

St. Cloud State University

The Repository at St. Cloud State

Culminating Projects in Education
Administration and Leadership

Department of Educational Leadership and
Higher Education

8-2024

Obstacles Women of Color Encounter as Educational Leaders and The Successful Pathway Leading to The Superintendency

Juanita Tamez

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad_etds

Recommended Citation

Tamez, Juanita, "Obstacles Women of Color Encounter as Educational Leaders and The Successful Pathway Leading to The Superintendency" (2024). *Culminating Projects in Education Administration and Leadership*. 122.

https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad_etds/122

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Educational Leadership and Higher Education at The Repository at St. Cloud State. It has been accepted for inclusion in Culminating Projects in Education Administration and Leadership by an authorized administrator of The Repository at St. Cloud State. For more information, please contact tdsteman@stcloudstate.edu.

**Obstacles Women of Color Encounter as Educational Leaders and The Successful Pathway
Leading to The Superintendency**

by

Juanita Tamez

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in Educational Administration and Leadership

August 2024

Dissertation Committee:

John Eller, Chairperson

Steve Emerson

David O. Lund

Kim Hiel

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify select Minnesota women of color superintendents. (1) Report on the obstacles and challenges they encounter, essential leadership characteristics, identify needs, policies, develop regulations, manage the day-to-day operation of the district while examining the successful pathway to the superintendency. (2) To analyze how select Minnesota woman of color superintendents' personal beliefs and attributes align with being responsible for monitoring projects' development, ensuring deadlines, quotas, how outputs are being met while encountering challenges as well as showing leadership skills as superintendents. (3) Provide current and future school administrators with communication, team building, operational flexibility, instructional knowledge and problem-solving strategies through obstacles they face and do so successfully as educational school leaders. These select Minnesota women of color superintendents were selected to participate in the study from a recommended list of superintendents who are successful educational leaders in the role of the superintendency. Data was collected in the form of semi structured in-depth interviews. The findings from the study identified the strategies, essential leadership characteristics considered necessary described by the selected women of color superintendents were cooperating, innovation, communication, and detailed resolutions through barriers enabled successful outcomes.

According to Superville “Like other district leaders, female district leaders of color education experiences are rooted in the classroom, the building level, and district support positions. Among a range of options, they were more likely to select classroom teacher, principal, district-level coordinator or supervisor, and associate superintendent or deputy superintendent among their past professional experiences than they were to pick a non-teaching role such as counselor or the military” (Superville, 2023, p. 1).

Women of color superintendents are devoted, and all students are their focus since they occupied the classrooms as teachers. They continue to support the students and the schools whether they are principals, coordinators, supervisors, associate or deputy superintendents. They are educational leaders with strategies that address challenges, their actions promote problem solving techniques, and their female perspectives encourage teamwork as leaders. Women of color superintendents enact positive, lasting change that benefits the lives of students, teachers and administrators. Women of color superintendents are on the rise as they are committed to improving the school environment and fostering student learning.

Acknowledgment

I am truly blessed and thankful to our Jesus Lord Father above. I am forever grateful to my mom for constantly reminding me of the importance of an education and my extended family for encouraging me to keep going in my educational path. I am thankful to my husband Emilio Sr. who has supported me throughout my educational journey, to my wonderful children Elizabeth Ember, Kassandra Karrie, Daisy Deanna, Breana Brandi, Emilio Jr., as well as my grandchildren Armani Gabriel and Raelynn Skye for the constant patience filled with love, they all gave me while I walked this extremely rewarding path of accomplishment in my career as an educator. I am appreciative to my brother Mario that through long distance communication prayed for my successful pathway in achieving such an enormous accomplishment in my career. Thanks to the Rivera and Tamez Familia for the words of encouragement that helped me to keep going and realizing that I could achieve this high-level goal in educational studies.

To my friends, coworkers and supportive professionals that I met while working on my studies whose words of encouragement brought me closer to my goals. I have been working hard throughout the years to inspire my children, my grandchildren, my family and every student out there that looks for guidance. I want to inspire others to get an education, that we all are equal in everything, that all can succeed in fulfilling their goals because if we dream it, we can make it come true. During my educational journey I came across many students that looked at me for guidance and support. If I can be a role model to them that would be such a rewarding gift, especially students that come from other countries who need someone to pave the road for them from start to finish. Nothing is so big that with support from teachers, principals and superintendents all students can climb up that ladder of achievement. Students need a valuable education and as educators we can encourage them to believe in themselves, so if you believe it,

you can achieve it. As an educator, I look forward to assisting all students that they may achieve their dreams and be successful in their future careers.

I want to express my gratitude to my Advisor/Chairman Professor Dr. John Eller for his assistance in my dissertation journey as he guided me through the many steps in my writing process and his continuation of support throughout my years as a doctoral student. Dr. Eller inspired me through his countless teachings that through hard work your writing will turn into drafts, then into chapters and finally when everything is finished, I will have reached that mountain with my research accomplishment and be called Dr. Tamez. Many thanks to Professors Dr. Steven Emerson and Dr. Dave Lund for all their valuable much appreciated guidance during my writing process in helping me achieve my goals. Thanks to Dr. Kim Hiel superintendent of the Osseo school district whose words of encouragement and thoughtfulness helped build me up in my dissertation journey.

I am amazingly grateful to my lord father Jesus in molding me to be the best I can be in achieving my educational goals and all the achievements I have accomplished through the years. Especially for helping me climb up step by step to that mountain of hard work, dedication with patience and being able to stand at the top of that mountain as I finished my doctoral program to receive the long-awaited blessed title of Doctor in Education, Dr. Juanita R. Tamez.

Dedication

I want to dedicate this enormous high-level goal of achieving the title of Doctor in Education to my Mamita (mom) Tina Olivo in heaven as she would always encourage me to get an education if I did not want to work the fields as a migrant worker in the hot sun as it took miles to reach one point to another. Mamita, “I did it” I finished the mile, the long-awaited mile and finished my education to the highest mountain, “I did it” Mamita. To my husband Emilio Sr. who has worked countless hours every day to help me achieve my educational goals and has supported me these many years. To my children Elizabeth Ember, Kassandra Karrie, Daisy Deanna, Breana Brandi and Emilio Jr. as well as my grandchildren Armani Gabriel and Raelynn Skye that throughout the years encouraged me to keep going and helped with so many chores so I could do my studies.

To all the students that came to me for guidance and support, especially those that came from migrant families as I did. A big wonderful special shout out to my partner in writing my daughter Elizabeth Ember in this huge project that she was my second set of eyes, editor, and supported me in this dissertation journey. To my Lord father Jesus for letting me achieve this milestone in my life that only because of his blessing with guidance I have made it through and earned the title of Doctor in Education, Dr. Juanita R. Tamez.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
List of Tables	10
Chapter I: Introduction of the Study	11
History	11
Gender.....	11
Obstacles.....	12
Statement of the Problem.....	13
Purpose of the Study	13
Significance of the Study	14
Research Questions	16
Assumptions of the Study.....	17
Delimitations: Boundaries of the Study.....	17
Definition of Terms	18
Summary.....	20
Chapter II: Literature Review	23
Introduction.....	23
History	26
Gender.....	32

Chapter	Page
Obstacles.....	42
Demographics	59
Recent Demographics.....	61
Summary.....	64
Chapter III: Methodology	65
Introduction	65
Statement of the Problem.....	65
Purpose of Study.....	65
Research Questions	66
Research Methodology	67
Population	68
Pilot Testing.....	68
Instrument for Data Collection and Analysis.....	69
Treatment of Data.....	69
Procedure and Timeline.....	70
Summary.....	72
Chapter IV: Results.....	73
Introduction.....	73

Chapter	Page
Problem Statement	74
Purpose of Study	74
Research Questions	75
Study Participants.....	76
Research Design.....	77
Instrumentation.....	78
Data Analysis	78
Study Results.....	78
Summary.....	117
Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations	119
Overview	119
Purpose of the Study	119
Conclusions.....	121
Recommendations for Professional Practice.....	134
Mentoring and Coaching.....	136
Recommendations for Further Study	140
Summary.....	141
Recognition.....	147

Chapter	Page
References.....	148
Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Letter	168
Appendix B: Consent to Participate.....	170
Appendix C: Interview Guide.....	172
Appendix D: Research Instrument for Data Collection.....	174
Appendix E: Release Form for Use of Audio Recording	176
Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter	179
Appendix G: CITI Certificate	180

List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Female Statistics.....	64
2. Female Representation vs Persons of Color Representation.....	65
3. Licensed Minnesota Superintendents.....	66
4. Minnesota Female Superintendents.....	66
5. Participant Profiles.....	85

Chapter I: Introduction of the Study

History

The role of superintendent emerged ten years after public schools were established. Initially, there were no superintendents overseeing schools, state boards managed schools, followed by local lay boards, both lacking professional support. Public education falls under state authority. The Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution asserts that powers not delegated to the federal government are reserved for the states or the people. Education was not specified in the Constitution, so when the demand for education grew, states took responsibility for it (Houston, 2023).

State legislatures initially passed laws and provided limited funding to support local education efforts. By the early nineteenth century, legislators recognized the necessary requirement for financial oversight and established volunteer committees to monitor the use of state funds. These committees in time evolved into formal state and local boards of education. Massachusetts, recognized for its influential educator Horace Mann, still refers to its school boards as “school committees”. As more communities received funding, the workload for local committees became swamped. As a result, states appointed paid officials to manage accounting for education funds and handle growing administrative duties. New York made history by appointing the first state superintendent in 1812, marking the beginning of a full-time position dedicated to overseeing state educational responsibilities (Houston, 2023).

Gender

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), 76% of public-school teachers are women. However, data from the School Superintendents Association's (AASA) 2020 Decennial Report indicate that only about 27% of superintendents are female. This reflects

a modest increase of less than 3% in female superintendents over the past decade (from 24.1% to 26.68% in 2020). Given that the teaching profession is primarily female, with 76% of teachers being women, it raises the question of why this does not translate into a similarly high characterization of women in educational leadership roles, such as superintendents. Despite some progress over the last 10 years, achieving full parity between men and women in the superintendency remains a significant challenge (Drake, 2023, p. 27).

Tinsley and Ely (2018) contended that the inconsistency in the workplace experiences between men and women are not attributable to inherent gender traits, but rather stem from organizational structures, company practices, and patterns of interaction that systematically position men and women differently (p. 115). This viewpoint aligns with Joan Acker's (1990) systematic feminist theory of organization, which forms the theoretical basis for this study. These organizational structures, practices, and interaction designs can be challenging to articulate because they are set in societal perceptions of gender and entrenched norms. Often, these dynamics remain unspoken and are not openly discussed (Drake, 2023, p. 27).

Obstacles

In a 2015 study titled "Women in Business and Management: Gaining Momentum" by the International Labour Organization, women identified various barriers to their own leadership roles, including discrimination and senseless gender bias. These barriers encompass societal expectations regarding the roles of men and women, the prevailing perception that management is predominantly a male domain, masculine corporate cultures, stereotypes against women, and gender biases in recruitment and progression (International Labour Organization, 2017). The study highlights that unconscious bias is deeply ingrained in traditional workplace norms and

poses a significant challenge for women globally, contributing to a range of barriers they encounter in pursuing leadership positions (Drake & Ny, 2023).

Educators of color, as indicated through interviews and external sources, describe encountering racism, discrimination, and microaggressions in their workplaces, which significantly complicate their roles as leaders and may deter them from pursuing superintendent positions. The superintendent's position is closely overseen by the community through elected school committees, leading to intensified political scrutiny that raises the challenges of the job. One superintendent, a woman of color, expressed a sentiment shared by many, stating, "Educators of color would rather have a secure job as a union teacher in a district than take on a superintendent role where one public mistake could lead to dismissal." This perception reflects a broader unwillingness among people of color to aspire to the superintendency, influenced by systemic biases and cultural barriers emerging from both the community and school committees. (Women's Power Gap, 2021, p. 14).

Statement of the Problem

In reviewing the literature limited research was found about the obstacle's Women of Color experience and their successful pathways to the superintendent role.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is intended to examine Women of Color perspectives, leadership characteristics, the practices they follow as they lead themselves to a successful pathway to the superintendency through history, gender (bias) and the obstacles they experience to obtain a superintendent role. For the study success is defined as how Women of Color in superintendent roles have increased throughout history, Women of Color are obtaining the superintendent role and Women of Color surpassing the obstacles they face towards the

superintendent role. This research project is a qualitative study approach supported by existing data provided by the participants.

The focus of this qualitative study is to: (1) Evaluate Women of Color perspectives, leadership characteristics and practices they use to obtain a superintendent role, through history, gender (bias) and the obstacles they experienced to obtain a superintendent role; (2) To explore how select Women of Color personal beliefs and attributes align; and, (3) Provide current and future Women of Color superintendents with the best knowledge on the successful pathways to obtain a superintendent role.

The researcher gathered qualitative interview (zoom) data in the Spring of 2024. The study included valid documentation required for the research to proceed. The documentation in this study includes Participant Recruitment Letter, Consent to Participate Form, Interview Guide, Research Instrument for Data Collection and Photograph/Video/Audio Recording.

Significance of the Study

The study is applicable to the field of education as there is a limited amount of current research on Women of Color in the superintendent role and the successful pathway that led them to the office of the superintendency. “Data from the most recent AASA superintendency study show that the greater the levels of minority students and minority residents, the greater the likelihood the district has a superintendent of color” (Kowalski, 2013, p. 1). As the superintendent’s role continues to diversify, school districts of any given demographic may see an increase in educational leaders of many races/ethnicities. Consequently, the research study will assist as a source of comprehension and encouragement for professionals and educational leaders who pursue different strategies to expand opportunities for Women of Color leaders in educational settings to help them confront situations or their experiences.

The research studies and literature reviewed allow for different perspectives on the obstacles Women of Color encounter but offer close to nothing on the successful pathways that lead to the superintendent role. The literature on the superintendency and the present-day educational studies continue to offer little on the perspectives and accounts on Women of Color educational leaders in the superintendent role. The incidents Women of Color encounter in the path or current superintendency educational settings can provide:

1. Women of Color have the possibility to see different cultures and ethnic groups as educational leaders in a higher learning setting such as the superintendent role. “Districts led by superintendents of color attract a more diverse educator workforce and create processes for welcoming unheard community voices into district decision-making” (Woodson et al., 2022, p. 1).
2. Women of Color seek opportunities in administrative positions despite the challenges they encounter and overcome the barriers by obtaining support in their path into equality. “Superintendents of color, especially women superintendents, reported incidents where their physical safety was threatened. Nonetheless, superintendents of color remained resilient, and continued to leverage social connections and resources to continue in their fight for advancing education equity” (Woodson et al., 2022, p. IV).
3. “School districts need to strive for representative proportionality to females in the education field. Hunt et al. (2018) noted that companies with diverse executive teams outperform other by 21% and are more likely to be profitable (27%). Through a close analysis of the district location and typology that currently employ female superintendents, conclusions can be drawn to break down existing barriers and

- eliminate discrimination for females aspiring to the superintendency” (Beese et al., 2022, p. 61).
4. “A deep body of research demonstrates that diversity among school administrators and educators has a positive impact on academic achievement and social and emotional learning for students of color as well as their white peers (Grissom et al., 2021)” (Woodson et al., 2022, p. 1).

Research Questions

In reviewing the literature, the following research questions were created to guide this study in identifying any correlations among the obstacles Women of Color face while obtaining administrative positions such as the superintendent role.

1. What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are Women of Color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?
2. What strategies have selected superintendents who are Women of Color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?
3. What mentoring or other forms of support do selected Women of Color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?
4. What advice would select Women of Color superintendents give to peers who are seeking the position of superintendents of schools?

Assumptions of the Study

Whereas a hypothesis involves a prediction that may or may not be supported by the data, an assumption is a condition that is taken for granted, without which the research project would be pointless. Careful researchers—certainly those conducting research in an academic environment—set forth a statement of their assumptions as the bedrock upon which their study rests. (Leedy & Omford, 2015, p. 23)

Therefore, the participants interviewed for the study will provide their experiences, as they personally perceive them. It is assumed that all participants answer the interview questions openly and honestly.

In addition, the researcher identified the following assumptions for the study.

1. The sample of participants in the state of Minnesota Women of Color Superintendents study was not representative of all Minnesota School Districts or Charter Schools and staff.
2. The participants in this study have experienced some level of obstacles and challenges.
3. Women of Color Superintendents are assumed to face more challenges than their white counterparts in a superintendent role due to the lack of diverse professionals in education.

Delimitations: Boundaries of the Study

Delimitations are boundaries in a study that have been established by the researcher (Roberts, 2010). The delimitations are in the researcher's control. Delimiting factors include the choice of objectives, the research questions, variables of interest, theoretical perspectives that the researcher adopted (Roberts, 2010, as cited in Rogers, 2021, p. 17).

1. Participants in the study are limited to public school districts superintendents in the State of Minnesota. Perspectives or opinions coming from one state can be narrowed.
2. Respondents in the study may be few participants which leads to small sample size of Superintendent Women of Color.
3. The validity of the study was based on participants' honesty and self-reported perceptions of characteristics.
4. The study will focus on Women of Color in the superintendent role in predominantly white and diverse settings as participation allows in the state of Minnesota.

Definition of Terms

- ***Cultural Background:*** “Collection of mores, folkways, and institutions that constitutes the social heritage of an individual or group” (eric.ed.gov, n.d).
- ***Discrimination (gender):*** “Gender discrimination’ refers to the unequal treatment of one gender member by the other gender member, especially the male unequal treatment of women, which holds that one gender is superior to the other (Pearsall, 2001, as cited in Jingxia & Lan, 2019, p. 155)
- ***Gender Bias:*** “Prejudicial attitudes toward people because of their sex, including the conscious or unconscious expression of these attitudes in writing, speaking, etc.” (eric.ed.gov, n.d)
- ***Glass-Ceiling:*** “The participants used the glass ceiling metaphor to describe obstacles or barriers that obstruct the advancement of women and minorities in leadership and decision-making positions” (Cooper & Wilson Jones, 2023, p. 1).
- ***Instructional Leader:*** The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) frames instructional leadership in terms of ‘leading learning communities.

In NAESP's view, instructional leaders have six roles: making student and adult learning the priority; setting high expectations for performance; gearing content and instruction to standards; creating a culture of continuous learning for adults; using multiple sources of data to assess learning; and activating the community's support for school success. (Lashway, 2002, p. 2)

- ***Latino/a:*** Culture is learned, and the social environment cultivates one's culture and shapes their identity. Gonzalez and Gandara (2005) draw distinctions between the terms Hispanic and Latino/a. They state that Latino implies the diversity and brownness among persons of Hispanic origin and 'most Latinos see themselves primarily in terms of nationalities, Mexican, Cuban and so forth' thus distinctions when referring to Hispanic groups needs to be clarified. (p. 396). (Gonzalez & Gandara, 2005, as cited in Rodriguez, 2022, p. 31)
- ***Minority:*** "Subgroups within a larger society that are distinguished from the majority and each other by race, national heritage, or sometimes by religious or cultural affiliation" (eric.ed.gov, n.d).
- ***Women of Color:*** Refer to African American, Asian American, Latina, and Native American women because research and practice suggest that women who are members of these groups are likely to share experiences related to identity, culture, and inequality (Lewis et al., 2001, p. 821).
- ***Selection Process:*** "School boards and search consultants are the primary decision-makers in the superintendent selection process, making decisions as to who gets in and who is out from the initial screening to the actual hiring process

(Glass, 2001; Hayes, 2001; Olsen, 2005; Rebore, 1984; Tallerico, 2000). (Handy, 2008, p. 4).

- ***Superintendent:*** “School superintendents work in an educational environment and are charged with delivering leadership that drives instructional programs in dynamic system (Bjork, 2009; Waters & Marzano, 2006)” (Sampson & Ridyolph, 2021, p. 8).
- ***Support Systems:*** Research indicated that support systems for aspiring women superintendents consisted of them reaching out to male superintendents to gain support and assistance (Superville, 2017 as cited in Sampson & Ridyolph, 2021, p. 2) Higginbottom and Robinson (2019) found that women superintendents often found their support from their family, staff, and community members.
(Higginbotom & Robinson, 2019 as cited in Sampson & Ridyolph, 2021, p.3)

Summary

The study will be presented in five chapters: Chapter I: Introduction of the Study, Chapter II: Review of the Literature, Chapter III: Methodology, Chapter IV: Findings, and Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations. The Review of Literature provides information on the history of superintendency, how gender plays a role in obtaining the position of superintendency and the obstacles Women of Color face in obtaining the superintendent role. Furthermore, the study aims in providing information that can analyze the factors that prevent Women of Color from obtaining the superintendent role and the successful pathways that pave the way in reaching a status in administrative positions. Finally, in expanding the research to potentially gather information that can shed light on other situations preventing Women of Color

from reaching such a status as the superintendent role and the individuals providing the support is important for the ongoing study of Women of Color in administrative positions.

Chapter I Introduction

Chapter I of the study covers purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, assumptions of the study, delimitations, and definitions of the terms. In addition, the study gives a brief overview of the history of women in the superintendency, how gender is correlated with the superintendent role and the obstacles Women of Color face in pursuing the superintendent role.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Chapter II reviews applicable literature upon which the study is based on. The literature is organized in three themes; the history of women in the superintendent role, how gender is correlated with the role, and the obstacle Women of Color face in obtaining the superintendent role.

Chapter III: Methodology

Chapter III consists of the methodology of the study including information on the qualitative method that is used in the research, the sample size, instrumentation used for the study, data collection procedures, data analysis and how the data was analyzed.

The Methodology of this study aims at a qualitative zoom(interview)to obtain information from Women of Color in the superintendent role. The obstacles they faced or other factors preventing Women of Color from reaching the superintendent role and the support they received that paved their way into that role.

Chapter IV: Findings-In Continuation

Chapter IV discloses the findings of the study. The results derived from the research revealed the obstacles faced by Women of Color and the data gathered was aligned to each specific question. The results were obtained from one qualitative measure which included a recorded zoom one on one interview session. The interview sessions were limited to an hour. The zoom interview format included open-ended questions that permitted in depth discussions and possible validations with research found in the literature review.

There were four main research questions, and each had sub-questions posed to each study participant and elaborated prompts to encourage participants' engagement in revealing as much information pertaining to their experiences as possible.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations-In Continuation

This chapter presents a summary of the study, and conclusions formulated from the data presented in Chapter IV. The purpose of the chapter is to provide conclusions and discussions from the study results. Additionally, the research provided a concluding statement that provides context to the research and prepares future researchers for further study of Women of Color in superintendent roles. The findings contribute to broadening the discourse and informing the field of educational leadership of the perspectives and challenges facing Women of Color in the superintendent role as they navigate their way through a successful superintendency.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to examine the obstacles and successful pathways reported by a group of Women of Color participants who work or are in their path to the superintendent role where their race is not highly represented in the administrative position work culture. The study provides a relative analysis of the obstacles, and the successful paths disclose by the study participants as well as their point of view on race and its impact on their superintendent role. It is expected that the study can contribute applicable research to the field of administrative positions such as the superintendent role, provide insights for other racially secluded Women of Color seeking employment opportunities in a school district setting where their race is not highly representative in the dominant school district setting, and offer suggestions for needed support for the racially secluded Women of Color.

The literature review is organized to support the research questions identified in this study:

1. What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are Women of Color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?
2. What strategies have selected superintendents who are Women of Color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?
3. What mentoring or other forms of support do selected Women of Color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?

4. What advice would select Women of Color superintendents give to peers who are seeing the position of superintendents of schools?

Part I: Historical Literature

Part I. The literature provides information on the historical insights of the superintendency and how the position developed over time. Historical accounts in the literature mentioned how the superintendency evolved in the 1890s. “Historical evidence suggests that the superintendents’ role as teacher-scholar emerged during the 1890s and was aligned closely with them being viewed as a master teacher (Callahan, 1962 as cited in Björk & et al., 2016, p. 124).

Part II: Literature on Gender

Part II. The literature describes gender perspectives and how women are entering administrative positions despite how the male dominant culture in the superintendency is largely represented. “Superintendents in U.S. school districts are the chief executive officers, and the majority of school superintendents remain predominantly male.” There has been an increase in the number of women superintendents in the United States with 13% identified in 2000 to 24% in 2014 (Glass, 2000 & Kowalski et al., 2011, as cited in Sampson & Ridyolph, 2021, p. 1).

Part III: Literature on Obstacles

Part III. The literature provides information on the obstacles Women of Color face and the lack of support they need to rise to a higher position such as the superintendency. “Women who aspire to the superintendency are often confronted with challenges from the start.” Research has found that women often lack the social networks that help many men find these positions (Bollinger & Grady, n.d., p. 48).

Part IV: Remaining Literature on Demographics: Percentages

Part IV. The remaining literature provides information on the demographics and the percentages people of color represent. Especially how Women of Color are underrepresented. As Alston (2005) explains, “In these United States, persons of color represent 10.9% of the nation’s teachers, 12.3% of the nation’s principals, but only 2.2% of the nation’s superintendents. Women and persons of color, nevertheless, go largely underrepresented as superintendents” (p. 675).

As an educational leader and an intern in a superintendent program, I know that the superintendent as chief decision-maker of a school district constantly deals with problems daily. As schools become more diverse, superintendents of color can be beneficial in handling issues where students of color are on the rise. Regardless of the circumstances as school leaders having a diverse leadership environment can be supporting of the school district setting. Even the most experienced, successful superintendents would agree that leading a change process can be difficult at best, and expensive and unproductive at worst. The old saying “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it” reflects the attitude of some members within and outside of the school community. Part of the challenge of facilitating change is to convince (inspire) people that the ‘new’ or different approach is worth the time, energy, and resource investment. Even when the merits are clear, barriers to success are part of the change process. (Worner, 2010, p. 97)

Change is hard, especially for school leaders trying to make that change. Experienced superintendents understand that time spent trying to convince people to embrace change is not as effective as identifying personnel willing to take a lead role in the change process. The people who are positive and see how the change can benefit students are the very people that need to be involved in leadership roles within the school district. Committees and task forces formed to

study and plan for change are more effective and productive if led by teachers and administrators who see the change as needed, focused, and beneficial to the students. (Worner, 2010, p. 99)

The school superintendent plays one of the most influential roles in a school community; all qualified leaders should be considered, and no one individual should be excluded based on race or gender (Miura, 2022, p. 61).

History

Superintendent as Teacher-Scholar

In the 1890s the role of superintendents as teacher-scholar came into view and it was associated closely with being a master teacher (Callahan, 1962). “Their responsibilities included training and monitoring classroom teachers, supervising curriculum development, supporting learning-teaching activities, and improving student academic outcomes” (Björk et al., 2016, p. 124).

The superintendent’s role has evolved since the early 1900s and can be understood through four main functions: a) teacher-scholar, b) organizational manager, c) statesman, or democratic leader, and d) applied social scientist. Superintendent as a communicator is the fifth role added by Kowalski (2005) that is being used to this present day. The initial role defining the superintendent position was that of a “teacher of teachers,” or as described by Callahan (1966, p. 187), “scholarly educational leaders.” This role lasted from approximately 1865 to 1910. During this period, the superintendent's primary responsibility was to serve as an educational leader who oversaw classroom instruction and curriculum. This allowed school board members to concentrate on legislative duties and the management and supervision of district operations (Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski, 1999; 2005).

These superintendents served as educators of educators, distinguished scholars, and authorities in pedagogy. They viewed themselves as educational leaders within their communities, exerting influence both within schools and among the public. The most perceptive superintendents were also diligent in managing financial matters and maintaining positive public relations (Henrikson, 2019, p. 101).

The history of the U.S. superintendency can be traced back to the late 1700s and early 1800s. As cities grew and public-school systems expanded during this period, boards of education recognized the need for specialized leadership to direct and oversee their schools. By the early 1800s, several major cities had begun considering the appointment of an educator to lead their public-school systems. In 1837, the common council of Buffalo, New York, made the first appointment of a superintendent of common schools, followed by Louisville, Kentucky, which appointed a superintendent of public schools later that year (Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 18). In recent literature, some authors discuss the history of the superintendent role, beginning with Ella Flagg, a notable figure among women superintendents who served in Chicago (Smith, 1979). Other authors note that during the era of county schools in the United States, a majority were led by women. However, after World War II, returning servicemen faced a need for employment taking the positions women held. Concurrently, male-dominated professional organizations advocated for superintendent roles to require higher education certifications, resulting in increased male dominance in the field (Blount, 1998). Consequently, women superintendents were diminished from these positions after World War II and have struggled to achieve equal representation since then. Studies in the literature also suggest that one contributing factor to the continued low numbers of women in superintendent roles is their career paths (Sampson & Ridyolph, 2021, p. 2).

A historical examination of women's roles in educational leadership reveals that some women served as superintendents. For instance, in 1910, women made up 8.9% of all superintendents, a figure that increased to 10.9% by 1930. However, significant changes in American education occurred in the following years. The Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared segregated and unequal education unconstitutional, marked a pivotal moment. The upcoming desegregation efforts in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the displacement of many Black teachers and administrators, both male and female. According to Toppo (2004), in 1954, approximately 82,000 Black teachers educated about 2 million Black children. However, in the decade following *Brown*, over 38,000 Black educators in Southern and border states lost their jobs. Many who secured new positions found themselves in subordinate roles rather than in leadership positions. For example, they were hired for janitorial jobs and not the positions they had before.

This period also saw a sharp decline in the number of women in superintendent roles, dropping to 1.3% during the 1970s and remaining low for nearly a decade. Several factors contributed to this decline, including school desegregation, the Vietnam War, and deeply rooted gender and racial biases (Jones, 2003). By the early 1990s, the percentage of women superintendents had risen to 6.6%, and by the year 2000, it had increased further to 13.2% (Brunner, 1999; Glass et al., 2000). Today, despite there being nearly 15,000 superintendents nationwide, only around 2,000 are women (Alston, 2005, p. 676).

The superintendent's role has changed over time, moving away from being primarily a custodian of schools where the board made nearly all significant policy and administrative decisions, to becoming the chief executive officer. In this evolved role, the superintendent now offers professional guidance to the board in policy development and is entrusted and empowered

to make decisions essential for implementing board policies. By the end of the 19th century, most superintendents had renounced the role of mere schoolmasters, who lacked decision-making authority, and had instead adopted the role of managing administrators responsible for the daily operations of the school district (Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 19).

During the late 19th century, school districts experienced a surge, leading superintendents' primary role as teacher-scholar to be overshadowed by managerial responsibilities (Björk et al., 2016, p. 124). In the decades following the 1983 release of the *Nation at Risk* report, which sparked national educational reform in the USA, expectations for superintendents slowly moved to align with new education policies emphasizing the importance of ensuring high levels of learning for all students.

Despite their continued managerial duties, the superintendent's role as a teacher-scholar re-emerged, furthermore with a significant change in how this role was carried out (Björk et al., 2016, p. 124). The position of the superintendent did not appear in American schools until the late 19th century. During this period, the structure of schools required a leader who could fulfill multiple roles. The superintendent was seen as the educational leader of the school district, responsible for curriculum development and student retention. Additionally, they served as the district manager, overseeing budgets, scheduling repairs, and preparing reports for the school board (Wiley et al., 2017, p. 18).

A conventional route to becoming a public-school superintendent typically involves gaining administrative and teaching experience at the secondary level, with serving as a high school principal often seen as a key milestone indicating readiness (Kim & Brunner, 2009; DiCanio et al., 2016, as cited in Grossane & Tatum, 2019, p. 13).

Superintendents undertake a notably challenging array of responsibilities including managing board relations, budgets, personnel, and enhancing district-wide academic performance (Hanover Research, 2014). Yet perhaps the most demanding aspect of their role lies in enhancing the instructional leadership of principals through effective supervision and evaluation (Björk, 1993; Rallis et al., 2006). While numerous studies have investigated the supervision and evaluation of teachers, research focusing on principals is comparatively scarce, with even less attention devoted to superintendents (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986). As Murphy and Hallinger (1986) noted, research on the superintendency remains scarce, particularly regarding the leadership role of superintendents. Over the past fifteen years, only a few studies have explored the instructional leadership role of superintendents (p. 2014). However, there is a growing body of literature supporting the concept of instructional leadership for superintendents (Björk, 1993; Petersen, 2002).

This role is evolving from a curriculum-focused model (Belden, Russonello, & Stewart, 2005; Bredeson & Kose, 2007) to one where supervising and evaluating principals plays a pivotal role (cited in Corcoran et al., 2013). Viewing the instructional leadership of superintendents through the lens of principal leadership underscores the critical need to elevate the supervision and evaluation of principals, thereby enhancing their performance and improving academic outcomes across schools (Hvidson & McKim, 2019, p. 14).

Early superintendents played an advanced role in reforming schools and preparing future school leaders. Drawing from practical experience and studying leadership and management theories, they have come up with a series of theories on school leadership. These conceptual contributions have often mirrored approaches seen in commercial and sometimes military organizations. The theory of organizational management has evolved through several stages:

from "scientific management" to the "human relations" approach, the "behavioral school" of management, the "systems approach," and more recently, a blend of "total quality," "outcomes-based education," and "campus-based management" orientations.

A shift hastened notably from the 1950s onwards, especially following the consolidation of school districts, the social and civil unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, and the financial crises of the 1980s. These events have continually shaped and influenced the evolution of educational leadership theories and practices (Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 19).

The role of superintendent of schools has evolved into a significantly more complex and demanding leadership position. Today's superintendent must effectively manage relationships with a diverse array of stakeholders including federal, state, and local courts; the local board of education; teacher and personnel unions; the press and other media outlets; the district's professional staff; students and parent groups; area universities; the state department of education; public and private funding agencies; various vendors; professional education groups; and the local community. These responsibilities underscores that the superintendence has become one of the most intricate and challenging leadership roles in American society (Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 19).

The superintendency can be segmented into three distinct historical periods. The early period commenced shortly after the inception of public education in the 1800s and continued into the early twentieth century. The professional superintendent era spanned the first half of the twentieth century and began to decline starting in the 1960s. Currently, the modern superintendency remains in a state of transition (Houston,2023).

Gender

Superintendents of U.S. school districts serve as chief executive officers, and despite some progress, most superintendents continue to be male. The representation of women in this role has increased from 13% in 2000 (Glass, 2000) to 24% in 2014 (Kowalski et al., 2011). However, the underrepresentation of women persists, prompting researchers to expand their previous studies and analyze recent dissertations from 2017 to 2020 focused on women superintendents. This ongoing research underscores the ongoing gender inequities in the superintendent position, highlighting its continued relevance and importance (Sampson & Ridyolph, 2001, p. 1).

Gender biases persist as a significant obstacle for women seeking superintendent positions in public schools (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Grogan, 1996; Tallerico, 2000). Even women of color often find gender to be a barrier than race in their pursuit of these roles (Grogan, 1996). Grogan (1996) argues that aspiring female superintendents are often perceived primarily as women rather than administrators. Negative gender stereotypes common in society creates additional obstacles for women, maintaining discriminatory practices upheld by institutional norms.

Research consistently shows that being a woman significantly increases the challenges associated with attaining a superintendent position (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2004; Montz, 2004; Tallerico and Blount, 2004). These findings underscore the enduring impact of gender biases on women's advancement in educational leadership (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2004; Montz, 2004; Tallerico and Blount, 2004 as cited in Munoz, Pankake et al., 2014, p. 768).

Research indicates that the underrepresentation of female superintendents is not due to a lack of training or experience required for success in the role. Instead, societal norms and beliefs about leadership (Shakeshaft, 1989), school board expectations (Tallerico, 2000), and shortcomings in the search and selection processes play significant roles. Issues within the selection process include school boards not actively considering female candidates, limited opportunities for career advancement, and biases among school board members who may perceive women as inadequately qualified for superintendent responsibilities. These factors collectively contribute to the persistence of gender disparities in educational leadership roles (Bernal et al., 2017, p. 43).

Female superintendents generally acquire more classroom teaching experience compared to their male counterparts (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Tallerico, 2000). This greater teaching experience often means that women enter the superintendency at an older age (Kim & Brunner, 2009). Björk et al. (2003) notes that females are more likely than males to go around the principalship. Tallerico (2000) supports this observation, attributing it to biases in principal selection processes that disadvantage women.

Consequently, many women who aspire to the superintendency transition from classroom teaching to roles such as district central office directors or coordinators. Furthermore, Björk et al. (2003) found that female superintendents often rise from district-level curricular positions rather than from roles like assistant or associate superintendents of finance or facilities. These findings underscore the distinct career paths women in educational leadership may take compared to their male counterparts, influenced by factors such as teaching experience and biases in administrative selection processes (Davis & Bowers, 2019, p. 10).

There are several additional reasons why the superintendency remains predominantly male-dominated. Discrimination against female candidates, lack of education among school boards regarding the qualifications of female candidates, challenges related to candidates' ability to relocate, and family responsibilities all contribute to these disparities (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009). Moreover, the "glass ceiling effect" serves as another significant barrier. This term describes the systemic barriers that limit women's advancement into top leadership positions, including superintendencies, despite their qualifications and capabilities. These factors collectively perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency role (Kelsey & Allen, 2014, p. 5).

Today, more than 80% of superintendents across the nation are male. Despite many teachers in classrooms being female, very few women have successfully broken through the "glass ceiling" to attain the highest positions in K-12 education (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001; Glass, 2000, as cited in Wiley et al., 2017, p. 19).

The conventional view of effective leadership has obstructed women aspiring to leadership roles in public schools (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). Blount (1998) argues that historical circumstances, such as men returning from war to occupy positions, have contributed to the underrepresentation of women in school administration. Heilman (2001) discusses the barriers women face in leadership roles through his Lack of Fit model, which highlights societal perceptions about gender suitability for specific jobs. Glass (2000) examined data from AASA's "2000 Study of the American School Superintendency" and offered further insights into why the number of female superintendents' trails behind male counterparts (Kelsey & Allene, 2014, p. 3). He suggested the following seven reasons for why there are fewer female superintendents (Glass, 2000):

1. “Women are not in positions that normally lead to the superintendency” (p. 28).

Most women are elementary teachers, and most men are secondary teachers.

According to, Glass (2000) being an elementary teacher is a disadvantage because elementary teachers have fewer opportunities for entry points into administration.

Elementary teachers must jump straight from the classroom to the principalship, whereas secondary teachers can move up the ladder as an assistant principal or as a high school department chair which puts them in a better position that may lead to the superintendency. (Kelsey & Allen, 2014, p. 3)

2. “Women are not gaining superintendent's credentials in preparation programs.” (p. 29).

Glass (2000) states that “only 10 percent of women in doctoral programs are opting to earn the superintendency credential along with their educational specialist or doctoral degree” (par. 2). Brunner and Kim (2010) have questioned the validity of Glass’s statement and believe it to be misleading. They believe the lack of women in the superintendency may not stem from the lack of credentialed women applicants but rather the need for an equitable selection process (Glass, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010, as cited in Kelsey & Allen, 2014, p. 4).

3. “Women are not as experienced or interested in district-wide fiscal management as men” (p. 29).

Glass (2000) based this reasoning on the fact that many female central-office administrators serve as instructional leaders rather than chief school business officials. Even though school boards are very interested in instructional programs and bringing up test scores, they do not want an inexperienced superintendent in fiscal management (Glass, 2000, as cited in Kelsey & Allen, 2014, p. 4).

4. “Women are not interested in the superintendency for personal reasons.” (p. 29).

According to, Glass (2000), due to traditional gender socialization women choose to spend their non-working time with family rather than on work-related issues, while men have been socialized to aspire to be a leader at work and provide for their families (Glass, 2000 as cited in Kelsey & Allen, 2014).

5. “School boards are reluctant to hire women superintendents” (p. 30).

Glass (2000) based this reason on data from the AASA’s “2000 Study of the American School Superintendency,” in which 82 percent of the woman superintendents indicated school board members do not see them as strong managers, 76% of the woman superintendents felt school boards did not view them as capable of handling district finances, and 61% of the woman superintendents felt that a glass ceiling existed in school management, which lessened their chances of being selected. Forty-three percent of the male superintendents agreed that school boards tend to view women as incapable of managing a school district (Glass, 2000, as cited in Kelsey & Allen, 2014, p. 4).

6. “Women enter the field of education for different purposes than men” (p. 31).

Women are no longer locked into nursing or education careers. Because more opportunities are being made available for women in more lucrative professions women may enter the teaching profession wanting to be teachers, not administrators (Glass, 2000, as cited in Kelsey & Allen, 2014, p. 4).

7. “Women enter education administration too late” (p. 31).

According to, Glass (2000), “There are three positions to move through to the superintendency (assistant principal, principal, and central-office administrator).”

Glass (2000) suggests that since women spend more years teaching in the classroom than men and often take several years out for child-rearing that by the time, they reach the central office they really do not want a new career since retirement is only a few years away (Glass, 2000, as cited in Kelsey & Allen, 2014, p. 4).

Women scholars are significantly advancing our understanding of women's experiences in aspiring to and leading school districts. Their empirical contributions not only shed light on the gendered aspects of superintendency but also enhance theoretical perspectives crucial for clarifying and defining the role (Tyack, 1990). Shakeshaft (1999), drawing on Schuster and Van Dyne's (1984) stages framework, provides valuable insights into the evolution of scholarship on women and gender in educational administration. She identifies six stages of this evolution, from documenting the absence of women to transforming theoretical frameworks, which help in situating current research and guiding future inquiries (p. 113) (Shakeshaft, 1999, Tyack, 1990, as cited in Björk, 2000, p. 7).

In 2008, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conducted an electronic survey titled "AASA Study: What's the Status of the Superintendent Pipeline?" The survey, sent to a random sample of 7,552 superintendents, achieved a response rate of 28%. Among the respondents, 85% expressed concern over the insufficient number of candidates to fill upcoming superintendent positions. To address this issue, the top two strategies identified were actively identifying and encouraging potential candidates, as well as establishing mentoring or coaching networks.

These initiatives have the potential to enhance the pool of qualified female candidates for superintendent roles (Sutton, 2008). The survey also asked respondents to identify and rank the three most significant incentives and disincentives associated with the superintendent role. The

top three incentives identified by respondents considering a career as a superintendent were the opportunity to make a difference (74%), leading learning (52%), and compensation (41%). Importantly, there were no significant differences in the ranking of incentives between male and female superintendents (Sutton, 2008, as cited in Kelsey & Allen, 2014, p. 3).

African American Women in the Superintendency

Dillard et al. (2000) pointed out the frequent exclusion of African American women's voices from social science research and practice. There is a clear imperative to explore the experiences of these women to grasp how their identities shaped by race, ethnicity, and culture influence their paths. The challenge facing African American women pursuing the superintendency is composed of their dual minority status as both African American and female (Revere, 1987). Many African American women encounter a life filled with "conflict, confusion, estrangement, isolation, and numerous unmarked beginnings and endings, false starts, and setbacks" (Fordham, 1993, p. 24) due to these intersecting identities. They often feel pressured to modify their identities to avoid being perceived as "too Black" or "too feminine" (Fordham, 1993, as cited in Wiley et al., 2017, p. 19). Despite the limited representation of Black female superintendents and the significant challenges associated with the position, those who do serve in these roles continue to confront the demands of educational leadership effectively and thrive in their positions. (Alston, 2005, p. 675).

A comprehensive review of the literature on educational leadership highlights a notable gap concerning the recruitment, retention, and specific roles of Black female superintendents (Alston, 1996, 1999; Doughty, 1980; Jones, 2003; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Moreover, there is insufficient research on the remarkable tenacity and

resilience demonstrated by Black women who successfully navigate the challenges of superintendency (Alston, 1996, 1999; Doughty, 1980; Jones, 2003; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tyack & Hansot, 1982, as cited in Alston, 2005, p. 676).

Current educational leadership literature often emphasizes the role of administrators as ethical leaders who foster learning communities and advocate for school reform. However, in urban districts, efforts to reform can sometimes conflict with initiatives aimed at building cohesive school communities. Power dynamics between school boards and superintendents often lead to disruptions in school-based initiatives, such as changing principals, reducing staff, and cutting program funding. Achieving meaningful change in city schools requires sustained commitment and collaboration from administrators and the community alike. Successful African American leaders have traditionally recognized the pivotal role of the community in fostering learning. The frequent turnover of superintendents, regardless of race or gender, undermines efforts to engage the community effectively, negotiate partnerships, and maintain stability (Murtadha-Watts, 2000, p. 613).

Latina Women in Superintendency

The number of women holding the position of school superintendent remains low, despite research indicating that leadership grounded in women's ways of knowing can promote equity and more inclusive school environments. Progress in integrating women of color into the superintendency has been particularly slow compared to other PK-12 administrative roles (Tallerico, 2000). Specifically, the representation of Latinas in superintendent roles has not kept pace with the increasing Hispanic student population. For instance, in Texas, out of 1,144 school superintendents, 911 were male, 233 were female, and only 14 were Latina (Texas State Data Center, 2018). Similarly, in California, out of 948 superintendents, 551 were male, 397 were

female, and only 17 were Latina (California Department of Education, 2018). This underrepresentation of Latina superintendents is concerning, especially given the rapidly changing demographics of schools (Tallerico, 2000; Texas State Data Center, 2018; California Department of Education, 2018, as cited in Rodriguez, 2019, p. 53).

“Claiming Forgotten Leadership”

The scarcity of Latinas in superintendent positions across the nation might give the impression that those who do attain this administrative rank are unusual. This assumption arises from several factors. Firstly, there is a prevailing stereotype regarding the capabilities and roles of Hispanic women. Secondly, historical narratives often overlook or underrepresent Latina leaders. Thirdly, academic research seldom includes minority women in studies on leadership, and even fewer studies specifically focus on this demographic group (Mendez-Morse, 2000, p. 584).

There are two primary reasons for the absence of Latinas in research studies on educational leadership. Firstly, there are relatively few researchers dedicated to studying the lives of Latinas, and within this group, there is limited focus on issues specific to minority female educational leaders. Secondly, the low representation of Latinas in administrative roles, particularly in the superintendency, contributes to their exclusion from research studies. However, the absence of Latinas from historical accounts or research studies does not imply their nonexistence. Instead, it reflects a pattern of exclusion and neglect, which overlooks and undermines the valuable contributions of Latina leaders (Mendez-Morse, 2000, p. 584).

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is prevalent in the United States, particularly within the field of education and specifically in the role of the superintendent (Young, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011).

Societal norms that prescribe behaviors for women and perceive females as the weaker gender influence women in leadership positions such as the superintendency (Young, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011; Tavis, 1992; Skrla et al., 2000, as cited in Gresham & Sampson, 2019, p. 258).

Women aspiring to the superintendency often encounter exclusion based on their gender (McLean et al., 2016). While women are prevalent in support roles such as secretary, clerk, and caregiver within educational settings, leadership positions like superintendent historically see less female representation (Acker, 2006). Although studies have shown progress in addressing unequal pay practices, gender inequality remains a significant issue in education and specifically within the role of superintendent (Acker, 2006; Glass et al., 2000).

Research underscores the persistence of gender bias in the superintendency. Whitaker (2006) found that all nine women superintendents in her study experienced gender bias, a sentiment echoed by Bañuelos (2008) in her survey of 35 women superintendents in California. Bañuelos' research revealed that these women were keenly aware of gender bias affecting both their professional roles and personal lives. Many reported feelings disrespected and having their authority challenged, and some even disclosed instances of emotional and physical mistreatment (Bañuelos, 2008). Gender was frequently cited as a topic of discussion among these women when interacting with peers, boards, and the broader community (Gresham & Sampson, 2019, p. 259).

District typology significantly influences the experiences of educational leaders, as highlighted by Dowell (2012), who observed that female superintendents generally receive lower salaries compared to their male counterparts across rural, suburban, and urban districts. This gender disparity is particularly pronounced in urban districts, where male superintendents may earn between \$135,000 and \$144,999, whereas female superintendents typically earn between

\$105,000 and \$114,999 (Dowell, 2012). These findings underscore not only the existence of a gender wage gap among superintendents but also how district typology amplifies these disparities (Miura, 2022, p. 59).

Obstacles

Barriers Women Face as Superintendents

Rhodes and Fletcher (2013) suggest that every path to leadership involves challenges. The literature considerably documents the distinct obstacles faced by women aspiring to the superintendency (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Katz, 2006; Muñoz. Mills et al., 2014). Despite these challenges, academic leadership programs often fail to customize and expand opportunities to meet the specific needs of women who aspire to leadership roles (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Katz, 2006; Muñoz. Mills et al., 2014; Petersen et al., 2008, as cited in Howard et al., 2017, p. 68).

Previous research has considerably examined the barriers women encounter when pursuing the superintendent position (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; FeKula & Roberts, 2005; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Quilantan & Ochoa, 2004; Sharpe et al., 2004). Once women attain the superintendent role, they continue to face critical challenges (Garn & Brown, 2008; Reed & Patterson, 2007; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Polka et al., 2008; VanTuyle & Watkins, 2009). Women aspiring to the superintendency often confront obstacles from the outset. Research indicates that they frequently lack the social networks that are crucial in helping many men secure these positions (Garn & Brown, 2008; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Sharp et al., 2014; Seyfried & Diamantes, 2005; VanTuyle & Watkins, 2009; Walter & Supley, 2004). This deficit is worsened by the underrepresentation of women in the field, which limits access to role models and mentors

crucial for career advancement (Garn & Brown, 2008; Muñoz Mills et al., 2014). (Bollinger & Grady, n.d., p. 48).

Research indicates that women often follow different career trajectories compared to men, frequently entering administrative positions later in their professional journeys (Bollinger & Grady, n.d., p. 48).

While it may be common for women to enter administrative roles later in their careers, research indicates they are underrepresented among superintendents (Muñoz, Mills et al., 2014). Burton and Weiner (2016) highlight that women are unequally represented in principal preparation programs. For many women, the pathway to the superintendency involves gaining leadership experience through various administrative positions (DiCanio et al., 2016). Examining the diverse pathways that female superintendents have taken can offer valuable insights for boards of education and search firms aiming to intensify the pipeline of qualified candidates for the position of public-school superintendent. (Grossane & Tatum, 2019, p. 13).

Domenech, Executive Director of the School Superintendents Association, emphasized the significant underrepresentation in school leadership roles, stating, "we are nowhere near representing the population that is in our schools" (Campbell, 2015, para. 4). He further underscored the importance of diverse representation, noting that students benefit from seeing leaders who reflect their own racial and ethnic backgrounds: "When they see a brown or black face walk into their classroom, especially as the superintendent, they think and say 'wow' that could be me" (Campbell, 2015, p. 1).

Carpenter and Diem (2014) highlight the ongoing challenges African American superintendents face in securing employment within districts. Educational theorists argue that, like principals, superintendents play a crucial role in shaping learning outcomes through the

foundation of school climate and culture. Therefore, achieving a superintendent population that mirrors the demographic diversity of the district is seen as essential for fostering optimal learning environments and enhancing student achievement (Carpenter and Diem, 2014, as cited in Jones & Korelich, n.d., p. 3).

Tozer, Senese, and Violas (2002) highlighted the persistent challenges rooted in biases related to race, gender, and culture. They observed that throughout American history, there has been a pervasive belief in inherent social, emotional, moral, or intellectual differences among national, ethnic, cultural, economic, racial, or gender groups. These beliefs are often unfounded and malevolent, serving as a basis for justifying exclusion from political, economic, or educational opportunities. This systemic bias sustains the subordination and repression of certain groups, particularly hindering women's progress towards achieving equality rather than being viewed as equals (p. 130) (Tozer et al., 2002, as cited in Brown, 2014, p. 575).

Women of color often operate within challenging educational environments, yet they bring leadership models characterized by passion and determination to ensure all children learn, despite obstacles like poverty. They actively engage in community building within school settings and larger urban areas, acting as a barrier against potentially damaging forces. Despite their long-standing leadership in urban schools, their narratives have been largely absent from change literature (Jackson, 1995; Lomotey, 1993). This omission limits our understanding of how to effectively improve public schools, particularly for children of color who are increasingly prevalent in urban settings. The political awareness of women of color is a crucial aspect that cannot be overlooked or generalized. They often play roles on both sides of the spectrum—both stabilizing and challenging existing systems. Their diverse leadership styles and perspectives on

leadership are essential subjects for study by anyone seriously interested in promoting change and stability in urban schools (Murtadha-Watts, 2000, p. 614).

School Board Choosing a Superintendent

According to scholars such as Montz (2004), obstacles facing female candidates aspiring to the superintendency include several factors. These include school boards being uncomfortable with female leadership, university programs and school board associations not actively promoting qualified female candidates, a perceived lack of critical experience and training in areas such as school finance, facilities management, and overall administration, as well as less experience in secondary school settings. Additionally, female candidates often face higher expectations compared to their male counterparts, which further makes their path more difficult in achieving the superintendency (Muñoz, Pankake et al., 2014, p. 768).

Access to female superintendents as mentors may be limited, so aspiring candidates should actively seek out a diverse range of individuals or influential figures who can assist them in building confidence, acquiring essential skills, and advocating for their advancement when opportunities arise. The broader and more supportive their network comprising individuals familiar with their capabilities and contributions—the greater their prospects of securing a superintendency position (Muñoz, Pankake et al., 2014, p. 768).

Unfortunately, these contributions may remain unnoticed unless more women are selected for available superintendent positions. Grogan (1996) argued that female candidates for the superintendency challenge traditional perspectives by bringing unique and individual approaches to the role. These approaches may involve innovative leadership techniques, reforming outdated practices, and coordinating teaching and learning over strict organizational

management. Helgesen (1990) noted that women often succeed in leadership roles by leveraging feminine strengths such as support, encouragement, teaching, open communication, seeking input from others, and fostering a positive and collegial work environment. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) suggested that women excel as interpersonal experts and are skilled networkers when provided with opportunities to do so (Copeland & Calhoun, 2014, p. 31).

Research has indicated that the underrepresentation of female superintendents is not due to a lack of necessary training or experience for the role. Instead, societal norms and beliefs about leadership (Shakeshaft, 1989), school board expectations (Tallerico, 2000), and issues within the search and selection processes play significant roles. These preferred process issues include school boards failing to consider female candidates for superintendent positions, limited mobility opportunities for women, and biases held by school board members who may perceive women as not competent or qualified for the responsibilities of the position (Glass et al., 2000). These factors collectively contribute to the continued underrepresentation of women in superintendencies despite their qualifications and capabilities (Bernal et al., 2017, p. 43).

The AASA survey (2008) identified the top three disincentives for individuals considering a career as a superintendent: funding for public schools (54%), family sacrifices (46%), and school board relations/challenges (44%). Women respondents (52%) more frequently cited family sacrifices as a disincentive compared to men (45%), while other top concerns were similarly ranked (Sutton, 2008). Despite women comprising 76.1% of educators (National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2011), reports of projected superintendent shortages (Domenech, 2010) raise questions about why more women are not hired for these roles. Heilman (2001) argues that gender bias in societal perceptions continues to hinder women from leading organizations, perpetuating stereotypes that associate leadership

with masculine traits like authority and discipline, while viewing women as emotional and collaborative (Krüger, 2008). In contrast to their male counterparts, women often lean towards smoother leadership styles, preferring delegation and collaboration (Montgomery & Growe, 2003). These factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in superintendent positions despite their prevalence in the education sector (Heilman, 2001; Montgomery & Growe, 2003; AASA, 2008; Kruger, 2008; Sutton, 2008; Domenech, 2010; as cited in Kelsey et al., 2014, p. 3).

African American Women

In Alston's (1999) article, she explored the barriers and supports that Black women encounter on their path to superintendency. Based on her research, Alston identified five major barriers that Black women ranked as significant or moderate obstacles in their pursuit of superintendent roles:

- a) Absence of an "old-boy network," support systems, or sponsorship.
- b) Lack of awareness of political maneuvers.
- c) Lack of role models.
- d) Societal attitudes that question the competency of Blacks in leadership positions.
- e) Absence of formal or informal methods for identifying Black candidates for administrative roles.

In addition, Alston (1999) found six key facilitators that Black women ranked as important in their journey toward the superintendency:

- a) Positive working relations with the school board.
- b) Effective teamwork with experienced and qualified staff and faculty.
- c) Acceptance by non-Black employers.
- d) Confidence in personal and professional capabilities.

- e) Availability of mentors or sponsors.
- f) Support and acceptance from Black administrators and teachers.

Alston's findings underscore the complex interplay of barriers and supports that influence the career trajectories of Black women aspiring to leadership roles in education. These factors highlight both the systemic challenges and the essential elements necessary to foster their advancement in educational leadership (Brunner & Peyton-Claire, 2000, p. 536).

Alston's study emphasizes the critical importance of role models and support systems for Black women pursuing and succeeding in the superintendency. However, the stark reality is that Black women are significantly underrepresented in superintendent roles, which limits their availability to serve as role models or to participate in support networks. This lack of representation perpetuates an unfair situation where aspiring Black female leaders face greater challenges in accessing mentorship and guidance that could enhance their career trajectories. Despite their small numbers, Black women in the superintendency do not go unnoticed. Their rarity among the predominantly White male cohort of superintendents often makes them stand out distinctly. This clarity can be both empowering and challenging, as they navigate environments where their presence may be noticed against the backdrop of traditional leadership structures.

Moreover, while social constructs may render Black female superintendents less visible in broader societal contexts, they are far from invisible within their own communities, districts, and families. Their contributions and leadership are recognized and valued by those they serve, highlighting the importance of diversity and representation in educational leadership (Brunner & Peyton-Claire, 2000, p. 536).

Considering the valuable attributes that women bring to the superintendency, mentoring has been identified as a crucial support mechanism. Research emphasizes the importance of positive and encouraging mentors for women in this role (Grogan & Brunner, 2007), with Glass (2000) highlighting the significant benefits derived from mentoring experiences specifically for women superintendents. Furthermore, Gilmour and Kinsella (2009) emphasize that mentors contribute to refining a superintendent's decision-making skills, while Odum (2010) underscores the pivotal roles of networking and mentoring within the superintendency circles. Mentors not only provide guidance and support but also play a vital role in helping aspiring women superintendents secure leadership positions more expediently. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) found that women who have mentors often transition into school district or school leadership roles more swiftly compared to those without mentoring support. These insights stress the critical role of mentoring in facilitating the career advancement and success of women in educational leadership, particularly in the challenging realm of the superintendency (Howard & Harris, 2014, p. 31).

The literature highlights several critical issues regarding the preparation and support of women aspiring to superintendencies. Academic leadership programs, as noted by Petersen et al. (2008), often do not adequately tailor their development opportunities to address the specific needs of women leaders in education. This gap underscores the importance of mentorship as a crucial component in the preparation and development of women superintendents (Muir, 2014). Despite women being underrepresented in educational leadership roles, researchers suggest that they are more prepared than ever to assume superintendence (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Copeland & Calhoun, 2014; Snyder & Dillon, 2012).

However, Muir (2014) and Bynum (2015) point out the lack of defined standards or formalized mentorship experiences tailored to women aspiring to superintendencies. This absence leaves much to chance in terms of which leadership topics are addressed and the productiveness of mentorship relationships. Furthermore, women often find themselves entering mentorship relationships with male mentors due to a shortage of women mentors or role models in educational leadership (Bynum, 2015). This gender disparity in mentorship can impact the support and guidance that women receive as they navigate the complexities of educational leadership and aspire to higher roles like the superintendency. In summary, while women are increasingly prepared for superintendencies, the field lacks structured mentorship programs tailored to their needs, highlighting the ongoing challenges in fostering impartial opportunities and support for women leaders in education (Howard & Harris, 2014, p. 68).

The "State of the American School Superintendency " report in 2007 highlighted significant insights into the role of mentoring in the superintendency. It revealed that 39% of superintendents nationwide had received no mentoring before assuming their roles, while 33% had benefited from mentoring by another superintendent, which aided in their transition into the superintendency. Sherman et al.'s research in 2008 underscored the crucial role of mentoring in developing confidence, leadership skills, and networking abilities.

This is particularly pertinent for women superintendents, as they often face a shortage of mentors and role models within their field. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) examined the mentoring experiences of female administrators and found that these relationships were influential in helping women attain high-level leadership positions. The effectiveness of mentoring was often enhanced when there were shared values, backgrounds, experiences, and outlooks between the mentor and mentee. Overall, these studies highlight the importance of

mentoring in supporting aspiring and current superintendents, particularly women, in navigating the challenges of educational leadership and advancing in their careers (Howard & Harris, 2014, p. 3).

Glass Ceiling

This report provides a stark depiction of the predominantly white and male-dominated landscape of K-12 education leadership in Massachusetts. It begins by examining statewide gender data within leadership roles, emphasizing the barriers that women encounter in aspiring to the superintendent position. Despite women earning 59% of all certifications to become superintendents, they make up only 39% of actual superintendents. This inconsistency suggests that the challenge lies not in the availability of qualified women (indicating no pipeline issue) but rather in systemic barriers that prevent women from breaking through to obtain superintendencies—a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "glass ceiling" (Women's Power Gap, 2021, p. 3).

Career Paths

Kim and Brunner (2009) discovered that the typical career pathway for women superintendents often starts with roles as elementary or secondary teachers, followed by positions such as club advisor, elementary principal, director or coordinator, assistant superintendent, and eventually superintendent (p. 95). They noted that a significant number of female superintendents (63%) had experience in secondary schools or both elementary and secondary settings. In contrast, only 35% had experience as secondary principals, and 57.4% held directorships in central office roles.

Women typically taught for 9.8 years before a change over into administration at around the age of 35.9 years. In comparison, male superintendents typically followed a career path

starting as secondary teachers, advancing through roles as assistant principals, principals, and finally, superintendents. This contrast suggests that many male administrators often ascend directly to the superintendency without prior experience in central office roles (Grossane & Tatum, 2019, p. 13).

The study by Derrington and Sharratt in 2009 highlighted persistent barriers that women face in aspiring to the superintendency, echoing findings from their earlier study in 1993. These barriers, largely self-imposed or stemming from societal expectations, include family responsibilities, limited mobility, and concerns about balancing career goals with raising children (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009). Women with children ranging from early childhood to high school age are notably underrepresented among superintendents. Low self-efficacy also emerges as a significant barrier among women, as identified by Muñoz, Mills et al. (2014). Women may question their capacity to handle the demands of the superintendent role, particularly in areas such as finance management where they perceive themselves lacking confidence (Dobie & Hummel, 2006).

This perception is despite their typically strong expertise in curriculum and instruction, which is increasingly valued in today's educational landscape focused on academic accountability. Moreover, the role of school board members and their search procedures presents another critical barrier. Muñoz, Mills et al. (2014) noted that school boards often view women as inadequate finance managers, thus discounting them as viable candidates for superintendent positions. Furthermore, search firms, which are commonly employed to recruit candidates, may inadvertently exclude women from consideration by using unwritten criteria that favor male candidates (Skrla et al., 2000).

Despite these documented barriers, it's important to recognize that women who do pursue and achieve the superintendency often possess unique characteristics and strengths different from their male counterparts. These include a strong foundation in instructional leadership and a focus on academic improvement, qualities that are increasingly valued in school leadership roles today. (Grensham & Sampson, 2019, p.260).

The insights from Glass (2000) and Derrington and Sharratt (2009) shed light on the unique challenges and characteristics that impact women aspiring to the superintendency.

1. **Career Pathways:** Glass identified several reasons why women face challenges in seeking superintendency. One key factor is that they may not typically hold positions that naturally lead to the superintendent's office. Throughout history, leadership roles that are considered stepping-stones to the superintendency have been dominated by men.
2. **Preparation and Interest:** Women may not always be preparing themselves for the role of superintendent, perhaps due to lack of interest or experience in certain areas such as finance, which is often considered a critical skill for superintendents.
3. **Personal Relationships:** Barriers related to personal relationships can also influence women's search for superintendency. This could include family responsibilities or societal expectations that impact their career decisions.
4. **Hiring Practices:** Glass also noted that school boards may not actively seek to hire women for superintendent positions, reflecting prejudice or preferences that favor male candidates.

5. **Changing Motivations:** Reasons why women enter the field of education leadership may differ from those in the past, perhaps affecting their trajectory towards superintendent roles.
6. **Age and Experience:** Women tend to enter administration at an older age compared to their male counterparts, which can influence their career development and the timing of their pursuit of the superintendency.

Derrington and Sharratt's study in 2009, focusing on 15 women superintendents in Indiana, highlighted that these women often have higher qualifications than their male counterparts. They also exhibited characteristics such as strong work ethic, the influence of mentors, tenacity, and independence, which contributed significantly to their success in the role. Superville's discussion in 2016 added that many women find the job of superintendent unattractive, possibly due to the demanding nature of the role or other perceived barriers. These studies generally underscore the complex array of barriers and characteristics that influence women's paths to superintendency, highlighting both the challenges they face and the unique strengths they bring to educational leadership roles (Grensham & Sampson, 2019, p. 260). The research findings on networking and mentoring for women aspiring to superintendencies provide valuable insights into the challenges and strategies employed in educational leadership:

1. **Fewer Opportunities:** Women typically have fewer mentoring and networking opportunities compared to men (Muñoz, Mills et al., 2014). This discrepancy may stem from systemic biases or historical norms in educational leadership roles.
2. **Social Support vs. Career Advancement:** Women often engage in networking more for social support rather than purely for career advancement, contrasting with men

- who tend to network strategically to enhance their career prospects (Singh et al., 2006).
3. **Dual Mentoring Approach:** Women superintendents commonly seek both male and female mentors for diverse perspectives and support (Peters, 2010). This binary mentorship approach acknowledges the value of different experiences and perspectives in leadership development.
 4. **Interest in Networking and Mentoring:** Research by Brunner and Grogan (2007) indicates that women actively pursuing superintendent roles show a stronger interest in utilizing networking and mentors compared to those not actively seeking the position. This proactive approach may enhance their preparation and readiness for leadership roles.
 5. **Reluctance and Resistance:** Some women may exhibit resistance to seek out or become mentors themselves, potentially due to various personal or professional factors (Searby & Tripses, 2006; Whitaker, 2006). Overcoming these barriers could expand networking and mentorship opportunities for aspiring women leaders.
 6. **Barriers to Seeking Superintendence:** Limited networking opportunities have been identified as a significant barrier preventing women from pursuing superintendency roles (Superville, 2016). Addressing these limitations is crucial to fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in educational leadership.

To further deepen understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by women superintendents, researchers have employed summative content analysis methodologies. This approach helps uncover recurring themes and insights from recent dissertations, providing a

comprehensive view of effective plans and areas for improvement in mentoring and networking practices within educational leadership contexts (Grensham & Sampson, 2019, p. 261).

The research highlights several critical points regarding the challenges women face in pursuing the superintendency, particularly in relation to mentoring opportunities:

1. **Glass Ceiling and Mentoring:** The existence of the glass ceiling is identified as a significant barrier that contributes to disparities between men and women in the superintendency (Haar et al., 2009; Kamler, 2006; Marina & Fonteneau, 2012). This metaphorical barrier refers to the unseen, yet powerful obstacles that prevent women and minorities from advancing to top leadership positions despite their qualifications and achievements.
2. **Peer Mentorship:** Kowalski et al. (2011) highlights that peer superintendents play a crucial role in shaping the professional practices of their colleagues. However, the predominant male composition of superintendents means that male superintendents are more likely to mentor younger males who resemble themselves (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006; Sherman, 2000). This tendency further limits the availability of female mentors for aspiring women superintendents.
3. **Gender Matching in Mentorship:** Research indicates that individuals tend to mentor those who share similar features, including gender (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). Given that superintendents are predominantly male, women aspiring to the superintendency may face challenges in finding mentors who can relate to their specific experiences and challenges.
4. **Underrepresentation in Mentoring:** The underrepresentation of women and people of color in mentoring relationships within educational leadership contexts worsen the

barriers they face (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Derrington & Sharrett, 2009; Gilmour & Kinsella, 2009; Katz, 2006). This lack of diverse mentorship opportunities limits the professional development and career advancement prospects for women and minorities in educational leadership roles.

5. Implications for Women Superintendents: These findings underscore the critical need for more inclusive and intentional mentoring programs that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women and people of color aspiring to leadership positions in education. By promoting supportive mentorship relationships and dismantling barriers like the glass ceiling, educational institutions can encourage greater diversity and equity in educational leadership roles (Copeland & Calhoun, 2014, p. 31).

The quote from Brown and Irby (1995) highlights a significant career-related barrier faced by women administrators: "In responding to open-ended questions about career-related barriers, this study's group of women administrators overwhelmingly (68%) indicated that balancing career and family was among their most challenging career obstacles" (Brown & Irby, 1995, p. 22).

This finding underscores the persistent challenge that many women in educational leadership roles face—balancing the demands of their professional careers with their responsibilities and commitments to family and personal life. This barrier is often cited as a significant factor influencing career decisions, opportunities for advancement, and overall job gratification among women administrators in education. Addressing this challenge requires supportive workplace policies, flexible work arrangements, and cultural shifts within educational institutions to promote gender equity and work-life balance.

This excerpt synthesizes findings from various studies on the challenges women face in attaining and succeeding in the superintendency role within education. Here are the key points summarized:

1. **Society's Inequitable Expectations:** Bernal et al. (2017) emphasize that societal expectations regarding parenting disproportionately affect women aspiring to superintendency compared to their male counterparts.
2. **Delaying Career Due to Family Responsibilities:** Barrios (2004) and Kawaguchi (2014) found that women often delay their career advancement due to family responsibilities, which impacts their career trajectories.
3. **Postponing Entry into Superintendency:** Evans (2006) and Hoff and Mitchell (2008) report that many women postpone entering the superintendency because of family commitments. This delay often leads women to start seeking these positions later in life compared to men.
4. **Inflexible Culture of Superintendency:** Mahitivanichcha and Porrer (2006) describe the superintendency culture as inflexible, making it challenging for women to balance their family responsibilities with their professional duties.
5. **Impact on Professional Networks:** Poulin (2017) notes that family commitments can hinder women from participating fully in professional networks that are crucial for career advancement in the superintendency.
6. **Limited Job Choices Due to Commute:** Derrington and Sharratt (2009), along with Sperandio and Devdas (2015), found that family commitments lead women to apply only to districts within a reasonable commuting distance, limiting their job options in pursuing the superintendency.

7. **Self-Imposed Internal Challenges:** Barrios (2004) and Montz (2004) point out that women often struggle with lower self-confidence in their abilities compared to men, which can deter them from pursuing leadership roles like the superintendency.
8. **Desire for Work-Life Balance:** Allred et al. (2017) and Brenneman (2016) suggest that many women desire a healthier work-life balance than they perceive possible in the superintendency. This desire for balance can create tension and discourage women from pursuing or remaining in the superintendency.

These findings collectively underscore the structured challenges and barriers that women encounter in achieving leadership roles in educational administration, particularly the superintendency. Addressing these issues requires not only changes in organizational policies and practices but also broader societal shifts towards more equitable expectations and support systems for women in leadership (Strothman, 2023, p. 16).

Demographics

The tables below (Table 1 and Table 2) show the female statistics and the female representation vs persons of color representation for this study.

Table 1

Female Statistics

Category	Percentage Representation	Sources (Year)
Female Population	51%	U.S. Census (1990)
Female Teachers	65 %	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)

Female Principals	43 %	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)
School Children	51%	U. S. Department of Education (1996)
Persons of Color Population	15.9%	U.S. Census (1990)
Minority Schoolchildren	28%	U.S. Department of Education (1996)
Persons of Color Teachers	10.9 %	Alston (2005)
Persons of Color Principals	12.3 %	Alston (2005)
Persons of Color Superintendents	2.2 %	Alston (2005)
Women Superintendents (Caucasian)	91.6 %	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)
Women Superintendents (Black)	5.1 %	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)
Women Superintendents (Hispanic)	1.3 %	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)
Women Superintendents (Native American)	0.7 %	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)
Women Superintendents (Other)	0.7 %	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)

Table 2*Female Representation vs Persons of Color Representation*

Category	Female Representation (%)	Persons of Color Representation (%)	Sources
Teachers	65%	10.9%	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)
Principals	43%	12.3%	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)
Superintendents	13.2%	2.2%	Brunner & Peyton-Caire (2000)

Recent Demographics**Table 3***Licensed Minnesota Superintendents*

Category	Representation
Active Superintendent Licensures	1,564
Females	652
Males	912

Source: Female Superintendent Perceptions of Challenges in Seeking and Serving in the Position of Superintendent of Schools. Mortensen. 2019.

Table 4

Minnesota Female Superintendents

Category	Year	Percentage
2014- 2015	53/324	16%
2015- 2016	55/319	17%
2016- 2017	54/325	17%
2017- 2018	53/322	16%
2018- 2019	52/321	16%
2019- 2020	55/327	17%

Source: Female Superintendent Perceptions of Challenges in Seeking and Serving in the Position of Superintendent of Schools.

Only 8% of licensed females are practicing superintendents.

“The most successful superintendent is male, Anglo-Saxon, middle-aged, Republican, intelligent, and a good student but not ‘gifted’” (Grogan, 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999).

Keep the Focus

The role of superintendent presents formidable challenges, particularly for Women of Color. These individuals encounter numerous barriers that complicate their pursuit of such

demanding leadership positions. Meeting the rigorous requirements of the superintendent role while navigating biases associated with gender and race proves daunting. Achieving meaningful change necessitates the formation of support networks and mentorship groups among Women of Color. These initiatives cultivate confidence and provide essential guidance, enhancing their prospects for attaining superintendent roles.

Women of Color can draw motivation and inspiration from existing female leaders in higher positions, despite the inherent difficulties of the superintendency. While the role remains arduous for Women of Color, guidance and support from peers, colleagues, and mentors can facilitate success. Although significant challenges persist, the potential exists for Women of Color to ascend to superintendent positions through determination and perseverance. According to "Success in the Superintendency, Tips and Advice," effective leadership in the superintendency requires a systematic approach to organizational change. This includes planning, organizing, implementing, evaluating, and reporting to continually enhance effectiveness and efficiency. Key responsibilities involve presenting progress to the school board, securing administrator support, communicating district priorities to the public, encouraging staff development, strategically allocating resources, setting and implementing goals with timelines, evaluating policies and procedures, reporting to stakeholders, analyzing data, and conducting cost-benefit assessments. These tasks underscore the dynamic nature of the superintendent's role in driving organizational improvement and achieving educational objectives (Worner, 2010, p. 102).

Involve Others in Change

Change can be logical and justified, but it may not be embraced if those impacted by the change haven't been adequately included in its planning. (Worner, 2010, p. 102). Women of

color have progressed and are dedicated to making adaptations that eliminate barriers to advancement, thus paving the way for others to succeed.

Summary

Maienza (1986) extensively utilizes Kanter's (1977) theoretical framework to demonstrate how organizational and institutional factors impact access to the superintendency. These factors encompass sponsorship structures, opportunities (such as visibility within the educational field), power dynamics (including influential networks and alliances), and the representation balance between males and females in educational leadership, which delineates insider and outsider status. At a broader ideological and sociocultural level, Maienza identifies several variables specific to women and their administrative careers, including conflicts related to gender roles, interruptions in career participation, familial responsibilities, and gender bias. This discussion resonates with scholarship by Tyack and Hansot (1982), Chase and Bell (1990, 1994), and Grogan and Henry (1995), who explore the superintendency and the influence of gender on both its role and access. Additionally, Hudson (1991, 1994) and Ortiz (1982, 1999) investigate racial and ethnic dimensions that mirror these gender-related challenges in accessing the superintendence, addressing systemic biases, patterns of professional socialization, tokenism, and cultural exclusion (Tallerico, 2000, p. 22).

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively explore the superintendent role specifically concerning Women of Color, focusing on the obstacles they encounter in attaining and effectively performing in these high-level leadership positions. While the superintendent role is inherently challenging, this study aims to delve deeper into the unique barriers faced by Women of Color in these positions. Additionally, the research seeks to identify successful pathways and strategies that have facilitated Women of Color in achieving and thriving in administrative superintendent roles. Through this investigation, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the experiences, challenges, and pathways to success for Women of Color in educational leadership, particularly in the superintendency.

Statement of the Problem

In reviewing the literature limited research was found about the obstacles Women of Color experience and their successful pathways to the superintendent role.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to examine Women of Color perspectives, leadership characteristics, and practices as they lead themselves to a successful pathway to superintendency through history, gender (bias) and the obstacles they experience to obtain a superintendent role. For the study success is defined as how Women of Color in superintendent roles have increased throughout history, Women of Color are obtaining the superintendent role and Women of Color surpassing the obstacles they face towards the superintendent role. The research project is a qualitative study approach supported by existing data provided by the participants.

The focus of this qualitative study is to: (1) Help better understand and evaluate on Women of Color perspectives, leadership characteristics and practices they use to obtain a superintendent role, through history, gender (bias) and the obstacles they experienced to obtain a superintendent role; (2) To explore how select Women of Color personal beliefs and attributes align; and (3) Provide current and future Women of Color superintendents with the best knowledge on the successful pathways to obtain a superintendent role.

The researcher gathered qualitative interview (zoom) data in Spring of 2024. The study included valid documentation required for the research to proceed. The documentation in this study includes Participant Recruitment Letter, Consent to Participate Form, Interview Guide, Research Instrument for Data Collection and Photograph/Video/Audio Recording.

Research Questions

In reviewing the literature, the following research questions were created to guide this study in identifying any correlations among the obstacles women/Women of Color face while obtaining administrative positions such as the superintendent role.

1. What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are Women of Color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?
2. What strategies have selected superintendents who are Women of Color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?
3. What mentoring or other forms of support do select Women of Color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?

4. What advice would select Women of Color superintendents give to peers who are seeing the position of superintendents of schools?

Research Methodology

This research study will focus on the information gathered pertaining to the obstacles Women of Color face while trying to obtain a role such as the superintendent and the successful paths taken to obtain the superintendent role. For the researcher to obtain open ended questions, that ensured the researcher to ask the same questions in the same area. A qualitative semi-structure interview was conducted.

Semi- structured interviews are a widely used technique in development research. Unlike formal interviews which follow a rigid format of set questions, semi-structured interviews focus on specific themes but cover them in a controversial style they are often the best way for learning about the motivations behind people's choices and behavior, their attitudes and beliefs, and the impacts on their lives of specific policies or events.

(Raworth et al., 2012).

Study participants included select Women of Color in Minnesota public school district superintendents. The list of recommended superintendents was provided by Saint Cloud State University professors. Snowball sampling was used and is one of the most popular methods of sampling in qualitative research, central to which are the characteristics of networking and referral. Participants are active members of the Minnesota Association of Superintendents. Four select Women of Color Minnesota superintendents volunteered for the qualitative study, recommended from a list of 12 superintendents. Through this process the participants have the privilege to express their views in their own terms and the interviews provided sound and reliable qualitative data.

Population

The subjects in the study will be identified by the researcher through information provided by Women of Color superintendents, participants serving in a Minnesota public school district and committee members that assisted the researcher with possible contacts with the study. The zoom one on one interviews consisted of Women of Color superintendents' participants in an educational setting. The participants consisted of Women of Color superintendents perusing a role in the superintendent field or those who hold that position and can give account as to what obstacles they encountered or still encountering. They provided details or information that assisted in this research.

Criteria

1. Must hold a superintendent license.
2. Women of Color in the superintendent role.
3. Must be a Woman of Color in a predominately white and/or diverse settings.
4. A previous Woman of Color in the superintendent role within the last 5 years.
5. The district you are leading or have led has shown a significant school acceptance for Women of Color where diversity is not the majority.

Pilot Testing

The survey is piloted to Women of Color who are educators in administrative positions and have or striving to be a superintendent. The collection of information gathered was used to examine the reasons as to why Women of Color have many obstacles when they try to obtain superintendents positions and their successful pathways to get there. Any additional information gathered can further this research into the reasons Women of Color have such difficulty obtaining the superintendent role.

Instrument for Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using a qualitative approach in the form of one-on-one interview approach with willing participants. The researcher developed an interview instrument adapted from other researchers in similar topics and through findings in the review of literature. The interview was developed by considering the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and by an examination of the literature. Immediately after the selected participants, the researcher gained consent from the participants, providing a zoom link via email. All information collected was obtained through the zoom meeting which established questions and probes to gather data.

Treatment of Data

The data collected was conducted in zoom interview form. Each participant was contacted via email upon obtaining their contact information. Upon conducting the zoom interviews the biggest challenges to encounter were inflexibility, high return rates, inaccurate and or reliable data. In conducting the zoom interview, the researcher can encounter different trends, commonalities and differences in the responses provided by the respondents. Responses from zoom interviews were noted and collected. Following the zoom interview responses were interpreted and coded.

The zoom interview data were compiled into categories and the researcher developed a list that Women of Color discerned as their challenges in the superintendent role. The zoom interviews were coordinated from April 2024 to May 2024. After the zoom interviews were completed, data was interpreted, and coded in the stated theme of obstacles, successful paths to superintendency.

Once the coding process is completed in April-May 2024. Chapters IV and V of the dissertation will be completed in June-July 2024.

Procedure and Timeline

Procedure

Participants were initially contacted via email to generate interest and participation. In the initial email there was an explanation of confidentiality and the opportunity to opt out of the study at any time. Upon IRB approval, all study participants were contacted via email with an official invitation to participate. Upon the participants agreeing to take part in the study, the date and time for the zoom interview was emailed to be arranged. Before the zoom interview was conducted a form of consent was distributed via email.

Timeline

Introductory emails were distributed to selected participants in the month of April-May 2024. Respective emails were sent to potential participants regarding the study. The initial email was sent as an introduction letter (Appendix A) from the researcher with the explanation of the study. An additional email was sent weeks later to be forwarded to respondents who had not yet responded to initial email. The participants who are willing to participate for the interview received an email containing the following information in varying forms.

- Professional sender information
- Informative subject
- Appeal for help
- Selection criteria
- Importance of the respondent
- The usefulness of the study

- Confidential and voluntary
- Questions for interview
- Contact information
- Thank you!

Upon the participants agreed participation a zoom link was distributed via e-mail for the zoom interview along with interview questions that can help the participant prepare for the interview. Consequently, after receiving participants interview response in Spring 2024, data were interpreted and coded (Appendix B) a copy of interview questions (Appendix C). Written consent was sent before the initial zoom interview was conducted. The zoom interview was completed in the month of April-May 2024.

Data Security

Data and information gathered for this study is confidential and will be reserved in a secure location throughout the duration of the study. All zoom interview responses will be stored in an encrypted laptop with password protection. Upon awarding of the degree, all data and documentation will be deleted and destroyed.

Compensation for Participants

Participants in the study will not receive any monetary compensation or gifts. However, if each participant desires will receive an online copy of the completed dissertation upon completion.

Human Subject Approval–IRB

Prior to collecting data for the study, the researcher completed the required training involving human subjects through Saint Cloud State University using CITI Training Solution.

Summary

In summary, the qualitative study purpose is to examine the perceptions of a select group of Women of Color Superintendents in the state of Minnesota regarding challenges, the support they receive from their school district, and perspectives on race as district educational leaders. Through the study, the researcher examined the commonalities and differences Women of Color Superintendents share pertaining to obstacles they faced, and the pathways taken in their role as educational leaders. Such data collected contributed to the literature by examining what it means for Women of Color to encounter obstacles and the path that lead to a successful outcome in obtaining such a position as that of the superintendent role where the demographics of the school district is not reflective of the individual's race. The study was conducted via zoom interviews on participants regarding Women of Color whose employment is as superintendent in predominantly white or diverse educational settings.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to examine the obstacles and successful pathways Women of Color face to obtain the role of superintendent in the state of Minnesota. Through a deliberate approach, the study was intended to discover the obstacles Women of Color in superintendent roles face, how gender factors in and the successful path in obtaining the superintendent role.

The specific research questions for the study were:

1. What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are Women of Color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?
2. What strategies have selected superintendents who are Women of Color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?
3. What mentoring or other forms of support do selected Women of Color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?
4. What advice would select Women of Color superintendents give to peers who are seeking the position of superintendents of schools?

Chapter IV discloses the findings of the study. The results derived from the research revealed the obstacles faced by Women of Color and the data gathered was aligned to each specific question. The results were obtained from one qualitative measure which included a recorded zoom one on one interview session. The interview sessions were limited to an hour. The zoom interview format included open-ended questions that permitted in depth discussions and possible validations with research found in the literature review. There were four main

research questions, and each had sub-questions posed to each study participant and elaborated prompts to encourage participants' engagement in revealing as much information pertaining to their experiences as possible.

The findings were limited to the participants in the study. They are not generalizable to the population of Women of Color in a superintendent role. Given the small sample size, specific efforts have been made to maintain the anonymity of the participants as agreed upon during the consent phase of the study. Consequently, the names of the participants and group names have been changed in the presentation of the data. Each participant is identified by a pseudonym. In instances where the data could lead to possible identification of the participants, non-identifiable data were substituted in brackets.

Findings presented in Chapter IV were organized into the following sections: Problem Statement, Purpose of the Study, Research Questions, Study Participants, Research Design, Instrumentation, Data Analysis, and a Summary of the findings. Chapter IV presents the findings of the study based on the research questions developed by the researcher and derived from related literature. The qualitative study was analyzed, and findings were reported in the same sequence as the research questions were presented. Qualitative data from interviews were reported as appropriate with each question.

Problem Statement

In reviewing the literature, limited research was found about the obstacles Women of Color experience and their successful pathways to the superintendent role.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is intended to examine Women of Color perspectives, leadership characteristics, the practices they follow as they lead themselves to a successful

pathway to the superintendency through history, gender (bias) and the obstacles they experience to obtain a superintendent role. For the purpose of the study success is defined as how Women of Color in superintendent roles have increased throughout history, Women of Color are obtaining the superintendent role and Women of Color surpassing the obstacles they face towards the superintendent role. This research project is a qualitative study approach supported by existing data provided by the participants.

The focus of this qualitative study is to: (1) Help better understand, evaluate on Women of Color perspectives, leadership characteristics and practices they use to obtain a superintendent role, through history, gender (bias) and the obstacles they experienced to obtain a superintendent role; (2) To explore how select Women of Color personal beliefs and attributes align; and (3) Provide current and future Women of Color superintendents with the best knowledge on the successful pathways to obtain a superintendent role.

Research Questions

1. What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are Women of Color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?
2. What strategies have selected superintendents who are Women of Color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?
3. What mentoring or other forms of support do selected Women of Color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?
4. What advice would select Women of Color superintendents give to peers who are seeking the position of superintendents of schools?

Study Participants

The participants in the study included Women of Color in the role of the superintendency in the state of Minnesota. This study considered the perspectives of four superintendents in a Minnesota school district. Each participant understood the purpose of the study and participated on an interview basis. A sample was used to select the school district and its participants by meeting the following criteria:

1. Must hold a superintendent license.
2. Women of Color in the superintendent role.
3. Must be a Woman of Color in a predominately white and/or diverse setting.
4. Woman of Color in the superintendent role within the last 5 years.
5. The district you are leading or have led has shown a significant school acceptance for Women of Color where diversity is not the majority.

Study participants included select Women of Color in Minnesota public school district superintendents. The list of recommended superintendents was provided by Saint Cloud State University professors. Participants are active members of the Minnesota Association of Superintendents. Four select Women of Color Minnesota Superintendents volunteered for the qualitative study, recommended from a list of 12 superintendents.

Background Information on Participants

This study utilized the expertise of four Minnesota Women of Color superintendents. A brief description of these four women superintendents is listed below.

Participant one is an African American superintendent with 25 years of experience in education. She began a career in education as a teacher, principal, superintendent and is also a

faculty member at a university. The school district size is approximately 8,500 students and 32% students are of color.

Participant two is an African American superintendent with 39 years of experience in education. She has served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant director of curriculum, associate superintendent, superintendent, and has worked at a university. The school district size is approximately 7,500 students, majority students of color.

Participant three is an African American superintendent with 20 years of experience in education. She was in business before serving as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent. She serves in a suburb district of approximately 22,000 students.

Participant four is an African American superintendent with 28 years of experience in education. This superintendent is the first woman of color to serve as a superintendent in the district. She has served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent. The school district size is approximately 7,200 students.

Research Design

This research study focused on the information gathered pertaining to the obstacles Women of Color face and the successful paths taken to obtain the superintendent role. In order for the researcher to obtain open ended questions, that ensured the researcher to ask the same questions in the same area. A qualitative semi-structure interview was conducted. “Semi-structured interviews are a widely used technique in development research. Unlike formal interviews which follow a rigid format of set questions, semi-structured interviews focus on specific themes but cover them in a controversial style they are often the best way for learning about the motivations behind people’s choices and behavior, their attitudes, beliefs, and the impacts on their lives of specific policies or events” (Raworth et al., 2012).

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a qualitative approach in the form of one-on-one interview approach with willing participants. The researcher developed an interview instrument adapted from other researchers in similar topics and through findings in the review of literature. The interview was developed by considering the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and by an examination of the literature. Immediately after the selected participants, the researcher gained consent from the participants, provided a zoom link via email. All information collected was obtained through the zoom meeting with established questions and probes to gather data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included organizing the data into common themes and categories. The following procedures occurred for an analysis of the data. Interviews were completed via Zoom and then were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher used an inductive process for analysis to generate themes, display patterns, compare data and findings with the literature review and draw conclusions.

Study Results

The results of the study were intended to examine the obstacles and successful pathways Women of Color experience to obtain the superintendent role. The results of this study are reported by research questions.

Table 5 below provides a profile of each of the study's participants and how they will be identified in the research.

Table 5

Participant Profiles

Participant Pseudonym Name	Race or Ethnicity	School District Student population (approximately)	Years of Experience in Education
Participant A	African American	8,500	25 years
Participant B	African American	7,500	39 years
Participant C	African American	22,000	20 years
Participant D	African American	7,200	28 years

Research Question 1

Research question 1 consists of two interview questions. Interview question one is divided into two sections examining the obstacles Women of Color superintendents encountered while seeking the superintendency and the obstacles that inhibit their effectiveness as a superintendent. Interview question two is asking the types of support they received and from whom provided that support. Through the interview the participants are asked to rate the obstacles and support from the most helpful to the least helpful.

Research question: What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are Women of Color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?

Interview question 1: What are the support and obstacles that you as a superintendent and a Woman of Color reported to have experienced as you have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?

- a. Please share the major obstacles you encountered while seeking the superintendency.
 - i. How would you rate these obstacles most to least impactful?
- b. Please share the obstacles that inhibit your effectiveness that you currently experience as a superintendent.
 - i. How would you rate these obstacles from most to least impactful?

Interview question 2: What do you as a female superintendent Women of Color report as types and sources of support you received in seeking and maintaining the role as a school superintendent?

- a. Please share the types of support and who/what provided them to you.
 - i. Which support provided to you was the most helpful? Which were the least helpful?

Obstacles

Each superintendent experienced obstacles on their pathway to superintendency and continue to encounter obstacles as they are in the superintendent role. Through each obstacle each of these women overcame them with the help from their support system. One obstacle each superintendent had in common is they were not taken seriously.

Participant A: "Where do I start? You know, women of color, we aren't always seen as smart as other folks, and so I cannot tell you how many times I've been told that you know. My gosh, you're so articulate. Well, and I've had to come up with a response to that. Right? So, I, my response is, yeah, that's what my dissertation committee said, too, you know."

Participant B: “So a few of those barriers are not having your ideals taken seriously, not being given the opportunity to lead.”

Participant C: “You know, coming in a female, and at times like, I said, not being heard. Getting less salary than others. Maybe just really ensuring that you voice your voice in a room, and that when you're standing up strong, whether it's for your school, or whether it's for your district.”

Participant D: “Apparently, I was replacing a black female assistant principal, who according to the teachers, hadn't done well. So, then everybody thought that I was gonna do a bad job. Also, I was like, okay, that's not feeling very good, right? So, I think the opposite can be true where you feel like people don't believe in you like right now, I have a couple of board members, and I question the new board members, and I'm kind of wondering if they believe in me if they trust me, and that really does impact your sense of efficacy.”

Participant A. Participant A pathway and obstacles in becoming a superintendent as an African American woman brings out significant barriers and perceptions she has faced. In her career pathway and networking participant A started as a director of an equity collaborative, but realized this path wouldn't lead to superintendency. She transitioned to roles like Principal and Director of Curriculum Assessment Instruction as they are more reputable and aligned with superintendent preparation. Stereotypes and perceptions, participant A faced stereotypes of being too aggressive, assertive, and serious, needing to soften her demeanor. She helps other African American women navigate and own these perceptions without internalizing them. Obstacles in effectiveness, she struggled with navigating macroaggressions, which drain mental energy needed for leadership. Examples include racially intense reactions to decisions like canceling school for a snow day. Coping mechanisms participant, A uses are meditation, prayer, and

journaling to maintain focus and strength amongst the negativity and challenges. She remains dedicated to ensuring the children's success despite personal and professional obstacles.

Validation and recognition, participant A highlights her background in math as an asset but takes notice of low initial expectations until she proves herself. She questions the idea that validation should depend on educational disciplines (such as mathematics versus physical education).

Participant A: "I shouldn't have had to have been a math teacher to be validated, because I know a lot of superintendents who are physical education teachers, and they are validated as leaders, you know." Impactful obstacles participant A came across in her early career were challenges with competence in finance that significantly impacted her leadership journey. Currently, participant A questions about decisions like calling a snow day have lesser impact but still affect her experience.

Participant A's story emphasizes the systemic challenges and personal strength required for African American women pursuing superintendency roles in education. Her experiences focus on the need for addressing racial and gender biases while advocating for diverse leadership and supportive networks within educational systems.

Participant B. Participant B path as a superintendent, an African American woman in a unique community setting, points out several key points and challenges she has encountered. Community and background participant B became a superintendent in a community where women held prominent leadership roles such as the Mayor, City Administrator, Chamber of Commerce Leader and Police Chief. She also attended an all-girls high school, contributing to her perspective and leadership approach. Challenges participant B faced is she overcame challenges of not having her ideals taken seriously and initially not being given opportunities to lead. She recognized the persistence and support she received, such as being encouraged into

administration by a principal. Perceptions and obstacles, she addresses the enduring prejudice against women in leadership positions, referencing a national survey in which 30% of respondents believe women should not assume leadership roles.

Participant B describes the challenge of matching her skill set with the expectations of school boards, which impacted her early attempts at securing superintendent roles. Intersectionality of race and gender, participant B acknowledges the intersectional challenges of race and gender, questioning whether perceptions of her leadership capabilities come from being a woman, African American, or outsider to Minnesota culture. Participant B uses strategies like self-advocacy, leading with questions, and addressing issues directly when evidence calls for it. Current obstacles she faces are challenges related to limited resources in public school systems, particularly during budgeting periods. She partners with the board and county to strategically manage resources and support student, and staff needs effectively. Participant B rated the impactful and less impactful obstacles as budgetary concerns, including securing and managing budgets, are the most impactful obstacles she faces. Family and community support, although important, are less concerning due to positive survey results indicating satisfaction with education.

Participant B story highlights resilience, strategic thinking, and the ongoing challenges faced by African American women superintendents, emphasizing the need for equitable support and recognition in leadership roles within educational systems. Her experiences underscore the complexities of navigating systemic barriers while striving for educational equity and excellence.

Participant C. Participant C experience as a superintendent, an African American woman focuses on several obstacles she has encountered in her career. Obstacles in education and superintendent path, she faced challenges of her voice not being heard or valued, especially in

male-dominated spaces like the superintendency. Participant C faced stereotypes like being perceived as the Angry Black Woman when advocating strongly for her school or district. Participant C raised the issue of intersectionality challenges; she experienced intersectional challenges of race and gender, where her contributions were sometimes overlooked or credited differently based on gender. Systemic barriers participant C noted were barriers in the hiring process for superintendents, where networks and connections played a significant role, often disadvantageous to Women of Color. She highlighted the lack of representation in candidate pools selected by third-party agencies, which often favored male candidates.

Participant C rated the impactful and less impactful obstacles. She identified the most impactful obstacle as ensuring coherence and alignment among staff towards the district's vision and goals. The least impactful obstacle was not having the specific education and training typically required for the position, as she found support and mentorship to bridge gaps in experience. Effectiveness as a superintendent, participant C emphasized the importance of clarity in vision and expectations for effective teamwork and district success. She advocated for the inclusion and alignment of all staff members to achieve shared goals, highlighting the critical role of every individual in the system.

Participant C story underscores the challenges of systemic bias and the importance of resilience, strategic networking, and fostering inclusive leadership practices in educational settings. Her experiences illuminate the ongoing need for equity and representation in educational leadership roles, particularly for Women of Color facing unique barriers in their career advancement.

Participant D. Participant D experienced and reflects as an African American woman superintendent, obstacles she faced. Participant D highlighted feeling isolated in her role,

especially when perceptions and doubts about her abilities persisted due to predecessor perceptions or external biases. This isolation impacted her confidence and effectiveness as a leader. Challenges in hiring and matching, she faced obstacles during the hiring process, where matching her skills and vision with a district's needs was complex. This included navigating interview processes and being evaluated by boards unfamiliar with her background, leading to uncertainties and biases. Management of people and resources, managing staff who may not perform effectively posed a significant challenge.

Participant D emphasized the delicate balance between empowerment and oversight, critical for maintaining accountability and achieving district goals. Resource constraints in public schools, exacerbated by budget cuts and inflation, further inhibit her effectiveness. These financial limitations forced her to innovate while facing skepticism and misunderstanding from stakeholders unfamiliar with school finance complexities. Systemic resistance to change. Participant D noted the established nature of educational systems, which resist change due to compliance-driven structures and established practices. Effecting meaningful change required navigating these bureaucratic challenges and interconnected dependencies across various areas of district operations. Impact on leadership effectiveness these obstacles collectively impacted her leadership effectiveness, requiring continuous adaptation, resilience, and strategic maneuvering to overcome systemic barriers and biases.

Participant D perception underscores the broader systemic and personal challenges faced by Women of Color in educational leadership roles. Her experiences highlight the need for support networks, strategic planning, and advocacy to address equity issues and foster inclusive leadership practices within school districts.

Support

Participant A. Participant A emphasizes several key points regarding the support and challenges Women of Color face in leadership roles, particularly in educational settings, depth of mentoring and sponsorship while mentoring exists, participant A notes that it often lacks depth compared to what white males, or males of color, receive. Women of Color need more than just guidance on how to do the work; they require opportunities to lead and make decisions at higher levels within organizations. Sponsorship, where someone advocates on their behalf for career opportunities, is crucial but often lacking.

Participant A highlights the discomfort Women of Color may feel in asking for such support, such as having someone call on their behalf during job applications. Preparation for leadership roles, participant A underscores the importance of preparing Women of Color for senior leadership positions, such as those in the C-suite. This involves more than taking notes in meetings; it includes actively participating in decision-making processes and gaining experience that directly translates to executive responsibilities. Personal experience and support received, as an assistant superintendent, Participant A received valuable support from her superintendent who prepared her tremendously for the business aspects of being a superintendent. This included involvement in community boards, understanding enrollment impacts, and facilities management, which bolstered her readiness for higher leadership roles.

Participant A, however, had experiences where she received minimal guidance or felt unsupported were less helpful. This lack of coaching and guidance contrasted with the proactive preparation she received from supportive leaders. Encouraging sponsorship among Women of Color, participant A advocates for Women of Color to not only seek sponsorship but also to

support each other in advancing their careers. This mutual support is crucial in overcoming systemic barriers and ensuring equitable opportunities within educational leadership.

Participant A perceptions highlight the ongoing need for more inclusive and supportive environments in educational leadership, where Women of Color are actively prepared and supported to excel in senior roles through both mentoring and sponsorship initiatives.

Participant B. Participant B highlights sources of support and reflections on her journey in educational leadership. Family and personal background, participant B draws strength from her family, which includes strong women who valued education despite facing personal challenges. Her upbringing instilled a deep respect for education and leadership roles held by women, including her great grandmother, grandmother, and mother, who each contributed to her foundational values. Professional networks and mentors, she has cultivated a strong professional network that includes mentors who were former superintendents and colleagues from various educational settings. This network provides her with day-to-day support and mentorship, enabling her to navigate challenges and seek guidance when needed.

Participant B is part of The Horsies*, a group initially formed by Black women in higher education with doctorates, later expanding to include K-12 colleagues facing similar challenges. This group offers solidarity and a platform for shared experiences and support. Support from allies, she acknowledges the different treatment she receives compared to white males in similar positions, Participant B values white allies who recognize these disparities and actively support her and other Women of Color in leadership roles. This advocacy helps in addressing systemic biases and promoting inclusivity. Educational leadership and reflections, reflecting on her educational journey.

Participant B recalls influential female leaders such as principals and superintendents who served as mentors and role models. These leaders reinforced her commitment to education and leadership, shaping her perspective on effective educational practices. Effective and ineffective support, the support Participant B finds most valuable is the practical, day-to-day assistance provided by her professional network and mentors. These relationships offer tangible guidance and serve as sounding boards for her leadership challenges. However, she finds less value in national branded professional developments that may prioritize sales pitches over genuine educational support and development opportunities.

Participant B experiences underscore the importance of supportive networks, mentorship, and advocacy in overcoming challenges faced by Women of Color in educational leadership. Her path reflects resilience, grounded in both personal conviction and communal support systems aimed at advancing equitable practices in education.

Participant C. Participant C emphasizes several key aspects of her path to superintendency and sources of support in educational leadership. Personal path and faith, participant C attributes her career path and decisions to her strong faith and belief in God's plan for her life. Despite not having a formal mentor, her Christian faith provides a guiding framework that shapes her leadership approach and decision-making. Supportive network and role models, she acknowledges the influence of women who held leadership positions before her, serving as role models and mentors indirectly through their demonstration of leadership. Witnessing their success and leadership styles provided valuable lessons and guidance. Community of support, participant C describes a strong community of support among superintendents, particularly Women of Color. This community is characterized by mutual encouragement, readiness to aid, and a willingness to share experiences and advice. They ensure

there is always someone available to offer guidance or brainstorm solutions for various challenges encountered in the role.

Participant C explains the types of support she received, practical support among colleagues includes frequent phone calls discussing a wide range of topics from finance to behavioral issues, where superintendents exchange ideas and strategies. Additionally, staying informed through continuous learning, whether through legislative updates or professional organizations like MASA (Minnesota Association of School Administrators), MSBA (Minnesota School Boards Association), and AMSD (Association of Metropolitan School Districts), plays a crucial role in her professional development. Evaluation of support, the support that participant C finds most beneficial is the direct communication and collaboration with colleagues. These interactions provide real-world examples and actionable advice that directly impact her decision-making and leadership effectiveness. On the other hand, while books provide valuable information, Participant C finds them less helpful over time due to repetition and similarity in content. However, she acknowledges their initial value and advises being selective in reading to align with one's specific vision and leadership approach.

Participant C underscores the importance of faith, community support, and continuous learning in navigating the challenges of educational leadership, particularly for Women of Color. Her reliance on a supportive network and practical advice highlights strategies for resilience and effective leadership in demanding educational environments.

Participant D. Participant D identifies several key sources of support that have been integral to her role as a superintendent. Seven-member Cohesive Board, participant D rates her seven-member cohesive, student-centered superintendent board as the most helpful source of support. She highlights their effectiveness and the realization that they provide significant

motivation and support, especially in times of change or challenge. Their unity and alignment with student-centered goals contribute greatly to her leadership.

Participant D explains how close colleagues in her board are the second most helpful source of support. These colleagues likely include peers within her district or other superintendents with whom she maintains regular communication and collaboration. Their shared experiences and advice offer practical support in navigating the complexities of educational leadership. Superintendent friends, her network of superintendent friends ranks third in terms of support. This group likely provides a platform for informal discussions, sharing of ideas, and mutual support among peers facing similar challenges in their respective roles.

Participant D prioritization underscores the critical role of supportive structures within and outside the district in sustaining effective leadership. The cohesive board, close colleagues, and superintendent friends collectively contribute to her resilience, decision-making, and overall leadership effectiveness in the educational landscape.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 examined the strategies Women of Color superintendents used to overcome the obstacles they encountered when seeking a superintendent role or what strategies they used to maintain the role as a superintendent.

Research question: What strategies have selected superintendents who are Women of Color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?

Interview question: What strategies do you as a female superintendent of color report you used/initiated to overcome the obstacles you encountered while seeking and maintaining the role as school superintendent?

- a. Which of these strategies & ideas do you find most helpful?
- b. Which of these strategies and ideas do you find least helpful?

The research question was examining the strategies Women of Color superintendents used to overcome obstacles while seeking the role of the superintendent and how they maintain the role. All participants responded to the second part of the question on maintaining the superintendent position, one participant did report the strategies they used when seeking the role.

Participant A. Participant A emphasizes the importance of affinity groups as a valuable source of support and understanding in her role as a superintendent. Affinity Groups, provide Participant A with a safe space to discuss and address issues such as microaggressions and other challenges unique to Women of Color in leadership roles. These groups allow her to "let her hair down" and openly share experiences, seek advice, and strategize solutions with peers who can relate to her experiences firsthand. The mutual understanding and shared experiences in these groups make them highly effective for processing and problem-solving. Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), while MASA offers support through its network, Participant A finds herself code-switching and unable to fully express herself compared to when she interacts with her affinity group peers.

Participant A suggests that while MASA provides resources and a network, it may not fully meet her needs for authentic dialogue and support in navigating specific challenges faced by Women of Color in educational leadership. Participant A preference for affinity groups highlights the importance of tailored support systems that acknowledge and address the unique experiences and challenges of diverse leaders in education. These groups not only offer emotional support but also practical strategies that enhance leadership effectiveness and resilience in the face of systemic and cultural barriers.

Participant B. Participant B employs several effective strategies to navigate challenges and lead effectively as a superintendent. Self-Care and mindset, participant B emphasizes the importance of self-care and maintaining a strong sense of purpose and identity. Knowing oneself and staying focused helps in avoiding distractions and staying resilient amidst challenges. Handling criticism, drawing inspiration from Taylor Swift's quote, "Haters gonna Hate," participant B acknowledges that criticism is inevitable but distinguishes between constructive feedback and unwarranted negativity. She values critical feedback for growth while disregarding detractors.

Continuous Learning, recognizing the evolving needs of students, participant B stresses the necessity of continuous learning. Adapting to changing circumstances and remaining open to new ideas ensures effective leadership in education.

Participant B, team collaboration, is a pivotal lesson learned from her advisor is the importance of hiring the right people and trusting their expertise. Participant B delegates responsibility and listens to her team, leveraging their skills to address challenges collectively. Crisis management, during the unprecedented challenge of the pandemic, participant B exemplified effective crisis management. She mobilized her team swiftly, collaborated with stakeholders, and focused on leveraging expertise within the district to navigate the crisis successfully. Building trust and relationships, in times of crisis, participant B prioritized building trust and forming new relationships within her team and the community. This trust was instrumental in not only surviving but thriving amidst adversity, as evidenced by positive feedback from students and families.

Participant B approach emphasizes the significance of hope, belief, and trust as guiding principles. By embracing these values and strategies, she navigates obstacles with resilience and

ensures effective leadership that fosters positive outcomes for the district. Her commitment to continuous improvement and team collaboration serves as a blueprint for successful educational leadership in challenging times.

Participant C. Participant C, as a Woman of Color and superintendent, employs several key strategies to navigate challenges and foster a supportive environment. Authenticity and imposter syndrome, participant C emphasizes the importance of being one's authentic self, highlighting her journey of initially assimilating into a predominantly white culture and later reclaiming her identity. She rejects imposter syndrome by affirming her rightful place in any room without seeking permission, thereby encouraging others to embrace their authentic selves as well. Holding Space, a significant strategy for participant C is "Holding Space," where she creates a supportive environment for open dialogue and sharing without judgment. This approach allows her to listen actively to diverse perspectives, fostering transparency and trust within her leadership.

Participant C explains, by holding space, she ensures that everyone feels valued and heard. The Three C's: Coherence, Consistency, Connection, participant C implements the concept of the three C's—coherence, consistency, and connection—in her leadership approach. These principles aim to establish clear direction (coherence), reliability in actions and decisions (consistency), and meaningful relationships with stakeholders (connection). By embedding these values into the organizational culture, Participant C promotes unity and progress within her team. Learning and collaboration, acknowledging that leadership involves continuous learning and collaboration, Participant C avoids assuming she has all the answers. Instead, she leverages the strengths of her team and acknowledges the collective expertise present in the room. This approach fosters a culture where everyone's contributions are valued, leading to more informed

decision-making and effective problem-solving. Reflective practice, participant C's reflective practice includes recognizing past challenges and leveraging those experiences to inform her current strategies. She is strategic in protecting the well-being of her team, having experienced the impact of being undervalued herself.

Overall, Participant C leadership is characterized by authenticity, inclusivity, and a commitment to creating an environment where individuals feel empowered to contribute and thrive. Her strategies of holding space, promoting the three C's, and embracing collaborative learning contribute to her effectiveness as a superintendent, ensuring that her leadership is both impactful and supportive of her community.

Participant D. Participant D employs several effective strategies to overcome obstacles and prepare for her role as a superintendent. Leveraging support networks, when facing challenges or feeling stressed, Participant D reaches out to her support network, which includes her group of superintendents and colleagues in her cabinet. She uses these connections to discuss issues, seek advice, and learn from others' experiences. This network serves as a valuable resource for problem-solving and gaining different perspectives. Preparation and practice, participant D emphasizes the importance of thorough preparation.

Participant D mentioned, before transitioning into the role of superintendent, she engaged in extensive preparation activities such as studying the educational system, participating in role play interviews, and practicing her responses. This proactive approach helped her feel more confident and equipped to handle the demands of the position. Networking and mentorship, initially lacking a strong network of superintendents in California, Participant D recognized the value of networking and mentorship upon moving to Minnesota. She now actively engages with a supportive community of superintendents who provide guidance and insights. This network not

only supports her personally but also professionally by sharing knowledge and best practices. Balanced preparation, reflecting on her experience, participant D acknowledges the balance needed in preparation.

Participant D discussed, while thorough preparation is crucial, she cautions against over-preparing to the point where it becomes overwhelming. Over-preparation can lead to information overload and hinder the ability to prioritize key competencies and experiences effectively during interviews or in the role itself. Advice on preparation, based on her path, participant D advises aspiring superintendents to prepare thoughtfully by focusing on broad categories of knowledge and competencies. It's essential to understand the district's challenges and strengths without feeling pressured to memorize every detail. Instead, practicing with trusted peers who can provide constructive feedback is invaluable for refining one's approach.

Overall, participant D strategies highlight the importance of networking, preparation, and seeking support from peers and mentors. By leveraging these resources, she has effectively navigated challenges and prepared herself for success as a superintendent, while also recognizing the pitfalls of over-preparation and the need for balance in readiness efforts. Her path to the superintendency underscores the value of community and collaborative learning in leadership roles within the education sector.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 examines the different types of support or mentoring the superintendents received to attain and retain their position. Also, if they could tell the researcher where they found this type of support or mentoring to help other Women of Color who are in the same position find support or mentors.

Research question: What mentoring or other forms of support to selected Women of Color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?

Interview question: What mentoring or other forms of support do you as a Woman of Color report to have helped you attain and retain your position as a school superintendent?

- a. What can you tell me about this experience?
- b. Where can a Woman of Color find these types of mentoring or support?

Participant A. Participant A emphasizes the importance of authentic mentoring relationships where she can be her true self without the need for extensive code-switching. Authenticity in mentoring, for participant A, a valuable mentoring experience is one where she can bring herself into the relationship. This means being genuine and not having to alter her communication or behavior to fit perceived expectations or avoid causing offense. Trust and care, trust is crucial in mentoring relationships.

Participant A needs to feel confident that her mentor genuinely cares about her success as a superintendent. This trust extends beyond personal interest to include a genuine concern for the well-being and achievements of the families, children, and staff under her leadership. Support for success, the ideal mentor, according to Participant A, should not only be focused on her individual growth but also on her effectiveness as a leader within the educational community she serves. This holistic approach ensures that the mentoring relationship supports her professional development in ways that benefit the broader educational environment.

In summary, Participant A values mentoring relationships where authenticity and trust are central. She seeks mentors who care deeply about her success as a superintendent and are committed to supporting her leadership pathway in a manner that aligns with her values and

goals for serving students, families, and staff effectively. This approach not only enhances her personal growth but also contributes to positive outcomes within the educational institution she leads.

Participant B. Participant B describes a supportive network of superintendents that has been crucial for navigating challenges and fostering collaboration, particularly in Minnesota. Support network participant B highlights her involvement in a regional superintendent's group consisting of about 8 superintendents who are geographically close to each other. This group serves as a platform for sharing experiences, discussing challenges, and offering mutual support. Expanding support to rural areas, beyond her immediate vicinity, Participant B extends support to rural superintendents, totaling around 16 individuals from rural areas. This broader network allows for diverse perspectives and insights into different educational contexts within Minnesota. Meeting frequency and purpose, the group meets weekly for approximately 45 minutes.

Participant B explains how this regular measure was initially intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic but has since continued due to its perceived value and effectiveness in fostering collaboration and support among superintendents. Value and continuation, the experience has proven highly valuable to participant B and her colleagues, prompting them to decide to continue meeting regularly even after the pandemic. This ongoing collaboration helps them address the unique challenges faced by their respective school districts and counties. In summary, Participant B involvement in the regional superintendent's group underscores the importance of peer support, collaboration, and shared learning in educational leadership. The network not only provides emotional support during challenging times but also serves as a forum for exchanging ideas, strategies, and best practices to enhance educational outcomes across different regions of Minnesota.

Participant C. Participant C reflects on the evolution of support and allyship within the educational system, particularly noting changes over her 20-year tenure. Shift in support dynamics, participant C acknowledges a noticeable shift in the level of support available, especially for Women of Color like herself. Initially, there may have been less visible support, but over time, she has observed an increase in allies and mentors who actively support and advocate for people of color in leadership roles. Allyship and mentoring, she emphasizes the concept of allyship, noting that while she personally prefers not to use the term "allies," there are strong networks of support comprising individuals from diverse backgrounds who are committed to promoting and mentoring Women of Color in educational leadership positions. Cultural and systemic changes, according to participant C, there has been a cultural and systemic shift where more leaders are actively working to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Participant C mentions this shift spans across races, cultures, and backgrounds, indicating a broader recognition and commitment to supporting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) women in advancing their careers within educational settings. Challenges persist despite these positive changes, participant C acknowledges that challenges and resistance still exist ("you still got the craziness"), which underscores the ongoing need for advocacy, mentorship, and systemic change to create more inclusive environments.

In summary, participant C experience highlights a positive trend towards greater support and allyship for BIPOC women in educational leadership. The shift she describes reflects broader efforts within the education sector to promote diversity and empower underrepresented groups, while also recognizing the persistence of challenges that necessitate continued advocacy and support initiatives.

Participant D. Participant D describes her experience with mentoring as multifaceted and somewhat informal. Initially, when transitioning into the role of superintendent, they had a couple of mentors, notably white males, but due to geographical distance and time away, they didn't maintain those connections upon returning to Minnesota. Now, in a more senior position, she sees herself as a mentor to several women, offering sisterly advice rather than a traditional mentor-mentee relationship.

Participant D notes that she hasn't had many formal mentors, including during her entry into the role of superintendent, although she consulted with experienced individuals, viewing them more as sources of technical guidance rather than mentors. Participant D emphasizes the importance of selectively adopting insights and practices from others while developing their own leadership style and toolbox.

Prompt Question: Where can a Woman of Color Find These Types of Mentoring or Support?

Participant A. Participant A suggests that Women of Color seeking mentoring, or support can find it through affinity groups and organizations like the Minnesota Association for School Administrators. These groups typically offer resources and networks where individuals can connect with others who share similar backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, they provide access to mentors or contacts who can offer guidance and support when needed.

Participant B. Participant B highlights the resources available through the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), noting specifically that they offer a leadership group for administrators and affinity groups tailored for administrators of color. These groups serve as valuable platforms for networking, sharing experiences, and receiving support within the educational leadership community.

Participant C. Participant C emphasizes the significant support available from fellow Black individuals, noting that there is a strong community willing to offer assistance and encouragement.

Participant D. Participant D states that while she mentors several women, she does not have many mentors. Instead, she has numerous examples of how to effectively serve as a mentor and provide support to others.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 examines the advice these Women of Color superintendents had to share with other peers who are seeking a position in the superintendent role and for women who are in the position. The researcher also asked the participants if they could change anything differently, what would they change and what would they keep the same on their journey to the superintendent role.

Research question: What advice would select Women of Color superintendents give to peers who are seeking the position of superintendents of schools?

Interview question: What advice do you as a female superintendent of color provide for other Women of Color who are seeking the position of school superintendent?

- a. What advice would you offer to other females of color who are currently superintendents?
- b. If you could go back, what would you do differently? What things would you keep the same?

Participant A. Participant A stresses the importance of self-belief and confidence, especially in combating imposter syndrome. They emphasize that despite feelings of self-doubt,

it's crucial to recognize and trust in one's competence, grounded in unique skills and experiences. They advocate for humility while actively seeking out supportive resources when needed.

Participant B. Participant B emphasizes several key points for women in leadership roles in education.

Authenticity and purpose staying true to oneself and not changing to fit the expectations of a district. Knowing one's strengths, leadership philosophy, and strategies for supporting children's learning and development are crucial. Instructional leadership the importance of instructional leadership as a core responsibility, including understanding how to support teachers in enhancing student learning. Business skills recognizing that school districts operate similarly to corporations.

Participant B highlights the necessity of developing business acumen, including understanding finances. They encourage women leaders to actively learn these skills through professional development and mentorship. Continuous learning personal experience of transitioning from teaching to administration and the importance of ongoing learning, particularly in areas outside their initial expertise, such as finance. Advice for women leaders to maintain focus on their purpose and the needs of children, suggesting continuous growth and development in all aspects of leadership.

Overall, Participant B underscores the importance of authenticity, instructional leadership, business acumen, and continuous learning in navigating and succeeding in educational leadership roles.

Participant C. Participant C shares valuable advice for Women of Color in leadership roles. Self-Worth and acceptance emphasizing the importance of internal validation, participant C encourages women not to seek validation from others. They stress that one's worth and value

should come from within, not from external acceptance that can be inconsistent. Self-Care they advocate for self-care and understanding, recognizing that societal pressures often undermine self-worth. Taking care of oneself is essential to withstand challenges and negativity. Dealing with other Insecurities participant C advises not to let others' insecurities diminish one's confidence or capabilities.

Participant C highlights the strength and resilience of Women of Color and suggests focusing on self-assurance rather than arrogance. Persistence and support acknowledging the extra effort required for Women of Color, they urge against self-doubt and encourage utilizing available support networks. Seeking guidance and connections from reliable sources can provide valuable assistance. Physical and spiritual Well-being recognizing the demanding nature of leadership roles, participant C recommends maintaining physical fitness and finding spiritual practices or meditation to manage stress effectively.

Overall, Participant C's advice centers on self-reliance, resilience, leveraging support networks, and prioritizing personal well-being as critical elements for success in challenging environments.

Prompt Question: What Advice Would You Give Women of Color Who Don't Have Support or are in the Position at Work that There is No Support.

Participant C offers practical advice on building confidence and seeking mentorship. Reaching out for mentorship they encourage individuals to be proactive in seeking mentorship, even if it means reaching out beyond their immediate network. Sending a respectful email to someone admired and asking to meet for coffee or a conversation is often well-received, as people are generally willing to share their experiences and insights. Support within the BIPOC

community participant C emphasizes that BIPOC individuals are generally supportive of each other and willing to offer guidance.

Participant C stresses the importance of taking steps to connect with others in the field who can provide mentorship and help combat self-doubt. Courageous conversations having open and honest discussions with mentors or peers to address and overcome self-doubt. Engaging in these conversations can be transformative and provide valuable guidance for personal and professional growth. Persistence and timing finally, participant C acknowledges that while people may be busy at times, it's important not to be discouraged if immediate responses aren't received. Building relationships and mentorship opportunities can develop over time with persistence and continued effort.

Overall, Participant C advice underscores the importance of initiative, community support, and courage in seeking mentorship and overcoming challenges in professional development.

Prompt Question: Then Women of Color Do Support Each Other?

Participant C is affirming that individuals in Minnesota consistently offer support and mentorship opportunities. Emphasizing that this support is reliable and reiterated, speaking from her experience as a leader within the state.

Participant D. Participant D reflects on the complexities and challenges of being a superintendent, particularly as a Woman of Color in a predominantly white environment. Reflection on role and satisfaction participant C expresses mixed feelings about her seven-year tenure as a superintendent, acknowledging the significant responsibilities and sacrifices involved. While they value service over power, they highlight the difficulty of balancing the demands of the job with being an excellent mother. Navigating white majority settings participant D

discusses the challenges of authenticity and comfort as a Woman of Color in a setting where past practices and privileges may prevail.

Participant D questions whether there's enough energy in resolving or to advocate for all students effectively in such environments, while also considering how to present themselves in a way that resonates across diverse audiences. Longevity and career choices participant D advises prospective leaders to carefully consider whether they have the stamina and commitment required for the superintendent role, suggesting that there are equally important leadership positions such as assistant superintendent or principal. They emphasize the importance of personal well-being and priorities when making career decisions.

Overall, Participant D encourages thoughtful consideration of the personal and professional challenges inherent in educational leadership, particularly in roles where advocacy and resilience are crucial.

a. If You Could Go Back, What Would You Do Differently? What Things Would You Keep the Same?

Participant A. Participant A emphasizes the necessity of understanding and effectively collaborating with the board: "I believe it's crucial to grasp the dynamics of working with a board. It's about employing various strategies to guide them effectively. In this role, you act as their coach while they oversee your work. Additionally, gaining a deeper understanding of the board's background would enable more effective collaboration."

Participant A also underscores the importance of community engagement and consistency in leadership:

"I would maintain the focus on actively engaging with the community and fostering relationships. Equally important is recognizing that this position requires constant

presence and leadership. Even during challenging times, I find fulfillment in this role because of my passion for the work.”

In summary, Participant A stresses strategic board management, community engagement, and steadfast leadership as crucial elements of effective educational leadership.

Participant B. Participant B reflects on the challenges and dynamics of the Board Superintendent relationship and emphasizes community engagement:

“In hindsight, I wish I had better understood the depth of the Board-Superintendent relationship from the beginning. Initially, it was estimated that 25% of my time would be spent with board members, but it’s more like 60 or 70%. Managing relationships with seven bosses is complex and requires significant attention. If I could redo it, I would prioritize building stronger relationships with the board members early on.”

Participant B also stresses the importance of being actively present in schools and the community:

“I make it a priority to visit schools and engage with the community regularly, typically at least twice a week. It's vital not to confine oneself to the district office. For example, this afternoon, I attended our city's elementary art festival at the big theater to admire students' artwork. It's crucial to stay connected with the community and participate in events that showcase student achievements.”

In summary, Participant B highlights the evolving nature of the Board-Superintendent relationship, the necessity of proactive engagement with board members, and the importance of community involvement for effective educational leadership.

Prompt Questions: How Did You Build Relationships with the Board?

Participant B describes the strategies for maintaining communication with the board:

“I employ several strategies to ensure effective communication with the board. We schedule monthly one-on-one meetings as a regular practice. Additionally, there's an open-door policy for discussions as needed. I provide the board with a weekly update, which I learned is crucial from another superintendent. In my first year, we developed a superintendent board communications document to formalize our communication protocols. Recently, we updated this document to ensure our communication methods are clear and effective.”

In summary, Participant B emphasizes the importance of structured communication practices and continuous improvement in board relations to foster transparency and alignment in educational leadership.

Prompt Question: Is It Hard to Form Relationships at the Beginning?

Participant B explains the perspective on the relationship with the board and negotiations: “No, it wasn't difficult because these board members are integral parts of the community and are committed to serving the children. Even though they receive a stipend, their focus is on benefiting the community's kids. Six out of my seven board members are parents themselves. They have personal connections with the schools and know the teachers. This familiarity with the district is why I believe we'll overcome our current contractual disagreements. The board members are actively involved in negotiating because their own children have gone through or are currently in the district. However, I find the tension during negotiations to be challenging and unpleasant.”

In summary, Participant B emphasizes the community-oriented nature of their board members, and the personal stakes involved in negotiations due to their children's involvement in

the district. They express frustration with the tension that negotiations can bring despite the shared commitment to serving the community's children.

Participant C. Participant C spoke with a sense of melancholy about her past experiences. She noted that her challenges did not primarily involve interactions with white men, as they were not prevalent in her professional sphere. Instead, she highlighted difficulties with white females. Reflecting on her experiences, she expressed a desire to address issues more promptly in hindsight, despite her lack of fear of conflict.

Participant C explains, she admitted uncertainty about whether she sought friendship or simply support in certain situations. While this issue did impact both herself and the system, she clarified that it was not necessarily negative but did lead her to question herself mentally. Participant C explained that her practice of holding space stems from these experiences. Holding space, as she described, involves creating a supportive environment where individuals can clarify misunderstandings through open dialogue and attentive listening. She illustrated this approach with an example: "We'll hold space, and I need you to listen. I'll explain what I felt when you said this, and why it made me emotional, possibly due to my identity as a BIPOC. Then we can discuss how to move forward." Addressing such issues sooner, she emphasized, could significantly reduce stress.

Participant C also emphasized the importance of community validation. She cited an example: "Showing love to people and letting them know they matter makes a significant difference for my students." She expressed profound dedication to students, describing them as central to her work. She affirmed her commitment to maintaining student engagement and empowerment groups, valuing diverse voices at all levels within the organization. She concluded

by expressing deep appreciation for the community's support, noting its consistent and invaluable contribution to her work.

In summary, Participant C experiences have shaped her approach to conflict resolution and community engagement, highlighting the importance of addressing issues promptly and creating inclusive environments where all voices are heard and valued.

Participant D. Participant D affirmed her decisions, stating,

“I would still communicate a bold vision after collaborating with the community to shape it. I would still make changes at the Cabinet and principal levels, replacing individuals with trusted people who can perform. I would continue hiring as many people of color as possible, as I have done.”

Participant D discussed reconsidering how systems adapt to change, noting, "I would carefully evaluate how much change a system can effectively manage and absorb at any given time. I would revise how frequently I communicate with my entire audience; currently, it ranges from quarterly to monthly, depending on the situation." She emphasized the community's need for more consistent and predictable communication. "Communication has become paramount in every organization," she stressed, reflecting on its critical role. Participant D acknowledged the need for greater self-compassion, recognizing her imperfections and limitations. She mentioned prioritizing her well-being and letting go of the pressure to physically visit every school daily. Participant D "I've learned that I don't need to be present in every school every day; it's physically impossible," she remarked. "I've stopped worrying about schools not seeing me for a month; they will manage. I've started showing more compassion towards myself, acknowledging that I'm doing my best every day."

In summary, Participant D highlighted the importance of strategic change management, consistent communication, and self-compassion in educational leadership. She affirmed her commitment to diversity while recognizing the need for realistic expectations and personal well-being.

c. What Advice Would You Offer to Other Females of Color Who are Currently Superintendents?

Participant A. Participant A emphasized the importance of building a supportive network in the role of a superintendent. She highlighted that no superintendent could know everything and stressed the necessity of leveraging resources, whether human or written, to build competence in areas where one may feel less confident. She encouraged utilizing tools like YouTube videos and other educational resources. Participant A underscored that building a network is crucial because challenges in the role can become overwhelming.

Participant A acknowledged the weight of the superintendent role, noting there are times when it feels insurmountable. However, she emphasized that having a strong network and understanding one's inner strengths, whether from faith or elsewhere, can help navigate these challenges because of the impact on the students who rely on their leadership. In terms of suggestions for further research, Participant A proposed, exploring mentoring and sponsorship opportunities specifically tailored for Women of Color.

Participant A suggests investigating in pipelines and pathways to leadership roles, particularly focusing on why there is a gender disparity with females often in curriculum, assessment, and instruction roles while males tend towards operational roles. Researching the impact of gender on elementary versus secondary principal roles and how these roles differ in educational leadership. These areas of research, she implied, could provide insights into

improving support structures and addressing gender disparities within educational leadership roles.

Prompt Question: Even Though You Encountered All These Obstacles, They Did Not Stop You from Being Successful in Your Pathway to the Superintendency. Was that something that You Found Hard to Do? How Did You Manage and Can You Explain to Me More on How You Got Through Everything?

Participant A reflected on the challenges she faced in her journey towards becoming a superintendent, describing it as a very difficult path. There were moments where she questioned why she wanted to pursue this path, feeling that it shouldn't be so arduous. She observed others getting promoted without having to apply for positions, which sometimes left her feeling disheartened despite her hard work and efforts to demonstrate her knowledge and understanding. Despite these challenges, Participant A found strength in her faith and family, grounding herself in the belief that if becoming a superintendent was meant for her, she would achieve it. She recounted her initial thoughts about becoming a superintendent, expressing a mixture of determination and uncertainty about the path ahead.

Participant A recognized that each step she took, even if it didn't lead directly to a superintendent position, provided valuable learning experiences that would ultimately better prepare her for the role. Participant A highlighted the role of mental resilience in navigating the complexities of the superintendency. Looking back, she acknowledged how each previous experience had contributed to her readiness for challenges she encountered in her current role. She concluded by affirming that these past experiences had significantly shaped her preparation and ability to handle the responsibilities of being a superintendent.

Prompt Question: Can You Explain What You Meant When You Mentioned “Some People Just Get Appointed Instead of Hustling Their Way into the Position or Applying.”

Participant A shared her journey and the challenges she faced in her career progression, reflecting on her initial goal of becoming an assistant superintendent. Despite holding roles such as director of achievement equity and curriculum, assessment, and instruction, where she led successful initiatives recognized with awards, she noticed colleagues, particularly white men, advancing to assistant superintendent roles while she remained in her director position. Even after earning her doctorate and having experience as a principal, she observed others, including non-people of color, being appointed to superintendent positions while she was not.

Participant A explains how this discrepancy led her to contemplate the reasons behind these decisions, acknowledging her frustration and the emotional toll it took. Throughout this journey, Participant A credited her faith and support system—her family and encouraging circle—for providing the strength and resilience needed to persevere despite setbacks. She emphasized the importance of stamina and tenacity in facing these challenges, reaffirming her belief that her time for advancement would come. Participant A highlighted her reliance on faith and encouragement from loved ones as crucial elements in maintaining her determination and hope for future opportunities in educational leadership.

Participant B. Participant B emphasized the importance of recognizing one's worthwhile working in the superintendency, acknowledging the challenging nature of the role. Additionally, Participant B highlighted a significant barrier faced by female superintendents: inequality in compensation.

Participant B recounted a specific instance where her contract negotiation was compared unfavorably to that of a male counterpart. She noted that female superintendents often face

disparities in pay compared to their male counterparts, which underscores the need for vigilance during contract negotiations. This disparity in compensation illustrates a broader issue of gender inequality within educational leadership roles, where female superintendents may not receive equitable pay for their responsibilities and contributions. Participant B experience underscores the importance of addressing and rectifying these inequities to ensure fair treatment and compensation for all superintendents, regardless of gender.

Prompt Question: Have You had Any Issues, You Mentioned that You had Applied Once or Twice Before and Didn't Get the Position Where You Applied?

Participant B described both processes as somewhat comprehensive. One of the processes involved applying for a position out of state, while the other was within the same state. Despite the challenges involved, Participant B found both processes to be straightforward and relied on her faith throughout them.

Prompt Question: What are the Things or Can You Give Me Information on What We Could Use for Our Further Research?

Participant B suggests exploring the differences among women superintendents in rural, urban, and suburban settings. She highlights that these environments present distinct worlds despite being within the same profession. In rural areas, urban centers, and suburban districts, the dynamics of supervision can vary significantly, influenced by the size and nature of the community they serve. For instance, Participant B notes that in her current position, she does not have any family members on her staff but acknowledges that this dynamic could be different for superintendents in other settings. This distinction underscores the unique challenges and dynamics that women superintendents navigate based on the characteristics of their district—whether rural, urban, or suburban.

Prompt Question: Would You Say That Women of Color Do Support Other Women of Color in the Same Position, or Trying to Get the Same Position as Superintendent?

Participant B shared her experience of being a finalist alongside two other women of color for superintendent positions. She emphasized that they did not see each other as competitors but rather as part of a supportive network. Participant B explained that they viewed their presence as mutually beneficial, helping each other to improve and celebrating each other's successes. This perspective highlights the solidarity and camaraderie among Women of Color in leadership roles, recognizing that their collective achievements contribute positively to representation and advancement within their field. Participant B experience underscores the importance of fostering supportive relationships among peers, especially in contexts where diversity and inclusion are significant factors.

Prompt Question: What Would You Say It Is Like a Day as a Superintendent, Is It a Long Day?

Participant B provides a detailed glimpse into a typical day as a superintendent, highlighting the varied responsibilities and demanding schedule inherent in the role: “Today started off with a meeting addressing staffing concerns with some of my team members, principals, and teachers. Following that, I met with regional supervisors. Later in the morning, I visited a senior center and attended an art event. Then it was back to business with HR meetings, preparing for an evening board meeting where we'll finalize agendas and presentations. Earlier, a thoughtful community member brought lunch for the staff, and I also had the chance to visit a new playground at the preschool. It's a packed schedule, and that's typical of a superintendent's life.”

Participant C, “I’m essentially on call 24/7, especially during challenging weather seasons like winter and spring. Our weather team convenes early mornings to assess conditions, and I join discussions with operations and transportation by 5:15 am. Tonight’s board meeting will likely run late into the evening, possibly until 8 or 9 pm. Stamina is crucial in this role!”

Participant B description underscores the constant engagement, community interaction, and round-the-clock commitment required of superintendents, emphasizing the resilience and dedication essential for effective leadership in education.

Participant C. Participant C offers insightful advice and reflections based on her experiences as a superintendent, emphasizing resilience, support, and finding purpose in the role:

“When I started, there were only two females, myself and one other African American in Minnesota at that time. My advice to others in similar positions is to recognize the weight we carry as superintendents of color. Even if the job isn’t explicitly about race, as a black superintendent, you represent your community. You’re never alone; I call us queens, and we’re here to support each other. Moving forward, it’s crucial not to give up, especially during the challenging first few years in any role. Despite the difficulties, remember that you’re making the world a better place.”

Participant C, “When I teach college courses, I always ask my students to identify the one value that drives them. It’s not about the money because there’s never enough of it.

Instead, find that intrinsic motivation—whether it’s serving leadership or nurturing our students—to keep you going every day. In tough times, when you face setbacks, reflect

on your purpose. It can't just be about money; it has to be deeper than that. That purpose will anchor you and guide you through the toughest days.

Participant C's words highlight the importance of perseverance, community support, and maintaining a clear sense of purpose in leadership roles, particularly for women of color in education.

Prompt Question: What Advice Would You Give Women of Color Who Are Searching and Are Not Getting the Offer or the Positions That They Are Seeking?

Participant C emphasizes the importance of seeking advice and continuous learning in the role of superintendent, drawing from her own experiences:

“One important thing for new superintendents is to sit down with several fellow superintendents. Share what's happening and seek their feedback on how to approach different situations. For instance, if you're preparing for an interview, ask if you can sit down with them to discuss what you can improve on and how to communicate effectively. There's a way you have to do and say things, and you need to learn that from those who have experience. Understand how to navigate these situations effectively. So, you have to meet with others and ask: What went well? What didn't? What do I need to work on? Instead of feeling rejected, see it as a learning opportunity—sometimes rejection is a blessing in disguise.”

Participant C, asked questions like: “Can you explain how I can improve? Sometimes it's a small detail that needs fixing, like a wrong date on a PowerPoint slide. Also, recognize that what worked in your previous role may not necessarily work in your new position. In education, especially in higher positions, continuous learning is essential because what succeeds in one district may not apply in another.”

Participant C's advice underscores the importance of humility, seeking mentorship, and adapting to new challenges as a superintendent, reflecting a commitment to growth and improvement in leadership roles.

Prompt Question: What Would You Say Has Kept You Going?

Participant C draws strength from her faith and personal experiences to navigate challenges in her role as a superintendent: "My faith is what keeps me going in this position. I believe it's God's plan that guides me, and I've always moved for jobs because I felt a calling to them. I lost my parents at a young age, and life has been tough, but I persevere."

Participant C also emphasizes the importance of creating an approachable district environment:

"To me, making the district approachable starts with being human-centric—from the heart to the head—and then focusing on strategy. Besides my faith, being a servant leader is crucial. It's about helping others achieve their goals, especially our children's aspirations. I believe strongly that no one should tell a child they can't pursue their dreams, whether it's becoming an astronaut or an entrepreneur. Everyone deserves that encouragement."

Participant C's approach highlights a deep commitment to service, leadership rooted in empathy, and a steadfast belief in supporting others to reach their full potential, echoing her personal resilience and faith-driven motivation in her professional journey.

Participant D. Participant D stresses the importance of balancing strategic thinking with self-care in the role of a superintendent:

"I think it's crucial to set aside time for strategic development, analyzing the system at a systemic level, and identifying the levers for change. Equally important is setting aside

time for self-care and having compassion for oneself, forgiving yourself for any perceived shortcomings."

Participant D acknowledges the challenge of following her own advice, noting the necessity of verbalizing it to reinforce its importance:

"While I'm giving this advice, I realize I'm not always taking it myself. Sometimes I need to say it aloud to listen and internalize it. If you're intentional about allocating time to strategically position the system towards your goals, it's equally essential to invest time in self-care. Both activities should have dedicated slots on a superintendent's calendar. This perspective underscores the need for superintendents to prioritize both professional responsibilities and personal well-being, recognizing that effective leadership requires a balanced approach that nurtures both the system and the leader themselves."

Summary

The findings related to the study do not generalize the experience of Women of Color in superintendent roles. However, the study was designed to share a sample of the experiences and perspectives of being a Woman of Color in the superintendent role. The role of the superintendent has become more challenging and complex over time; however, the challenges intensify when a superintendent is racially isolated.

The findings in the study revealed that Women of Color face many challenges in the superintendent role. It is very evident that the higher in administrative leadership hierarchy an educator advances, there is less diversity. Women of Color face obstacles directly related to their gender and their individual circumstances resulting from the color of their skin. The findings also revealed that each superintendent experienced different types of obstacles, but the result was they were treated differently because of their gender and their skin.

Chapter IV has provided the results of the study. In Chapter V the summary of the findings from the study is shared, along with limitations of the study and future recommendations to the field of educational administration and further research.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

This chapter presents a summary of the study, and conclusions formulated from the data presented in Chapter IV. The purpose of the chapter is to provide conclusions and discussions from the study results. Additionally, the research provided a concluding statement that provides context to the research and prepares future researchers for further study of Women of Color in superintendent roles. The findings contribute to broadening the discourse and informing the field of educational leadership of the perspectives and challenges facing Women of Color in the superintendent role as they navigate their way through a successful superintendency.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the obstacles and successful pathways reported by a selected group of Women of Color who were interviewed and shared their experiences on their pathway to the superintendency. The study provides an analysis of the history of women in superintendency, how gender impacts Women of Color in obtaining the position and the obstacles Women of Color encounter on their path to superintendency. Through the study, the researcher compared the commonalities and differences of Women of Color superintendents' perspectives as they hold the office of superintendent. It is anticipated the study can contribute relevant research and provide insight to other Women of Color pursuing a superintendent role.

To understand the phenomenon of Women of Color in superintendent roles, the researcher conducted a study that highlights their experiences and perceptions. Additionally, the researcher compared their experiences to identify commonalities and differences. To best understand Women of Color in superintendent roles, it was necessary to explore the history of the superintendency, the influence gender has on Women of Color obtaining the superintendent

role, the obstacles they face on their path to the superintendency, and the support they received on their path to superintendency.

When one considers the teaching force as the pipeline to the superintendency, the question is why the predominantly female (76%) teaching force does not equally reflect a predominantly female educational leadership force. Despite the slight progress of women filling the superintendency role over the past decade, full parity between men and women in the field is far from present. (Drake, 2023, p.27).

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are Women of Color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?
2. What strategies have selected superintendents who are Women of Color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?
3. What mentoring or other forms of support do selected Women of Color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?
4. What advice would select Women of Color superintendents give to peers who are seeing the position of superintendents of schools?

Conclusions, discussion, limitations and further recommendation for research and professional practice are provided in the chapter.

Conclusions

During the interviews, participants reported their perspectives as Women of Color superintendents experiencing the general challenges of the superintendency and detailed a more complex set of challenges when they were not validated as superintendents because they are women but Women of Color. Each participant was able to express their experiences and responses to the interview questions. Participants from the study often reflected on their responses which provide the researcher an up close and personal view of the role of a Woman of Color superintendents, and how they navigated through their set of challenges as a Woman of Color superintendents leading a school district. In addition, hearing their reflections revealed the many complexities of their role, and revealed the various challenges and support they receive. As stated in the literature review,

One barrier women face as they move to the superintendency is the attitudes of gatekeepers. In this context, gatekeepers are defined as school board members who help to hire women superintendents and consultants working in superintendency searches who place women among the top candidates for superintendent positions (Chase & Bell, 1990). (Bernal et al., 2017, p. 42)

The literature points out board members as gatekeepers and the attitudes they have towards women as per say Women of Color in the hiring process. The following expresses how participant A experienced a moment when she needed to explain budgeting to feel validated.

Participant A addresses how math has been an asset in her career, but the low expectations people have of her is another obstacle she experiences. Oftentimes it isn't until she puts it on the table that she was a math teacher, then people saw that she understands budgeting and can work alongside a man on school budgeting. It is these moments when they ask questions

but see her work with school budgeting that she is validated. This obstacle was the most impactful for participant A is the questioning about her competence in finance early in her leadership career.

Participant A “I shouldn't have had to have been a math teacher to be validated, because I know a lot of superintendents who are physical education teachers, and they are validated as leaders, you know.”

“The focus of studying gatekeepers’ speech was on how gatekeepers talk about women, that is, on the kinds of understandings about women’s actions and situations that are produced by gatekeepers’ speech” (Chase & Bell, 1990, p. 164). Research supports the fact that there are qualified women who enjoy the work and have the expertise to lead systems who are actively seeking the superintendency (Grogan & Brunner, 2005); however, the gatekeepers—school board members and search firms—are not hiring women at the same rate as men. Another barrier involves headhunting, gender, and color. Tallerico (2000) explored the process of filling the position of superintendency from a gatekeeping and career mobility theory while looking specifically at gender and color. The idea of head-hunting ties into the gatekeeping theory because headhunters may be able to personally control portions of the hiring process early on (i.e., the initial paper screening). They have the power to control who proceeds at various levels of the hiring process. (Bernal et al., 2017, p. 42).

Women of Color are subjected to not only the unfairness of the hiring process but also to that they are Women of Color where race and gender come into play in whether they get the superintendent position.

Participant C describes the obstacles Women of Color may encounter on their pathway to superintendency. This is something she didn’t have to deal with, but she knows that the school

board sometimes seeks for a potential superintendent through a third-party agency. Usually when that occurs these agencies seek for the same style of person, and a lot of those times that would be male. Rarely you would see a Woman of Color pulled into those pools to be able to go into that. It was hard to break into that system of being chosen because at those times you had to know the right people to do the right thing. They would always have a specific person that they would try to bring up and a lot of those times it wasn't a woman let alone a Woman of Color.

Cultural norms also play a role and prejudicial gender stereotyping does exist.

Specifically, females are often assumed to lack prior knowledge about issues related to the superintendency. Male candidates are expected to understand appropriate disciplinary actions, budgeting, and other non-instructional technical abilities, while the competencies of women are questioned. If a woman does make it as a finalist, the school board often questions whether they need to pay her as much as a male contender (Tallerico, 2000).

The third category inquires about how a school board makes selection decisions. Many of the participants involved in the interviews described the chemistry or connection they feel with a candidate as crucial. Psychologically, humans are more likely to connect with others who are similar to them (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983). This means that this 'fit' being assessed is more than likely to push women and people of color out of the position

(Baltzell & Dentler, 1983). (Bernal et al., 2017, p. 42)

Women of Color often feel that they are not considered because they do not fit in or have a connection with those in charge of the hiring process as related to their strategic planning that often includes male leadership. A common issue that occurs when women or as that Women of Color are overlooked because they are not seen as leaders or where race and gender add to the hiring process.

Participant B contends how school boards are looking for something that will support their strategic plans, their long-range goals. It may not be that you aren't capable, knowledgeable or skillful, it is just that your skill set may not match theirs. She explains how she did not get the first two superintendent jobs she applied for. It can be devastating after the first time, and you try to understand why you didn't get the job. She says it's good to know who you are, what skills you bring, being persistent and going after those opportunities. Participant B describes another obstacle that impacted her, intersectionality of race and gender. For example, she starts questioning herself when she perceives people are not accepting of her ideals or taking her seriously. She questions if it's because she is a woman, African American or if it's cultural to Minnesota that she isn't born or raised in Minnesota. Participant B says, "You have to figure out which of these it may be, or it could be none of them and people could just be equal opportunity haters."

Participant D explains how having the board members approval is an important part of the job, not having that support only questions their leadership skills.

An example participant D gave is when she was hired as an assistant principal in the school she became a principal, she was replacing a black female assistant principal, who according to the staff she hadn't done well. So, everyone thought she was going to do a bad job, and it wasn't a good feeling. She started wondering if the new board members believe in her or if they trust her. That is something that impacts her sense of efficacy and your confidence as a leader.

Research Question 1

What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are Women of Color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?

The first research question examined the support and obstacles experienced by Women of Color superintendents. It examined the obstacles the superintendents came across while obtaining the superintendent role, obstacles that inhibited their effectiveness as superintendents, and the types of support they received on their pathway to superintendency.

Obstacles

The experiences of the four Women of Color superintendents in navigating their paths to and within the superintendent role highlight significant challenges they faced. According to Bollinger and Grady (n.d.), "Women who aspire to the superintendency are often confronted with challenges from the start" (p. 48). This assertion underscores the systemic and structural barriers that women encounter in educational leadership, particularly Women of Color

Participant A came to the realization that in order to effectively lead and have a significant impact, she would need to transition to a role that is perceived as more prestigious or respected within the organization or field. This recognition likely stemmed from an understanding that her current position did not provide the necessary platform or authority to influence decisions and outcomes to the extent she desired. Studies suggest that the underrepresentation of female superintendents is not attributed to deficiencies in their training or experience necessary for effective performance in the role. Rather, societal perceptions and norms regarding leadership (Shakeshaft, 1989), expectations set by school boards (Tallerico,

2000), and shortcomings in the processes of recruitment and selection are identified as significant factors (Bernal et al., 2017, p. 43).

Participant B didn't get her first two superintendent positions she applied for. Participant B highlights that school boards prioritize candidates who can effectively support their strategic plans and long-term goals. This perspective implies that the issue may not be a question of the candidate lacking capability, knowledge, or skill, but rather a potential mismatch between the candidate's skill set and the specific requirements and priorities of the school board. Heilman (2001) argues that societal perceptions often dictate that certain genders are more suitable for roles, contributing significantly to gender bias and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. There persists a stereotype that effective leaders should exhibit masculine traits such as authority and discipline, while women are often stereotyped as being emotional and collaborative (Krüger, 2008) (Kelsey & Alleb, 2014, p. 3).

Participant C has encountered numerous obstacles in entering and advancing within the education system, particularly as a Woman of Color aiming for a superintendent role. She describes facing situations where her voice was disregarded or undervalued as she progressed through the education program. In the predominantly male-dominated superintendency, she navigated challenges arising from an increasing number of women entering the field. Participant C highlighted several specific challenges, including not being listened to, receiving lower salaries compared to others, and the ongoing struggle to ensure her voice is respected and acknowledged in decision-making processes. Additionally, she expressed concerns about the stereotype of the "Angry Black Woman" (ABW), where assertiveness or advocacy for her school or district could unfairly label her in a negative light. According to Muñoz, Mills et al. (2014), women frequently exhibit low self-efficacy, which acts as a barrier in assuming leadership roles

such as superintendent. Dobie and Hummel (2006) also found that women commonly question their own capability to successfully fulfill the responsibilities of a superintendent position (Grensham & Sampson, 2019, p. 260).

Participant D describes the profound impact of isolation on one's efficacy, motivation, and resilience as a system leader. Feeling isolated can potentially lead to a downward spiral of decreased self-confidence and motivation. However, recognizing this isolation and embracing self-reliance can also empower individuals to find their own sources of motivation and strength.

Furthermore, the study's findings indicated that all four participants faced a common obstacle: they were not taken seriously in their leadership positions. Each participant encountered experiences where they were ignored, their competence and intellect were questioned, and they were denied opportunities to lead. Despite these obstacles, these Women of Color found support systems that helped them succeed as leaders within their school districts, with a steadfast focus on prioritizing the well-being and education of children.

Support

Participant A points out disparities in mentoring experiences, noting that while many women receive mentoring, it often lacks depth compared to what males, especially males of color, receive. She emphasizes the importance of more substantial mentoring that goes beyond surface-level guidance. It's crucial for Women of Color to not just be shown the ropes but to gain meaningful organizational experience that allows them to effectively carry out their roles.

Participant A found valuable support from her superintendent while serving as an assistant superintendent. He prepared her comprehensively for the business aspects of the superintendent role by involving her in various community activities like the rotary and the chamber board. He also engaged her in communications, enrollment management, and facilities maintenance, which

equipped her to demonstrate readiness for the superintendent position during interviews.

Conversely, the least helpful support for Participant A came from situations where she had to navigate her role without adequate guidance. She encountered frustration when seeking clarification or assistance from superiors who were not supportive of her questions. Despite this challenge, she relied on other professional networks to seek advice and support when needed. Participant A received valuable support as an assistant superintendent when her superintendent actively prepared her for the business aspects of the superintendent role. This included joining the rotary, filling in on the chamber board, and involving her in communications, enrollment management, and facilities maintenance. These experiences enabled her to demonstrate readiness for the superintendent position during interviews. The least helpful support for Participant A came from situations where she lacked guidance and encountered frustration when seeking clarification or assistance from superiors. Despite this challenge, she was fortunate to have other professional networks to rely on for the coaching and support she needed.

Participant B derives support from several sources, including her family, which grounds her, and her extensive professional network. She has been guided by mentors, including former superintendents who supervised her. Additionally, she benefits from a network of Black female superintendents and is involved in a group called The Horsies*, initiated by Black women with doctorates in higher education. These support networks provide her with valuable guidance, mentorship, and solidarity in her professional journey. Participant B also highlighted the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), which offers supportive groups and affinity groups. She emphasized the importance of her family, however she defines it, as a foundational source of support. In addition to her family, she values her professional networks, including the Minnesota Association of Superintendents. She also acknowledged the support

from white allies, recognizing their role in bolstering her efforts and advocating for equity and inclusion in her professional environment. Participant B finds the most helpful support from individuals who provide day-to-day guidance and mentorship, allowing her to seek advice and collaborate as needed when facing challenges. These mentors serve as thought partners and offer practical experience and insights. She finds national branded professional developments less helpful, viewing them as overly commercialized and focused on sales rather than meaningful professional growth and support.

Participant C mentioned that while she did not have mentors, religion plays a significant role in her life and provides her with guidance and support. Participant C provides various types of support to others, including practical advice on issues ranging from finance to behavioral matters, often serving as a sounding board for ideas and solutions as a superintendent. Additionally, Participant C emphasizes the importance of staying informed through reading, particularly legislative updates and educational resources provided by organizations like MASA, MSBA, and AMSD. According to Participant C, the most helpful form of support is engaging directly with colleagues through phone calls, where they can exchange advice and share examples of successful strategies. On the other hand, Participant C finds books to be the least helpful form of support over time, noting that while informative, they can become repetitive and require careful selection to ensure relevance and utility.

Participant D benefits from several support groups. One is a group of Women of Color who hold doctorates and run their own organizations, which provides her with strength and support. Another group is women superintendents who maintain communication through a group text and meet in person when possible. Additionally, she is involved in a mixed-gender group where camaraderie is strong, and they make efforts to gather monthly. These support networks

contribute to her professional and personal well-being. Participant D rated her seven-member cohesive, student-centered superintendent board as her top source of support, emphasizing their effectiveness and now recognizing them as a significant support system. She reflects that their encouragement and motivation were pivotal, even if she didn't fully realize it at the time. Her close colleagues ranked second in terms of support, followed by her friendships with other superintendents, which she values as well.

Research Question 2

What strategies have selected superintendents who are Women of Color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?

The second research question examined the strategies the Women of Color superintendents used to overcome the obstacles they encountered in obtaining the superintendent role.

All participants had different strategies to deal with obstacles they encountered in their role as superintendent. Helgesen (1990) argued that women often achieve success by leveraging their feminine strengths, such as nurturing, supporting, teaching, promoting open communication, seeking input from others, and fostering a positive and collegial work environment. Similarly, Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) proposed that women excel as interpersonal experts who thrive in networking roles when provided with opportunities to do so (Copeland & Calhoun, 2014, p. 31). Participant A and Participant D rely on their support networks to process, problem-solve, and strategize about the situations they encounter. Participant B and Participant C employed strategies focused on personal development and overcoming obstacles. Participant B emphasized self-care strategies such as maintaining self-

awareness, staying aligned with their purpose as a superintendent, accepting constructive feedback, and continuously learning and growing. On the other hand, Participant C strategies centered around authenticity and self-acceptance. She advocated for being true to oneself in the superintendent role, avoiding the temptation to conform or assimilate to expectations that might undermine personal worth. Instead, she emphasized the importance of maintaining authenticity to foster confidence and effectiveness.

Additionally, Participant C introduced the concept of "holding space," which she used as a strategy when interacting with others. This involved creating a supportive environment where individuals could come together to engage in open dialogue, exchange advice, and offer mutual support without fear of judgment. These strategies highlight the participants' resilience and proactive approaches in navigating challenges within their roles as Women of Color in leadership positions within school districts.

Research Question 3

What mentoring or other forms of support do selected Women of Color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?

Research question 3 examines the different types of support or mentoring the superintendents received to attain and retain their position.

Research indicates that women often encounter obstacles in accessing the social networks crucial for career advancement, particularly in fields where they are underrepresented, such as the superintendency in education. One significant reason is the scarcity of female role models and mentors in these positions. As a result, women aspiring to leadership roles like the superintendency may struggle to find guidance and support, which can hinder their career aspirations (Bollinger & Grady, n.d., p. 48).

Three of the four participants had mentors when they were on their pathway to superintendency. Participant A mentor helped her with the business side of superintendency which then helped her demonstrate her preparedness for the position in her interview. Participant B had a former superintendent who mentored her on her way to superintendency and is always there for her. Participant D mentions that she had a white male mentor when she was going into the superintendency. After working in a different state for a friend who is a superintendent, she didn't have mentors, only her superintendent friend when she was applying for a superintendent job in Minnesota. "The State of the American School Superintendency (2007) reported that 39% of superintendents across the nation indicated that they had received no mentoring before becoming a superintendent (Howard & Harris, 2013, p. 3). Participant C, as she likes to say it "I'm one of the weird ones" didn't have a mentor but religion is a huge part of her life. Even though she didn't have mentors she does mention she had women who were in the positions before her that she could see them model the role for her.

Research Question 4

What advice would select Women of Color superintendents give to peers who are seeing the position of superintendents of schools?

The fourth question examines the advice Women of Color superintendents give to their peers who are on their path to the superintendency.

Participant A emphasizes the importance of self-belief, competence, and confidence. They acknowledge the challenge of imposter syndrome and stress the need to overcome it by recognizing one's unique skills and experiences. They advise staying humble and seeking support when needed.

Participant B underscores the importance of self-awareness and authenticity, advising against changing oneself to conform to a district's expectations. They emphasize the need to articulate one's strengths, knowledge, leadership style, and strategies, especially in relation to children's learning and development—the essence of instructional leadership. Additionally, they highlight the importance of understanding how to support teachers in these areas. Lastly, they emphasize the necessity of having business skills, recognizing the district as a corporate entity. Another piece of advice from participant B is to learn the business world. We often aren't recognized as leaders, which can lead others to doubt our ability to grasp business concepts. "It's crucial to grasp the numbers and understand finance."

Participant C encourages a mindset of self-worth and self-acceptance, emphasizing that one doesn't need external validation to prove their value. They highlight the fluctuating nature of others' acceptance and stress the importance of internal validation and understanding one's own worth. They advocate for self-care and resilience, acknowledging the challenges faced by Women of Color in leadership roles. Participant C advises against letting others' insecurities diminish one's confidence, promoting self-assurance without arrogance. "You have to get physically fit because this is a hard job, and you need something to release stress. If it's meditation or having faith. What you are comfortable with so you're able to change the world."

Participant D emphasizes the need for careful consideration of one's capacity for the superintendent role, noting its significant demands. She reflects on her own experience of serving in the role for seven years, expressing mixed feelings—not a clear yes or no about their satisfaction. She highlights a preference for service over power, acknowledging the sacrifices inherent in the role and the challenges of balancing it with motherhood. Additionally, she

underscores the difficulty of feeling completely comfortable as an authentic Woman of Color in a predominantly white environment.

Recommendations for Professional Practice

Women Leading Ed coalition organization is calling for five major strategy shifts (Zalaznick, 2023). The participants in the study suggested some of the recommendations below as well:

1. *Embolden deliberate support systems*-to prepare women for leadership roles in education. Women in the field require both mentors and sponsors. While mentors offer guidance and reassurance sponsors play an active role in navigating career trajectories and supporting executives to ascend to CEO positions. Sponsors are critical in fostering confidence among candidates to pursue promotions and salary increases.
2. *Reinstate balance in the hiring process*-When selecting new leaders, districts should attempt for a diverse finalist pool that includes multiple women and candidates of color. School board members and other decision-makers involved in hiring and promotions should undergo training to recognize biases and prioritize diversity. It's essential for districts and educational systems to ensure that search and hiring committees themselves reflect diversity.
3. *Institute a comprehensive system of family and well-being establishment*-Women in education require the adaptability offered by hybrid and remote work arrangements, which are proven to strengthen job satisfaction and reduce exhaustion. Districts should also embrace comprehensive leave policies that provide paid time off for both female and male employees without negative consequences. The report calls attention

- to the private sector, companies committed to advancing female leadership offer a range of benefits to strengthen women's daily work experiences, such as flexible work preference, emergency childcare and eldercare leave, and mental health support.
4. *Demonstrate clear objectives to promote female leadership*-When conducting superintendent searches, districts should reveal their finalist pools publicly or provide data on the organization of the pool, including the capacity of male, female, and candidates of color. In addition, districts could be required to include at least two female candidates as finalists. According to Women Leading Ed, research indicates that having only one woman or person of color in a finalist pool significantly decreases their chances of securing the position.
 5. *Secure equitable financial applications*- Introducing a "self-assessment pay device" enables employees to confirm if their district guarantees equal pay for equal work among genders. District leaders should manage regular audits of their pay arrangement to identify and correct any gender-based wage discrepancy, and they should share these findings straightforwardly with employees. Additionally, districts should commit to communicating the previous salary of the outgoing superintendent in job postings to increase salary transparency.

A Pipeline Matter

*Recommendation on a more extensive reading on Pipelines is as follows:

*All participants in the study discussed A Pipeline Matter as a Pathway to the Superintendency.

The significance of increasing educators of color and the reasons as to why can generate many answers. One such answer can be reflected in our cooperative commitment to be devoted,

driven, inclusive to equity and diversity. What strategies can ensure the accomplishment of the few leaders of color to achieve and attain the superintendent role. (Ott, 2019).

Mentoring and Coaching

Key Characteristics of Coaching

What makes coaching unique are its key characteristics that drive results. Coaching is future and solution-focused, with a focus on goal setting and developing action plans to help people get closer to their goals. It's cooperative, enabling people to take charge of their own development by viewing the coach as a partner rather than a teacher. Each person's requirements and goals are catered to with great personalization in coaching. Coaching places a strong emphasis on responsibility, making people answerable for their actions and progress toward their objectives.

Taking the above points a step further. The distinctive elements of coaching set it apart, and each is essential to achieving successful results. First, by emphasizing goal setting and creating practical strategies for reaching them, its forward-thinking approach creates the conditions for success. Coaching motivates people to take significant action toward their goals by imagining a fascinating future and breaking it down into doable steps. Second, rather than being an authoritative figure, the coach acts as a helpful partner in a collaborative environment. This cooperative dynamic encourages mutual respect, trust, and open communication, which creates a favorable atmosphere for learning and development.

Thirdly, because each person is different and has their own set of skills, difficulties, and goals, coaching is by its very nature customized. To ensure that sessions are relevant, important, and effective, coaches customize their approach to each coach's unique requirements and preferences.

Finally, accountability is a fundamental component of coaching since it holds people accountable for their actions and progress toward their objectives. By creating a sense of ownership and commitment, this accountability mechanism encourages people to maintain focus, self-discipline, and accountability for their personal development. These fundamental qualities work together to provide the basis of coaching, guiding people toward success, fulfillment, and ongoing development.

Essence of Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring, as opposed to coaching, is based on connections that are formed in the workplace. It concentrates on the mentor and mentee developing a relationship based on mutual respect, trust, and open communication. In contrast to coaching, which frequently focuses on immediate goals, mentoring adopts a more expansive, long-term perspective, fostering the mentee's overall growth and development.

These connections go beyond the office and explore areas of personal development and life experience. The mentor serves as a: Confidant, Role model, Advisor and Guide. They provide priceless guidance and insights drawn from their own life experiences. The foundation of mentoring is this close relationship, which creates a safe space for mentees to grow, learn, and explore under the guidance of an experienced mentor (Menschy, 2024).

Women of color Superintendents make advancements in their career when other educational leaders they trust provide coaching and mentoring thus investing in their leadership skills providing successful outcomes in a promising field. Trust needs to be part of the equation in building a relationship that generates discussions that are confidential and private. People in general sometimes do not understand the necessity that coaching and mentoring provide. Research about coaching and mentoring suggests the importance of having both in career

advancement and the experiences of the participants in this study. This strategy has increased the successful careers of women of color superintendents (Ott, 2019).

The dilemma for women of color or leaders of color is a pipeline problem that requires immediate collective urgency to settle the breach that persists in our leadership ranks. Problem solving solutions can only be addressed by identifying the future leaders, placing them into the pipeline with coaching and mentoring that starts early in their journey to become superintendents of color (Ott, 2019).

Participant A mentions that most of them would say that they receive mentoring but it's not as deep as males receive and certainly not as deep as males of color receive. She explains that it's like being shown the ropes, but we need to get deep down into the organization not just talking about how one does the work but giving that Woman of Color the experience to do the work. Participant A speaks about how women in the cabinet, what they are doing is taking notes instead of being the ones to be able to think and put their ideas on the table. Preparing them to lead in the c-suite, the c-suite is like the CEO's office, these are the types of experiences participant A thinks women of color should have. Mentorship is a form of support women get but participant A mentions that women need sponsorship. Someone who can advocate for them by picking up the phone and calling whoever the woman is applying for, but this doesn't happen. The reason it doesn't happen is because Women of Color don't know that they need to ask someone to do that for them. Women are uncomfortable asking someone 'hey can you give this headhunter a call'.

Participant B mentioned a few sources of support she has such as her family whom she is grounded with, and her professional network. She has had mentors, former superintendents who

were her supervisors, a network of Black female superintendents, and is also part of a group called The Horsies*, that was started by Black women in higher education with doctorates.

Participant C explains that there were females and people in her life to say she should become a superintendent. As participant C said “I’m one of those weird ones. I never had a mentor. So, my source of support if you have not picked it up, my Christianity is huge so to me it’s my path and God’s plan what I was supposed to do.” There were women in positions before her that she was able to see them model the role for her, that taught the role for her. Participant C informs there’s a strong group that’s there to support women of color. She gives an example about all superintendents but in particular if a Woman of Color is becoming a superintendent, they are all there, asking what she needs, encouraging her that she’s got it, ensuring that there is someone to fall on and if you don’t know something it’s always there. The types of support participant C provided could be as simple as a product, phone calls ranging from finance to behavioral issues asking for ideas about what they as a superintendent has done. Other types of support participant C mentioned is reading and keeping up on it, the legislature they help you get what you need in your school systems, other larger organizations like MASA, MSBA, AMSD they provide that education you need to as well to be able to be successful in your position.

Participant D is part of a few support groups. She is part of a group of Women of Color who have doctorates and run their own organizations that have been a strength and source of support. Another support is a group of women superintendents, it’s more of a group text that get together when they can. The other group participant D is part of is not all women or Women of Color but consists of people that like each other a lot and try to get together once a month.

Recommendations for Further Study

The study involved a small sample size of Women of Color Superintendents who work in the state of Minnesota. Based on the research, study, and conclusions drawn from the data, the following recommendations are made for further research.

1. It is recommended that a qualitative study be conducted with regards to why Women of Color intelligence is questionable in leading a higher office such as that of the superintendency.
2. It is recommended that the study be replicated with Women of Color Superintendents that includes other races other than African American Women.
3. It is recommended that an additional research study be conducted on how school districts address and support Women of Color Superintendents.
4. It is recommended that a quantitative study be conducted solely on the challenges Women of Color encounter in seeking, obtaining, and retaining their educational administration superintendent positions.
5. It is recommended that a mixed method study, interviews, and surveys, be used in the conduct of the study on challenges Women of Color Superintendents encounter in their positions.
6. It is recommended that a quantitative study be conducted on Women of Color Superintendents regarding the support they receive and what helps the most in minimizing the challenges they encounter.
7. It is recommended that a qualitative and/or quantitative study be conducted with school board members to see what support they offer to Women of Color Superintendents.

8. It is recommended that a qualitative study be conducted on Women of Color Superintendents and how they mentor other women of color who are pursuing a career as superintendents.
9. It is recommended that a quantitative study be conducted on Women of Color Superintendents and how they manage school finance.
10. It is recommended that a mixed method study be conducted on Women of Color Superintendents and why school finance is an important factor as female leaders.

Summary

Chapter V of the study on Women of Color in superintendent roles presents a summary of the findings, discusses the limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research and the field of educational administration.

The purpose of the study focused on examining the obstacles and successful pathway to the superintendency as described by a chosen group of Women of Color Superintendents who work in or have worked in school settings where the students as well as the staff are predominantly white or a diverse population. To put it in other words they work or have worked in an all-white or with people of color student and staff educational school setting. The study revealed that even though there were improvements in the Obstacles Women of Color Superintendents Face in their Path to the Superintendency, they are still faced with discrimination regarding their race and gender. Regardless of the obstacles they are faced with in working in such an environment, the results also indicate that there are some professional and personal benefits of working in such an extremely strenuous setting.

The outcome of the study disclosed that Women of Color Superintendents encountered more challenges and difficulties than that of their white male and white female counterparts in

leading a school environment where the demographics of their school setting is not highly reflective of their race than that of white men or white women superintendents. Women of Color Superintendents reported not being regarded as equals or acknowledged as leaders as assumptions were brought against them in not having experience in school finance. Other obstacles they faced included being a female of color in a leadership role where their white females' colleagues brought more pressure to them as opposed to their male colleagues where they were not even considered at their level of leadership. They also felt that the board regarded white male educators with less experience than they had to be in the position of school superintendent. At some point these positions were just appointed to white males whom they had not even applied for such a position as that of school superintendent. Isolation was reported by Women of Color Superintendents where thought partners would be very beneficial to them at times when issues arose and there was no support.

Additionally, Women of Color faced barriers where there was no job mentoring or training to successfully start the job in the office of the superintendency. They reported it was often white males through conversations pointing out what needed to be done. At times when they had questions they were met with aggression or frustration, so they felt they had no one to guide them, putting pressure on them to figure things out on their own. Often the challenges came where change was needed but were met with the same routine systems that had no regard for improving the well-being of all students, only the selected privileged ones. As participant D reported, "If you seek to make change then you must make that change to the entire school district and that is where the challenge is, opposition to change which benefits some will lead to a roadblock regarding all."

The results also indicated that Women of Color are not seen as intelligent, and this becomes a barrier because they are not given the opportunity to lead or given the chance to share their ideals. This form of not being valued as their male counterparts speaks volumes when the salary, they receive per say in their contract is not equal to the male superintendents. Participant D said, “The feeling of having others not believe in you is not a supportive feeling because then you question your efficacy. That leads to an overwhelming feeling as everyone looks at you as representing people of color.” Constant obstacles that inhibit the effectiveness as a superintendent is how people do not understand how taxing macroaggressions or microaggressions can be. Having to use mental energy to navigate through issues takes away from the ability to use intellect to lead the district into the future.

Through the many obstacles Women of Color faced in becoming superintendents they also have a successful pathway that has brought them all the way to the office of the superintendency. The study confirms that Women of Color reported shared experiences that were successful to them in the path to the superintendency. One of the experiences reported occurred when one of the study participants was an assistant superintendent and a sponsor sent her a letter imploring her to interview a Woman of Color. The study participant recalls that Women of Color must become comfortable asking someone to sponsor them and become more comfortable with sponsoring one another because it's important as well. Some of the support that participants received that was helpful to her is when she was assistant superintendent, her superintendent colleague prepared her for the business side work of being a superintendent. He had her join the rotary, fill in for him on the chamber board, involved her in all communications, enrollment, helping her understand the impact on enrollment, understanding attendance, understanding long

term facilities, maintenance. All this helped her demonstrate at the interview table that she was prepared to be a superintendent.

Another participant mentioned a few sources of support she has is her family whom she really is grounded with, and her professional network. She has had mentors, former superintendents who were her supervisors, a network of Black female superintendents, in higher education with doctorates. She also mentioned the Minnesota Association of Superintendents (MASA) they provide groups for support and affinity groups. Another support is people that give you day to day experience, a mentor that you can call with an issue (thought partner).

At times there were females and people in her life to say she should become a superintendent. Another source of support reported was Christianity as being huge and having faith in what God's plan was. Women in higher education are seen as role models and others can learn from them. Having support from women of Color is supportive and helpful. School systems, other larger organizations like MASA, MSBA, AMSD provide that education you need as well to be able to be successful in your position. Support is huge and advocating for oneself in reaching out to the support groups mentioned or a trusted colleague can be beneficial in dealing with the obstacles and benefiting from the office of the superintendency.

Women of Color Superintendents continue to encounter challenges as they are not regarded as leaders in leading the office of the superintendency. They are not seen or expected to lead school districts as their competency is questioned, they must challenge white colleagues on racial bias, while they route their own cultural path to abolish any biases or assumptions that has been encouraged by society, whether it was inherited etiquette or participating actions. Women of Color Superintendents reported they discouraged assumptions and stereotypes from

their educational setting and reported lack of student resources/student academia as their considerable difficult barriers.

Women of Color Superintendents continue to be resilient in the male dominated office of the superintendency. Participants reported: the importance of hiring BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color), uncovering and terminating inadequate policies, series of steps that do not benefit all students, displaying trustworthy leadership skills, eliminating forced stereotypes, biases related to female administrators in the superintendency office, working on training, providing professional development for Women of Color Superintendents colleagues on equity, being supportive of people of color that need mentorship, sponsors leading to a more supportive work environment attracting more BIPOC people in the industry that will culturally benefit all races of students and all staff combined where their education should be the most important priority in a school setting.

During the interview process, it was common for the Women of Color Superintendents participants to feel uncomfortable, especially when addressing racial and bias injustice. Additionally, the participants felt no matter how uncomfortable discussing such issues was it was a way of acknowledging that there is still much change that needs to be done and by sharing their experiences change can occur especially when more Women of Color are seeking the office of the superintendency. Recognizing that their experiences can lead the way to school districts in hiring additional diverse individuals as mentors, assisting students, showing the differences in leadership styles, having that support regarding other people of color they can work with in the same school setting making it easier to work and feeling comfortable as opposed to feeling isolated all the time.

In conclusion, as Women of Color are making the superintendent office more diverse, and the leadership roles continue to look more different than the all-white male superintendents status quo. It is important for all students and staff to feel acceptance or sense of belonging as they see themselves reflected in the diverse educational leaders leading schools and school districts. It is imperative that school districts try to acknowledge and support Women of Color Superintendents by changing their bias hiring practices, committing to supporting, understanding Women of Color Superintendents as capable and smart educational leaders that can lead school districts as Woman of Color Superintendents.

***Group name has been changed for privacy.**

*** Subtext questions have been added (Prompt Questions)**

Recognition

I want to express my gratitude to the women of color superintendents who participated in my research study. Their involvement was crucial, and without their participation, this study would not have been possible. I also want to express my many thanks to the university staff who supported the research process, from organizing documents to proofreading dissertations.

I encourage all women of color to get involved in research about their own life experiences, whether related to the workplace or educational pursuits. As a young migrant worker, I dreamed of pursuing an education, supported by my mother as we worked in the fields. I pray that migrant workers with similar dreams realize that, although it requires hard work, achieving your goals is possible.

I am also appreciative to my "white allies," as one of my participants would say, for their support and encouragement in reaching my objectives. This study focused on African American women superintendents, who were inspiring and highly educated. As a Latina, I encourage other Latinas to research the challenges and successes they face in education or other areas. Unfortunately, I could not find Latina participants or other women of color in Minnesota for this study, but I deeply appreciate those who did take part.

More research is needed on the experiences of women of color in the workplace and their educational journeys. By sharing our stories and supporting one another, we can inspire others to begin their own research. As more women of color achieve higher education, it's vital to believe in oneself and encourage others to do the same. Together, we can accomplish great things. Many blessings and much success in your educational path.

Dr. Juanita R. Tamez

References

- American Association of School Administrators.(2008). What’s the status of the superintendent pipeline? Arlington, VA.
- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender and Society, 4*(2), 139–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002>
- Acker, J. (2006). Inequality regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations. *Gender and Society, 20*(4), 441–464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243206289499>
- Allred, P. D., Maxwell, G. M., & Skrla, L. E. (2017). What women know: Perceptions of seven female superintendents. *Advancing Women in Leadership, 37*, 1–11.
<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/ed-facarticles/93>
- Alston, J. (1996). Missing from action: Where are the Black female school superintendents? *Sager Journals, 15*(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085900355003>
- Alston, J. A. (1999). Climbing hills and mountains: Black females making it to the superintendency.
- Alston, J. A. (2005). Tempered radicals and servant leaders: Black females persevering in the superintendency. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 41*(4), 675–688.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X04274275>
- Alston, J. A. (1996). *Black female superintendents and success: A study of perceptions regarding constraints and facilitators encountered en route to the superintendency*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation] The Pennsylvania State University, University Park.
- Bañuelos, M.V. (2008). *Gender bias experienced by women superintendents in California*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of La Verne, La Verne, CA.

- Barrios, V. S. (2004). *Factors influencing the underrepresentation of women in the role of superintendency as perceived by selected school board members and superintendents of school districts in Region XX, Education Service Sector in Texas*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Texas A&M University, College Station.
- Bernal, C., Monosov, N., Stencler, A., Lajoie, A., Raigoza, A., & Akhavan, N. (2017). Gender bias within the superintendency: A comparative study. *Journal of School Administration Research and Development*, 2(1), 11.
- Beese, J., Miller, H., & Reid, L. (2022). Leadership and research in education. *The Journal of the Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Administration (OCPEA)*, 7(1).
- Björk, L. G. (1993). Effective schools—effective superintendents: The emerging instructional leadership role. *Journal of School Leadership*, 3(3), 249-259.
- Björk, L. G. (2000). Introduction: Women in the superintendency—advances in research and theory. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(1), 5–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00131610021968877>
- Björk, L. G., & Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2018). Superintendent roles as CEO and team leader. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 3(2), 179–205.
<https://doi.org/10.30828/real/2018.2.3>
- Blount, J. M. (1998). *Destined to rule the schools: Women and the superintendency, 1873-1995*. SUNY Press.
- Bollinger, A. A., & Grady, M. L. (n.d.). *Women's satisfaction in the superintendency: A mixed methods study*. ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1174446.pdf>

- Brenneman, R. (2016). Gallup student poll finds engagement in school dropping by grade level. *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/gallup-student-poll-finds-engagement-in-school-dropping-by-grade-level/2016/03>
- Brown, A. R. (2014). The recruitment and Retention of African American Women as Public School Superintendents. *Journal of Black Studies*, 45(6), 573–593.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934714542157>
- Brown, G., & Irby, B. (1995). *Women as School Executive Voices and Visions*. The Texas Council of Women School Executives.
- Brunner, C. (1998). *Benefit of Bane? Critique of the usefulness of Research about Women Superintendent*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.
- Brunner, C. C. (n.d.). *Sacred dreams: Women and the superintendency* (pp. 79-90). State University of New York Press.
- Brunner, C. C., & Grogan, M. (2007). *Women leading school systems: Uncommon roads to fulfillment*. Rowan and Littlefield Education.
- Brunner, C. C., & Kim, Y.-L. (2010). Are women prepared to be school superintendents? An essay on the myths and misunderstandings. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 5(8), 276-309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/194277511000500806>
- Brunner, C. C., & Peyton-Caire, L. (2000). Seeking representation: Supporting Black female graduate students who aspire to the superintendency. *Urban Education*, 35(5), 532–548.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085900355004>

- Burton, L. J., & Weiner, J. M. (2016). They were really looking for a male leader for the building: gender, identity and leadership development in a principal preparation program. *Frontier Psychology, 7*, 141. [https://doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.0014100141](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.0014100141)
- Bynum, Y. (2015). The power of informal mentoring. *Education, 136*(1), 69-73.
- California Department of Education, Dataquest. (2017). Enrollment in California public schools, 2017-18. Retrieved from <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensuEnrEthGrspcx?cds=00&aggllevel=state&year=2017-18>
- Callahan, R. E. (1962). *Education and the cult of efficiency: A study of the social forces that have shaped the administration of public schools*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.
- Callahan, R. E. (1966). *The superintendent of schools: A historical analysis*. (Unpublished manuscript). Graduate Institute of Education, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 0104 410).
- Carpenter, B., & Diem, S. (2014). Guidance matters: A critical discourse analysis of the race related policy vocabularies shaping leadership preparation. *Urban Education, 50*(5), 515534.
- Chase, S. E., & Bell, C. S. (1990). Ideology, discourse, and gender: How gatekeepers talk about women school superintendents. *Social Problems 37*(2), 163-177.
- Chase, S. E., & Bell, C. S. (1994). How search consultants talk about female superintendents. *The School Administrator*. <http://www.aasa.org/Issues/Women/women1.htm>
- Cooper, T. P., & Wilson-Jones, L. (2023). Exploring the challenges of breaking the glass ceiling: A historical perspective. *Journal of Research Initiatives, 7*(3), Article 2.

- Copeland, S. M., & Calhoun, D. W. (2014). Perceptions of mentoring: Examining the experiences of women superintendents. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 9(2), 28-46.
- Corcoran, A., Casserly, M., Price-Baugh, R., Walston, D., Hall, R., & Simon, C. (2013). *Rethinking leadership: The changing role of principal supervisors*. Washington, DC: Council of Great City Schools.
- Cotter, D. A., Hermsen, J. M., Ovadia, S., & Vanneman, R. (2001). The glass ceiling effect. *Social Forces*, 80(2), 655–681.
- Dana, J., & Bourisaw, D. (2008). *Women in the superintendency: Discarded leadership*. Rowman & Littlefield Education. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234585273_Women_in_the_Superintendency_Discarded_Leadership/citation/download
- Davis, B. W., & Bowers, A. J. (2019). Examining the career pathways of educators with superintendent certification. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 55(1), 3–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X18785872>
- Derrington, M. L., & Sharratt, G. (2009). Female superintendents: Breaking barriers and challenging life styles. *The Delta Kappa Gamma bulletin*, 75, 8. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Female-Superintendents%3A-Breaking-Barriers-and-Life-Derrington-Sharratt/ee26ae906190cc97386380f9b0ca36fbbe0b9586>
- DiCanio, D., Oakdale, N. Y., Schilling, L., Ferrantino, A., Brook, S., Rodney, N. G. C., & Dillard, C. B., Abdur-Rashid, D., & Tyson, C. A. (2000). My soul is a witness: Affirming pedagogies of the spirit. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(5), 447-462.
- Dobie, D., & Hummel, B. (2001). Successful women superintendents in a gender-biased profession. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 34, 22-28. 10.1080/1066568010340204

- Domenech, Daniel A. (2010, December). AASA's status check on the superintendency. *The School Administrator*, 67(12), 11.
- Dowell, L. (2012). *Gender differences in the compensation, promotion track and performance evaluations for school superintendents*. (Doctoral dissertation). Youngstown State University, Department of Teacher Education and Leadership Studies.
- Doughty, R. (1980). The Black female administrator: Woman in a double bind. In S. K. Biklen & M. B. Brannigan (Eds.), *Women and educational leadership* (pp.165-174). Lexington Books.
- Drake, J. D., & Dobbs Ferry Ny. (2023). Female superintendents' perceptions of unconscious gender bias in the superintendency: An exploratory quantitative study. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice*, 19(4), 26-39.
- Dunbar, D. & Kinnersley, T. (2011). Mentoring female administrators toward leadership success. *DeltaKappa Gamma Bulletin*, 77, 17-2
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285906785_Mentoring_female_administrators_toward_leadership_success/citation/download
- ERIC. (n.d.). *Cultural background; gender bias; minority*. <https://eric.ed.gov/>
- Evans, C. (2006). Women in the superintendency: A study of accumulative disadvantage. *Academic Leadership, the Online Journal*, 4(2). <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol4/iss2/10/>
- FeKula, M. J., & Roberts, L. (2005). Why do fewer women than men pursue the superintendency? *Sage Journals*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/105678790501400207>
- Fernandez, A.(2015, June). Do Students of Color Need Leaders Who Look Like Them? *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/do-students-of-color-need-leaders-who-look-like-them/432219/>

- Fordham, S. (1993). Those loud Black girls: Black women, silence, gender passing in the academy. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 24(1), 3-32.
- Garn, G., & Brown, C. (2008, January). Women and the superintendency: Perceptions of gender bias. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 6(1), 49-71.
- Gilmour, S. L., & Kinsella, M. P. (2009). *Succeeding as a female superintendent: How to get there and stay there*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Glass, T. E. (2001). The superintendent crisis: A review by search consultants. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.
- Glass, T.E. (2000, June). Where are all the women superintendents? AASA's latest study on the profession suggests seven reasons why female numbers still lag in top district posts. *The School Administrator*, 57(6), 28-32.
- Glass, T. E., Björk, L. G., & Brunner, C. C. (2000). *The study of the American school superintendency 2000: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium*. American Association of School Administrators.
- González, C., & Gándara, P. (2005, October) "Why We Like to Call Ourselves Latinas." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 4(4), 392-396.
- Gresham, G., & Sampson, P. (2019). Women superintendent research: 2014-2016 dissertation literature review content analysis. *Athens Journal of Education*, 6(4), 257-270.
<https://doi.org/10.30958/aje.6-4-1>
- Grogan, M., & Henry, M. (1995). Women candidates for the superintendency: Board perspectives. In B. Irby & G. Brown (Eds.), *Women as school executives: Voices and visions* (pp. 164-174). Texas Council for Women School Executives.

- Grogan, M. (1996). *Voices of women aspiring to the superintendency*. State University of New York Press. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED399658>
- Grogan, M. (2000). The short tenure of a woman superintendent: A clash of gender and politics. *Journal of School Leadership, 10*(2), 104-130.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/105268460001000203>
- Grogan, M., & Brunner, C. (2005). Women leading systems: What the latest facts and figures say about women in the superintendency today. *School Administrator, 62*(2), 46-50.
- Grossane, T., & Tatum, S. (2019). Women who navigated the trajectory to superintendent: The role of a special education background. *Journal for Leadership and Institution*.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1235764.pdf>
- Haar, J., Raskins, C., & Robicheau, J. (2009). Attracting women leaders to the superintendency. *Minnesota School Boards Journal, 61*(4), 12-15.
- Handy, C. (2008). *Hiring a female superintendent: The gatekeepers' perspective*. (Doctoral dissertation). The George Washington University. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Hanover Research. (2014). *Effective board and superintendent collaboration*. Washington, DC.
<https://www.hanoverresearch.com/>
- Hawk, N., & Martin, B. (2011). Understanding and reducing stress in the superintendency. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership, 39*(3), 364-390.
- Hayes, W. (2001). *So you want to be a school board member?* The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Heilman, M. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(4), 657-674.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00234>

- Helgesen, S. (1990). *The female advantage: Women's ways of leadership*. New York: Currency/Doubleday.
- Henrikson, R. L., (2019). Building purposeful superintendent and school board relationships through examining the historical narrative of evolving roles. *International Dialogues on Education*. <https://doi.org/10.53308/dev.v6i12.62>
- Higginbottom, K. & Robinson, K. (2019). The critical importance of support systems for women educational CEOs. *European Journal of Educational Management*, 2(2), 59-72. <https://doi.org/10.129731/eujem.2.259>
- Hodgkinson, H., & Montenegro, X. (1999). *The U.S. school superintendent: The invisible CEO*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.
- Hoff, D. L., & Mitchell, S. (2008). In search of leaders: Gender factors in school administration. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*. http://advancingwomen.com/awl/awl_wordpress/in-search-of-leaders-gender-in-school-administration
- Houston, P. (2023). *Superintendent of schools: History, importance in education, new expectations, an evolving role*. <https://education.stateniversity.com/pages/2471/Superintendent-Schools.html>
- Howard, E., Msengi, C., & Harris, S. (2017). Influence of mentorship experiences in the development of women superintendents in Texas as transformational leaders. *ICPEL Educational Leadership Review*, 18, 167-180.
- Hudson, M. L. (1994). Women and minorities in school administration: Re-examining the role of informal job contract systems. *Urban Education*. 28, 386-397.

- Hvidston, D., & McKim, C. A. (2019). Superintendents' perceptions regarding the supervision and evaluation of principals in a rural state. *The Rural Educator*, 40(3).
<https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v40i3.779>
- International Labour Organization. (2017). *Breaking barriers: Unconscious gender bias in the workplace*. Switzerland: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/breaking-barriers-unconscious-gender-bias-workplace>
- Jackson, B. L. (1995). *Balancing act: The political role of the urban school superintendent*. Lanham, MD: University Press of American, Washington, DC.
- Jansen, E. (2021). *The power gap in K-12 Massachusetts education*. Women's Power Gap Study Series.
- Jingxia, L. & Lan, T. (2019). On the gender discrimination in English. *Advances in Languages and Literary Studies*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.10n.3p.1>
- Jones, D. & Korelich, K. Experiences of African American Superintendents in Texas. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, 37:17
- Jones, S. N. (2003). *The praxis of Black female educational leadership from a systems thinking perspective*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Bowling Green State University
- Kamler, E. (2006). The aspiring superintendents study group: Investigating a mentoring network for school leaders. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 14(3), 297-316.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611260600733471>
- Katz, S. J. (2006). Influencing others: Women superintendents speak (reluctantly) about power. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 4(2), 103-111.

- Kawaguchi, C. (2014). *Barriers women face while seeking and serving in the position of superintendent in California public schools*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Southern California.
- Kelsey, C., & Allen, K. (2014). Lean in and lift up: Female superintendents share their career path choices. *Journal of Case Studies*, 6. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Lean-in-and-Lift-up%3A-Female-Superintendents-Share-Kelsey-Allen/d0cf787b6a09a1e7106a2861fe437dfa5df3180c>
- Kim, Y., & Brunner, C. C. (2009). School administrators' career mobility to the superintendency: Gender differences in career development. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 47(1), 75-107. <https://doi.org/10.1108/0957823091092807>
- Kowalski, T. J. (1999). *The school superintendent: Theory, practice, and cases*. Merrill, Prentice Hall.
- Kowalski, T. J. (2005). Evolution of the school district superintendent position. In L. G. Björk & T. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 1-18). Corwin Press.
- Kowalski, T. J. (2013). *District diversity and superintendents of color*. Educational Leadership Faculty Publications. https://ecommons.udayton.edu/eda_fac_pub/19
- Kowalski, T. J., McCord, R. S., Petersen, G. J., Young, I. P., & Ellerson N. M. (2011). *The American school superintendent: 2010 decennial study*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Krüger, M.L. (2008). School leadership, sex and gender; Welcome to difference. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 11(2), 155-168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603120701576299>

- Lashway, L. (2002). *Developing instructional leaders*. ERIC Publications.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED463706>
- Leedy, P.D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2015). *Practical research: Planning and design* (11th ed.). Pearson.
- Lomotey, K. (1993). African American principals: Bureaucrat/administrators and ethno-humanists. *Urban Education*, 27(4), 395-412.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085993027004003>
- Lunenburg, F.C., & Ornstein, A.C. (2004) *Educational Administration: Concepts and Practices*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth Learning
- Mahitivanichcha, K., & Rorrer, A. K. (October 2006). Women's choices within market constraints: Re-visioning access to and participation in the superintendency. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(4), 483-517. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X06290690>
- Maienza, J. G. (1986). The superintendency: Characteristics of access for men and women. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 22(4), 59-79.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X8602200405>
- Marina, B. M., & Fonteneau, D. Y. (2012). Servant leaders who picked up the broken glass. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 5(2), 67–83.
- McLean, L. L., La Guardia, A. C., Nelson, J. A., & Watts, R. E. (2016). *Incorporating Adlerian and Feminist Theory to address self-objectification in couple's therapy*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Méndez-Morse, S. (2000). Claiming forgotten leadership. *Urban Education*, 35(5), 584–596.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085900355008>

Menschy, K., (2024). *Coaching and mentoring in the workplace, What's the difference?*

Erickson Coaching International. <http://www.erickson.edu/resources/coaching-and-mentoring-in-the-workplace>

Miura, Y. (2022). Leadership and Research in Education. *The Journal of the Ohio Council of*

Professors of Educational Administration (OCPEA), 7(1). [https://www.icpel.org/](https://www.icpel.org/uploads/1/5/6/2/15622000/ocpea_journal_v7issue1.pdf)

[uploads/1/5/6/2/15622000/ocpea_journal_v7issue1.pdf](https://www.icpel.org/uploads/1/5/6/2/15622000/ocpea_journal_v7issue1.pdf)

Montgomery, P.S., & Growe, R. (2003). Visionary leaders by design. *Advancing Women in*

Leadership Journal, 13. Retrieved from

www.advancingwomen.com/awl/spring2003/index.html

Montz, C. (2004). *A case study of female superintendents from one mid-western state:*

Characteristics, skills, and barriers for female candidates aspiring to the

superintendency. Dissertation Abstracts International, 67(08), 2445A (UMI No.

3139373).

Montz M.A. (2004) Characteristics and career path barriers of women superintendents in Ohio.

(Doctoral dissertation). Bowling Green State University. Retrieved from:

<http://etd.ohiolink.edu/sendpdf.cgi/Askren%20Edgehouse%20Melissa%20A.pdf?bgsu12>

18138547

Montz, C. B., & Wanat, C. L. (2008). Slow path to the superintendency: Women's social

networks and negotiation skills. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 6(1), 29-

47.

Mortensen, M. (2019, October 6). *Female superintendent perceptions of challenges in seeking*

and serving in the position of superintendent of schools. [PowerPoint Slides]. Minnesota

Association of School Administrators.

https://www.mnasa.org/uploads/4/7/7/9/47793163/2019_ppt_mortensen_richard_green_presentation.pdf

Muñoz, A. J., Mills, S. J., Pankake, A., & Whaley, S. (2014). Disparity in the superintendency. *Contemporary issues in Educational Research*, 7(4), 269-278.

<https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v7i4.8840>

Muñoz, A. J., Pankake, A., Murakami Ramalho, E., Mills, S., & Simonsson, M. (2014). A study of female central office administrators and their aspirations to the superintendency.

Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 42(5), 764–784.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213510508>

Murphy, J., & Hallinger, P. (1986). The superintendent as instructional leader: Findings from effective school districts. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 24(2), 213-236.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/eb009917>

Murtadha-Watts, K. (2000). Cleaning up and maintenance in the wake of an urban school administration tempest. *Urban Education*, 35(5), 603–615.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085900355010>

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2019). *Digest of education statistics, 2017*.

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018070>

Odum, R. D. (2010). *The lived experiences of female superintendents in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia*. Georgia Southern University.

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/360>

Olsen, G. I. (2005). *A portrait of an Iowa woman superintendent: A study of attributes and barriers for women in accessing the position of superintendent in Iowa* (Doctoral dissertation, Drake University, 2005). Dissertation Abstracts International, 3184204.

- Ott, M. G. (2019). Coaching and mentoring superintendents of color. *Equity, Leadership Development, School Administrator Magazine*.
<https://www.aasa.org/resources/resource/coaching-mentoring-superintendents-of-color>
- Pearsall J. (2001). The New Oxford Dictionary of English (pp. 1382-1385). Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Peters, A. (2010). Elements of successful mentoring of a women school leader. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 9*(1), 108-129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760903394638>
- Petersen, G. (2002). Singing the same tune: Principals' and school board members' perceptions of the superintendent's role as instructional leader. *Journal of Educational Administration, 40* (2), 158-171. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230210421114>
- Petersen, G. J., Fusarelli, L. D., & Kowalski, T. J. (2008). Novice superintendent perceptions of preparation adequacy and problems of practice. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 3*(2). <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ958880.pdf>
- Pigford, A. B., & Tonnsen, S. (1993). *Women in school leadership: Survival and advancement guidebook*. Technomic Publishing.
- Polka, W., Litchka, P., & Davis, S. (2008). Female superintendents and the professional victim syndrome: Preparing current and aspiring superintendents to cope and succeed. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership, 6*, 293–311. <http://cehs.unl.edu/jwel>
- Quilantán, M. C., & Menchaca-Ochoa, V. (2004). The superintendency becomes a reality for Hispanic women. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 40*(3), 124–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2004.10516421>

- Rallis, S., Tedder, J., Lachman, A., & Elmore, R. (2006). Superintendents in classrooms: From collegial conversation to collaborative action. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87, 537-545.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170608700720>
- Raworth, K., Sweetman, C., Narayan, S., Rowlands, J., & Hopkins, A. (2012). *Conducting semi-structured interviews*. Oxfam. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/conducting-semi-structured-interviews>
- Rebore, R. W. (1984). *Handbook for school board members*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Reed, D., & Patterson, J. (2007). Voices of resilience from successful female superintendents. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 5(2), 89–100.
- Revere, A. B. (1987). Black women superintendents in the United States: 1984-85. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 56(4), 510-520. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2967251>
- Rhodes, C., & Fletcher, S. (2013). Coaching and mentoring for self-efficacious leadership in schools. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching*, 2(1), 47–63.
- Roberts, C. M. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation*. Corwin Press.
- Rodriguez, S. (2019). The unfamiliar superintendent. *Multicultural Education*, 27(1), 53-56.
- Rodriguez, S. (2022). The Latina superintendent's ethical problem solving for equity and justice. *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development*, 34, 24-42.
- Rogers, C. (2021). *The challenges racially isolated male principals encounter when leading schools in which the demographics of the building are not reflective of their race*. (Culminating Project) St. Cloud State University.
https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad_etds/77

- Sampson, P. M., & Ridyolph, T. (2021). Content analysis of dissertations on women superintendents from 2017-2020. *School Leadership Review*, 16(1), Article 2.
- Sanchez, J. E., & Thornton, B. (2010). Gender issues in K-12 educational leadership. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 30(13). <http://advancingwomen.com>
- American Association of School Superintendents Association's (AASA). (2020). *The American superintendent 2020 decennial study*. Alexander, WA.
<https://www.aasa.org/publications/publication/the-american-superintendent-2020-decennial-study>
- Searby, L., & Tripses, J. (2006). Breaking perceptions of 'Old Boys Networks': Women leaders learning to make the most of mentoring relationships. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 4(3), 179-195.
- Seyfried, N. H., & Diamantes, T. (2005). Career paths and the superintendency: Women speak out. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 5, Article 136.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/jwel/136>
- Shakeshaft, C. (1989). *Women in educational administration*. Sage.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1999). The struggle to create a more gender-inclusive profession. In J. Murphy & K. Seashore Louis (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (2nd ed., pp. 99-118). Jossey-Bass.
- Sharpe, W., Malone, B., Walter, J., & Supley, M. (2004). A three-state study of female superintendents. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 27(2), 22-37. <https://login.ezproxy.samford.edu/login?qurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.ebscohost.com%2flogin.aspx%3fdirect%3dtrue%26db%3dth%26AN%3d37376470%26site%3ded-live>

- Sherman, A. (2000). Women managing/managing women: The marginalization of female leadership in rural school settings. *Educational Management & Administration*, 28(2), 133-143.
- Sherman, W. H., Muñoz, A. J., & Pankake, A. (2008). The great divide: Women's experiences with mentoring. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 6(4), 239-259.
- Singh, V., Vinnicombe, S., & Kumra, S. (2006). Women in formal corporate networks: An organizational citizenship perspective. *Women In Management Review*, 21. 458-482.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420610683462>
- Skrla, L., Reyes, P., & Scheurich, J. J. (2000). Sexism, silence, and solutions: Women superintendents speak up and speak out. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(1), 44-75.
- Snyder, T., & Dillow, S. (2012). *Digest of education statistics 2011* (NCES 2012-001). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012001>
- Sperandio, J, & Devdas, L. (2015). Staying close to home: Women's life-choices and the superintendency. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 53, 335-353.
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (1995). Evaluation of superintendent performance: Toward a general model. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 21(2), 153–225. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-491X\(95\)00011-I](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-491X(95)00011-I)
- Superville, D. R. (2016, December 30). Few women run the nation's school districts. Why? *Education Week*, 5(5). PBS, Public Broadcasting Service. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/women-run-nations-school-districts>.

Superville, D. R. (2017). Few women run the nation's school districts. Why? *The Education Digest*, 82(6), 14.

Superville, D. R. (2023). Women of color bring special strengths to the superintendency, new research suggests. *Education Week*. <http://www.edweek.org/leadership/women-of-color-bring-special-strengths-to-the-superintendency-new-research-suggests/2-23/05>

Sutton, C. M. (2008). AASA study: What's the status of the superintendent pipeline? *The School Administrator*, 4(65).

Tallerico, M. (2000). Gaining access to the superintendency: Headhunting, Gender, and color. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(1), 18–43.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00131610021968886>

Tallerico, M. (2000a). *Accessing the superintendency: the unwritten rules*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Tallerico, M., & Blount, J.M. (2004) Women and the superintendency: Insights from theory and history. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 40(5): 633–662

Tatum, S. (2016). The glass maze and predictors for successful navigation to the top seat to the superintendency. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice*, 12(4), 66-86.

Tavris, C. (1992). *The mismeasure of woman*. Simon & Schuster.

Texas Education Agency, Department of Assessment and Accountability, Division of Research and Analysis. (2017). Enrollment in Texas public schools, 2017-18 (Document No. GE 12 601 01). Retrieved from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctress/Enroll_2017.18.pdf

Tinsley, C. H., & Ely, R. (2018). What most people get wrong about men and women. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2018/05/what-most-people-get-wrong-about-men-and-women>

- Toppo, G. (2004, April 28). Thousands of Black teachers lost jobs. *USA Today*.
http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-04-28-brown-side2_x.htm
- Tozer, S. E., Violas, P. C., & Senese, G. (2002). *School and society: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Tyack, D. B., & Hansot, E. (1982). *Managers of virtue: Public school leadership in America*. Basic Books
- Tyack, D. (1990). Restructuring in historical perspective: Tinkering toward utopia. *Teacher College Record*, 92(2), 170-191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819009200208>
- VanTuyle, V., & Watkins, S. G. (2009). Women superintendents in Illinois: Gender barriers and challenges. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 7(3), 135-151.
- Whitaker, J. E. (2006). *Women in the middle: A qualitative study of the leadership experiences of women central office administrators*. (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest dissertation database <https://doi.org/10.25777/s70g-dp94>
- Wiley, K., Bustamante, R., & Ballenger, J. (2017). African American women superintendents in Texas: An exploration of challenges and supports. *Journal of School Administration Research and Development*, 2(1), 18-24.
- Women's Power Gap. (2021, November). *The power gap in K-12 Massachusetts*. Rennie Center. <https://www.renniecenter.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/K12%20Power%20Gap.pdf>
- Woodson, T. T., McLennan, D., & Pérez, K. (2022). *Exploring the lived experiences of superintendents of color in Oregon: Understanding systems of support, challenges, and recommendations for recruiting and retaining superintendents of color in Oregon*. Education Northwest.

Worner, K., (2010). *Success in the superintendency: Tips and advice*. American Association of School Administrators.

Young, M. D. (2005). Shifting away from women's issues in educational leadership in the US: Evidence of a backlash? *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 33 (2), 31-42.

Zalaznick, M. (2023). 5 things that must change if we want more female superintendents. *District Administration*.

Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Letter

St. Cloud State University
Institutional Review Board
Approval date: 02/28/2024
Expiration date: 02/27/2025

Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear Participant,

My name is Juanita Tamez and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Administration & Leadership Program (EdD) at Saint Cloud State University. I am conducting a research study examining the obstacles women of color encounter and the successful pathway leading to the superintendent role, and you are invited to participate in the study. If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in a recorded zoom interview. For the interview process you will be provided a link to access the zoom interview at the agreed time and date.

The interview will approximately be 1-2 hours (or time needed to provide responses). During the interview you will be asked questions about your superintendent role the obstacles encountered and the successful pathway in achieving it. The responses from the zoom interview will be noted and collected. After data is collected it will be interpreted and coded.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The data collected will remain confidential. All data will be stored in a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher. All interview transcriptions will be de-identified. Your name will never be used, and all potentially identifying information will be removed from any direct quotes used in reporting. A pseudonym will be used for direct quotes. The data from this research will not be used or shared with other researchers for future research. The video recording will be used only to record and analyze data. All data will be destroyed after research is completed.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me, Juanita Tamez at 320-534-8711 or jtamez@go.stcloudstate.edu

Thank you for your participation,

Juanita Tamez

Saint Cloud State University

Educational Administration & Leadership

Appendix B: Consent to Participate

St. Cloud State University
Institutional Review Board
Approval date: 02/28/2024
Expiration date: 02/27/2025

OBSTACLES WOMEN OF COLOR ENCOUNTER AND THE SUCCESSFUL PATHWAY LEADING TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Consent to Participate

Introduction

Women of Color are constantly faced with obstacles as professional leaders in roles such as the superintendency. Obstacles throughout history often are associated with women of color seeking higher leadership positions and determine if they will remain a rarity in such executive positions. Women of color make up a small group educational leaders seeking the superintendency. Yet, they are determined to reach such a position besides it being a challenging path. This study seeks to determine what are the challenges they encountered and what strategies they used to achieve in obtaining the superintendent role. You are invited to participate in a research study about the obstacle's women of color encounter and the successful pathway leading to the superintendent role.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is intended to examine women of color perspectives, leadership characteristics, the practices they follow as they lead themselves to a successful pathway to the superintendency through history, gender (bias) and the obstacles they experience to obtain a superintendent role. For the study success is defined as how women of color in superintendent roles have increased throughout history, women of color are obtaining the superintendent role and women of color surpassing the obstacles they face towards the superintendent role.

Study Procedures

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in a recorded zoom interview. For the interview process you will be provided a link to access the zoom interview at the agreed time and date. The interview will approximately be 1-2 hours (or time needed to provide responses). During the interview you will be asked questions about your superintendent role the obstacles encountered and the successful pathway in achieving it. The responses from the zoom interview will be noted and collected. After data is collected it will be interpreted and coded.

Benefits

The anticipated benefits associated with the participants in this study is that of the information obtained in this research study will be information that can further allow for further research on similar studies such as that of Obstacles Women of Color Encounter and the Successful Pathway Leading To The Superintendency.

Risks and Discomforts

Potential risks for participants while participating in this study can be that comments may be taken out of context, but no physical or psychological risks are presumed.

Data Confidentiality

The data collected will remain confidential. All data will be stored in a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher. All interview transcriptions will be de-identified. Your name will never be used, and all potentially identifying information will be removed from any direct quotes used in reporting. The participants voice and likeness will not be used in any publication. A pseudonym will be used for direct quotes. The data from this research will not be used or shared with other researchers for future research. The video recording will be used only to record and analyze data. All data will be destroyed after research is completed.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time without penalty.

Contact Information

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact the researcher, Juanita Tamez at 320-534-8711 or jtamez@go.stcloudstate.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact SCSU Institutional Review Board Chair at wccollisprather@stcloudstate.edu. You may contact the researcher if you are interested in the study results.

Compensation

Participants in the study did not receive gifts or monetary compensation.

Consent

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, have read the information provided above, and consent to participate.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Name

Appendix C: Interview Guide

St. Cloud State University
 Institutional Review Board
 Approval date: 02/28/2024
 Expiration date: 02/27/2025

Interview Guide

Obstacles Women of Color Encounter
 And
 The Successful Pathway Leading to The Superintendency

Introduction

- Greetings
 - Introduce yourself to the participant (your name and where you work)
 - Explain to the participant that you are doing a research project to learn about women of color, the obstacles they encounter and successful pathways to the superintendent role.
 - For this project you'll be asking them questions about their obstacles and successful pathways to the superintendent role. You want them to be as open and honest when answering.
- Confidentiality
 - Interview is going to be recorded.
 - All information collected during the interview will be kept safe in a secure office.
- Study Identifiers
 - I will not use your name or any identifying information and everything that you say will be only used for research purposes.
 - After the research is done all information will be deleted.

Interview Guide

1. How are you doing?
 - a. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
 - i. What school district you work in?
 - ii. What are the demographics of the school district you work in?
2. Research Questions
 1. What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are women of color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?
 - As for the support you mentioned do you think you could've changed anything. If so, why?
 2. What strategies have selected superintendents who are women of color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?
 - Can you elaborate more on the strategies you used to overcome the obstacles encountered?
 3. What mentoring or other forms of support do selected women of color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?
 - Can you explain more on the mentoring/support you received to help you obtain the role of superintendency?
 4. What advice would select women of color superintendents give to peers who are seeking the position of superintendents of schools?

- Would you ever consider being a mentor to another woman of color who is seeking to obtain the role of superintendent?
- Thank You for participating and can we contact you again if I have any further questions or need further clarification?

Appendix D: Research Instrument for Data Collection

St. Cloud State University
Institutional Review Board
Approval date: 02/28/2024
Expiration date: 02/27/2025

Research Instrument For Data Collection Obstacles Women Of Color Encounter And The Successful Pathway Leading To The Superintendency

Research Instruments

The research instruments used for data collection are research questions, zoom interview, observation, and transcribing.

Essentially the researcher must ensure that the instrument chosen is valid and reliable. The validity and reliability of any research project depends to a large extent on the appropriateness of the instruments. Whatever procedure one uses to collect data, it must be critically examined to check the extent to which it is likely to give you the expected results.

Research Questions

1. What are the support and obstacles that selected superintendents who are women of color report they have experienced as they have worked to attain the position of school superintendent?
 2. What strategies have selected superintendents who are women of color report using to overcome the obstacles they encountered in seeking and maintaining their role as school superintendent?
 3. What mentoring or other forms of support do selected women of color report that have helped them attain and retain their position as a school superintendent?
 4. What advice would select women of color superintendents give to peers who are seeking the position of superintendents of schools?
- It is a form that contains a set of questions on a topic or group of topics designed to be answered by the participants.
 - The participants are the population samples of the study. The answers provided by the participants constitute the data for the research.
 - This type which is also termed as open-ended or unrestricted type of questionnaire calls for a free response in the participants own words. The participant frames and supplies the answer to the question raised in the questionnaire. It also constitutes questions which give the participant an opportunity to express his or her opinions from a set of options. Spaces are often provided for participants to make their inputs.

Interviews

The participant will be part of the research study, they will be asked to participate in a recorded zoom interview. For the interview process they will be provided a link to access the zoom interview at the agreed time and date. The interview will approximately be 1-2 hours (or time needed to provide responses). During the interview they will be asked questions about their superintendent role the obstacles encountered and the successful pathway in achieving it. The responses from the zoom interview will be noted and collected. After data is collected it will be interpreted and coded.

- Interviews become necessary when researchers feel the need to meet face-to-face with individuals to interact and generate ideas in a discourse that borders on mutual interest. It is an interaction in which oral questions are posed by the interviewer to elicit oral response from the interviewee. Specifically with research interviews, the researcher has to identify a potential source of information, and structure the interaction in a manner that will bring out relevant information from his respondent. The creation of a cordial atmosphere is therefore vital to the

success of such an interaction. Apart from face-to-face interviews, they can also be conducted over the phone or the computer terminal via video conferencing technology.

- The Unstructured Interview is the less formal type in which although sets of questions may be used, the interviewer freely modifies the sequence of questions, changes the wording and sometimes explains them or adds to them during the interaction. Hence the researcher has to be careful in order not to deviate from her focus. The atmosphere is often casual. This is conducted in what is characterized as an opened situation because there is more flexibility and freedom in the interaction.

Observation

- Observation is one of the very important methods for obtaining comprehensive data in qualitative research especially when a composite of both oral and visual data become vital to the research. A researcher obviously needs an audio-visual recorder for a complete collection of such comprehensive record. Using observation strategy, researchers are able to obtain first-hand information about objects, and eventful happenings like durbar and festivals. The possibility of distorting facts and records are reduced to the barest minimum.
- Non-Participant Observer: In this approach the researcher does not live as a member of the subjects of the study. The researcher watches the subjects of his or her study, with their knowledge of his status as a researcher, but without taking an active part in the situation under study. This approach is sometimes criticized on the grounds that the very fact of their being observed may lead people to behave indifferently, thus invalidating the data obtained.

Transcribing

Data recorded from verbal interaction with participant must be transcribed i.e. convert the speech sound into words as accurately as possible.

Appendix E: Release Form for Use of Audio Recording

St. Cloud State University
Institutional Review Board
Approval date: 02/28/2024
Expiration date: 02/27/2025

Release Form for Use of Photograph/Video/Audio Recording

Obstacles Women of Color Encounter And The Successful Pathway Leading To The
Superintendency

Juanita Tamez

jtamez@go.stcloudstate.edu

Dr. John Eller

jfeller@stcloudstate.edu

Please Print:

Participant Name

Legal Representative if Applicable

This form asks for your consent to use media for and from this study. We would like you to indicate how we can use your media. On the next page is a list of media types that we will use. Please initial where you consent for that type of use of your media. Legal representative initials will provide consent when needed.

Regardless of your answers on the next page, you will not be penalized.

We will not use your media in any way you have not initialed.

Questions regarding this form should be directed to the researchers. Additional answers can be found by contacting the IRB Administrator or an IRB Committee Member. Current membership is available at: <https://www.stcloudstate.edu/irb/members.aspx>

A copy of this form will be provided for your records.

Video with audio	
Consent Granted	Type of Release
	Used by research team to record and analyze data
	Published or presented in an academic outlet (e.g., journal, conference)

Transcription of audio	
Consent Granted	Type of Release
	Used by research team to record and analyze data
	Published or presented in an academic outlet (e.g., journal, conference)

Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)
720 4th Avenue South AS 101, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

February 28, 2024

Juanita Tamez
jtamez@go.stcloudstate.edu

Faculty Mentor: John Eller

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects.


PROJECT TITLE: Obstacles Women of Color Encounter and the Successful Pathway Leading to the Superintendency
YOUR PROJECT HAS BEEN: Approved
IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Expedited
SCSU IRB#: 60199485

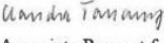
1st Year Approval: 02-28-2024 **1st Year Expiration:** 02-27-2025

Please read through the following important information concerning IRB projects.

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc) by completing an IRB Modification/Revision request Form: https://webportalapp.com/webform/irb_modification_request_form
- The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.
- Expedited and full board review projects are up for annual renewal (1 year from your approval date, or on the expiration date listed on the approval stamp) and the principal investigator is required to report the status of the project prior to the expiration date by completing one of the following:
 - Continuing Review Form: Request to extend the project as either subject recruitment/enrollment continues or data collection continues and the project has not concluded. https://webportalapp.com/webform/irb_continuing_review_form
 - Final Report Form: Indicate project completion as data collection is complete (data analysis may continue). You will receive an email reminder approximately one month in advance of the expiration date. https://webportalapp.com/webform/irb_final_report
- Approved consent form(s) and recruitment document(s) display the formal SCSU IRB stamp which is indication of official approval and lists expiration dates. These are the forms to be used during the project study. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

Feel free to contact the IRB for assistance at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding for expedited response. Additional information can be found on the IRB website <https://www.stcloudstate.edu/irb/default.aspx>.

Sincerely,
 IRB Chair:
 Dr. William Collis-Prather

 Program Director
 Applied Clinical Research

IRB Institutional Official
 Dr. Claudia Tomany

 Associate Provost for Research
 Dean of Graduate Studies

Appendix G: CITI Certificate



Completion Date 05-Nov-2023
Expiration Date 05-Nov-2028
Record ID 52115206

This is to certify that:

Juanita Tamez

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Basic/Refresher Course - Human Subjects Research
(Curriculum Group)
IRB Training for Graduate Students
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

St. Cloud State University



Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wd793ddee-8108-41d8-bb24-160048b2a11f-52115206