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Phenomenal Women: Experiences of Women in Executive Catholic Educational Leadership in the United States

Fatima Ann Samson Nicdao
Loyola Marymount University, tpafatima@gmail.com

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Phenomenal Women:

Experiences of Women in Executive Catholic Educational Leadership

in the United States

by

Fatima Ann Samson Nicdao

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirement for the degree

Doctor of Education

2020

Phenomenal Women:

Experiences of Women in Catholic Educational Leadership

in the United States

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Fatima Ann Samson Nicdao

Loyola Marymount University

School of Education

Los Angeles, CA 90045

Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
Los Angeles, CA 90045

This dissertation written by Fatima Nicdao, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

30 June 2020
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Date

Dissertation Committee

_____
Elizabeth Reilly, Ed.D., Committee Member

_____
Lauren Casella, Ed.D., Committee Member

_____
Franca Dell'Olio, Ed.D., Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

Phenomenal Women:

Experiences of Women in Catholic Educational Leadership

in the United States

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Though women are overrepresented in education as classroom teachers, they continue to be

underrepresented in decision-making leadership positions in education administration (Bynum,

2016; Coleman, 2003; Fuller, 2013; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Moorosi, 2018; Robinson et al.,

2017; Torrance et al., 2017). The cause of the low representation of women in decision making

has been attributed to a wide range of reasons spanning from ingrained patriarchal mindsets,

societal biases, lack of professional networks, misconceptions of women in leadership, and the

lack of leadership opportunities.

Other causes of gender inequality in educational leadership are linked to a lack of a

systematic mentorship ecology and infrastructure within institutions. Instead, there are

hegemonic structures of White males in power who mentor other White males to continue the

cycle (Robinson et al., 2017; Shakeshaft, 1989). It is a challenge in the Catholic church because

traditional beliefs rooted in conservative Biblical interpretation may support and reinforce male

domination in leadership contexts. The steady shift of society's values and understanding of women, however, has revealed the growing acceptance of women as leaders in other industries beyond education, which contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership styles and how leadership can be androgynous.

This study analyzed the experiences of current assistant superintendents or superintendents in a Catholic diocese. Experiences ranged from participants' early days as teachers, administrators, and assistant superintendents or superintendents. This phenomenological study explored participants' lived experiences with faith, spirituality challenges and barriers, and navigating relationships and accomplishing goals through transformational leadership.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Catholic education is one of the oldest institutions in the United States. Generations of immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and other Catholic countries came to find a better life while maintaining their own sense of faith, culture, and identity. The growing population of immigrants in urban cities prompted bishops to mandate building new churches and parish schools to educate their children on Catholic values and traditions (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2003). The need for Catholic schools came with the need for religious sisters from Spain, France, and various European countries.

To fully understand women and their role in Catholic educational leadership, it is first important to understand the context of Catholicism and its role in the United States and the education system. This includes the history of religious sisters in Catholic schools, the advent of Vatican II, and the cultural revolution of the 1960s. These events marked the genesis of women in Catholic educational leadership.

Background of the Problem

Parishes: A Home Away From Home

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Catholic parishes were the centers of community life. From the early colonial period to the mid-20th century, Catholics were generally hated and victims of discrimination (Walch, 2003). The "nativists" who were Protestant and anti-Catholic did all they could to discourage Catholics from settling in their states. Maryland was one of the only states that protected Catholics from the widespread hate and disdain of a religion that was ridiculed for presumably worshipping the Pope. They were unwelcomed immigrants who formed

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close-knit communities among their own ethnicities. *Parishes*, according to canon law, were "social and religious communities bound to a particular church" (Brinig & Garnett, 2014, p. 2). They were largely in urban spaces and territorial in nature. They were usually in communities bound by non-English ethnicities such as Irish-American, Italian-American, Hungarian-American communities that sought to preserve their culture, language, and ways of expressing their Catholic faith. Parishes were the centers of community life with schools. A parish was the center of a Catholic's world that included a culture of attending Sunday School, Mass, and support of local businesses and homeownership. Pastors were influential and set the tone in establishing cultural norms and expectations such as keeping the families together, loyalty to parishes, contributing to the parish financially and through volunteerism (Brinig & Garnett, 2014; Walch, 2003). In the early years, American bishops issued letters to the Church leaders and community to establish more Catholic schools.

Call for Catholic Schools

In the early 1900s, public schools were run under Protestant values and anti-Catholic rhetoric that saw the Pope as "the Anti-Christ, a man of sin and son of Pestilence" (Walch, 2003, p. 12). Catholic leaders opposed public education since it had heavy influences of Protestant style instruction and anti-Catholic propaganda (Brinig & Garnett, 2014; Caruso, 2012). Meanwhile, Protestants saw Catholicism as a "backward religion and depraved" (Walch, 2003, p. 40). Catholics and Protestants were at odds in public schools until finally hundreds of Catholic school children were expelled from public schools after refusing to recite the 10 commandments from a Protestant Bible (it was against the bishop's orders at the time for any Catholic to read from a Protestant Bible). Riots ensued, and the anti-Catholic reached its climax with riots and

official laws being made to ban the funding of Catholic schools since they failed to uphold the Protestant values and were "sectarian" (Brinig & Garnett, 2014). The Blaine Amendment was based on nativist beliefs and prejudice against a church as the source of "superstition, ambition, and ignorance" (Brinig & Garnett, 2014, p. 17) and therefore a threat to the American Public System. In 1876, the Blaine Amendment set into effect a law that no public funds should be appropriated to Catholic schools (Walch, 2003). This law still applies to Catholic schools today.

As a result, the American bishops called for the establishment of Catholic schools (Brinig & Garnett, 2014; Caruso, 2012; Cattaro & McDonald, 2015; Walch, 2003). The Catholic school system or parochial education became the largest private school system in the world outside the public school system by the late 19th and early 20th centuries and totaled 5 million students by the 1960s (Brinig & Garnett, 2014; Caruso, 2012). In 1884, the bishops of the United States gathered in the Third Plenary Council in Baltimore to mandate a Catholic school in every parish. In addition, a mandate was given for every Catholic to put their child through a parochial school with an authoritarian threat of mortal sin if they did not comply (Caruso, 2012).

The Impact of Religious Sisters in American Catholic Education

Catholic education was built by the hard labor of religious sisters in classrooms. At the start of the twentieth century, Catholic schools were almost entirely staffed by women religious from many communities and were the backbone of U.S. Catholic education (Caruso, 2012). For over 300 years since the Franciscan friars from Spain established the first school in the new world, religious orders established schools to educate children on "Christian doctrine, reading, and writing" (Kealey, 1989, p. 278). The religious orders ran the schools from administration to instruction; educating the immigrants, the poor, and the marginalized. The religious schools

either served the very wealthy or the very poor. Early private schools were run by the Ursuline Sisters who served upper-class Protestants (Brinig & Garnett, 2014; Walch, 2003). Notably, the first two congregations to establish schools in North America were cloistered nuns; the Carmelites and Poor Clares. Cloistered nuns devoted their lives to prayer and quiet obedience and sacrifice. Though unsuccessful at first, other orders of religious sisters soon followed and established schools in New England and as far as New Orleans. The Ursuline sisters established the oldest Catholic school in New Orleans in the United States in 1792. The Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph were successful in establishing their convent school and expanded from Carondelet (near New Orleans) and Rochester (near Boston). By 1808, the Sisters of Charity led by Elizabeth Ann Seton began to establish itself and train its first generation of religious sisters and later became known as "the founder of the Catholic parochial school movement in the United States" (Walch, 2003, p. 21). These religious orders worked swiftly and systematically with the help of bishops to establish schools in their communities.

Sisters Establishing the Teaching Workforce

By the mid-19th century, religious congregations experienced a surge of membership and recruitment. Religious communities were sending over 40,000 sisters from 119 communities into parish schools (Owens, 1981, as cited in Jacobs, 1989). These vocations were attracting many women to join congregations and work in schools up until the 1950s. Catholic schools were also established to prepare young men for the priesthood and young women for more domestic tasks for a life as a homemaker in managing a home and raising children (Buetow, 1970, as cited in Ignacio, 1995). Between 1946 and 1964, a record number of women entered religious life (Caruso, 2012). The surge in religious vocations corresponded with the demand of teachers in

Catholic schools with robust enrollment. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles had over 10,000 students in Catholic schools with a demand for over 40,000 students and describes the history with letters and a narrative of how the Sisters of St. Louis in Ireland were invited to run schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (Caruso, 2012). These sisters had little to no training and were put in a "sink or swim" model in which they were mentored by experienced teachers while taking Saturday classes. They were supervised by *Sister Supervisors* who had more advanced education and worked with them on how to teach effectively.

Financing a Workforce

The religious sisters were expected to live a life of celibacy, obedience, and poverty. Their contracts to teach in Catholic schools during the second half of the 20th century were described as follows:

> School parents often tithed a certain amount of money so that their children could attend the parish school. Otherwise, the school was entirely financed with the Sunday collection. Running a school on such slender means was possible because of the contributed services of the teachers who received a meager monthly stipend of approximately $50. The sisters were rarely offered health insurance or retirement benefits as part of their employment package. Sisters often depended upon the generosity and friendship of Catholic hospitals —operated by religious communities of sisters, physicians, and dentists—to contribute their services *gratis* or for a reduced fee. (Caruso, 2012, pp. 30-31)

At the time, the average salary was about $200 a month; religious sisters were an "educational bargain" in comparison to the $50 stipend, community car, and convent provided by the diocese (Caruso, 2012). Nevertheless, the sacrifices of the religious sisters have never been really uncovered. One student recounted, "The sisters have only the bare necessities and did without items we take for granted today. I remember one day, finding her at her desk gluing her false tooth back in place with Elmer's glue because there was no money for a dentist" (Caruso, 2012, p. 33). The sisters lived in poverty and managed as best as they could with what they were given.

First Women in Catholic Education Leadership

The religious sisters were the first women in Catholic educational leadership. They were the pioneers who ventured off into distant places to serve where needed. Caruso (2012) stated, "In fact, everyone looked to the sisters for leadership in conducting the school and setting its standards. They looked to the sisters to handle various celebrations and traditions" (p. 49). Single, laywomen who worked at the schools looked to the sisters for how to organize events and discipline children. In a way, it was as if the sisters were preparing the laywomen for when the religious orders would eventually leave schools.

By 1940, religious sisters outnumbered priests in the Diocese of Boston two to one. Even within religious orders, canon law gave more autonomy and exemptions to male religious orders. Religious orders were controlled by diocesan (local bishop's office) and pontifical (from Rome) offices. Men were overall in charge of these religious orders and could dictate their superior generals (leaders), community rules, and overall lifestyles. American bishops mandated cloistered lifestyles for many orders. For example, sisters were required to stay at their convent during Christmas and Easter, have limited contact with the world, and practice the virtues of "silence and humility" (Oates, 1993, p. 153). In addition, the sisters were to bow to bishops instead of the customary handshake, withdraw from attending graduations and school events, and be subject to wardrobe modifications by the clerics. In essence, women were subordinate to men. It was summarized in *The Catholic Press* in 1896: "Woman is not, and in the eternal fitness of things never can be, unqualifiedly man's coequal or superior. Women being after and from man, does not represent humanity in the full and complete sense that man does" (MacCorrie, as cited in Oates, 1993, p. 153)

Religious orders were low-cost labor solutions to the growing needs in education or health within a diocese. A bishop could invite an order to his diocese and assign them to start or run a school and/or hospital; whatever the needs of the diocese at the time. Religious orders, with the intent to serve in schools and social justice causes, started to be controlled more tightly by clergy. They began to demand sisters to be domestic servants in seminaries and rectories. The sisters fought back avaricious bishops and started to organize and professionalize their services by drawing up contracts. These accounts of religious sisters' experiences are important to note since it did not happen in isolation. In the turn of the twentieth century, numerous religious communities faced obstacles not only from Protestant communities but from within among their own bishops.

This particular part of the literature demonstrates the limiting paradigms those that represented the church practiced among their own flock. The mentality and beliefs expressed in this context may be diminishing from the larger social context of Catholic governance in terms of how women are perceived. However, there are still policies in place that seem to echo these outmoded sentiments of oppression.

Vatican II and the Cultural Revolution

The arrival of the cultural revolution in the 1960s and Vatican II signaled a vast change in the landscape of Catholic education. Religious vocations declined significantly while existing clergy and religious sisters left their orders in waves. Though the primary tasks and vocation of a religious sister included living a simple, celibate life of obedience in the context of community living and teaching, they were interested in evolving as professionals in a group governed by men (Oates, 1993). Laymen and women began filling in teaching and administrative positions as

the religious orders that managed the schools simply died out or sold their buildings and land. An influx of change occurred in the 1960s and 1970s; the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam war, women's/feminist movement, Latin American liberation movement, Watergate scandal, and concern for the environment had a direct and indirect impact on Catholic education (Caruso, 2012). These chain of events, such as Vatican II, which lead to religious communities refocusing on their charism (mission and vision) and therefore leave schools, have less community among religious sisters, change in their outfits (and thus less visibility), decrease in vocations, smaller families and fewer vocations, more opportunities for women to be professionals (Caruso, 2012). The new paradigm shift brought new career possibilities and opportunities for women. Moreover, it brought new finance and staffing challenges with the growth of a lay workforce. The negative perceptions and assumptions of women in regard to leadership continued to be present in secular contexts and corporate workforce settings. In Catholic tradition, high ranking clergy such as bishops, archbishops, and Cardinals lived comfortably. They oversaw operations and managed the religious sisters through their own chosen leader. Within the religious orders were leaders based on appointed members and years in service to the community. These leaders would be called *mother* for higher superiors in rank. In the religious community, elected leaders appointed superior generals for a certain amount of time.

Though it was the expectation for all to live by the tenets of Christian kindness and respect, it was not uncommon for certain clergy to exert any dominance or authority over the religious sisters as they saw fit. It was the cultural norm rooted in the religious expectation that women would be obedient and cooperative toward their male superiors.

Statement of the Problem

The fixed mindset regarding women and leadership in theological aspects of Church teaching permeates Catholic school policies and parish life. Church teaching on the ordination of males only as clergy contributed significantly to the lack of women leadership in the Catholic superintendency and assistant superintendency. Though there are prominent female figures such as the Blessed Virgin Mary, various female saints and icons, such as Mother Teresa, the fundamental structures of decision making still rely on the bishops and Cardinals in regard to choosing a Pope and deliberation on Church doctrines, and contributions to social issues. Women still experience discrimination and prejudice due to their gender in secular and religious contexts (Moorosi, 2018). The Catholic Church is an established, patriarchal institution with extensive influence and inextricable ties to culture with its 1.6 billion membership all over the world. In addition to its influence and size, is its tendency to be slow in change. The nature of the patriarchal, male-dominated institution creates a structure of unique leadership experiences for female Catholic school leaders (Gomez, 2017). In the Catholic Church's hierarchical structure, there are no expectations of collaboration or discussion (Caruso, 2012). Caruso (2012) explained Catholics are "accustomed to regimented hierarchical dissemination of information" (p. 98). Dogma, doctrine, encyclicals, and other messages are released from the seat of the Papacy.

Women and Leadership in the Catholic Church

In Catholic education, the historically patriarchal dispositions which permeate in policies and procedures may have hindered women from pursuing leadership opportunities beyond a classroom teacher. The conflict is rooted in the patriarchal mentality supported indirectly by the interpretations of teachings and scripture such as the woman's role in family life and leadership

and the man's authority and leadership. For example, Manson (2016) reported Pope Francis' new commission on researching Women as Deacons. In Church law, women are not allowed to be priests. According to the Pope and Church doctrine, women do not have equal power since it goes against natural law. It is believed God "created men to be leaders, authorities, and decision-makers" (Manson, 2016, p. 2). Meanwhile, women in the past were relegated to nurturing babies and families and serving others.

In many ways, attitudes toward women in Catholic education and educational leadership take its cues from deeply rooted beliefs about women and their place in the church and society as a whole. If the Catholic church in its most conservative form sees men as the true leaders capable of making decisions, this cascades down to the notion of leaders in other facets of Catholic life to follow in some cases. Opponents of women being in clerical positions assume they (the women) are careerists who seek titles and honors. However, this is not the first assumption made by young seminarians who seek to be priests. It is assumed they want to serve the Church. Though women are declared equal in dignity, they are not equal in power. Though women's voices are encouraged to be heard, they are not the ones making the decisions (Manson, 2016). In addition to the limiting paradigm that women in Catholic education must navigate, obstacles in educational leadership exist in all educational sectors.

In addition to the existing patriarchal paradigms in the Catholic church and secular society, the problem exists in three parts: (a) underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles and higher forms of educational leadership, (b) lack of institutionalized level interventions for mentoring, and (c) under evolved policies at work that produce microaggressions toward women in the context of work-life balance and family life (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Historically, women are disproportionately represented in high positions of educational leadership compared to their overrepresentation as career teachers (Bynum, 2016; Coleman, 2003; Fuller, 2013; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Moorosi, 2018; Robinson et al., 2017, Torrance et al., 2017). Much of educational leadership literature has focused on the male experience. Researchers showed: "Traditional models of leadership tend to be exclusive and represent an orientation to leadership derived from those traditionally in positions of power that is mostly Caucasian, male, upper-middle-class orientation to leadership" (Kezar & Moriarity, as cited in Torrance et al., 2017, p. 30). Current findings (see Table 1) also show men are 4 times more likely than women to serve as superintendents, and women and men of color are underrepresented still (Robinson et al., 2017). Table 2 shows superintendents in public schools in the United States.

Table 1

Percentage of Superintendents in Public School Districts in the United States by Race and Gender

	Percent superintendents of color	Percent of White superintendents	Total by gender
Percentage female	2.2	24.6	26.8
Percentage male	3	70.2	73.2
Total by race	5.2	94.8	100

Table 2

Percentage of Superintendents in Catholic School Dioceses in the United States by Gender

	n Catholic superintendents	Percentage Catholic superintendents
Percentage female	71	39.6
Percentage male	108	60.3

The Catholic Superintendent

The job of a superintendent evolved from the 1880s. According to Cattaro and McDonald (2015), the position was created by a board of inspectors. The schools were run by religious congregations which were supervised by a board of inspectors, a group of pastors appointed by the bishop. Since pastors did not have time to supervise schools, the superintendent position emerged. Their duties included visiting schools, keeping records, standardizing the curriculum, and teacher professional development. All superintendents were clergy until the 1960s. In 1967 there were religious sisters as superintendents. By the 1970s there were laypersons as superintendents.

The Role of the Administrator

Education leadership comes with its costs for women in the task to make sense of professional and personal lives, especially with children and family. These administration roles can be exhausting and require sacrifices. Regina Bowers, a former head of school at the Center for Early Education at the University of Southern California (USC), remarked, "There's no balance. But you become skilled at managing the imbalance" (Brenneman, 2016, p. 1). The balance of having children, a family, and a career will always guarantee that something will be neglected.

Slow Road to Progress

It is impossible to prescribe one quick fix action to hasten the progress of women in leadership. The best action we can take to ensure women in leadership cover all industries is to first ensure more women are hired in educational leadership (Fugler, 2016). The next generation of leaders is socialized into learning academic and social skills in their K-12 years in school and

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later on in higher education. The change is taking longer than it should due to outdated paradigms and misconceptions about women in leadership. In public education, the shift of females becoming superintendents are only increasing by 0.7% annually. At this rate, it would take 80 years for females to be fully represented in educational leadership in public schools (Fugler, 2016). If the rate of change in the Catholic church is considered, it would take longer for women in Catholic education. There needs to be more robust conversations about developing women as leaders as a whole and especially in education.

Women make up 77% of the professional staff in Catholic schools. From that percentage, 75% are lay women and 3% are religious sisters. Nevertheless, only 40% of the superintendents in the Catholic dioceses and archdioceses in the United States are women. The problem is situated in not only the underrepresentation of women in executive Catholic educational leadership. Moreover, it is in the patriarchal framework and the accompanying discriminatory practices found in secular systems and reinforced in certain practices found in the Catholic system that contribute to the enduring challenges women face in spaces of leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to understand the experiences, challenges, and successes of female assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses in the United States. This was done through semi-structured, qualitative interviews analyzed through a Dedoose software to extract themes and phenomena of the field. This study aims to critically examine and unpack the experiences of women in Catholic educational leadership and contribute to the knowledge of recruitment, hiring, and retention of women as educational leaders. Findings of this study may inform Catholic school leaders and decision-

makers to be more aware of the challenges faced by women and work toward intentional

solutions to ameliorate the development of female Catholic school leaders.

Significance of the Study

In the public school context, 76% of the nation's K-12 educators are women. Yet only

24% are school superintendents (Ramaswamy, 2020). In the Catholic school context, a

superintendent study conducted in 2015 showed though women are a majority in the

superintendency at 56%, there is a 3.6% decrease since 2009 while men went from 3.6% to an

increase of 43.4% in that same time (Cattaro & McDonald, 2015). According to the Forbes

Coaches Council (2018), women have not progressed enough in terms of leadership

representation. In the past, women were not included in discussions of leadership even if they

always served as leaders (Curry, 2000). Today, only 5.2% of the CEOs (26 women) are part of

the Fortune 500 companies. Women are still not considered for many high demand and decision-

making positions. As of this last election, a historic number of women were elected into

Congress. Kurtzleben (2018) reported 98 women won seats in the U.S. House of Representatives

(out of 435) and 13 women in the Senate seats (out of 50) during this year's November midterm

elections. A 23% rise of women from 107 to 121 women in Congress signaled the ushering in of

a new era of how women are perceived as leaders. Exit polls showed almost 8 in 10 Americans

agreed it was important to elect more women to public office. It is important to examine current

contexts of women in leadership within society since it is inextricably connected to the

patriarchal mindsets that still permeate over political, religious, and cultural issues. According to

the Pew Research Center, due to the double standard of women in professional roles, women

have to work harder than a man would have to work, to reach positions of significant leadership to prove themselves (Brown, 2017; Parker et al., 2018).

This study is important because we are entering an era that is starting to further recognize the emerging power and voice of women. The #MeToo Movement began by giving victims of sexual abuse a voice to be heard. The current presidential administration is the embodiment of aggressive attempts to preserve the misogynistic, racist, and classist ways that have dominated the culture. This study is to examine the state of women in leadership in the context of Catholic education and see how it is changing society.

Though women in educational leadership have been examined extensively, there is limited research on this leadership in the Catholic school context. There is limited research that has documented their progress. It will help diocese leaders understand how to better support women leaders. There is a particular gap in the literature review of the experience of women of color in diocese-level jobs. This study sought to explore if an institution established on patriarchal tenets is making any progress on developing women as leaders. The study seeks to understand their experiences in Catholic educational leadership.

Essential Research Question

What are the experiences, successes, and challenges of female assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses?

This study seeks to research the experiences of women in dioceses across the United States who serve in positions of leadership as assistant superintendents and superintendents.

Research Design

This is a qualitative, phenomenological study using a semi-structured interview protocol. Phenomenological research methods help those in the study be fully understood. This type of study requires intentional listening, a reflective and analytical return to experiences. This includes clear descriptions of "thoughts, feelings, examples, ideas, situations that portray what comprises an experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). Participants were chosen from a purposive sample of women in leadership positions such as assistant superintendents and superintendents in a Catholic diocese in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study grounded on Catholic social teaching (CST) and the social justice framework. Catholic social teaching; specifically, the principles of Life and Dignity of the Human Person and Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers are the main tenets to connecting to the experience of women in educational leadership. This framework is pertinent to this study since it is tied to the dignity of women and how their role is perceived in society. Church teachings call its followers to elevate the role of women (*On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* - Pope John Paul II). Catholic Social Teaching is an integral part of moral theology that looks at relevant issues of the interaction between economic, political aspects of contemporary society with the themes of human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity (Wright, 2017).

Church teaching on prejudice and discrimination is very clear and is condemned as direct violations of human dignity. Furthermore, Church teaching states in Vatican II's encyclical *Gaudium et Spes* (Church in the Modern World):

> With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language

or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honored. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right to choose a husband freely, to embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men. (Paul VI, 1965, section 29)

Though the patriarchal narratives may hinder women, deep within its teachings calls for "cultural benefits equal to those recognized in men" (Paul VI, 1965, section 29). According to Scanlan (2009), Catholic schools cannot claim to be truly Catholic unless they treat those in the margins with dignity. It is a philosophical framework from the late 19th century that calls for the undeniable recognition of the dignity of the human being and the commitment to marginalized people to promote the common good.

The social justice framework is the lens of which challenges of women in Catholic educational leadership was analyzed. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2009) articulated the social justice framework in education as actively standing up to oppression established by institutionalized injustices toward others due to race, class, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexual orientation. This framework can be applied to this research as it analyzes experiences and how policies and practices rooted in patriarchal values may be used to oppress persons directly or indirectly due to gender.

Methodology Overview: Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The research assumes the existence of levels of discrimination based on sex and perceived competence, and the lived experiences coupled with leadership capacity. This study also assumes mentorship is key to leadership development.

Some limitations of the study include sample size, time constraints, and lack of generalizability due to the nature of qualitative research. The data collection process can also be

affected by bias by someone who is a woman in Catholic education. My semi-structured

interview questions may reflect some bias and assumptions of women in leadership. Interview

answers as self-reports and the interpretation of findings are other limitations to this study. The

women of this study represent a small number of assistant superintendents. The superintendents

only represent 2% of the nation's total superintendents.

Definitions of Terms

- An *assistant (or associate) superintendent* is a person who supervises a particular set
  of schools (sometimes within a deanery or vicariates) to ensure professional
  development, provide wisdom and guidance to principals to solve problems, create
  budgets, improve learning outcomes, and create provide onboarding and guidance for
  new principals.

- *Collaborative mentoring* is when several professionals become directly involved in
  the learning, a network, shared decision making, systems thinking, and collaboration
  (Bynum, 2016).

- *Deanery* is a group of schools within a geographic region that is supervised by an
  assistant superintendent or superintendent.

- *Formal mentoring* refers to programs managed and endorsed by the organization and
  involve matching a senior employee with a less skilled junior colleague (Bynum,
  2016).

- *Glass ceiling* refers to an unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a
  profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities (Gomez, 2017;
  Stout-Rostron, 2017).

- *Informal mentoring* refers to relationships formed by chance, with no schedule or agenda, and conversations revolve around professional development and career projection (Bynum, 2016).

- *Peer mentoring* refers to informal mentoring, where a mentor is close in age to the mentee and vice versa (Bynum, 2016).

- *Servant leadership* is practiced by serving others, but its ultimate purpose is to place oneself and others for whom one has a responsibility in the service of ideals (Sergiovanni, 2013).

- *Superintendents* oversee, supervise, guide, direct, and set a vision for Catholic schools. They make school visits and ensure the vitality and sustainability of schools (Cattaro & McDonald, 2015).

- *Transformational leadership* is a type of leadership characterized by emphasis on intrinsic motivation and developing the strengths of followers to fulfill their needs in being empowered to succeed. It involves emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It combines both a charismatic style and visionary leadership (Northouse, 2016).

- *Vicaries* refer to a region or set of schools supervised by an assistant superintendent.

Positionality

I am a woman of color, Catholic educator, assistant principal at a Parish Catholic High School in an upper-middle-class urban space. I have been a teacher for 10 years and an administrator for 5 years in Catholic education. I have experience in working in various facets of Catholic education and taught theology, English literature, psychology, study skills, and

geography. I have experience in teaching full class loads (five classes, up to four preps or subjects) and being a department chairperson, director, dean, and assistant principal.

Connection to Leadership and Social Justice

Women and children are historically linked to social injustices as they feel the impact of these injustices even more (Çagatay, 2001). It seems to increase as one would add other factors such as sexual orientation, disabilities, and geographic region. This connects to leadership and social justice since it looks at how women are given the opportunity to participate in leadership to *ensure* social justice. Democracy and accountability, power and authority, equity, and opportunity are tied inextricably to social justice and are central to educational leadership (Mullen, 2008). This topic seeks to dismantle the systems of exclusion of women in decision-making roles in educational administration through accountability and equity.

Representation of women in Catholic education leadership in this specific context is an important aspect of social justice as "we must never lose sight of the facts that the leaders we are discussing are women, that doing leadership may differ for women and men, and that leadership does not take place in a genderless vacuum" (Yoder, 2001, p. 815). By analyzing the experiences of women in Catholic education leadership through a critical lens, current Church and diocesan leaders have the data to ensure opportunities and mentorships are provided to diversify leadership in Catholic education.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review evaluates the successes, challenges, and experiences of being a woman in a leadership role within the context of education and specifically, within the context of Catholic education. Though women are invited to be heard in certain Catholic contexts, they are still uninvited in making important decisions; including carrying out certain changes in Catholic education. These higher ranking positions women fill focus on the diocesan positions such as chancellor, chief financial officer or a school superintendent (O'Loughlin, 2015). It is further reported that 35% of the U.S. dioceses have no women filling influential positions and, out of the nation's 571 high ranking positions, only 32% are filled by women. On an uptrend, women make up half of the Catholic school superintendents. However, if they are taken out of the equation, women make up 31% of chancellors and 16% of CFOs. Once the superintendents are removed from the picture, the number of no women in these decision-making roles increases to 56%. In some dioceses, there were no women in decision-making positions. Some women in high ranking roles report they are fortunate to work with collaborative bishops or clergy. However, they note how it would be easier if they were male or another clergy member. High ranking chancellors or decision makers in the Church tend to be dismissive of female leaders who report feeling invisible (O'Loughlin, 2015).

The review of the literature addresses the following topics: (a) a history of women and leadership in secular and Catholic contexts (Church tradition and K-12 education); (b) challenges of women in leadership; (c) policies that have helped women develop leadership and

(d) successes of women in leadership, particularly in the power and impact of mentorship and networks for women.

Women in Leadership: Secular and Catholic Contexts

History of Women in Leadership

To understand women in leadership, it is important to understand the historical impact of women in leadership. Women have been leaders throughout history. They have been queens, chiefs, empresses, founded religions, held political offices, stirred change as needed, served in the armed forces, and did so much to improve the quality of life of those they served in the context of religion, politics and social development. From Ancient Egypt's Queen Hatshepsut, Greece's Aspasia, Rome's Messalina, women leaders were pragmatic, diplomatic, and positively impacted their countries. Queen Isabella the Catholic was a powerful leader in Spain. Through her tenure, she is recognized for unifying Spain, supporting explorers, and the spread of Catholicism. Even as the queen, she struggled with her obligations to the people, her marriage, and raising children. Interestingly enough, this would be the case for women for centuries to come (Klenke, 2011).

Women in the 19th and 20th centuries emerged as leaders in politics and social movements. The 19th century began the first signs of feminism. By the early 20th century, women were treated as second class citizens subject to discrimination and outsiders in the political arena (Klenke, 2011). Major women leaders such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Betty Friedan were consequential in gaining rights for women in the United States. Susan B. Anthony made history as she was arrested for voting for the president, a right reserved for only men at the time. Eleanor Roosevelt practiced a quiet or

invisible leadership style that was anything but weak. She broke barriers when she declined secret service and carried her own gun, gave press conferences, and publicly fought for integration, and visited troops (Klenke, 2011). Roosevelt's greatest achievement is her establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These women were leaders in fighting for women's rights, fighting against poverty and injustice, and for equality. Women used peaceful and religious means to improve the life, status, and advancement of women.

Contexts of Women in Leadership

Secular and religious contexts of women in leadership symbiotically draw from one another. The rich concept of women and leadership interacts inextricably from socialized norms and paradigms ingrained in our collective psyche through thousands of years of influential contexts established by the intermingling of cultures, ideas, scientific thought, and assumptions. Past studies have shown male superintendents believed there should be more male administrators since there are so many female teachers, that tall, slender persons would be a better "fit" for a community, that women did not have the capacity to understand financial matters, should be left to do routine tasks, and are less likely to solve problems (Shakeshaft, 1989). The way people think of women and leadership is not an accidental phenomenon. It is the amalgamation of generations of beliefs, practices, preconceived notions, and ideas from religious and secular context; there is no separation of church and state as each indelibly influences the other. The institutionalized practices in society take root from Biblical justifications and erroneous scientific theories that gave life to the myth of the inferiority of the woman. Grady and Bertram (2009) summed it up well: "The low status of women is often a product of intentional and unintentional actions of men and the acceptance of these actions by women" (p. 158). This is remedied by

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critically looking at the layers of an intricate oppressive narrative that has perpetuated injustices toward women for centuries and thus spilling over to practices and contexts of women in Catholic educational leadership. It is important to understand these contexts as they all come into play in every subtle hint of discrimination or negative assumption of women and their capacity to lead.

Religious and Catholic Context

Organized religions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism can offer women some alternatives to escape oppressive situations and climb up to higher roles. Within these religions are women who are heroes who saved their people; Mary (Catholicism), Aisha and Rabia (Islam), Esther and Ruth (Judaism) are some female heroines who have shown courage, intellect, and cunningness in the Bible or religious texts.

Religion can also be a source of oppression, suffering, and discrimination for women (Klenke, 2011). Religion has been used as a justification to keep women in low ranking positions, be subservient, and accept the misogynistic attitudes of the patriarchy. Religion has entered into the corporate sector in the form of chaplains or spiritual leaders. Chaplains are traditionally priests or male ministers from Christian denominations. However, no women are in these spaces to offer spiritual leadership. These positions are not contingent on gender. Duties of a chaplain or spiritual minister such as give religious leadership and provide spiritual, moral, and ethical guidance. In other words, it is not only something a man can do. In the Catholic church, women are not allowed to be priests. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains only men can receive the sacrament of holy orders because Jesus was a male and chose his apostles who were all male. Therefore, only men are ordained into these holy orders (Rocca, 2013).

Women have more success achieving greater equality with men through religion as opposed to mainstream means when the following are accepted (a) God is neither male nor female, (b) belief that women are *not* the cause of "the fall," (c) denial for the need of ordained clergy, (d) accepting that women can do more than just be married and mothers (Klenke, 2011). Only when these conditions exist and there is a general acceptance of equality, women can thrive in religious leadership. Klenke (2011) indicated only two out of the nine major organizations are led by a woman. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Latter-Day Saints do not allow any women to hold top church leadership.

The Catholic church is recognized as the oldest Christian based group in history. In many ways, the Catholic church is the epitome and bedrock of the patriarchal paradigm that exists today. In 1984, a conference that included the Women's Ordinance Conference group came together for "Woman-Church Speaks." The conference highlighted Jewish traditions that are rooted in patriarchy and spill into Christianity. The speaker highlighted how in Jewish history women are part of the struggles but are often excluded in the reform and liberation.

In the 1950s, the Conference of Major Superiors (Superiors were the leaders of a religious order of nuns), transformed from a product of the patriarchy to a more feminist, democratic, and progressive Leadership Conference of Women Religious. This conference was significant because it was the first time women leaders had transparent meetings and debated the pros and cons of gender-related issues seen as taboo beforehand (Kane et al., 2001).

Catholic clergy leaders began writing advice manuals for men and women on how to truly be the exemplars of their gender; masculine and feminine. While men were encouraged to be chivalrous and show their manliness in strength. A collection of writings from 1881-1991 is

featured with ideas of feminine virtue that liken to the Virgin Mary and female saints. Themes of such writings include docility, the dangerous woman, dangers of hearing a woman's confession, the woman's place being in the home, and gender roles (Kane et al., 2001).

In established Christian schools, the educational aspect is an extension of the church itself and its traditions and values. Therefore, female applicants are barely considered due to the ingrained, socialized beliefs of men as the leaders and women as the household caregivers (Marcomber, 2018). These beliefs perpetuate the cycle of inequity and keep women out of key leadership networks. The Peter Principle states men rise to their level of incompetence.

Meanwhile, women work well below their skills and qualifications. Women often have to work twice as hard to prove competency and may be seen as a threat and intimidating to colleagues. This may root from low self-esteem and by feeling threatened by a competent, female administrator. Complementarianism is a theological belief system within Muslim, Judaism, and Christian traditions that argues men and women are made for different roles but have an equal status in terms of moral value. Marcomber (2018) quoted a Complementarian man expressing a belief and practice in religious-based schools: "The truth is that Christian schools are more willing to put up with incompetent male leadership than accept competent professional female leadership" (p. 2). Shakeshaft's (1989) seminal work established women were not hired due to custom; men do not want to take orders from a woman nor does a community want a woman as an administrator. This ties in with the Complementarianism mindset in which men are established as the leaders in a social context.

Catholic Education Context

Catholic education would be nonexistent if it were not for the increase of nuns in parish schools in the late 19th and early 20th century. The religious sisters educated a generation of women who later became outspoken advocates for higher education. Mary Frances Clare Cusak, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in the United States was one of the early advocates for women's need for higher education. Common rationale and attitudes of women obtaining an education can be summed up in a cleric's statement working girls to "count their blessings and give up aspirations to attend school" (Kane et al., 2001, p. 119).

Caruso (2012) introduced a concept called *la bella figura*: look good in all circumstances and present a positive face. This concept has been applied to the pastor and principal relationship which is dominant in elementary school contexts. In this concept, a pastor who may be tyrannical or hostile toward the existence of a school and refuse to show goodwill and faith in the principal can set the tone and environment. This is difficult to do if a pastor is unwilling to work with the principal and strengthen communication, foster respect, and collaboration toward the betterment of a school. In Caruso (2012), a religious order had to withdraw from its parish school after years of abuse and neglect of an inefficient pastor backed by the diocese and the Vatican. The families of the communities were devastated that a group of transformative women was sacrificed to keep up appearances, for *la bella figura* of a pastor who was unwilling to put the needs of his parishioners before his own ego. Other religious sisters who tried to stand up for their school and make improvements were met by clerical leadership (pastor, bishops, Cardinals) with a "dismissive tone and resistance to dealing with the problems at the parish" (Caruso, 2012, p. 86) which resulted in the religious sisters leaving the schools. Caruso (2012) made a poignant point

about leadership and treating others with respect: "When the leadership of a community is constantly evaluating the community's ability to meet commitments, it is far easier to withdraw from a place where their members are not heard or treated as responsible partners in ministry" (p. 86).

Catholic Superintendency

The Catholic superintendency is organized by regions in the United States. The USCCB (2020) indicated the organization of 14 regions within the United States with specific dioceses and archdioceses (larger, densely populated areas). Altogether, there were a total of 179 dioceses (149) and archdioceses (30) around the United States. Each diocese had a minimum of 8 to 19 dioceses or archdioceses per region. By researching every diocese website, the current superintendent's name and contact information were located. To date, there are about 179 persons who oversee Catholic education in the elementary and high school levels (USCCB, 2020) as superintendents or in some cases interim superintendents or as directors of education. By a tally, it was simple to find if the superintendent of each diocese and archdiocese was a woman. Out of all these dioceses and archdioceses, only 71 women served as superintendents. This put the current percentage of women in the superintendency at 39.66% in 2020, a sharp 20% decline since 2015.

When Cattaro and McDonald (2015) conducted their study, they surveyed 166 superintendents and received 83 responses. Their study aimed to describe the demographics of Catholic school superintendency and identify any emerging trends with gender, state of life (lay or religious/clerical), education, prior experiences, religious leadership, working conditions, compensation, and job satisfaction. Cattaro and McDonald found women were the majority of

superintendents at 56.6%. However, the research discovered a 3.6% decline since 2009. Moreover, men increased their positions by 3.6% putting them at 43.4%. Cattaro and McDonald noted, in their extensive study of the Catholic superintendency, that women held the majority of superintendent positions at 56.6%. This seemed positive at first glance. However, further reading and research showed there was a 3.6% decline in women superintendents since 2009. Furthermore, there was a 3.6% increase (to 43.4% total) in the percentage of men in the superintendency. The comparative data shows that in the last 5 years alone, fewer women have been filling the roles of the Catholic superintendency.

A survey of the websites showed next to no diversity with four persons of color (out of 179), one being Asian, three were Latinx and one was of mixed race. The majority of the superintendents were white males and females. Even areas with high populations of Latinx did not have any Latinx in their leadership. Assistant superintendents were more diverse. In Figure 1, the yellow represents the overall number of dioceses while the red represents the number of women superintendents. The data show a decrease in women in the superintendency.

Figure 1

Male and Female Superintendents in Catholic Dioceses in the United States, 2020
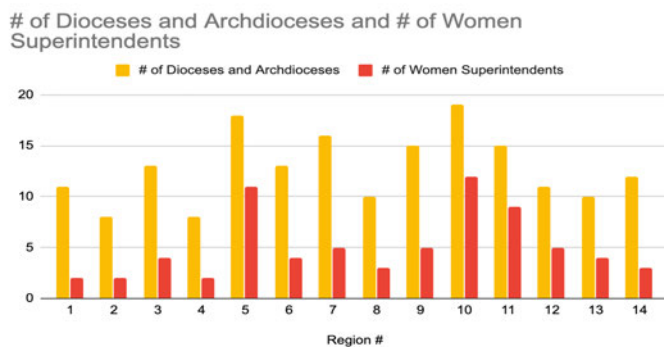
Note. Created from "Bishops and Diocese," by U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020.
https://www.usccb.org/about/bishops-and-dioceses

The first four regions had the lowest number of proportioned male and female leaders. For example, Region 1 had two female superintendents and seven superintendents. The regions are New England (Region 1), New York (Region 2), New Jersey and Pennsylvania (Region 3), and Washington DC, Delaware, West Virginia (Region 4).

Other regions had a proportionate number of female superintendents to make superintendents. The largest regions like Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas (Region 10) have 12 out of 19 superintendents who are women. Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee (Region 5) had the second highest with 18 dioceses in which 11 women were superintendents and seven were male.

The current data show a disproportionate number of female superintendents in Catholic dioceses/archdioceses along with a vast underrepresentation of leaders of color. For example, in several racially diverse, urban areas, the superintendents were Caucasian. Demographic of the student population are disproportionate to the representation in the highest areas of leadership.

Organizational Context

How are women seen in the workplace? These contexts set the stage of the dynamic of women in professionalized contexts. Transactional/traditional leadership style has dominated corporations and organizations in the last 30 years. This type of leadership is characterized largely as autocratic, task-oriented power held by an omnipotent leader (Klenke, 2011). Leadership theory has gone through various definitions to adjust to the various changes in the economy, globalization, and culture. Klenke (2011) asserted women succeed in contexts and cultures that allow them to succeed. They do not participate in self-promotion as much as men would do so, a problematic move since it undercuts their chances for moving forward in their

career. The *glass ceiling*, a term coined by Wall Street reports, explains the seemingly impenetrable barrier that prevents women and minorities to stay out of senior leadership positions. These include any policies and practices that become barriers to impede women from professionally advancing in a profession. Meanwhile, a *glass escalator* was in place to steadily bring men up to the positions of leadership (Gomez, 2017; Klenke, 2011). The context of leadership or contextual intelligence is important when speaking of leaders. This includes having an awareness of the past, present, and future while understanding the contextual variables (Klenke, 2011).

Women in Leadership in the Last 60 Years

Women in leadership in the last half-century have progressed significantly after federal statutes such as the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VII played significant roles in allowing victims of sex discrimination to fight for their rights in the courts. Before 1963, there were no federal laws that protected women from sex discrimination. It was very common for women to lose jobs from underqualified men. Under Title VII, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and or national origin in terms of hiring, promotion, and compensation. Sex discrimination is prohibited in some cases such as the bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ exception); such as a man has to be chosen to coach boys' physical education (McCarthy et al., 2018).

There are more congresswomen in the House of Representatives than any time in history, more women as heads of state, cabinet members, CEOs, doctors, scientists, and board members (Kolbert, 2017). Additionally, Kolbert (2017) pointed out gender-diversified companies are more innovative and generate more profit responsive to their customers' needs. Parker et al.'s (2018)

research on Women in Leadership 2018 reported in the Pew Research Center study that 54% of women and men say gender discrimination is a major reason why there are not more women in top executive business positions while 59% believe there are too few women in top executive positions in the country today.

Challenges of Women in Leadership

The number of female principals has risen from 1987-1988 from 24.6% in the public school sector to 51.6% in 2011-2012. In private schools, women in leadership made small gains from 52.2% in 1987-1988 to 55.4% in 2011-2012 (Hill et al., 2016). Due to the high turnover and extensive work needed to gather this information, there is no current data on principals by gender. Though many women are represented in education, there is still a disproportionate amount of low representation of women in positions of leadership. There is a shortage of women in senior leadership in higher education and are continually underrepresented in senior academic managerial positions due to a range of barriers (Stout-Rostron, 2017). Despite laws and policies that support equal pay and opportunities, deeply rooted beliefs and stereotypes stand in the way of allowing women to hold positions of decision-making power in education (Bassett, 2009). Some of these beliefs include motherhood and being a wife make it difficult for a woman to handle the responsibility of leadership, indicating men are free of any domestic type duties such as running a household and taking care of the children. Bassett (2009) further noted, despite cultural and structural changes, beliefs regarding the "appropriateness" of women in leadership roles have "kept women in their place" (p. 9) all this time. It is interesting to note that not only men hold these beliefs but women. Women in higher positions may doubt their abilities to handle the pressures of the job.

Sobehart (2009) cited the many obstacles of women in leadership. Her metaphor for the growing presence of women in educational leadership was that of melting glaciers with the fire of passionate women. She cited obstacles of women in leadership: women in Melanesia often lead difficult, lower ranked schools and not by choice; in China, women make up 99% of the teaching staff yet only 30% are administrators; in England, 13% of vice chancellors were women; in India, 19% of the principals in government teaching colleges and 26% of the educational leadership staff are women. Further research from international scholars shows compelling evidence that women are universally, actively being kept out of top positions in education.

Discrimination, Gender, and Cultural Barriers

Early research by Shakeshaft (1989) established patriarchal paradigms as the root of barriers of having women in educational administration. The "male dominance" model explains male hegemony as the outgrowth of barriers (Shakeshaft, 1989). In this lens, we see "white males hold power and privilege over all groups" (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 83). Coleman's (2007) research on women in educational leadership in England highlighted overt discrimination in the form of stereotypes, perceptions through sexism, or discrimination as it related to their advancement. For example, one respondent was told it was not worth applying for the position since a man was already appointed for the job. More subtle statements of discrimination came in the form of implied inability for a woman to do a job due to the fact she had children. Themes of discriminatory comments centered on motherhood and work-life balance (Coleman, 2007; Stout-Rostron, 2017). Women who did not have children were not exempt from discrimination. They were accused of not understanding children since they did not have any of their own.

The study found women were relegated to pastoral type roles. A respondent reported, "Expectations that I would be pastoral care: look after the girls/flowers/coffee/Tampax machines" (Coleman, 2004, as cited in Coleman 2007, p. 15). Female headteachers reported unpaid maternity leave (telling the woman that she was irresponsible for getting pregnant at that time and had no right to have paid leave), and meetings scheduled in the evenings with no regard for the childcare needs of the women.

Though personality traits are not gender-related, traits can be socialized differently by gender (Marcomber, 2018). For example, females may be expected to be "soft, gentle, and submissive" (Marcomber, 2018, p. 1); yet, if females expressed leadership behavior that is acceptable for males, it would be considered inappropriate. Ironically, even women can have a tendency to align with these judgments. Such traits like making a decision may be seen as a positive trait for a male but be seen as a negative trait ("controlling") for a woman. If men are praised for being logical when creating directives, women may be perceived as unemotional or cold for being logical.

Women in the study who reported they were successful in their leadership roles only succeed to a certain extent. Advantages were due to the stereotypical aspects of being a woman: being empathetic, the ability to de-escalate angry situations and males involved, and using feminine charms (i.e., motherly status, getting discounts through mild flirtation; Coleman, 2007).

Stout-Rostron (2017) interviewed several women and their experiences in educational leadership in Colombia, South Africa, India, Mexico, and Spain. They reported numerous barriers in overcoming very staunch, discriminatory, male-dominated workplace cultures. In

South Africa, one woman reported, "Women didn't speak up for themselves and were literally afraid" (Stout-Rostron, 2017, p. 131).

Aside from the glass ceiling, work-life balance, and family obligations, women are underrepresented in educational leadership roles due to educational disadvantages, religious beliefs, family circumstances, unexpected opportunities, peer group pressure, lack of mentorship and role models, training and development experiences, and prior job challenges (Stout-Rostron, 2017).

Acheampong (2009) researched the experiences of African American women principals in New York and Brooklyn dioceses. Her research showed the women were familiar with the limiting mindsets of some of their constituents. They reported understanding and experiencing the subtle racism and limiting stereotypes from whites and even other minorities. The research points out that whites have been socialized to see themselves as superior leaders while Blacks have been also socialized to perceive themselves as inferior and their own people as inferior when it comes to leadership.

Belmonte et al. (2006) found priests had little or no regard for women who were in leadership positions. Pastors seemed more skeptical of the leadership of female principals. Parker et al. (2018) reported women are more likely to see the "structural barriers and uneven expectations" (pp. 4-5) that hold women back from top executive positions.

There is a growing number of young women leaders who are more aware of the gender discrimination gap as a barrier to leadership. According to Parker et al. (2018), among women between ages 18 to 49 years old, 68% see gender discrimination as a reason for underrepresentation while among women 50 and older, only 50% see it as a reason. It is

interesting to note men in those same age brackets have a very similar perspective in that only 35-38% see gender discrimination is the reason why women are not in higher leadership. The Pew Research Center study also showed 67% of men and women believe it is easier for men to get top positions in politics and business than women, 60% believe women have to do more to prove themselves, and 54% believe women face gender discrimination.

In an article by Fugler (2016), a North Carolina study of how professors evaluated a male and female processor revealed significant gender bias. The male and female professors had the same syllabus and outline of classes but revealed their true gender to one group/section and the opposite gender to another group. At the end of the course, the students rated the professors whom they thought were male higher than those they believed were female. In a content analysis study by a Northeastern University professor, reviews on *Rate My Professor* were analyzed. Men were associated with words such as "smart," "idiot," "interesting," and "boring." Women were described as "sweet," "shrill," "warm," and "cold." The study concluded professors were rated on different scales: intelligence for men and nurturing for women (Schmidt, 2015).

Shakeshaft (1989) first gathered data on women in educational leadership in the 1980s to give a voice to women in education. Her studies showed women faced sex discrimination in hiring practices to maintain the status quo of keeping white men in power. Five filters were identified with being gatekeepers and keeping women out. These included recruiting through the "old boy" network, separating applications by sex, allowing men to skip certain requirements or steps while requiring strict criteria for women, having only male interviewers, establishing lower salaries for women and seeing assertive women as unfit while praising the same qualities in a man. Most times, competent women had a disadvantage if applying for a position in educational

administration. According to Shakeshaft, this action of hiring less competent minorities or women may make white males more comfortable while perpetuating the mentality that women and minorities are not as qualified for these jobs.

Limiting Beliefs

Outside barriers of race, gender, and religion are the more obvious factors that deter women from accepting leadership roles. Women subconsciously place internal barriers on themselves through years of socialization; creating limiting beliefs and assumptions, self-doubts, and ideas of what they can and cannot do (Acheampong, 2009). This leads to a lack of self-confidence and needs for external support, which ultimately leads to one "questioning everything." Perfectionism, extreme introversion, impatience, and one's own inner baggage. As a leader, one must stop doubting oneself and comparing oneself to others (Stout-Rostron, 2017). In addition, women with such beliefs are unequipped to recognize barriers and how to respond to them while trying to advance to higher positions (Clark & Hawarden, 2017). In addition, social context, education, and economic environments are to be considered when understanding limiting beliefs.

Shakeshaft (1989) noted how women were less motivated to apply for principal jobs since they were socialized to believe they would not be qualified. Structures for hiring made it difficult for women to attain administrative positions. The research showed women did not think they qualified or were discouraged from even aspiring to these jobs. Furthermore, women had a low self-image, lack of confidence, and low motivation when it comes to aspiring for higher positions.

Work-Life Balance

Though women have more freedom and a voice in the workplace, men have not changed enough to take responsibility for family matters. One of the women in Stout-Rostron's (2017) study was a prominent person in the Colombian government. She had to breastfeed at odd times around meetings, had four children, had to give up a high ranking job since her husband took on a position that was a conflict of interest. In this case, the woman had to give up her ambitions and career to take care of her family and husband's career interest. Sadly, her husband divorced her and put her in a very difficult financial predicament (Stout-Rostron, 2017). More women leaders are responsible for child rearing and domestic matters. Their only choices are to either not have children or put their careers on hold (Stout-Rostron, 2017). Moorosi (2018) further stated cultural and traditional perceptions and stereotypes continue to control the roles of men and women in the home and at work, particularly how women are perceived in the workplace. Women revealed in their stories the lack of support from nonworking mothers and lack of organizational culture that supports women staff members regarding maternity leave. Research also showed family responsibilities make it more difficult for women to hold high political offices (36%) or have top executive positions (44%) in corporations (Parker et al., 2018). Shakeshaft (1989) reviewed language from interviews about women and that lacked the motivation to be in higher positions because of the "reality of a world that expects that if a woman works outside the home she will continue to do the major portion of the work inside the home as well" (p. 89).

Compensation

Caruso (2012) reported most laywomen who worked in Catholic elementary schools had attended Catholic colleges and had husbands who worked to pay the majority of the income. They reported their "retirement benefits were terrible, if not scandalous, especially coming from a church that advocates the rights and just treatment of the working person" (Caruso, 2012, p. 98). Pension plans, benefits, and salaries are generally higher in public school systems.

Glass Ceiling and Talent Pipeline

The glass ceiling represents the promotion of men over women in key positions (Gomez, 2017; Stout-Rostron, 2017). This term denotes the "invisible barrier to the upward movement and advancement of women and minorities in management" (Klenke, 2011, p. 7). Meanwhile, a man would ride the "glass escalator" to advance steadily and earn more than women despite having the same or fewer qualifications. Though the European Commission (2012) found countries like Sweden have made significant strides in overcoming the barriers (43% of their vice chancellors were women in 2010), there is still more work to be done. Studies showed there is certain work characterized as "women's work" and are less prestigious, limited advancement, and reduced job security. Gendered jobs such as human resources, public relations, and marketing are considered the "velvet ghetto" and are less valued. Some women accept management positions to senior positions out of obligation and sense of duty to all women.

Gender barriers can be understood through the pipeline problem of leadership. The talent pipeline of women in leadership can be attributed to women's family responsibilities and their socialization and tendency to display traits and motivations needed for high-level positions. Women tend to be more modest than men and display less self-promoting behavior. Stout-

Rostron (2017) identified five "leaks" to the pipeline that hinder women: work relationships, university environment, invisible rules, proactivity, and personal circumstance. Gendered workplaces are part of the reason glass ceilings exist. The "glass cliff" is also known to exist for women in higher education. This describes how women are set up to fail and fall from the heights of leadership (Stout-Rostron, 2017). Klenke (2011) described it as the promotion of women in organizations in a crisis that has a higher risk of failure. However, an increase in leadership development programs for women results in women feeling increased self-confidence and access to networks of professionals to increase connections within an institution, an invaluable steppingstone to senior leadership positions.

A study as cited by Ignacio (1995) revealed women principals tended to be older than men, tended to be from a minority group, more likely to have majored in education, majored less in educational administration at the graduate level, and were appointed to be principals at an older age than men and had less high career aspirations than men.

New Managerialism Policies and Practices

Education has been primarily focused on accountability, quality assurance, inspection, standards, standardized testing, and operating on a highly empirical and business model of education. Schools have to fight for funding by raising test scores and boasting of college acceptances (Thompson, 2007). These mindsets are highly regarded in the traditional, authoritarian form of leadership and masculine ethos. The new managerial policies and practices came from the Thatcher and Reagan conservative era of matching public education to corporations. It was argued such schools had to be "responsive" to the market economy (Thompson, 2007). Coleman (2007) reported 70% of the women felt they had to "prove their

worth" within this educational paradigm. This leadership style emphasized "management, surveillance, and control" (Davies, 2003, as cited in Thompson, 2007, p. 342).

People-Centered and Paper-Centered

In the new managerialism, terms of "people-centered" vs. "paper-centered" values were at play. discourses centered on working one on one, shared leadership and goals, caring for students and colleagues, consulting, and collegiality; while paper-centered values revolved around meeting target outcomes, building new initiatives, and accountability. It is often perceived once a person is in a leadership position must suppress their original passion or reason for working as teachers, which is building relationships with other students and teachers. Thompson's (2007) research reflected the managerial values and priorities such as the ability to handle paper and balance the books since "that's all they really care about" (p. 349), "getting bums on seats" (p. 349), and that people no longer matter. Performance, people, and outcomes are what new management leadership styles are pushing. This is problematic since it is reductive of the people within the institution. The current competitiveness of the education market with enrollment is justified and even motivates the assertive and aggressive behavior of paper-centered leadership. Korcheck and Reese (2002) suggested all leaders must embrace a cooperative, interpersonal and decision-making style; a team organizational structure; an intuitive and rational problem-solving style with a high ethical standard.

Gomez (2017) noted how the pastor and principal dynamic in the Catholic church leadership model can pose problems. Pastors of a parish and the principal of the parish school are expected to work together in making important decisions to create viable goals and push the school toward academic excellence and financial sustainability. The pastor can override the

principal's decisions even if the principal is highly experienced and qualified (Schafer, 2005).

The differences between feminine and masculine styles of leadership assert men are more self-centered and move toward self-preservation while women are more other centered (Lowe, 2010).

This could cause more tension between female principals and a pastor as opposed to if a principal were male and more respected in these leadership settings.

Organizational Management and Human Capital

Though women are increasingly moving into management and leadership roles, the value shift of managerial roles has made the profession increasingly difficult. The heavy workload is unrewarding, managers are micromanaged, and a shift from allowing professionals to do their job has moved to managerial control through surveillance (Thompson, 2007). Thompson's (2007) research on women in leadership in higher education revealed women could easily work 12-hour days from 7 or 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. Some participants reported having only one night off, being administrators or program heads but also being in charge of teaching classes. The constant overwatch and demands of programs made one participant feel a loss of ownership of the program and simply a "minion" or someone to "run around doing the housework" (Thompson, 2007, p. 345). This part of the literature review will focus on the policies, professional development, marketing, recruitment, and retention in education.

<div align="center">

Leadership Styles

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According to Parker et al. (2018), when it comes to leadership styles, 57% say men and women have different leadership styles in the context of top positions in business and politics while 43% believe men and women are basically similar. Of those who believe men and women

have different leadership styles, 22% believe women have a generally better approach, 15% believe men have a better approach while 62% believe neither is better.

The Pew Research Center's Women and Leadership 2018 study also showed women have an advantage over men in the political aspect of leadership. Out of nine categories, women were considered better at: being compassionate and empathetic (61%), serving as a role model for children (41%), working out compromises (42%), being honest and ethical (31%) maintaining a tone of civility and respect (34%) standing up for what they believe in (30%), and being persuasive (21%). Women were tied with men on working under pressure (17%) and were rated lower when it comes to taking risks (9% vs. 37% for men; Parker et al., 2018).

Leadership styles come with certain characteristics such as assertiveness, decisiveness, and ambition. Seventy-three percent of respondents for the Women and Leadership 2018 survey noted that being assertive helped a man in leadership while only 53% believed it would help a woman. In addition, it is interesting to note being decisive, ambitious, and approachable would help a man but would not really help a woman in gaining a top position of leadership. The study showed it would help women most to be in a top leadership position if they were physically attractive, compassionate, and showed emotions.

This review of the literature focuses on understanding leadership styles and characteristics women demonstrate in the workplace. This helps understand the workplace dynamics, interplay, and expectations.

Comparisons of Men and Women Leaders

Curry (2000) presented character traits tied to the "great man perspective" such as physical vitality and stamina; intelligence and judgment in action; willingness to accept

responsibility; task competence; understanding followers and their needs; skill in dealing with people; the need to achieve; the capacity to motivate; courage, resolution and steadiness; the capacity to win and hold trust; the capacity to manage, decide and set priorities; confidence; ascendance, dominance, and assertiveness; and adaptability and flexibility of approach (Gardner, 1990, as cited in Curry, 2000).

Western, traditional thought reinforces the concept of men as the natural leaders and women the leaders in family contexts (Curry, 2000). Through socialization, feminine leadership was seen as largely ineffective and unequal to the preferred masculine type of leadership. Curry (2000) presented theories on the differences between men and women in leadership. Men are focused and get lost in their rapid work pace, uninterrupted, unencumbered by small talk, face-to-face meetings, lack reflection, identify themselves with their job and find it difficult to share information (Helgesen, 1990, as cited in Curry, 2000).

In comparison, women work at a steady pace with small breaks, welcome small interruptions, make time for non-work-related activities, have complex networks, focus on the ecology of leadership, see themselves as beyond their job, and share information freely (Helgesen, 1990, as cited in Curry, 2000). Curry (2000) explained these traits came out of survival and socialization. Eventually, an emerging leadership will rely less and less on gender comparisons. Socialization of males and females will eventually blur the lines of leadership traits attributed to each gender.

Five Leadership Styles

Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2011) extensive research on women and educational leadership enabled them to distill leadership to five styles unique to women. Leadership research used to

focus on male styles of leadership. The five leadership styles of women are relational style, leadership for social justice, spiritual leadership, leadership for learning, and balanced leadership.

Relational leadership refers to how women leaders see power as everyone achieving a sense of power and leadership. Research shows how female assistant principals, principals, and superintendents show a level of discomfort when referred to or described as having power. It is about "power with" not "power over" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). These leaders have strong relationships with faculty and staff, collaborate, and build capacity for others.

Women leaders who entered into education may have largely done so to create change in a school context. This style is demonstrated significantly by women of color who feel they are on a mission to improve conditions and give back to their community. Studies showed women of African descent combined a spiritual and social justice dimension in their leadership.

Spiritual leadership is a theme found mostly in leadership styles of women of color. Spirituality is a source of strength and a way to connect with others. This should not be confused with being religious. Spirituality is more reflective, conscious, and filled with diverse wisdom from all faiths that provide hope.

Leadership for learning describes women leaders who are motivated by introducing innovative learning programs and experimental instructional practices. This leadership style draws strength from site-based leadership, shared leadership, collective visions, and increased focus on academics and the learner experience.

Balanced leadership refers to balancing work and home life responsibilities. Unlike men, women are expected to handle the home: make sure the kids are fed, the house is clean, and that bills are paid. The workday of a woman does not really end.

Feminization of Leadership to Androgynous Leadership

Stout-Rostron (2017) described the 20th century as a time focused on leadership from a single leader who commanded power with authority and operated out of reason, analytical thinking, and strong managerial styles of delegating and solving problems. In the 21st century, the paradigm shifted to highlighting human relationships and shared goals (Stout-Rostron, 2017). Leadership values began to be noncoercive, teamwork based, and building deep relationships as interactional, relational, and participatory.

No longer is there a singular, autocratic leader with unquestioned power. This power is now shared as the new leader must help and develop others in the process. Leadership is characterized as having both masculine and feminine aspects to balance one another out and not replace the other. Women have been socialized to produce leadership behaviors based on relationships, encouragement, and support as opposed to traditional values of competition, control, and aggression. Stout-Rostron (2017) further explained how female leaders are more democratic, show an ethic of care, put a priority on relationship building, connectedness, have increased interpersonal skills, are people-oriented, and possess team-building knowledge. Meanwhile, men tend to be paternalistic, authoritarian, and goal oriented.

Men are often associated with having hard skills, while women have soft skills of being more nurturing, communicative and relationship-focused. Studies in Canada and the UK revealed women had power through and power within but not power over (attributed to men).

This meant that dominance and control were more associated with a masculine image of power (Ignacio, 1995; Stout-Rostron, 2017). Overall, this is not to say a woman's style is better or the only way. Rather, this opens up possibilities in the androgynous nature of leadership that combines the best of what is considered male and female characteristics of leadership. The review of the literature is aligned with the Pew Research Center's (Brown, 2017) findings on contemporary issues regarding women and leadership.

Servant Leadership and the Female Style

The concept of servant leadership is close to the feminist ideas of community and relationship in a shared leadership style. "To lead as Jesus did" seems to be the crux of servant leadership and the ongoing theme of Jesuit understanding of leadership. Modern ideas of management are masculine constructs that place emphasis on ambition and outcomes (Sergiovanni, 2013). The social science model and modern school management follow the empirical model of choosing a problem, organizing data, and looking at ways to solve the problems. This is similar to a paper-centered style (Kaufman & Richardson, 1982, as cited in Sergiovanni, 2013). Servant leadership is most likely not to be valued in highly masculine and male-dominated workspaces due to its contrast to masculine value shifts; individual relationships, individual achievement, power as a source to control events and people, independence, authority, and procedures. However, women tend to emphasize successful relationships, power as a means to achieve shared goals, connectedness, authenticity, and personal creativity (Sergiovanni, 2013). The challenge of servant leadership is it is perceived as for "losers," since who wants to be a servant? Sergiovanni (2013) highlighted Shakeshaft's findings: women spend more time with others, communicate effectively, show more concern,

and motivate more. In addition, schools with female principals demonstrate higher morale, higher academic achievement, and knowledge of instructional learning, greater capacity building through participatory inclusiveness (Sergiovanni, 2013).

Professional Development

Catholic schools are called to be places that promote the personal and professional growth of its faculty and staff. This is done through a collegial working environment that is intentional with faith and Catholic identity, caring, and supportive (Lydon, 2000). Hunt et al. (2000) articulated a Catholic school leader must be committed to continuous intellectual and moral learning, aware of different forms of leadership and social responsibility, and aware of the "fragility" of everyone; especially with oneself and the ones with whom they work and teach. Wallace (2000) cited three major descriptors of a Catholic school principal/leader: spiritual, managerial, and instructional. However, the ability of principals to be faith and spiritual leaders is the most important as it informs the others.

Fugler (2016) noted 70% of valedictorians are women, women made up more than three quarters of public school teachers, and only 30% were administrators. In context, women are doing the work and men are making decisions. The author notes how we culturally value male leadership over female leadership.

Spiritual Development

Catholic school leaders must not only be knowledgeable and conversant in their faith, but they must also model it to others. Catholic, lay principals reported their formal training and preparation to be faith leaders was "inadequate" (Hunt et al., 2000). School leaders cited a lack of knowledge in Church and Catholic school history, teachings and documents. Their lived

experiences and encounters through mentors and religious or priests gave them context to their Catholic identity. The Catholic school leader must "re-present Christ." The Archdiocese of Los Angeles offers a Religious Teaching Certification program for administrators and Religion teachers. It is the goal that all Catholic school principals have faith and spirituality experience through knowledge of the Bible and Church Tradition.

Understanding the Catholic faith, educational philosophy, and foundational documents are essential to be a Catholic school leader (Caruso, 2012). Tradition, mission, vision, academics and faith formation all interact with the spiritual dimension of a leader.

Managerial Development

Thompson (2007) cited the importance of being paper centered in educational institutions. The growing competition between public, private and charter schools drives the market in competition for students. Standards, accountability, standardized test scores, Honors and AP classes, rankings, and college acceptances are metrics used to quantify the value of a school. In the midst of this value shift, it is important Catholic school leaders understand the basics of organizational management. Managerial development includes understanding budgets, balancing the books, being mindful stewards of the school, managing enrollment, marketing and leading with a metric-driven sense of managerial style (Thompson, 2007; Wallace, 2000).

Recruitment

Thompson (2007) found, though women were moving into positions of leadership in higher education, these positions were generally lower paid and had more work to do. Men have shifted out of these roles since it has been a "stressful and demanding job with little power,

reduced status, and a heavy workload" (Thompson, 2007, p. 346). The meaning of being a

manager has changed in the leadership paradigm shift and bureaucratic systems.

Higher Education Programs

Caruso (2012) proposed an effective step to ensure healthy Catholic schools were in

providing professional leadership programs such as master's degree programs to prepare

Catholic school leaders. To keep the Catholic identity within Catholic schools, former religious

sisters suggested inserting specialized instruction in leadership programs about prayer and faith

integration. In addition, it was suggested that the following topics are included in the education

formation of Catholic school leaders: private school law and ethics, catechetical leadership,

foundations of Catholic education, leadership and administration in Catholic education and

finance and management (Caruso, 2012).

The 2005 U.S. Conferences of Catholic Bishops (USCCB; as cited in Caruso, 2012)

issued a statement on Catholic schools, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and*

Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium and called for Catholic colleges and universities to

collaborate with diocesan educational leadership to create programs for ongoing faith formation

and professional development. The statement further noted:

> We must provide a sufficient number of programs of the highest quality to recruit and
> prepare our future diocesan and local school administrators and teachers so that they are
> knowledgeable in matters of our faith, are professionally prepared, and are committed to
> the church. (USCCB, as cited in Caruso et al., 2012, p. 94)

Initiatives such as the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE),

Partners in Los Angeles Catholic Education (PLACE) Corps in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles,

and Loyola Marymount University (LMU) and a consortium of schools created 20-month

programs for new teachers interested in teaching in Catholic schools (Caruso, 2012).

One of the leading higher education programs for aspiring Catholic school leaders in Los Angeles, the context of this study, is done through the Institute of School Leadership and Administration (ISLA) at LMU. Programs like these within the School of Education—the master's in Catholic school administration and the certificate in Catholic educational leadership—are the current programs that create a pipeline of leadership for Catholic schools in Los Angeles.

Retention

In Thompson (2007), the sample participants who worked in higher education identified two paradigms of managerial structuring in their schools. It seemed apparent managers who put a priority on care, discourse, and collegiality were vulnerable and may not thrive or survive the new direction of their schools. Women are often synonymous with the "caring script" and yet are not rewarded for it (Thompson, 2007).

Mentorship

Parker et al. (2018) reported, in a survey of adults given by the Pew Research Center, 43% believed women are not encouraged to be leaders from an early age. True representation of women in leadership begins when young women are encouraged from an early age to pursue leadership. Fugler (2016) asserted if we want to change society's perspective of women leaders, then we have to change the way we teach and show women in decision-making positions in schools. Women should be asked more questions about their aspirations in obtaining a master's degree and opportunities for advancement. The conversation needs to be changed from hiring to the promotion of women.

Vacancies for higher positions in educational leadership are not generally considered popular career options. Coleman (2007) explained, in England, there are more vacancies for leadership positions, reposting job posts are common and women often take jobs at more challenging, urban schools. Under such circumstances, professional development and support are imperative. Mentorships, both formal and informal and support from colleagues have been cited to be the best forms of support among teachers.

The value of gaining networks from a program increases visibility and builds capacity within the organization. In the process of building relationships, strengthening engagement, and exchanging organization "know-how," women feel more confident to face obstacles. The research showed organizations should create women's groups to create spaces for women to exchange stories and solutions to cope with everyday demands (Clark & Hawarden, 2017).

The biggest factor in increasing the representation of women in high positions is the lack of role models and systems for mentoring (Bynum, 2016). This is why mentoring is so vital to the movement of women in leadership. These support systems give assistance, advice, guidance, and direction to women to navigate the industry. In a way, these women who have "made it" act as sponsors and act in good faith for another. In a networked world, opportunities are attained by the connections within a particular industry. In educational leadership, such as the Leadership Development and Discernment Program (LDDP), seeks out leaders nominated by their principals to be part of a discernment group for 2 years to self-reflect on their motivations and abilities to be a leader of a Catholic school. Higher education institutions such as LMU and Mt. St. Mary's University offers programs in Catholic school administration and certificates for leaders to build capacity. Though more women have enrolled in higher education programs, it is yet to be seen

how this affects women and their participation in decision-making roles in schools or in higher education contexts (Moorosi, 2018).

Caruso (2012) emphasized the importance of mentorships as the relationships novitiates (new religious sisters in training) had with their mentor teachers. Leaders should always have transparency and share information. Caruso stated cooperative school environments have more stability than those where only one person knows the information.

Shakeshaft (1989) identified a key component of mentoring in sponsors. These are persons who not only help and guide a person through their career but also vouches for them and brings their name up in conversations for job openings. Traditionally, sponsors have been white males. Minority females have two strikes against them due to the lack of sponsors that look like them. Sponsors create access to a network and visibility. Women have been historically excluded from these conversations and thus have stayed in their positions as teachers. Fortunately, in updated studies, women are receiving more mentoring than they did in the past (Robinson et al., 2017).

Role Modeling

People learn by example and observing behavior from others. According to psychologist Albert Bandura (1977), social learning theory, we learn from each other through observation, imitation, and modeling. People look at what behaviors produce favorable outcomes for the given situation. In a panel for women in education leadership, a retired, USC administrator gave advice for being in educational administration. She told the audience members to outwork anyone who reported to your position, look the part, be reflective, make a conscious decision to

move from colleague to administrator, model the work ethic you expect everyone else to have, and never be too good to do menial work (Brenneman, 2016).

Former Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Superintendent Michelle King shared, "Women have to be in leadership roles so others can see them in leadership roles. That way, people get used to knowing that women can manage and make tough decisions" (Brenneman, 2016, p. 1). This powerful statement from the first female superintendent since 1929 and the first African American female superintendent in LAUSD. These roles are attained by establishing intentional, systematic mentoring and networking programs. Current women leaders must be role models for aspiring leaders by providing access to conversations and spaces where decisions are being made to learn how to be an effective educational administrator.

Leadership in the Home

Women leaders' first role models and mentors tend to be their mothers. One of the participants in Stout-Rostron's (2017) research shared, "My mother brought me up to believe there is nothing that needs to be done in the world that women cannot do" (p. 133). Mothers encouraged their daughters to have a career and be independent despite strict, autocratic masculine fathers. Maezama (2018) noted women's leadership started in their homes where granddaughter watched their grandmothers and mothers taught their daughters. Her study of women's leadership in the Solomon Islands revealed strong leadership began at home: "The women leaders reported that they practiced leadership that was collaborative, consensus making, and caring . . . women also perceived their leadership was founded on the notion of service and working across networks" (Maezama, 2018, p. 18). It is interesting to note women's leadership

in the community was incongruent with leadership in educational institutions. Women still faced barriers to leadership from male-dominated leadership roles in their context.

Institutional-Level Interventions

It is recommended companies focus on retention through identifying talent in mid- to senior-level management. These programs are debated on whether to be gender-specific or available to all persons. One of the advantages of women-only programs is women will talk more freely without men present. Some proponents argue, in women-only settings, the vulnerability can increase relationships and improve the dynamic and quality of conversations in the program. In addition, it has been noted women generally downplay their strengths. Opponents say women and men will have to work together and must create a shared understanding of both male and female perspectives (Clark & Hawarden, 2017).

Women only programs were shown to be more successful since they focus on issues such as seeking the right kind of mentoring and sponsorship, addressing gender-specific derailers (i.e., assertiveness, self-promotion and asking for opportunities), and dealing with gender dynamics (Clark & Hawarden, 2017). Programs for women only with women who are senior top-level executives can provide a sense of confidence, specified advice, and guidance specific to the woman's experience. Research showed women wanted to be comfortable where they worked and not feel valued despite wanting to have children.

Clark and Hawarden (2017) recommended a women's leadership development program that includes small group coaching circles to build trust and instructional content on "networking, sponsorship, mentoring, financial acumen, strategic thinking, female and male

archetypes, and an experiential component to provide a deeper understanding of leadership" (p. 157).

For institutions to have a robust conversation and significant change within the organizations, the research recommended a "head, heart, and hands" (Clark & Hawarden, 2017, p. 156), or H3 approach, to cognitively reflect and have a meaningful response to the training. This includes looking at things in an academic, reflective, cognitive way. In addition, there must be complete and unwavering buy-in and support from the executive leaders of the organization to commit to the ideals and practices of the approach.

Developmental Ecosystems

Research has noted that women leaders experience at least one critical transformational experience or trial (Clark & Hawarden, 2017). It is in this experience that the leader shows a strong will and determination to take on the challenge while having a high tolerance for stress and exhibiting extreme toughness. Social ecosystems and support structures such as family and friends are among the factors that lead to leadership success. In this ecosystem, the research showed women leaders developed a "self-sponsorship" (Clark & Hawarden, 2017, p. 55) or a deliberate belief in themselves. Women leaders attributed factors such as early development in cultivating a sense of self-worth, having a strong influence from parents and formidable female role models and leadership in community issues, and being encouraged to speak their voice leads to their position of leadership (Clark & Hawarden, 2017).

The review of the literature shows the historical; religious and secular contexts of women in leadership, the challenges of women in leadership, leadership styles research, and the success in the form of mentorships and strong networks.

Successes

Parker et al. (2018) reported, in both politics and business, people are acknowledging women are better "when it comes to being compassionate, and empathetic" and "working out compromises and standing up for what they believe in" (p. 5). The Pew Research Center showed 22% believe women have a better approach to leadership, 15% believe men have a better approach, while 62% believe neither is better (Brown, 2017).

On several aspects of corporate leadership, women were perceived as better than men in terms of creating a safe workspace (43%), valuing people from different backgrounds (35%), considering the social impact of their business decisions (33%), mentoring younger employees (33%), and proving fair pay and good benefits (28%). The only area women were deemed not as proficient was negotiating profitable deals (9% vs. 28% for men).

The international landscape of women in leadership is slowly changing the playing field. For example, China passed laws to encourage women in educational leadership, and Germany proposed a gender mainstreaming movement that established and measured family-oriented policies that promote work-life balance for males and females. Furthermore, countries are establishing policies requiring female representation in higher level administrative positions in education, gender topics integration into courses, and enrollment of female students in schools is surging.

These successes come at the advent of companies realizing the economic advantage of creating gender diversity for their companies, implementing policies that create opportunities for women and most of all, establishing mentorship and networks to build community and the much-needed role models for future leaders.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology to answer the research question. I demonstrate the significance and rationale for this phenomenological design method. Furthermore, I present the participant criterion, the setting of the study, and the entire process of data collection from setting up interviews to analyzing data on qualitative software. Finally, I present the study's limitations and delimitations and create greater reliability and validity.

Context of the Study

To gain insight into the findings of the study, it is important to establish the context and structures of Catholic school systems in the United States. In this study, I explored the experiences of assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses. A diocese is an area that consists of different counties (New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia). An archdiocese is a diocese that is led by an archbishop. For example, the Los Angeles Archdiocese (led by Archbishop Jose Gomez) consists of three counties; Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara. Some dioceses are led by bishops such as the Diocese of Orange led by Bishop Kevin Vann. Every diocese has Catholic schools within it. A Catholic diocese superintendent is a leader who organizes the different Catholic schools within a diocese.

Assistant superintendents have specializations depending on the size of the diocese. Bigger dioceses may have designated elementary and high school departments while smaller dioceses with fewer schools may have assistant superintendents in charge of specific areas such as curriculum/teaching and learning, marketing and advancement, finance, accreditation or human resources.

Elementary and high schools that are within a parish are called parish schools. There are few joint elementary and high school parish schools in the (arch)diocese. However, virtually all elementary schools are connected with a parish. Within these parish structures, the pastor is the head administrator that makes the final decisions for the school. This includes but is not limited to choosing the principal, managing the budget, creating programs, and admitting students and families to the schools. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church establishes the bishop, diocesan office, and the pastor as the head decision makers for the school (Acheampong, 2009; Gomez, 2017). Therefore, every elementary school principal must work directly with the pastor of the school. There are different levels of classifying schools within a Catholic diocese.

There is diocesan (subsidized by the diocese), parish (the pastor is the decision-maker), and independent school (run by a board of directors and a president). Diocesan schools are more closely connected to the archdiocesan office (Ignacio, 1995). Parish schools are semi-independent and usually autonomous from their finances since they are able to sustain their budgets. They are usually tied to the archdiocese through joint programs for insurance or benefits. They are administered by a single parish and usually have a board to make decisions. Independent (private) Catholic schools have finances and governance completely separate from the archdiocese. They may be run by a particular religious order (Marianist, Salesian, Jesuit, Norbertine). They may choose to collaborate with the archdiocese on projects such as academic excellence and professional development.

Restating the Purpose of the Study

Women, particularly religious sisters have been the backbone of Catholic education in the 19th and 20th centuries (Caruso, 2012; Engel, 2013). The majority of women were teachers

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and not administrative leaders with decision-making power. Even today, pastors are the definitive authority over the parish school. They have the final say on budgets, programs, mission, vision, and overall operational decisions. Canon Law (Canon 515) puts the pastor of the parish as the person ultimately responsible for the "spiritual and temporal welfare of the entire parish" (Acheampong, 2009, p. 57). With the shortage of priestly vocations, some priests are in charge of more than one parish school or lay administrators have been put in charge of parishes and schools. The landscape of Catholic education has changed from being run by priests and religious orders to predominantly laypersons. As the landscape of Catholic education evolves, what are the experiences of aspiring women leaders?

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the general experiences of women in Catholic education leadership. At first, the study was going to look at women at all levels such as assistant principals, vice principals, principals, and those in the central office in a diocese. At the suggestion of the dissertation committee, the study focused more on the highest levels of decision-making power; assistant superintendents and superintendents. The study wanted to look at how the Church, ever-evolving, and society has created an environment for women in Catholic education leadership.

Research Questions

Experiences of women in Catholic schools in the 19th century have significantly evolved in terms of leadership and decision-making. The research showed there are more women in Catholic educational leadership now than at any other time in the last three centuries. Nevertheless, similar issues of inequality still exist in attaining positions of leadership. In addition, the education system and society are opening up more to the idea of a woman as a

leader in the decision-making process. To gauge the lived experiences of women in Catholic educational leadership in the 21st century, my research question asks: What are the experiences, successes, and challenges of female assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses?

Rationale for a Qualitative Phenomenological Approach

The qualitative, phenomenological research method was used in this study to understand the point of view of women in Catholic education leadership. According to Denscombe (2014), through phenomenology, participants provide their point of view of themselves as Catholic education leaders, describe how they see things, how they experience things in these positions, how they understand their own positionalities, and how they have interpreted events.

This technique allows an analysis of the individuals' lived experiences in a selected context. Phenomenology design (Moustakas, 1994) was used in this study since it focuses on familiar concepts in which research still lacks a deep and comprehensive understanding. This qualitative approach describes the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon for several individuals" (Hall et al., 2016, p. 137). In phenomenology, a common meaning is defined for the prior experiences of multiple people regarding a phenomenon or concept (Creswell, 2013). This research design will help Catholic school leaders to understand common experiences to develop a deeper understanding of this phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

This phenomenological research design seeks to describe the common meaning, experiences, and lived experiences of women in Catholic educational leadership. Creswell (2013) described the method as a collection of data from those who have experienced a phenomenon and develop a "composite description of the essence of the experience for all the

individuals" (p. 76) and not "on the life of the individual but the lived experiences of the individual around the phenomenon" (p. 122). Moustakas (1994) described this as "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it (as cited in Creswell, 2013).

The assistant superintendents and superintendents were grateful and eager to share their stories and experiences. One participant disclosed that she gets invitations to participate in studies regularly. However, she never saw a research study that wanted to explore the highest decision-making positions in Catholic education. They recalled details of their past mentors, people who encouraged them, obstacles, challenges, joys, regrets, and even realized as they spoke it out loud for the first time, some things that needed to change in their office. Through their anecdotes, reflections, insights, and descriptions of experiences, we can "tell an interesting story" (Denscombe, 2014, p. 102) as the events unfold throughout everyday life.

Research Setting and Procedures

The research was developed under the encouragement of my dissertation committee to ambitiously reach out to female assistant superintendents and superintendents all across Catholic dioceses in the United States.

Initial Contact

Once permission to solicit participation was granted by the Department of Catholic Schools (see Appendix A), I sent a thoughtfully scripted email invitation to various assistant superintendents and superintendents throughout the United States (see Appendix B). I introduced myself as a doctoral student and outlined the purpose of the research study. I explained there is no compensation and they were contributing to an underresearched body of knowledge on women in Catholic educational leadership. Once they agreed, I emailed them a research packet

that included the interview questions/prompts (see Appendix C), the 2-page informed consent form (see Appendix D), and the Subjects' Bill of Rights (see Appendix E). They were asked to read the documents, fill them out, and sign and return to me at their earliest convenience or by the time of their interview.

Lastly, I provided additional information of my dissertation chairperson and IRB contact for further inquiries and verification. This is how I established legitimacy and credibility to start to earn their trust and gain access.

Once a person responded positively to an interview, I thanked them and gave several choices for dates and times. After several emailed correspondence, reminders, and follow-ups, I calendared a majority of the interviews within the span of 1 month.

Gaining Trust

Before each interview, I provided the participant with the interview prompts at least 24 hours for review. I earned the trust of participants by frontloading all the information, replying promptly to questions, by being organized and efficient with scheduling, and providing a summary of my positionality and interest in the topic.

Before I started recording each interview, I thanked the participant and gave them a brief summary of who I am and why I was doing this research. This was something I did after one of my first participants from a video call asked, "I am really interested in your research but I would like to know who you are and your own context." I was transparent and told her that I was inspired by conversations with other women and their experiences in Catholic education. I wanted to see if these are similar experiences for people who are considered in the highest decision making roles in different parts of the country.

In addition, I reminded each participant that all information such as their name, diocese, race, or any specific, identifying descriptors are confidential and will never be released or included in any of these chapters. I reassured them that this was not a narrative qualitative analysis but was analyzed through a thematic way. This helped significantly lower their anxiety and speak freely. Through general courtesy, transparency, and availability, I gained their general trust and created a safe, empowering space for them to speak truthfully of their experiences without judgment.

Though I already knew explaining confidentiality was important and vital to the study, I was more intentional of assuaging any anxiety or fear of retribution for speaking truthfully when one of my first interviewees dropped out in fear of what she shared being discovered by her superiors.

Choice of Research Participants

In a phenomenological study, data is collected from individuals who experienced a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). For this research, I used purposeful, criterion, and convenient sampling. I chose these sampling methods since I wanted to explore the lived experiences of females in the highest decision-making positions within Catholic education leadership. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of women who work as assistant superintendents or superintendents in a Catholic diocese.

Purposive Sampling

Palinkas et al. (2015) described purposeful sampling involving individuals or groups that are knowledgeable or experienced with a particular phenomenon. These individuals expressed their availability and willingness to participate freely in an open and articulate manner. As

female assistant superintendents and superintendents, they are a very small group of individuals with the knowledge of women in Catholic educational leadership at its highest levels. Creswell (2013) suggested about 3-4 or 10-15 individuals who have experienced similar phenomena in an objective and subjective lived experience. In this study, all the participants are women who are currently either an assistant superintendent or superintendent.

Criterion Sampling

A narrower type of sampling is criterion sampling. This was used since it was important that all participants had the experience of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Participants had to be females and serve as current assistant superintendents or a superintendent in a diocese for Catholic schools in the United States. This criterion sampling was done for "quality assurance" (Creswell, 2013). The quality of the study was contingent on securing women in these decision-making roles.

Convenience Sampling

Sampling is a method to collect data from a population so findings can be applied to the population (Marshall, 1996). Convenience sampling was used in the study due to the constraints of time since it involves obtaining a sample based on participants' accessibility and time. However, to strengthen this sample, purposeful sampling was used to ensure the quality of experiences and knowledge from the participants can contribute significantly to the greater body of knowledge in this area of study (Gentles et al., 2015). Participants were acquired through leveraging contacts and networks and looking up Diocesan websites for a listing of employees.

Ten Participants

According to phenomenological researchers, 5 to 25 participants are suitable for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1989). Through the use of my available networks in Catholic education and the ability to look up email information on the internet, I contacted as many current female assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses all over the country. I sent them a scripted email with some personal touches ("You were recommended by . . ."). They were recruited with the help of the Dissertation Committee's connections, my personal connections, and by emailing assistant superintendents and/or superintendents an invitation to participate in the study. Out of all the invitations, 11 responded. However, one interviewee did drop out immediately after the interview due to some issues regarding her current diocese. I had a respectable participant pool of 10 women in those roles. Six were assistant superintendents and four were superintendents at the time of the interviews.

Assistant Superintendents

All six women served as teachers, and some also served as former principals in elementary or high school contexts. The range of service in this position ranged from 1 year to 40 years. All had either master's degrees and/or doctoral degrees.

Superintendents

Four female superintendents agreed to participate in the study. They were diverse in their representation in terms of race, education, age, and regions. Most served previously as assistant superintendents in a Catholic diocese.

Data Collection

For this research, I gathered data through recorded, semi-structured interviews with each participant. Each interview averaged about one hour, with a minimum of 33 minutes for one and 1 hour and 30 minutes for the longest interview. These interviews were done through one-on-one face-to-face conversations, video conference calls, or phone calls. Due to time and regional constraints (participants were from other parts of the country), other types of data collection such as observations or school visits were not possible.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Denscombe (2014) described semi-structured interviews as a clear list of issues or questions that allow for flexibility. He stated, "the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered . . . to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher" (Denscombe, 2014, p. 186). These interviews were opportunities to gather a significant source of data from their lived experiences as women in power.

Phenomenological Study

According to Creswell (2013), interviews are the main source of data collection in a phenomenological study. Interviews are regarded as an effective method since it eliminates any constrictions inherent in tests and surveys. Likert-type surveys sometimes do not tell the whole story. Interviews with critical prompts reveal meaningful data, points of view, experiences, and emotions of individuals in a comprehensive manner. The main questions with subquestions allow the individual to expand and further explain their answers in a reflective way. Skrla et al. (2000)

noted research conducted in 2000 about women in administrative positions should be done as follows:

> The research context should encourage an empathetic dialogue that provides a comfortable place for women to tell stories of successful professional work, interwoven with acknowledgments of their own silence. In this context, women are more likely to be able to relay candid accounts of their experiences with sexism and discriminatory treatment, which may make it possible to "learn how women leaders construct their identities in inherently inequitable circumstances such [as] those found in the superintendency. (as cited in Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 34)

It is interesting to note there were extensive pauses of silence in the recordings. During these thoughtful pauses, participants would think and sometimes start tearing up before answering a difficult question regarding family or general challenges.

Probing for Deeper Explanations

Denscombe (2014) emphasized the importance of reinforcing and asking for clarity or further responses in semi-structured interviews. The interviewer must have the right questions and know when to properly probe and prompt for these answers (Kajornboon, 2005). As an interviewer, I had to know how to ask more probing questions to expand participants' own understanding of the question and articulate a clear answer. Summarizing an answer also helped with going on a deeper dive into the question. For example, I summarized a participant's answer on their previous examples of a challenge she had mentioned with a pastor when she was a principal. She gave vague references about not getting along with the pastor. I went back to that incident and carefully asked her to give more context to help me understand what the root of the conflict was about and reflect on why that pastor spoke to her that way. She thought for a moment and explained she never thought about it much before but it was possibly because of his

cultural upbringing as he was from a different country. She gave more details and expanded on that experience while probably having some healing about that memory at the same time.

Quality of Questions

The quality of the interview questions is important to bring out the responses needed to answer and give insight to the research questions. Moustakas (1994) suggested asking broad, general questions: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? (as cited in Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) noted these basic questions lead to more textual and structural descriptions of experiences that will later provide an understanding of participants' common experiences.

Instruments

My instruments included a semi-structured interview protocol. I conducted a semi-structured interview composed of questions inspired by other research on Catholic school leadership and women in educational leadership (Casella, 2018; Gomez, 2017; McManus, 2018).

For recording and transcriptions, I used Otter.ai. I put my laptop in front of the participant and recorded them with consent as the software transcribed in real-time. For coding and memoing, I used Dedoose Software. This is further explained in the analysis section.

Organization of Prompts

The interview consisted of questions in two frameworks; transformative leadership theory and Catholic social teaching. The first part of the interview prompts included questions regarding how the participant came to their leadership role and explored their call to leadership, mentorships, leading with mission and vision, leadership styles, and successes. These prompts

established a context in which to understand their positionality. They helped the interviewee speak on their call to leadership, educational journey, mentors, early days of challenges, experiences, mentors, and successes in leadership scenarios.

The second part of the interview prompts related to their experiences of being a woman and how it connected to acquiring their role in educational leadership. These prompts focused on experiences with family life (whether having children, taking care of children or parents), balancing both career and family, obstacles to leadership, perceptions of leadership, interactions and experiences of working with clergy or men, compensation and opportunities for growth within the context of women in Catholic educational leadership.

The prompts were inspired by interview questions by two dissertations. Casella (2018) looked at Catholic educational leadership and how Catholic schools are developing leaders for their schools. McManus (2018) looked at the challenges and opportunities of novice female principals in charter schools. Their questions were used as inspiration for creating the questions for the research. Critical prompts can be found in Appendix C.

Data Storage

The protection of data was the most important aspect of the data collection process. I was very intentional about keeping this information safe. For field notes and observations, I kept them in my personal computer "stickies." All transcripts and recorded data were stored on Otter.AI and Dedoose Software. This could only be accessed through my university username and password. All other data were kept in Google Drive

Transcriptions

 All audio recordings and written transcripts for each of the interviews were done through the Otter.ai app accessible at https://otter.ai/. This app records and transcribes all spoken words in real time. Though the app is quite advanced, it did misspell certain words such as *principal* being spelled as *principle*. Certain accents or ways of saying a word were also transcribed incorrectly. I went back and cleaned up each transcript for accuracy.

Data Disposal and Destruction

 In accordance with IRB standards and ethics, I will permanently delete all digital data from transcripts, notes, audio recordings, and emails. Any written notes will be shredded. This will be done 1 year from the date of the final dissertation submission and approval from my committee.

<div align="center">

Analysis Plan

</div>

 In this section, I will explain my plan to examine the data gathered from interviews. In phenomenological studies, data are not intended to be analyzed in the traditional sense by drawing correlations or making assumptions. Salmona et al. (2020) stated the "researcher is challenged when drawing credible and trustworthy findings gathered from the evidence" (p. 103). The term used in phenomenological research is *explication*. This is an exhaustive analysis of a phenomenon or significant phrase and clustering it into themes to extract the essential meaning of something. In addition, examining space, physical or bodily presence, time, and relationship with others is considered as a holistic explication of the data (Creswell, 2013).

Explication Versus Analysis

Explication is the process in which phenomenological data are best understood (Groenewald, 2004; Lester, 1970). According to Hycner (1999), the word analysis implies breaking things down into parts (as cited in Groenewald, 2004). Explication looks into these experiences as a whole. Their experiences are based on the "essence" of noted experience. In phenomenology, data are approached by developing a textual description—"what happened"— what was experienced and a structural description or how the phenomenon was experienced (Creswell, 2013). The explication process involves reading statements and getting a feeling for what is being stated, creating notations (memos) about how it was said or communicated, and identifying key themes.

Data Explication

To explicate the answers from this phenomenological study, I used Colaizzi's (1978) method of reading the transcripts several times to get an overall feel of them through significant quotes and creating memos. I read each interview several times while listening to the recording. While reading and listening, I made notes on the participant's voice, intonation, sighs, body language (from face-to-face interviews), cadence, and pauses.

I copy and pasted significant phrases and put them in another document to use later to support themes. In phenomenological studies, meanings take form from the emergence of themes from the transcripts. For example, when speaking about experiences in working with mission, the importance of building relationships and building capacity became apparent.

Dedoose software is a tool used in helping put a quantitative aspect to qualitative research. To understand the analysis of this data, a basic understanding of the software must be explained. This tool has been central to increasing the validity of the research.

Transcripts and Descriptors

Once a transcript of an interview is completed, the audio recording and the transcribed interview can be uploaded into the media files. Once the files are uploaded, the researcher makes Descriptor sets. One set can have as many fields as one chooses and have text, option list or a number. For my research descriptors, I included their participant number, pseudonyms, age range, position (assistant superintendent or superintendent), years in the position, children, highest education completed, ethnicity, region, and a notes field for me to put in other aspects of the person such as if they earned a specific degree or have unique characteristics about their story into leadership.

List of Codes

After putting in the descriptors, codes are set up. These codes are based on the review of the literature, interview questions within a theoretical framework, and emerging themes from the interview itself. In this case, skills, confidence/self-efficacy, race, and age were emerging codes I added once it was mentioned more than once. The codes are the following:

- *Mentorship* (*as a whole, by religious sisters, other women*): This code had subcodes such as *mentored by Religious Sisters, Mentored by Women, Mentoring Others*. This would refer to specifics of mentorship. In some cases, if a woman mentioned being mentored by a man, I would apply the code *Mentorship*. If it was specific to a woman or religious sister, I would apply the *Mentorship* code and the *Mentored by Religious*

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sisters code. I did this because though it was specific it still fell under the umbrella of mentorship. These codes referred to excerpts that explained any mentorship or guidance by religious sisters or specific women (e.g., former superintendents or their bosses). Under the umbrella of Mentorship, I coded excerpts that referred to the participant's journey as well. For example, Nicole, a superintendent, sought mentorship through formal networks in the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA). She enrolled in a program where she met with her mentor every two weeks for a one-hour phone call.

- *Mentoring others:* This code referred to excerpts that explained how the participant may have mentored others formally or informally.

- *Catholic identity*: This code pertained to any mention of spirituality, Catholic values, Catholic centric themes, prayer, Mass, God, higher power in the Catholic context, growing up Catholic, attending Catholic schools, and reference to Catholic teachings and beliefs.

- *Challenges* (*with clergy, with parents, with patriarchy*): The blanket code of challenges referred to any obstacles in their journey ranging from education, financial situations, faculty challenges, dealing with politics in the workplace, or challenges with colleagues. Specific codes such as *challenges with clergy* referred to pastor-principal relationships, working with superiors such as bishops or archbishops in the dioceses. Lastly, *challenges with the Patriarchy* referred to any mention of male dominated work situations. For example, Cara (assistant superintendent) remarked,

"There can be a little bit of the good old boy system. Yeah, that was kind of the situation I was at."

- *Collaboration*: This code referred to the instance of working together to solve a problem. For example, Annette, an assistant superintendent, shared her experience working with principals to roll out Common Core standards in their schools. This was not a top-down mandate but a working together and knowing the "why" or purpose of doing so and carrying it out together.

- *Compensation:* This code refers to any excerpts related to salary and benefits. For example, Justine, a superintendent, speculated she was not sure about being paid more or less than a man in her position, but she suspected it and felt compelled to renegotiate her salary this coming year. Cara, an assistant superintendent, found out later her former male colleague at her previous school site did less than what she did (the bare minimum) and yet was paid $6,000 more than she was at the time.

- *Confidence* or *self-efficacy*: This code came to be during the interviews since participants naturally expressed a sense of confidence about being in their position. No one expressed hesitance or self-doubt in their abilities. Annette, an assistant superintendent, explained, "In this position, you have to know yourself and why." This code speaks on the beliefs that participants had about themselves and their abilities.

- *Family:* This code pertains to any excerpts related to having a family, wanting a family, building a family, having children, and working within this dynamic as a whole.

- *Gender*: This code pertains to any excerpts related to a reference to participants' gender coming into play with either compensation or challenges.

- *Age:* This code pertains to reference to one's age.

- *Networking*: This code pertains to reference to building networks, reaching out, maximizing networks and building connections.

- *Professional development*: This code refers to any type of conference, workshop, class or seminar that the participant either participated in or gave to others.

- *Race*: This code refers to excerpts in which one's color or ethnicity came into play at any point in their career.

- *Skills*: This code refers to any mention of their skills in their position. Belinda, an assistant superintendent, explained in her interview she had held so many of the positions in her school site such as teacher, literary coach, curriculum coordinator, and more. When a position for a vice principal came up she knew it was time.

- *Social justice (realizations)*: This code refers to the social justice aspects of the excerpts that explain the hard decisions they had to make as leaders. Justine, a superintendent, brought up how difficult it is to sustain a tuition-funded model while serving all students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

- *Successes:* This refers to the successes of participants and women in Catholic education leadership as a whole. These excerpts speak on how some of these women were on the fast track to leadership because someone believed in their abilities. Other successes that were coded were those in professional development or developing other leaders in their context.

- *Transformative leadership (building capacity, building relationships, morals and ethics):* This code is an umbrella code that refers to any excerpts that speak on aspects of transformational leadership which was discussed further in detail in the explanation of themes. Overall, transformational leadership involves creating spaces for everyone to derive their own abilities to effect meaningful and sustainable change. The subcategories of *building capacity* and *building relationships* were one of the most prevalent concepts that participants spoke about. There may be challenges and logistics to figure out but all participants became animated and recharged when speaking about the work they do under the ideas of building capacity and building relationships to empower educators and the administrators.

Coding and Memo Process

For coding and memoing I used Dedoose Software. This software has a very sophisticated way of organizing data into meaningful visual representations. Once a transcript was corrected, I downloaded it from Otter.ai and uploaded a Microsoft Word document as the transcript on Dedoose. Through this program, I created a code notebook based on the literature review, theoretical framework, and prompts.

Memos were linked to participants and excerpts through simple right-clicking and adding a memo. In these memos, I wrote notes on how the person answered the question (e.g., stammer, hesitant, rapid-fire, repeating words, nervousness). In addition, I would add field notes I took during the interview

Setting Up Parent and Child Codes

Parent codes were the main codes in the codebook. If a specific code emerged from the transcript, I would add a child code. For example, Challenges was an overall code that pertained to any obstacle or hindrance to complete a goal or objective. They ranged and varied to financial or culturally related challenges. Child codes were added to significant recurrences of challenges such as challenges with patriarchy, challenges with parents, and challenges with the clergy. When these showed up more than five times within all the transcripts, they would be added as a child code. If a participant told a story about a person such as a religious sister helping them early on in their career, I would code it as *Mentoring by religious sisters.*

Applying Codes

The next part of the process involves actually coding the transcripts. This is the longest part of the process. I would listen to each chunk of responses while reading along with the transcript, sometimes going over it twice. After stopping the recording, I would go through it line by line highlighting and applying one to a maximum of six codes per excerpt. There is no maximum amount, however, this is the most I applied to one excerpt. Dedoose allowed for simple annotation of highlighting an excerpt, right clicking, and applying any number of codes.

Applying multiple codes to an excerpt was allowed. An example of multiple codes to an excerpt would be one about Cara, an assistant superintendent, who responded she did not like to think about the perceived different treatment of males and females. I asked this in the context of whom she works with (all men priests). I coded this excerpt for *gender, challenges with clergy,* and *challenges with patriarchy*. Though she did not consider it a challenge, her reticence and tension with the topic with no follow up lead me to believe there was more to the story. On the

other hand, another assistant superintendent was very open about the perceived different treatment of males and females and dubbed it the "good old boys club" and talked freely about it. I also coded this as *gender*, *challenges with clergy,* and *challenges with patriarchy.*

Applying a Memo

Afterward, I would write a memo regarding any quotable lines and notes about participants' attitudes and ways of answering. For example, I noted when I asked Cara, one assistant superintendent, about any perceived difference of treatment of males and females, she paused thoughtfully and quickly replied in a high tone, "Probably, but I don't like to think about it." I noted how she went from speaking freely to almost tensing up in her voice when I brought this topic up. I coded her response for *gender* since her response related to the topic.

I applied memos to excerpts to denote tone, cadence, pauses, and in some cases, body movement (when done in person or video conference). For example, I put a memo on one transcript about how a participant had long sighs and pauses when asked questions pertaining to interactions with clergy in a professional context.

Retrieval of Excerpts and Codes

One of the most helpful features of Dedoose is the connection between excerpts and codes. When I accessed charts and clicked on codes, the full, highlighted excerpts were available for that specific code. I could also do code co-occurrences and pull up excerpts that were coded with more than one code. Codes and their interactions were available for explication and relationship analysis. More on charts is covered in the next section.

Dedoose Analysis of Charts

After all the transcripts are coded and memos have been written, the last process is to click on the Analyze button and select Chart Selector. There are two ways of looking at the data; an overview or in detail. I used the Qualitative Charts to explore my data first. I used the following charts: Code Application, Code Presence, and Code x Descriptor. This showed me how many times a code occurred with another code. Warmer colors like red and yellow indicated a high code co-occurrence while lower numbers were colder colors like blue. For example, transformative leadership and collaboration had the highest occurrence. These grid charts show the data in different variations such as code presence per participant and code and descriptor application. I will describe the charts I used to analyze the data.

- Code application: This refers to the occurrences of a code in an excerpt. For example, Justine, a superintendent, spoke frequently and the most about *Catholic identity* and all things related such as spirituality

- Code presence: This chart describes the presence of a code (not the number of occurrences) by each participant. For example, there were only three participants that mentioned anything about age while the others made no mention of it at all.

- Codes x descriptor: This chart showed each code applied to a participant's interview. For example, compensation was a code applied to all participants' transcripts. Adrienne, an assistant superintendent spoke more about compensation at a total of 38.5% than others who ranged between 7 to 23%. Once I clicked on her statistics, I saw the excerpts in which she talked about compensation. This chart is a great overview to see the relationship between each participant and the code.

- Descriptor x code: This chart displays the descriptor fields in relation to the codes that were applied. This is an interesting source of data because it has demographic data that can be matched to codes. For example, for the code transformative leadership, I noticed doctoral students and women of color and those from the west coast regions talked about this topic more. For the code, building capacity, superintendents and older persons mentioned it more than any other type of participant. Descriptors such as demographic information (age, ethnicity, region) can yield interesting results.

- Code co-occurrence. This refers to the number of times two codes interact and are coded within the same excerpts. These code co-occurrences are valuable to see any connections. For example, there were significant code co-occurrences with transformational leadership and building capacity and building relationships. This is positive since these two qualities are integral to transformative leadership. This helps reduce any researcher bias.

Phenomenological Analysis and Representation

Creswell (2013) suggested a modified way to approach data in phenomenological research. He suggested the researcher first articulates a comprehensive reflection of their own experience with the phenomenon to try to set aside any personal experiences. This is difficult and nearly impossible to do. However, by this exercise, the researcher can focus on participants rather than themselves. These parts of phenomenological analysis and explication is broken down in sections below. To break these concepts down, I use this significant statement from Danielle, a superintendent:

> I would often have conversations with my colleagues in different diocese about, you know, is there that stained-glass ceiling and, in the sense with the, you know, the clerical

hierarchy. You know, sometimes we feel like we don't get that next step, because we're not men but we don't, you know . . . we have no actual data, we just have anecdotal situations where we think, "Wow, you know would I have gotten it had I been a male or not?

In this statement, she was asked about any experiences she could recall about thinking of her gender having an impact on her career trajectory. The following steps were used:

1. Significant statements: Creswell (2013) also suggests developing a list of significant statements regarding participants' experiences of the topic. Each statement must not overlap and be treated with "having equal worth" (Creswell, 2013, p. 192). Danielle's excerpt above is a significant statement since it speaks about her experience as a woman in educational leadership.

2. Meaning units: These significant statements are later placed into larger units of information called meaning units. These are the emerging themes from the research (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). This statement was added to similar statements regarding their experiences as women and coded as gender. The essence of the quote and those similar to it created a theme of perspectives of being a woman in a patriarchal system.

3. Textural description: In this process, a description of "what" participants experienced (in relation to the study) was organized (Creswell, 2013). "What happened?" is analyzed with quoted examples. In the same example, Danielle speaks on being passed up for the superintendent position for a number of years despite having all the qualifications.

4. Structural description: This involves the "how" the experience happened (Creswell, 2013). In the same example of the quote regarding the notion of being passed up for a job in conversations between other women, we can say these conversations happen

not in just a diocese but within another diocese since she has conversations about it with others most likely in collaborative conferences or settings. The phenomenon of women's experiences in Catholic school leadership happens in conversations with other women.

5. Essence: This last stage of explication is described as a composite paragraph of "what" participants experienced and the "how" or context of which they experienced it.

In summation, this process is a general guideline for analyzing data through explicating significant phrases, coming up with meanings and organizing them into themes, and writing a comprehensive description of the phenomenon. This is demonstrated in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness and Evaluation

Qualitative Validity

Salmona et al. (2020) characterized qualitative analysis as "an ongoing struggle with ambiguity" (p. 103). The credibility of a qualitative study can only be done through strict adherence to social science protocols and empirical practices for research. Furthermore, qualitative analysis is not meant to produce generalizable findings. Rather, it is meant to provide more understanding and insight into what is being studied (Salmona et al., 2020). The terms of *validity, reliability* and *generalizability* are not considered appropriate qualitative terminology. Rather, *transferability, dependability, confirmability,* and *trustworthiness* are used in a qualitative context (Salmona et al., 2020).

Anderson and Spencer (2002) noted in their phenomenological study that validity is achieved through some of the following ways: "the review of the literature, adhering to the

phenomenological procedures, bracketing past experiences, keeping field notes, using an adequate sample" (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 333).

Phenomenological Validity

Creswell (2013) analyzed different perspectives of validity in qualitative, phenomenological studies. For Polkinghorne, valid or the idea of validation is contingent on the belief that an idea is "well-grounded and well supported" (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 259). Polkinghorne (1989) posed questions as points of determining the quality of the study. He asked, "Does the general structural description provide an accurate portrait of the common features and structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected?" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 57). Polkinghorne (1989) posed five evaluative questions for researchers to reflect on:

- Did the interviewer influence the contents of participants' descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect participants' actual experiences?
- Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation of the interviews?
- In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified these alternatives?
- Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?
- Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experiences in other situations? (as cited in Creswell, 2013, pp. 259-260).

I established validity and reliability by reflecting on those questions and making sure that the structural descriptions were in the right context and exhaustive. In addition, I followed detailed protocols mandated for empirical social science research. This ranged from sending participants the questions in advance, establishing ethical research standards, ensuring confidentiality, reviewing transcripts, and comprehensive detailing of the codes.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative, phenomenological research requires a level of closeness and disclosure between the researcher and the participant. They are discussing topics they may not have even thought about or considered before the interview. Creswell (2013) asserted ethical considerations happen at all stages of research beyond data collection. Some things to consider include participant's fear of disclosing information, establishing supportive relationships, acknowledging their voices, and not placing participants in any risk.

All the women in this research study were adults and consented in the very beginning. They signed the informed consent form approved by the IRB, consented to being recorded and answered openly and truthfully about their experiences. Before each interview, I assured them that their identities would be confidential and that no identifying information such as names, specific ages, region, name of diocese or individual information regarding their race would be disclosed. The results were not presented in a narrative format with specific information or experiences that could be traced back to them. All information was treated as a whole. For example, I disclosed the age ranges and percentages of race representation. I did not identify an individual participant by their race or age. In the case of one female interviewee, her request to withdraw was immediately honored. Her recording was immediately deleted.

Limitations

Number of Participants

Although 5 to 25 participants is considered an adequate number of participants (Creswell, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1989), 10 participants can still be a limitation. I invited 20 female assistant superintendents and superintendents in total. Eleven responded, but only 10 remained in the

study. Some dioceses have only 2 to 5 people in their district offices. There were more female assistant superintendents than superintendents.

Accuracy of Participants' Experiences

During some interviews, it was apparent that some difficult questions were thoughtfully crafted and may not have been answered to the fullest extent. Questions pertaining to interactions with clergy, gender, compensation and promotions were usually met with long pauses, sighs, followed by some terse answers. It would not be surprising if information regarding these sensitive topics were smoothed out to sound more diplomatic or polished.

Summary

Data analysis in a phenomenological study moves from "narrow units of analysis (significant statements)" and "broader units (meaning units)" to detailed elements (Creswell, 2013). Once I completed interviews, I uploaded interview transcriptions through the Dedoose software and broke down these statements (significant and meaning units). Through this, I used codes to tag data in the interview responses that were meaningful and related back to my research questions. I looked for patterns in the stories and responses from participants to drill down the data. This software helped me create visualizations of the data and inform the next steps with code charts.

Creswell (2013) explained how phenomenological data analysis involves going through the data such as interview transcripts and highlighting significant statements such as quotes or sentences that give insight on how participants experienced these phenomena. I found consistent themes through an inductive style approach (see Table 3). These themes and excerpts connected to the success, challenges, progress, and overall experiences of the women in Catholic education.

Table 3

Relation of Research Question to Theoretical Framework and Interview Questions

Research question(s)	Theoretical framework	Interview questions
What are the experiences, successes, and challenges of female assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses?	• Catholic social teaching • Social justice framework	• What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? • What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This qualitative, phenomenological study sought to understand the experiences, successes, and challenges of female assistant superintendents and superintendents in the United States through their work in Catholic education. In this phenomenological study, I asked them questions rooted in transformative leadership and Catholic social teaching.

This research explored the experiences of 10 dynamic women in Catholic educational leadership who serve as assistant superintendents or superintendents. From this research emerged 10 hours of recorded interviews, 150 significant statements, 379 excerpts from 25 codes, and 929 code applications.

Summary of the Findings

The research study findings can be explained through the emergence of three themes: (a) The Importance of Catholic Identity in Leadership; (b) Recognizing the Challenges; and (c) Leading to Inform, Form, and Transform. These themes developed from the lived experiences of these leaders. They articulated examples of their prayer life, spirituality, challenges with clergy, discrimination, and successes with building effective collaborative teams to improve their schools.

The Value of the Study

In education, the highest positions are as an assistant superintendent or superintendent. These positions of decision-making power influence educational policy, processes and practices that directly impact curriculum, instruction and the viability of a school. Though traditionally a position held by males, this position has now been occupied by women. According to the

NCEA's superintendents study, women number nearly 50% of the superintendency (Cattaro &

McDonald, 2015). In California, out of 12 dioceses, women fill the role of superintendents in

eight dioceses (California Catholic Conference, 2020).

By conducting this study, I have identified central themes that have permeated the

experiences of helping female leaders attain more decision-making positions in Catholic

education. These findings can shape future leadership programs in higher education to create

opportunities for advancement, meaningful learning networks, and forge mentorship programs.

Furthermore, it can help remove barriers to equitable leadership and lead to a truly

transformative leadership culture. Findings of this study provided critical information for

Catholic school leaders and decision makers to be more aware of the challenges faced by women

and work toward intentional solutions to ameliorate the development of Catholic school leaders.

How the Study Was Conducted

I conducted this research with the help of my dissertation committee to connect with

assistant superintendents and superintendents in the United States. In addition, I searched

through websites and contacted 20 female assistant superintendents and/or superintendents from

dioceses in different regions of the United States. After gathering their email, I emailed them

each an invitation to participate in the study through either a video conference, phone call or in

some instances, a face to face interview.

Data Gathering

Participants in the study had to have met two requirements: be a female and hold a

current position as an assistant superintendent or as a superintendent. Once I identified these

persons, emailed them, and received a response, I set up a time to do the interview. Interview

questions were based on the transformational leadership framework and Catholic social teaching framework. Between November 2019 and February 2020, I interviewed 10 women—four superintendents and six assistant superintendents from the midwest and pacific regions. I called them and conducted semi-structured interviews and used Otter AI software to record and transcribe the interview. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes depending on the participant.

Data Explication

These semi-structured, qualitative interviews were explicated through Dedoose software. This helped me to code excerpts from transcripts that formed clusters of meaning and later to build on themes phenomena of the field to recurring themes. Memos were made for excerpts to note reactions, context and general tone and nuance of the way the interviewee responded to the questions. Significant statements were organized and analyzed by themes and subconstructs. They were connected with other significant statements to build up each theme. This process of explication was explained in Chapter 3.

Restatement of the Research Questions

I engaged in the extensive process of interviewing 10 assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses and followed the demands of qualitative research design to explore the phenomenological topic of women in Catholic educational leadership and answer this research question: What are the experiences, successes, and challenges of assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses?

Participants

Through their narratives, participants revealed their personal information such as marital status, children, years in education, and past roles (teacher, director, administrator) through the first set of expository questions regarding their journey to their current position as an assistant superintendent or superintendent. Participants' ages ranged from 35 to 65. Experience in the role ranged from 18 months to 30 years, all have a master's degree (two have MBAs), and two have doctoral degrees. Participants consisted of 50% Caucasian (White), 40% as Asian, and 10% as Hispanic (Latinex) descent. All but one participant had children or will have children. Two participants were pregnant at the time of the interview, and one adopted a child. All assistant superintendents and superintendents were from urban cities and areas with considerable diversity of students in terms of ethnicity and learning differences.

Confidentiality

The protection of subjects is the most important part of the study. I changed all participants' names and did not provide any identifiable information beyond what was listed here. I refer to participants with pseudonyms and their titles but will not disclose the city or region for which they serve. It is interesting to point out that one assistant superintendent who had originally agreed to participate in the study and provided an interview dropped out shortly afterward. She noted many challenges in her diocesan leadership context and feared retaliation and being on record regarding such challenges. The absence of her interview in this research is important information to include since this act alone connects to some of the challenges of a woman in Catholic education leadership. This also demonstrated the potential risks of participating in a study of this nature.

The following list of participants consists entirely of pseudonyms with only the position they served at the time of the interview. Other identifiable information such as the region in which they serve, number of years in the position, and ethnicity is not listed or discussed as individuals. They are as follows:

1. Adrienne, Assistant Superintendent

2. Sue, Assistant Superintendent

3. Raquel, Superintendent

4. Nicole, Superintendent

5. Karen, Assistant Superintendent

6. Cara, Assistant Superintendent

7. Annette, Assistant Superintendent

8. Justine, Superintendent

9. Belinda, Assistant Superintendent

10. Danielle, Superintendent

Inductive Approach

This chapter is organized by emerging themes found through the transcripts of the interviews such as (a) the importance of Catholic leadership and Catholic identity; (b) recognizing challenges (compensation, patriarchy, family); and (c) learning to inform, form and transform (transformative leadership with building capacity and building relationships). These themes emerged from the coded transcripts. This is explained further in this chapter with the explanation of how Dedoose software works with the analysis of the results.

Other clusters of meaning include collaboration, compensation, confidence/self-efficacy, family, gender, mentorship (religious sisters, women, mentoring others), networking, professional development, race, skills, and social justice also emerged and is weaved into the themes. The following sections will explain what Dedoose is and why and how it was used in this analysis process. This is important in understanding the analysis of the data.

Significant Clusters of Meaning

The results of using Dedoose helped me see a significant number of occurrences of the codes that lead me to notice and analyze them. I determined major themes through code application information. For example, transformative leadership was coded in 104 excerpts in the 10 interview transcripts. Subcodes within this code were building capacity and building relationships which received 62 and 64 code applications respectively. The top six code applications were (a) transformative leadership (building capacity and building relationships), (b) challenges (including clergy and patriarchy), (c) Catholic identity, (d) gender, (e) family, and (f) professional development. These codes were applied the most throughout the research. Other codes such as mentorship, collaboration, networking, and compensation were not coded as much as the main themes. However, some insights from these codes are shared to help build a more holistic perspective to answer our research question.

Emerging Themes of the Research

Out of 10 interviews totaling about 10 hours, 150 significant statements were extracted. These statements have been categorized into three overarching themes that describe the experiences of women in Catholic education leadership. As assistant superintendents or superintendents, they reflected on their entire experience in Catholic education from working as

a teacher, curriculum leader, principal (in most cases) and to their current role. From the significant clusters of meanings in the transcript, these three themes are: (a) the importance of catholic identity in leadership; (b) recognizing the challenges; and (c) leading to inform, form, and transform

Theme 1: The Importance of Catholic Identity in Leadership

The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012) are the standards for Catholic schools regarding Catholic identity, governance, teaching and learning, and sustainability/development. What makes Catholic schools, Catholic? This important document opens with the Mission and Catholic Identity of Catholic schools. Catholic Identity is fundamentally rooted in the Church's teachings and practices. Standard 1 cites, "Gospel values and the Eucharist, and faith formation intertwined with academic excellence and service" (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012, p. 5). The benchmarks cited in 2.1 to 2.7 characterize Catholic identity in religious education curriculum and instruction as required by (arch)dioceses, religion classes, catechetical preparation, qualified faculty to teach religion classes, the use of Scripture and Catholic tradition. Catholic identity is also defined as the Catholic culture of faith (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012). Examples of Catholic identity include the Mass, celebration of sacraments throughout one's life, prayer, scripture reading, and Church social teachings.

In this study, Catholic identity encompassed all things that related to the Catholicity of the phenomenon. Sixty-five excerpts were coded with Catholic Identity codes from all 10 participants. Any mention of the Church or Catholicity was coded. Significant examples of Catholic identity emerged from experiences of women in Catholic education through their

expressions of prayer, being faithful, and trusting in God with all things. Some significant subconstructs that emerged included spirituality and faith, prayer warriors called to serve, Catholic leaders and prayer in the workplace.

Spirituality and Faith

When speaking about their call to leadership in Catholic education, certain participants spoke of a spiritual component and belief of their vocation in their position. They expressed a strong faith that enabled them to accomplish everything to lead them up to their role. It was not only a job but something more meaningful. Belinda, an assistant superintendent shared, "I am a strong woman of faith. And this is where I'm supposed to be." These were her last words during our interview as she reflected on her journey and experiences in Catholic education. She then shared about her faith journey as she was mentored by a religious sister during her principalship: "She was my mentor, and she would sit with me once a week, just to sit and listen and grapple, and pray." Another superintendent found her faith and spiritual mentor in another colleague in the same office who "emulated her own spirituality in life and leadership" and helped her become a "woman of faith." Her colleague taught her about the importance of living her faith through her role as she shared with great love and admiration:

> And I feel like each one of these has led me closer to Christ really because of their example of not only in leadership but their faith filled leadership and being a female leader in our church. And it really wasn't until I think I was at the [diocesan] level that I recognized that opportunity about being a strong woman in our church.

These spiritual relationships were the source of strength and sisterhood that gave them the capacity to be the same type of inspiration and person to other principals and colleagues. Step by step, the leader was formed in her faith to deal with all the problems and challenges bound to

come their way. Justine explained her faith in God as something God has called her to do and be

"the hand of God" to do his work. things in her life unfolded:

> I feel like when you open yourself to that so many blessings just come and unexpected blessings . . . . And I give it to God and say, God, you led me down here. I know you'll take care of the details. I know you'll take care of my family and I trust that because never once if I doubted that this is where I've been called to serve.

The quote exemplified the tremendous faith of this superintendent and her belief in the

importance of her work in Catholic education. Though she experienced some trials and

hardships, she still expressed such gratitude and humility with her faith. She added:

> I am wholly myself when I can be a superintendent and be a mother and be a wife and be a daughter. It's just part of my life and my identity. People ask me all the time, how do you do it all and I, you know, the grace of God and I mean, that's always the first thing. God has called me to do this work.

Prayer Warriors Called to Serve

Prayer was mentioned by most participants throughout their interviews. When discerning

a certain position, they would turn to prayer for guidance. It guided their choices in pursuing

leadership roles. The women believed they were called to serve in their capacity. Raquel, a

superintendent shared, "The opportunity presented itself. And that's when, once again, through

prayer and through discernment about whether this was the right move and made that transition

from, you know, site level school leadership into the superintendency."

As Catholic leaders, they grew not only in learning about leadership but also grew in their

faith formation. Justine, a superintendent, explained:

> I'm very authentic and in who I am, as a leader began learning from [name of mentor] to be bold about my faith, and to be unapologetic. And when I speak either privately to people, publicly to large groups of people, I tell them I am here because God has called me to serve this diocese in this way. It's that simple to me. And I don't apologize for it. This is not my work. This is God's work.

This powerful statement showed her confidence and belief in the work she was doing as a

Catholic leader. During the interview, she did not hesitate as she explained the team's mission

and vision of creating a culture of spirituality.

Catholic Spiritual Leadership

As assistant superintendents and superintendents, daily life in the central office can be

chaotic and centered on solving problems, dealing with budgets, attending meetings and visiting

schools. However, the main priority for these women has centered first on ensuring the Catholic

identity of their schools. This superintendent made faith the priority in her mission and vision for

the diocese "to create a culture of spirituality that we can have these conversations" and have

"prayer opportunities." As the superintendent, Justine recognized the need for spiritual

leadership in her diocese and how they were "hungry for this" and a relationship with the district

office. She explained:

> We've increased our principal retreats from one to two this year. We're reading
> *Redeeming Administration*. We've created a new mission statement that is totally aligned
> with our diocesan mission statement and focuses on creating missionary disciples. That's
> who we are. Yes, we are schools, but we are Catholic schools. And we make no apologies
> for that.

As superintendents, they set the tone of making Catholic identity the priority. Through their

actions or lack of action, they communicate the importance of Catholic identity. These are done

in conferences, meetings, professional development and retreats. Another superintendent, Nicole,

recognized this call to Catholic leadership and shared:

> I'm the spiritual leader of the Catholic schools. What the bishop delegates to me is to
> make sure that our Catholic identity in our schools are strong. So, in order to be a source
> of support, and in the area of faith for my principals and my teachers, I have to tend to
> my faith as well. I've always liked going on retreats so I try to work that in.

As being a spiritual leader of a Catholic diocese, these women create spaces for their leaders to grow and have honest conversations about their own faith journeys. The job of a Catholic school administrator is extremely difficult. They have many responsibilities to their stakeholders.

Leadership practices start from the top administrators. This includes modeling Catholic practices. One participant noted when the superintendents are mindful and intentional of modeling the faith, so are the principals and teachers. They become "excellent models" of the faith to their faculty and students. Leaders are not afraid of conversations about their faith and being Catholic while trying to "meet the students where they are in their journey." One superintendent, Danielle, shared:

> And then my hope is that it follows the data and it is those who attend our schools that come back later in life, and who are in the pews. And that's when I talked about having that investment for the future. I think we need to model what the faith is about and we have to ask students "Have you ever considered this?" and "Have you considered that?" And giving them an opportunity to experience their faith so that they will want to participate. I think somebody who is joy-filled and joyful about their faith is more attractive to a teenager than somebody who is the opposite.

This superintendent's statement showed her progressive take on addressing the decline and lack of Catholic values within adolescence. As Catholic school leaders, we continue the richness of Catholic identity through modeling its best parts with love and our own example.

Challenges are inevitable in Catholic school leadership or in any leadership context. However, the difference is the faith component. The women in this study definitely cited the importance of Catholic values of prayer. One assistant superintendent, Sue, offered simple advice to future female leaders, "I would say, stay rooted in prayer." She explained a friend advised her to keep her eyes focused on Christ just as Peter did when he was walking on the Sea

of Galilee. She showed a picture of the same Gospel story that sits on her desk. She explained

keeping focus on Christ is what "keeps me grounded." Sue added:

> When I start to think that, you know, "I'm not good enough" or "I'm not skilled enough
> I'm not trained enough." Or, if you know like I get critical feedback that's you know
> "ouch! that hurt a lot." You know . . . but I have to block all those things aside and just
> focus on Christ.

Prayer in the Workplace

It is not uncommon to see prayer walls in Catholic schools. One assistant superintendent,

Belinda, shared:

> I pray in the hallways with the girls, I pray all the time. I'm like a prayer warrior, and
> before I'm going to have a stressful meeting with a parent, I open the door and I'm like
> [makes an excited "Come here" gesture] "I need prayer come on guys come around!

Belinda stated the importance of prayer in managing the stresses in her role as a school leader. A

superintendent shared her daily routine starts with prayer and prays with her colleagues; "I think

it's a great way for the whole building to start together." Her days even seem to be better when

she does call on the Holy Spirit. One superintendent, Danielle, shared:

> I think we are a people of faith and a people of prayer. And if we don't model prayer,
> then I think it's hard for us to expect others to find that time in their life. When we work
> with our new teachers and our new principals, we have a faith formation piece. I just
> remind them that every day you should start with prayer, whether it's with your own staff
> or with your students or, you know, in person with yourself before you have a
> conversation with a parent, you should pray and ask for wisdom.

Another faith-filled superintendent described the importance of prayer and integrating it into the

workplace and colleagues. Prayer is intentional and done as a community during staff meetings,

meals, privately in their offices at their desk or as a whole in other gatherings. Justine, a

superintendent, explained:

> I just can't discount the power of prayer not only in our kind of big work, but the work
> amongst ourselves in creating that. I would say the two biggest things are, the prayer and

the focus on faith and mission. But that high level of trust, we trust one another. We like one another. We love one another. I mean, I do think that it goes just deeper than kind of enjoying one another's company. We love one another, we are bound by Christ and, and, and I, we're going to transform this Catholic school system here in our diocese.

Justine's spirituality and leadership style were validated when attending a professional development conference on creating amazing teams. They highlighted all the positive spiritual practices already being done at their central office. The leaders I spoke with in this research expressed their Catholic values as integrated into their leadership positions. They recognized the importance of their faith early on in their lives and career. They worked as religious education teachers, attended Catholic schools, grew up with the faith with devoted families, had religious sisters as mentors or teachers and grew up steeped in Catholic culture. They were all unapologetically Catholic and understood how to talk about their Catholic identity. One assistant superintendent, Sue, was approached as being overly Catholic and was advised to "tone down the Catholic piece." She emphatically explained, "That's why I say to you, I'm not going to apologize for being too Catholic, no such thing in my mind."

Theme 2: Recognizing the Challenges

An important theme that emerged from the interviews were challenges the women faced in various parts of their leadership career in Catholic education. While some approached it with passion and a call to action with a social justice mission to change the status quo regarding these issues, some diverted from speaking further about any challenges and chose to focus on what they had the capacity to change. For example, some participants noted that the structure of clerical men as the main members of Catholic leadership was not going to change anytime soon. Instead, they focused on their abilities to create changes within their power and context by working with the existing structures. It was interesting to note some found it almost futile and a

waste of energy to focus on the gender inequalities within the patriarchal structure of the Catholic church. It is interesting to note the women of color spoke out the most regarding the gender issues in Catholic educational leadership and patriarchy while the Caucasian women seemed more at ease with navigating their relationships with clergy (mostly Caucasian) with relative ease to meet their goals.

The subconstructs of the theme of challenges are explained below as compensation, family, gender (patriarchy and clergy), and communication dynamics. Each one is explained and give evidence to support these established challenges.

Compensation

Based on the answers, tone, pauses, sighs, silences, and shift in body language, this part of the interview may have been the most difficult part for the women to speak about. Before asking about compensation, I would try and restate my research question and how compensation is an important part of this phenomenon of working as a woman in Catholic educational leadership. The women took their time to really answer these questions when asked. Generally, they did not know what other people made and never really asked. When asked about compensation or having experiences in which someone with equivalent experiences and credentials was paid more than them, one assistant superintendent, Annette, replied:

> You know, I don't discuss salaries with my colleagues, so I didn't think that was the case or I'd like to hope that that's not the case. But I could 100% tell you that it is the case because the structure of how salaries are worked off I feel like . . . and this could just be me personally on how I've been, I, I just kind of take it as it goes. I didn't, I don't really question it that much. I just kind of do my thing. If somebody raises to me that there might be a discrepancy, then that's like the first time I would ever get vocal about it if I had that data in front of me that I would, but I haven't had a reason to question it but it doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

This assistant superintendent expressed a high commitment to making data informed decisions in

her role throughout the interview. Therefore, it was not a surprise that even if this is a sensitive

topic she did not necessarily allow any instant or raw emotion to fuel her answer. Her answer

was empirical in nature in that only the existence of data would make her question it. However,

she also acknowledges that it is a possibility and that the wage gap may exist within her role.

Justine, a superintendent, expressed the lack of data that exist when answering this question:

> I don't know for sure, but I suspect that. I do. I do. And, and again, I don't have any, like
> hard evidence. I do think that that's something that I need to work on is becoming a better
> advocate for myself in terms of that. I'm feeling more confident in this position to be able
> to do that. And, you know, I've even told my husband that I said, I feel like I need to
> renegotiate, you know, and I and I feel and I feel confident in saying that, you know, and
> so yeah, I do I sense that. It doesn't surprise me. But I don't have any hard evidence on
> that.

Participants suspected that wage discrepancies may be present. Another superintendent, Danielle,

was reflective and answered:

> You know, I, I honestly don't know, like I'm curious as to, I don't know what my
> predecessor was paid. And I don't know if they would have paid me differently had I
> been a man, so then I hate to put it that way but I don't know. . . . I can't think about if it
> happened to myself and I don't know what the previous gentleman was paid.

Meanwhile, there were two women who explicitly stated that their husbands made

significantly more money than they did. When asked about being a mother and balancing one's

professional life, Cara, an assistant superintendent, answered:

> I think about that a lot especially because my husband . . . he's a [specific job title]. So,
> he makes. . . . He's the one who basically supports the family, so even though I'm in the
> central office, I don't make that much more than I did as a teacher. Okay. Um, so, I, I do
> think about that and I worry about it. Um, because he's not as like mission driven as I am,
> you know, and doesn't always understand why so much work and so much service comes
> without any matching compensation.

Though the question was not necessarily about compensation, she revealed important

information regarding salaries not being more than a teacher despite having to do more work and

put in longer hours. Another assistant superintendent, Annette, revealed her husband "does have

a job that he gets paid almost double" than her. She shared she has the luxury of doing something

she loves to do. She never thought of her salary until recently as the job became increasingly

challenging and demanding, she started thinking of her compensation in relation to new

colleagues. Annette stated:

> But the job's been getting harder, and with new transitions when people come and new people come in and makes me think like, wait a minute . . . I may need to figure out if new people who are coming in or making a certain amount and I never even asked about it. I'm just letting them, give me whatever they want because I'm not advocating for myself. So, I did that last year and I have done it this year, because I got a lot more responsibilities. And so, it's something that I've learned to feel more comfortable with, but not because of the money but because of what it stands for.

Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, gave insight on the new influx of female assistant

superintendents, compensation and how salaries are negotiated and leveraged:

> Questions like, "What does your husband do? . . . they ask this before HR makes an offer. So, it's interesting because you're not told in these positions what you're going to make till you are the final [choice], and both my experience, all [number] of my experiences of becoming principal and then assistant superintendent, I was offered the job before I was told what I was going to make. So interestingly, it is, you know, you would think it's all based on skill and background and experience. I think when you don't take insurance that's quite a giveaway that "Oh, she doesn't need the money" because somebody else is earning more and can pay that insurance.

Other participants, Cara, an assistant superintendent, shared stories of when they knew men were

compensated more than women and it did not sit well with them. One assistant superintendent

shared a revelation when she came into the central office. She had to pull up a file of a former

colleague in her previous school and saw that even if he had less responsibilities, he made $6,000

more than her before she left the school. It made her wonder about salaries of other female

colleagues as she mused, "I heard that that was a thing but it made me think that we should maybe do an audit of our schools and just see, is there a difference between what men and women get paid." These revelations were proof that the pay gap did exist. The suspicions of instances where a man was compensated more than a woman with comparable credentials and experiences were substantiated in these revelations. Another assistant superintendent, Adrienne, shared her experiences as a teacher and compensation:

> When I was a teacher, I knew I was getting paid less than a man in my school. And when I brought that up to my principal her response was "Well he's a breadwinner for his [family], and you have [a husband] and I used to not take insurance, and that was a big help for the school's budget. And so, and I was doing a lot more extracurricular because I didn't have kids yet. He had children so when I asked my principal that she said, "Well see he has kids, and you know." He was getting tuition assistance. So, we find it very easy to overcompensate men because women are not considered the breadwinners of the family. You know the fairness all dies right there.

When Danielle became the superintendent of her diocese, she witnessed the evidence firsthand of men being compensated more than women and recollected:

> I would tell you this, there were a few male principals hired last year in our elementary schools, who had similar experiences to some of our female principals who got hired and their pastors did pay them more. And I was annoyed, and made that known, but they made the comment, "Well I really wanted so and so to be the principal," and I told them, we are trying to set a scale, and stick with that scale. And so, moving forward I'm going to be a little bit more . . . Because I was not the superintendent at the time, I was on . . . .I lead search committees and lead hiring a few of them because we had to hire [number] people last year. But I let them know that I felt like that was wrong. So, it has . . . I have seen it happen.

This participant's experience with actual evidence of the pay gap empowered her to be more cognizant of this injustice and later make steps to correct them as she stepped into the role of the superintendent. This opened her eyes to the inequalities and helped her to also reflect on her own situation and if she was a victim of the same practice in the context of her supervisors.

The women's voices were growing stronger everyday as they realized these inequalities.

Annette, an assistant superintendent, remarked, "So, or if you don't fight for . . . And I think

that's a huge difference between women and men, is we take what we get. Because we think

there's no alternative." In essence, she articulated one of the biggest factors of the gaps in

compensation. The participant noted how some women may not negotiate their salary since they

have never had to or feel grateful to be considered even if underpaid. This is in this anecdote of

how a male superintendent negotiated versus a female assistant superintendent. Adrienne, an

assistant superintendent, took the position and did not negotiate further than what was offered.

They indicated there was room only for a $500 increase. She scoffed, "I wasn't ready to care for

$500. That's how much gas I spend in 2 weeks driving around." She was approached one day by

another colleague asking if she negotiated her children's tuition. Apparently, a new male

assistant superintendent refused to sign on for the low salary without getting tuition remission.

The option did not exist for Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, when she signed on. She

followed up and asked about tuition remission for her children. Adrienne reported:

> I was told, "Well, you negotiate with your school that your children are at because we
> can't mandate that. And if you need any help, we will call in." Whereas for the other
> person . . . I knew it was a given . . . done deal.

This situation is a snapshot of the way these negotiations are carried out. In this case, the new

male assistant superintendent was emboldened by his confidence in his competency in the role to

ask for paid tuition and actually get it despite human resources setting negotiation for $500

added to the yearly salary.

When it comes to compensation and women's experiences in Catholic educational

leadership, we see a range of situations; women who can afford to have these mission driven

careers with comparably lower pay, witnesses to wage inequality, and attitudes on "taking what we can" because of fixed mindsets. Sue, an assistant superintendent, put it best as she summarized the situation of women's challenges in terms of compensation in Catholic schools.

> Well, I think. I think the thing is that there is a large number of women who work in Catholic schools right, whether they're leaders or teachers. And our salary scales do not show that. There is still an injustice of how much people get paid in Catholic schools and I think the problem is, like they say oh it's because it was religious. Well it was religious women too like let's be real with this . . . Like it wasn't it wasn't clergy for the most part, because we might be having a different conversation about salaries. So, I think that's in a place where . . . Gosh, can females afford, even as principals, can they afford to raise a family, and send their kids to Catholic schools? Not always, if they're if their husbands aren't making a lot.

This participant was very passionate about the topic as she spoke of teacher compensation. She posed valid questions about the sustainability of teacher salaries, especially for women. Her quote brings forth the social justice issues related to the compensation of teachers to reflect a living wage and their human dignity versus the bottom line. The mission and vision of the Church in education has yet to reconcile their aim to establish affordable, sustainable Catholic education systems while taking care of its own leaders.

Family

All but one of the participants have or were going to have children at the time of this study. Number of children per woman ranged from 1 to 6 children. They ranged from pregnant, newborns, small children, teens and adults with their own children. Participants reflected on their experiences in the context of what they experienced with children or what they expected to experience.

One participant centered her talk experiences with family in the context of being the primary caretaker of her parents. Karen, an assistant superintendent shared her stories of taking

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care of her father who had Alzheimer's and her mother who later suffered a stroke. She reflected, "I'm so grateful that I was able to be there for my parents. But it meant almost every day you know, after work, to always go on the weekend."

The women were asked about their experiences with children in regard to challenges and successes. What was it like being in leadership roles and having children? The answers were near to what I expected. Their answers reflected on compromise, not answering emails after a certain time, self-care, showing up for their children and also in some cases, having to live with that thought of how they put their career over a family.

Wear and Tear

The women in this study were all teachers before taking on more leadership roles. These significant statements speak on the difficult decisions these women had to make and how their families were affected. They ranged from financial reasons to move into leadership roles, and the everyday struggles linked with the job.

As teachers, they did not make enough money and relied on their husbands' contributed income to support their family. Financial reasons were some of the motivating factors to move them from teacher positions to administrators. For one woman, choosing to be in administration leadership was a logical move for the simple reason of more pay. Belinda a usually animated and energetic assistant superintendent, softened her tone when she explained her first reason for being an administrator. The rising cost of a homeschooled instructor for her special needs son made her consider moving from a classroom teacher to an administrator due to the increase in salary. She shared, "And so, because the salary was more . . . leaving the classroom and being an administrator . . . I left the classroom." She shared how she cried her first week outside of the

classroom and "missed being kids." This experience demonstrates how family needs became a factor in making those decisions to be in admin leadership. She loved teaching and was good at it. But she knew she could not help to support her child on the salary of a teacher. Decisions on becoming an educational leader sometimes stemmed from economical needs.

Once a woman became an administrator, long nights and time away from family was inevitable. One assistant superintendent recalled how she brought her family to networking parties, events and gatherings. They grew tired of it and decided to no longer attend events as a family to represent her office as president of a school. Travel and long hours at school sites were part of the job of any woman in an educational leadership role.

Work-life balance was an inherent struggle. Annette, an assistant superintendent, recalled when her car was stolen during her first year of her current role. She went to a finance meeting in a "questionable part of town at 8pm." She shared, " A lot of the work doesn't end in an office space. You're traveling a lot to different places, and so it requires you to be on the road a lot." Though her job takes her to many places, she checks in with her family and makes sure to put her safety first. It is difficult to not give your all as she explained:

> There's so much to do here and so many people relying on you, whether you're a principal or in this job [assistant superintendent] that you don't want to let people down, and so sometimes I would sacrifice, doing work stuff, even on the weekends like going to things that schools or supporting a principal to like my external family things like maybe I would like not spend as much time with my mom or miss a family function or because I was working.

When an important relative passed away, she was reminded of the importance of staying connected. It was in losing someone she dearly loved she was reminded of the importance of family and making decisions to be more present. Annette recalled:

I didn't make a lot of decisions [to stay at work longer] after that, based on making sure that I stayed balanced. So, I try not to work on Saturdays, that's like a big one for me. So, I'll try not to work on Saturdays and on Sundays, not until after 5. So, I try to find some balance.

Her story demonstrates the snapshot of the life of an assistant superintendent with safety, family, and making decisions to lean in on difficult times. The constant "wear and tear" is not just on the car but on the person and their family. Everyone is affected by the decision of being in leadership. It was not until the death of Annette's grandfather that she reset her values and priorities back to time with her family.

Present, But Not Really

The women shared struggles with family such as their relationships with their children. They recalled some situations and dynamics that were affected by their long hours as principals or in the central office. These women recalled some visibly difficult memories to recall due to the fact they never intended to want to impact their child in that way. They recounted really tough lessons about the impact of their presence or lack thereof. Belinda, an assistant superintendent, remembered:

But there was one comment by my daughter one day…. I was like " You know that's not the way a young woman should act" . . . she said something very, almost like…"But mom, I wouldn't know because you're not around."

As someone who grew up without a mom and with her grandmother, this really struck Belinda emotionally. Her daughter's comment shook her to her core to the point that she sought other career opportunities to change that narrative. When the job of an assistant superintendent presented itself, Belinda shared:

It [the job] was taking a lot of time from my family. A lot of time. So, I decided to come here [diocese] and accept the position [as superintendent], and hope . . . with a goal of

maybe I would have more time to spend with my family. This was a family-based decision.

Being in this position is sometimes allotted for a more flexible schedule. Belinda recounted her days as a principal when she had to be at her former school site constantly since she was responsible for so many things from academics, professional development and cocurricular activities. As an assistant superintendent and superintendent, one had more autonomy with their time and flexibility since their time was not held to their "feet on the ground" of their school site only. Most of the women interviewed have been in their positions for 1 to 5 years and served as principals. They recalled experiences as principals and how it impacted their families. Justine reflected:

> There was a lot of time that I sacrificed being away from them [children] when I was a principal and I will never get that time back. So that's, that's something that just, you know, kind of saddens me and I recognize it was something that I gave up.

The women reflected on things they had to give up and time away from children. When they spoke about these experiences, there was a sense of melancholy mixed with matter of factness in their voices as they grappled with the emotional aspects of these decisions they had to make. Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, recalled a conversation and reflection on how much depends on the mother and how the small pockets of time with children mean a lot. She shared:

> So much of the rules in our society are based because of how men have made those rules right? They've created these . . . where you go to meetings that are held at 8:00 in the morning, or 9:00 in the morning and you forget that moms are the ones most often dropping the children or preparing them for school and such. So, it, I do feel that when I became a principal, I sacrificed. I was always a better principal than I was a mom. And when I realized that because I had just given birth to my daughter when I became principal, for the first time. And on my daughters . . . She went to the same school I was principal. And so, I think that was a band aid for me. I felt well she's physically present around me but I was still not present to her. And I asked her for her seventh birthday, what she wanted and she said, I just want you to be mom. And that kind of broke my heart because I felt, I'm with you, nearly 24/7 right? But she wanted a simple thing like,

"Come and pick me up from my classroom" or, you know, "don't send me to daycare after school, because you're busy with everything else you're doing." And so, I had to realize that and I started grabbing my kids, and leaving at an acceptable time, so that I could be present to them. I was telling my teachers to do that, but I wasn't doing it. And so, I knew my work was never going to get done. So, I had to be the one creating the balance between life and work. And that's when I kind of had to put my phone down, and my work away and said, "this is the time I'm going to be with my family and and respect that time."

Adrienne's story brings to light how seemingly insignificant or small things from when meetings are scheduled to give one's attention and being mentally present for a child are so impactful. It was the little things that meant a lot. Belinda's story of her daughter and realizing the parallels of her own absent mother (though in a different context) were a realization of the need for things to change in her work life.

Nicole, a superintendent who was expecting at the time, was very self-aware of her decisions in waiting to have a family. She understood the ramifications of having children as she worked intentionally to be on the fast track to the superintendency. This was accomplished by a continuous pursuit of education, networking, mentorship and time spent at her school site. She said with confidence:

I'm [age] and I'm having my first child. And I always thought that I was going to have, you know, six kids, and we would have started having kids right at the beginning but my career actually took precedence. So, I don't think I sacrificed my career for children. We intentionally put our family life on hold and focused on career, which isn't necessary but I mean that's just something that we thought was best for our family.

This quote suggests a different mindset for younger generations who may be more career oriented and focused on hitting certain work milestones before embarking on having a family early on in their 20s and 30s as most of the other women did from older generations.

It Takes a Village

Support from family was imperative to the success and growth of a woman in educational

leadership. The women cited how their families became a source of inspiration and encouraged

their career aspirations through help with childcare and normal "mom duties." Annette shared

how her husband and mom supported her in her role. Though her husband does not always

understand her passion and dedication for the work in Catholic schools, he is supportive and

makes it work with family responsibilities. Her mother is a significant source of help as she picks

up her daughter and takes care of her after school. Annette, an assistant superintendent,

pondered:

> So, I spend time with other people's kids. And when you stop and reflect on that you
> have, to take a step back and see like okay you have a kid. So, you worry about other
> people's kids but you have to find the balance.

Annette was fortunate to have her mother to help her with childcare after school. These supports

were important to help women leaders focus on their work each day. Nevertheless, it still made

her reflect on how she spent more time with other people's kids than her own. Danielle, a

superintendent, recalled when she decided to go back to school and get her doctorate degree. Her

family supported her in every way possible from financially to also learning to take care of

themselves and contributing to the responsibilities in the home. She shared:

> And then when I went back to school, he [husband] was supportive with the family and
> supportive of me going back to school, and understood it was important for me. And
> didn't, you know, didn't regret, or make me feel bad about spending the money on
> education because new in the long run, it would be helpful to the whole family. But, of
> course, it was time consuming but I think you also have to be really organized. And we
> would come home and we would all do homework together. Everybody's participating in
> helping the dinner, everybody's working, creating in clean up and getting ready so I have
> to say, your family has to be in the mode of everybody supporting one another. And I
> think that's important if you don't have a supportive spouse. It can be really tough.

Another woman found her support from not only family but her own friends and colleagues. She recalled how her team (who are the emergency contacts of her children) stepped up for her when her father passed away, "Never once did I have to worry that the work was not getting done, that my schools were not being taken care of. Because my team was here to support me in any way they could." Justine recalled how her friends and colleagues were there for even in one of the most difficult times in her life. Her friend would pick up her kids from school and help them with their homework and make dinner. She recalled, "I know it's very cliche, 'It takes a village' but I had so much support. I had so many people supporting me." She shared with gratitude:

> There is no way that I would be able to do this work and to be where I am without the support of so many people. And even to the point of where now I have really tried to just be much more whole in who I am as a person in all aspects of my life. It just continues to show that you don't do any of this alone. You don't get to where you are without the help of so many people.

Nicole, a superintendent who was expecting a child, shared how her central office team was very supportive of her new situation and plans for her temporary leave of absence. She made extensive support plans that tapped into the strengths of her diocesan team to help when she would be in recovery after the birth of her child. She explained:

> But everyone's been so supportive so you know I think it would have been hard if this was my first year as superintendent, but I have built such strong relationships with my principals and my diocesan colleagues, that everyone's been so supportive. So, I say, you know, they're not going to bring in someone to take over for me when I'm gone. We have like a team in place to do that and everyone is just so willing to help. Yeah, so I will be taking [time off] because I don't want to have to sacrifice family life for my career, I don't want to feel rushed to come back. So, you know . . . we'll see how it goes. That's the plan, and everyone's been really supportive of that.

This was significant since she was not leaving the office but was going to be partially accessible as needed. She shared how her parents are also moving in with her and her husband and helping out when the baby is born.

These anecdotes gave such privileged insight on the way these incredible women have managed and continue to manage living their best lives with family despite all challenges while being such inspirational and effective leaders in their diocese.

Looking Ahead

Catholic church teaching puts families and family life in such high importance. The family is the central way that a child knows and comes to encounter God's love. Catholic social teaching looks at the importance of societal structures to support and uphold families. The right to life and upholding human dignity are central to the teachings of Catholic faith. And yet it prompts one to reflect on the alignment of these values to the practices of Catholic education. What are Catholic leaders doing to support the work of Catholic education through the leadership of these exceptional women?

Sue, an assistant superintendent, reflected on the future of women in leadership and how it can be more sustainable and allow for a true work life balance. She asserted:

> So that's one piece and I think the other piece too is like, you know, are there ways for women to work at home sometimes? Even as a principal, because as principal, you don't always have to be there, right, but I will and I'll give you an example of that in our diocese. We're not really encouraging team teaching. But what about if a mom wants to be at home with their child but doesn't want to do that full time. Right? So, this idea of like co-principalship or this idea of team teaching would allow for females to have more of a balance of taking care of kids and working. We're not there yet.

Current structures in Catholic educational leadership have not been innovative in disrupting the status quo of work for women. Women have simply managed with what they have in terms of support. Would more women be in these positions if current leaders understood these contexts of family life and challenges? Justine envisioned:

> I think that really educating our pastors on the realities of family life is super important. I think that that you know, and in particular kind of our older generation of pastors that

maybe have worked with, you know, women religious who were there 24/7 , they lived next door to them. The realities are different and families are different. And so, the demands of women who are wives and who are mothers and who also want to be leaders in our church . . . something's got to give. And we need to remember when as women who work in the church and in particularly married women, our marriage is a sacrament our marriage is sacramental. And it is as sacramental as our priests and their holy order sacrament. It is sacramental. It is sacred. And so, our priests, I think, you know, when they have these demands on our principals, they need to remember that. They need to remember that the vocation of marriage is a sacrament and it is holy and it is sacred. And so, if the "job" if you will, of being a principal is, is detrimental to you know, our marriage, we have a problem. We have a problem. So, I think just those types of conversations and those are bold conversations, right? Because the work needs to get done. We recognize that. But it's going to look different than it did 30 to 40 years ago when, you know, sister [religious sister] was living right next door at the convent.

This powerful statement called out paradigms of older clergy who may expect a lot from principals. They may have lived in a time when they worked with religious sisters who could be everywhere and do everything since they did not have families. When the sisters ran Catholic schools, that was their life, their whole vocation. However, that is not the reality today. The laity run these schools now while having families and other obligations. It calls them to recognize these realities to develop empathy and an appropriate expectation of principals. The women of this study thought of ways the Catholic Church could look at reshifting paradigms and help support female leaders in Catholic schools. Cara, an assistant superintendent, shared some ideas on how schools could work on policies that support best practices and offer more flexibility in helping women. She shared:

I think that our schools could do a little bit more, you know, since we're assisting with all of these parishes and everything that we could do more for childcare for families . . . And then also just trying to bring a lot of our HR practices up to the modern standard.

Nicole, a superintendent, brought up costs of raising families as a Catholic school teacher. She brought up health insurance for families and how it is not affordable for most people. She explained:

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It's just not affordable [insurance]. So, a lot of our teachers that have kids or families. They have dual insurance, maybe their spouses are working, I don't know. And this [following statement] might not be true. But I just don't know of any household of our teachers, where the Catholic school teacher is the primary source of income for that family.

This bold statement affirms the difficulties of Catholic school teachers who are not making enough and are able to make a living wage and be the breadwinner of the family. It would be important to consider single mothers or women who do not have a husband with a significantly augmented income.

Despite the challenges of family life for working mothers, these resilient women have shown that there are stronger networks of women who are banding together to build capacity for aspiring female leaders. Danielle, a superintendent, shared how her principals and teachers are creating spaces that recognize family life and duties in their schools. She recounted:

I've seen now with some of our teachers and some of our principals, you know they're young moms, they're nursing moms. So, making sure that there are accommodations for them to be able to, you know, I know that a lot of them have to pump when they're at work. And so we're making sure that we have those accommodations for them and hopefully they have supportive, you know staff that's willing to, you know, maybe cover a recess duty or a lunch duty to make sure that they can have that opportunity and I've seen that more and more where people are willing to help one another because I think there are so many women who are in Catholic education that they understand that we need to support one another. We need to have that network. I think that's important. We need to let women know you don't have to choose work or a family, but you need to find a good balance of work and family.

This excerpt demonstrates the way women are creating solutions and "leaning in" through their support of one another in the workplace. This section demonstrated how their career choices and ambitions coexist with family obligations. These women shared their lows of missing out on their children growing up, having to spend long hours at work, sacrificing family time, and making decisions based on the financial aspects. They also shared their wins of how their

families rose to the occasion and how they gained help from family, friends, and colleagues from

childcare, pick up and making dinner. Their hardest times showed the best of their inner circle.

Danielle, a superintendent, ended her interview with this advice for women who want to be in

leadership and may have or want to have families. She urged:

> You don't have to be Superwoman. You can take time to be with your children. You know you don't have to be at every single event, and be present at every, you know, parish Mass or their school Mass, you know? Be fair to yourself in the sense that you don't answer emails . . . I tell all young women who are working moms, don't answer emails at night, you might look at them, but you have to set a time aside for your family. Don't get in the habit of responding to people at night or right away, because then they will get in the habit of you answering them right away. You don't need to answer people right away.

The interviews demonstrated how women leaders continued to balance work and family through

creating blocks of time for family and detaching from work as needed.

Gender

Participants spoke of their experiences of working as female principals and later as one of

the highest ranking women within a diocese in a historically and fundamentally patriarchal

institute. While some reported either none or limited challenges with male colleagues, there were

experiences that women recalled the shift in the dynamics due to their gender. This includes

experiences with working with male colleagues, the patriarchy/clergy, stained glass ceiling, the

Church in which we exist, looking forward and closing.

It is interesting to note in this context, the difference of how women of color and

Caucasian women navigated these gender-related interactions. Most of the positive experiences

with male colleagues or clergy were reported by Caucasian women. Karen, an assistant

superintendent, has been in Catholic education for nearly 40 years in different regions. When

asked about her interactions with clergy or males, she reported nothing out of the ordinary and

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said she got along well with everyone; male or female. It is interesting to note this participant did work as a religious sister in these schools and later as a lay woman. Justine, a superintendent, also reported very high functioning collaboration and professionalism between her and her superiors in the diocese. She had a realization of the gravity of her privilege as she sat in a meeting with all men as the highest ranking female in the diocese. She recalled:

> They're all men and me sitting at the table. That was . . . that really, this was just a few weeks ago that really struck me like wow! This made me so proud. It made me proud to be a woman diocesan leader. . . . Our bishops have very publicly given me that respect they model. They have modeled that beautifully.

In this particular situation, the leadership team of clergy and lay men have been more protective of her and have a positive rapport with her. This is an example of the best situation that can exist between clergy and women in leadership.

Another perspective came from an assistant superintendent, Adrienne. She cited her doctoral program as a catalyst in which she started to see her leadership interactions with a focused social justice lens. She articulated:

> I learned to recognize situations of bias or oppression. I did not recognize that often from my seat because I would always look at it as 'It's just this person' and 'It's just my circumstance'. And the more I learned about how it is an occurrence within different industries, and the educational industry, I realized that this is the norm, which is something that we have to change. So, the higher I went on the leadership pyramid, I started realizing it's not the people I serve who see me differently but the people I serve with that treat me differently.

This powerful statement describes an important aspect of the challenges women faced as educational leaders.

Despite some successes, every participant recalled an example of either a woman or they (the participant themselves) was treated differently due to being female. The interviews produced examples of statements regarding experiences or interactions these women had with other men

that centered around gender. Cara, an assistant superintendent, shared how she heard males and even females would say things like, "A female should never be president because she just couldn't handle her emotions" These statements are damaging in the greater vision of promoting women in leadership. These socialized biases perpetuated by media and microaggressions in such statements perpetuate the notion of the woman as the lesser.

Role Models

When Sue, an assistant superintendent, announced she was leaving her school to transition from principal to the assistant principal, her families were devastated. Working in a mostly Hispanic and Filipino community, she made an impact as being a strong leader. Being a woman of color in the community meant even more to the families. However, she told her school families she was doing this for them. She explained to her community, Latino and communities of color, she was leaving to become an assistant superintendent for their sons and daughters to see people like them—a person of color—in leadership. She said, "If I don't leave, then they won't see it. If I leave, then they will see themselves as leaders." She shared how it is not easy to be the minority in training and meetings "where most of the assistant superintendents and superintendents were predominantly Caucasian and/or male." Sue confirmed:

> As you move up in leadership, there's more male representation. There's an unequal amount of male representation in diocesan offices, when in fact, most educators are female. Like percentage wise. And then, you go and you look around the room and you don't see a lot of people like you. And I think the piece of this that's important for me is sometimes I get intimidated and think, "Where's everyone else?" And yet, some more of us need to do what you're doing. More of us can get their doctoral degrees, more of us need to say, "Yes, I'm capable, and I'm worthy of it, because God has put me in a position to do so." And so, we have to accept the challenge and it can be really hard.

Sue articulated an important aspect in increasing the visibility of not only women but women of color in these vital roles of leadership. Putting women in leadership starts with the way current

generations see their leaders. People are socialized into understanding roles and who fills them. When children see a woman of color or even a woman in an important role, it socializes them to seeing it as normal and as something positive. Sue took on the assistant superintendent role knowing that it would be beneficial for students to see a woman of color in an important role.

Nicole, a superintendent, alluded to the importance of being a woman in leadership. She shared about her frequent visits to an all-girls high school to show that someone like them can be in a leadership position. She shared:

> I think it's inspiring for those students to see a young woman in a leadership position. I take every opportunity to just be a presence there [at the high school] so that these young women can see that young women can be leaders as well.

These women recognized their positions of power to be influential in direct and indirect ways to future generations. As role models, they demonstrated how they overcame obstacles to be in that position. Danielle, a superintendent, noted how the religious sisters in her high school taught them they can be leaders in any capacity. Most of the participants have religious sisters or teachers and supervisors that were role models for leadership. They now know the power they have in their positionality to do the same.

Working With Male Colleagues

From the interviews emerged experiences of how women managed their professional relationships with their male colleagues. The women I spoke with always came off as amicable and professional. They exuded confidence, competence, and passion for their work in Catholic education. When the topic of gender and perceptions of leadership styles came up in the conversation, they never came off as the stereotypical "angry feminist" who hated men. They were sure to preface each answer by first acknowledging the positive interactions they

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experienced with men. Afterward, they opened up and were more candid with their experiences. They also acknowledged they had no "hard evidence" to show the inequalities yet they all experienced it personally or through other women. One of the women, Raquel, a superintendent, shared how she never experienced any direct discrimination by her estimation. However, she did reveal, "But I do . . . there are times that you think, 'Am I being taken as seriously as I would as if I was . . . you know here in a three-piece suit as a man?' You know? And that thought is there"

Karen, an assistant superintendent, noted how though she never experienced any negative gender dynamics, she did experience how some female principals were disrespected by older male faculty. She shared:

> I experienced it with some of my principals with their own staff. Like we have, for instance where I've seen it as with a woman versus been more age discrimination where the principal is younger, and you have an older male teacher now it's not, but it's the fact that the male teacher himself is a person coming at you (I would never have on my staff). But would always if this younger principal is a woman trying to express you know, some change problem that should be initiated with the teacher. And then the teacher's response is that "Well, she doesn't know anything." You know, "You don't have that kind of experience." . . . but you know, "I have more experience than you have," you know, it's more of that kind of thing in trying to disparage the person because you're being called to do something. And you simply, you know, you lash out in that way. So, I've seen that kind of like discrimination.

Another assistant superintendent who worked as a principal beforehand also experienced when an older male faculty member challenged their authority and right to be a leader. Belinda was confronted by the male faculty member and basically said to her, "You're either that good, you're honest, you're just genuine or . . . [long pause] you're a snake in the grass, you're a snake itself and you have everyone fooled." Belinda recounted this story with such energy and theatrical build up. She continued her riveting story and responded to the man in the most epic way any woman could respond to this unfounded accusation. She asked the male coworker to

lean in and hissed right back at him and with a serious face said, "Wait and see." She broke the

intensity of her storytelling with a hearty laugh and threw up her hands in the air; "Because just

like at that point like what do you do?" She looked to the side smiling and wondered, "It's gonna

take too much effort to be a snake in the grass like this is too much plotting and planning and

overthinking this." This anecdote demonstrated the boldness and confidence of this leader. She

was confronted and basically challenged and harassed by a male colleague about the integrity of

her character and leadership, yet she handled it in such a creative way while breaking the ice and

making it known to this man how he was overthinking the whole situation. She later happily

reported that they became good colleagues and that he became her biggest advocate. This is not a

typical outcome of clashes between males and female leaders.

Belinda continued to share another encounter with a male colleague who confronted her

one day and accused her of being disingenuous:

> And then this man said to me, "Look, you seem like a really nice lady. You know we've
> had X amount of principals come and go. . . . You know, so don't take it personally, but
> I'm not going to take my time to like get to know you, or whatever. And you also don't
> come from the system. I'll tell everyone that it was fine." And he just kind of had this
> [posturing in a standoffish way] way and still standing. And so, I was thinking, "This
> person is going to be either my friend or not" And as soon as he said. "So, let's just see
> where this goes." So, I got up. I just remembered that I straightened my skirt. And I said
> to him, "Well, Mr. [name redacted] (as I extended my hand] it was so great meeting you.
> GAME ON." And he looked like [shocked face]. I said, "I look forward to it. Thank you
> so much. You may be excused."

Belinda did not allow herself to be intimidated by this male colleague. As a woman of color, she

knew she had to set clear boundaries and set a strong tone to be respected in her new school site.

Males who challenge their female superiors is not uncommon. She knew if any work would be

done and if the school was going to succeed, she had to be firm in her leadership and

communication starting with this interaction with an older male colleague.

Patriarchy and Clergy

Though some women reported generally professional and cordial relationships with clergy or male superiors, there have been challenges and room for growth. The interviews revealed that although the landscape of leadership is changing, there are still clergy or men who align with an old paradigm of superiority over a female. In the example of one diocese, an assistant superintendent, Adrienne, revealed the process of how a superintendent is chosen. A clergy person such as the bishop or archbishop chooses or appoints (with the council of a search committee at times) with the help of another clergyman who is in charge of Catholic schools. She then concluded:

> And it's a guy [bishop] with other guys [in leadership]. I think people before me have said "That doesn't represent well of our Catholic school system." But you have to realize who these are people picking these leaders who are above us. They're picked by pastors. So, the bishop picks the superintendent by [bishop's name] and [clergyman] is in charge of Catholic Schools. So, you have all these men sitting around the table, picking the top leaders, which is more men. And so, it trickles down to . . . . if there were more men available as principals, there would be more male assistant superintendents. It just happens to be that there are more females than males. So, it's not that we're being open to hiring females. The numbers just don't help you to put enough males in opposition.

This is how she explained the rise of female assistant superintendents and leadership in the diocese. It was not that leadership was necessarily more intentional about choosing women for leadership positions. It was dependent more on the skills gap that exists in the position. Her conclusion on how all the top leadership positions were males picking males for important roles was very revealing. She was not afraid to share the very thing that most women speculate about. Adrienne added further about the structure of leadership within a patriarchal institution:

> The pastors are our bosses. So, it's a male dominated institution where . . . and the way you treat your pastor, quite often is better than how you've treated husbands and boyfriends and other relationships in your life. And pastors treat principals as how they would relate to nuns, you know "You'll never matter to me . . . you might be doing

harder and better work than I am, but they'll always be this . . . the male on top and the female who's serving that position. So, I think the optics are our challenge.

This unapologetic indictment of the foundation of the patriarchy and Catholic education system embodies the challenges of women in Catholic educational leadership whether it is realized or not. While some may have been accustomed to the power dynamics and relationships between clergy and lay women, this emboldened statement holds nothing back. Though this section explores the challenges, it acknowledges that this is not definitive for all women's experiences. They all varied in different degrees.

While Justine reported working well with her current clergy and male colleagues, she acknowledged, "I have absolutely come across pastors that that I think would just quite frankly rather work with men." She gave an example of her experience with a pastor when she worked as a principal. She did not feel aligned with her pastor and felt a "tug" or "stirring" in her heart that she had to move on after reading an email he sent out to the pastoral council. Upon making the decision to resign, she felt "pure peace" and "the most peaceful moment of my life." She recalled the rest of the journey:

> I remember it perfectly. And it was an early morning. I was getting ready for work. It was a Friday and in May, I mean, it was really late in the year I had already signed my contract. But I knew in my heart, "Oh, I can't work here." And a few days later, I had a conversation with him. And I said, I need to, "I need to move on." And he said, "I think so."

Though this specific pastor principal relationship ended amicably, not all pastor principal relationships are productive. Pastors come from different backgrounds ethnically and generationally. They come with their own experiences and understanding how to do things. One assistant superintendent shared how her dynamic with pastors was difficult due to the fact she

was not only a woman but had a strong personality, looked younger than most women in her

position and was well versed in theological issues. Sue, an assistant superintendent, shared:

> Being strong, not a timid woman but being a strong presence, can be intimidating for at least in my experience, some clergy that I've worked with. And I think that because I can articulate what I'm trying to express, because I've gone to universities that have really formed me, not only academically but also in the faith. And I think because I'm, I also look young. And that throws people off sometimes. So, how can someone who's young be so committed to their faith? How can someone who's young be articulate in, you know, in leadership how's that possible? Because it's, it's not the standard and it's not what's expected.

This same assistant superintendent also shared how her husband (also a principal) never had any

problems with three of the pastors he has worked with in parish schools. She also witnessed a

pastor discriminating male and female Eucharistic ministers based on the fact of what they wore

despite the fact that all the females dressed modestly.

Another assistant superintendent, Annette, shared how she worked with four different

pastors within the 5 years of her principalship. She revealed:

> They all came from a certain belief and approach with how they worked with women. I don't think it was personal against me. I just think it was culturally, how they worked and where they were at. So, I always had that first kind of issue with them because I was a woman and I wouldn't come in all blazing like "Don't treat me like that! I'm a woman!" I still had to think of what I needed to accomplish. And what is what I said what know your boundaries, like, how much are you willing to take and how much aren't you, so I did get myself involved in social situations where I was willing to take some stuff that I wouldn't take from my husband or my brother or my dad, because we needed to get the job done. But I had a line where sometimes I did have issues where I'd have to say, "that's not okay to treat a person like that." And sometimes people don't even know they're doing it. But as a principal there were some issues happening. And being a female here in this role, I still do work with pastors. So, I try to be very conscious that some pastors do have different ways of working with people.

When Annette was explaining this experience, it was evident that she had a plan and vision in

every job in which she was involved. Her emotional intelligence was on point as she navigated

these relationships to achieve the goals she had for her school site at the time. At the first

meeting and handshake she comes off as a strong woman, assertive, confident and self-assured. However, nothing is offensive about her demeanor as she maintains a respectful tone and cadence in her voice at all times. She does acknowledge that pastors are flawed human beings and that she has endured some words or actions she would not tolerate if it were from other males in her life. She rationalizes that it is for the greater good of accomplishing what she needed to do for her school. Later on, she shares how she grew to further navigate these professional relationships with clergy and other men. She started out in her assistant superintendent job with no relationships with pastors and justified every action or recommendation to be done in the name of her boss (a male) to validate or legitimize her authority. Through building relationships with visits, she won over pastors and convinced them of her dedication to their schools.

Annette, an assistant superintendent, was dressed stylishly yet professionally during the interview. She brought up how she dresses as part of the experience of working successfully with pastors and how she is "very conscious" of what she wears. She articulated the nuances of style and fashion when working with men or clergy when it came to wearing short sleeves or pants or even having a tattoo. She made every effort to cover up her tattoo due to the fact that she would never "want a pastor that I was first meeting to judge me on that first." Annette is conscientious of her style to direct a successful meeting by being "proactive" and being cognizant of her dress. Though all her bosses in leadership are male, she does not let that stop her from achieving her goals. Annette articulated:

> I haven't really had any difficulty. I feel very comfortable like with the regional bishops with people in higher leadership, even my bosses. All my bosses have been male. I mean, our bosses are male which is another thing but it hasn't been anything that has stopped me from, like, being able to get something done or influence or being asked for my opinion on something so I don't really feel it in my department but I do sometimes feel it outside of the department.

What women wear on the job is scrutinized much more than what a man would wear. Women

are expected to look professional and yet stylish. Jewelry, makeup, wearing pants or skirts and

even in this case tattoos seem to be deal breaker when it comes to building relationships with

clergy who may have a different perspective on women they work with. In another anecdote,

Danielle, a superintendent, shared her experiences with priests:

> There are a couple priests who I think sometimes . . . I can't quite tell if it's because it's a female principal or not that they're a little bit condescending, and I have had to go and have some conversations there and I think also, they questioned my authority and my conversations with them, and did not care for the way I talked with them and I thought I was being, you know, I thought I was relational. They said I was being condescending to them and acting like a school mom . . . so you know I . . . I have to work on making sure . . . like I pray a lot about not letting my ego get in the way when I work with priests, because of that reason because I get a little bit . . . . Sometimes I think of situations when the past Superintendent was here who was a man and he was a religious [from a religious order]. And I think what they respond to him, the same way they're responding to me and so I could question that sometimes because he would say things to them and I would say, "Wow, he just said you know x y z and they didn't say a word back." And so, I do sometimes question that.

Danielle's speculation of her dynamic with the priests and how they would be with the former

superintendent reveals their own biases toward Danielle. They were used to communicating with

someone who was also a clergy member and male. Danielle may have been posed as a threat to

their intellectual understanding of education and also their own authority. Not all priests are

supportive of Catholic education. Cara, an assistant superintendent, revealed:

> I've seen that [pastor-principal challenges] for my principals but I worked at an archdiocesan school so you know I haven't experienced that directly. But yeah, I have seen that on the part of many of my principals. There [would be] issues with that or if the priest isn't a huge supporter of Catholic schools that makes it really tough.

This quote shows how difficult it can be to get initiatives and academic programs in a school if

the Parish (through the support of the priest) would be nonexistent. The success of schools

depends largely on the pastor's rallying support of a school and the principal's ability to build connections and get things done.

Ultimately, the superintendent and/or assistant superintendents are the mediators between the pastors and principals. Danielle, a superintendent, described how she acts as a mediator between the pastor and principal relationship dynamic:

> Where there is a little bit of a disconnect or the pastor in my estimation might be a little bit too controlling and micromanaging and wanting to tell the principal what to do rather than working with them (and it doesn't happen that often) but [when it does] I then have to have conversations with the pastor, to ask them, you know where they're coming from, what the issues are so that we can work together to, to make sure that we're all on mission and that that you know once in a while if that goes too far with a pastor, they can destroy a school quickly. So, I find my role and to make sure that the communication stays open. and [they don't] always have to agree on everything but they have to be able to talk about everything without a principal being afraid [or think] "Am I going to be fired?" because they disagree with a pastor. And sometimes the pastors are right, and sometimes they're not, and it's sometimes when they're not that sometimes we even have to call in, maybe the vicar for clergy [supervisor of pastors] and say, "hey can we have a conversation all together." And so far the vicar of clergy has been really supportive when there's an instance when, when the pastor might have overstepped, and we have to try to smooth things over.

The assistant superintendents and superintendents call to their own interactions and experiences as former principals with pastors to help lead conversations and open communication for all those involved.

The hierarchy, clergy and setup of pastors as the head of every parish school is the status quo. The women of the study were vocal about their role in challenging the status quo in their dioceses to produce better learning outcomes and sustainability. Whether it was in compensation, representation or advocating for families and inclusivity, these fearless women were eager to change the status quo. Annette, an assistant superintendent, beamed when I asked if she has ever challenged the status quo. She explained:

Yes! That's why I think that's what I feel is part of my job. That's what I do! I always tell people, I told my bosses all the time, "I don't stay here to keep things the same." I respect foundations, I respect history, but we always have to check if what we're doing is working or not . . . and just because this is what canon law says, with everything else is, it's not working. How can we build a different type of relationship? So, I work with some schools where we do alternative ways of doing things. But I still have to work really closely with the regional bishops because it's critical that we're all at least not against each other. So, to disrupt the status quo, you have to still maintain the relational pieces, so you can't disrupt that part, but you can question and say, why are we still doing it the same way?

Annette was strategic in being a disruptor and innovator in doing things to get more positive outcomes for schools. Sometimes clergy or the hierarchy would be barriers to these innovations. Nevertheless, she maintained positive relationships to reach her goals. Adrienne, an assistant superintendent shared how though she does have a respect and reverence for priests and clergy, she did not allow students to be alone with them as altar servers in the sacristy, she challenged discriminatory comments and policies against single parent families and LGBTQ families who wished to send their child to the Catholic school. Adrienne shared:

I've always challenged the status quo. I think working in the [diocese] with pastors was one of my greatest challenges. I pushed the envelope the most when it had to do with how we are including all children in our schools. And that could be children with learning challenges, families that are not the typical cookie cutter families. I have pushed the status quo of not just becoming like firefighters for our principals but building capacity and building strong leaders who can take care of themselves. And often, people I work with, say, "Well, you're just working yourself out of a job." And for me, I guess that's not my concern.

These women were fearless in addressing anything that hindered the success of student learning; even if it included outmoded patriarchal-based practices or pastors. Adrienne empowered her principals to do the same and fight for marginalized families that may not be what pastors are used to in their churches.

Stained Glass Ceiling

When I asked an assistant superintendent if male and female leaders were perceived differently in the Catholic Church she answered with little hesitation, "Probably but I don't like to think about it." I did not push that any further because it seemed like a sensitive topic. I did not want to make participants feel unsafe to answer questions. This response warrants questioning about how often (if at all) these conversations exist in dioceses in the United States. Danielle, a superintendent, shared:

> I would often have conversations with my colleagues in different dioceses about, you know, is there that stained glass ceiling and in the sense with the you know the clerical hierarchy. You know sometimes we feel like we don't get that next step, because we're not men but we don't know we have no actual data we just have anecdotal situations where we think wow you know what I have gotten it had I been a male or not?

This quote speaks to the reason for studies on experiences of women in educational leadership in the Catholic context. There is limited data on if women get passed up for positions for simply being a woman. Through the collection of anecdotes in these phenomenological studies, we can finally gather and organize the data to speak on the truth of these experiences. These candid interviews are very revealing to extract the truth of what women already intuitively know as having substantiated truth.

One superintendent reported that she applied several times for the role that she has now. For confidentiality purposes, she is not directly identified. She disclosed:

> It took a while for the [clergy member] to even have a conversation with me about holding the position of superintendent. And I don't know if it's a fact but in my heart, I was thinking he was looking for a male religious to take over. Because I applied twice for that role and, and . . . the first time I was passed over completely. The second time, they decided to keep the superintendent on for a [number] year. So actually, I guess I would say applied three times and the third time I applied for it and I heard nothing until [date] when I was called in for a [brief] meeting with the [clergy member]. We had that meeting and then he offered me the job.

Persistence paid off for this superintendent. She explained her path to leadership was never straight or easy. People kept asking her why she kept applying despite the rejections. She replied, "I want to be in Catholic education. I have something to offer. And when the time is right, the job will be there." Sue, an assistant superintendent, explained, "Usually you would find a male person of color, before female personal color [in a leadership position]. In leadership, they already have more males to begin with." Even among males of color, women of color take a back seat in leadership. This speaks Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, also highlighted if there were more qualified men to be assistant superintendents, there would be no women in these positions. She deduced the reason there are more female assistant superintendents is because there are not enough qualified, male principals.

The Church in Which We Exist

The women in this research provided examples of challenges with the patriarchal system in the Church, pastors, and other clergy. When one woman was asked what some challenges for women in Catholic education were, she paused for a noticeably long time and looked up to the right. Belinda thoughtfully answered:

> I think . . . just being in the Catholic Church is a challenge for women right? At times, oftentimes, I think women…. not acknowledging or holding themselves to that, or containing themselves in that bubble than "Well I work for the church. Oh, let me not push . . . let me not you know."

She chose her words with intention and added, as women within the church, they do not want to assert or even push beyond the status quo. She encouraged women in Catholic education to "just ask" and put themselves out there (be vulnerable) and ask for mentorship and ask those questions to learn more.

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Though the women in the research acknowledged certain areas of dissonance within their negative experiences in Catholic education due to being a woman, they never showed any sign of anger, defeat or discouragement. They had diverse reactions to inquiries about their interactions with clergy and the patriarchy in general. One assistant superintendent, Adrienne, commented, "I think working in the [diocese] with pastors was one of my greatest challenges." The same assistant superintendent also shared that although one of the pastors was sabotaging her attempts to obtain another job in a Catholic school, a better pastor gave her more opportunities to succeed. For the most part, most participants did not show much righteous anger or discontent with the hierarchical structure. Some were constructively critical and had no reservations expressing their critiques. Some were moderate to diplomatic in their answers. In essence, "it is what it is." Nicole, a superintendent, explained:

> And that's just the challenge I think just kind of going off of what I had shared earlier about just the power dynamics in the Catholic Church where it tends towards males, because only men can be clergy, and they kind of surround themselves with other clergy. So, breaking into that can be challenging. So, the one on one relationships, the more present you want the school community and engaging a pastor into that, or the more one can present at like the deanery meetings . . . it's going to be important to establish yourself as a leader in that scene.

It is important to understand how to work in the system that fundamentally excludes you in a major way. Raquel, a superintendent, explained her rationale on how she sees the Church interact with women leaders. She shared:

> I think there's always going to be some things that exist for women with respect to Catholic education leadership and just Catholic leadership in general because once again, we're talking about the hierarchy of the church at the end of the day and. So, I think there are some things that will just always kind of exist as a result of that. That's not good. It's not bad. It's, it is what it is and so knowing that there's some things that you can't change. And it seems silly for me to waste my time on that. . . . I think it needs to always be about, I think for any leader, what do I really have the ability to impact. What do I

really have the ability to have a voice in, and then let my energy go to those kinds of things.

This expresses a different perspective of challenges with clergy and the patriarchy in Catholic schools. She expressed to her principals to not focus on things they are unable to change but to solve problems and focus on things they have the capacity to change. Annette, an assistant superintendent, shared she chose to focus on what she can control in regard to gender biases. She shared, "What do I really have the ability to impact? What do I really have the ability to have a voice in, and then but my energy goes to those kinds of things."

Though the women in the research understood the set of givens and environment they were a part of, they seemed resigned to work through it all to fulfill a greater purpose. Justine, a superintendent, shared although she has experienced more positive relationships with clergy (bishops and pastors), she has no ego in the process and is focused on getting the work done.

> I don't bring any ego to this. And if me being a woman is an obstacle to working, you know, to reaching what our goals need to be at a certain school site. I have great men on my team. This hasn't happened, but if you know if it were to occur, I don't have any ego if it means that I put [name of male colleague] or [name of male colleague] on something to work with a pastor through it. And we're going to reach what needs to be done if it is what's good for the community and good for our church and good for our students. Then I'm all for that.

The women in this research can be characterized as strong, driven and decisive. They would even have characteristics of what would be considered akin to feminism. However, their approach to these gender issues within the Church and greater society is not approached with anger or resentment. Rather, there is a more conciliatory attitude to the institute's paradigm yet masterfully strategic method to ensure the success of their goals from securing funding or permission for a project or building out programs.

Moving Forward

History has shown the Catholic Church is slow to change. Sue, an assistant

superintendent, tried to make sense of the concept of working in the Catholic Church despite the

challenges. She explained:

> I think that throughout history, women have always been seen as less. And then you're talking about working in an institution that has a hierarchy of men. And it's really hard. It's easy to get discouraged when everyone around you that is seen as a major leader doesn't look like you. And I think that is why I hold on to the fact that women started Catholic schools in the United States. The foundation of this amazing institution and system of education was actually founded by people that look like us.

She made a case for the foundation of Catholic education to be rooted in the charisms and legacy

of religious sisters. Catholic education was created for the immigrants, the poor, the working

class and those who are marginalized. It was founded by hardworking women.

However, though there may be fewer women in leadership within the Church itself, more

women are emerging in Catholic education leadership. Justine, a superintendent, articulated how

to approach and move forward in leadership within the contexts of our Church:

> One of the challenges will continue to be the hierarchy of our church, and the governance model of our schools. They are governed by pastors, and I think that that can be a great benefit, but sometimes that is the biggest challenge. Particularly for women, that still remains a challenge. Even at the diocesan level, our diocese will always be led by bishops. You know, this is the church in which we exist. . . . You need to know who you work with. Good, bad or other, the system itself is not going to change, right? I mean, that part of it's not going to change. But I think that's okay. I think that then we find these things in ourselves right, that we can be strong, we can be bold and then these opportunities for transformation take place. And instead of having these systems if you will be obstacles, then they [become] great opportunities for us as women leaders.

This quote acknowledges these patriarchal structures with all its positive and negative aspects are

what we have to work within. Essentially, these are things we do not have the power or capacity

to change. However, the goal was to focus on working within these structures and create

transformative change.

Communication Dynamics

When Karen, an assistant superintendent, received an important phone call regarding her

father's sickness during a meeting with a male board member, she recalled his actions afterward:

> And after I hung up, the normal thing would have been to say something, you know, like
> "I'm really sorry," you know what I mean? That that's anyone that would, you know,
> would say. Instead [it] was, "Well, let's get back to work." And when that . . . [this] is not
> what you know, I would expect. No, no compassion. And that really bothered me [the
> situation] sounded so transactional.

This opening quote begins this in-depth look into the communication dynamics as a point of

challenge for women in leadership. Faced with a very grave phone call, the male colleague

showed no empathy or compassion for his female colleague. Instead it was "business as usual."

This subconstruct pertains to the challenges women had with exchanging ideas or even meeting

in a space to collaborate.

Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, shared her experiences of how information is

communicated in her context and gave insight on the spaces of communication for men that are

much more different for women in her diocese. She explained:

> Currently we have top leadership at the [diocese] held by men. So, it's very interesting to
> see . . . we also have male assistant superintendents in the mix. It is interesting to see how
> ideas are received when men put ideas forward than when women put ideas forward, and
> there is a level of dismissal that women are always coming from a place of empathy
> rather than a place of fact. I think it's just how we relay our message. We'd never relay
> our messages, based on fact we present a more like, "This is how I feel," "This is what I
> experienced," "This is what I'm hearing off the field." And when . . . and that's dismissed
> much easier if . . . people find it [easier] to dismiss that because it's coming from a soft
> place right. I see that different from how my male colleagues who put their messages
> forward and mostly always are fact based and black and white. And the other thing I
> realized is, there is a different platform where those discussions are taking place, because
> as women we don't, you know, walk up to our male bosses and just have conversations

and, you know, hang out by and get a coffee together and there's no informal space of talking to each other. Whereas, our male counterparts have that relationship with the male bosses. And so, when we are at meetings I find somebody will talk about an experience they've had with this person, or the boss at a different. . . . And I'm thinking, Well, I just find it odd that I'm just gonna go hang out with my boss and we talk about work right? We don't just pick up the phone on a Saturday and call my boss and chat.

This quote is significant as it shows how women communicate their ideas from a much more different place than men. Women's communication styles tend to lead with more empathy and emotion, and men are objective and free of emotion when communicating ideas or arguments. Though there is nothing inherently wrong with both styles of communication, the point of contention may come from how these communication dynamics prevent the woman from being heard or taken seriously. This paradigm of communication is to be reconsidered. Furthermore, she gives an example of how the men have more opportunities for networking and communicating their ideas when out in informal settings with other men in leadership. The way things exist in the workplace is that women (especially married or with families) are less likely to call their male bosses to chat or throw some ideas around. Annette, an assistant superintendent, shared her conscious decisions around how she communicates with her male colleagues:

So I do my best to really, like, not sound emotional about it and I always stand by like . . . I bring data in and facts and I name it and I . . . that's like everybody knows me for this . . . like, I just say, "Let's just name it," and I always start with that. And, but I'm sure there's like men around the room that don't feel as comfortable with me, acting that way. So, I have felt that.

Women like Annette have shifted their communication styles and realize data are the equalizer that keep the attention of male colleagues or superiors; but, sometimes it is difficult for some males to really intentionally listen to females, as evidenced with this case. Cara, an assistant superintendent, shared:

I was raised by parents who were like either. you know, it doesn't matter what gender you are you could do whatever you want you know you could be anything. And so it really wasn't until I was, you know, going for leadership positions that I realized that it is true that sometimes if you're a lady, and you say something, you know your boss might not hear you and then if a guy says the exact same thing like parrots what you say, you know, they get recognized, you know. I think that's bizarre. It's bizarre and it leaves like it leaves a lot of people even guys you know sitting around the table sometimes looking at each other like, "Are you serious?"

She continued and gave an example of how communication can be difficult when men do not understand something and has to be "translated" by another man. Cara recounted:

We were having a principals meeting and I was presenting on something, and one of the male principals was pushing back about something, which is fine like I don't mind pushback at all you know like, let's talk about it and get on the same page. But he just could not hear what I was saying. And then a male principal who was sitting right next to him repeated something that I said and he was like, oh so this is for blah blah blah. And it's what I've been saying for like 15 minutes.

This particular anecdote is interesting since it shows how women are challenged by men at times because of communication styles. There is a disconnect of how some men may sometimes be so focused on the fact that a person is a woman and not at the quality of what they are presenting on. Women tend to get overlooked for their ideas and suggestions. However, if suggested by a man, it would be received much differently. This phenomena of being overlooked or unheard because of being a woman is a real experience of women in leadership. Cara also spoke of a "good old boy" system that existed in certain schools. She had a superintendent who advised them on how to manage these dynamics. In their pockets of power and positionality, the women came together to combat these archaic ways of thinking. Cara stated:

I think in certain schools there can be a little bit of a "good old boy" system. Yes, and that's kind of the situation where I was at. And so she saw that and since she had a little bit of power, you know she did what she could to basically like, you know, protect some of the ladies and help remind us like not to, like, you know, to completely pour ourselves, totally into our jobs and that we still needed to remain people.

This example helps to demonstrate that challenges can exist in the patriarchal system but not bring down these strong women in leadership. As collaborative leaders, the women learned to navigate these relationships skillfully and remain with their sense of well-being intact.

The interviews produced narratives that spoke on the challenges of women in Catholic educational leadership. Challenges can be seen as anything in one's way to achieve or attain a goal. It is interesting to note the way these women approached the concept of challenges. They recognized there were challenges inherent in the position. They were rooted in things they could not necessarily change—their gender and the hierarchical structure of the Church—so they approached these challenges by acknowledging they exist in some form or another.

Challenges exist in compensation for all levels in the Catholic educational system. Women shared candid stories of their experiences with negotiations, pay scales, wage inequality, and confronted the fact that a Catholic school educator could not be the primary source of income for a family.

These challenges exist in family life. These women shared their struggles of family planning, raising children, going to school at the same time as their children, missing out on family events, worrying about their safety, raising children, the importance of extended family, and working on weekends. Nevertheless, they persisted. They kissed their babies goodnight and got back to business.

Challenges existed in gender-centered dynamics and communication styles. They shared important stories of how being a woman impacted their work relationships or how they were perceived by male colleagues and superiors. They were very honest in telling stories of being

passed up for promotions, heard but not listened to, adding another layer of consciousness of what they wore in hopes to not offend males, and navigating pastor-principal relationships.

Though their experiences varied in degree, their narratives confirmed these challenges do indeed exist and are worth discussion. Annette, an assistant superintendent, summed it up when she reflected on the challenges of being a woman in Catholic educational leadership:

> I think the challenges in Catholic school leadership for women, does have to do with the male hierarchy of our church in general. Our department and what we do is part of our larger organization, and that is so much of, "It's always been done this way," like our church is so slow in change. And so, a big part of a female leader, especially as I speak on behalf of my principals, where some of them I have to problem solve their relationships. A big part of it is that hierarchy that exists, and who has the ability to make decisions based on the male dominant leadership roles that exist in our organization. So, and that way you have to know that that's what you're, you have to know that that's what you're working for. And don't try to change so much the bigger pieces of it, but find a way to get the job done and navigate it in a way that doesn't you know, harm who you're there to serve. So, you just . . . . a lot of female leaders that I support or have seen that they leave, is because they can't navigate that part. Like, "It's a problem, we have to change it" and "No one's doing anything about it." And it's like, it's not that people don't recognize it or don't want to but find a way to still get it done. And don't be hung up on that part because if you say "yes" to work for any, any diocese, that's what you're signing up for. Regardless, like you have to know that. That is the part people need to be able to reconcile with, but then also know that it doesn't mean you have to keep everything the same way, and the frustration that sometimes you get sometimes [makes] you lose sight because there are a lot of moments of frustration. So, you just need to bring yourself back to the circle. So, it is a challenge by the very nature of how our Church is organized and what we face on a day to day basis.

Every participant acknowledged in varied ways the intrinsic challenges of the system in which they operated every day. It was a conscious choice to work around these systems of patriarchy and persist to achieve a goal that ultimately leads to creating spaces for meaningful and authentic student learning at the end of the day.

Theme 3: Leading to Form, Inform, and Transform

The women in this research study shined and came alive with their best examples when speaking on their experiences in transformative leadership. This last yet most overwhelmingly emergent theme was prevalent in all of the interviews across all races, ages and regions. In the context of all these emergent themes, Catholic identity was the foundation of these experiences, challenges were what keep them growing and learning while transformative leadership is what got the work done. These women were not complacent in finding solutions for sustainability of Catholic education, increased academic excellence in schools, and building capacity and relationships with principals, teachers, students, and community partners.

This emergent theme of Leading to Form, Inform, and Transform are divided in these parts and specific subconstructs within them. Their early experiences with education formed them to become leaders. Their continuing education with masters and doctorate degrees informed their practices as teachers, principals, directors assistant superintendents and/or superintendents. All these things combined with their positionality in turn transformed others and their work in their current dioceses.

This theme is about the ways female leaders have experienced success in their call to leadership through building capacity, building relationships, developing their leadership skills, collaboration, challenging the status quo, and being connected with mentorships and sponsorships.

Call to Leadership

Every woman was asked about their story, their call to leadership. After listening to the 10 very different women, some common themes emerged. These commonalities included a

significant and personal experience in Catholic education, a religious sister or nun who recognized something in them (leadership capacity) they did not see for themselves, mentors and principals who believed in them, a strong faith and desire to serve in Catholic education. Justine, a superintendent, shared:

> And so, it was just a conversation [between her and a principal regarding teaching at the school]. And I now look back 25 years ago, and that was really the discernment process. So, after a lot of prayer and discernment, it just felt right. It was the right fit for me. I loved my Catholic school experience.

Justine recalled her early experiences being a result of casual conversations with her mentors and women she looked up to. Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, saw the opportunity to be leader due to the problems in their own school site. She knew the only way things could really change was to change herself and step up to be a leader. She recalled:

> I had experiences with really good principals, and really bad principals. And I remember speaking to some of my faculty members and complaining about a situation and they said, "You can't change anything if you're not a leader." And so that's when I found an opportunity, 5 years into teaching to consider principalship but the first school I was teaching at, and from the I've been and I was a principal for 10 years after that.

Nicole, a superintendent, left nothing to chance. She made her intentions clear as she explained, "I had communicated with them [administrators] that I had this passion for greater leadership. So, they were able to provide me with those opportunities." With great power and opportunity came a huge responsibility in their answer to the call. Cara, an assistant superintendent, was cognizant of her positionality as she shared:

> I try to be really conscientious of the fact that my voice does matter and I'm representing other people. I need to be careful about the things that I say, because who knows if some of the things, some of the thoughts in my head can very easily become policy.

The women understood their leadership positions of power could transform or harm their dioceses. An incredible amount of trust was placed on them to lead their Catholic schools toward successful learning outcomes and sustainable practices.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was the overarching theme with subcategories included building capacity and building relationships. In Dedoose, this was the most prevalent code among all the interviews. According to Northouse (2016):

> Transformational leadership puts emphasis on intrinsic motivation and follower development. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, long term goals , morals and values; influence followers' motives to succeed; incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership; is attentive to the motives and needs of followers; helps followers reach their full potential; inspires followers to do great things; gives individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. (pp. 161-190)

The women in this research study all demonstrated characteristics of this type of leadership throughout their careers. This leadership style is not held predominantly by one gender but is characterized as the best of traditional styles of leadership prescribed by gender. This section explores examples of transformative leadership shown by the women.

Building Capacity

In the context of this research, building capacity is defined as the context setting in which leadership abilities are expanded and improved beyond the formal leadership. According to Lambert (1998), it is "broad-based, skillful involvement in the work of leadership" (p. 16). In code co-occurrence, building capacity was the most prominent theme within transformative leadership. Excerpts that demonstrated the women leaders building capacity as principals or their current position were coded as building capacity.

Sue, an assistant superintendent, shared her thoughts on building capacity in others. She expressed how important it was to train people to know what you (the leader) is doing. For example, as a WCEA commissioner, she has a cochair and learns what she does so that person will build their own skill set. She shared:

> When you're a principal, part of your job is to instill leadership in all of your teachers and staff. There were times when I had them present things at faculty meetings, or there are times when I said, "You know what, there's an opportunity for you to go and do a presentation for the diocese; Go for it." I think it's really important that the principal never thinks that they're the only leader at the school. It's in small ways that people can be leaders. It could be office staff or instructional assistants. I need to think about this is my [number] year in this job but I am already thinking about how am I building up the next person who's gonna take this place?

In Sue's interview, she talked about how important it was to train others about what you are doing and mentor them into your position. This may seem counterintuitive but it actually makes people want to work harder for you. Cara, an assistant superintendent, shared, "I pay attention to who comes and who's involved" when looking to fill leadership roles (e.g., principal or director). She further shared:

> Engage in dialogue and support them. I just think any opportunity that we can give principals to collaborate and work with each other through issues would be effective. Our office then provides support to make what they think needs to happen. I love that. I thrive off that.

Annette, an assistant superintendent, explained her understanding of building capacity and its importance:

> And then the other piece is to be open to it, also being a follower. Like it's not just about you as a leader, you have to be open and ready to let other people take the reins whether you're a principal or here [district office] and just say "okay what's the plan?." I believe in that. And realize "oh, this is my part to execute."

Building capacity is recognizing leadership talent in one's own faculty and staff. It is about learning to lead and when to follow. Everyone has their own strength areas. It is important to

recognize other people's strengths, whether in curriculum, instructional technology, budgeting, finance, or marketing. Nicole, a superintendent, understood the power of building capacity. She noticed the low math and ELA scores from her school. Instead of giving directives, she asked questions about instructional activities and assessments. As they answered, teachers realized they had no way of really knowing how to help their students. Nicole allowed them to reflect on their need for new curriculum and standardized tests to gauge the success of these programs. She shared:

> Allow them to come to the realization themselves. And when they do, I have buy-in. So, then we started looking at a new curriculum, we looked at piloting a new math curriculum and ELA curriculum and the Star Assessments. We have had new things in the classroom So they definitely rose to the challenge. And they were able to identify the problem and came up with concrete solutions that we've got, which ended up being better for our students in the long run.

When teachers are given the opportunity to solve problems with their ideas, leadership develops. The leader creates these spaces for faculty and principals to be more solution oriented rather than wait for the answer like our own students would sometimes prefer. Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, commented on how her first year as an assistant superintendent was "putting out fires" at her school sites. In one example, instead of coming in to talk to a parent about an issue, she coached the principal through a mock meeting on how it could go. She gave her principal tools on how to manage and resolve conflict. She further shared:

> I am proud that I've run schools where I've not become an enabler or a comfort blanket for my principals, or even my teachers. It was more to build their capacity to take on challenges. One of the major challenges when I was a principal was parents reacting to decisions we were making as a faculty. And quite often the fallback is just "let the principal deal with it." And I would first let my teachers have the interaction with the parents so that I don't remove their power . . . I'd rather empower them. So, when parents came with any issues, I would make sure they would follow the process. I'm still open to meeting with the parents after they've had a chance to discuss the issues with the teachers. And quite often I would make the teachers take on that responsibility also

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because they do find it easy to send the problem off to the next level. As an assistant superintendent I'm doing the same thing. It's easy for principals to just send people to the [district office]. And I encourage them, because I tell them, it might be a culture they're creating at their schools where they are not the decision makers, and they're releasing the power to me. And so, I push back and make sure that they're the ones making the decisions at their sites.

Each of the women shared how they built capacity by sending their teachers to professional development, to present at conferences, to manage conflicts with parents, to build programs, and to try new instructional practices. It was through this integral practice that they solved curriculum and stakeholder conflicts.

Danielle, a superintendent, recruited some women to be her assistant superintendents for their central office. One of her assistant superintendents asked her, "Is it ok that we're all women [in the central office]?" She replied:

Actually, I think it's best that we're all women because this department needs to understand that women make excellent leaders. We are great at, you know, building relationships, and there's nothing like that because if there were men here, nobody would bat an eye.

While some may see training others to do what one is doing in the school site is training them out of a job, a true leader knows that this is what is needed for the sustainability and continuity of the school site or central office. These women demonstrated no hesitation to lift others up and expand their knowledge and professional learning networks. The idea of a shortage or "not enough" is expelled in the concept to build capacity. Danielle, a superintendent, shared how she encourages her principals to look within their halls of teachers and cultivate leaders. She shared:

When I talked to the current principals, I really encouraged them to look in their building and say, "Who has leadership potential?" And a lot of times those are the women in the building and I want our principals to encourage those women to step into that role. So maybe they are in charge of curriculum development for their building or maybe they are in charge of, you know, being the leading mobile learning specialist in their building so that they can have true responsibility of leading a program before they move on to

another stage. This is important so that they can not only have the experience but be able to write about it, you know on their resume. Otherwise, they don't have enough chances to have leadership roles, which I think that's important.

Superintendents like Raquel, Danielle, and Justine were all trained by their predecessors who moved on to other opportunities in education. To hold back knowledge in fear of it being irrelevant only hurts the organization and state of women in leadership in general.

Leaders also spoke on how to build capacity with their principals by promoting healthier work life balance. Raquel, a superintendent, noted the importance of being mindful of how to manage work and family life. She expressed:

> We need to be better about work family balance all the way around our principals. They have to be everything to everyone, and there are times that I worry for them. I'm thinking to my principals in particular that the amount of time they're spending with their schools and that's not what's intended. That's not what we want for them, it's not healthy either. And so, I think what more that we can do, that I can do as a Catholic school leader to help grow their capacity and show they have support. So, they don't feel like they're just this one woman show. If we do this the better, we will all be because the greater issue is to help our school leaders at multiple levels, find that balance for their own well-being, and for their families.

She noted how they as the top decision-making leaders need to model better work and life balance. As a principal, Adrienne used to send her faculty home at noon on Fridays and resume a faculty meeting through Zoom. She did this because she understood how most of her teachers lived far from the school site. She shared:

> I'd send them home because we were a commuter school so most of my teachers were traveling at least 40-50 minutes. And if you go home at 12 on a Friday, in comparison to four on a Friday, you're going to like that. So, I would send them home early on Fridays. I said it doesn't matter where you're signing in from, this is what I would give them what we were going to discuss. I would make a video of it. I will be speaking. I would give them all the stuff they needed beforehand. And then we would pick a time amongst ourselves what would be the best time, so they would take about four o'clock. They would go home, have lunch and relax a bit, have the meeting at 4 p.m. and then started the evenings with their families.

These simple and yet innovative ideas paid dividends in creating a culture of trust and buy-in

from the faculty. They knew this leader had their back and their best interests in mind. Justine, a

superintendent articulated the importance of building capacity. She explained:

> Our principals are up against so much and they have to be all things to all people. And
> from this position, I feel just such a responsibility to them to support them in their work
> because we need good leaders at our site levels. But, at the diocesan level, we've got to
> support them then in their leadership and in their mission.

Building Relationships

In the research, building relationships came out as one of the most significant themes in

the overarching theme within transformative leadership. Nearly every leader spoke dynamically

about how they built relationships with teachers, principals, students and parents. For them, this

was one of the most integral aspects that would make or break leadership and culture in a school

site or diocese. Several women cited how they reviewed names and faces from yearbooks,

diligently learned the name and one specific thing about each of the students, faculty, and staff.

They wrote notes about parents they met or with whom they started to work to remember

specific details. They stood outside the gates and greeted students and parents, their visibility

was constant. Cara, an assistant superintendent, learned from her boss about the importance of

building relationships as she shared:

> Well, I think that you have to be very relational in any kind of administrative job. Like I
> love my, my boss I respect her so much for being able to know almost all of our teachers'
> names. She's really impressive in that way and she can remember personal details about
> people. So, I tried to do that but I definitely am not as good as she is. I do try to listen to
> people's ideas as it aligns with our schools in the big picture. By talking to people and
> being relational makes things happen.

Some women shared how they opened their homes to faculty and staff for beginning of the year

parties and met their families. Community building was the center of the life of the leader. And

further into that center was building meaningful relationships. Sue, an assistant superintendent and former principal shared the importance of relationships such as learning everyone's names, know about their lives, go to CYO games, ask about their lives outside of school, make memories with faculty and staff through Thanksgiving breakfasts, baking for them, planning intentionally for Teacher Appreciation Day, making personalized gifts, doing races or outdoor runs, and coming together in fellowship outside of school. Sue energetically expressed:

> There's nothing more important than relationships! I don't care as much about academics. I don't care as much about finances, because if our kids can't relate to people, who cares what their academics is. If they can't connect heart to heart, soul to soul, then, it doesn't matter to me what we taught them. And so, I modeled that.

Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, recalled how her predecessor from when she was a principal warned her to not be friends with her faculty and staff. This did not sit well with her. She shared how negative experiences as a teacher formed her leadership style when she first became a principal. Adrienne shared:

> And I never believed that [not being friends with teachers]. I felt that was what was lacking in our leaders. They don't know our lives. So, my relationship was built based on [opposite of that notion] and I opened my home to them and their family members, and I'd invite them over. And I would enjoy their company as people before "as people who work with me." And it was all I would do; a lot of activities where I would recognize their lives and what they were coming from in their backgrounds rather than going about it like "I treat you all the same." So, my teachers who had children; I told them that if they needed to take care of something with their kids then go ahead. I said, "When you come into work, I'd rather you be happy." I had a principal who once told me when I had my first child, "I think you're distracted now that you're a mother" and I said, "I would never say that to anybody who works with me." There were other teachers who had no family commitments but knowing them on a personal basis and recognizing that they have lives; that's the part that helped me build relationships. And so, when I respected all that about them, they respected when I had high expectations of them, because they knew that I was fair. I wasn't just this person that had ideas and showed up next morning to implement new things. I needed to know that we had to be that balance and having kids of my own I think I realized, you know, if we are not going to prioritize our personal lives we cannot do well in our professional lives.

Another leader, Justine, a superintendent, shared positive experiences in building relationships and how it formed a positive culture in her district office. She recalled as a former principal and assistant superintendent she had to compartmentalize her life as wife, mother, and career woman. She shared how in previous experiences she did not feel supported by colleagues. Justine was the most enthusiastic to share about how she built meaningful relationships with her colleagues.

> We needed the culture to shift in our office when I came to this diocese. So, I recognized my whole first year instead of kind of implementing what needed to be done. I spent that whole first year building relationships, building trust. Now, we text a lot. After hours we send each other jokes and stuff like that. This past summer I had at my home a Back to School barbecue for our families, our spouses, our kids, and it was so much fun. Spouses; husbands and wives of Catholic school principals really journey with them. I always say there's a special place in heaven for them. Because they support so many and people don't know that. And so, we need to honor that. And so, at this level, the same thing, you know, we go home to our spouses and talk to them. We're all in this ministry together. And so, we tried to celebrate that and next weekend, we're having a Christmas party at my house with my staff and their families. I want to make it very authentic, very real. It all just kind of just organically happened. We had set staff meetings at the beginning of the week. And as just as it so happened on Friday afternoon, we were all here. So, we'd have these really, kind of unofficial touch points. We sit down, we talk, "Okay, how did the week go? What are you looking forward to? Where do you?" And so, this year, we actually calendar time in on a Friday afternoon for our check-in meetings. And it just works for us. And so, I think those frequent check ins are really important in building that trust. But, you know, sometimes if, if our Friday afternoons are clear, we'll go to lunch, and then, you know, start our meeting there and come and finish our meeting. Yeah, it's good. It's just fun. I just can't say enough good things about these people. I love them.

Justine spoke highly of her work family as she explained their dynamics. Other women spoke of how their work family stepped up when by helping bring their similar aged children to school, helping one another in projects, and being there in personal times of loss or death of a loved one. The women spoke of knowing the teachers' and colleagues' stories and backgrounds, hobbies, families, current events, deaths, sicknesses, graduations, birthdays, and kids' college acceptances. It did not begin only at 8 and end at 3:00 p.m. They were inextricably tied to one another's lives.

Though the personalities of the women varied on a spectrum of introversion to extraversion, they all expressed the importance of social capital and building networks and connections with their communities. Nicole, a superintendent, shared how she balanced her extraversion with listening to her school communities. She explained:

> I think having a physical presence is really important when trying to build a relationship. When I'm with school communities (teachers or with principals), I really try to listen. I am an extrovert. It's my personality so I love to chat and I'm really chatty. I try to turn that off in the right circumstances. I think it's appropriate sometimes but when I'm trying to build relationships, I'm doing more listening than I am chatting. And I try to commit facts about that person to memory, so that the next time I interact with them. I can recall that or I can make sure that I follow like, "Oh hey how's your son doing? Is he at UCLA now?" They feel like I'm invested in them as a person, and they're not just another teacher. I compliment and show gratitude when I can. The Lord has blessed me with a really good memory. That's why I was a really good teacher because I could remember everybody's names. I try to use that memory to make people feel special because I know how hard it is to be a teacher in a Catholic school. So, if I can go out of my way to make a teacher feel special and valued as a person. I'll definitely try to do that.

Nicole saw the value of creating connections to move the mission and vision of the schools. She knew teachers would be more invested in improvement if they believe their leader was invested in knowing and seeing them.

When Danielle became superintendent, she wanted to look at how her schools saw discipline. The discipline system was more punitive with easy detentions and suspensions. She wanted to explore restorative justice with her principals and their schools.

> I asked them, "Let's work together on helping students understand the virtues and how to live to be a good person for others." It took a little bit of trust for them to switch over from that punitive "let's have detention and the suspension too" to the restorative way. Let's talk about what's going on, and let's celebrate what's going well not necessarily reward with things but just celebrate and let's take time to listen to kids and see where they are. So, they were trusting about that shift. You know it's building relationships with people I think that helps build the most trust between people.

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Women in leadership are communal and make decisions based on the collective by listening to others, being supportive (Northouse, 2016). Problems were solved while programs and policies were built out of conversations and collaborations between highly functional teams that took the time to nurture their relationships with one another. These women recognized the importance of making connections, listening, asking questions, being vulnerable, and recognizing the value of each of their colleagues. Adrienne knew if she first recognized them as people, then they would step up as professionals. Justine created a work family that solved problems together, grieved each other's personal losses, and celebrated each other's wins. These women shared how their relationships with teachers, mentors, parents, students, and staff set the environment and culture to have productive conversations to improve leadership capacity and ultimately to enrich the academic, social, and spiritual lives of the students.

Leadership Skills

The review of the literature notes characteristics that are more dominant in women than in men. This is not a biological phenomenon but rather a result of socialization. The leadership skills code pertained to excerpts in the interviews that described certain skills that enabled them to get their vision across and their work done. Justine, a superintendent, commented:

> Women are a little bit better at seeing that broad picture as not having that kind of tunnel vision on things when approaching conflict, or issues. I think a really strong leader needs to be compassionate, needs to be empathetic. Sometimes I think our society thinks those qualities make you a weak leader. I think it makes you a more well-rounded leader. And when you can do that, that's when you then build trust. And when you can build trust, then you can transform. And so, I think all of that is I think those are really powerful things that have been discounted in the past.

The women spoke of their leadership skills and how they navigated situations to get work done. Although they cited significant differences between male and female leadership skills, it did not

indicate their effectiveness was compromised. Sue, an assistant superintendent, has a dynamic

personality that does not seem to match how she looks at first. One would think at first

impression before she spoke that she would be a reserved person, stereotypically nurturing and

kind. However, when she speaks, she exudes confidence and competence with a slight swagger

notable in masculine leaders. However, she gives enough examples to support that she does

possess feminine type leadership skills. She explained:

> Okay, I think that as a female, in terms of being pastoral, nurturing, compassionate, those
> are pieces that are embedded in who I am as a person. Like it's very natural for me to
> sense how someone's feeling. I have high emotional intelligence to relate to people and
> strong relational skills. I think that comes pretty natural for me.

Sue is assertive and makes no apologies about who she is and what she believes in, yet she did

convince me she is all those things as a female leader. She demonstrated how she could be

pastoral by helping transition principals out of their schools. Her nurturing and compassionate

aspects come out of her story of fostering a child.

The women in this research study also shared how they picked up most of their

leadership skills by volunteering for projects, doing the things others did not want to do, and

saying "yes" to initiatives and leadership roles. These skills came out as a result of dealing with

problems on a day-to-day basis. In Catholic education, women are known to take on things more

than a man would. Cara, an assistant superintendent, explained:

> It was just one of those cultures [school culture] where like a lot of women took on
> responsibilities that men didn't necessarily want to take on. So, I think that I was maybe
> offered things or things put on my plate even my male colleagues didn't have [to do].
> Even though that's not a great thing, it turned out well for me because I got this position
> that I have, you know, like it exposed me to some more opportunities.

Care showed even if the women had more on their list of things to do, it was training for something better. In the end it worked out for her benefit seeing as how she is now the assistant superintendent in her diocese.

Research on gender and leadership cited women leaning toward more collaborative and communal characteristics (Northouse, 2016). This was demonstrated with Adrienne's plan of implementing blended learning and a flipped classroom model. Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, shared:

> I depended on all the stakeholders to depend on the trust, and that trust that I was making that decision; that it was data informed and evidence based. So, I think the most important group that I was concerned about to accept this decision were the children. They responded positively to the space I was creating for their learning and the respect I was giving to their feedback. This allowed them a chance to be their best through this new endeavor we were taking on together.

Instead of coming in and establishing a new program, she consulted with her leadership team, approached teachers who would be quick to want to learn how to lead in this space, and most of all, get feedback from the children. She established Google apps for education at her school, sought out professional development for her teachers, modeled flipped learning by providing reading materials and the agenda for faculty meetings and then having them on Zoom online. She modeled her vision for learning by the way she interacted with her staff. This kind of leadership skill establishes spaces for open dialogue, learning and removes fear while inspiring positive change.

The women of this study learned and picked up new leadership skills through the day to day problems and issues attached to their roles as teachers, assistant principals, principals, assistant superintendents and/or superintendents. They picked up their leadership skills from observing their role models and mentors. Karen, an assistant superintendent, and Danielle, a

superintendent, cited their leadership skills evolving from being a teacher aid for the religious

sisters and teaching lower grades. Leadership skills were developed by being thrown into

situations in which they had to step up. Belinda, an assistant superintendent, shared how she was

the teacher who volunteered for things no one else wanted to do. She worked as the curriculum

coordinator, professional learning communities (PLC) coordinator, and AP coordinator.

Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, noted how there was no training or onboarding for her job

when she was hired. Nevertheless, she arranged for her own professional development for her

position and started creating personalized professional development for her principals. The

women of this study supported evidence of leadership skills rooted in empathy, compassion, and

collaboration. Justine, a superintendent, shared some advice for aspiring leaders and expressed:

> There's room for us [women] to lead. There's absolutely space for us. Sometimes we
> need to fight for that space. But we need to be at the table. Our voice is so important.
> Women lead differently from men. They just do; good, bad or other and I think that our
> Church really needs that right now.

Collaboration

Several times during interviews. It was impossible to get any meaningful work done

without collaboration. Excerpts were coded with collaboration if they demonstrated groups or

teams of people coming together to achieve a common goal. Whether it was between assistant

superintendents and their superintendent, the superintendent and her district/central office team,

or anecdotal data of their former positions as principals or directors and their teachers,

collaboration was vital to growth and sustainability of all their projects. As principals, they

recalled collaboration with teachers to improve overall reading and math scores, achieve

curriculum alignment and professional development, and work toward improving school culture.

Working in the district office, they shared stories of working with principals to solve various

conflicts with parents, provide meaningful and high quality professional development for various schools' faculty and staff, and create programs and initiatives to increase enrollment in schools. Justine shared how important it was to get a high functioning team to effectively collaborate. Justine, a superintendent, explained:

> It's all collaboration. I had the opportunity to build an incredible team. And so, this office has been totally restructured. It's such a privilege to work with these people because they're highly competent, they're highly mission focused, highly experienced, passionate about our work, and we genuinely like one another. And that makes and I think when all of those things are aligned, then you have a high level of trust. And it's to be at a high level of trust with one another. That's when transformation occurs.

The collaboration was informed by the high level of trust each person on the team had with one another. Though Justine had more staff in her diocese office, she created and built it from ground up with people who could support the mission and vision while also seeing the opportunities for improvement. Some diocese staff were much smaller. It depended on the size of the region and diocese (number of schools). Nevertheless, these smaller staffs functioned well. Though Raquel has always worked with a smaller staff, she always felt part of the decision-making process with her predecessor. In turn, she continued to do this as superintendent. Raquel, a superintendent, shared:

> It's more collaborative; it's not really about lording over anybody and telling them what to do. We come together to make decisions and they have a voice in that as well. But usually we're coming to those conclusions and decisions together.

Though the superintendent can always override or make modifications to a plan and has the final say, everyone's voice is heard out. The best decisions are made by a group to avoid blame in the event the decision did not work out the way it was planned. The shared leadership of collaboration is to ensure all ideas are included in brainstorm and executed with great care through collaborative efforts.

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Professional Development

This referred to any outside workshops, one on one meetings and interactions that provided knowledge and strategies for growing and improving as not only a good teacher but also as a leader. All the women indicated they understand the importance of their own professional development and providing it for others. This section will speak on how the women leaders participated in professional development and how they provide it for their principals and teachers.

Receiving Professional Development. Most of the women reported attending conferences from National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) conferences and leadership summits, being part of professional groups within their state (group of superintendents), attending professional development workshops from CUE Conference (instructional technology), Twitter professional learning networks, university networks, or learning with their principals at conferences provided by universities. They continued their education with master's degrees, administrative credentials, principal credentials, and, in some cases, doctorates. Justine, a superintendent, shared her involvement in a professional group of superintendents:

> One of the ways [I receive professional development] is through collaboration with colleagues at this level [superintendency]. We have a wonderful network with [number of people] of us and we meet in person [number] times a year, and then every month through a conference call. That has become such a source of professional development for me. Our interactions with colleagues who are in the same position in different diocese has been fantastic. I'm surrounded by people who I didn't know I could turn to for coaching for you know, advice, things like that, at a professional level. I've learned so much from a business standpoint and organization standpoint.

The old adage goes, "It's lonely at the top." However, this narrative has been changed when top decision makers decide to come together and work toward improving their schools by letting ego

be put aside and learn from others. Raquel, a superintendent, shared she gained the most from relationships with assistant superintendents and superintendents from other dioceses:

> Sometimes, and, you know, at every level in education, you can attend a conference, it may not always be the actual session itself that you're getting something at but the connections you make when you're in those. And I have experienced that a lot.

All the women were very humble about the importance of them getting professional development. They did not dread it but rather were hungry for the opportunity to experience high quality professional development. Raquel, a superintendent, shared that she does not always know everything in education and learns from others in meetings and discussions. In her experiences, she learned to listen and think about things in a different way. She further explained:

> I always try to treat those [conversations with other professionals] as opportunities to learn from. And then to challenge myself that if there's something more I need to learn that I have the power to do that. I need to go out and seek that for myself.

The women demonstrated learning leader mindsets and never hinted on being without professional development. They understood its importance in their own growth and recognized the possibility of learning from teachers, principals and other colleagues.

Not all professional development came from conferences or workshops or colleagues. In one case Justine took up an offer from someone who offered her one on one advice and consulting even if he was not from the education field. Justine recounted the encounter:

> This person said, "I'm from this field or you know, love to sit down with you and give you some help." And they're men who for living, they did strategic planning for businesses. One of them was a professor in the [state school system]. These are really high-quality people who would probably charge a lot of money. And I meet with them every 6 weeks for coaching. So, I've these opportunities that I didn't know were here but are kind of showing themselves and I am just, I'm really, yeah, taking people up on their offers I take people up on those offers. I didn't always do that. So, I'm trying to be really intentional and to learn from people who are really willing to kind of share with me.

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Justine reflected she has become more open to learning about new educational strategies to better develop and grow her principals and teachers. She expressed how she was willing to learn about other things outside of the realm of education like business and marketing to help Catholic schools as a whole.

Others were more strategic with their professional development and had a clear plan. For example, Nicole was very strategic and clear about her vision in Catholic educational leadership. She sought out exemplary principals as mentors. As a principal, she was inspired by the superintendent at that time. Nicole revealed:

> And as a principal I was inspired by my superintendent at the time. And what they did was they gave me, increasing responsibility. When I was principal in my current diocese, my superintendent gave me responsibilities as one of the curriculum coordinators for the diocese. I think I had communicated with them that I had this passion for greater leadership. So, they were able to provide me with those opportunities. And then as superintendent I was intentional about surrounding myself with other superintendents so I had an informal mentor, another superintendent in [state]. She took me under her wing. And then last year we ended up putting money from my budget towards actual formal mentoring and coaching. And I did that through the NCEA, and I checked in with my mentor every 2 weeks. The whole purpose of that mentorship was really to home in and strengthen my executive skills as a leader. I thought that was such a beneficial program. Having the mentorship in my [number] year really allowed my mentor and I to take a look at the scope of my job, and come up with a division and the next steps of where we're going to take our schools and our diocese.

Professional development was a challenge for some women in their higher positions. Time was always a factor that prevented them from nourishing themselves to maintain their own growth. Some women admitted to having more professional development as principals. However, in their roles, they have found it to be in the other end of professional development by providing it for their principals. Some women seemed reflective by the fact they have not attended any conferences or other professional development in the last year or so due to scheduling conflicts.

They all concluded they would love to be more intentional about their own growth as a leader despite the time constraints.

Providing Professional Development. As women in these roles, one of their priorities was to provide professional development for their principals and teachers. Nicole, a superintendent, made this one of her priorities when she began the superintendency and shared:

> When I came in I made it really clear with our finance team at the diocesan level that it was important that we spend money on high quality PD. I got a lot of questions from the diocesan team when I first started, but now they know that I'm willing to put money in my budget towards a really good presenter, that my teachers are going to walk away from feeling like they learn something from that.

Some of her presenters are big names in the education world and come with a hefty price tag to give professional development. She also sent her principals to reputable conferences with educators teaching workshops and not vendors. Her investment on the teachers was reflected on her commitment to professional development.

Sue's role as an assistant superintendent focused on professional learning. With a revolving door of transition of principals and teachers due to the cost of living, professional learning was integral to the success of academic excellence. Her role was to help create systems of professional learning to build capacity in schools that may have had four principals in the last 4 to 6 years. With this kind of context, it was imperative to create professional development that was in Sue's words, "ongoing, systematic and long lasting." She described one of her first initiatives:

> I helped organize one of the largest staff development days we've ever had. This day included over 800 people, because we asked everyone in the building except for the custodian to come. In the past, we've only had PD [professional development] for principals and teachers and that was it. And what I'm trying to help create with our staff development committee with our Department of Catholic Schools, is that idea of, let's create PLC [professional learning community] for everyone in the building. Let's create

PLCs for instructional assistants. Let's create PLCs for the bookkeepers. Let's create a PLC for counselors and everyone else. We had differentiated workshops where they could pick and choose, and some of them were mandatory for certain groups. So, let's just say the bookkeepers, that meant that our fiscal controller was there. That meant that the insurance and benefits representative was there. Someone from human resources from the Chancery was there. You know we have to build up all our people in our school sites, because we cannot rely on the principals and the teachers to be the only ones who are receiving professional development. We can't rely on them being the only professionals in the building because sometimes the ones who stayed the longest or the instructional assistants or the daycare director, someone else who is not a teacher. If we're talking about differentiating instruction in the classroom. We have to differentiate PD too.

Her ingenious idea for creating a professional development with PLCs for all faculty and staff in the entire diocese built capacity in schools, strengthened knowledge of a certain job and the history of the school (continuity was established), established networks where professionals could consult about best practices, and opened up collaboration among all finance persons, advancement/development personnel, front office/attendance personnel, and operations staff. By getting everyone in the room together, conversations of what worked and what did not work strengthened the whole organization.

As Sue indicated, personalized professional development is needed for principals and teachers. Justine, a superintendent, made sure her first-, second-, and third-year principals received meaningful professional development. To ensure their growth, development, and support, she explained her plan for principals:

We've set up principal meetings four times a year. I've really tried to shift those from being just kind of talking memos to very collaborative meetings. We do a lot of work at these meetings and our professional development opportunities. We survey our principals afterwards, we do exit tickets, and they're really appreciating the use of time and they feel like they're growing as professionals. So that's been good feedback. Going to my team, I have people [and this is important to me] who have been principals. So, they know how to do professional development for teachers and I don't by any means do all the professional development. I like to work closely with the principals, but I have team members who are just on fire and really good at what they do. So, I think those are just being really intentional, meaningful. And that takes time. I mean, it takes a lot of

planning, you don't just show up, right? It's like a good lesson plan; you put the time in behind it, you know, in the back end so that when you're there in front of your students, it's a great lesson.

As experienced principals, they know what skills and support teachers needed and catered it to their needs. Like master teachers, they knew their audience, assessed their needs carefully, gathered their input and received feedback.

Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, collaborated with her principals after noticing many assistant superintendent positions opened in 1 year. Though there were opportunities for principals to apply, they were unable to get any out of hundreds of principals to even attempt to apply. This made her think of how this could be. She came to realize the principals had lower self-efficacy about their own abilities for those positions since they did not have the right professional development. Since she had a background in business and finance, she had "clandestine" PDs with principals who were uncomfortable to reveal they did not know much about budgets and finance. Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, shared:

> And what I also tried to do is when my principals request any specific professional development, I find it for them and I enroll with them. And so, they see me learning, alongside. And then I have been to schools to lead professional development where the principals and I call these our "No Name Training." So, we just decide what we all want to work on and then we find the resources to help us out together.

She worked one on one with them to help them figure out their budgets. She did not only refer them to a certain workshop. She joined them and built relationships with her principals as a leading learner, modeled building capacity and personalized their professional development experiences.

The struggle of providing principals with personalized, meaningful professional development has been one of the things these women leaders are trying to grapple with. The

offices are mostly understaffed and resources are low. Building capacity among principals is one

of the only ways. An assistant superintendent, Adrienne, commented on the state of professional

development when she started on the job:

> And so, if I look at my principals now than when I came in. There is a lot more PD that
> we are providing them. But we are providing them again like what we do in Catholic
> schools, the same for everybody. It's not that this principal is sitting in an inner-city
> school and this principal is sitting in a school in [high end neighborhood]. They need
> entirely different PD, personalized PD. And this one's a man, this is a woman, they learn
> in entirely different ways but we are. We don't have enough hands-on deck to be able to
> start to look at that, you know, but we want our teachers to do that in schools we want our
> principals to do that. But as instructional leaders ourselves and assistant superintendents
> we are not doing it ourselves so we have to have that conversation.

Providing meaningful professional development for principals and schools can be a daunting

task. However, as problem solvers, these women understand they must first make sure they are

"fed" and model actively seeking out professional development. They must be the leading

learners. This is then modeled on principals who are called to be self-starters and actively engage

in personal learning networks (PLNs) such as Twitter, LinkedIn or NCEA to invest in their own

growth plan. Leaders in district offices can gather data to assess the needs of their principals and

schools, plan for high quality professional development meetings or conferences, discuss

solutions based on the needs of the principals and set actionable goals and benchmarks toward

solutions.

Mentorships and Sponsorships

No woman from this study would be in her position right now if it were not for mentors.

Raquel, a superintendent, acknowledged:

> I had really strong role models in women as leaders, both in religious and in in as a lay
> leader and I think that, in all honesty, led me that to gain the confidence to be able to do
> this, because otherwise I would not if someone would have told me that this is what I
> would have been doing.

Excerpts from interviews were given this code if they pertained to being mentored or mentoring others. Being mentored included a teacher that believed in them and their strengths, a principal or administrator that gave them more responsibilities and helped coach them into leadership, a religious sister or lay person who taught them spiritual and operational leadership, someone who encourage them to being open to continuing their education or doing more to help their school site. When Nicole, a superintendent, started her work, she reflected:

> I don't know how well I would have done with it and my first year, because my first year, I didn't really have a grasp of the position, but having the mentorship in my third year really allowed my mentor and I to take a look at the scope of my job, and come up with kind of a vision and the next steps of where we're going to take our schools and our diocese.

Through her mentorship and professional development, she built her vision for the diocese and student learning.

Sponsorships was a theme that evolved from the women recalling their mentorship days. Sponsorship refers to the people who will vouch for you and put your name out there as a recommendation. In Sue's case, she was exposed to opportunities since her mentor brought her to events and conferences. Many of the women in the study became principals at the recommendation of the outgoing principal or other diocese leaders they knew. When Nicole was a principal, it was the assistant superintendent at that time who sponsored her by assigning her important district wide roles like a curriculum coordinator. Karen was sponsored by the religious sister for whom she worked in her previous schools. The superintendent of her diocese believed in her leadership and called on her to be an assistant superintendent when recognizing several decades of experience. Annette worked her way up from teacher to principal and as an assistant superintendent. Her sponsors continued to be former principals she worked with. Belinda, an

assistant superintendent, was sponsored by her dissertation chairperson who was affiliated with the school in which she was later hired. No matter what the circumstance, when leaders were in a room deliberating the next leader for a school or district, the sponsor spoke their name and gave it for consideration. According to the stories in these interviews, this has been the number one way in which women in leadership have risen up to their current positions.

The women of this research gratefully recalled women who have helped them in their journey. "I've had so many beautiful women of faith that have grounded me in my journey," recalled Justine, a superintendent. She further expressed:

> I'm just so grateful for friendship, guidance, prayer, all of that. And I feel like each one of these [women] have led me closer to Christ really because they're their example of not only leadership but faith filled leadership and being a female leader in our church. And it really wasn't until I think I was at the diocesan level that I recognized that opportunity about being a strong woman in our church.

Selection for Mentorship

The women of this study did not have a difficult time speaking about the people who sparked their passion for education. When speaking about mentors, the women in the research often started with some variation of, "They saw something in me I did not see in myself." Some women in the study pursued other endeavors outside of Catholic education. Some were in public schools, business fields, corporations and pursued majors like psychology, child development, business administration, finance, religious education, and sports medicine. Though the gateway to education was through their children or volunteering, it always involved a religious sister or principal that gave them leadership opportunities and "took a chance" on them. Sue, an assistant superintendent, recalls her former principal in high school. She recalled fondly:

> And when I worked for her, she saw something in me that I hadn't seen myself and so she would start to bring me to their annual administrators' conference in [city], with all

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the presidents and principals of all of their schools. Slowly I was formed by a lot of [Order] Sisters of [location]. And then there were other people in the diocese who said, "You might want to consider leadership" or "It would be great for you to present at a new teacher meeting." Then it was like, "Well, maybe you could consider being on the leadership team at your school." And then it progressed to being an assistant principal and principal and then my role now.

Her exposure to these environments allowed her to open doors of opportunities and get her name out in the forefront of people's minds when filling leadership positions. Justine, a superintendent shared, "I think there's people in our lives that see things in us that we don't always recognize in ourselves, and I think that that's the leadership journey. And so, the seed had been planted."

The women credited their success to their predecessors or direct supervisors. In some cases, an assistant superintendent moved to become a superintendent. They prepared them well for the position by allowing for shadowing and apprentice type of coaching. Adrienne, an assistant superintendent, cited several women that included her former principals. She was fortunate to be around women who were not only competent but also willing to show her how to manage people and tasks. She explained:

> And I was inspired by the work she was doing. I also was inspired by her own encouragement of me taking on the position of (age) years old. And another person who did inspire me was an interim principal. The school was going through a lot of challenges with the current principal who was there and the teachers. She led with the heart, and she brought the faculty together and she always took time to talk to me and valued my role as a teacher. She recognized that I had some leadership skills, and always encouraged me to pursue leadership. She was my informal coach, when I had challenges with issues, mostly things that you can't find out in a book or a website like finances. She was my hearing board.

Before pursuing master's or doctorate degrees, these women were the source of learning how to do budgets, communicate effectively with parents, encourage teachers, and build relationships with all stakeholders.

Not all mentors were educators but worked in the education world. Justine, a superintendent, remembered:

> I would say I've had maybe like veteran teachers, people who have almost been motherly figures to me. I've recognized in my life that I've tended to identify and relate to these beautiful women of faith who have almost just taken me under their wings. And it's been really beautiful even when I became a new principal. I was young, my assistant, the secretary had been there a number of years and, and was older than me probably could have been my mother in age and. She took me under her wing and then gave me wings to fly. And I became such a strong leader with her at my side. And, and I think that sometimes people like that don't always identify themselves as leaders, but the impact they have on leadership is really it that that's, it's so beautiful and so profound.

Other mentors came in the form of spiritual mentors. Belinda, an assistant superintendent, went through a spiritual direction program and was mentored by a religious sister. She learned the art of prayer, stillness, and not always having to do something or solve problems. She was very instrumental in Belinda's faith formation and inspired her leadership as a principal.

As the women continued to rise in power, they recognized the need to do the same for those younger or working as teachers and principals. Danielle, a superintendent and a seasoned educator, shared, "I do believe in other women and I think we need to support one another." It was in their sharing that they eventually became mentors for others. They paid it forward through their advice, encouragement, and ability to expose others to leadership opportunities in their own schools.

Advice for Aspiring Female Leaders

The women of the research varied in their ranges of time and experience in their current positions. They reported not formally mentoring another person or others. They attributed this to the nature of their job or that someone has not simply asked. They cited how it was easier for them to be a mentor while being a principal. They observed teachers who were self-starters,

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problem solvers, and could manage their time and think creatively to build programs. Danielle, a

superintendent, encouraged her principals to build leadership capacity in their own schools and

be attentive to those who want to be in leadership positions and have those types of experiences.

Some of the women in the study shared how they mentor their daughters, nieces, or are simply

role models to young women in high schools.

Nevertheless, they are approached by other women such as teachers and principals for

advice and coaching on improving their leadership skills. Belinda, an assistant superintendent,

has informally mentored a few women. She shared:

> A lot of my advice is focused around being true to who you are. And not changing
> yourself for anyone. I also do this with the ladies and gentlemen here in the office; to take
> advantage of what's right in front of us and be prayerful, be thoughtful, talk about your
> faith and continue being true to who you are. Being a listener.

They did offer some sound advice for aspiring women leaders who want to be in these decision-

making roles someday. Nicole, a driven superintendent, highly recommended:

> I would just suggest to any leader at any level to engage in formal mentoring. I think
> when people take you under as an informal mentor, there isn't a structure around it. There
> would be a check in call every two weeks. We had it on our calendars and there were
> certain themes that we would visit, and then revisit, you could see the progression, and
> my skills, improving throughout the year.

For persons who tended to be more organized and systematic, formal mentorships worked the

best. Though none of the women in the study formally mentored anyone, they expressed doing

more informal check ins and letting it happen organically.

Women helping other women was a common factor in most of the interviews. Danielle, a

superintendent, stressed the importance of helping other women with their educational careers.

Even in her interview she gave the interviewer some advice on interviewing and dealing with the

possibility of rejection. She explained a rejection is not a reflection on the person but the role that

needs to be filled. She advised the interviewer that other opportunities will always be available.

She did offer this wisdom to someone she would mentor:

> I would tell them don't be afraid to reach out to other women and ask them for assistance, help, guidance and support and keep your prayer life strong because I think it helps us, at least for me. It helps me with my confidence because I think sometimes when you get turned down once or twice, you think "Is it me?," and I remind them it's not like you somebody else was a better fit for that position. And remember that God has a plan for all of us. So, don't be in a rush, just because you don't get one job, don't give up. Keep working at it, and something will turn up. My young daughter applied to a few schools last year, and did not get chosen for either of those places that she was a finalist in and I said, "Don't let it just harden you, even though it's hard." And then this year she had several offers. So, you just never know. You have to stick with it and you have to keep true to what's in your heart and what you want to do for yourself and your family and keep your prayers going and know that other women are out here to support one another. And I think it's important that women support other women.

Five out of the 10 women in the research group were women of color. Some of their advice was

influenced by their positionality and context. Sue, an assistant superintendent stressed how an

education was imperative and more women of color attain doctorate degrees. Annette expressed

the need to honor traditions of the Church and find ways to have more positive results in spite of

some obstacles that do not make sense. Adrienne and Belinda, both assistant superintendents,

encouraged women to speak up. Oftentimes being a woman and being part of a culture that

expects a woman to stay silent can be an obstacle to effective communication in leadership.

Belinda pleaded for women to speak up. She emphatically expressed:

> Ask! Ask! If it feels right and you think you're supposed to do it to serve our kids in our Catholic schools do it. I know people who just don't ask! I have asked people, "Why don't you just ask?" (mimics shy person) "Oh no what if . . . ?" Just ask. Just ask. I've role played with so many women in leadership in these situations. Just ask. Don't hesitate, be thoughtful in your approach. Don't just like be . . . because you're a woman you are" too emotional." Be thoughtful and hold a confident face, and don't waver. We are . . . You are invited to the table. Now I am invited. . . . I sometimes . . . I set the table! Very different now right? It's so different, I did not have a place to sit sometimes. I guess it could have been a challenge but you just keep on just asking you know just ask that just, just do it.

The women had the opportunity to reflect on their leadership journey when they were asked what kind of advice or wisdom, they would offer to aspiring women leaders. Most emphasized being reflecting, knowing who they are and what they believe in, and always keeping the children in the forefront of all decisions. Karen, an assistant superintendent, emphasized the importance of a good principal and their effect on vice principals. All the vice principals she mentored became successful principals after she left the school site. She shared:

> You have to have a good principal who's able to be able to just look at your faculty and see [who would be a good leader]. You're not there for forever. You want to help to get those teachers to understand what their gifts and talents are. Unless you bring that out, they may not even think about it. So, I would say if someone wants it, if it's someone that I really know, well, I can really sit down with them and go through it.

Though dioceses do not have any formal mentoring from assistant superintendents and superintendents, principals are really the next in line to be mentored by these decision makers. As most said, not many people decided to become an assistant superintendent or superintendent. It all began when someone said, "You should consider being a teacher."

Successes

The research shows that there is considerable progress being made in Catholic educational leadership for women. More women are being hired as assistant superintendents and superintendents. Even beyond that, they are women of color from diverse background experiences in urban dioceses. Bishops and archbishops are recognizing the need to tap into their leadership talent in women. All the women in this study were highly educated, credentialed, and experienced.

In addition, the women of the research reported more positive experiences and feel a sense of agency and self-efficacy in terms of their power and ability to impact and significantly

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change our schools. Working in Catholic education at this level was not an anti-climactic career

for these women. Belinda, an assistant superintendent, reflected, "But I don't even call it a

sacrifice anymore because I love the work that I do, and, and the opportunities that I have to

support kids and adults in my current position." The challenges of women in Catholic education

are very real and pressing. Their strong faith and resilience from a strong Catholic identity help

convert their challenges to learning opportunities for transformative leadership. They have

seemed to adopt a positive paradigm that focuses on solving problems by building capacity and

relationships first. Justine, a superintendent, joyously explained:

> I have the opportunity here [diocese] to just think so broadly, and to just imagine the possibility, and then, "How do we work towards realizing those possibilities?" I'm a person of tradition. I love my church. I love being Catholic. I love all the traditions of it. I'm a person who really respects it. I like tradition. Since I've been here, I've just been inspired to think boldly and broadly, and I've been supported in doing that and that comes from our bishops that support Catholic schools 100%.

The other women in the study identified their successes in Catholic education leadership as the

ability to work one on one with principals, increasing spiritual retreats for them and their

principals, working with exceptional colleagues who are like family, having bishops who support

Catholic education, creating policies that affect curriculum and learning, and building capacity

within their teams and principals. Raquel, a superintendent, articulated the direction of women in

Catholic education when she shared:

> I look across the landscape of other superintendents, in other dioceses and there are a lot of amazing women, and men. I am seeing more women in these leadership roles, particularly superintendencies. There were probably greater numbers of men in those positions. I think it's starting to even out a lot more. In my experience, I have just as many women colleagues, as I do men and. And I think we all have something we can bring to the table with that so which I think is a good thing. And, and, as I shared earlier, I think it's important that we model healthy, working relationships as men and women. There's an increasing number of laity, even our numbers of our pastors and priests are not as strong and robust as they used to be. We need to be great examples of how we can

work together in that effort, and not reduce it down to you know being in conflict because it's not all men at the table or all women at the table. And I think the more that we can continue to model, those healthy working relationships, the better off we will all be.

With this attitude and mindset, the future of Catholic education is in good hands of very emotionally intelligent leaders who are building bridges and connections rather than build barriers.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate the experiences of women in Catholic education leadership are improving; however, much more still needs to be done. The research question centered around their experiences, challenges, and successes of female assistant superintendents or superintendents in Catholic dioceses. Each participant brought such unique perspectives and experiences as leaders in their dioceses.

From the interviews of 10 women (six assistant superintendents and four superintendents) in Catholic educational leadership from different parts of the United States, three themes of their experiences emerged: Catholic Identity; Recognizing Challenges; and Leading to Form, Inform, and Transform. These themes had their subconstructs to support the themes.

Theme 1: Catholic Identity, women in educational leadership expressed common experiences of developing a spiritual, faith filled life in their own way. Some were emphatic and dynamically unapologetic about their Catholic faith while others were more private about their faith. Faith and Catholic identity were best expressed in prayer, faith in others, following God's will, using prayer and faith as points of connection and building relationships with others.

Theme 2: Recognizing challenges looks at the experiences of women in Catholic education leadership experience such as issues with compensation, family life, gender.

communication dynamics, working within the patriarchy, and finding their own voice in creating meaningful change.

Theme 3: Leading to Form, Inform, and Transform came from a quote from one of the superintendents' interviews. This theme centers on some of the significant constructs that were coded the most, such as transformative leadership, building capacity, building relationships, and collaboration. Within this theme also comes mentorship and sponsorship.

Based on these interviews, the bigger challenges revolved around compensation, family dynamics and support for working mothers, gender in the context of the patriarchy, clergy and pastor relationships with principals, leadership skills and communication dynamics/issues. Some other noted challenges are the deeply rooted notions of the patriarchy within the hierarchical structures of the Catholic church and schools, clergy inexperienced with education, perceptions from other male leaders, leadership styles, and the need for a voice around the table.

Several of the women in the study noted their interest in the study since they were curious themselves about what other women were experiencing in these roles that often seem siloed and solitary in nature at least in the last few decades. Annette, an assistant superintendent, reflected on her educational journey from teacher, principal and now assistant superintendent. Annette mused out loud and said:

> I think what's really important for us to know as women educators is that we are the core and the heart of this mission. So, if you look at our teachers you look at our principals you look at our moms and grandmas like everybody that is the center of this; it's female dominated. We need to take advantage of that is the important piece. If you would have asked me these questions, 5 or 6 years ago I probably would have given different answers. I've seen what's possible when you don't let that [obstacles, challenges] stop you. I think I would want to be encouraging for more women to do it [be in leadership] because we do have the ability to continue to make change. We just have to be able to understand that we don't need to be confined by what the rules say and just find a way to work around them, and honor still the traditions of our church, without honoring the parts

that don't make sense. I know there's going to be a lot of negative things and obstacles named [in the study] but I think I just wanted to make sure to state like that the opportunities are numerous, and that part of the reason why we're still here as a system is because of all the work that women have done. So, we just have to put ourselves in a position to keep making it happen.

The earliest women leaders of Catholic education came to the United States about 140 years ago with a mission and vision to educate children of Catholic families. They came with nothing and earned so little yet persevered and educated millions of children. We are still in this system that "doesn't make sense" in many ways. However, their pioneering spirit lives on in every woman who does not give up the good fight to make great things happen in Catholic education.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Thank you for inviting me. Thank you. I did not know that I needed to have this conversation. And I'm looking forward to your findings and your study. And I hope as you journey through, you're also learning nuggets and tidbits out to continue all the great work that you're doing in your school.

– Belinda, Assistant Superintendent

Every participant was gracious and thankful for the opportunity to be part of this research. It was after they spoke and told their stories that they allowed themselves to be proud with how far they have come. There is sparse research on these positions in the Catholic education context. There is even far less when pertaining to women who have taken on these roles of leadership. Research on women and leadership is largely in public or charter school sectors. One woman in the research noted how her role as an assistant superintendent in a Catholic diocese is diminished and seen as inferior to the public sector counterparts despite the fact that they carry out the same standards and require the same education and credentials. This research allowed the voices of these phenomenal women to be finally heard. Their experiences with compensation, family life, and the leadership confirmed what we already knew was occurring despite the lack of evidence. This is the evidence.

This qualitative, phenomenological study aimed to understand the experiences of women in Catholic education leadership, particularly those who are assistant superintendents and superintendents. The purpose of the study was to answer the research question: What are the experiences, successes, and challenges of female assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses? A purposive sample of 10 women responded to emailed invitations to participate in the study. Interviews were scheduled and held in person or by phone and lasted at

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an average of 45 minutes to 1 hour. They were recorded and transcribed by Otter.AI app (see Appendix F) and hand coded on Dedoose software. A codebook based on the literature review and reoccurring themes was set up (see Appendix G). Memos were set up to guide further analysis and excerpts were coded (see Appendices H and I). The codes were analyzed through several charts in Dedoose to show which themes emerged from participants' narratives (see Appendices J and K). Three main themes emerged with subcategories. The main themes that emerged from the research were anchored by *Catholic identity* (faith and spirituality, Catholicity of the women), the *challenges* (gender related issues, family and the stained-glass ceiling), and the pivotal role of *transformational leadership* (building relationships and capacity, collaboration and skills). Full quotes from the interviews can be found in Appendix L.

Discussion of Findings

Catholic Identity

An emerging theme of the research was the spiritual and faith aspect of women leaders. Their faith and religious practices from praying with colleagues, having retreats for principals, attending spiritual retreats on their own, and applying it to their own lives was a significant theme in the research. Their faith mirrored that of the religious sisters who practiced obedience and prayer. The women leaders in Catholic education were faith-filled women grounded with incredible faith and spirituality that enabled them to believe in the work they do in Catholic education.

Catholic education began with religious sisters who lived and worked together in community and prayer. The women of this research study exemplified the same qualities as the women who served as "spiritual, managerial and instructional leaders" (Hunt et al., 2000, p.

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133). The literature cited how spiritual leadership was underdeveloped in Catholic school leaders and how they lacked knowledge in Church teachings and documents. However, many of the women leaders seemed very passionate about their faith and cited scripture and theological concepts to connect to their vocation as a Catholic school leader. They were unapologetically Catholic, had training and exposure to theology classes, and understood the faith and its application to life. The women would pass Caruso's (2012) requirements of Catholic leaders to understand the basics of the Catholic faith and its teachings along with educational mission and vision.

Main Challenges of Women in Catholic Education

Most of the women candidly shared their struggles and challenges of being a woman in Catholic education leadership. For some this seemed difficult because they may have felt bad for admitting there was even a problem. Others were forthright about the challenges they experienced and acknowledged things in the Church that were incongruent to its practices in Catholic education. These challenges included issues tied to gender, compensation, family life, the patriarchal system and clergy.

Gender

Though the women were generally gracious when speaking about gender related topics, they knew the importance of addressing them. They were professional and spoke diplomatically on the gender inequalities they experienced directly or through secondhand knowledge (seeing it with other colleagues or principals). It was interesting to note most of the Caucasian women reported less gender-related incidents or experiences than women of color.

Though the women felt they were respected they did notice certain behaviors from men that tied to gender. Some felt since they were women they had to do more and prove themselves and their worth as opposed to a male who would do the bare minimum but would get paid more due to the fact he was the breadwinner of the family. This corroborates with Parker et al.'s (2018) study on how 60% of women do more to believe they have to prove their worth. Findings also showed women were discriminated against due to their gender (Moorosi, 2018). One superintendent was passed up twice for her current job with her predecessors being males. Some of the women reported how clergy or male supervisors treated them more harshly than their male counterparts.

Compensation

Salary and compensation were a sensitive topic that needed to be addressed. Though they made it a point to stress how there was no concrete evidence of this due to confidentiality of salaries, most of the women believed they were paid less than a man even if they had similar or more credentials and experience. However, they did share at how it was lower than their public-school counterparts or that their husbands who had higher paying jobs could afford to take lower pay to be in a higher position to effect more change. In a way it was as if they were paying to work more and change the system.

The women had unique experiences in terms of compensation. An assistant superintendent noted how she was asked what her husband did for a living in a casual way. That indicated the diocese could save money for insurance if she took her husband's insurance. She also noted she was asked this information and offered the job before they revealed the salary.

She also revealed although she took a pay cut taking the position as the superintendent, she knew she had to do it for the experience and could affect meaningful change in a larger context.

Several women revealed they could rely on the financial support of their husbands noted this enabled them to pursue this position and live their dream or in some cases go back to school and pursue doctorate degrees. Another assistant superintendent had to look up the salary of her former colleague and discovered he was getting paid $6,000 more than him at the time they were in the same school site. While she was there, they had the same credentials and experience but took on more extracurricular activities and projects than her former colleague.

Family Life

All but one of the participants were either pregnant at the time or had children. Several reported having their child in the same school in which they were the principal to be closer to them. It was interesting speaking with the women who were pregnant since though they did reveal apprehension to some extent, the conversation seemed to indicate finances were not much of a concern. Whether it was because of the support of their husband or an arrangement to work from home was unclear.

The women who raised their children while they were starting out in their leadership positions recalled with some sadness being not as present for their children while serving hundreds at the school site. Belinda, an assistant superintendent, had an argument with her daughter one day after she said, "Well I would not know how to act like a lady because I do not have a mom who's around to teach me." This was painful to hear but was a sign she had to seek another position that would afford her more time with her children. Assistant superintendent Adrienne's daughter had only one request for her birthday—that her mom pick her up from

school and take her home as her mom and not have to wait. Adrienne shared she always felt like a better principal than a mom. The review of the literature on work-life balance and family life were present in the stories of these women leaders. Expectations of child rearing, cooking, cleaning, while working as an educational leader was an incredible task to take on. The dioceses and schools lacked childcare services or options and had practices that made raising children difficult such as late financial committees (Moorosi, 2018; Stout-Rostron, 2017).

Pastors and the Patriarchy

Most of the women had an experience regarding negative experiences with pastors or the patriarchal system as a whole in the context of the Catholic Church. As sweet and competent these women were, they encountered ineffective pastors who did not align with the mission and vision of the school. Since pastors stayed in a church for many years, the women inevitably left for a better workplace environment. Though not all pastors were difficult to work with, the women did note how they noticed they were different with male principals or administrators. Danielle, a superintendent was accused of being condescending to some clergy she worked with. However, she heard how some other men and clergy talk to one another in unprofessional ways and no complaints were ever made. She noticed how priests would speak to women in demanding ways but would shift totally when speaking to other males or clergy. Research from the review of the literature validate these relationship dynamics (Gomez, 2017; Schafer, 2005).

All women understood they worked in an institution where the bishops, priests, and other clergy were the dominant minority. They understood the confines of the traditions and governance to work around these givens. Justine, a superintendent, expressed how she would (if she had to) send her male colleagues to speak with a pastor if it meant accomplishing something

greater that would impact students in a positive way. Despite the fact they were working in a patriarchal institution, they were fearless and did not let these kinds of things stop them from creating change and doing their work to build relationships to accomplish their work goals for schools.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is the type of leadership that best describes women without including gendered styles of leadership like "assertiveness" or "nurturing." This type of leadership taps into intrinsic motivation of others, helps address the needs of the team to reach their potential and pursue the greater good, has personalized relationships and high integrity. The women in this study gave examples of how they were transformational leaders. For example, one assistant superintendent gives personalized professional development on finance and budgets for principals who may be lacking confidence or otherwise embarrassed to attend a workshop on it and have to reveal their lack of knowledge in that area. A superintendent provides high quality professional development and makes it a priority for her principals, an assistant superintendent organized a diocesan conference for all administrators, teachers, finance managers, front office staff and other school personnel to build professional learning communities (PLCs). The women of this study exemplified being transformational leaders through building capacity in others, building relationships and having mentors.

Building Capacity

It is sometimes easy for leaders to take on workloads by themselves or do a task their way. However, true leaders empower others to believe in themselves and expand their toolbox. The women of the study spoke about first building capacity when they were principals. As

principals they built capacity with their vice principals and teachers by inviting them to lead a workshop or professional development day. Other ways they built capacity was allowing them to come up with solutions to school wide problems by providing guided questions. Nicole, a superintendent, recalled how she came into her school site as a principal and noticed low reading and math scores. She asked questions and listened rather than come with solutions and directives. When the teachers realized they needed to be more data informed, they started with STAR testing (standardized testing for K-12), analyzed the results as a faculty, and came up with strategies and interventions to help their students. Their scores improved within the year. These women leaders had the ability to help other women principals on how to solve problems and manage crises. Adrienne would help her principals by doing mock interviews and meetings with them on how to have difficult conversations.

Building Relationships

Lowe (2010) noted how women were "other centered." In this style of leadership, building relationships is key. The women of this study would not have been where they are if it were not for this integral value. Their abilities to build meaningful and authentic relationships with others were vital to the development of their career. As teachers, they sought out positive working relationships with others and established positive rapport with their students. As principals, assistant superintendents and superintendents, they remembered names, personal details, family details, went to school games, baked bread, had parties, ate together, celebrated holidays together, and made genuine connections with parents, teachers, and colleagues.

Mentorships

It was prevalent in the research that these women leaders would not have gone as far in their career as they did if it were not for the mentors who have guided them in their life. Some mentors came in forms of other women in Catholic education leadership as principals or their predecessors while some were religious sisters who worked with them in a spiritual capacity. Some of the women cited other women like their secretaries/assistants who inspired them, family members, or dissertation chairs. These persons were pivotal in their growth as leaders. It all started as seeds were planted with the words or actions that affirmed their leadership capacity. "They saw something in me I did not see in myself" was something that was referred to by many of the women. Their talents were recognized and they felt seen for the first time in their careers. Mentors were also people who helped guide with their next steps, helped with career advice and acted as a bridge to other people who opened up opportunities. The women engaged in informal mentorships such as nonstructured meetings regarding career strategies and professional development. Others had more formal mentoring with goals and action steps at the end of each meeting. Another formal mentoring relationship looked like spiritual guidance with a religious sister with more mindfulness and spiritual direction.

Successes

Despite any challenges reported, women have come a long way in terms of representation. The women did have examples of positive relationships with clergy and the need to continue cultivating and seeking these connections. The women in the superintendency or diocesan office level do have a closer seat at the table in making decisions. They have reported being respected and listened to by the more open minded and pastoral bishops who understand

the importance of women leaders in Catholic schools. In one diocese, the superintendent reported how her bishop models that respect given to their other fellow clergy.

Success comes when women are not tolerant of unprofessional behavior but know how to navigate relationships to achieve the educational goals for their principals and school sites. The women were experts of knowing their audience from students, teachers, principals, parents and clergy. They are exemplary women who are competent, knowledgeable, dynamic, charismatic, and faith filled. These women leaders are working hard for their schools and the future of Catholic education in their diocese and as a whole. They are never satisfied with the status quo, are true innovators and problem solvers.

Significance of the Findings

The findings were clear: women in Catholic education leadership have an incredible sense of faith and spirituality. They are religious but not overzealous, unapologetically Catholic, filled with immense love for their faith. Though the first women leaders in education were religious sisters who had a devout spiritual life, decades later, there are still women in education who practice the same faith with such fervor and passion while having families in their care.

Another finding centered around their challenges of gender, patriarchy, compensation inextricably intertwined throughout the decades. In this study the women shared their stories of exclusion, contention with certain clergy in their career, not negotiating their salaries, being paid less, and exclusion from the "good old boys club." These findings can help inform Catholic diocesan leaders and clergymen such as bishops and pastors to understand the realities of women in these leadership roles.

Lastly, the findings were clear we have strong, formidable women in Catholic leadership in the 21st century. They are confident, transformational leaders who lead with mission and vision but most of all with the heart. They are all highly qualified with a wealth of rich experiences with curriculum, instruction, finance, leadership, building capacity, building relationships and gaining the trust of all they serve. This crop of women leaders is not simply taking directions from clergy or being subservient women. They are ambitious, driven, personable, relational and highly competent and ready to transform Catholic education.

Implications

The implications of this study put into light the systems and structures of Catholic education departments within dioceses. In this study, women spoke of their experiences with the wage gap, being ignored, being passed up for positions despite having the credentials, struggles with pastors and clergy, and struggles with childcare and having a family. The interviews produced rich information that gave intimate insight on the women's struggles while trying to build capacity and relationships with their teachers, principals, and administrators. This research offers theoretical, practical, and policy-level implications.

Theoretical Implications

The research supports transformational leadership theory and Catholic social teaching principles of the dignity of the worker. This research is unique in that it works within a patriarchal structure. The clergy hold the highest positions of leadership not only in the Church itself but of Catholic education as a whole. In the past, only clergy were appointed as superintendents and board of supervisors (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2003). Women were at the highest level principals or the head of their religious order. Women in educational leadership

practice a transformational leadership style, which has no gendered characteristics. This research combined social justice theory, Catholic social teaching principles, and transformational leadership theory to create a unique conceptual framework in which women assert a transformational leadership style within a patriarchal institute that inherently represses their ability to ascend levels of higher leadership or build capacity for women who wish to do so. In effect, the very institution and place that women work for to promote Catholic social teaching and social justice experience some form of social injustices. Nevertheless, the women plant themselves in these structures and persist within to create some form of change and therefore transform it from within. Several women in the study commented how they were asked by people why they worked within an organization that excluded them from executive levels of leadership or at least made it very difficult. With such professionalism and a serene almost saint like demeanor they responded along the lines of wanting to change it in small ways as much as they could. They knew they could really make a difference in spite of the challenges that would not exist if they were men or clergy. This phenomenon of women working for an organization that whether consciously or unconsciously oppresses them in the hopes of effecting change within the culture, is present in the literature review. Women have persisted through systems that intentionally have been excluded. They have fought to participate, and be included one decision at a time.

Implications for Practice

The research findings have implications for the Catholic education system, dioceses, and pastors in parish schools. These are discussed in the following subsections below.

Catholic Education System

The findings have major implications for the Catholic education system as a whole. It is the beginning of discussions to rethink about modifying canon law and its declaration of clergy as the main leaders of education in their parish or bishops in their diocese. Areas of governance should be reconsidered as we look into the decision-making positions held by clergy who have limited training in education in comparison to women who have credentials, master's degrees, and doctorate degrees. The current traditions and structures were set up during a time when religious vocations were plentiful. Lay persons now make up 97% of the workforce in Catholic education (USCCB, 2020). Therefore, it would make more sense to have more laypersons involved in dioceses beyond director or superintendent roles. The main intention of having religious or clergy in these positions in the past was to maintain a Catholic identity. However, with the decline in vocations and cultural revolution, it is time to empower and trust lay persons with a justified amount of faith and devotion to the Church to be part of these systems.

Dioceses

This study can help dioceses inform their Catholic education structures practices. For example, provide better healthcare, support for pregnant employees, childcare services, reduced or covered tuition for central office administrators, equitable pay scales, more transparent justification of stipends, create programs for helping women develop executive leadership skills and coaching for principal and administrator roles, and create cultures of inclusivity. This can be done by hiring collaborative, empathetic, compassionate, forward-thinking, and innovative teachers, principals, and administrators. This would help create a pipeline of leaders when assistant superintendents and superintendent positions open up in the diocese.

Pastors in Parish Schools

The implications of this research would benefit parish schools that have had instances of pastor and principal contention. Pastors are the head administrators of their schools and parishes. The success of a school often depends on the pastor. The interviews indicated pastors have the power and ability to make schools close down. Their incredible power must be checked and held accountable. Though respect for clergy should always be kept in mind, they should not be infallible nor should they have opportunities to abuse their power.

Policy Implications

The implications of this study in a policy level pertain to the highest levels of the Catholic church. Their long-standing policies need to be revised and reconsidered to fit the times and needs of our schools. Priest formation should also include education management, organizational management and emotional intelligence type courses that enable them to become effective communicators and collaborators with women in Catholic education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research study, systematic changes need to be initiated at these different levels: Catholic social justice, the diocesan, educational, hiring and training level. Effective change can only happen when existing systems that caused the injustices in the first place recognize their destructiveness. On a social justice level, we must recognize the indirect biases and mixed messages around that continue misconceptions about women and their leadership. Education on Catholic social teaching and the dignity of the human person must be addressed. The Catholic Church should continue to dismantle the layers of patriarchal practices that put women in the margins. This can be done by starting dialogue regarding explaining

women's roles to serve in positions usually held only by clergy such chancellors, vicar for clergy, and parish directors. Women can be considered for administrative type roles usually served by priests. This does not include theological or sacramental duties. Furthermore, pastors should be given more training on educational management and actually learn about business management, budgeting, curriculum and instruction. Formation of diocesan priests should include educational training and a basic understanding of how learning really works. Based on the research, pastors may make decisions for the school based on their own preferences or biases. They have too much power to ruin a school and make it close.

The dioceses should have more women represented in top leadership not only as superintendents but also in parish life and ministry. These should not be reserved only for clergy or religious brothers and sisters. Superintendents should have teaching experience and Positions should be more inclusive. Women could give homilies or reflections as parish life directors or with their husbands who may be going through diaconate formation. Women do not have to only be in administrative assistant roles.

On an educational and hiring level, the hiring of superintendents should not only be the decision of the bishop. There should be a board with parents, students, teachers and other principals present in the selection of a superintendent. Superintendents should be vetted by all stakeholders and the selection process should be public and transparent. It should not be guided by favoritism or nepotism. Administrative positions tend to be filled by appointing political allies. The job should be given to a qualified candidate with the emotional intelligence and relational skills to navigate relationships and also problem solve. Additionally, schools should consider

Dioceses should create sustainable, and intentional leadership programs for women by women in a residency model. This will enable women to build networks, gain confidence, skills and learn how to build capacity in their own school site. These programs can include mock interviews, role playing for conflict management, and collaboration projects between their schools.

Local Catholic universities should build out their teacher and admin preparation programs to expand courses in finance, budget, crisis management, negotiation, problem solving, actionable leadership courses and engage in mission trips or teach abroad in different countries to understand different cultures. In addition, courses on executive coaching and formal mentoring should be offered to every graduate and doctoral student.

Future Research

Future research should include perspectives of assistant superintendents and superintendents who are women of color. A survey can be given to also understand their attitudes and ways they handle difficult topics like school shootings, LGBT issues, and immigration to see how it informs how they create culture and build trust within communities. The research can expand to observational shadowing of the leader. This extensive field work would follow the woman leader around for a set amount of time to schools, meetings and other interactions witnessing firsthand women leaders in action.

Survey Method

Besides an interview, future studies could include a survey that asks them to answer statements about the different codes/clusters of meaning. There could be a section for them to answer from a Likert scale "strongly disagree to strongly agree" on statements. The clusters such

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as gender, compensation, and family life can be quantified. For example, under the Gender heading, there can be statements like "I have generally positive interactions with clergy in the position I am in currently." or "I had positive experiences with pastors as a principal for a school" They could choose on a Likert scale to answer the questions. These could be matched up with the interviews to strengthen reliability in their responses.

Observations and Field Work

Another idea would be to shadow these assistant superintendents or superintendents for a day or two and experience their daily lives from start at their home to finish back at home. The researcher could make arrangements to stay at participants' houses and observe things like family life and interactions, schedules, challenges, and interview their children and spouses. The researcher could gain insight on how the participant gets ready for each day, gets kids ready and sits with them on their commute to talk about different topics. The researcher could also go with participants to schools, be debriefed of meetings and interactions with principals, take notes of body language, dynamics between colleagues, and observe how participants handle problems and navigate relationships. Afterward, the researcher could follow participants home or to the store or restaurant and see how dinner is made, how the kids are fed, taken care of and put to bed (for small children). It would be interesting to observe interactions between the participant and their spouse and see what kind of support is given. These types of data would give incredible insight and validity to the study.

Due to the extensive parameters of this study, this would have to be done quickly within a 3-year period in the program. Also, possible travel costs to other regions should be factored into the practicality of the study. Though there are several challenges in this study with IRB

(interviewing the children) and feasibility to travel to far off dioceses, this would make an interesting research method. Local dioceses within driving distances could also be considered.

Conclusion

The results of this research confirmed and validated the experiences many women in leadership can affirm to. One of the recurring statements and sentiments from interviews were statements like "I have no evidence on this but I know this to be true" or "I have never seen this documented but I know this has been done." They were all aware of the various challenges in a patriarchal institute, microaggressions, pay gaps, inequalities, social injustices, the stained glass ceiling, being passed up for promotions and discrepancies in the way they were treated or perceived in their work. However, as women do, they pushed it to the side and persisted forward to get their work done for ultimately improving the environment and learning outcomes for their students through the support and development of teachers and administrators. This study added to the body of research that now affirmed their truths and narratives. It is in understanding these critical narratives we can start opening discussion on how to create simple accommodations and changes to give talented women a better chance at having a seat at the table. There are finally women at the table but there must be more there to give voice to the needs of everyone they serve. They can no longer be only relegated to being assistants to clergy. Their voice must have the same respect and authority when it comes to educational matters.

This research should be read and studied by seminarians aspiring to be clergy leaders one day and clergy who are working within education now. Though cannon law gives pastors and bishops authority to make decisions in education, they need to understand the realities of today's

educational leadership landscape and think more progressively to let qualified women take the lead. There should be trust between the two leaders not contention.

Out of struggles and challenges come innovation, creativity, and change. As we enter our second decade into the 21st century, we must hasten with intention to create more spaces of leadership for women in Catholic education and give justice to the thousands of religious sisters who came over a century ago to dedicate their lives to opening and running Catholic schools. It is time for women to not have to think of getting doctorate degrees just to have a shot at higher, executive leadership while in some instances, men can easily get the same type of position with more pay without the same credentials. More studies on women's lived experiences are needed to give quantitative and qualitative evidence of the importance and impact of women in Catholic education. It is time to create spaces where women can flourish and be supported in their leadership journey. It is time to reimagine the spaces of leadership within the Catholic church to have more women in decision-making roles. After 140 years, this is the time to entrust the future of Catholic education to these *phenomenal women*.

> *Now you understand*
> *Just why my head's not bowed.*
> *I don't shout or jump about*
> *Or have to talk real loud.*
> *When you see me passing,*
> *It ought to make you proud.*
> *I say,*
> *It's in the click of my heels,*
> *The bend of my hair,*
> *the palm of my hand,*
> *The need for my care.*
> *'Cause I'm a woman*
> *Phenomenally.*
> *Phenomenal woman,*
> *That's me.*
> – Maya Angelou

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Permission to Solicit Participation in the Study

CATHOLIC ❤ SCHOOLS

LOS ANGELES | SANTA BARBARA | VENTURA

Internal Review Board (IRB)
Loyola Marymount University
1 LMU Drive
Los Angeles, California 90045

February 26, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed letter confirms that Ms. Fatima Nicdao has obtained preliminary approval from the Department of Catholic Schools to begin a qualitative research study entitled:

Progresses, Successes and Challenges: Experiences of Women in Catholic Education Leadership

Ms. Nicdao has requested this written confirmation to establish IRB approval for her work to begin. Upon IRB approval, the Archdiocese will issue a final written authorization confirming the support of this research, allowing Ms. Nicdao to begin her data collection. Your review and prompt approval of her IRB request is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kevin Baxter, Ed.D.
Senior Director and Superintendent of Schools

Archdiocese of Los Angeles • 3424 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90010 • lacatholicschools.org • 213.637.7300

Appendix B: Letter to Participant

Dear _____

I am a doctoral student at Loyola Marymount University and I would like to invite you to participate in a study about the experiences of female assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses.

You were recommended to me as an effective, faith-filled transformational leader by my dissertation committee member, Lauren Casella, EdD, Director of LMU's Catholic School Leadership Academy and her colleague, Tim Uhl, PhD, Superintendent of Montana Catholic Schools.

The research question for this study is: *What are the experiences, successes, and challenges of female assistant superintendents and superintendents in Catholic dioceses?*

In this study, I seek to hear the voices and validate the experiences of women leaders, and thereby create a culture of mentoring for women who seek a role in Catholic educational leadership. As a participant in this study, your contribution will contribute to understanding women leaders in high-level leadership roles in Catholic education.

Your participation in this study should take approximately one hour for the interview at the time, date, and venue most convenient for you.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Elizabeth Reilly at elizabeth.reilly@lmu.edu or me at xxxxx@lion.lmu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the IRB Compliance Office at Loyola Marymount University at david.moffet@lmu.edu.
Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

With gratitude,

Fatima Nicdao

Appendix C: Interview Questions/Critical Prompts

Question/Critical Prompt	Framework
1. Why did you decide to be a Catholic educational leader? What drew you to the path of admin leadership? 2. Who mentored, inspired or sponsored you in the process of your leadership development? What are specific things they did or said to inspire you into leadership? 3. Tell me about a time someone demonstrated trust in your decisions and plans. 4. Tell me about a time when you felt that your voice mattered. 5. Tell me about a time you created an environment in which you allowed teachers to take up a challenge and solve problems together. 6. Tell me about a time you inspired someone or a group of people to enact change in your context? How did you get them to see your vision? 7. What are some ways you have challenged the status quo? 8. What would your advice be for other aspiring leaders? 9. How do you think being female influences how your leadership is perceived by your colleagues? Students? Families? 10. Tell me about a time you communicated your vision and executed it. 11. Tell me about how you build relationships with other colleagues. 12. How do you ensure continued professional development for yourself? How you keep learning? 13. Tell me about a time you displayed strong ethics, morals and values. 14. Tell me about a time you developed other people's talents, and or built networks for others to succeed.	**Transformational Leadership** (Northouse, 2016, pp 161-190) • Emphasis on intrinsic motivation and follower development • Concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, long term goals, morals and values • Influence followers' motives to succeed • Incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership • Attentive to the motives and needs of followers • Helps followers reach their full potential • Inspires followers to do great things • Individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation

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Question/Critical Prompt	Framework
1. How do you balance being a mother and a professional? Have you sacrificed taking up any roles at any stage of your career due to raising children? 2. What are some obstacles you have faced to become a leader? 3. Have you ever experienced being paid less than a man for the equivalent role and experience? 4. Tell me about a time you may have felt or perceived discrimination in the context of being a Catholic school leader. 5. Tell me a story about a time when your leadership or career trajectory was impacted by being a female? 6. Tell me a story about a time when you felt inadequate in your leadership? 7. Do you believe that male and female leaders are perceived differently within the Catholic Church and the Catholic school system? Please explain. 8. What are some challenges for women in Catholic ed leadership? 9. How do you think Catholic schools can better help support female leaders in terms of work/family balance?	**Catholic Social Teaching (CST)** Dignity of the Human Person Catholic Social Teaching is an integral part of moral theology that looks at relevant issues of the interaction between economic, political aspects of contemporary society with the themes of human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity (Wright, 2017) *Gaudium et Spes* (Church in the Modern World): with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honored. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right to choose a husband freely, to embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men. (Paul VI, 1965, section 29)

Appendix D: IRB Informed Consent Form

Loyola Marymount University
Informed Consent Form

TITLE: Women in Catholic School Leadership

INVESTIGATOR: Fatima Nicdao, School of Education Doctoral Program
                       Loyola Marymount University

ADVISOR: Dr. Elizabeth Reilly, Department of Educational Leadership
                      Loyola Marymount University

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate the successes, and challenges of women in Catholic school education. You will be asked to complete a recorded interview session for approximately one hour.

RISKS: Risks associated with this study include: Some discomfort recalling any negative experiences with colleagues or past work sites and being possibly identified by the context of the examples summarized in the final dissertation paper.

BENEFITS: Benefits associated with this study include: Contributing to the body of work that looks at Women in Leadership within the context of Catholic schools, empowering other aspiring female leaders in Catholic education, informing practices and policies that affect women that work in Catholic education.

INCENTIVES: Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name or names of specific school sites and other affiliated persons will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). Your name and other identifiers will not be stated in the audio recording of the session but will be in my notes. All research materials and consent forms will be stored in my Google Drive associated with my LMU account. Only the researcher will have access to this data. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled, your class standing or relationship with Loyola Marymount University.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

Fatima Nicdao
Phone: omitted for ProQuest

Email: omitted for ProQuest
Summary of results will be available in May 2020

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. If the study design or use of the information is changed I will be informed and my consent reobtained. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact Dr. David Moffet, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659 or by email at David.Moffet@lmu.edu.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

Appendix E: Experimental Subjects' Bill of Rights

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY
Experimental Subjects' Bill of Rights

Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code §24172, I understand that I have the following rights as a participant in a research study:

1. I will be informed of the nature and purpose of the experiment.
2. I will be given an explanation of the procedures to be followed in the medical experiment, and any drug or device to be utilized.
3. I will be given a description of any attendant discomforts and risks to be reasonably expected
   from the study.
4. I will be given an explanation of any benefits to be expected from the study, if applicable.
5. I will be given a disclosure of any appropriate alternative procedures,
6. drugs or devices that might be advantageous and their relative risks and benefits.
7. I will be informed of the avenues of medical treatment, if any, available
8. after the study is completed if complications should arise.
9. I will be given an opportunity to ask any questions concerning the study
10. or the procedures involved.
11. I will be instructed that consent to participate in a research study may be withdrawn at any time and that I may discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.
12. I will be given a copy of the signed and dated written consent form.
13. I will be given the opportunity to decide to consent or not to consent to
14. the study without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, coercion, or undue influence on my decision.

Appendix F: Otter.AI

Tue, 11/26 · 9:28 AM
Participant 5 Assistant Sup (S)
🕐 1:31:22

Fri, 11/15 · 10:15 AM
Participant 4 - Superintendent (K)
🕐 51:42

Fri, 11/15 · 9:09 AM
Participant 3 - Superintendent (D)
🕐 58:10

Thu, 11/14 · 5:09 PM
Participant 2 - Assistant Sup (J)
🕐 47:39

Mon, 11/11 · 1:13 PM
Participant 1: Assistant Sup (C)
🕐 46:17

February

Mon, 2/17 · 1:02 PM
Participant 10 - Superintendent (JMoney)
🕐 1:02:24

December 2019

Thu, 12/12 · 3:21 PM
Participant 9 - Assistant Superintendent (N)
🕐 55:59

Thu, 12/5 · 8:41 AM
Participant 8 - Superintendent (E)
🕐 1:11:18

November 2019

Tue, 11/26 · 3:33 PM
Participant 7 - Assistant Sup (AM)
🕐 52:50

Tue, 11/26 · 12:02 PM
Participant 6 Assoc Sup (R)
🕐 33:43

Appendix G: Dedoose Chart for Coding the Transcript

Appendix H: Dedoose Memos

Appendix I: Dedoose Data Coding

Challenges

Name	Percentage
Adrienne	19.6%
Annette	12.0%
Belinda	7.6%
Cara	13.0%
Danielle	8.7%
Justine	8.7%
Karen	6.5%
Nicole	6.5%
Raquel	6.5%
Sue	10.9%
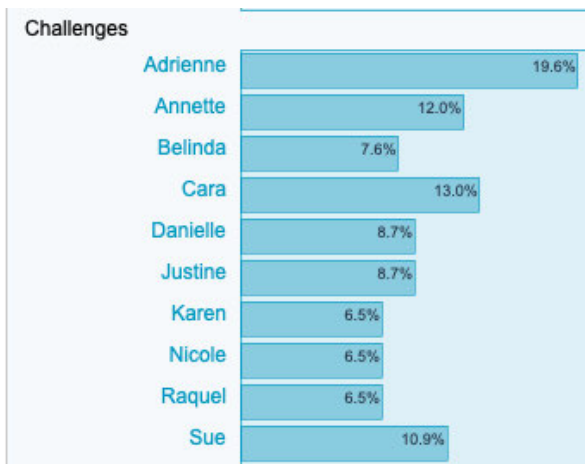
Matching Excerpts: 11 | **Matching Resources: 1**

Resource **7Participant -**

When I first came here, it was. I didn't know that it was going to be a challenge because of what I face as a principal, and I came in thinking like the opposite of the ad... we have we've gotten a little creative. But I think what's really important for us to know as women educators is that we are the core and the heart of this mission. So, if... grandmas like everybody that, that is, like, the center of this there's were female dominated. So, just because, like we need to take advantage of that is the important...

Resource **7Participant -**

I think the challenges and Catholic school leadership for women, does have to do with the male hierarchy of our church in general. So, you know, we are department... way like our churches so slow and change. And so a big part of a female leader, especially as becoming half of my principles were some of them I have to problem so... ...

Resource **7Participant -**

so do my best to like really, like, not sound emotional about it and I always stand by like I bring data in and facts and I name it and I that's like everybody knows me for... there's like men around the room that don't feel as comfortable with me, acting that way.

Resource **7Participant -**

out into a lot of, you know, my daughter. Play competitive sports so you always run a lot of families, and people. And so, when people find out like I worked for the dio... having troubles at their schools, they would like start bad my theme or like Tell me why do you guys do it like that. And so I would have to number one say, you know, ... differently, but this is you know what we stand for and nobody's perfect but so I always find myself having to do that. Obviously I think this little secret with all of the sc...

Resource **7Participant -**

So, you got a difficult task to do and you have to meet people where they are, if you're trying to help a principal in a school and password, with their finances. It makes... start a finance Council, and most of those volunteers that will do it, are working. So sometimes those early. If you have a principal that needs a lot of help or support, t... but sometimes they just need your support standing in the back. It's a volatile situation. So depends on how much you choose to do it, but the meetings are set by pla...

Resource **7Participant -**

And don't forget, and he's I know you have an appointment job but you have a family too. And when he passed away, it. He, that's what he reminded me and I didn't m... to work on Saturdays, like a big one for me. So I'll try not to work on Saturdays and on Sundays, not until after five. So I try to find some balance

Appendix J: Dedoose Code Applications

Media	Age	Call to Leadership	Catholic Identity	Challenges	Challenges with Clergy	Challenges with Parents	Challenges with the	Collaboration	Compensation	Confidence/Self-Efficacy	Education and Training for the	Family	Gender	Mentorship	Mentored by Religious	Mentored by Women	Mentoring Others	Networking	Non education Background	Professional Development	Race	Skills	Social Justice	Realizations	Successes	Transformative Leadership	Building capacity	Building relationships	Morals and Ethics	Totals
10Participant - Superintendent			9	8	7		3	4	2	2		4	3	5	2	1	1			1		5	2	2	4	12	7	8		92
Participant - Assistant			8	7	1		1	1	2	8		6	3	4	1		2	2		1		2		1	2	7	1	4		64
Participant - Superintendent			13	8	3		2	6	1	1		8	9	3	4	5	1	3		7		3	2	2	2	20	4	7	1	115
Participant - Assistant Superintedet			3	11	5		2	6	2	3		4	9	3	1	1	4			2		8	6	6	4	14	10	8	2	115
Participant- Associate		1	1	12	2		4	5	3	2		5	6			2	2	4		6		4	2	3	1	10	7	8	1	91
Participant - Assistant	1		1	6				2		5		4	5	2			2			3		5			1	5	3	4	2	51
Participant - Superintendent Nicole	2	2	6	6	2		2	2	1	4		6		4		4	6	4	1	7		7		1	5	13	8	9	1	103
Participant - Superintendent -	1	3	10	6	2	1	3	5	1	1	2	3	3	7	1	5	2	4		4		1	4	1	3	6	6	6		91
Participant -Assistant	1	5	11	10	4	1	1	2	3	6		2	5	1	1		2			4	2	3	5	4	2	9	8	6	4	102
Participant - Assistant	2	1	3	18	4	2	2	2	5	2	1	4	8	1		1	3	2	1	8		2	2	4	5	8	8	4	2	105
Totals	7	12	65	92	30	4	20	35	20	34	3	46	51	30	10	19	20	25	2	43	2	40	23	24	29	104	62	64	13	
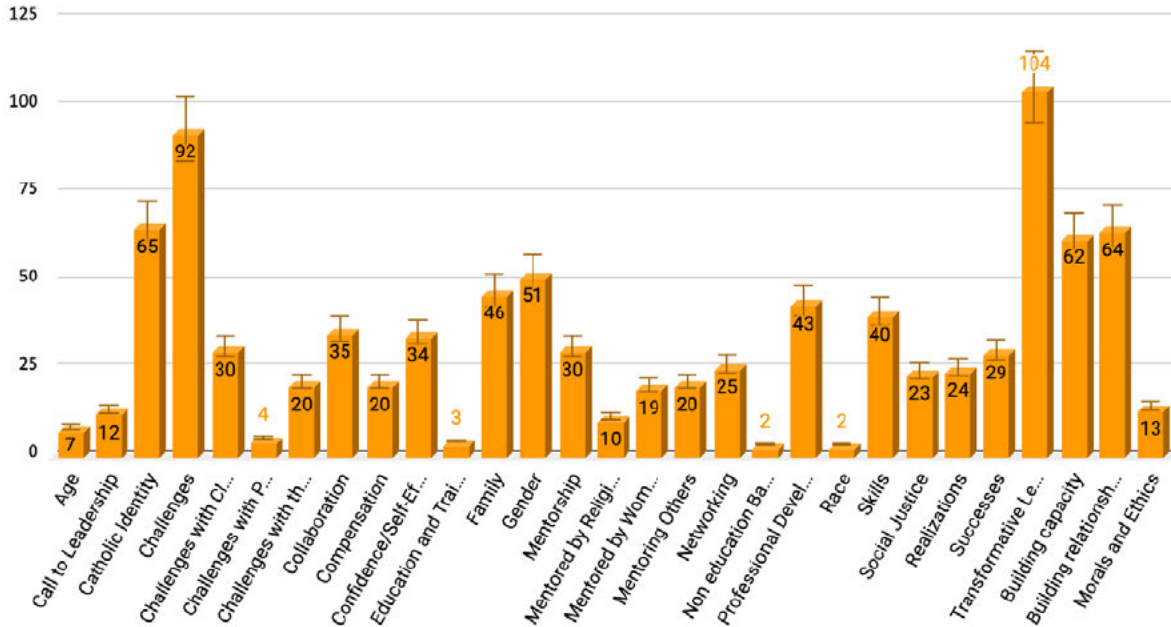
Appendix K: Dedoose Code Co-Occurrence

Include Overlapping Excerpts

Codes	Age	Call to Leadership	Catholic Identity	Challenges	Challenges with Clergy	Challenges with Parents	Challenges with the	Collaboration	Compensation	Confidence/Self-Efficacy	Education and Training for the	Family	Gender	Mentorship	Mentored by Religious	Mentored by Women	Mentoring Others	Networking	Non education Background	Professional Development	Race	Skills	Social Justice	Realizations	Successes	Transformative Leadership	Building capacity	Building relationships	Morals and Ethics
Age				1	1								2				1									1		1	
Call to Leadership			6	2						2	1	1	1		1				1		1					1	1		
Catholic Identity		6		15	11	1	6	7	1	7	1	5	1	7	5	5	4	2		3	1	2	5	6	2	15	11	10	2
Challenges	1	2	15		16	1	12	7	9	6		17	24	4		1	3	3		6	1	4	8	10	5	21	14	12	7
Challenges with Clergy	1		11	16			10	1		1		1	10	1			1	1						2	3	5	2	3	2
Challenges with Parents			1	1				1		1										1				1		2	2	1	
Challenges with the			6	12	10			1		2		1	11	1		1	1	1					3	3	1	3	3	2	
Collaboration			7	7	1	1	1			1				8	1	5	7	8		10		3	2	3	6	29	20	23	
Compensation			1	9						1		4	8											5	4				1
Confidence/Self-Efficacy		2	7	6	1	1	2	1	1			1	2	7	1	1	2	2		3				12	1	10	6	7	
Education and Training for the		1	1									1	1				1												
Family		1	5	17	1		1		4	1	1		4	1						1			2	4	3	5	4	3	
Gender	2	1	1	24	10		11		8	2		4		1			1					2	1	5	6	4	2	3	1
Mentorship			7	4	1		1	8		7		1	1		4	5	6	6		9		4	2	1	1	15	12	13	
Mentored by Religious		1	5					1		1				4		2		1		1			1			4	4	2	
Mentored by Women			5	1				5		1				5	2		1	2		2					1	6	7	8	
Mentoring Others	1		4	3	1	1	1	7		2			1	6		1		4		8			2	1	1	10	12	9	
Networking			2	3	1		1	8		2	1			6	1	2	4			12		6			1	13	11	14	
Non education Background		1																											
Professional Development			3	6			1	10		3		1		9	1	2	8	12				7			5	24	23	20	
Race		1	1	1									2																
Skills			2	4			1	3		12		2	1	4			2	6		7				1	3	20	13	13	
Social Justice			5	8	2		3	2	5	1		4	5	2	1		1							15	4	5	6	2	4
Realizations			6	10	3		3	3	4			3	6	1									1	15		6	4	3	4
Successes			2	5	1		1	6		2		2	2	1		1	1	1		5		3	4	4		13	11	9	
Transformative Leadership	1	1	15	21	5	2	3	29		10		5	4	15	4	6	10	13		24		20	5	6	13		47	50	5
Building capacity		1	11	14	2	2	3	20		6		4	2	12	4	7	12	11		23		13	6	4	11	47		36	2
Building relationships	1		10	12	3	1	2	23		7		3	3	13	2	8	9	14		20		13	2	3	9	50	36		1
Morals and Ethics			2	7	2				1			1											4	4		5	2	1	
Totals	7	18	141	209	72	12	62	143	33	83	5	60	91	108	27	47	75	88	1	135	5	94	75	80	74	314	253	245	29

Appendix L: Full Quotations

Page	Quote
105	I learned from her how to be a strong woman of faith, not just a person of faith, but a woman of faith. I felt that she just emulated that in her own spirituality in her life in her leadership, and, and I just feel so grateful for friendship, guidance, prayer, all of that. And I feel like each one of these has led me closer to Christ really because of their example of not only in leadership but their faith filled leadership and being a female leader in our church. And it really wasn't until I think I was at the [diocesan] level that I recognized that opportunity about being a strong woman in our church. (Belinda, Assistant Superintendent)
105	People ask me all the time, how do you do it all and I, you know, the grace of God and I mean, that's always the first thing. Yeah, God has called me to do this work. I never in a million years would have thought that we'd be moving leaving [city] and it was just this is.. this is the hand of God. I feel like when you open yourself to that so many blessings just come and unexpected blessings. It's just I think just being open to that has made life almost less stressful if that I know it sounds so crazy it does . . . .Yeah. But uh, but that's God's grace and I think opening yourself to His plan and I don't do it perfectly by any means, but I feel like I'm at least headed in the right direction. And, and the, you know, when I worried about my family or my kids, you know, my kids had a hard time adjusting to new schools and their, their training and transitions and things like that. And I give it to God and say, God, you led me down here. I know you'll take care of the details. I know you'll take care of my family and I trust that because never once if I doubted that this is where I've been called to serve. (Justine, Superintendent)
107	My principals have . . . they were hungry for this. They were hungry for that relationship with this office. It was not there before. They were just thirsty for this, you know, creating this culture of spirituality, of prayer of not only being given the opportunity, but being encouraged to do that. And so that was one of the first things I really tried to do was to create this, this culture of spirituality that we can have these conversations that I can speak boldly, that we have prayer opportunities at our meetings. We've increased our principal retreats from one to two this year. We're, you know, reading "Redeeming Administration", we've created a new mission statement that is totally aligned with our diocesan mission statement and focuses on creating missionary disciples. That's who we are. Yes, we are schools, but we are Catholic schools. And we make no apologies for that. (Justine, Superintendent)
107	I'm the spiritual leader of the Catholic schools. What the bishop delegates to me is to make sure that our Catholic identity in our schools are strong. So, in order to be a source of support, and in the area of faith for my principals and my teachers, I have to tend to my faith as well. I've always liked going on retreats so I try to work that in. Maybe I can't go on my own, but if I'm hosting a principal retreat, I work with the retreat director and say, you know, I'm coming on this retreat as an attendant not as you know the facilitator. So that has been very beneficial. (Nicole, Superintendent)
108	I think that our principals and our presidents and our teachers are really working hard to model the faith and we know that adolescence can be contrary, no matter what. So, we continue to speak the message and try to live the message in the mission and invite students to believe and give them what I think are excellent models. And then my hope is that it follows the data and it is those who attend our schools that come back later in life, and who are in the pews. And that's when I talked about having that investment for the future. I think we need to model what the faith is about and we have to ask students "Have you ever considered this?" and "Have you considered that?" And giving them an opportunity to experience their faith so that they will

want to participate. I think somebody who is joy-filled and joyful about their faith is more attractive to a teenager than somebody who is the opposite. I think there are ongoing conversations and I am not afraid . . . I'm not apologetic, I don't apologize about being Catholic they also needed to meet students where they are and help them in that, in that journey
(Danielle, Superintendent)

108 And a friend of mine who's a Deacon . . . he said, You know what, you have to be like Peter. I said, "What do you mean?", so he said well, "You have to keep your eyes focused on Christ, because the minute you don't, you'll fumble and you'll struggle." But he said, "If you keep your eyes focused on Christ, you will walk on water." And so, this is what I keep in [during the video call she shows a picture of Jesus and Peter walking on water] And this is what keeps me grounded. When I start to think that, you know, "I'm not good enough" or "I'm not skilled enough I'm not trained enough." Or, if you know like I get critical feedback that's you know "ouch! that hurt a lot." You know . . . but I have to block all those things aside and just focus on Christ. (Sue, Assistant Superintendent)

109 I think we are a people of faith and a people of prayer. And if we don't model prayer, then I think it's hard for us to expect others to find that time in their life. I start every day with prayer and when we're developing it . . . this year was the first year that I'm the superintendent and I did get to hire [omitted information] who are women. And I think we, together, you know, we start every meeting and day with prayer and the pastoral center downstairs in the morning for when we're there. When we're present they do a prayer at 9 a.m. I think it's a great way for the whole building to start together. When we work with our new teachers and our new principals, you know we have a faith formation piece. I just remind them that every day you should start with prayer, whether it's with your own staff or with your students or, you know, in person with yourself before you have a conversation with a parent, you should pray and ask for wisdom. I tell them every time that I remember to do that, it seems to go a lot better than when I don't call on the Holy Spirit to help me. [Danielle, Superintendent]

109 The other thing that we do, and this is something that is very important to me and that I brought here, we pray together very intentionally. We pray together. We pray together at staff meetings. But what I've tried to do here is different to really center everything on prayer. When I start my day, I pray every day I sit at my desk, and I pray and, and my team has told me that the you know, they'll walk by me, they see me, they see me with my book, they see me praying and, and that's a powerful example to them that they see you know, they've told me So prayer I, I just I can't discount the power of prayer not only in our work kind of big work, but the work amongst ourselves in in creating that. We recently attended the amazing parish conference in [city], which was fantastic because it's all about collaboration and teamwork through a Catholic lens, and although it's focused on the parish, it just translates perfectly to schools. And for us for my team. It was very validating to us because a lot of the things that they were talking about are things that we already do, but it was putting names to it. And so, it was really I just, I felt so validated in, in the work that we do as a team and, and I think that the biggest you know, I would say the two biggest things are, are the prayer and the focus on faith and mission. But that high level of trust, we trust one another. We like one another. We love one another. I mean, I do think that it goes just deeper than kind of enjoying one another's company. We love one another, we are bound by Christ and, and, and I, we're going to transform this Catholic school system here in our diocese. (Justine, Superintendent)

113 My husband does have a job that he gets paid almost double what I do, so that's a luxury that I have. So, I just love what I do so you know it's not something that I've really felt like it doesn't give me worth in a lot of ways. But the job's been getting harder, and with new transitions

when people come and new people come in and makes me think like, wait a minute . . . I may need to figure out if new people who are coming in or making a certain amount and I never even asked about it. I'm just letting them, give me whatever they want because I'm not advocating for myself. So, I did that last year and I have done it this year, because I got a lot more responsibilities. And so, it's something that I've learned to feel more comfortable with, but not because of the money but because of what it stands for. (Annette, Assistant Superintendent)

113-
114
In fact, one of my former co-workers at the high school called me and he was asking me an HR question. He worked significantly less, and like sponsored fewer extracurriculars and all that kind of stuff, had 1 year more work experience than I had. And so, I had to pull his contract the other day, and I saw that he makes like $6,000 more than I made when I left the school. Wow, you know and so, and I heard that that was a thing but it made me think that we should maybe do an audit of our schools and just see, is there a difference between what men and women get paid. (Cara, Assistant Superintendent)

115
When I took the position, I didn't ask for anything more. Whatever they offered me I took it. I did not negotiate and they said the room for negotiation was $500 and I wasn't ready to care for $500. That's how much gas I spend in two weeks, driving around. So, but it was interesting this year, when a male assistant superintendent was hired [a friend] came up to me and asked "What about your kids' tuition? Do you pay for that?" and I said, "Yeah I pay the school" and they said, "Well, the new person who was hired negotiated that the [diocese] would cover his kids' tuition." When I said "Well, that wasn't offered to me" and they said the new male assistant superintendent said, "I'm not coming for this amount of money."…and then they [friend] said "You need to ask for that." And even when I did, I was told, "Well, you negotiate with your school that your children are at because we can't mandate that. And if you need any help, we will call in." Whereas for the other person . . . I knew it was a given . . . done deal. (Adrienne, Assistant Superintendent)

117-
118
And then, Billy* (son, name was changed from transcript) needed a homeschool instructor that I couldn't afford. And so, because the salary was more . . . leaving the classroom and being an administrator . . . I left the classroom. My first week out of the classroom in my office or whatever, I cried. I missed being around kids and doing that work. (Belinda, Assistant Superintendent)

118
A lot of the work doesn't end in an office space. You're traveling a lot to different places, and so it requires you to be on the road a lot. And sometimes far so I work with some schools in [location] or I work with some schools in [really far location]. So, it's that time constraint and like it sounds really silly but just like a wear and tear on a car like you have to pick a new car, and you want you to be safe because your family worries if you're like all around town. My first year on the job my car got stolen from a location. So, I always have to constantly reassure my husband that I'm okay. So sometimes I have to be conscious of my schedule, because even though I feel comfortable in a certain area of the city, he doesn't. And so, I have to be able to respect that, although he lets me do my thing. Who wants their wife in [relatively unsafe location] for a finance council at 8:00 at night? There's so much to do here and so many people relying on you, whether you're a principal or in this job [assistant superintendent] that you don't want to let people down, and so sometimes I would sacrifice, doing work stuff, even on the weekends like going to things that schools or supporting a principal to like my external family things like maybe I would like not spend as much time with my mom or miss a family function or because I was working. And so, I did have to take a step back when my grandfather passed away a couple years ago and he reminded me about that, like, you know, "You need to stay connected. And don't forget . . . . And he said, "I know you have an important job but you

have a family too." And when he passed away . . . that's what he reminded me about that and I didn't make a lot of decisions after that, based on making sure that I stayed balanced. So, I try not to work on Saturdays, that's like a big one for me. So, I'll try not to work on Saturdays and on Sundays, not until after five. So, I try to find some balance. (Annette, Assistant Superintendent)

122   I have a very supportive husband so even though he doesn't always understand why I still work what I work for, he's very supportive because he understands like my personal reasons. And another big help was my mom living down the street. So, my mother helped me a lot. Once I became principal I do think I did sacrifice some important time with my daughter, but I knew she was with my mom and she was in good hands. But when I look back at it like, you know, sometimes I'd stay at work till eight o'clock. My mom would pick her up at three. So, even though she was with my mom, she wasn't with me because principal hours are long hours. And sometimes, I knew my daughter was okay. So, I spend time with other people's kids. And when you stop and reflect on that you have to take a step

back and see like okay you have a kid. So, you worry about other people's kids but you have to find the balance. But I never missed any other sporting events or anything. She's a competitive [sport] player so I made time for that. Once I came here [current job and role in central office], I wasn't physically with her anymore. She was in junior high, and that's one of the reasons why I left because I felt she needed her own space. (Annette, Assistant Superintendent)

122-   I know it's very cliche, "it takes a village" but I had so much support. I had so many people
123   supporting me. You know, my good friend would pick up my kids on Monday from school, she would take them home, she'd have them do homework, make dinner until my husband got home. I mean, There is, there's no way that I would be able to do this work and to be where I am without the support of so many people. And, and even to the point of where now I have, you know, really tried to just be much more whole in who I am as a person in all aspects of my life . . . My team [Diocesan team, other assistant superintendents] is on my emergency slip for my kids. Yeah. And so, again, it just continues to show that you don't do any of this alone. You don't get to where you are without the help of so many people. My passed away, you know, fairly unexpectedly [time frame]. Never once did I have to worry that, that the work was not getting done, that my schools were not being taken care of. Because my team was here to support me in any way that they could. So that was what was really that's really powerful.

129   And then when I left to become assistant superintendent. That was really hard to leave a community where there's such a great partnership. And some of my [school] families would ask me, "Why are you leaving?", or even like Latino families. families of color. I said to them, "I have to leave because your son or your daughter needs to see people [like them, people of color] in leadership. If I don't leave, then they won't see it. If I leave then they will see themselves as leaders. I'm going to tell you it's not easy. It's not easy going to trainings or meetings where the assistant superintendent, the superintendents are predominantly Caucasian and/or are male. As you move up in leadership, there's more male representation. There's an unequal amount of male representation in diocesan offices, when in fact, most educators are female. Like percentage wise. And then, you go and you look around the room and you don't see a lot of people like you. And I think the piece of this that's important for me is sometimes I get intimidated and think, "Where's everyone else?" And yet, some more of us need to do what you're doing. More of us can get their doctoral degrees, more of us need to say, "Yes, I'm capable, and I'm worthy of it, because God has put me in a position to do so." And so, we have to accept the challenge and it can be really hard. (Sue, assistant superintendent)

131-   You know I'm going to tell you something. I said, 'Lean in.' And he leaned in and then I
132   hissed like a snake. [Laughter] I went HHHIIIIIISSSSSS. 'Wait and see.' That was it and he

was just like . . . ."What!" Because just like at that point like what do you do? you just like laugh. He's like oh my gosh I was like . . . How's it..It's gonna take too much effort to be a snake in the grass like this is too much plotting and planning and overthinking this. I sound crazy right? (Belinda, Assistant Superintendent)

134   I actually left my position before I had a job. And I just knew it was time. I had a very good working relationship with my pastor. And then I didn't. It was really kind of an interesting relationship, you know, things that were going really really well and then I could just kind of see the writing on the wall and I don't know why. But you know, our leadership was not in alignment anymore and I could just kind of feel it stirring in my heart that you know it was hard because you feel like I still have work to do here. And yet I'm feeling this tug that I…. need to move on but I don't know what I need to move on to and so I remember there was an email from my pastor that he had copied me on to the parish council. And I read the email and I thought, we're so misaligned, and it was so clear to me and I . . . it was this realization, Oh, I can't work for him anymore. And it was . . . pure peace. It was the most peaceful moment in my life. I remember it. I remember it perfectly. And it was an early morning. I was getting ready for work. It was a Friday and in May, I mean, it was really late in the year I had already signed my contract. But I knew in my heart, "Oh, I can't work here." And a few days later, I had a conversation with him. And I said, I need to, "I need to move on." And he said, "I think so."

136   I'm also very conscious of what I wear sometimes with some pastors and the sense that some are not like [open to women who wear short sleeves or pants]. The pants really because I'm gonna say this on tape but I have a tattoo [location and style]. I would never want a pastor that I was first meeting to judge me on that first. So sometimes I'm very conscious of that so that our meeting could be as successful as it needs to be. That's an example of like, as a woman I need to think about that. Again, I don't let it take up too much of my time, but I just do it to be proactive. Instead, so that I can kind of dismiss any kind of, you know [bias]. But in [central office], I haven't really had any difficulty I feel very comfortable like with the, with the regional bishops with, you know, people in higher leadership, you know, even my bosses all my bosses have been male. I mean, our bosses are male which is another thing but it hasn't been anything that has stopped me from, like, being able to get something done or influence or being asked for my opinion on something so I don't really feel it in my department but I do sometimes feel it outside of the department. (Annette, assistant superintendent)

152   When you're a principal, part of your job is to instill leadership in all of your teachers and staff. There were times when I had them present things at faculty meetings, or there are times when I said, "You know what, there's an opportunity for you to go and do a presentation for the diocese; Go for it." I think it's really important that the principal never thinks that they're the only leader at the school. It's in small ways that people can be leaders. It could be office staff or instructional assistants. I need to think about this is my [number] year in this job but I am already thinking about how am I building up the next person who's gonna take this place?. As the WCEA commissioner, I co-chair at different accreditation visits and other dioceses. On my visits, I'm making sure that there's a co chair with me. Now we're going to have more chairs who understand the process, then eventually could be the commissioner. But it happens in baby steps but you have to think about it now, and not 5 years from now 10 years from now when I'm thinking okay, maybe I want to do something else. (Sue, assistant superintendent)

157   There's nothing more important than relationships! I don't care as much about academics. I don't care as much about finances, because if our kids can't relate to people, who cares what their academics is. If they can't connect heart to heart, soul to soul, then, it doesn't matter to me what we taught them. And so, I modeled that. How did I model that? Well, when I was

new, as a principal I took the yearbook, and I tried to learn the names of kids, the names of the staff. And when they would come in the summer, I would write little notes, so I would look at the old yearbook, and I would try to write notes about who they were. And I made sure to make it my goal to go to at least one CYO [Catholic Youth Organization] game for each team. I didn't go to the whole game because I was like I have to be able to balance it. So, I'd always go in the second half, so that I could see the kids at the end. Those are ways of building relationships with kids. I'd ask them about their lives outside of school. And then in terms of staff; what's important to me is experiences and memories. I took some of these ideas from my previous school sites. We did a huge Thanksgiving breakfast, where they came at 7 in the morning. I would have candles, I would have just a breakfast assortment of things that I cooked or my husband helped me. I'd make for them each a loaf of like, zucchini bread or pumpkin bread because that was my gift. I love to bake. I love that sense of hospitality. And then when it came to like Teacher Appreciation Day, I always did something special that was just from me. In the beginning of the year, I created things for them as gifts; those things were important to me. And then we also did things as a staff like we did the [name of event] run together, and even now like this upcoming week I'm going to go to a [name of race/obstacle course] with a couple of them because we do that. We signed up for activities together. And so, we built relationships, outside of the workday. (Sue, assistant superintendent)

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