, which only compounds the issue of gendered societal norms. Intentional, intensive study into female educational leadership, beginning with follow-up studies of Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) diverse collective leadership theory, can be a starting place for this work.

Although it was not the intent of this study, findings showed female superintendents, particularly in rural districts, continue to face barriers because of their gender. Additional research is needed that identifies what specific barriers are in play in rural districts that may or may not be evident in other contexts. Discerning the best methods to address the barriers and understanding how the barriers impact the superintendent's leadership are critical to understanding how best to support these leaders and break the pattern of isolation they experience.

Last, not until I examined the social justice leadership theme did I wonder about the role race and ethnicity might play in participants' responses. I did not think to include race or ethnicity in the demographic questions, perhaps because I am a member of the

majority racial group. To deepen knowledge of how race impacts leadership, equity, and policy, intentional research connecting race, ethnicity, gender, and social justice leadership from women in rural school districts is an area for additional research as well.

This study attempted to listen to the voices of women in rural California school districts as they implemented LCFF and LCAP policy mandates. Findings, as with all studies, led to a few limited answers but mostly more questions. Probing these areas will not only impact the leaders of these LEAs, it will deeply impact the education, earning potential, and lives of hundreds of thousands of California school children.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout this study, learning was revealed similar to the peeling back of an onion. Every time I thought I had figured out something, a new question arose. Clearly, it is hard physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually to be a female superintendent. So few women have held this position that incumbents have few role models to draw on for support, deepening the isolation inherent in leading in remote locations. Female superintendents should consider intentionally planning to combat this isolation by connecting with female counterparts virtually and by hiring a female coach. The coach can not only provide emotional support when the superintendent experiences expected and unexpected challenges, she can point out the sometimes subtle sexism each participant in this study experienced and help her work through the politics to a reasonable solution.

Even in 2016, overt and, even more dangerous, subversive sexism, is clearly part of a female superintendent's reality. Whether it is the double standard female superintendents face in trying to balance work and home responsibilities (never an issue

for her male counterparts), communities that question her ability to lead, or local politics that result in the reason she was hired being the reason she is fired, female superintendents are not much better off today than they were in 1887 when Ella Flagg Young became the first woman to lead a school system. In 2016, the United States has a woman candidate for president. The criticism of her voice, hair, dress, and ability to lead are characteristic of what every female leaders faces. Should she be elected, no doubt these sexist criticisms will only increase, just as criticism of the first African American president increased after Obama's election.

Being the first to break through a societal barrier is hard. One is judged unfairly by their gender or race rather than their abilities. People yearn for the good ol' days when they went to school and women were at home, making cookies, like when they were children. Deeply entrenched gender norms may seem impossible to overcome at times. For the brave few who seek to serve children at the highest level, they are not alone. Connecting with other women who are in or have been in a similar situation can bring clarity in what may seem to be suffocating situations. Breaking the isolation through continued and deeper research and skilled administrative coaching of superintendents by other women is a crucial next step. The success of U.S. children depends on it.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Time of interview:

Date:

Location:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today. I recognize that your time is valuable so I want to set a reminder on my phone to assure we do not go over our time allotment. Are you comfortable with that? Thank you.

Also, if you would please sign this consent form indicating that your responses will be held in the strictest confidence and that the utmost care will be used to maintain your anonymity in the study. Pseudo names for yourself and your district will also be used. Once the data is collected, I will send it to you so you can review your responses for accuracy. What questions can I answer for you regarding the protection of your identity?

Lastly, so that I can attend to you during the interview, I would like to record our interaction today. Are you comfortable with that? Thank you.

As I shared with you on the phone, this study is looking at the leadership behaviors female superintendents in rural, California school districts use while implementing the

Local Control Funding Formula and LCAP. The interview questions, as I'm sure you saw in the email I sent you, are focused around three research questions:

1. What are the leadership practices of female superintendents in rural California districts?
2. How are the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) policy implementation impacted by the leadership practices of the superintendent?
3. To what extent is Grogan and Shakeshaft's diverse collective leadership theory supported as these rural, female superintendents implement California's LCFF and LCAP policy mandates?

Data from this study will be used to inform policymakers and researchers about both the unique needs of superintendents in rural areas. Additionally, this study seeks to provide inaugural data for LCFF/LCAP implementation and Grogan and Shakeshaft's diverse collective leadership theory, broadening the small research base on female superintendent leadership.

As I said in my email, I will not be using all of these questions, but will select questions from this list based upon your responses so that I have as complete a picture of your leadership as possible. Shall we start?

Briefly describe your background, career path and how you became superintendent of this school district

What role did other leaders play in the process?

Describe this community in economic, demographic, and geographic terms.

- Increased or decreased FRL enrollment?
- Increased or decreased numbers of ELL students?

What is a brief history of your school district?

- Increasing or declining enrollment?
- Positive/contentious issues in the past?

Please briefly describe or characterize the relationship between the district and the local community.

- What is the community's number 1 education priority?

Describe the relationship between yourself and the board.

- How involved were they in the LCAP formation?

Describe the process your district used in creating your LCAP.

- What was your role?
- What roles did others play?
- How was this similar to or different from your previous budget development processes?
- As you move forward with the implementation of your LCAPP, what is working well? As you consider possible future revisions, what will you do differently? How did the process work for you and for your community stakeholders?
- When a conflict arose or arises now, what are the criterion used to make a decision?
- What process is used to resolve conflicts?

How do you go about making student achievement the most important priority in your district?

- Describe specific actions or activities you do with your school board?
- With your principals?
- With your teaching staff?
- With your students, parents, and community?

What do you do specifically that helps you grow and develop leadership talent in your district?

- How do you recognize leadership talent? What specifically do you look for?
- Once you recognize a talented individual, what specifically do you do next?
- What do you do specifically to encourage or help these individuals to develop their leadership skills? Examples

What specifically do you do to build trust with the people that you work with?

- How do you build trust with your building principals?
- How much authority or responsibility do you give your principals?
- When and how do you limit their authority and responsibility?
- How do they know where their authority stops?
- Give example of a decision a principal can make and one they cannot make.
- How do you build trust with board members?
- How do you build trust with teachers?

What are the strengths and areas of growth of your school system?

- Describe your district's future challenges and prospects.

When you reflect on your time in your current position, how would you characterize your overall effectiveness? Example?

- What are the two actions or activities you do as a superintendent that have contributed the most to improving student academic performance in your district?

What one word would you use to describe your tenure in your position?

Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me today. I will keep your responses confidential and protect your identity. I look forward to observing your meeting this afternoon.

APPENDIX B: EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH MARGARET GROGAN



Claudia Coughran <cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu>

Re: Assistance with interview questions

3 messages

Claudia Coughran <cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu> Fri, Oct 2, 2015 at 12:08 PM

To: "Grogan, Margaret" <grogan@chapman.edu>

Cc: Patricia A Mitchell <mitchell@usfca.edu>

Good morning Dr. Grogan!

Thank you for your gracious offer - and yes, I would greatly appreciate your review of my interview questions. My proposal is due next week so I completely understand if you have time constraints that prevent your assisting me.

I have attached a copy of the interview questions I generated. I will be using a semi-structured interview approach selecting questions based upon participant responses.

I will be coding the interview responses, as well as documents reviewed, field notes, and observations, in iNivo by leadership theme.

Again, thank you for your gracious offer! I look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,

Claudia Coughran

Doctoral Student

University of San Francisco

[805-709-8012](tel:805-709-8012)

cdcoughran@usfca.edu

P.S. I am an alum of Chapman...that's where I earned my masters degree. I am sure they are THRILLED to have you!



Coughran_Interview Questions.doc

37K

Grogan, Margaret <grogan@chapman.edu> Fri, Oct 2, 2015 at 6:51 PM

To: Claudia Coughran <cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu>

Cc: Patricia A Mitchell <mitchell@usfca.edu>

Claudia – I’ve read your questions. Most of the questions are very good and should allow you to answer your research questions. Make sure you ask the superintendents how they identify – so that you can look at cultural/ethnic issues as well as gender.

There are a couple that I would not ask during the interview because they’ll take up too much time. Rather I would get the data for these questions in writing either before you visit with the superintendent or after. The questions I’m referring to are:

Describe the community ...

What is a brief history ...

While the answers to both questions inform the context of the superintendent’s leadership, you have other questions that more directly get at your research questions.

So glad to hear you’re an alum of Chapman! Hope we can meet again in the future. Don’t hesitate to let me know if I can be of assistance to you – but if I don’t respond in a week or so, please send a follow up. I always view follow-ups as helpful not hindrances!

Good luck with your study,

Margaret

Margaret Grogan, PhD

Dean and Professor

101 Reeves Hall

College of Educational Studies

Chapman University

One University Drive, Orange CA 92866

Tel [714.516.5968](tel:714.516.5968)

FAX [714.997.6923](tel:714.997.6923)

grogan@chapman.edu<mailto:grogan@chapman.edu>

www.chapman.edu/ces<http://www.chapman.edu/ces>

“Changing Education. Changing the World.”

On Tue, Jul 14, 2015 at 6:21 AM, Margaret Grogan

<Margaret.Grogan@cgu.edu<mailto:Margaret.Grogan@cgu.edu><mailto:Margaret.Grogan@cgu.edu<mailto:Margaret.Grogan@cgu.edu>>>> wrote:

Fine to send the questions Claudia. Please send to my new e-mail address:

grogan@chapman.edu<mailto:grogan@chapman.edu><mailto:grogan@chapman.edu<mailto:grogan@chapman.edu>>>

Best

Margaret

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 13, 2015, at 12:52 PM, Claudia Coughran

<cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu<mailto:cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu><mailto:cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu<mailto:cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu>>>> wrote:

Hello Dr. Grogan,

We met last October at the ACA/AASA Women in School Leadership forum in Sonoma where you were conducting a focus group. You were gracious enough to allow me the opportunity to observe you and your colleague conduct the focus group session of female principals.

At the end of your session, I approached you and mentioned I am using yours and Shakeshaft's diverse collective leadership theory as the theoretical framework for my dissertation. You kindly offered to review my interview questions and gave me your business card.

I am currently writing the methodology chapter of my dissertation and am planning of collecting data in mid September.

My research topic is the leadership behaviors of female superintendents in rural CA districts as they implement the LCFF policy.

May I send you a copy of the questions for your review? Thank you so very much!

Sincerely,

Claudia Coughran

Doctoral Student

University of San Francisco

cdcoughran@usfca.edu<<mailto:cdcoughran@usfca.edu>><<mailto:cdcoughran@usfca.edu><<mailto:cdcoughran@usfca.edu>>>

805-709-8012<<tel:805-709-8012>><<tel:805-709-8012><<tel:805-709-8012>>>

--

Claudia Coughran

[805-709-8012](tel:805-709-8012)<<tel:805-709-8012>><<tel:805-709-8012><<tel:805-709-8012>>>

[Quoted text hidden]

Claudia Coughran <cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu> Fri, Oct 2, 2015 at 9:52 PM

To: "Grogan, Margaret" <grogan@chapman.edu>

Cc: Patricia A Mitchell <mitchell@usfca.edu>

Thank you, thank you, thank you! I'll keep you posted!

All the best,

Claudia

[Quoted text hidden]

--

Claudia Coughran

[805-709-8012](tel:805-709-8012)

APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Claudia Coughran <cdcoughran@dons.usfca.edu>

Expedited Review Approved by Chair - IRB ID: 572

1 message

Christy Lusareta <noreply@axiommentor.com>
Reply-To: Christy Lusareta <calusareta@usfca.edu>
To: cdcoughran@usfca.edu
IRBPHS - Approval Notification

Thu, Nov 5, 2015 at 10:38 AM

To: Claudia Coughran
From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #572
Date: 11/05/2015

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your research (IRB Protocol #572) with the project title **Voices of Female Superintendents in Rural, California School Districts as the Implement the Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control Accountability Plan Policies** has been approved by the IRB Chair under the rules for expedited review on **11/05/2015**.

Any modifications, adverse reactions or complications must be reported using a modification application to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS via email at IRBPHS@usfca.edu. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP

Professor & Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

University of San Francisco

irbphs@usfca.edu

<https://www.axiommentor.com/pages/home.cfm>

APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Setting:

Observer:

Role of Observer:

Time:

Date:

Length of Observation:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Reflection</u>

APPENDIX E: “WHAT DREAMS DO YOU HAVE FOR OUR CHILDREN”

(Adjectives Gathered From Stakeholder Meetings)

Life-Long Learners	Good Citizens	Work Ethic
Learn a foreign language beginning in kindergarten	Bilingual/bi-literate	Confident
Interactive	Health-conscious	Respectful of themselves and others
Engaged	Inquisitive	Appreciated for effort
Questioning	Creative	Proud
Perseverance	Critical thinkers	Cutting-edge
‘Rebootable’	Ownership of own life and actions	Innovative
We are smarter together	“Yes” (you can)	Cooperative
Can-do attitude	Resourceful	Industrious
Success in their whole life	Success in their relationships on the playground	Positive
Self-worth ad value	Open-minded	Motivated
Tenacious	Independent	Cooperative learning
Love working	Caring	Focused
Effective communicators	Kind	Success in the classroom
Learn the basics, then move on the abstract	Curious learners	Independent thinking
Successful	Interesting	Team players
Technologically literate	Proud of their identity	Culturally sensitive
Risk-takers	Not afraid of failing	Resilient

