**Exploring An Intersectional Approach to Bureaucratic Representation:**

**Employment Patterns Among Principals in Multiethnic U. S. School Districts**

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**Abstract**

As U. S. educational institutions explore ways to diversify their leadership, meaningful change requires evaluation of the factors that underlie diversity in leadership positions. Using an intersectional approach and a data set compiled by the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), we address the following questions about racial/ethnic diversity among women and men employed as principals in 613 multiethnic U. S. public school districts: (1) What are the predictors of African-American, Hispanic, and white women’s and men’s representation among school principals? And, (2) do the same or different factors predict the presence of racially/ethnically different groups of women and men in administrative positions? Using the school district as unit of analysis, we evaluate the patterns of significance for coefficients across multiple multivariate regression models. Findings indicate that the most commonly used contextual predictors of educational workforce composition are not consistent determinants of principal positions across the six intersectional groups. The internal factors, especially gender composition of teachers and racial/ethnic composition of teachers, assistant principals, and administrators appear to be more accurate predictors of principalships. Our findings support the intersectional perspective. We observe that the significance of explanatory variables differs across models for women and men representing different racial/ethnic groups.

**Introduction**

U. S. competitiveness in the global economy depends on training a diverse and technically proficient workforce. While central to the building of a more equitable society, the U. S. educational system has been among the most gendered and racialized social institutions (Collins 1998, Gregory 1999, Collins 2000, Hanson 2004). In fact, the most recent 2011–20 comparison of student and teacher populations shows that while minorities constitute 40% of students, minority teachers account for 16% and minority principals 17.6% of the workforce. The situation is even worse in rural areas and small towns where minorities account for 9.3% and 6.2% of school principals, respectively (Sanchez, Thornton et al. 2009). As a consequence, educational institutions, progressive think tanks (e.g., Center for American Progress), nonprofits, and professional associations (e.g., National Education Association) have been exploring ways to diversify educational leadership to better serve their constituents. Bureaucratic representation theory, which connects descriptive and substantive representation (Boser 2011, Tyler 2011), notes that administrative diversity hinges on the more equitable “distribution of jobs, especially high-level positions, by gender and by race/ethnicity in U. S. school districts” (Kerr, Kerr et al. 2014, 3).

Despite the strategic significance that the educational system plays in the U. S. economy, accounting for 25 percent of public spending and employing one-third of government employees, policy scholarship has paid scant attention to public education (Raffel 2007). Recent scholarship in this area suggests that while the overall representation of women in leadership and teaching positions in public schools has increased (Kerr, Kerr et al. 2014), as has the representation of African-Americans and Latinos (Gates, Ringel et al. 2003), the gains for the latter groups are not as pronounced. The women’s share of principalships in the U. S. increased from 44 to 52 percent between 2000 and 2002. While these gains look promising, assessing progress in women’s ascension to administrative positions between 2002 and 2008, Kerr, Kerr et al. (2014) find that gender parity has not been achieved. The picture for racial/ethnic groups is even more complex. Between 2002 and 2012, the share of Latinos among school principals increased from 5 to 7 percent, and decreased for both whites and African-Americans, from 82 to 81 and 11 to 10 percent, respectively (Grissom, Kern et al. 2015). Researchers continue to explore factors explaining levels of women’s and racial minority’s representation in U. S. school districts. The majority of existing studies focus on finding explanations for either women or racial/ethnic groups rather than the intersection of racial/ethnic and gender.

In recent years, social science and policy scholars have been called upon to overcome historical segregation of race, gender, and class scholarship (Manuel 2006, Collins 2007, Simien and Hancock 2011). The intersectional perspective, which most commonly examines the interactions among race, gender, and social class, and focuses on similarities and differences between and within intersectionally defined social groups, is critical to overcoming this segregation.[[1]](#footnote-1) Over the years the intersectional perspective has provided an important lens for exploring the mutual construction and interactions of social inequalities in defining institutional and social practices. While intersectionality has gained popularity among other social scientists and policy scholars, it has not been given the same attention in political science and public administration (Bearfield 2009, Simien and Hancock 2011). With a few notable exceptions (Hsieh and Winslow 2006, Guy and Schumacher 2009, Riccucci 2009, Miller, Kerr et al. 2010, Townsend-Bell 2011, Wadsworth 2011), political science and public administration scholarship focuses on either gender or on race/ethnicity. Although the non-intersectional studies provide valuable insights into the general patterns of representation, change, and continued presence of gendered and racialized patterns of employment and representation, the intersectional approach can provide us with a deeper understanding of occupational segregation and representational inequalities.

The few existing intersectional studies of representation tend to focus on elected positions in state legislatures (Darcy and Hadley 1988, Hardy-Fanta, Lien et al. 2007, Esterchild 2010), municipal governments (Miller, Kerr et al. 2010), and school boards (Hardy-Fanta, Lien et al. 2007). Quantitative policy studies are rarely conceptualized using an explicitly intersectional perspective or constructed to establish statistically whether intersectional locations matter (Manuel 2006). In discussing the importance of integrating quantitative methods, Wilkinson (2003) suggests creating single variables out of highly correlated intersectional statuses (immigrant status and visible minority status) to assess their effects on dependent variables. While such an approach is important to advance theory, to adequately assess progress toward representation and equity, and to evaluate the meaning of change, we must be able to determine the conditions under which racially/ethnically different groups of women and men are likely to be represented in public bureaucracies (Roch and Pitts 2011). Specifically, if we are to move beyond theoretical frameworks built from the experiences of the dominant group (Vinz and Dören 2007), we must assess the usefulness of different theoretically-derived models in helping to explain variations in representational patterns observed for social groups defined at the intersections of gender and race/ethnicity (e.g., African-American men, white men, Hispanic men) (Miller, Kerr et al. 2010).

**Research Question**

Our study is guided by two research questions: (1) What are the predictors of African-American, Hispanic, and white women’s and men’s representation among school principals? And, (2) do the same or different factors predict the presence of racially/ethnically different groups of women (and men) in principal positions? Toward this end, we constructed multivariate models in which we use the percentage of principals identified with each racial/ethnic and gender group (e.g., African-American women, African-American men, Latinas, etc.) as the dependent variable and evaluate the pattern of significance for coefficients across each model. The analysis is based on a recently released data set compiled from the EEOC’s Elementary-Secondary Staff Information and made available by the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The 2008 data set, the most recent and actually the last one available from the EEOC, includes all school districts in the U. S. with at least 100 employees. School district employment data are broken down by job category (called activity assignment classification), gender, and race/ethnicity.

To our knowledge, there are no studies that examine the distribution of jobs in U. S. school districts by the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender. In fact, there are very few studies that examine descriptive representation and the distribution of U. S. public school systems jobs by gender or by race (for exceptions see Grogan 1999, Reyes, Wagstaff et al. 1999, Kerr, Kerr et al. 2014, Kerr, Miller et al. 2016). One reason offered for this gap in the literature, addressed in this study, is the lack of school district employment data broken down by gender, race/ethnicity, and job category (Kerr, Kerr et al. 2014).

**Literature Review, Theoretical Orientation, and Hypotheses**

Given the dearth of research that focuses on distribution of U. S. public school systems jobs, much of the literature we review pertains to non-education bureaucracies rather than to educational systems. We believe that the current literature does shed some light on factors that affect descriptive representation. Next, we discuss studies examining descriptive representation of women and other underrepresented groups in educational administration to provide context. Finally, we briefly discuss the intersectional framework and formulate our hypotheses.

**Previous Studies of Determinants of Descriptive Representation**

Beginning with Kingsley (1944), the relationship between diversity, inclusion, and bureaucratic representation has been a major theoretical and empirical focus for social scientists (Saltzstein 1979, Welch 1985, Kathelene 1994, Bratton and Haynie 1999, Bratton, Haynie et al. 2006). Scholars of bureaucratic representation often make a distinction between descriptive and substantive representation (Pitkin 1967, Meier, Stewart et al. 1989, Meier and Stewart 1992, Meier 1993, Keiser, Wilkins et al. 2002). Although the mere presence of a group in a bureaucratic structure (i.e., descriptive representation) does not necessarily lead to policy decisions that reflect the interests and desires of its constituents, it does increase the likelihood that such decisions are made (Fraga, Martinez-Ebers et al. 2005, Hunt and Zajicek 2008, Brown 2012). Furthermore, some researchers argue that the distinction between descriptive and substantive representation is overstated in the areas of employment policy and the distribution of public sector jobs, primarily because levels of as well as changes in employment diversity can themselves be considered bureaucratic outcomes directly beneficial to a minority group (Reid, Kerr et al. 2003, Miller, Kerr et al. 2010). Studies examining the relationship between the presence of leaders with “multiple identity disadvantages” (e.g., African-American women) in the educational system suggest that leadership diversity leads to positive performance outcomes (Pitts 2007, Okçu 2014) and benefits students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Grissom, Kern et al. 2015). Given the likely benefits of representational diversity, what do existing studies of bureaucratic representation say about its contextual predictors?

In other public sector employment, studies of municipal governments indicate the importance of both situational factors—such as size and composition of the municipal population—and internal, institutional factors for bureaucratic representation (Eisinger 1982, Hogan 2001). For instance, extant studies of African-American representation in municipal governments indicate that among the situational factors the percentage of African-Americans in the municipal population is an important predictor (Goode and Baldwin 2005). The internal institutional predictors include African-American representation in city services (Goode and Baldwin 2005), the form of government (Stein 1986), and the percentage of African-Americans among personnel directors, administrators, mayors, and council members (Meier 1993, Kerr and Mladenka 1994).

In a study of U. S. municipal bureaucracies, Miller, Kerr et al. (2010, 234) find that traditionally underrepresented groups—mostly Latinos and African American men—have made modest progress in obtaining larger shares of managerial positions in city governments. Latinas, however, are by far the most underrepresented group and their shares of administrative and professional positions in city governments has remained stagnant over time. Moreover, the employment records of African American women show low levels of representation and very little progress in municipal government agencies, especially those with distributive and regulatory policy commitments (Miller, Kerr et al. 2010).

Concerning diversity of elected officials, several scholars note (Montoya 2002, Esterchild 2010, Brown 2014), we have a very rudimentary understanding of factors that affect political participation and the presence of minority women or minority men. The few extant intersectional studies can be divided in two groups: those that explore whether factors affecting political participation and representation are gendered within the specific racial/ethnic groups, and those that focus on whether these determinants vary among women of different races/ethnicities. With regard to the former, Montoya (2002), for instance, observes that the predictors of political participation for Mexican women and men tend to be more alike than those for Puerto Rican or Cuban women and men. With regard to the differences among women, Brown (2014) examined predictors of traditional and nontraditional patterns of participation among black women, Asian-American women, white women, and Latinas. She concludes that although resources play an important role in women’s political participation regardless of race/ethnicity, the specific predictors of political participation do not affect the women of different racial/ethnic identities in the same ways. In this context, Brown (2014) calls for more studies exploring racial/ethnic differences among women.

Finally, Esterchild (2010) conducted a study comparing determinants of representation in state legislatures for women and men of different racial/ethnic groups. She (2010, 129) observes that while the decades of research on women’s representation identified a number of predictors, it is “not clear whether these predictors apply equally for different groups of women.” Among the findings, Esterchild indicates that the traditional predictors that are used to predict patterns of representation, such as size of electoral districts or concentration of minority populations, do not operate in the same ways across intersectionally defined populations.

First, traditional variables are better predictors of electoral success of Black men than of Black women or Hispanics. Second, with regard to minority women, Esterchild notes that the traditional variables that are used to assess the size of the candidate pool (percentage of college graduates, women employed, etc.) correlated with Black women’s representation but have very weak effects on Hispanic women. Esterchild (2010, 143) concludes that these patterns of racial/ethnic differences among women, as well as gender differences within each group, affirm “the intersectionalist perspective that many variables operate in different ways among different groups.” She also notes that in order to create more exhaustive intersectional analyses, we should go beyond comparing women across different racial/ethnic groups or gender within the same groups; instead, we should account for differences among women and men both within and across intersectionally defined groups. The current study addresses this call while focusing on predictors of racial/ethnic and gender representation in educational administration.

## Conceptual Framework: Racial/Ethnic and Gender Representation in Educational Administration

The intersectionality perspective, a perspective developed to account for the complexity of social relations, provides an “integrated” approach identifying and analyzing the simultaneous operation of multiple forms of inequality/discrimination and privilege (Crenshaw 1989) has not been given much attention in the bureaucracy literature (Bearfield 2009). Extensive reviews of the intersectional perspective are already available (see Crenshaw 1991, McCall 2005, Verloo 2006, Yuval-Davis 2006, Nash 2008, Cho, Crenshaw et al. 2013), as is the literature showing its usefulness for specific disciplinary fields, including public policy (Manuel 2006, Hankivsky and Cormier 2011), political science (Fraga, Martinez-Ebers et al. 2005, Greenwood and Christian 2008, Brown 2014), and public administration (Bearfield 2009). Here we limit our review of intersectionality to its basic tenets as they relate to our current study.

The continued underrepresentation of women and minority men in leadership positions in public bureaucracies can be attributed to many structural, social, and economic factors. We have yet to gain a very systematic understanding of how these factors affect the representation of diverse groups of women and men. Such an understanding requires that we adopt an alternative paradigm for analyzing how people’s experiences are shaped by a simultaneous interaction of gender, racial/ethnic, and class inequalities (Manuel 2006, Hankivsky, Cormier et al. 2009, Urbanek 2009, Norris, Zajicek et al. 2010, Hankivsky and Cormier 2011) and use it to development new perspectives that addresses multiple discriminations in “legal and policy arenas related to human rights, the family, employment, criminal law, and immigration” (Dhamoon 2011, 230).

Intersectionality allows a conceptualization of social inequalities that captures “macro axes of social power” as well as “organizational, intersubjective, experiential, and representational forms” of social divisions (Yuval-Davis 2006, 198) that categorize people by race/ethnicity and gender and create different barriers to and opportunities for ascendance to leadership positions. Intersectionality assumes that people’s identities and social locations are not only multifaceted, but also that their meaning and salience are context-specific. For instance, while social class always structures a society’s social relations, a combination of race/ethnicity, gender, and social class location may or may not be salient factors affecting people’s careers in public sector employment. By stressing the importance of gender and race/ethnicity as power systems, intersectionality goes “beyond the mere recognition of diversity and difference” among women and men “to examine structures of domination” (Zinn and Dill 1996, 327). This means that the question of underrepresentation or overrepresentation in public bureaucracies is not just an employment diversity issue; it is an issue of equity, equality, and power. Additionally, the intersectional perspective shows us that depending on people’s social locations, certain identity dimensions (white) may enhance a group’s opportunities while others (women, non-white) may simultaneously lead to discrimination (Crooms 1997). Finally, it is important to note that intersectionality assumes that social location not only affects people’s identities and positions in a power structure, it also shapes perspectives on social reality. Thus, when questions of representation and inclusion are approached via the lens of intersectionality, we move beyond defining people’s locations, identities, and interests based on either race/ethnicity (i.e., African-American) or gender (women) to defining them at the intersection of both dimensions (i.e., African-American women or Hispanic women).

Almost two decades ago, Allen, Jacobson et al. (1995, 409) noted the continued scarcity of research on African-American women in educational administration and the tendency to see “their concerns in much the same manner as those of other women, most often Hispanics.” Although there has been a resurgence of studies on white women and minority (men) administrators, comparable studies of different groups of minority women are still rare. Even though principals are the heads of individual schools, the majority of studies on public school jobs focus on superintendents and teachers. We draw on a range of available studies of educational administrators, to examine what might be the most commonly used internal/institutional and external/contextual determinants predicting diversity among principals. Since none of the studies focusing on the determinants of educational workforce composition use an intersectional approach, we build our predictive models and state our expectations based upon extant studies of minority and gender representation to address intersectionality and the representation of principals.

In terms of internal factors that contribute to the ascendance of the underrepresented groups in positions of administrative authority in educational administration, studies suggest that the presence of potential mentors representing the same identity group are possible predictors (Allen, Jacobson et al. (1995). Theoretically, this is explained by the fact that people in positions of power are likely to support and select people like themselves as their mentees or potential replacements. Although for white women gender appears to be the main obstacle to assuming leadership positions, research on African-American women educators suggests that race plays a more important role (Allen, Jacobson et al. 1995). Accordingly, in our study, we use percent administrators by racial/ethnic group and also by gender as independent variables.

With regard to gender, earlier research suggests that in female dominated occupational sectors, such as K-12 education, men enjoy the so-called “glass escalator” (Williams 1992). However, since educational administrative positions, including school principalships, are most often filled internally (Williams 1992), we examine whether selection of members of a specific identity group to the principal position will be determined by the size of the pool of potential employment candidates (e.g., women teachers, African-American assistant principals). Hence, the percentage of female teachers and the percentage of teachers representing a racial/identity group are likely factors predicting the identity of school principals. Similarly, the presence of women in administrative positions above school principals should have a positive effect on the employment of women as school principals. We also suspect that, in multiethnic school districts, principals are likely to be selected to represent the racial/ethnic identity of the people they will supervise (i.e., teachers), and, as the public administration literature suggests (Gates, Ringel et al. 2003, Papa Jr and Baxter 2005), there will be a positive relationship between the racial/ethnic identities of district administrators and school principals.

With regard to contextual/external factors and gender, a recent report from the School Superintendents Association (Finnan, McCord et al. 2015) notes that while the median salary of women superintendents tends to be higher than that of their male counterparts, they tend to lead districts facing greater economic challenges. Building on these findings, we examine whether women principals, regardless of their race/ethnicity, more likely will be employed in school districts with higher levels of poverty and income inequality, and therefore lower salary/wages per student. To our knowledge no data exist on the relationship between geographic region, gender, and educational administration, so we draw on existing studies of political representation and examine whether women will less likely be employed as school principals in Southern school districts.

Similarly with regard to race/ethnicity, it has been reported that a higher percentage of minority superintendents supervise districts characterized by difficult economic conditions (Finnan, McCord et al. 2015). This is corroborated by research specific to principals, which suggests that, compared with their white counterparts, African-American principals are more likely to be found in schools that are located in large urban districts, have high student poverty rates, and high single race minority student populations (Tillman 2004, Wegenke and Shen 2005). However, it appears that Hispanic school administrators are more likely to be found in rural rather than urban districts (Russell and Wright 1990, Brown 2005). Moreover, there is also evidence for the existence of regional variations in the employment of African-Americans and Hispanics, with African-Americans most likely to be employed in the South (Finnan, McCord et al. 2015) and Hispanics in the Southwestern states (Bajaj 2011). Based on extant research, we expect to see a positive relationship between region (South) and higher levels of representation of African-Americans and Hispanics among school principals.

According to the intersectional perspective, the interaction of racial/ethnic and gender identities should have an effect on leadership diversity. For this intersectional perspective to be supported, we should observe differences in the determinants of the employment patterns of women and men principals representing different racial/ethnic groups. Methodologically, one way to assess the existence of intersectional differences is to compare women and men *within* each racial/ethnic group to determine if intersectional factors predict their presence in principal positions. Second, we can separately compare women and men *across* all racial/ethnic groups to determine if there are racial/ethnic differences in determinants of women’s representation and men’s representation.

For instance, in the first intersectional pattern, we should observe that school districts with higher percentages of African-American assistant principals employ higher percentages of male African-American principals, but have a null or even negative effect on the employment patterns of female African-American principals. Alternatively, we should observe that higher salary wages predict the presence of white men, but will have no effect or a negative effect on the employment of African-American men.

**Research Design: Data, Variables, and Method**

**Data**

Data for the analysis is provided by the U. S. Bureau of the Census and the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC data are not publicly available.[[2]](#footnote-2) We obtained data from the EEOC EEO-5 reports, EEOC Form 168A (Elementary-Secondary Staff Information) for 2008, the most recent and the last year for which EEO-5 data are available. School districts in the U.S. with 100 or more employees are required to file these reports with the EEOC every even-numbered year. The EEOC’s EEO-5 reports represent the most complete and resolute source of employment data available for U. S. school districts. The data permit analysis of employment distribution by job category (administrators, principals, assistant principals, classroom teachers, etc.), race/ethnicity, and sex for each reporting school district.[[3]](#footnote-3) Units of government that do not employ classroom teachers (e.g., educational cooperatives, regional education agencies, and state education agencies) are omitted from the analysis. Also, the EEOC does not include the District of Columbia or Hawaii school districts in the data set because these units of government do not have multiple school districts. There are 6,153 school districts included in the 2008 EEO-5 data set. Because we are interested in evaluating the intersectionality framework, we restrict our analysis to school districts that included populations that are at least 5% African-American, 5% Latino, and 5% white non-Latino based on data from 2006–2008 (United States Census Bureau 2008). This method of isolating multiethnic districts follows previous research (Kerr, Miller et al. 2000, Meier, McClain et al. 2004, Rocha and Hawes 2009). Based on these criteria, 613 multiethnic school districts are available for analysis.

The current analysis uses the measures of descriptive bureaucratic representation, leadership representation, and workforce representation developed by Kerr, Kerr et al. (2014). As defined by (Kerr, Kerr et al. 2014, 385), “descriptive representation is a simple measure of the percentage of women in the activity assignment classification.” Redefined intersectionally, the measure of descriptive representation employed in this paper is the percentage of white women, Black women, and Hispanic women in the activity assignment classification (or job category). Similar to Kerr, Kerr et al. (2014, 385), we also assume that “women leaders should proportionally represent the women they supervise in the workplace.” Hence, leadership representation is measured as the ratio of the percentage of white women, Black women, and Hispanic women leaders in an activity assignment classification to the percentage of women classroom teachers of each group.

**Variables**

*Dependent Variables.* The dependent variables for our analysis are the percentage of: (1) female Hispanic principals; (2) male Hispanic principals; (3) female African-American principals; (4) male African-American principals; (5) female white principals; and (6) male white principals. For example, the measure of female Hispanic principals is the number of female Hispanic principals in the school district divided by the number of principals in the school district multiplied by 100. All data for the dependent variables are from EEOC EEO-5 reports from 2008.

*Independent Variables.* Each of the six models includes the following variables from EEO-5 reports: percentage of African-American teachers, percentage of African-American assistant principals, percentage of African-American administrators, percentage of Hispanic teachers, percentage of Hispanic assistant principals, percentage of Hispanic administrators, percentage of white teachers, percentage of white assistant principals, percentage of white administrators, percentage of female teachers, percentage of female assistant principals, and percentage of female administrators. For example, the percentage of African-American teachers is the number of African-American teachers in the school district divided by the number of teachers in the school district multiplied by 100.

We also include in the models for each school district a set of control variables that have been shown to affect the levels of bureaucratic representation by gender and for various racial/ethnic groups. Specifically, we include the percentage of children in poverty, district-level salary and wages per pupil, and total district enrollment. We also include a dummy variable measured as 0 if the school district is not in the South and 1 if the school district is located in the South.[[4]](#footnote-4) We also control for the level of urbanization for the school district by using locale codes. The urbanization index ranges from a low of 1 to a high of 53 (National Center for Education Statistics 2005-2006). Finally, we control for the extent of income inequality in the school district by using the Gini Index (United States Census Bureau 2008).

**Method**

Because multivariate ordinary least squares (OLS) models have not been used for the explicit purpose of evaluating intersectionality, we cannot base our methodology/strategy on research designs from the literature. Our primary objective is to determine if the factors related to the ability of one sex-ethnic group to lay claim to principalships are the same or different from the factors for another sex-ethnic group. Accordingly, our initial strategy is to run identical models for each of the six sex-ethnic groups. Then, we compare the parameter estimates for each of the independent variables across the six models. We use OLS regression analysis for each of the models. Because we are primarily interested in evaluating the intersectionality framework, we are most concerned with (1) whether the parameter estimates are significant or insignificant and (2) the direction of the effects. We are far less concerned about the size of the effects. Thus, we focus primarily on whether coefficients are significant, insignificant, positive, or negative. Then, we examine the patterns of significance or insignificance across the models in order to determine whether the models support hypotheses that are suggested by the intersectionality framework. This strategy allows us to make some preliminary observations about the utility of the intersectional framework in the context of data on principalships in U. S. school districts.

**Empirical Results**

Table 1 reports the parameter estimates for the determinants of principal positions for each sex-ethnic group. To facilitate comparisons across models as well as to assist in identifying patterns of intersectionality, we group the independent variables for each occupation—teachers, assistant principals, and administrators—by (1) race/ethnicity and (2) female. In reporting our results, we first compare women and men within each racial/ethnic group and, subsequently, we separately compare women and men across all three racial/ethnic groups.

The results reported in Table 1 indicate that school districts with higher percentages of African-American teachers tend to employ higher percentages of female African-American principals, but the African-American teacher variable is unrelated to percentages of male African-American principals. The percentage of African-American assistant principals is unrelated to percentages of female and male African-American principals. However, districts with higher percentages of African-American administrators tend to have higher percentages of female and male African-American principals.

The parameter estimates indicate that higher percentages of African-American teachers are related to lower levels of female and male Hispanic principals and lower levels of white female principals but higher levels of white male principals. Furthermore, the results show that higher percentages of African-American assistant principals and administrators are associated with higher percentages of male Hispanic principals, but are unrelated to percentages of female Hispanic principals. By contrast, higher percentages of African-American assistant principals are unrelated to white female principals, but are associated with lower percentages of white male assistant principals. Finally, higher percentages of African-American administrators are related to lower percentages of white female and male administrators. These gender differences in predictors of principalships within each racial/ethnic group support the intersectional perspective.

(Table 1 here)

At conventional levels of significance (i.e. *p*<0.05), our findings indicate that the effects of higher levels of Hispanic teachers are related to higher percentages of female Hispanic principals, but not to higher percentages of male Hispanic principals. Higher percentages of Hispanic assistant principals and Hispanic administrators affect female and male Hispanic principals only. The percentages of Hispanic teachers, assistant principals, and administrators are unrelated to the percentage of African-American principals, irrespective of gender. At conventional significance levels, these same three independent variables are unrelated to white principalships, irrespective of gender; the only instance of a significant relationship is in the positive direction between percentage of Hispanic teachers and percentage of white male principals. Overall, these three independent variables yield gender patterns that are more similar than different for women and men within each racial/ethnic group. Although in this instance the patterns of gender differences are not as pronounced, the intersectional perspective appears to provide us with a slightly more complex understanding of gender and principalship patterns for whites and Hispanics, but not African-Americans.

When the independent variables are the percentage white among teachers, assistant principals, and administrators, we observe some gender differences for Hispanic principals. Specifically, although the percentage of white teachers is associated with lower percentages of Hispanic male and female principals, we observe a positive relationship between the percentage of white assistant principals and administrators on one hand and Hispanic male principals. These factors are unrelated to Hispanic female principals. None of the occupational categories for whites are related to gender differences for African-American principalships, but they are related to gender differences for white principals. While not affecting white females, the percentage of white teachers is associated with higher representation of white male principals, but the higher percentage of white assistant principals is related to a lower percentage of white male principals. Overall, in this case, the intersectional perspective is most useful in accounting for gender differences among whites and Hispanics, but not African-Americans.

When we separately compare women and men across different racial/ethnic groups, we find the following patterns. First, higher percentages of African-American teachers are related to higher percentages of female African-American principals, but to lower percentages of Hispanic and white women principals. The percentage of African-American assistant principals does not account for racial/ethnic differences for women, but the percentage of African-American administrators accounts for racial/ethnic differences; it is unrelated to Hispanic women, indicates a positive relationship with African-American women, and a negative relationship with white women. For Hispanics, the patterns are slightly different. All occupational categories indicate a positive relationship with percentages Hispanic female principals, but these categories are unrelated to African-American or white women principals. Finally, none of the occupational categories for percentage white show widespread relationships with African-American female or white female principalships, but we observe a negative relationship between the percent of white teachers and percent of female Hispanic principals. In this case, the intersectional approach provides useful lenses for understanding the patterns of racial/ethnic differences among women.

For men, the percent of African-American teachers is related to lower percentages of male Hispanic teachers, is unrelated to African-American male principals, but indicates a positive relationship with white male principals. We observe a positive relationship between the percent of African-American assistant principals and administrators as well as Hispanic principals; however, there is an inverse relationship between these two groups and percentages of white male principals. With regard to African-American principals, the percent of African-American assistant principals is unrelated, but the percentage of administrators is positively related to African-American male principals. For percentage Hispanics, the patterns are slightly different. The percentage of Hispanic teachers is unrelated to Hispanic and African-American principals, but shows a positive relationship with white principals. For the two other occupational categories, assistant principals and administrators, we observe a positive relationship with percentages of Hispanic male principals, but these occupational categories are unrelated to African-American and white principals. Across all three occupational categories, the percent white is unrelated to percentages of African-American men, but is related to percentages of Hispanic and white principals. Specifically, the parameter estimates suggest that multiethnic school districts with a higher percentage of white teachers employ lower percentages of Hispanic principals, but higher percentages of white principals. Percent white in the two other categories indicates a positive relationship with percentage of Hispanic principals. However, percent white among assistant principals is inversely related to white principals, but not related to percentage of administrators. In all, for men, the intersectional approach helps to illuminate distinct patterns across the three racial/ethnic groups.

When gender is used as the independent variable, we observe no effects on African-American women and men, but for the two other racial/ethnic groups, we observe gendered patterns: districts with higher percentages of female teachers tend to employ higher percentages of Hispanic women and lower percentages of Hispanic male principals. Similar gendered patterns are revealed for white women and white male principals. With the exception of African-Americans, these relationships are what we would expect based on a gender-only model: districts with higher percentages of female teachers employ higher percentages of women principals. The estimates indicate that percentage of female assistant principals is insignificant in each of the six models, suggesting the absence of intersectional effect. The percentage of female administrators is statistically significant in only two of the six models—in the negative direction for male Hispanic principals, and in the positive direction for female African-American principals—revealing a rather limited intersectional pattern.

The findings indicate that the percentage of children living in poverty in multiethnic districts shows intersectional patterns both within and across each group. With regard to the within-group effects, a higher percentage of children living in poverty is unrelated to Hispanic females, but is associated with higher percentages of Hispanic men. We observe different relationships for poverty among African-Americans: districts with higher percentages of poor children tend to employ higher percentages of female African-American principals, but there is no relationship to the employment of African-American male principals. District-level child poverty has no gendered relationship to white principal employment; however, it is related to lower percentages of female and male white principalships. If we focus on racial/ethnic differences for women and men, percentage of children in poverty indicates racially/ethnically specific relationships across the three groups of principals.

The dummy variable for the South is not significant in any of the models. Salary/wages per pupil is significant in each of the six models, indicating interesting intersectional effects both within the racial/ethnic groups and across. Specifically, it shows gendered effects for Hispanics, positive for women and negative for men, but shows no gendered effects on African-Americans or whites. If we focus on women across the three groups, higher salary/wages per pupil is related to higher percentages of female Hispanic and African-American principals, but negatively effects white female principals. For men, it has a negative effect on Hispanic male principals but shows a positive effect on African-American and white male principals. The control variable for urbanization indicates the existence of gendered intersectional patterns for African-Americans and whites, in that urban districts are more likely to employ female African-American principals, but the level of urbanization is unrelated to percentages of African-American male principals. For whites, rural districts are more likely to employ white male principals, but the level of urbanization is insignificant for white women. If we focus on racial/ethnic patterns for women and men, urbanization is related to the employment of African-American women principals, but not to Hispanic or white women principals. For men, urbanization is related to the employment of white male principals, but not to Hispanic or African-American men. Hence, this variable offers some very limited support for the existence of intersectional differences. The Gini Index is insignificant in each of the six models; hence the level of income inequality does not support the existence of intersectional differences either across or within the six groups.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Since 2006, political science scholars have begun exploring “the functioning of intersectionality and politics” (Jordan-Zachery 2006) and attempted the mainstreaming of intersectionality as a research paradigm in political science (Dhamoon 2011). With this progress in mind, the current study has been designed to accomplish two interrelated goals. First, we sought to provide a better understanding of occupational segregation and representational inequalities in the educational system. Second, we set out to contribute to the debate about “the value added by the intersectional approach,” especially “the various ways in which intersectionality can enrich political science in the future” (Simien and Hancock 2011, 186). We examined whether similar or different factors predict representation of white, black, and Latino women and men principal positions in U. S. public school districts. The research question was “Do the same or different factors predict the presence of racially/ethnically different groups of women (and men) in administrative positions?”

With regard to the first research goal, along with Esterchild (2010) we conclude that different models are needed to predict the presence of women and men representing each racial/ethnic group in principal positions. Specifically, when we compare determinants of principal positions for women and men within each racial/ethnic group, we find the most sustained pattern of differences based on gender within two racial/ethnic groups, that is, between Hispanic women and men and white women and men. Similar to Esterchild (2010), we also observe some differences between African-American women and men, but these gender differences do not seem to be as consistent as they are for the two other groups.

Second, when we compare women across the three racial/ethnic groups, we find that the predictors for Hispanic, African-American, and white women show different patterns, with African-American women showing a more distinct pattern; the pattern of predictive variables is more aligned between white and Hispanic women. Differing from Esterchild (2010), who suggested Hispanic women are the most distinct our findings note the correlates of representation are more similar for white and Black women than they are for either of these groups and Hispanic women. These findings also point to the fallacy of grouping women of color into one single category that is then compared with white women. Third, implementing Esterchild’s (2010) call for racial/ethnic comparisons among the men, we also observe different factors predicting the presence of men in principal positions. These findings support the usefulness of the intersectional perspective in understanding the differences in representation patterns for each intersectionally defined group.

Interestingly, the variables that are typically used to predict the share of women or minorities in leadership positions in public agencies/bureaucracies, such as the level or urbanization, poverty, extent of inequality, or salary/wage levels do not appear to be performing well in our models. Future research should explore other possible determinants of leadership representation in educational workforces. We observe that higher percentages of African-American teachers in school districts is related to higher percentages of African-American women principals, but this factor does not have strong effect on the employment of African-American male principals. This may be the case because African-American women constitute the majority of African-American teachers. However, the presence of whites among school district employees appears to have the most negligible and the least consistent effect on the presence of white principals. Out of the three racial/ethnic categories, the presence of Hispanic employees in the school districts appears to have the most consistent effect on co-ethnic representation. Future studies should explore whether the gender composition of school district employees has something to do with these patterns. With regard to the cross-ethnic patterns of employment, the presence of Hispanics or African-Americans does not appear to have a negative effect on the employment of African-Americans or Hispanics, respectively. However, the presence of African-Americans appears to have an adverse effect on the employment of white women and white men. This finding may be related to the racial/ethnic segregation of school districts, which is most pronounced between minority students and whites (Saporito and Sohoni 2006).

Our second goal was to make the case for an intersectional approach as an important step in an effort to create more inclusive political science research. Future research should differentiate independent variables by gender and race/ethnicity to assess whether the presence of intersectionally defined groups across the three occupational categories (e.g., white women teachers, assistant principals, and administrators) is a better predictor of the group’s representation in the leadership positions (e.g., white women principals). Not only will this type of approach produce more theoretically rich and explanatory findings, but the usefulness of disaggregating gender and race through an intersectional research approach produces more policy relevant knowledge. Policies that are designed conscious of this complexity will be more effective in addressing blocks to better representation.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1. Determinants of Principal Positions by Sex and Race/Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **Hispanic Principals** | | | | **African-American Principals** | | | | **White Principals** | | | |
| Variable | **Female** | **T-score** | **Male** | **T-score** | **Female** | **T-score** | **Male** | **T-score** | **Female** | **T-score** | **Male** | **T-score** |
| Intercept | -0.02 | -0.22 | 0.28\*\*\* | 3.33 | -0.20 | -1.55 | -0.01 | -0.05 | -0.01 | -0.05 | 0.05 | 0.22 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| % AA teachers | -0.18\*\* | -2.13 | -0.48\*\*\* | -5.24 | 0.82\*\*\* | 5.73 | 0.23 | 1.69 | -0.41\* | -1.65 | 0.92\*\*\* | 3.69 |
| % AA assistant principals | 0.06 | 1.26 | 0.19\*\*\* | 4.03 | 0.08 | 1.08 | 0.09 | 1.20 | -0.06 | -0.43 | -0.30\*\* | -2.30 |
| % AA administrators | -0.02 | -0.82 | 0.06\*\*\* | 2.62 | 0.20\*\*\* | 5.35 | 0.07\* | 1.95 | -0.13\*\* | -2.09 | -0.17\*\* | -2.55 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| % HI teachers | 0.25\*\*\* | 2.64 | -0.11 | -1.07 | 0.03 | 0.18 | 0.01 | 0.03 | -0.27 | -0.98 | 0.99\*\*\* | 3.57 |
| % Hisp. Asst. principals | 0.13\*\*\* | 2.89 | 0.16\*\*\* | 3.42 | 0.03 | 0.38 | 0.04 | 0.58 | -0.08 | -0.62 | -0.21 | -1.62 |
| % Hisp. Administrators | 0.06\*\* | 2.20 | 0.09\*\*\* | 2.83 | 0.01 | 0.22 | -0.01 | -0.21 | -0.12 | -1.38 | -0.03 | -0.38 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| % white teachers | -0.18\*\* | -2.28 | -0.43\*\*\* | -5.13 | 0.13 | 0.99 | 0.07 | 0.55 | 0.05 | 0.22 | 1.26\*\*\* | 5.44 |
| % white asst. principals | 0.05 | 1.07 | 0.20\*\*\* | 4.35 | 0.04 | 0.59 | 0.01 | 0.22 | 0.00 | 0.03 | -0.25\*\* | -2.05 |
| % white administrators | 0.00 | 0.03 | 0.08\*\*\* | 2.99 | -0.08 | -1.80 | -0.01 | -0.29 | 0.03 | 0.34 | -0.01 | -0.11 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| % female teachers | 0.14\*\*\* | 4.20 | -0.11\*\*\* | -2.98 | -0.09 | -1.59 | -0.10 | -1.79 | 0.80\*\*\* | 8.21 | -0.71\*\*\* | -7.27 |
| % female asst. principals | -0.01 | -0.71 | 0.02 | 1.67 | 0.00 | 0.18 | 0.00 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 1.37 | -0.05 | -1.50 |
| % female administrators | 0.03 | 1.18 | -0.10\*\*\* | -3.92 | 0.11\*\*\* | 2.93 | -0.01 | -0.38 | 0.04 | 0.58 | -0.08 | -1.19 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| % children in poverty | 0.05 | 1.45 | 0.07\*\* | 2.02 | 0.14\*\*\* | 2.62 | 0.08 | 1.59 | -0.16\* | -1.71 | -0.20\*\* | -2.23 |
| Enrollment | 0.00 | 1.37 | -0.00 | -0.55 | -0.00 | -0.68 | -0.00 | -1.42 | 0.00 | 1.13 | -0.00 | -0.07 |
| South | -0.00 | -0.58 | -0.01 | -0.94 | -0.01 | -0.95 | 0.01 | 0.67 | -0.02 | -0.94 | 0.03 | 1.58 |
| Salary/wages per pupil | 0.00\*\*\* | 3.08 | -0.00\* | -1.77 | 0.00\*\*\* | 4.24 | 0.00\*\*\* | 3.50 | -0.00\*\* | -2.56 | -0.00\*\* | -2.20 |
| Urbanization | 0.00 | 0.48 | 0.00 | 0.45 | -0.00\*\* | -2.29 | -0.00 | -1.03 | -0.00 | -1.09 | 0.00\*\*\* | 2.76 |
| Gini index | -0.00 | -0.17 | 0.00 | 1.34 | 0.00 | 1.09 | -0.00 | -0.07 | -0.00 | -1.06 | 0.00 | 0.14 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Degrees of freedom | 613 | | 613 | | 613 | | 613 | | 613 | | 613 | |
| Adjusted R Squared | 0.50 | | 0.34 | | 0.66 | | 0.22 | | 0.34 | | 0.33 | |

Note: \**p*<.10; \*\**p*<.05; \*\*\**p*<.01 (two-tailed test). The dependent variable is the number of principals in the sex-ethnic group in the school district divided by the total number of principals in the school district.

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1. Specifically, given our focus on public bureaucracies, we attend to the intersection of gender and race only. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These data were obtained subject to provisions of an Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Agreement authorized by the federal government. The terms of the agreement explicitly prohibit (1) sharing of data and (2) discussion or publication of empirical analysis that permits individual school districts to be identified. Only summary statistics may be reported or discussed. Replication of parts of the analysis can be accomplished by (1) executing an IPA Agreement and (2) obtaining the requisite data from the EEOC. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Officials, administrators, and managersare occupations requiring administrative personnel who set broad policies, exercise overall responsibility for execution of these policies, or direct individual departments or special phases of the school system, or district or school operations. Included in this category are superintendent of schools; deputy, associate, and assistant superintendent of schools; school business officials; directors and administrators of district-wide programs; and other professional administrative staff. Principals are staff members performing the assigned activities of the administrative head of their respective schools (not school systems or districts) to whom has been delegated responsibility for the coordination and direction of the activities. Assistant principals (teaching) are staff members who in addition to assisting the head of a school (normally the principal) in directing and managing schools are also engaged in instructing pupils in classroom situations. Assistant principals (non-teaching) are staff members who perform only the professional activities of assisting the head of a school (normally the principal) in directing and managing a school. Classroom teachers are staff members assigned the professional activities of instructing pupils in classroom situations for which daily pupil attendance figures for the school system are kept. Included in this category are music, band, physical education, and home economics teachers, etc., as classroom teachers if they teach full-time at a school campus. Classroom teachers are reported separately for elementary, secondary, or other, using the local school system’s definition of elementary and secondary (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Form 168A, various years). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)