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African American Superintendent Perceptions and Experiences with the

Recruitment, Selection and Promotion Process

by

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

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This dissertation written by Dennis Perry, 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.

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being the best and most amazing and supportive colleagues that anyone could have, I truly also

could not have done this without their support, checking in, and encouragement!

DEDICATION

I am dedicating this research study to all African Americans who aspire to become superintendents as well as all leaders of color who are aspiring to the superintendency and breaking down the barriers of race, racism, sexism, and discrimination. Additionally, I am dedicating this research study to all researchers with curiosity who want to know more about ways in which we can increase the pipeline of viable and exemplary African American educational leaders as well as all leaders of color to executive educational leadership positions at all levels so that those that they serve can reach their full potential. Lastly, I dedicate this study to all social justice leaders and scholars working overtime to expose injustice in our society and destroying the barriers to equity that prevents everyone in our society from achieving their full potential.

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ABSTRACT

African American Superintendent Perceptions and Experiences with the

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The underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency and lack of equitable

access to the superintendency in K-12 public school districts across the United States is a

problem of significant concern. This qualitative study explores the perceptions of 17 African

American superintendents with the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to the

superintendency while examining how the role of race, racism, sexism, and discrimination

contribute to the underrepresentation of African American superintendents. The career and

employment experiences of African American superintendents via semi-structured interviews is

how this study extrapolates data to answer the research question. Thematic analysis based on

narrative inquiry is utilized to report the findings of the data. This research study utilizes the

frameworks of critical race theory and Asante's (2009) 5 principles of the Afrocentric method for

generating knowledge as a lens for analyzing and making sense of the data. Findings indicate

significance with regards to the effects of racism, sexism, prejudice, and discrimination by

school boards and search firms with the recruitment, selection, and promotion process for both

aspiring and current African American superintendents. Additional findings of significance

include the skillful knowledge and use of political acumen, contract negotiations, social justice leadership, mentoring, networking, and spirituality. The findings support the need to educate school boards, search firms, universities, professional educational leadership networking organizations on the local, state, and national level, as well as aspiring and current African American superintendents about how to increase equitable access and longevity both to and within the superintendency.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Since my early beginnings as a child growing up in a single parent home in a lower socio-economic neighborhood, I always had a longing to know why I lived in those conditions and what could be done to get out of that condition. I watched my mother work very hard to provide what she could for us, and I always remember what she said about the power of education and how it can really make a significant difference in an individual's life as far as their opportunities, choices, and upward mobility. We frequently had conversations about her expectations for my brother and me to attend and graduate from college so we could live in a better socio-economic condition than the one we experienced in our upbringing. When she was growing up there was no expectation that she would attend or graduate from college even though she had the academic and intellectual potential to succeed. So, my mother was determined that once she had children that she would encourage them to live up to their full potential and attend college so they could have a better life. Being an African American male, I am well in touch with the fact that there can be many obstacles to success due to racism, classism, and an inadequate education that does not prepare one to be successful in life. However, by the grace of God I was able to successfully graduate from high school and college and become an educator.

Beginning with *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) to the Civil War of the 1860s, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Jim Crow laws of the 1870s and through the 1960s, African Americans faced and still continue to face an extraordinary amount of racism, prejudice, and discrimination as a barrier to advancement (Jones, 1991). The *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) decision was a legal

case in which the U.S. Supreme Court, on March 6, 1857, ruled (7–2) that a slave, Dred Scott, who resided in a free state and territory where slavery was prohibited, was not thereby entitled to his freedom; that African Americans were not and could never be citizens of the United States; and that the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which declared free all territories west of Missouri and north of latitude 36°30′, was unconstitutional. This decision basically made it so that African Americans were not considered American citizens and reduced them to being a mere commodity rather than human beings worthy of citizenship, equal status, and equal rights. The Dred Scott decision was only one significant event that fueled sentiments that led to the Civil War.

Racism and Education

After the Civil War, there were Jim Crow laws that legally authorized discrimination against African Americans. The United States Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) further reaffirmed racism and discrimination towards African Americans by making racial segregation legal and justifying the legality according to the United States Constitution. This prejudice and discrimination have been far-reaching and have extended into many facets of American life such as economics, politics, housing, employment, schooling, criminal justice, and business (Jones, 1991). Additionally, this prejudice and discriminatory thinking led to segregated schools in which African American students, teachers, and administrators were relegated to schools and school systems by race (Jones, 1991). Once desegregation started to take place and African Americans were allowed to pursue teaching and administrative positions such as the principalship and superintendency in desegregated school districts, most were not even allowed to apply or be considered because educational leadership positions were viewed as positions that were the property rights of White men (Underwood et al., 2019). This aspect is critical for this

research because it somewhat helps to explain the current dearth of leadership representation of African Americans in the superintendency. The history and legacy of racism is very strong, and there is clearly a need to examine as many ways as possible to break down these barriers, especially as it pertains to African Americans being able to access the superintendency fairly and equitably (Carrier, 2017; Hodge, 2017).

Although many Americans believe that the United States is in a post-racial era in which an individual's race does not limit their opportunities (Jones, 1991), there is substantial evidence to the contrary that cannot ignore the legacy of slavery and segregation as significant contributing factors to the race and racism that persists in the United States and that finds prejudice and racism in many facets of American society (Span, 2015). Williams (2012) asserted that the history and legacy of racism was and still is pervasive, deep-seated, and at times has led to implicit and explicit bias that is both covert and overt. According to Jeynes (2011), Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest was also used to justify racist thinking. Known as "Social Darwinism", this justification stated that Whites have been viewed as the "fittest race" that has survived, and, therefore, as the strongest and most superior race. Theories like this have continued to bolster the views that other races are inferior. The lingering historical effects of racism, prejudice, and discrimination have led to white supremacy and superiority which have contributed to diminished, deficit, and derogatory thinking towards other races, including African Americans, seeing them as inferior, invalid, and unworthy of equal consideration regardless of evidence to the contrary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; McIntosh, 1988). This type of thinking in fields like education also impacted who gets access to the superintendency (Carrier, 2017; Hodge, 2017).

The very first superintendent was appointed in 1837 in Buffalo, New York by locally elected school board members in need of an individual to carry out the duties of overseeing schools to ensure that teaching and learning was happening (Callahan, 1966). The position evolved over the years from scholar educator to business manager, to political statesmen of education, to education realist (Callahan, 1966). The traditional path to become a superintendent is: teacher, teacher leader, assistant principal, principal, director, assistant superintendent and then eventually superintendent (Underwood et al., 2019).

Statement of the Problem

I am largely concerned about this issue of disproportionality and inequity and about race as a potential barrier to African Americans gaining access to the superintendency because these circumstances have led to a situation where there is a large pool of highly qualified African American candidates that would make outstanding contributions to the field of education and student achievement that may never have the opportunity to do so because of potential racial bias. According to Jackson and Shakeshaft (2003), African Americans were largely underrepresented in the superintendency because of prejudice and racial bias in the recruitment, selection, and hiring practices of consultant search firms largely utilized by school boards in their search for a new superintendent. As a matter of fact, Jackson and Shakeshaft (2003) found that African American candidates for the superintendency rarely moved beyond the first round of interviews, which means they never even got a chance to interview with the school board for a chance to be selected and hired. Additionally, according to Hodge (2017), institutional racism in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process has created barriers for African Americans to be able to access the superintendency. This practice is socially unjust and perpetuates inequities

in our society by undermining who gets access to very important leadership positions in public education (Carrier, 2017; Hodge, 2017).

My desire to know more and to seek out positions in leadership that could have the greatest impact on the lives of others, including students, teachers, parents, educational leaders, and the larger community, led to my desire to become a school district superintendent. In my attempts to gain knowledge about the steps I need to complete in order to successfully pursue and obtain the position of school district superintendent, I have increasingly found that, even though there is an increase in African Americans gaining access to the superintendency, African American superintendents still only represent 2% of all superintendents in the entire country. Additionally, they are more likely to be hired in under-resourced urban areas in school districts that are rife with serious problems with which many White superintendents do not want to contend (Carrier, 2017; Hodge, 2017). In the state of California, in which African Americans comprise 7% of the total population, there are 1,037 school districts, and 28 of these school districts are led by African Americans, which amounts to 2.6% in representation (California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators [CAAASA], 2020). Furthermore, I also found out that African American males only represent 2% of the superintendency across the entire nation (Carrier, 2017; Chalmers, 2012; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017).

Research Question

In order to learn more about the career and employment experiences of African American superintendents and their experiences with the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to the superintendent position, this qualitative study focused on one research question:

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What are the career and employment perspectives and experiences of African American public-school superintendents in the United States?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about the lived experiences of African American superintendents as well as their perspectives concerning challenges they encountered and overcame that were critical in their experience of the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to become a superintendent. The research of the study aimed to better understand and clarify the role of race as well as gender in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to gain more knowledge and understanding about why African Americans are grossly underrepresented in the superintendency. The setting of the research study took place in urban, suburban, and rural school districts with both current and retired superintendents. The recruitment and selection process were defined as the process whereby candidates applied for the superintendent job and were selected and promoted to the position. This study seeks to inform researchers, scholars, practitioners, and individuals who are aspiring to the superintendency, as well as those who want to know more about what leads to success and/or failure in the recruitment and selection process.

A secondary purpose of this study was to explore and examine the role of search firms and school boards in how a superintendent candidate is brought forward in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process. Unfortunately, I was able to find an example of only one or two search firms that valued diversity of candidates in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process. Most search firms I discovered that recruit superintendent candidates were predominantly run by White males. Lastly, I found very few scholarly studies that discuss the

problem of underrepresentation of African Americans to the superintendency thus making

another purpose of this to study to add to the dearth of scholarly research literature on this topic.

This research study also attempted to further describe, discuss, and explore the

importance of various forms of social justice leadership concepts. Throughout this study there

are several examples of the undergirding philosophy of my vision for social justice leadership.

The articulation of my personal beliefs and values about social justice leadership and the

connection to my vision of social justice leadership is included in this research study. Social

justice leadership work is more critical now, especially living in the state of California where we

have a significant population of children that come from socio-economically disadvantaged

backgrounds along with students impacted by trauma (Johnson et al., 2018; Wolf & Sands,

2016).

Significance of the Study

This research study is important because despite alarming data that demonstrate and

indicate a clear need for more research on the topic, there is a dearth of research literature on the

positive impact of the leadership enacted by leaders of color (Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones,

2000; Carrier, 2017; Chalmers, 2012; Hodge, 2017). Additionally, as mentioned above, there are

educational achievement gaps and negative achievement trends for students of color as well as a

prevailing lack of representation of leaders of color in leadership positions that could otherwise

be poised to make a positive difference and impact if they were only given the chance to do so

by being recruited, selected, and promoted to prominent school leadership positions (Freedburg,

2016). This study is important because it will help identify and inform the ways in which

aspiring African American superintendents as well as other leaders of color who aspire to be

promoted to the superintendency can know more about the necessary skillset and disposition that they must have to be promoted to the position as well as which potential barriers and biases exist in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process. It is my desire that the results of this research study will not only inform school boards and search firms that are responsible for recruiting superintendents but also inspire researchers who have an interest with regard to increasing racial diversity in the superintendency in order that more new knowledge will be generated. The role of race and racism is closely examined and analyzed within the study while also demonstrating how the role of race and racism is contributing to the underrepresentation of African Americans to the superintendency.

Because of my perspective as a social justice leader and aspiring superintendent, this research study highlighted several connections between social justice leadership and the recruitment, selection, and promotion of African Americans to the superintendency. When it comes to social justice leadership theories there are two theories that strongly aligned with my views. The first is culturally responsive leadership. Khalifa et al., (2016) described five expressions of culturally responsive school leadership which are: critical self-awareness, culturally responsive school leadership and teacher preparation, culturally responsive school leadership and school environments, and culturally responsive school leadership and community advocacy. The behaviors of culturally responsive school leaders are described as inclusive, equity-oriented, and focused on advocacy and social justice in school (Khalifa et al., 2016). Utilization of this research study can increase the candidate pool of African American superintendents that are oriented and committed to social justice precepts once these candidates are successfully recruited and hired for the job. It was also my desire that this study would yield

more diversity in the pool of African American superintendent candidates as well as other superintendent candidates of color. This is critical because the research demonstrated that the student population in public schools is becoming increasingly saturated with students of color that need leaders of color to improve their chances of more just and equitable student achievement outcomes for all students and more so, for the marginalized and oppressed (Underwood et al., 2019).

Finally, this research study described the importance of transformative leadership as an important component of one of the many critical skillsets that African American superintendent candidates must possess to increase their chances of being successfully recruited, selected, and promoted to the position. Transformative leadership utilizes the lens of justice and democracy to guide the work of educational leaders in resisting and challenging inequality, as well as inequities, while building structures and capacity within the educational environment for inclusion, equity, and social justice (Shields, 2010). Shields (2010) described several aspects of transformational leadership as it relates to how social justice leadership can contribute to positive transformative leadership actions. It does this by focusing on how knowledge or lack of knowledge contributes to inequity, striving to understand the workings of complex interactional dynamics between power and privilege, and highlighting the importance of decision-making that contributes to the overall public good, the enactment of moral courage and activism along with promoting the principles of liberation, democracy, equity, and justice. Transformative leadership should continually resist any actions that abuse power and privilege and that help to continue to grow and spread oppression in the forms of inequity and injustice (Shields, 2010). This aspect of the research study is significant as it relates to social justice leadership and eliminating barriers

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for African Americans who aspire to be promoted to the superintendency as well as those that are currently serving in the position.

Nationally, African American males make up only 2% of all superintendents across the United States (Carrier, 2017; Hodge, 2017). Furthermore, according to Braddom (1988, as cited in Carrier, 2017), African American educational leaders have the potential to make a significant impact on achievement for students from all backgrounds because of their own experiences with socially unjust practices that they have personally experienced. In the state of California two-thirds of African American women employed in education are teachers, yet only 25% of the African American women employed in education are superintendents (Freedburg, 2016). Although this is very concerning and problematic, I still believe that this problem of underrepresentation can be overcome by equipping African American superintendent candidates with the knowledge they need to improve their chances of successfully being recruited to the superintendent position.

Theoretical Framework

The lived experiences of the African American superintendents were analyzed through the lens of critical race theory and Asante's (2009) 5 principles for generating new knowledge known as the Afrocentric method (Asante, 2009; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Ladson-Billings (1999) discussed critical race theory in education as a state of existence in which race matters in many areas as far as which racial group gains access to resources over another racial group. Although this phenomenon was first pointed out in law studies, Ladson-Billings (1999) has investigated and researched how critical race theory plays out in education.

Moreover, there are several tenets of how critical race theory demonstrates itself through the notions of storytelling, counter storytelling, the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, interest convergence, experiential knowledge, and the critique of liberalism (Bell, 1980; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). These tenets, which correspond with critical race theory, serve as the lens through which I approached my analysis of the career and employment experiences of African American superintendents with the recruitment, selection, and promotion process. Additionally, the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the research study were examined with this lens. George (2011) asserted that critical race theory can be used as a theoretical framework that can help to explain the underrepresentation of African American males in the superintendency. The tenets that George found to be relevant based on his research are the permanence of racism, interest convergence, critique of liberalism, and storytelling (George, 2011). This approach to analysis was also found in several other research studies with regard to African American superintendents (Carrier, 2017; Chalmers, 2012; Hodge, 2017).

Figure 1

Critical Race Theory

Note: Adapted from ''So When It Comes Out, They Aren't That Surprised That It Is There': Using Critical Race

Theory as a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in Education," by J. T. DeCuir and A. D. Dixson, 2004,

Educational Researcher, 33(5), pp. 26–31 (https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X033005026), copyright 2004 by

SAGE Journals; "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," by G. Ladson-Billings and W. F. Tate, 1995,

Teachers College Record, 97, pp. 47-68 (https://www.unco.edu/education-behavioral-

sciences/pdf/TowardaCRTEduca.pdf), copyright 1995 by Columbia University; from "Images and Words that

Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping, and Teacher Education," by D.G. Solórzano, 1997, *Teacher*

Education Quarterly, 24(3), pp. 5-19 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/23478088), copyright 1997 by California Council

on Teacher Education; from "From Racial Stereotyping and Deficit Discourse Toward a Critical Race Theory in

Teacher Education," by D. G. Solórzano and T. Yosso, 2001, *Multicultural Education, 9*(1), pp. 2–8

(https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.817770), copyright 2001 by Multicultural Education.

Another key objective of critical race theory is the discussion and inclusion of how race

and racism impact laws, social policy, and organizational cultures to eliminate racism and racial

stereotypes (Solórzano, 1997). Additionally, it requires the understanding that racism exists and is a normal occurrence in education as well as the education profession itself which should not be ignored and must be openly discussed and exposed in order to eliminate it. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) asserted that race can be used as a theoretical lens for assessing social inequality and disproportionality. As I interviewed my research participants, I analyzed my data through this lens of assessing social inequality as it pertains to the underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency. Marginalized and oppressed populations and people of color are given a voice through this lens as well as the opportunity to describe their lived experiences of being impacted by racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This is important because it helps those who have not lived this experience to be aware of it and understand how it impacts various decisions, interactions, and outcomes on students, schools and employees' views about themselves and other races as well as school and district culture in terms of how people of color are treated, viewed, and perceived.

Critical race theory also provides the opportunity to give people of color a voice through counter-story telling that have traditionally been silenced (Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to Solórzano (1997), there are four activities that combat racism. The first activity has to do with identifying examples of racism and racial stereotyping and the impact it has on people of color as well as people that are not of color. The second activity has to do with identifying media stereotypes in film and television and print and the ways in which they are used to validate unjust treatment towards people of color. The third activity has to do with how we identify professional stereotypes, which is extremely important because this impacts the way in which individuals are perceived as being worthy of professional positions based on their race and gender. The fourth

activity is one in which examples are found that challenge and expose others to positive examples of people of color, which helps to challenge racial stereotypes. These activities have proven to be relevant to this study based on, and in comparison to, the experiential knowledge data obtained from the superintendent participants.

African Americans seeking the superintendency tend to not have guidance and mentoring that would assist them with gaining access to the superintendency (George, 2011; Hodge, 2017). Additionally, the lack of access to guidance and mentoring is a consequence of underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency (George, 2011; Hodge, 2017). The scholarship and research about the superintendency has been conducted largely by White males, which helps to explain why there is a limited amount of research on African American access to the superintendency (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Smothers, 2012).

Another conceptual/theoretical framework utilized to analyze and interpret the research data is the theory of Afrocentrism to generate new knowledge (Asante, 1990, 2009). This theory utilizes codes, symbols, etymology, motifs, myths, and circles of discussion while incorporating African ideas and values as the frame for acquiring and analyzing data (Asante, 1990; Verharen, 2000). Asante (1990) asserted that Eurocentric thinking is flawed and limited because it imposes its view as universal to the detriment and exclusion of other valid cultural perspectives that should be included, whereby individuals are able to provide their own perspective based on their own cultural view and lens. A single cultural perspective cannot accurately capture the comprehensive interpretation of a cultural experience (Asante, 1990; Verharen, 2000). The problem with the use of a singular cultural perspectives is still a significant issue in scholarly research (Asante, 1990; Verharen, 2000). There is significant value in giving voice to previously

silenced perspectives for new knowledge to be generated (Asante, 1990). Lastly, it is important

to note that the Afrocentric perspective does not approve of ethnocentrism and hegemony in any

form, especially when it devalues and degrades another cultural perspective as inferior (Asante,

1990). This principle of inclusiveness is especially important in mitigating the actions that lead

to silencing the perspectives of the marginalized and oppressed (Asante, 1990).

Asante (2009) described 5 principles of Afrocentrism as a lens through which a unique

cultural perspective and experience can be analyzed. The 5 principles are 1) No phenomena can

be sufficiently understood without locating it first; a *phenom* must be studied and analyzed in

relationship to psychological time and space. It must always be located; 2) Phenomena is

considered to be diverse, dynamic, and in motion. The necessity of accuracy and precision is

critical in order to accurately note and record the location of phenomena as it moves about. This

means that the investigator must know where he or she is standing in the process; 3) Cultural

criticism that utilizes the etymology of words in order to analyze and know the source of an

individual's location; 4) Seeks to uncover what is hidden when rhetoric is used to describe and

discuss power, privilege, and position which also leads to the establishment of principal myths

that are perceived as reality; 5) Locates the imaginative structural system of economics, politics,

government, cultural expression style, attitude, direction, and language of a phenom, in written

word, institution, personality, interaction, or event. In addition to critical race theory, I utilized

these 5 principles as I analyzed the research data based on my interviews with African American

superintendents. Furthermore, I was cognizant of my own location perspective and positionality

as a researcher while examining and analyzing the etymological uses of words and terms in order

to interpret meaning from my research subjects. Lastly, I keenly observed for examples of the

rhetoric of power, privilege, and position in order to establish meaning from the perspective of African American superintendents as well as how systems of economics, politics, government policy, and expression of cultural form are in play as it informs their perspectives by analyzing their interactions, the institutional dynamics of the places in which they work or worked as well as any other unique phenomena based on personality, interactions and events.

Figure 2

Asante's 5 Principles of the Afrocentric Method
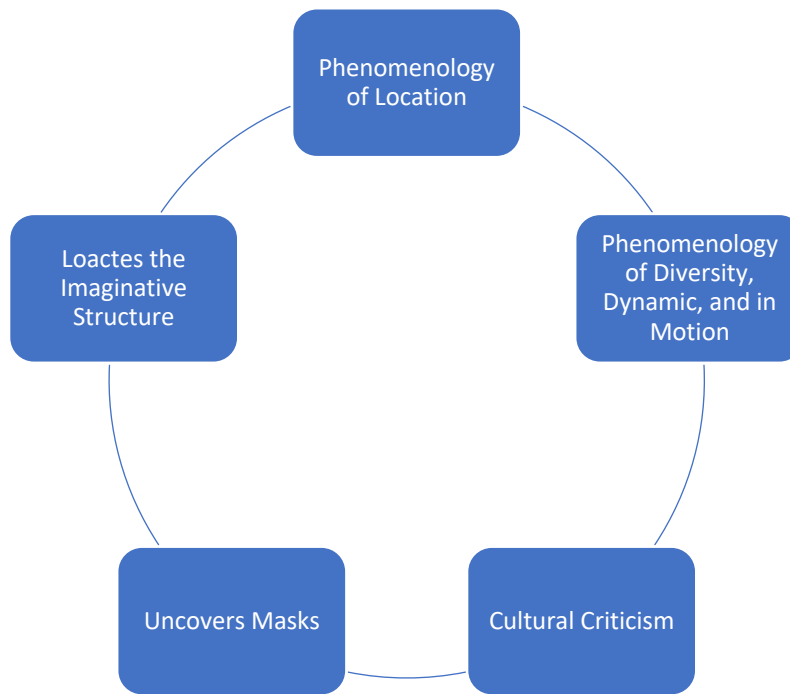
Note: Adapted from "Afrocentricity," by M.K. Asante, 2009, Asante.net (http://www.asante.net/articles/1/afrocentricity/), copyright 2009 by Molefi Asante.

Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative research is more of a process of inquiry in which both inductive and deductive reasoning is used to describe, categorize, and interpret the phenomenon that is being studied (Gay & Mills, 2019). Furthermore, being able to describe patterns and make meaning

from those patterns is critical to the validity and quality of qualitative studies (Gay & Mills, 2019). Before going into more specifics about my research design methodology I believe it is important to describe my researcher worldview in order to understand my chosen research design methodology. My research worldviews are both constructivist and transformative. The constructivist worldview is one in which an individual makes meaning from research based on their own subjectivity in what they experience in the world (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, meaning is created from broad and general rather than specific questions and is also related to context and situation within the setting. Discussions and interactions with other individuals are also key with this approach because it allows the individual conducting the research to experience subjectivity and to make meaning based on that subjectivity. Positionality is key here because the researcher should be transparent about their positionality and how it might influence their interpretation and subjectivity. Inductive reasoning is used for the generation of theories and interpreting patterns based on what is being observed and studied in the field (Creswell, 2014). An example of how this worldview shaped this research study is that I am an African American educational leader as well as an aspiring superintendent that is conducting qualitative research with other African American superintendents about their experiences and perceptions of the selection and recruitment process for the superintendency. This process involved open-ended questioning, interaction with the subject participants and relating the findings to my own experiences, the experiences of the participants and generating meaning from the data gathering process in the field where the research took place.

The transformative worldview is a social justice-oriented worldview in which research can be used for the purposes of impacting social and political change, advocacy, and

transformation for the marginalized and oppressed along with individuals, organizations, and researchers that are working to impact positive change for the marginalized and oppressed (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, researchers who engage in their work from this worldview tend to use issues that impact marginalized and oppressed individuals as the focus of their research. According to Creswell (2014), this research empowers and benefits the participants by providing choice, influence, and voice as partners with the researcher and the research study. Several of the participants in my research study expressed an interest utilizing the findings of this research so they can empower others through the creation of mentoring networks and utilization of the funds of knowledge that aspiring African American superintendents can use. Additionally, the research could impact political change by being provided to legislators and school boards for the purposes of providing legislative advocacy and diversity recruitment initiatives based on the research study.

The key qualitative research method employed for this research was the use of narrative inquiry. Narrative is a qualitative research design in which the participant tells a story of their lived experience within a particular context, setting, or situation (Gay & Mills, 2019). Some of the key features of this design are equality of voice, trust and collaboration between the researcher and participant, chronology of lived experiences, construction of a story, and retelling of that story by the researcher based on interview data collected over time (Gay & Mills, 2019). Sampling strategies that work best to find participants for a narrative research design is small, purposive sampling (Gay & Mills, 2019). Data collection for narrative research studies involves story telling that begins with a question about what the participant is experiencing in the context or situation they are in or have experienced (Gay & Mills, 2019). Narrative can also help to bring

about a focus on areas that need further research that paradigmatic studies may exclude (Kim, 2016). According to Gay and Mills (2019), the limitation that exists with a narrative research design is maintaining a mutual relationship that is based on trust, care, equality of voice, and respect.

According to Kim (2016), narrative inquiry is a means by which a story is told within a particular context in order for meaning and sense making to take place. There is a great value in the culturally relevant stories and narrative accounts that leaders of color share, live, and lead which are qualitatively distinct and different from mainstream leadership practices. Members of a historically marginalized group practice leadership through different filters of experience, resulting in an understanding and practice that incorporates more multicultural or social justice practices (Santamaría, 2014). With narrative as the core of human research, the elements of storytelling include plot, re-creation, and release, which leads to revelations of wisdom, ethics, and insights to the human condition as well as how to improve the human condition (Alexander, 2012; Kearney, 2002; Kim, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Furthermore, narrative inquiry leads to the revelation of universal themes and truths based on lived experiences and dialogical exchanges which provides for what may not be said (Alexander, 2012; Kim, 2016).

The participants of this study were 17 African American Superintendents who were either currently in the position or were no longer serving in the position. Data collection took place in the form of interviews with the superintendents about their perceptions of what led to their recruitment, selection, and promotion to the superintendency. The interview protocol questions were designed based on the research question, the 6 tenets of critical of race theory, and Asante's (2009) 5 principles of the Afrocentric method. Additionally, the questions were designed in such

a manner to evoke responses that were highly effective in generating a story that informed the research purpose and questions (Kim, 2016). Participant transcripts, along with researcher field notes, were used for coding themes and data analysis. The coding themes were connected to the 6 tenets of critical race and the 5 principles of Asante's principle of the Afrocentric method of generating new knowledge.

Limitations/Delimitations/Assumptions

This research study involved interviews with 17 superintendents in urban, suburban, and rural areas from the across the United States. This means that I did not interview anyone from charter school or private school organizations. All of my interviews took place with public school superintendents only. This is important to point out because it means that the generalizability of my study will be limited due to the small sample size. Furthermore, the context of the research was with African American superintendents in order to gain their unique perspective and insight which, by default, excluded other racial/ethnic groups. A delimitation with regard to this research study was the fact that I interviewed African American superintendents from across the United States in every region representing the experiences of both African American men and women within all of those various regions across the country.

It is also important to note that I interviewed superintendents with a focus on social justice or those who have social justice as an emphasis of their work. Some of these superintendents were also retired, which means that some things may have changed since they participated in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process although, quite frankly, I assumed that much had not changed. Although the findings of the research study discussed gender, there is a lot more focus on the topic of race as a critical consideration in the recruitment,

selection, and promotion process to becoming a superintendent. I believe that because I'm African American I assumed that these African American superintendents would be honest with me about their perceptions that led to their recruitment, selection, and promotion and would not hesitate to discuss the importance of race as a factor in their recruitment, selection, and promotion or as a potential barrier within the recruitment, selection, and promotion process.

My positionality began with stories from my childhood, my experiences growing up, my identity as a highly educated Christian married heterosexual African American man, father of two daughters, and my experiences as a teacher and as an administrator. In my career I have served as a social studies and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) teacher, AVID coordinator, vice principal and principal. The legacy of slavery and racism, along with my gender status, marital status, and spiritual and religious beliefs, have informed the social constructedness of my positionality. Growing up in a single parent African American home, I sensed the odds were stacked against my brother, my mother, and me as she struggled to raise two boys alone in a poor neighborhood and environment that puts children at risk of underperformance in achieving their full positive potential and thus creating inequitable outcomes for children of color versus their White and Asian peers.

Academic achievement and expectations were low in our local schools, and many of my peers never reached their full potential. In thinking back on this experience growing up in an African American single parent home I can see how I was also at risk of not realizing or living up to my full potential because I was subjected to the same forces of oppression and inequity, which makes me that much more empathetic to children of color and informs my own social justice leadership praxis in regard to race, class, culture, and ethnicity. My demographic

experience growing up caused me to see dismal trends impacting inner city youths being raised in similar circumstances and becoming part of an ever-increasing achievement gap of underperformance and lost opportunities to maximize positive potential, talents, and abilities. Our underperforming K-12 schools in urban settings are in serious need of strategic and effective leadership that narrows the achievement gap (Elmore, 2006). It is important to point out that all of these aspects have contributed to the evolution of my positionality over time.

The topic of interest for this research was African American superintendents and their experiences and perceptions that led to their recruitment, selection, and promotion, to the superintendency. The participants and setting for my research interest were African American superintendents that served urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Due to my own positionality, I believe that I was be able to make a strong connection with the participants and find some commonalities in upbringing and identity, as well as similar professional experiences and work history that helped to shape our common identity and desire to do social justice work in schools within urban settings. I believe that my research interests in this topic will contribute to the discourse on disrupting and resisting the negative and damaging legacies of slavery, racism, classism, and sexism and thereby reify my positionality, especially in the area of social justice advocacy in schools that I work at now and will be in charge of leading in the near future.

The research is clear that a significant number of students of color are not adequately prepared or supported to achieve success in school and therefore are becoming permanent members of the underclass if our leaders do not act based on a strong social justice leadership praxis (Furman, 2012). What is tragic about this is that many of these students are bright and

have numerous talents and assets that would make the entire society better off if offered the

educational guidance and support that they need (Khalil & Brown, 2015). So, I approached this

project from a position as an individual that has witnessed that talent is everywhere, but

opportunity is not. Therefore, my focus was on how I can utilize my present position to enact

social justice leadership as I have done in the past, to advocate for poor and low-income students

of color and underserved youth that are further at risk of not living up to their full potential and

living their best life. Lastly, the research is very clear that when educational leaders of color are

provided with fair opportunities to access educational leadership positions such as assistant

principal, principal, director, assistant superintendent, and superintendent they are more likely to

have a significant impact on closing achievement gaps for students of color, which is why the

barriers of racism, sexism, and discrimination must be eliminated to accessing these key

positions in leadership (Khalifa et al., 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalil & Brown, 2015;

Santamaría, 2014).

Definition of Key Terms

Several terms were important to know and define within this research study. The

following terms were very important to understanding this research study: critical race theory,

racism, recruitment, selection, and promotion. The terms are defined and summarized here:

- **critical race theory:** a state of existence in which race matters in many areas as far as which racial group gains access to resources over another racial group (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

- **racism:** the belief that all members of a purported race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or other races. Racism is a particular form of prejudice defined by preconceived erroneous beliefs about race and members of racial groups (Hoyt, 2012).

- **recruitment:** refers to the overall process of attracting, shortlisting, selecting, and appointing suitable candidates for jobs within an organization (Lexico, 2019).

- **selection:** the action or fact of carefully choosing someone or something as being the best or most suitable (Lexico, 2019).

- **promotion:** the action of raising someone to a higher position or rank or the fact of being so raised (Lexico, 2019).

Organization of Dissertation Chapters

When it comes to African American leadership representation in the superintendency our K-12 public school system is clearly and disproportionately lacking equitable representation. Moreover, our K-12 public school system needs strong African American leaders in what one would arguably consider the highest and one of the most important leadership positions in K-12 public school systems. Chapter 1 provided both a background and introduction to the problem of practice along with an outline of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, background of the theoretical framework and methodology along with limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and researcher positionality. Chapter 2 provides a synthesis of existing literature in regard to the history of African Americans in the superintendency as well as what has been researched about the potential causes of the underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency. Critical race theory, which was utilized as a lens to analyze the perceptions of African American superintendents in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process according to their career and employment experiences is significantly described within Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides details of the chosen research design method of thematic analysis with the use of narrative inquiry and data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews with African American superintendents in order to include their voices in the research and generate new

knowledge with respect to what is contributing to the underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency along with strategies to successfully navigate the recruitment, selection and promotion process. Chapter 4 presents a thematic analysis of the findings based on narrative inquiries. Finally, Chapter 5 offers recommendations for equipping current as well as aspiring African American superintendents with what they need to know in order to successfully navigate the recruitment, and selection process in order to be promoted to the superintendency as well as what search firms, school boards, universities, and educational leadership professional network organizations need to know in order to assist with increasing opportunities for the successful recruitment, selection, and promotion of African Americans to the superintendency as well as other leaders of color.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

As an educator I have made it my personal mission to do all that I can do within my power to help others succeed so they can live out and meet their full potential regardless of their race, class, gender, or other potentially hindering status due to someone else's bias. Therefore, I have always had an intense passion and drive to take action as an educational leader to help others realize their potential to succeed and thereby make our world a better place. So, as I saw the positive difference that I was making in the lives of others, my desire to continue to make a positive difference increased, and I decided to start mapping out my career goals that I wanted to pursue in school leadership. One thing that I am excited about is that there are some clearly identifiable research-based practices and factors, as you will see in further analysis and discussion of this literature review, that lead to the successful recruitment, selection, and promotion of African American superintendents. Although there are multiple barriers that impede access to the superintendency due to racism, sexism, and implicit and explicit bias, there is some evidence of success.

The purpose of this study was to understand why African Americans are so disproportionately underrepresented in the superintendency in the United States and to examine the extent to which race, racism, and discrimination are contributing factors to the disproportionate underrepresentation that exists. In this country, marginalized populations are coming under great scrutiny by typically white leadership. There is a lack of representation of those marginalized communities leading our schools, and transformation is happening in only a

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handful of places. Santamaría (2014) asserted that the "value-added leadership" of leaders of color now, more than ever, is important to the success of marginalized communities. Students of color and other marginalized students need leaders of color who can relate to their experiences and perspectives in order to create a social justice orientation that transforms school experiences for typically marginalized students. The underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency is one of the problems that is contributing to achievement gap for students of color (Santamaría, 2014).

In Chapter 1, I described and discussed the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, theoretical framework, the research question, and methodology for conducting the research. The purpose of this literature review is to examine, describe, and analyze what other scholars have discovered with regard to the role of race, racism, and discrimination and the legacy from which it is derived as well as the consequences it has had on the underrepresentation of African Americans to the superintendency. Additionally, the purpose of this literature review is to examine and analyze what has been identified in the scholarly body of research literature with respect to the theoretical and conceptual framework that is utilized as a lens to analyze the findings of the study. Lastly, this literature review is a comprehensive representation of my understanding of the problem that has been identified with regard to the disproportionate underrepresentation of African Americans to the superintendency.

In this Chapter, I examined the existing literature in four sections. First, I reviewed the history and historical overview of the superintendency in America. Second, I conducted an historical analysis of African Americans in the superintendency. Third, I examined, analyzed, and discussed the role of race, history of racism in America, gender, and critical race theory as

well as how critical race theory is utilized as a theoretical framework to further inform this study. Fourth, I examined, analyzed, and discussed the roles of individual leadership style, skillset, and culturally proficient school leadership within the context of the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to the superintendent position.

Literature Review

The History of the Superintendency in America

Historical Overview of the Superintendency in America

The beginning roots of the educational system in America can be traced back to 1642 when the Massachusetts colony approved legislation that required a group of locally selected men to be responsible for ensuring that children were receiving training in labor as well as literacy (Björk et al., 2014b; Glass et al., 2007; Moody, 2011). Eventually, by the year 1789 in the colony of Massachusetts this led to the appointment of school committees which eventually led to elected school board members who had the responsibility of ensuring that communities were educated (Björk et al., 2014b; Glass et al., 2007; Moody, 2011). The history of the superintendency began with the growth of cities in the 19th century that resulted from the spread of the industrial revolution (Callahan, 1966; Candoli, 1995; Moody, 2011; Theobald, 2005). The first superintendents were appointed in 1837 in the cities and states of Buffalo, New York and Louisville, Kentucky as a response to the growth of commerce and industry in the United States (Callahan, 1966; Candoli, 1995; Moody, 2011).

The need for superintendents came about because town councils would elect school boards that initially were only responsible for supervising one room schoolhouses. However, as schools continued to grow and expand it became too much responsibility for the elected officials

to oversee so, out of that need for more assistance and direction and supervision, the board of education decided to appoint a superintendent of schools to oversee the day-to-day operations of the schools (Callahan, 1966; Candoli, 1995; Moody, 2011). A superintendent of schools was the chief executive officer of a school system which came along with numerous responsibilities (Björk et al., 2018; Glass et al., 2007; Hoyle et al., 2005; Moody, 2011). Moreover, a superintendent of schools was directly responsible for all organizational oversight of a school district's instruction, finances, and operations, and for carrying out the policies designed by the elected school board members (Björk et al., 2018; Moody, 2011). Additionally, the superintendent was evaluated and solely accountable to the board of education as its only employee that they directly hire, terminate, and supervise (Björk et al., 2018; Moody, 2011). Within 23 years of the establishment of the first superintendent there were 27 school districts that had established the office of superintendent by 1860, and, by 1890, 39 major cities in the United States had a superintendent of schools on record (Candoli, 1995). By time the year of 1915 arrived, more school districts were starting to turn into large consolidated systems and the first county superintendent of schools was created at this time to help to provide assistance and oversight to school districts within the cities of the county (Candoli, 1995). According to the NCES there are now over 132,000 school districts across the United States.

According to the literature, most early superintendents were White males who also dealt with difficult challenges as school districts went from one room schoolhouses to larger and increasingly consolidated school systems (Blount, 1998, 2003; Candoli, 1995). Teaching was a male dominated field until more men were called to leadership positions leaving more women to take positions as teachers and placing them in subordinate roles to men (Blount, 1998, 2003).

Superintendents had to go around largely as evangelists persuading the cities that they worked in that these larger more consolidated systems were necessary for educating students and the survival of democracy and capitalism in the United States (Candoli, 1995; Glass, 1992; Glass et al., 2007). Initially, the role of superintendent started out as an individual that was a schoolmaster working with the board of education who made most of the decisions, but it eventually became a lead administrator role by the end of the 19th century (Blount, 2003; Candoli, 1995; Glass, 1992; Glass et al., 2007).

The pioneering superintendents that advocated for this type of executive leadership were Ellwood Cubberley, George Strayer, and Frank Spaulding (Callahan,1966). The era of scientific management which was designed and introduced by Frederick Taylor is based on five principles that include large daily tasks, standard conditions, high pay for success, loss in case of failure, and expertise in large organizations (Owens & Valesky, 2015). This prescribed set of criteria also influenced the development of the role of superintendent as a significant degree of control and decision making was given over to superintendents from boards of education, all of which led to some of the practices that we see with school boards and superintendents in the current school governance context (Björk et al., 2018; Fusarelli, 2006; Hendricks, 2013). Lastly, this led to the next phase of the development of the superintendency in which the superintendent served as the CEO and expert administrator that oversees the school district (Björk et al., 2018; Candoli, 1995; Glass et al., 2007).

The duties of the superintendent may vary by state and by district; however, most of the duties have been quite uniform across most school systems (Björk et al., 2018; Glass et al., 2007; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). In general the duties included leading the school district,

community and long term planning; advising the school board around governance policies and the execution thereof; planning and preparing comprehensive reports about the state of operations within each department and school within the district; acting as the clerk to the board of education by preparing and completing accurate records of school board related activities and functions; ensuring that school board policies are carried out via administrative regulations; maintaining and establishing organizational systems that define the authority and responsibilities of all staff members; recruiting, selecting, assigning, suspending, and transferring employees; ensuring that regulations are in place to protect employees and individuals from all types of discrimination; supervising instruction, managing students, and approving and recommending curriculum along with a course of study, textbooks, instructional materials, instructional supplies, and school equipment; preparing the school district budget and submitting it for approval; supervising buildings, grounds, and maintenance which also includes recommending and executing renovations and repairs; serving as chief negotiator for labor relations in collective bargaining on behalf of the board of education; listening to and resolving complaints between employees, parents, and members of the public; receiving and reviewing reports from both local and state agencies, communicating with the board of education about those reports and any action taken based on those reports; enforcing student attendance laws and regulations; delegating duties to others and being accountable for overseeing the execution of those duties as well as to the board of education (Alston, 2000; Björk et al., 2014a; Björk et al., 2018; Candoli, 1995; Fusarelli, 2006; Glass, 1992; Glass et al., 2007; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011; Moody, 2011).

Historical Analysis of African Americans in the Superintendency

The History of African Americans in the Superintendency

      Although there is limited research on the history of African American superintendents there is some research that currently exists which documents a first African American superintendent in the 1870s in Washington DC who was in charge of all black schools. There is also evidence of a prominent African American superintendent who served from 1944 to 1956 in the city of Oklahoma and at least four African American superintendents from the 1950s (Taylor & Tillman, 2009; Tillman, 2004). Just about any researcher on this topic of African American superintendents can attest to the fact that this position was largely owned as a property right of White males (Alston, 2000; Blount, 1998, 2003; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Gregory, 2006; Hodge, 2017; Moody, 1983; Revere, 1989; Smothers, 2012). However, there is some substantial evidence that African American superintendents began to increase in numbers during the 1970s mostly in urban cities that were large with mostly African American student and school board demographics, and which suffered from poverty, dysfunction, and extraordinary challenges that needed extraordinary leadership (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Moody, 1983; Scott, 1980; Sizemore, 1986; Smothers, 2012; Taylor & Tillman, 2009; Tillman, 2004). The African American superintendents that were appointed to these positions were largely unwanted by Whites which made the positions more available to African Americans (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Moody, 1983; Scott, 1980; Sizemore, 1986; Smothers, 2012; Taylor & Tillman, 2009; Tillman, 2004).

      One pioneering African American superintendent by the name of Charles Moody not only served as a superintendent in 1968 in Illinois public schools, but he later joined the faculty

of the University of Michigan. One of his key areas of research was African Americans in the superintendency, which led to him doing a dissertation study about African American superintendents (now known as the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) with more than 6000 members and more than 125 affiliates) that resulted in the formation of the National Alliance of Black School Superintendents. His study also confirmed what was discussed earlier in that African Americans were more likely to be appointed to school districts with mostly African American students with lots of challenges, learning gaps, and lack of resources (Moody, 1983; National Alliance of Black School Educators [NABSE], 2017). Another pioneering African American superintendent by the name of Alonzo Crim was placed in charge of the Atlantic public schools from 1973 through 1988 under a desegregation settlement that stipulated that at least 50% of district administrators were to be black and that the district was required to have an African American in the role of superintendent (Scott, 1980).

Although data has been collected about superintendents since 1923, the data did not start to include race until around 1982. This data discovered that 0.7% of all school superintendents in the United States were African American and, in 2017, there were a total of 14,599 superintendents across the country with African American representation making up 2% for a total of 323 African American superintendents of which 222 were male and 101 were females, serving in a combination of 36 states (Carrier, 2017; Hodge, 2017; NABSE, 2016; Tillman, 2004). The largest concentration of African American superintendents can be found in Mississippi, Illinois, and Arkansas (NABSE, 2016; Tillman, 2004). The increase of African American superintendents can be attributed to the civil rights movement as well as the social and political contexts of the schools' cities and districts in which African Americans serve (Horsford

& McKenzie, 2008; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Taylor & Tillman, 2009; Tillman, 2004). However, it is important to point out that, while African Americans have increased in representation in the superintendency since 1982, the representation is still disproportionately unequal to that of white representation in the position and mostly accounts for urban area representation in under resourced and challenged school districts (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Smothers, 2012). Although African American superintendents have been largely employed in urban school districts with significant challenges these superintendents have shown extraordinary leadership that has resulted in significant gains in student achievement (Carrier, 2017; George; 2011; Hodge, 2017; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Smothers, 2012). According to the California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators, there were 28 African Americans serving in the role of superintendent in the state of California, which is roughly about 2.6% representation (CAAASA, 2020).

Most of what can be found about African American superintendents is information provided by organizations that are oriented towards social justice such as the National Alliance of Black School Educators, the Education Trust in the Council of the Great City Schools, along with a few books, articles, and dissertations (Alston, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Taylor & Tillman, 2009; Tillman, 2004). In 2003, NABSE and Education Trust collaborated to do a study on African American superintendents within the NABSE organization in order to describe the trends and demographic profiles of these leaders (Tillman, 2004). The findings from the study indicated that African American superintendents led 248 school districts that varied in size and population and that most of them tended to be concentrated in the Southeastern part of the United States with 55% of African American superintendents being

located in states in the deep south in predominantly urban areas and 30% in rural areas totaling more than 6,000 schools, 193,000 teachers, $25.1 billion budgets, 3 million students composed of 54% African American, 26% White, 16% Latino, 54% low-income along with a total of 219 schools performing in the highest quartile (Tillman, 2004). Lastly, the study pointed out the relevancy of four issues to the success and tenure of African Americans in the superintendency, which include the complexity of the role of the superintendent, the superintendent as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the superintendent as educational leader, and the superintendent as political leader (Tillman, 2004).

There are multiple researchers that have confirmed the negative impact of desegregation on the employment of African Americans in educational administration leadership positions including the superintendency (Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Horsford, 2009; Moody, 1983; Taylor & Tillman, 2009; Tillman, 2004). Murtadha and Watts (2005) have also confirmed that there has been an omission of the experiences of African American leaders in education which has had a deleterious effect on recruiting leaders of color in high poverty and high needs school districts with high concentrations of students of color. Although segregated schools were considered inferior by pro-integrationists they in fact had a lot of caring African American educators and educational school leaders that were very devoted and committed to ensuring that African American students had the highest quality of education and, as a matter of fact, by some standards they were doing a superior job with African American student achievement outcomes in comparison to integrated schools with more resources (Horsford, 2009; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Taylor & Tillman, 2009; Tillman, 2004). Scott (1980) posited that African American superintendents who were appointed to the superintendency post-segregation were

usually given all black school districts with challenges and problems, and they were also considered a messiah or a scapegoat. Another influential factor in African Americans becoming superintendents after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was that during the periods of 1965 to 1975 and 1975 to 1980 there were increasing numbers of African Americans becoming elected school boards, who subsequently appointed African Americans to the superintendency in order work rigorously in regards to the challenges of educating African American students (Gregory, 2006; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Moody, 1983; Scott, 1980; Taylor & Tillman, 2009).

Another challenge that African American superintendents had to overcome was the fact that even though they were in charge of their school districts they often had to rely on White policy makers who often made it difficult for those superintendents to operate a school district with the funds they needed in order to help students to be successful (Gregory, 2006). During the 1960's there were also several organizations that wanted African American superintendents to succeed, such as the Anna T. Jeane's Foundation Program, by providing funding and leadership training in order for more African Americans to go into the superintendency along with the Rockefeller foundation (Gregory, 2006). African Americans have also had difficult challenges when it comes to obtaining the superintendency in suburban areas including suburban areas with significant African American populations (Gregory, 2006; Scott, 1980). Additionally, this led to several notable African American males by the names of Lorenzo R. Smith, E.W. Warrier, and Arthur Shopshire being appointed to the superintendency in the 1970s (Gregory, 2006; Scott, 1980).

Race

The History of Race and Racism in America

There are several scholars who have confirmed the significance of race and racism in the United States as it pertains to many aspects of life in the United States in the areas of civil rights, education, employment, housing, political power, who has the right to own property, as well as the fact that racism is permanent, pervasive and deeply ingrained on a cultural, psychological, and legal level (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kendi, 2017; Moore, 2018; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) posited that the historical significance of race and racism in the United States has contributed to the intersection of race and property leading to many of the inequities that we see in society with different racial and ethnic groups in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Furthermore, according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), these inequities and inequalities are the direct result of the history of race and racism in the United States and have caused the voices of the marginalized to be silenced and absent. According to Kendi (2017), when African slaves were brought to the United States as property, this largely contributed to the fact that African Americans were perceived as property even after the abolishment of slavery, during the Jim Crow era, and the Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which essentially allowed for separate and unequal treatment of African Americans even though the letter of the law stated that things were to be separate and equal. The dominant white culture believed that it was their manifest destiny to have the most political, economic, and social advantages over all other racial and ethnic groups in the United States (Kendi, 2017; Moore, 2018). Lastly, another aspect of the legacy of race and racism that cannot

be overlooked is the fact that it has led to systems of hegemonic oppression that are both covert and overt (Bell, 1995; Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Another important aspect of the legacy of property rights in the United States is the fact that it dehumanized and undervalued the status of human rights based on the ownership of property. This goes back to when the pilgrims came to the United States in the 1600s when they subjugated Native Americans by taking ownership over their lands, along with the fact that the first Africans that arrived in 1619 were property for White slave owners (Bell, 1992; Kendi, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Moore, 2018). Since White males owned the most property, they also owned the highest status in society which gave them a racial advantage that placed African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and those of Mexican descent at a significant disadvantage (Bell, 1992; Kendi, 2017). Furthermore, African Americans during slavery were accounted for as being 60% human in the census, thus demonstrating that Whites had much higher status not only because they were White but also because they were property owners (Kendi, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Moore, 2018). These events are all important for explaining the racial subordination of not only African Americans but other marginalized ethnic/racial groups in comparison to the hegemonic advantage of White Americans (Crenshaw, 1988; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Moore, 2018).

The intersectionality between race and racism in the United States is an important tenet of critical race theory that describes the ways in which racism and other forms of subordination including sexism and classism are structured in schools in ways that maintain subordination of the marginalized and oppressed (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Furthermore, Solórzano and Yosso (2001) asserted that practices that perpetuate structural inequities were created as a result of the

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intersection of race and racism. Another consequence of the intersectionality of race and racism was the creation of a system of white racial hegemony and notions of white supremacy that devalued and assigned a lower status to African Americans and other racial minority groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Critical race theory also acknowledges the importance of the experiences and knowledge of women and men from marginalized groups in order to better understand the impact of racial subordination and counter stories that not only challenge and contradict racist hegemonic privileged discourse, thinking, and systems of oppression but also seek to reduce, dismantle, and eliminate these types of privileged discourse, thinking and systems (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Critical race theory also is about exposing these systems of power and privilege that have been largely owned by the dominant group (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Bell (1992) advocated for the dismantling of the racially-privileged political, economic, and social systems that Whites are allowed to take advantage of, which is a direct result of the consequences of race and the permanence of racism.

White privilege and whiteness as a property interest of use, possession, disposition, enjoyment, transference, and exclusion is critical to understanding how the concept of race is reified within these components (Harris, 1995). Solórzano and Yosso (2001) associated the permanence of racism with a legacy of racial advantages and privileges for Whites and a legacy of disadvantages and inequities towards marginalized racial and ethnic groups. However, the use of critical race theory can be utilized to uncover and expose issues of advantages, privileges, disadvantages, and inequities by challenging incrementalism and critiquing liberalism that

advocates for slow changes that should be quicker and more widespread (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Individuals that enjoy the power and unfair advantages that race, and racism provide are in approval of incrementalism because these slow changes that might help the marginalized and oppressed in minor ways do not really impact and take anything away from the privileged and advantaged racial White group (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Race, Educational Leadership and Critical Race Theory

Grounded by their own experiences, leaders of color can understand their students' experiences with a compassion for and understanding of where they are situated in their learning. Leaders of color have a distinct ability to innovate, act, empower, and call for educational reform and these idealistic, ethical perspectives are the underpinnings of social justice leadership (Santamaría, 2014). Leaders of color make a great impact in our schools; according to Khalifa et al. (2013), leaders of color can practice a culture-specific leadership that is nuanced. DeMatthews (2016a) affirmed much about what is agreed upon by most social justice leadership scholars in that schools must have leaders who can recognize and empathize with the experiences and plight of marginalized and oppressed students. This is especially important in reducing the widening gaps of opportunity and achievement between low income and impoverished African American, Latino, and immigrant children as compared to their White middle class peer group (DeMatthews, 2016b).

Based on this literature review there is ample evidence that race matters in the recruitment, selection, and promotion of African American superintendents. "Racism is the belief that all members of a purported race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that

race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or other races. Racism is a particular form of prejudice defined by preconceived erroneous beliefs about race and members of racial groups" (Hoyt, 2012, p. 225). Several studies have confirmed that race and racism are as contributing factors to the low representation of African American males in the position of superintendent (Avelar-Lasalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Smothers, 2012). Additionally, there are multiple research studies that repeatedly pointed out how African Americans are likely to be hired in poor and struggling school districts with minority students and, more specifically, with African American student populations (Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Smothers, 2012).

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) provided a definition of racism as "a means by which a society allocates privileges and status [and] racial hierarchies determine who gets tangible benefits, including best jobs, the best schools, and invitations to parties in people's homes" (p.17). This is key in that one must know who the holder and gate keeper of these privileges and benefits is and how they have a disparate impact on excluded groups. The remnants of these historically unjust practices have had lasting and lingering effects on African American access to the superintendency (Smothers, 2012). According to Carrier (2017), critical race theory helps to explain how racism is deeply rooted in our society including who gains access to the superintendency, and he further asserted that African American males are impacted by this in their quest to gain access to the superintendency. Carrier (2017) discussed the idea of *interest convergence,* or the idea that Whites will support more African Americans being in educational leadership positions because it will also help to advance the interests of Whites.

George (2011) wrote about how white privilege is an invisible set of benefits that White people are not even aware of because it happened as a natural result of the domination, oppression, and subjugation of other racial groups, which has had a significant impact on racist beliefs and attitudes. George (2011) also pointed out that white privilege explains the underrepresentation of African American leadership in the superintendency by the fact that historical and institutional racism, through the exclusionary practices of legalized segregation, set White males up to be favored and advantaged in a manner that would last for generations to come, even in the post-civil rights era.

George (2011) found race, racism, and power through white privilege to be amongst some key reasons that have contributed to the significant problem of underrepresentation of African American superintendents across the entire country. George (2011) also asserted that White males have the best advantage for accessing the superintendency in any type of district that they want to be in and that African Americans, especially males, are more likely to be able to gain access to the superintendency in troubled urban school districts while White men still tend to largely have access to this position no matter what type of district it is. This is unfair and very unfortunate because our students and communities deserve the best and most highly qualified candidates, and nobody should be excluded from the opportunity to make the world a better place as an educational leader because of their race. Hodge (2017) explained that the power dynamic between race and racism has resulted from white supremacist thinking that makes Whites believe that they are entitled to superiority over other races just because of their race and racial status.

Race and Gender

There are numerous studies within the literature that documented the intersectionality of race and gender as both a challenge and barrier for African American women that aspire to attain and maintain educational leadership positions including the superintendency (Alston, 2000, 2005; Moorosi et al., 2018; Revere, 1989; Wiley et al., 2017). Most research studies about the evolution of African American women in educational leadership positions primarily pointed to the fact that not only were they the majority when it came to African American teachers, but they were also allowed to be teachers in segregated black only schools whereas White women were teachers in predominantly white schools (Alston, 2000; Revere, 1989; Sizemore, 1986; Taylor & Tillman, 2009). From 1830 to 1900 most teachers were women, and it wasn't until around the 1910s and 1930s that women started to occupy elementary school principal positions in county and state superintendencies (Alston, 2000; Revere, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sizemore, 1986). Although there is more evidence of African American women in the principalship in the early 1900s, there is some evidence of African American female superintendents before the 1970s such as Velma Dolphin Ashley who served as the superintendent for the Oklahoma school district from 1944 until 1956 (Alston, 2000; Revere, 1989; Sizemore, 1986; Wiley et al., 2017).

Sizemore (1986) posited that African American superintendents not only had to be stronger and more skilled than their White counterparts but also had to endure unique challenges and treatment due to race, racism, and sexism (Alston, 2000, 2005; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Reed, 2012). One of the key challenges that African American women face in educational upward mobility in leadership roles is a lack of mentors and lack of a mentoring system that could lead to promotion within various positions of educational leadership (Alston, 2000;

Moorosi et al., 2018; Revere, 1989). These above-mentioned factors, in addition to the exclusion

of the voices of African American women in scholarly research, has led to under-representation

of African American women in the superintendency (Alston, 2000; Revere, 1989; Shakeshaft,

1989; Wiley et al., 2017).

According to the most recent studies, women make up 13% of the superintendency across

the country and amongst the ranks of all female superintendents 91% are White and African

American women make up about 1.6% of all female superintendencies and 2% of all

superintendencies across the country (Alston, 2005). Additionally, most African American

female superintendents are in their late forties and early fifties, have at least 15-20 years of

educational experience, are likely to serve in a dysfunctional, challenging urban school district

with a high percentage of students of color, and have more than likely served in many facets of

educational roles before attaining the position (Alston, 2005; NABSE, 2017). There have also

been very few studies on the experiences of African American women in the superintendency

(Alston, 2000, 2005; Revere, 1989; Wiley et al., 2017). White women, although faced with the

challenges of sexism, have historically held advantages over African American women because

it was legal for White women to get an education before it was legal for African American

women to be educated (Alston, 2005; Sizemore, 1986).

The experiences of the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women

superintendents has been found to be a very important component to understanding their

experiences and challenges as educational leaders as well as their under-representation in these

positions despite the extraordinary skill set and resilience they possess (Alston, 2000, 2005;

Moorosi et al., 2018; Revere, 1989). Furthermore, Horsford (2012) described and discussed the

experiences of African American women educational leaders as "bridge leaders" that use their intersectionality of race, class, and gender experiences to inform their social justice work while in positions of leadership which adds further merit to the need for leaders of color in educational leadership positions in schools and places that serve students that come from marginalized and oppressed backgrounds. Lastly, African American women in educational leadership roles have had to endure both racism and sexism by those that are subordinate to them as well as those that they are subordinate to, all the while having to temper their actions, interpersonal styles, and decision making in order to remain viably employed or risk being terminated from their jobs (Alston, 2000, 2005; Moorosi et al., 2018; Revere, 1989).

Wiley et al. (2017) did a research study in which they analyzed the challenges, supports and experiences of African American women superintendents in Texas in which African American women represent less than 1% of all superintendents in the state. The researchers found conclusive evidence that suggested that African American women who are successful in the superintendency possess extraordinary strengths in both technical and interpersonal skill sets, have external support systems, and show a strong desire to impact the lives of others on many levels (Wiley et al., 2017). The participants of the study emphasized the importance of being prepared to lead with positional knowledge and experience, earning a doctoral degree, as well as having the self-awareness of knowing what the challenges are that they're going to face in seeking and attaining the position, which can include doing the job without actually being employed in the job (Wiley et al., 2017). Lastly, the study concluded with the importance of increasing the pipeline of African American female superintendents commensurate with changing demographics. This can be achieved by actively recruiting them to superintendent

preparation programs, training the search firms responsible for finding superintendent candidates for school boards, developing strong mentoring networks in which they can be paired up and mentored by someone else who is an African American female in the position who can advise them how to successfully prepare, and having strong relationships with family and friends that can keep them grounded (Wiley et al., 2017).

Recruitment, Selection, and Promotion to the Superintendent Position

Jackson and Shakeshaft (2003) identified several aspects of critical race theory at play that present as obstacles to access for the superintendency for African Americans. The first one they identified was how racism is at play in the recruitment, selection, and promotion of African American candidates for the superintendency in predominantly white school districts. Upon interviewing the headhunters employed by search firms they found that they mostly considered White candidates and did not seem to be at all aware or concerned that they were not recruiting a diverse set of candidates for the superintendency. Secondly, they found out that search consultants were very self-serving in that they rarely moved African American candidates forward after the first round of interviews so that school board members never even got a chance to interview African American candidates for the job. It was also discovered that the search consultants believed that if they had moved African American candidates forward that their future employment prospects with search firms could be placed in jeopardy. This also goes back to the idea of interest convergence, and, in this case, it is in the consultant's best interest to behave in a racially biased manner. One search consultant was even explicitly told not to bring forth any minority candidates including homosexuals.

Jackson and Shakeshaft (2003) discovered that African American candidates for the superintendency were only being recruited to districts that White superintendents were not interested in rather than higher functioning and more resourced school districts regardless of career accolades and advanced degree status of having a doctoral degree. They also found that African American candidates placed a stronger emphasis on the importance of the doctoral degree. It is very clear that the persons in charge of the recruitment and selection process have control over applying the rules and clearly operate in a biased manner (Carrier, 2017; Hodge, 2017; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003). The need for mentorships as well as mentoring shadowing programs for African American superintendents is very much needed to assist with navigating these challenges (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Sampson, 2018; Smothers, 2012). White superintendents have had the advantage of networking and mentoring relationships for well over 100 years, and these relationships have proven beneficial in helping them to navigate challenges of being a superintendent (Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003).

Donahoo and Hunter (2005) asserted that African American superintendents are more likely to be micromanaged by their school board and state and local politicians as compared to their White counterparts and are more likely to be employed as a scapegoat or puppet for someone's political agenda. Donahoo and Hunter (2005) further explained that African Americans are not trusted or perceived as competent before they even begin the job and are expected to achieve extraordinary results with less resources and support. Additionally, unrealistic expectations without the additional needed supports are placed upon African American superintendents, and when they do not succeed as a result of this lack of support they

are deemed as incompetent (Donahoo & Hunter, 2005). Lastly, high quality leadership versus management cannot be underestimated in the application of change leadership especially due to the fact that high quality leadership actions are critical to creating cultural change in an organization, which many African American superintendents are expected to do within the districts in which they are hired (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Owens & Valesky, 2015; Shaked & Schechter, 2017).

There are several key findings in the research that discussed and described the experiences of African American superintendents as having to apply for the job multiple times and having had to do all the prerequisite jobs from teacher, to coordinator, to assistant principal, principal, director, and assistant superintendent compared to Whites who have not always had to go the traditional route (Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; George, 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Sampson, 2018; Smothers, 2012). Control of the process has led to inconsistent application of the rules for selection or have ignored them all together which has caused even more African American superintendent candidates to be excluded from the recruitment, selection, and promotion process (Carrier, 2017; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Scott, 1980). There is clearly the need for diversity and more leaders from diverse backgrounds within educational leadership, and one of the reasons why there is a shortage of diversity in educational leadership has to do with who is controlling the process for who can access high-ranking administrative educational leadership positions (Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017). It is also clear from the literature that African American males aspiring to the superintendency have encountered many unique challenges and barriers in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process that their White male counterparts

have not had to endure (Carrier, 2017; Donahoo & Hunter, 2005; Gregory, 2006; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Smothers, 2012).

The knowledge and skills a superintendent must possess are critical to the recruitment, selection, and promotion process (Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Glenn et al., 2009; Hill & Jochim, 2018; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017). One key finding, also known as synergistic leadership theory, pointed to leadership behavior, organizational structure, external forces, and attitudes, beliefs, and values as some of the critical skills that consultant search firms look for when recruiting a superintendent (Irby et al., 2002). Glenn et al. (2009) listed 54 items/components that describe leadership behaviors that are both a combination of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills with 19 of the following to be the most sought out traits in the recruitment and selection process: communication, leading by example, setting high expectations for self and others, motivation, communicates a vision, is resourceful, dependable, decision maker, knows how to analyze situations, high energy, achievement oriented, emotionally stable, organized, persuasive, effective, people oriented, team player, strong interpersonal skills, consensus builder, and is responsive to the needs of faculty and staff. Secondly, the superintendent must also show evidence that they know how to respond to external forces with strong skills in the area of promoting community and cooperation (Irby et al., 2002). Lastly, beliefs, attitudes, and values about organizational structure and requisite technical skills have also been considered critical to what consultants from search firms look for when recruiting and selecting superintendents for a school board (Irby et al., 2002). Overall, the top two important qualities that search firms look for besides evidence of good character, integrity, ethics,

professional learning, and openness to diversity, is the ability to communicate effectively and the ability to develop positive relationships with others (Glenn et al., 2009; Hill & Jochim, 2018).

Individual Leadership Style and Skillset

Individual leadership style and skill set matters when it comes to determining the factors that lead to the successful recruitment, selection, promotion, and longevity of African American superintendents (Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; Donahoo & Hunter, 2005; Narayan & George, 2012; Hodge, 2017; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Sampson, 2018; Smothers, 2012). Avelar-LaSalle and Campbell-Jones (2000) asserted that African American superintendents have to exemplify extraordinary leadership skillsets and styles in order to increase their chances of being recruited, selected, promoted, and tenured in the superintendency. Although superintendents are given contracts that specify the length of the terms of their employment anywhere from one to five years, superintendents serve at the pleasure of the board, which means they do not have tenure, also known as permanency, and can be terminated at the will of the board of education according to state employment laws (Candoli, 1995; Fusarelli, 2006; Glass et al., 2007; Hendricks, 2013; Moody, 2011). Candoli (1995) further discussed how some school boards of education have utilized progressive discipline in releasing a superintendent with notification by the end of February that the contract will not be renewed at the end of the school year; the use of a negative evaluation and improvement plan with corrective actions; and termination for cause. The specific skillsets and styles that they pointed out include performing above and beyond in their job duties by consistently demonstrating exemplary skills that outperform their White counterparts in the areas of being resourceful and interpersonally strong in the most non-threatening manner as possible; being inclusive and collaborative leaders;

having excellent oral and written communication; dealing with difficult problems and situations with poise, grace, and calm; being willing to work with every type of person no matter how difficult they may be to deal with; knowing how the rules and etiquette for social conduct and language communication style of the dominant culture work and being well versed in those customs; having a superhuman work ethic of devotion; and being resilient. Candoli (1991) posited that all superintendents are not only judged and evaluated in the following areas but must also be highly skilled and capable in the functions of planning, delivery, evaluation, business management, communications, instructional and non-instructional support. Lastly, it was also noted that African American superintendents have to be better than the best of their White colleagues and are more likely to be judged harshly with no grace or mercy when they make the same mistakes as their White counterparts who are given many more opportunities, forgiveness, and second chances (Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; Donahoo & Hunter, 2005; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2000).

An exploration of four dissertations which analyzed and described the experiences of African American male superintendents revealed the personal leadership skills and styles that they must possess in order to be successful in ascending to the superintendency in various settings and contexts (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Smothers, 2012). Due to the fact that African American male superintendents are more likely to be hired to lead school districts that are riddled with difficult challenges, the research highlighted these skills to be effective: extraordinary interpersonal skills, enabling them to collaborate in multiple contexts and settings; exemplary oral and written communication skills; visionary leadership with the necessary skill set to garner synergy around a shared vision; knowledge of how to make positive

change swiftly and efficiently; ability to act with integrity and humility; clever management of allocating human and fiscal resources; having access to strong networks for mentoring; and possessing extraordinary perseverance (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017; Smothers, 2012). Additionally, according to Jackson and Shakeshaft (2003), African American male superintendents increased their chances of being hired and being successful in their superintendent position if they possessed the following: a doctoral degree from a prestigious and reputable university and an exemplary work ethic of going above and beyond as compared to their White counterparts. Furthermore, there is confirmatory research that stated that the most important aspect by which a superintendent's performance is judged is by the quality of interpersonal relationships between the school board members and the superintendent (Candoli, 1995; Fusarelli, 2006; Glenn et al., 2009; Hendricks, 2013). So, personality and politics truly matter in how a superintendent is judged and evaluated. In tracing the evolution of the requirements to become a superintendent, they only had to have a credential, then eventually a master's degree, a special certification in educational leadership, and finally a doctoral degree, although I do want to point out that White superintendents have not had to meet this requirement as have African American superintendents (Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Candoli, 1995). Lastly, being a consensus builder, planner, communicator, visionary, competent manager, and transformational leader are all also considered to be critical aspects of the skillset needed to be a successful superintendent (Björk et al., 2014b; George, 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Candoli, 1995).

Bush and Bush (2013) created a framework for understanding some of the exemplary leadership attributes possessed by African American male superintendents called African

American Male Theory. African American Male Theory examines the unique spiritual, psychological, social, and educational development of African American males. Bush and Bush (2013) asserted that African American males possess the traits of resilience, resistance, a strong moral compass, strong spiritual faith in God, exemplary intelligence, strong opposition to deficit thinking, confidence, and an orientation towards social justice due to personal experiences with racial oppression. According to Carrier (2017), the personal characteristic of effective superintendents is described as committed, ethic of care, interpersonal skills, integrity and honesty, work ethic, supervisory skills, team oriented, and organized. The success factors for African American superintendents are described as emotionally, physically, psychologically, and spiritually fit, resilient, and resistant, having unique background experience and expertise, socially connected to mentoring networks, agents of change, inspirational, encouraging, positive, and spiritual, and demonstrating exemplary leadership performance (Carrier, 2017). Additionally, successful superintendents must have exemplary communication and interpersonal skills as well as strong instructional and collaborative leadership skills along with the political acumen to get others involved in accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organization (Fusarelli, 2006; Haar & Robicheau, 2008; Hill & Jochim, 2018; Moody, 2011; Myers, 2011).

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Khalifa et al. (2016) posited that culturally responsive school leadership works to improve liberation while ameliorating oppressive educational practices that are detrimental to students of color and those that descend from historically marginalized and oppressed people. Culturally responsive school leadership is also affirmative, while seeking to identify and institutionalize practices that affirm the identities and cultural practices of students of color

(Khalifa et al., 2016). There is ample evidence in the literature that affirmed and attested to the fact the African American educational leaders can be highly effective culturally responsive school leaders due to the fact that many of them have had backgrounds and upbringings that included experiences of marginalization and oppression which helps them to be better prepared to make a positive impact in the lives of marginalized students (Johnson, 2006; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Taylor & Tillman, 2009; Tillman, 2004). Johnson (2006) described culturally responsive school leaders as public, intellectual, curriculum innovator and social activist, all of which are important qualities that help to advocate for change and improvement for the marginalized and oppressed. As stated by Khalifa et al. (2013), "Schooling is much more than a test; it is a racialized, politicized, historical, and local experience" (p. 503). African American educational leaders and other leaders of color that come from marginalized and oppressed backgrounds are more likely to be in tune with the racial, political, historical, and local contexts of the communities that they serve, especially when those communities are similar to the ones that the leaders grew up in (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010).

There are four key behaviors that culturally responsive school leaders engage in which include critical self-reflection on leadership behaviors, developing culturally responsive teachers, promoting culturally responsive and inclusive school environments and engaging students, parents, and indigenous contexts (Khalifa et al., 2016). These leaders are committed to continuous learning of cultural knowledge and contexts; display a critical consciousness on practice in and out of school; display self-reflection; use school data and indicants to measure culturally responsive school leadership; use parent/community voices to measure cultural responsiveness in schools; challenge whiteness and hegemonic epistemologies in school; use

equity audits to measure student inclusiveness, policy, and practice; lead with courage; are transformative leaders for social justice and inclusion (Khalifa et al., 2016). African American and other leaders of color, as well as those that can identify with the experiences and identities of the marginalized and oppressed, are more likely to make a significant leadership impact and commitment of their leadership work for social justice (Alston, 2000; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to Johnson (2006), social justice leadership involves advocating for culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum in which teaching strategies and curriculum should reflect the cultural background of the students in order to reach the students in an effective manner. Additionally, Johnson (2006) described the importance of making connections in the community by using those resources to help students to reach their best and most positive potential by advocating for equity and equitable student achievement outcomes.

As further proof of the importance of leaders of color and their unique contribution, Khalifa et al. (2013) presented an ethnography study from 2006-2008 of an alternative high school that outperformed other alternative high schools and closed gaps for students of color who were considered "at-risk". Khalifa noted the principals' enactment of self-advocacy and social justice advocacy for students, parents, teachers, and others. In this study Khalifa captured the four leadership behaviors used: *administrative structures, strong student-principal relationship, school-community overlap, acceptance of indigenous student identities.* Students who had become accustomed to being marginalized at traditional schools found their voice and identity valued. Many students entered and persisted in higher education as they graduated from this alternative high school. The literature highlighted that "shared marginalized experiences might

result in these leaders' increased multicultural understandings, alternative perceptions, and practices of applied leadership" (Santamaría, 2014, p. 349).

Santamaría (2014) presented evidence of nine elements leaders of color utilize to enact a social justice orientation and effect change in their institutions: 1) the inclination to have critical conversations to address inequities, 2) a critical race theory lens that informs all aspects of their leadership, 3) building group consensus and working on shared leadership practices, 4) working against stereotype threat to support marginalized populations and reframe how these sub-groups are viewed by the educational system, 5) academic discourse that involves acting as a public scholar who contributes empirically to the body of knowledge about specific populations, 6) honoring constituents and the multi-faceted experiences marginalized communities represent, 7) leading by example, 8) building trust with mainstream systems to build bridges that result in access and equity, and 9) servant leadership that speaks to a vocation for the work that is done institutionally.

Theoharis (2007) explained that social justice leadership is about how school leaders focus and prioritize issues that impact the marginalized and oppressed by ensuring that they use their leadership skills to advocate for ways to reduce and eliminate inequities. Another important aspect to keep in mind when it comes to culturally responsive school leadership is to ensure that there are no decisions made that end up marginalizing a group further, even if the educational leader did not intend it to be so (DeMatthews et al., 2015). Furthermore, DeMatthews et al. (2015) asserted that even well-intentioned educational leaders can make poor decisions that are not beneficial and that at times those decisions are made based on uncertainty and lack of "real world context" resulting in decisions that don't actually create any change, but rather maintain

the status quo. Culturally responsive school leadership requires the leader to be very self-reflective and aware in order to reduce the chances making detrimental decisions (Khalifa et al., 2016). Superintendents of color have been known to possess unique insights and talents that allow them to serve as positive role models that provide supporting and inclusive learning environments and climates for students of color (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Smothers, 2012). Lastly, it is recommended that educational leaders can make better decisions that will serve everyone better, despite difficult circumstances by focusing on values, clarifying ethical principles, analyzing a decision before making it, engaging in critical reflection and group discernment, and making small and incremental decisions (DeMatthews et al., 2015).

Conclusion

This literature review has taught me several important things. The permanence of race and racism in the United States is very much real and a deeply engrained and interwoven aspect of life in this country. The history of race and racism has been around since the founding of this country over 400 years ago and has had a lasting legacy that has impacted many generations resulting in inequitable and unfair outcomes for people of color. This literature review has also taught me about understanding the importance of intersectionality and how race and gender can be compounding factors that lead to more marginalization and oppression of individuals of color and women. The resulting legacy of white supremacy and especially White male supremacy has led to very real entitlement property rights in many aspects of American life including who predominately obtains superintendent jobs. However, I also learned that there is hope and more optimism for the future as there has been a small but steady increase of African American males,

females, and others that come from marginalized and oppressed backgrounds aspiring to and becoming superintendents.

It is of the utmost importance to understand the role of race, racism, and discrimination, as well what the necessary skills are in order to be recruited, selected, and promoted to the position. Because there are such few voices of African American superintendents there is an additional need to allow more voices and opportunities for these voices to be included which further justifies the need to include more of these voices through qualitative research methods like the ones I outline in Chapter 3. Lastly, it is also important to understand what the most common factors are that can lead to being terminated from the position for an African American individual so they focus on skills that will not only get them recruited, promoted, and selected for the job, but will also keep them in the job for as long as possible in order for them to make the most significant contribution while serving in the position. One question that remains on my mind is, "How we can create and expand more mentoring networks that will help aspiring African American superintendents to obtain the job?"

I found out that there is a substantial amount of research about school boards, politics, racial politics, effective educational leadership skills, political systems and criteria that defines successful superintendents and school board relationships. However, one of the questions that is still unanswered for me is, "What work or research has been done about how school boards and search consultants can be influenced to not have racial and gender bias when it comes to the recruitment, selection, promotion, and longevity of African American superintendents?" The fact that there is limited research on what it takes for an African American male to be recruited, selected, promoted, and retained in the superintendency is alarming, especially since I was able

to uncover, through my research and literature review, that African American males possess superhuman talents, strengths and leadership abilities that can transform and maintain exemplary school systems. So, another question I have for future research studies is, "How can university educational leadership preparation programs do a better job to prepare and equip African American leaders for the superintendency and do more research to add new knowledge to this field?"

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As illustrated in the review of the literature presented in the previous Chapter there is clearly a need to recruit and hire more African Americans to the superintendency. My topic is about African American superintendents, their career and employment experiences, as well as their perceptions of the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to becoming a superintendent. In this Chapter, I will be describing the methodology of my study, who the participants are, where the research took place, the interview protocols, and method for analysis of the data. There is a serious lack of substantial research literature on this topic with respect to African American superintendents and the under representation of African Americans in the superintendency. I employed critical race theory and Asante's (2009) 5 principles of the Afrocentric method of generating new knowledge as a framework and lens to inform the questions I asked and how I analyzed the data.

The purpose of this research study was to utilize a qualitative method to give voice to a largely voiceless population in order to add new literature in the field on the topic of African Americans in the superintendency and why there is such under representation of African Americans in the superintendency. The previous Chapter of this study demonstrated that there are many African Americans poised and prepared to be successful superintendents that are being hindered from doing so because of race, racism, and discrimination as a barrier to advancement. It is my hope that this research study adds to the body of knowledge and research literature for African Americans that are currently in the position as well as those that are aspiring to the

superintendency in order for them to have current research information that may lead to their successful recruitment, selection, and promotion to the position as well as information about what they need to know in order to successfully increase their chances of being promoted to a second superintendency. Lastly, it is my hope that this research study adds to the very limited body of knowledge about African Americans and the superintendent position as a prominent social justice issue worthy of additional research and consideration.

Research Question

In order to add to the current research literature on this topic of African Americans in the superintendency, I have selected the following research question:

What are the career and employment perspectives and experiences of African American public-school superintendents in the United States?

Method

Context

This research study took place within the context of current and retired superintendents who are or were in charge of traditional public K-12 school districts in urban, suburban, and rural areas. This research study involved interviewing multiple superintendents online via Zoom (www.zoom.us) in multiple school districts throughout the United States.

Participants

The participants of my research study were African American superintendents. I interviewed 17 African American superintendents in urban, suburban, and rural areas who had successfully been recruited, selected, and promoted to the position. The superintendents were both male and female and ranged in age from 43 to 70 years old. Some of the superintendents

that I interviewed were retired. I interviewed three retired African American superintendents who reflected on their experience in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process. All of these superintendents have focused on social justice as a significant part of their life's work, which I also found important to the significance of this study, which also happened to be concerned with a social justice issue.

Procedures

I answered my research question using data collected through semi-structured interviews and a combination of deductive and inductive analysis. I chose this approach based on my understanding of narrative inquiry. According to Kim (2016), narrative inquiry is a means by which a story is told within a particular context in order for meaning and sense making to take place. Furthermore, it involves a process of meaning making for understanding the actions of individuals through multiple ways of data gathering (Kim, 2016).

> The narrative mode of thinking, on the other hand, typically considered less important than the paradigmatic in the academy, use the stories to understand the meaning of human actions and experiences, the changes and challenges of life events, and the differences and complexity of people's actions. It strives to put events into the stories of experience in order to locate the experience in time and place. It incorporates the feelings, goals, perceptions, and values of the people whom we want to understand, and this also leads to ambiguity and complexity. (Kim, 2016, p. 11)

Narrative inquiry also organizes detailed events of a lived experience that occur over time in the form of a story (Kim, 2016). "In using narrative, educational researchers intend to interrogate the nature of the dominant curricular stories through which humans have shaped their understandings of education and schooling within the paradigmatic perspective" (Kim, 2016, p.19). Additionally, narrative inquiry allows for social cognition and conceptions to be derived in regard to power relationships and domination (Boyd, 2009; Martin, 1986). According to Bruner

(1986), as cited by Kim (2016), narrative inquiry has been established as a valid form of generating knowledge in social science research because it is capable of both providing empirical evidence as well as a rich description of a story that involves details that are related to empirical findings. Scientific knowledge and universal truths can in fact be tested and generated empirically through narrative inquiry which also happens to be challenging for researchers with a positivistic worldview (Kim, 2016). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) described the importance of utilizing narrative inquiry as a process by which theory, practice, and reflection are utilized in the procedural analysis of deriving meaning from both lived and told stories. Furthermore, according to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), as cited by Kim (2016), the phenomenon of the inquiry is the actual narrative itself and is the methodological lens by which the experienced phenomena is studied and analyzed. "The essence of narrative thinking is about organizing an experience around our perception, thought, memory and imagination" (Kim, 2016, p. 156). Narrative thinking is all about creating a story based on an authentic lived experience of an individual (Kim, 2016). Additionally, according to Kim (2016) and Chase (2003), a key procedural aspect in conducting narrative inquiry requires a procedural plan known as a narrative schema in which the linking and organizing of important information and experiences provided by the participants assists with the examination and analysis of causal relations which leads to both sense and meaning making based on the information and experiences. I accomplished this through my semi-structured interview process. In order to represent the stories of my participants I chose to use thematic analysis to link and organize the important information extracted from their stories.

Mason (2010) posited that a sample size of 6-12 participants is adequate for a qualitative research study. I first reached out to between 20 and 27 African American superintendents to be

a part of my research study via email, referrals from the California Association of African American superintendents and administrators, and referrals from other superintendents that I personally know. Once I had confirmation from the superintendents that they agreed to be a part of my research study I then confirmed and set a date for us to meet in order to conduct the interviews.

Recruitment

All participants in my study were enrolled via an official written email that described the purpose of my study, background, statement of the problem and my positionality. A statement of informed consent was provided to the participants, and once I received the signed informed consent, I scheduled the interview. My sampling technique was purposive in that I deliberately chose African American superintendents in traditional public K-12 school districts, most of whom were in the position at the time of the study and some of whom were retired.

Interviews

The hallmark of a great interview method is one in which responses are evoked that are significant enough to generate stories that help accomplish the research purpose and answer the research question, keeping in mind that the interviewee has important knowledge that the researcher is seeking (Kim, 2016). According to Narayan and George (2012), a good interviewer doesn't just ask questions but also listens well in a way that encourages the participant to not hold back in telling their story in a genuine way and that engages in a reciprocal exchange by responding to each other's questions that may not arise until the actual interview exchange takes place. However, another critical aspect to the interview process, in order to gain the most authentic and relevant data to answer the research question, is the establishment of trust and

rapport by showing genuine care, interest and respect for the dignity and integrity of the participants as well as maintaining attentiveness, responsiveness, empathy and integrity during the process to the highest extent possible (Kim, 2016). I established this trust and rapport at the outset before we began interviews by being willing, open, honest, vulnerable, and positive in my demeanor with the participants of the research study during the recruiting process as well as in setting the tone for the actual interview. I also let them know up front that they were always free to tell me how things were going and to make any requests for adjustments to the process. Morrisey (1987) asserted that sensitive questions should be deferred until trust and rapport is most assuredly established. There are several aspects of the narrative interview phase that Kim (2016) described as critical to keep in mind as the process is conducted. I scrupulously and conscientiously followed these phases as I conducted my narrative inquiry research interviews. The first one is the narration phase in which the interviewee and researcher are exchanging in listening and storytelling, and the second one is the conversation phase where questions, clarifications, and connections to the theoretical/conceptual framework are co-constructed through continual discourse and dialogue (Kim, 2016). I was able to successfully do this with my participants.

The interviews were semi-structured with the use of nine questions that built upon one another with further follow up questioning by both me as the researcher as well as the participants. The interviews were video recorded and transcribed with the use of Zoom. Once I had the interviews transcribed, I did member checking and had them read it over to double check for accuracy and to also make sure that they were comfortable with what had been transcribed as far as the contents and accuracy (Gay & Mills, 2019). Additionally, I applied the two-sentence

format technique (Morrisey, 1987) by preparing statements that went along with the questions. According to Morrisey (1987), this technique is good for establishing rapport and is conducive to collaboration as well as the co-creation of an oral history with rich details. Please see Appendix A for the interview questions.

Demographics

All of my participants provided information about their years of experience, their education, their background/upbringing, how many years they served in public school education, which positions they served in, their career trajectory, significant career accomplishments, how long they served in the superintendency, as well as any other relevant technical information that pertains to the job and their experiences.

Debrief

I debriefed the experience at the end of the interview to ask them about the process, how they felt things went, and if there was any relevant feedback in regard to the process for how it could be improved upon or revised. They were informed of the member checking process for how I wanted to double check for accuracy and verification of the interview transcript (Guba, 1981) along with the theories and inferences being applied (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, I asked the participants about what they believed were the next steps or future implications for research studies on this topic.

Measures

I asked the participants questions about the superintendent interview process, the recruitment process, how the candidates came to be recruited, what that process looked like from the beginning with the initial posting of the actual position, how they found out about the

position as a vacancy, to the requirements to apply for the position, the invitation to interview for the position, as well as the interview process and final decision as to the outcome of the interview process itself. Additionally, I asked the participants about their stance on their own positionality, factors that contributed to resilience, how many times it took for them before they finally were able to obtain the position, and their explanation for why it took as many or as few times as it did to obtain the position, especially if they obtained a second superintendency. Participants were also asked about the role of race in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process and if there were any perceptions that race played a role and if so to what extent. I also asked the female participants if they believed that gender and race played any role in their recruitment, selection, and promotion to the superintendency. Lastly, the role of contract negotiations, mentoring and mentorships was also asked of the participants in so far as what role it played in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process.

Interviews

Each superintendent candidate was interviewed at least once and sent written correspondence with pertinent follow up questions that were tied to the research purpose. The interviews took an average of 90 minutes, and some were longer. However, if I had to come back for any reason because we either ran out of time or if there were follow-up questions, I requested an additional interview.

Analytical Plan

Credibility has to do with how believable the research data is based on how well I as the researcher articulated the manner in which I went about effectively and thoughtfully navigating through complex problems and issues within the research study as well as by identifying patterns

based on the data of the research study (Gay & Mills, 2019). Some of the ways in which I as a

qualitative researcher enacted credibility was by doing participant debriefing, data triangulation,

data collection in the form of field notes, establishing structural corroboration/coherence within

the participant/researcher dialogue, and establishing referential adequacy by delineating between

what is being told in the narrative by the interviewee and what is being retold or restoried by me

as the researcher (Guba, 1981). Transferability is the use of authentic and real descriptions by the

researcher to help readers to know and discern the setting in which the research took place (Gay

& Mills, 2019). Transferability was enacted by me as the researcher by collecting descriptive

data and developing detailed descriptions based on the context of the interview (Guba, 1981).

Dependability and confirmability are two terms somewhat related to one another in the sense that

dependability can be confirmed (Gay & Mills, 2019). Dependability and confirmability were

enacted by me as the researcher with the use of audits, triangulation, and reflexivity, all of which

has been described within the previous sections addressing interviews as a data gathering

measure (Guba, 1981). Since my research method was primarily qualitative, I used narrative

inquiry as well as inductive and deductive methods to make sense of my data. I also looked at

my original research question to see how well the data answered that question as well as how

they were related back to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks (Shenton, 2004).

The raw data in the form of transcripts was read and re-read multiple times and was

coded according to the characteristics and tenets of the theoretical and conceptual framework in

order to identify emergent categories and themes including similarities, differences, frequency,

sequence, correspondence, and causation (Hatch, 2002). I paid special attention to etymology,

language, and terms that described the participants perspectives of their career and employment

experiences, and I used a text search to identify frequency of words to identify emerging themes and patterns. The themes and patterns that emerged from the superintendent interviews were compared to what exists in the literature regarding themes and patterns.

The lens of data analysis was objective, analytical, subjective, and interpretive because I wrote interpretive comments as I interviewed as well as when I read an interview transcript, always looking for where I could excavate a story based on a plotline or thematic structure, along with social and cultural referents (Kim, 2016). I also used word or short phrases to turn them into codes, then into categories, then themes, and then patterns (Kim, 2016). This process alone helped me to uncover things that were perhaps, according to Kim (2016), unconvincing, uncertain, perplexing, surprising, disappointing, or even counterintuitive. Nonetheless, this process of data analysis happened multiple times with the use of description and discovery based on a sound analysis that classified information and emerging themes and provided interpretation of findings related to the literature as well as theoretical concepts and frameworks such as critical race theory and Asante's (2009) 5 principles (Kim, 2016).

Figure 3

Using Theory to Construct Meaning From a Story

Macro-Level Theory
(Asante's 5 & CRT)

Meso-Level Theory
(Narrative Inquiry)

Micro-Level Theory
(Transactioanl,
Transformational and
Social Justice
Leadership)
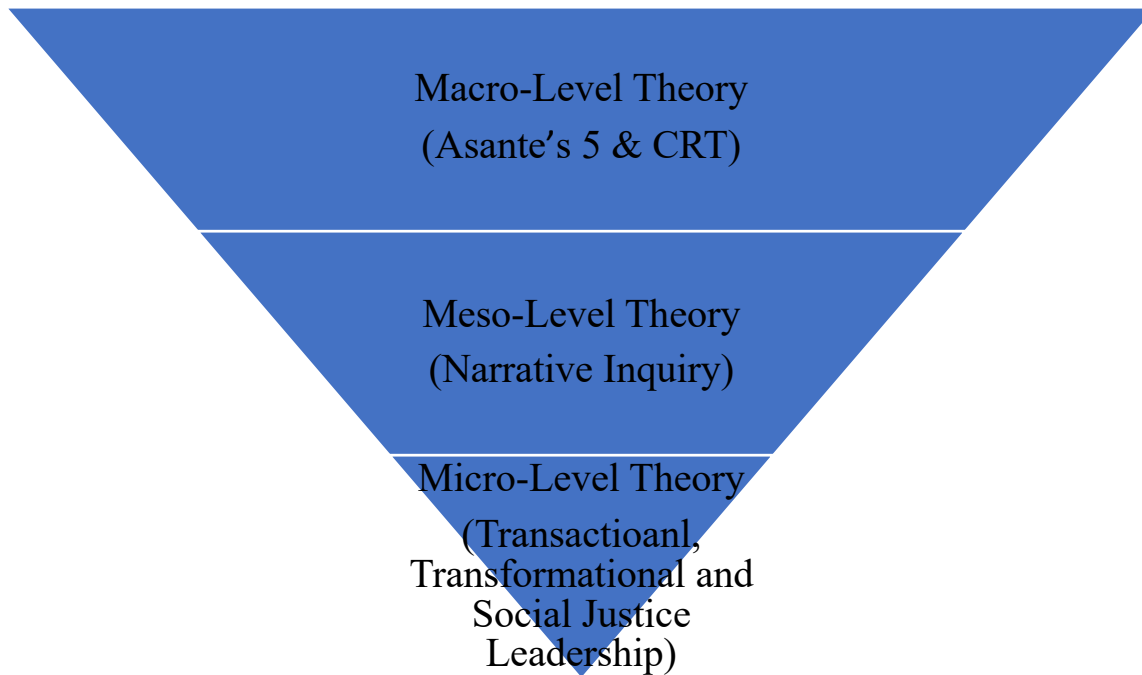
Note: Adapted from *Understanding Narrative Inquiry*, by J. H. Kim, 2016, Sage Press (https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/understanding-narrative-inquiry/book240868), copyright 2016 by Sage Publications.

Polkinghorne (1995) utilized a term called analysis of narratives, which is a process of analyzing paradigmatic cognition to determine themes and patterns based on recurring elements that appear over and over again. Furthermore, this process of story collecting in the form of a narrative is both inductive and derives from previous concepts and frameworks, all of which is conducive to generalizing new knowledge (Polkinghorne, 1995). I utilized the same process of analysis based on stories that I collected from the interviews. Additionally, after each interview I composed analytic memos in order to contrast the bigger picture meaning related to themes as well as the personal meaning being derived from the interview participant perspective (Kim, 2016). I utilized what Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000)

referred to as broadening and burrowing in which the interview data was utilized to construct a coherent story and restorying with the use of general descriptions of the interviewees, their values, their character, and their social/cultural milieu as well as how they navigated their feelings and understandings with dilemmas, events and certain situations and how those experiences influenced their viewpoints about their lives and their work.

Interviews

The data of the actual interview question responses as well as the interview questions were coded thematically according to the tenets of critical race theory and Asante's (2009) 5 principles of the Afrocentric method of generating new knowledge.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to the design of this research study. I do want to point out that some critics of narrative inquiry as a qualitative research method believe that storytelling within a narrative method is unscientific, non-empirical, lacks transparency of what the method is, lacks theory and academic rigor, lacks narratology, and lacks integration of theoretical perspectives and frameworks for conclusions (Kim, 2016). According to Gay and Mills (2019), qualitative research aims to understand and make sense of data from a particular phenomenon through an interpretative analysis that does not necessarily involve the use of numbers. Rather than utilizing numerical methods (quantitative data) and interpretation, the researcher instead utilizes a participant observer interaction approach within a social setting whereby data is collected in the form of interview narratives as a means for interpretation and making meaning from what the data provides. Context, situation, and setting are key within qualitative data collection because they are the means for how the data is used to make meaning. Interpretation and implications are

usually made after all of the data is collected (Gay & Mills, 2019). Furthermore, qualitative

research is more of a process of inquiry in which both inductive and deductive reasoning is used

to describe, categorize, and interpret the phenomenon that is being studied (Gay & Mills, 2019).

Being able to describe patterns and make meaning from those patterns is critical to the validity

and quality of qualitative studies. Quantitative research on the other hand does start with a

hypothesis and research methods that are used to collect data for the purposes of testing and

interpreting the hypothesis (Gay & Mills, 2019). Quantitative researchers can exercise controls

and manipulation of their research studies whereas qualitative methods cannot do so. Qualitative

research studies usually take place in natural and uncontrolled settings in which the researcher

works with participants and subjects over longer periods of time through interviews and

observations (Gay & Mills, 2019).

The key characteristic of the narrative approach has to do with interacting and listening to

the stories that a particular individual has to tell about their lived experience or experience in a

particular setting over an extended period of time (Gay & Mills, 2019). Narratives result from

this type of research. Moreover, participants for this type of research are deliberately and

strategically selected for the unique experience that they have to offer (Kim, 2016). It is of

importance to point out that the participant number samples are usually smaller than in

quantitative studies (Gay & Mills, 2019). The researcher also acts as a data gathering instrument

for categorizing and sorting the data in order to make meaning based on the themes that arise and

evolve from the actual collection of the data (Gay & Mills, 2019). What is so important about

this particular aspect of this research characteristic is that the research and findings tend to be

organic and unmanipulated, which lends itself more towards increased validity and credibility for

relevance in real world settings, as opposed to that learned from controlled and manipulated settings and environments within the quantitative research methods (Gay & Mills, 2019).

However, there is a trend in research in which more and more realization is happening to show that scientific understanding of human phenomena is flawed (Kim, 2016). Furthermore, according to Kim (2016), qualitative research methods such as narrative inquiry help to understand complexities that cannot be understood in purely scientific studies and that both qualitative and scientific research methods should have equal consideration. Polkinghorne (1988) asserted that we must always know that, when conducting narrative inquiry, meaning is not easily understood and that interpretation is not as precise as in scientific studies due to the subjective nature of a narrative inquiry, which is interpretive based on subjective criteria at times. Meaning is made based on perceptions, remembrances, imagination, recollection, and introspection of the interviewee who is telling the story, all of which can be difficult to investigate (Polkinghorne, 1988). A social justice researcher is more likely to choose a qualitative approach to research due to the fact that there are no preconceived notions, theories or assumptions that are fixed as the researcher embarks upon the task (Gay & Mills, 2019). The way in which this relates to social justice is that in order to understand and make sense of phenomena that happens to marginalized and oppressed groups and individuals it takes an "outside of the box" approach that requires an open mindedness to discovery, approach, and interpretation without any assumptions or pre-conceived notions. This is critical because oftentimes the explanation and interpretation of experiences of the marginalized and oppressed cannot be explained with fixed and traditionally derived scientific methods and hypotheses. At

times these methods and hypotheses can pose a bias which undermines the validity and quality of the research in describing and explaining the phenomena.

My sample size was limited to 17 superintendents across the United States in suburban, urban and rural areas with experience in traditional public K-12 school districts, which excluded charter school systems and private school systems. Additionally, my positionality as an African American administrator and aspiring superintendent influenced the ways in which I viewed this research as well as the ways in which I interpreted this research because I have had personal career and employment experiences that were similar to the participants. It is also important to note that I also interviewed retired superintendents who were no longer in the field. However, there were a lot of similarities in the experiences of current and retired African American superintendents. It is my hope that the superintendents who were in the position at the time of the study were honest with me in their responses without fear of any negative repercussions to their job position or status that may come along with the publication of this research study. However, I made sure to reassure them that they would not be identified and that pseudonyms would be used to tell their stories.

Conclusion

In summary, I conducted a qualitative research study by interviewing African American superintendents in order to learn about their perceptions with regards to their career and employment experiences as well as the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to becoming a superintendent. This method was selected in order to give voice to a population that has been largely left out of scholarly research studies. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, there is not very much scholarly research on the lived experiences of African American superintendents with

regards to their career and employment experiences (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Hodge, 2017).

Chapter 4 describes the findings with respect to the voices of African American superintendents, their career and employment experiences, and their perspectives surrounding the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to becoming a superintendent.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Background

This study focused on the experiences and perceptions of African American superintendents according to their career and employment experiences as well as the processes of recruitment, selection, and promotion to the superintendency. Specifically, the purpose of this research study was to understand why there is such under representation of African Americans in the superintendency. The findings of the study contribute to the body of knowledge and research literature for African Americans who are aspiring to the superintendency by providing current information to support their successful recruitment, selection, and promotion to the position as well as information on how to successfully navigate the process of being promoted to the superintendency. The findings presented in this Chapter add to the very limited knowledge about how African American educational leaders are recruited, selected, and promoted into superintendent positions as a prominent social justice issue worthy of additional research and consideration.

Research Question

In order to add to the current research literature on this topic of African Americans in the superintendency, I have selected the following research question:

What are the career and employment perspectives and experiences of African American public-school superintendents in the United States?

In order to answer the research question, I interviewed 17 African American Superintendents (either currently employed or retired) from K-12 school districts across the

United States. This Chapter first presents summary information on the 17 participants, including information about the district(s) in which they currently or previously served. It then presents the findings from my analysis of those interviews organized by themes. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted via Zoom.

Participant Demographics

For this inquiry 17 participants were invited and participated in a study to describe their career and employment experiences as African American superintendents and to identify their experiences and perceptions about what they believe led to their recruitment, selection, and promotion. The demographic data of each participant is in Table 1. As Table 1 illustrates, the participants in this study possessed a wide variety of characteristics and experiences leading to their role as superintendent. There are several notable characteristics amongst most participants with regards to the previous roles they fulfilled before being offered the superintendency (See Appendix B). One of the most notable characteristics is that many of them have had roles as disciplinarians as assistant principals, directors of special education, and directors of student services, which makes me think about stereotypes with respect to how African Americans are perceived as suitable for dangerous and less desirable jobs that White educational leaders do not choose. Another notable characteristic is the differences between the men and women in that most of the men have had at least two different superintendencies whereas most of the women have only had one superintendency. All of the participants identified racial and gender perceptions as issues that have presented challenges and barriers in their career and employment experiences. Women discussed the significance of both racial and gender stereotypes in their employment experiences with regards to how they were perceived by others.

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant *(Pseudonym)	Gender	Years of Experience	Earned Doctorate	Region(s)	School District Type
Mike	Male	34	Yes	South; West Coast	Urban; Rural
Sheila	Female	32	Yes	West Coast	Suburban; Urban
John	Male	28	No—In progress	Midwest	Urban
Robert	Male	25	Yes	West Coast	Urban; Suburban
Trudy	Female	43	Yes	West Coast	Urban
Emma	Female	40	Yes	West Coast	Urban; Suburban
Jackie	Female	20	Yes	West Coast	Urban
Reggie	Male	21	Yes	South	Urban
Raymond	Male	30	Yes	Midwest	Urban; Rural
Robert	Male	28	Yes	South	Urban
Sharon	Female	28	Yes	South	Urban
Grayson	Male	30	Yes	West Coast	Urban; Suburban
Jesse	Male	28	Yes	West Coast	Urban
Brenda	Female	28	Yes	East Coast	Urban; Suburban; Rural
Tony	Male	27	Yes	Midwest	Urban; Suburban
Vince	Male	32	Yes	West Coast	Urban; Suburban; Rural
Joseph	Male	43	Yes	East Coast; South; Southeast; Northwest; West Coast	Urban; Suburban

Thematic Analysis

In order to understand the shared experiences and perceptions of African American

superintendents, I conducted a thematic analysis of the interview data, supported by documents I

collected from the participants including their resumes/CVs. In the sections that follow, I present

the findings of my analysis organized according to five themes present in the data: (a) influence

of racial and gender stereotypes and assumptions on career and employment experiences; (b)

commitment to social justice; (c) the importance and influence of mentoring and networking; (d)

navigating the contract negotiations process; and (e) the importance of spirituality and political

acumen in understanding the career and employment experiences of African American

superintendents. Each of these themes is informed by elements of Critical Race Theory and

Asante's (2009) 5 principles of the Afrocentric method of generating new knowledge as the

theoretical and conceptual frameworks for the study. Additionally, these frameworks are the

basis of analysis for how the themes are derived (Please see Table 2).

Table 2

Structural Framework for Analysis by Theme in Relation to the Theoretical/Conceptual Frameworks

Theme 1	Framework
Influence of Racial and Gender Stereotypes and Assumptions on Career and Employment Experiences	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism, Imaginative Structure CRT-Storytelling, Counter storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Permanence of Racism, Whiteness as Property, Critique of Liberalism, and Interest Convergence
Theme 2	Framework
Navigating the Contract Negotiations Process	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism CRT-Storytelling, Whiteness as Property, The Permanence of Racism, and Experiential Knowledge
Theme 3	Framework
The Importance and Influence of Mentoring and Networking	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism, Imaginative Structure CRT-Storytelling, Counter storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, and Critique of Liberalism
Theme 4	Framework
Commitment to Social Justice Leadership	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism, Imaginative Structure CRT-Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Counter storytelling, The Permanence of Racism, Critique of Liberalism, and Interest Convergence
Theme 5	Framework
The Importance of Spirituality and Political Acumen in the Career and Employment Experiences of African American Superintendents	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism, Imaginative Structure CRT-Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, The Permanence of Racism, and Whiteness as property

Note: Adapted from ''So When It Comes Out, They Aren't That Surprised That It Is There'': Using Critical Race Theory as a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in Education," by J. T. DeCuir and A. D. Dixson, 2004, *Educational Researcher, 33*(5), pp. 26–31 (https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X033005026), copyright 2004 by Sage Journals; "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," by G. Ladson-Billings and W. F. Tate, 1995, *Teachers College Record, 97*, pp. 47-68, (https://www.unco.edu/education-behavioral-sciences/pdf/TowardaCRTEduca.pdf), copyright 1995 by Columbia University; from "Images and Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping, and Teacher Education," by D.G. Solórzano, 1997, *Teacher Education Quarterly, 24*(3), pp. 5-19 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/23478088), copyright 1997 by California Council on Teacher Education; from "From Racial Stereotyping and Deficit Discourse Toward a Critical Race Theory in Teacher Education," by D. G. Solórzano and T. Yosso, 2001, *Multicultural Education, 9*(1), pp. 2–8, (https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.817770), copyright 2001 by Multicultural Education.

Theme 1: Influence of Racial and Gender Stereotypes and Assumptions on Career and Employment Experiences

All 17 of the participants in the study described similar ways in which race impacted their recruitment, selection, and promotion to the superintendency. For example, interview participants described how racial stereotypes, often intersecting with gender stereotypes, were prominent in how they have been treated by others in their career and employment experiences. One participant noted, "As an African American woman people are going to put you in categories such as the angry Black woman or the mammy Black woman that will keep everyone happy." Another participant shared, "Because if I'm giving less than 200% then I must be a lazy Black woman." This comment was made with regards to this superintendent not attending one community event on a weekend after which they which received criticism from the school board. This experience was compared to that of a White male colleague superintendent who was encouraged to do self-care on the weekend and did not have to attend every community event that happened on a weekend or throughout the week. Among African American male participants in the study, a common sentiment was feeling like they were viewed as disciplinarians able to "Clean up a district," as one participant said. He continued, "I think a district may think that they need a Joe Clark—you know—the *Lean on Me* [1989 film] guy." Another participant by the name of Mike said the following, "We have to run twice as fast, be twice as strong, and we have to be better than the best. You got to. It's not fair but it is reality." According to Mike, not only do African American superintendents have to be conscientious of racial stereotypes with regards to why they might be promoted to a superintendency, but they also have to be aware that they are going to be expected to work harder than someone who is White, which is related to the tenet of critical race theory of the *permanence of racism* (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This is also related to the first principle of the

phenomenology of location by identifying the source of these experiences as well as the fourth

principle of *uncovering masks* to reveal what is rooted in a principle of power, position, and

privilege (Asante, 2009).

One of the key reasons why the participants said that this is so important to be aware of is

because these racial and gender stereotypes are relied upon for how school boards and search

firms look to recruit, select, and promote African Americans to the superintendency. In

reviewing the resumes of the participants of this study, the stereotypes of African Americans as

aggressive, discipline-oriented, or caretakers for others were apparent. Most participants

previously had served in roles that required them to be disciplinarians such as Director of

Student Support Services and Assistant Principal in which they were in charge of all of the

processes for suspensions, expulsions, truancy, child welfare and attendance. Emma discussed

how African American female superintendents are viewed by some school boards as a "kinder,

gentler" alternative to hiring an African American male or White male to fill the role. She

described the perception of African American female superintendents as "warm demanders" and

reliable leaders but noted the "trickiness" of the identity politics involved. According to Emma,

these perceptions about race and gender with regards to African Americans play a very

significant role in the recruitment, selection, and promotion to the superintendency.

> And so, for Black women. You know, for Black men. It could be. I don't want a Black
> man. I'm going to pick a young White guy because they come off as equity warriors and
> they say all the right things and have beliefs and values that are consistent with what the
> board needs, but it looks kinder, gentler, you know, that's a thing. It's tricky Black
> women can be selected if you have the feel of a warm demander so you're like somebody
> who's kind but doesn't look too soft, but at the same time, you can push and demand and
> move work because people will think you can direct or lead in a way that that feels
> affirming to others and supportive of others, but strong enough. And you have the

backbone, or the spine enough to not take any crap. But it's tricky. You know, like you're the person who will be able to work with the Union, to get something moved or whatever that particular thing is. You're the one who can stand in that community meeting and take a bunch of hits, and because you have big broad shoulders, even though your shoulders are tiny you've got shoulders broad enough to hold that hundred-pound weight that folks feel you can hold.

As seen in Emma's quote above, racial and gender biased stereotypes really do play a role in how African American male and female educational leaders are perceived as candidates for superintendent employment opportunities.

Another research participant by the name of Sharon had a different perspective to offer about race in gender working in her favor as an African American superintendent.

Your race and gender many times, can work for you and or against you, depending on where you are certainly. I think in Smiths County, especially there is a long history of hidden racism hidden and overt racism. Yes, I do think that there's always kind of these forces and powers working against you because you're always having to prove yourself. You're always proving I should be here. I am qualified even though I didn't necessarily raise my hand for the job.

Sharon also talked about her race and gender working in her favor because in her current district they wanted an African American superintendent to lead the district in a nurturing manner. However, Sharon also talked about an experience in which racism played a very prominent role in the termination of an African American superintendent. "He went to jail for perjury. It's not like he was stealing from the system. They told him not to do this work that he was doing. He did it anyway. Then he lied about it." Sharon said that she knew of White superintendents that did much worse. "And he went to jail for that. But I can tell you other White people have done more, and they have not served any time for it." Sharon further went on to describe an experience that she attributes directly to racism when one of the school board members talked about how the African American superintendent as well as the African American administrators serving under

him ought to be disciplined. "Hang them high and call all the Village in to see." What was so disturbing about this quote from the school board member, according to Sharon, is that this reminded her of the way that African Americans have been lynched in the South and where entire racist white communities were called out to come see the actual lynching take place. Sharon was in fact demoted and one board member said to her as the decision was announced, "This is like watching a lynching." This decision was especially difficult for Sharon because she had worked so hard to improve the school district and sacrificed her own well-being at times, and she went on to talk about how there is already a different and more difficult work ethic expectation for African American educational leaders. "It's about the black tax. We're always having to pay more. We have to do twice as much and work twice as hard to get half as much, and it is the tax that we have to pay."

The quotes and experiences discussed in this section also speak to several tenets of critical race theory. Each of the participants are engaging in storytelling, counter storytelling, and experiential knowledge by discussing, describing, and analyzing their own experiences with racial oppression (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Secondly, the quotes of this section speak to whiteness as property as well as the permanence of racism by describing how White superintendent candidates have privileges that only they can take advantage of because they do not have to worry about or be concerned with fulfilling a stereotype expectation as a condition of an employment offer nor do they have to be concerned with white supremacy as a barrier to their recruitment, selection, and promotion to the superintendency as compared to African American superintendent candidates (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Additionally, because of racism the consequences that are assigned for

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misconduct are completely different as told by Sharon in describing what happened to an African American superintendent that committed perjury and was given a jail sentence to serve for doing work he was not given permission to do, versus White superintendents that have stolen money and committed other crimes yet have not served time in jail for those acts. These quotes also speak to Asante's principles of phenomenology of location and diversity, because the participants are describing the location and sources of their experiences (Asante, 2009).

Participants described other ways in which assumptions about race impacted African American superintendents' opportunities. Trudy, an African American female superintendent, recalled a conversation between her district's former outgoing superintendent and a school board member following the outgoing superintendent's announcement that Trudy was planning to apply for the superintendent position in the district. Trudy recalled the following being told to her by the outgoing superintendent: "If you get the position, we want you to know in advance, we will not support Dr. Knight becoming the superintendent, we will not support an African American. That is what exactly came out of his mouth. Then I said, did they say why? And he said, because this is a predominantly Hispanic district, and we believe that a predominantly Hispanic district needs to be run by a Hispanic." The quote above is an example that race is a barrier to African Americans from obtaining the superintendency. Similarly, John described how race often trumps experience in hiring decisions, "I've seen where even though you might have a Doctorate degree, this White man just has his master's degree and he's gonna be the superintendent before you. This is because he's White." This is an example of whiteness as property that allows Whites greater access to the superintendency (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The stereotypes and assumptions related to race and gender encountered by participants in this study are examples of the permanence of racism in which racism is an ordinary part of life for people that descend from marginalized and oppressed backgrounds specifically due to their race, which is one of the key tenets of Critical Race Theory. Every individual that I interviewed had doctorate degrees with the exception of one individual whose doctoral degree was in progress. So, African American superintendents place a high priority on the need to earn a doctoral degree in order to be invited to the opportunity to become a superintendent due to the fact they know that they must compete and be better prepared and more qualified than their White counterparts.

Educational researcher Derrick Bell (1980) is responsible for another tenet of Critical Race Theory known as *interest convergence* in which Whites are supportive of racial justice and progress if it is beneficial to Whites. Most of the research participants named an experience in which they were hired or promoted because there was a perceived advantage to Whites for hiring an African American to the position. For example, one African American superintendent named Mike shared:

> A lot of us are put in districts where they're not going to be able to find a White male or White female superintendent to take over that district. And when you can't find people that are Caucasian to take those districts, they fill those in with African Americans. I think that happens a lot.

Mike's sentiments were similar to those of several other participants, particularly when discussing recruitment by search firms. 13 out of 17 (75%) of the participants in this research study said that they had an experience with recruitment to the superintendency with a search firm. When searching for a new superintendent most school boards use search firms to recruit and select superintendent candidates. According to most of the participants there were issues

related to race with the recruitment, selection, and promotion process. A key challenge and obstacle that was identified by Sheila in regard to increasing the pipeline of more African Americans to the superintendency had to do with search firms. She emphasized the importance of diversity within search firms. She noted,

> Having a search firm that appreciates diversity in a very real way; not like we made a shirt that says we love diversity and they don't do none of their practices that reflect that. Because we're not automatically considered, so if you have a search firm that even within itself doesn't have diversity, it's gonna be very hard for them to recruit. And there's still that good old boys club. It's still very much there. And I realized as far as search firms, though, we don't even get invited into those I'm calling like stables because search firms have their go-to people already formed.

According to Sheila, the search firms lack diversity, are predominantly led by White males, and often do not even place African Americans in their initial line up of candidates. African Americans are usually only considered when Whites do not want the position or are difficult to recruit. Similarly, Trudy affirmed the power held by search firms and the importance of diversity within the firms: "These recruitment firms, they hold a lot of weight. Because they can present certain things to a board, and it could sway the board's perception of a candidate. They have influence." Trudy recalled an example of when a very large and popular urban school district was searching for new superintendent and how they refused to go with a very popular search firm because of their lack of diversity. She said, "They couldn't get the contract because the board was astute enough to say: Your members of your search firm aren't diverse, so we don't believe that you look for diversity in your recruits." This criticism led the search firm to hire recruiters of color, which also led to more candidates of color for the superintendent position. The most significant thing that I learned from Trudy about search firms is that because search firms have such influence over boards in how a board perceives a candidate, they have

tremendous influence in which superintendent candidates are brought forth to go through with the selection, promotion, and recruitment process. Another participant by the name of Mike also said the following with regards to his promotion to the superintendency: "Search firms have stables and because I was the only sitting superintendent applying for the job, I got the job." Mike said that if there were other sitting superintendents who applied for the job who were White, they would have more than likely been recruited by the search firm recruiter. It is very clear that recruiter involvement makes a difference in the process. This example also speaks to several tenets of critical race theory such as whiteness as property, the permanence of racism, experiential knowledge, interest convergence, and storytelling (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Additionally, Mike described the following about his experiences with racism from the south versus the racism that he has experienced in California, "I can deal with overt racism. But not covert racism like when I saw the White superintendent only promoting those that looked like him." This quote was in reference to an experience that Mike had when was working hard to be promoted from the principalship to a district office director job. More specifically, what he witnessed is seeing White males being promoted to district office administrator jobs which also got them promoted to the superintendency quicker. This is another example of Asante's phenomenology of location as well as uncovering masks (Asante, 2009).

Looking beyond initial recruitment for a superintendent position Sheila shared that when it comes to African American superintendents getting a second chance to do the job after being terminated or resigning there are very clear and distinct differences in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process.

> I think it's still systemic racism and the search firms look at the White person that has resigned or is let go as a problem as a mismatch with the board or community mismatch.

> Not a good fit. You hear that all the time. But when it's a person of color, especially if it's an African American female, they didn't have the skill set. They just go straight to they didn't have the skill set. So that's just how things are done.

A majority of the research participants also affirmed the quote above which clearly speaks to not only how African Americans are perceived when the things do not go well between the school board and superintendent but also to how African American women in particular are judged even more harshly. According to most of the research participants, the permanence of racism and racial animus is a key driving force that leads to racial hatred and more harsh outcomes for African American superintendents when they are terminated.

Most of the research participants said that African American males have a much higher chance of being recruited, selected, and promoted to a second superintendency and that an African American female is likely not to be able to be recruited, selected, and promoted to a second superintendency, which also speaks to another tenet of critical race theory known as the *critique of liberalism* (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The critique of liberalism advocates for a race-conscious approach as opposed to the thinking that racism can be ignored because it is assumed that we live in a colorblind society where equality and justice for all exists. Sheila's quote above also exemplifies storytelling, the permanence of racism, experiential knowledge, and whiteness as property (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

One of my research participants by the name of Raymond had the following to offer with regards to the white privilege and whiteness as property when it comes to obtaining the superintendency.

> Whites have nine lives when it comes to the superintendency and Blacks get no forgiveness or second chances, which has also led to the lower representation of African

Americans to the superintendency. And White women are five times more likely to obtain a superintendent job than a Black person that is just as qualified and, in some cases, more qualified.

Additionally, Raymond said search firms are likely to recruit African Americans to a district with changing demographics or a predominantly black school district. However, in one school district with changing demographics resulting in a larger black community, Raymond was told that they did not want to hire a black superintendent because that would signal to the community that the community was changing. Raymond offered the following, "White superintendent candidates don't have to settle when it comes to their choices of a district because they can go anywhere." Raymond also said that he only works with three search firms when he has an interest in a superintendent job because he knows that most of them are biased in how they recruit, select, and promote African Americans to the superintendency. Raymond explained that "being a large and assertive Black man has not worked in my favor with some of the search firms." Raymond stated that when he has not been moved further beyond the first round of interviews in the recruitment and selection process by the search firm, he has been given feedback about the reason why, and one of the reasons is that he came across as aggressive in his interviewing style. This also speaks to Asante's principle of seeking to uncover the masks behind the rhetoric of power, privilege, and position that establishes myths (Asante, 2009) in how being a big Black man that is assertive contributes to the myth of being perceived as aggressive rather than what he truly is, which is assertive. Raymond discussed his experiences related to microaggressions that he would attribute to race.

> I've had experiences where people go to other administrators in the district rather than me circumventing the process and not seeking permission to do certain things. It puts you in a position where if you put your foot down and say no, so why are you behaving this way, then you become the bad guy. They in essence force you to be a benevolent leader.

Raymond ascribes these microaggressions to race because when he asks his White counterparts to see if they have experienced these microaggressions, they often report they have not experienced these things before. Raymond said that when speaking with other African American superintendents about these experiences he has found his experiences to be very similar to many other African American superintendents.

Robert recalled an example of interest convergence when he was recruited by a white search firm to a district that he described as, "troubled with a majority of students of color and lots of dysfunctional issues to deal with such as poverty, fiscal insolvency, and high turnover." In following up with Robert about what he exactly meant by this statement he said that it means that an African American superintendent will more than likely have to start their career in a troubled school district and prove their skills and worth before they will be considered for a higher performing school district with elevated socioeconomic status. Robert used an analogy to describe this context by stating,

> As an African American you might have to start off by coaching low status football teams like the Detroit Lions and the Cleveland Browns before you get to coach a higher status team like the San Francisco 49ers or New England Patriots.

Robert himself worked as superintendent in a lower-status district successfully for three years and then was hired for a superintendent job in a district with higher socioeconomic status closer to his home and in the county where he began his career. At the time of our interview, he had been in his new position for four months. However, Robert pointed out that, because of racism, White superintendents get their choice of top status, higher performing, and highly resourced school districts as compared to African American superintendents. This example can be related to the tenet of critical race theory that deals with whiteness as property in which Whites

inherently believe they are entitled to certain benefits and privileges that other racial groups

cannot and should not have access to (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Theme 2: Navigating the Contract Negotiations Process

All 17 of the participants in the study described similarities and differences in the

contract negotiations process. Most participants articulated some common perceptions about the

process that were attributable to race and gender. For example, Joseph, a retired Superintendent

with 43 years of experience and 5 superintendencies, which is the most years of experience of

any of the participants, summarized the essence of contract negotiations by stating, "There are

three components: money, benefits, job expectations and the conditions that I must do them

under. However, White men can much more easily get what they want than I can as a Black

man." Raymond shared something very similar to what was shared by Joseph.

> You can't ask for too much because the community is going to react a certain way if you
> are a Black superintendent and the type of district. You are clearly one of the top paid
> people of color in their community, and so you can't ask for what the White boys ask for.
> For example, I have had Black superintendent colleague friends ask for country club
> membership payments, car allowances, and bonus pay, and it backfired. If we asked for
> that kind of stuff it's going to backfire. It'll backfire, and we will be perceived as being
> greedy. When my buddy was in Miami, he asked for what was deserving of the
> superintendent of a district that size with a multi-billion-dollar budget, and they lost their
> minds when they saw what he was requesting on his contract. His response was, I do
> more than most CEOs in the city. Why wouldn't I have this? A Black man asking for
> those things is not welcomed. It is because society does not see us as chief executive
> officers. But when you talk about a chief executive officer who uses their financial
> acumen and their business acumen and their operational acumen to lead an organization,
> and it's 80% White women and men that's a whole different ball game.

Raymond also went on to tell me about an African American superintendent colleague that ended

up being declined a job offer by the school board because they did not like what he was asking

for in the contract negotiations process despite this individual resigning from his previous

employment to take on the job opportunity of becoming a superintendent. He ended up having to

sue that school district in federal court for what they did to him. Raymond concluded the story, explaining, "And here's the killer. So, then they hired a White guy and gave him more in the contract than the brother was asking for." The district offered the job to a White male, and they gave him more than what was asked for by the African American superintendent candidate. These examples speak to several tenets of critical race theory such as whiteness as property, experiential knowledge, and storytelling (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

The superintendency has been and still is predominantly led by White males who view the superintendency as their property right and so when a Black man is asking for something that a White man is naturally granted there seems to be a cognitive dissonance with school boards and communities in how they react and respond to a Black man asking for the same things that White men expect. Another participant by the name of Sheila had the following to offer with regards to this perception by saying, "Servitude, not service, is what is expected of me as an African American superintendent." This quote also relates to Asante's principles of cultural criticism by examining the etymological use of words and terms to know where an author of a story is coming from as well as locates the imaginative structure that an author is using to describe a system in which they work (Asante, 2009). According to Kendi (2017), the roots of servitude can be traced back to slavery in the United States and how African Americans were brought to this country as property for the purposes of servitude to Whites. Lastly, another participant by the name of John had the following to offer, "I don't think I got as much as I probably should have asked for but, there are a lot of things that I could have probably asked for more." When I asked John why he was reluctant to ask for more, he said that he did not want to

be perceived as greedy and that school board members can become jealous and envious of the superintendent because most of them will not and cannot earn the kind of money that a superintendent earns. Additionally, the permanence of racism and whiteness as property is what makes Whites believe they are more worthy of a higher status than African Americans simply because of race as well as the principles of the racist foundation the United States was founded upon (Kendi, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The perspectives that the women participants had with the contract negotiations process and experience was similar and different in that race and gender was identified as a challenge. Eight out of the 17 participants (47%) either had completed a second superintendency or were currently serving their second term as a superintendent and only one participants had done more than two superintendencies by completing five different superintendent jobs. Six of the 17 participants were women and only one out of those six (16%) women had a second superintendency compared to seven out of the eleven (63%) male participants who were either on their second superintendency or had already completed their second superintendency which corroborates a statement that was made earlier in this Chapter by the following statement issued by Trudy.

> There is a double standard, even when I hear people talking about their superintendents, there's a double standard. And if you look at trends and patterns African American superintendents, if they are terminated, very few of them get a second chance. White people, when they don't agree with the board, they resign or retire. They get second, third fourth chances but blacks, very rarely do they get a second chance and Black women especially. Rarely do they get a second chance.

Most of the African American women superintendents were very savvy when it came to the contract negotiations process because they took time to study and learn from the mistakes and

inequities that have happened with other African American women superintendents as well as female superintendents in general. A participant by the name of Jackie said that as a first-year superintendent she accepted exactly what was offered and she did not even think to negotiate until she found out from colleagues that she accepted a contract that was beneath her worth. Although she admitted that she had reticent feelings about going in and renegotiating her contract, "I just felt terrible about the idea of asking my all-Caucasian board for a raise and more benefits and how they would perceive me as a Black woman asking for these things," she still went in and asked for what she wanted and got everything she wanted because the board wanted her to be there. Of the one African American female superintendent that did serve a second superintendency she learned how to better negotiate the employment contract based on previous experience. Another participant by the name of Brenda said that "No candidate should ever attempt to negotiate a contract alone. Always use an attorney. If not, you can negotiate yourself out of a job offer."

Sheila's first and only superintendency taught her several important considerations with regards to the negotiations process for a superintendent employment contract. One aspect of the contract negotiations process that she described as a challenge was negotiating with people in the community that she had known for a long time and worked with and lived with whom during those times were not her bosses. However, there was a former colleague in human resources that Sheila knew who had gone on to become a superintendent and that individual connected her with someone that could assist her with negotiating her employment contract. "Well, I would like $25,000 worth of coaching support for the next…two to three years." This advice proved invaluable because Sheila was able to work coaching into her employment contract. Sheila said

that knowing how to negotiate a contract is important because most new superintendents don't

know what they can ask for, and she also said that superintendents have to be careful about what

they ask for in order not to be perceived as extravagant or greedy.

> What I find sometimes is that with the board whatever kind of experience they had before somehow carries into the next person. So, if they had a great experience for the superintendent, then the next superintendent has a really great chance. If they didn't, sometimes they're a little angry. And they're like, well, we're not going to be taken advantage of.

Sheila did note that her compensation was not as much as the previous superintendent because

the board found out that they were taken advantage of by the previous superintendent. However,

she was still able to work in the $25,000 of coaching into her contract. Sheila did not know about

how she could bargain for her workdays, retirement package, and she also found out that she

would have qualified for more compensation if she had obtained her doctorate degree. So, she

decided to pursue and earn her doctoral degree. Eventually, Sheila was able to earn more

compensation in her employment contract not only because she earned her doctorate but also

because she compared what other superintendents were being paid in the local area which

qualified her for annual 4% increases as well. Another aspect of her contract negotiation that

boded well for her was that Sheila was the first African American superintendent of the district

and the lowest paid in the area which, once that was noted by the board of education, they agreed

to increase her compensation. Sheila's experience speaks to the critical race theory tenets of

whiteness as property, experiential knowledge, and counter storytelling (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004;

Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), as well as Asante's principles of

phenomenology, uncovering masks, and using the imaginative structure to make sense out of an

experience (Asante, 2009).

For Trudy's second superintendency she used a third party to negotiate her contract. "And then I found out that you probably can get more, do more if you actually have a third party negotiate for you." This way Trudy believes that if the board gets upset about what's being asked for, rather than them being upset with her, they will be upset with the third-party negotiator. She went on to explain, "but when a third party negotiates for you, they bring in the comps. They bring in information." This is also important because it helps with not creating negative perceptions about the superintendent as being greedy and it keeps the process focused on factual information. Additionally, Trudy emphasized the importance of a superintendent candidate to take the time to learn about the board in order to become familiar with the culture, which can also inform a superintendent candidate in how to approach a school board with the contract negotiations process. She said, "You've got to study the board. Everybody has to study the board." When it came time to negotiate her salary, she asked the deputy superintendent to negotiate her salary. They had a very close working relationship, and he openly admitted to the rest of the management team that she was the best candidate for the job and that he would have chosen her. When the deputy superintendent went in to negotiate for her, he came out with everything that she wanted. Trudy attested, "he was with me for two years and he was loyal, and we would do joint management meetings together. And he said in one management meeting…I would have chosen her if I was the board."

I asked Trudy if there are any differences in the negotiation process by gender. Trudy said there are definite differences in how a superintendent is perceived by gender. For example, she said that women are perceived as too aggressive when they ask for certain things such as salary and benefits and that men are not perceived that way when they ask for the same thing.

"There is a gender difference in how you are perceived. You are perceived as too aggressive as a female. Now things are changing, but they haven't changed yet. So, let's don't fool ourselves. They have not changed." Trudy said that there are stereotypes at play in the minds of the school board members and especially among boards that have more experience. For instance, she explained, "If it's a more seasoned board, they just think that the woman…your husband gonna take care of you. You don't need as much. You know, there are these stereotypes in the back of their head." I shared an anecdotal story with Trudy about my former supervisor who is now a retired superintendent and how she does consulting work with female superintendents advising them on how they should negotiate and ask for what they want rather than settling for what is offered initially by the school board. My former supervisor told me that women tend to settle for less and are not as confident about asking for what they want like men do. Trudy said that she can completely relate to this experience because this is how things were for her when she negotiated her first superintendent employment contract.

> And actually, what she said, is what actually happened is in my first one. I wanted the job and it was really critical times, but there were men probably and some women across the state. Knowing it was critical times, they still came in and asked for what they wanted, you know. But I didn't and then I learned from that. And so, for me, I don't want you just thinking I'm greedy when I know I'm just being fair. So, it's better to just have somebody go in. I used my male deputy assistant superintendent of human resources to go in and negotiate my contract and I got everything I wanted.

Sharon had the following to offer which was very similar,

> Well, for my first superintendency, the board chair, who was very kind, very nice. He's the one who told me to apply. But he's an attorney. And he also said to me that he I didn't think I needed an attorney because I already had a substantial contract. Meaning, why would I want any higher pay when I already had a substantial contract, and I said, but you want me to become superintendent at the same pay as chief academic officer? For female superintendents, we tend not to be as assertive, so you don't have to be if you get an attorney, you get somebody to be the pitfall for you. But people are expecting you

to just be kind of grateful and I do think that that has everything to do with being black and being female like, well aren't you just grateful to be at this table, you know, like, you certainly can. Do you really want to get into all of this? Yes, Absolutely I do.

Sharon used an attorney to negotiate her contract and she got everything she wanted.

According to Emma contract negotiations are, "about the protections that you put in place for yourself that hold you strong later. Because that time will come. It will come when you have to, when you have to divest, or you have to part ways". This is what has to be in writing as far as what governs how a board and superintendent are to part ways. Salary and benefits are secondary considerations according to Emma because they are not the most important statutes within an employment contract. As far as actually negotiating the contract Emma decided to have two male former superintendents, and her personal attorney to read over her contract through ACSA so they could help her to avoid some of the common mistakes and missteps that others have made. She explained,

> I had two men review it who had been superintendents twice. So, I had people who had been through it either screwed it up or learned from their first contract how not to mess it up in their next contract. And the reason I did that is because there could be some nuance. It could be one word in your contract that could blow it for you when you make that one decision that a board asks you to do or you can't do. Because even something you can't do is a decision if it's based on your values.

Emma was very emphatic about how contracts must be negotiated in a manner that protects the superintendent and provides clear guidelines that govern what is going to happen when the time comes for a superintendent and school board to sever ties because it binds both parties to the agreement in the employment contract. Another reason that Emma cited for using two men to negotiate her contract is because women are often taken advantage of in ways that men are not. However, she had these two men negotiate her employment contract by having them extract

comparable data between several local school districts in regard to salaries, benefits, mileage, and stipends, and from there the two men went in and negotiated from that vantage point of asking for what other superintendents in the area were receiving so that what she was asking for would seem fair and reasonable. Emma also made sure to examine the budget of the school district to make sure that what she was asking for was reasonable.

According to Emma the contract is what preserved and protected her when it came time for her to end her employment as a superintendent. However, she also wanted me to know that there are differences in how White males negotiate their contracts, which usually includes getting exactly what they want with protections and a high salary regardless of the context of the budget or how others might perceive them. She stated, "A lot of White guys don't care about that stuff, they'll be like, I'm gonna take the highest salary and protect myself." This example and quote exemplify the meanings of *Whiteness as property and experiential knowledge* (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), based on what was shared from the superintendent's personal experience and first-hand knowledge with White males. These experiences are also connected to what was said about the reason that most of my female participants utilized attorneys and White males to assist them with negotiating the terms and demands of their employment contract in order to ensure fair and equitable treatment. These experiences all coincide with what the research says about the challenges that African American female educational leaders are likely to encounter and experience (Alston, 2000, 2005; Moorosi et al., 2018; Revere, 1989; Wiley et al., 2017).

Two participants identified the importance of defining working conditions and clearly defined roles between what the board members and superintendent does within the terms of the employment contract. For example, Robert had the following to offer,

I had a board member who'd live on Facebook, and every time a negative comment came up about the district or something she would screenshot it and send it to me. I'm talking at 6am on a Saturday, you know, calling me Sunday morning and all hours of the night. Three, two in the morning emailing me about stuff. So, what you don't want is you don't want the board member to start trying to solve that complaint going down talking to the principal. So those are things that you can put in the contract on how we've got the board-superintendent relations.

Similarly, Joseph had the following to offer, "School boards are not honest about what they want done, and they do not tell you about what could happen that will piss them off which is all the more reason to have a clearly defined employment contract." When I asked Joseph to further expound upon what he meant by this statement he told me that sometimes they like to micromanage the superintendent by being directly involved in taking actions that are really the job of the superintendent to execute. For example, Joseph talked about an employee that the board was not happy with and one of the board members took it upon themselves to confront the employee. According to Joseph, "If you hire me to drive the car you may not place your hands on the steering wheel. However, you may tell what direction to go, but you cannot do the actual driving."

Several of the participants also stated that school boards are especially known for micromanaging African American superintendents as if they cannot be trusted to be autonomous. Reggie had the following to offer with regards to this issue, "I remember being once asked if I was sure that I didn't need the board's help to evaluate an employee and if I should have one of my White assistant superintendents do it instead." Upon further explanation with context Reggie said that he found out that White employees were intimidated to be evaluated by the superintendent and they had gone to a board member to request another evaluator. According to Reggie he was described as "intimidating" without any concrete examples to illuminate why he

was being perceived and described in such a manner. Reggie also said that when he discussed this with his White assistant superintendents about what employees were saying to them about why they did not want to be evaluated by the superintendent he said the only answer he was given is that his presence was "intimidating" without any concrete examples to justify any fears. All of these experiences are in line with what the literature says about whiteness as property, the permanence of racism, and experiential knowledge (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) as well as Asante's principles of phenomenology, cultural criticism, and uncovering masks of power, position, and privilege (Asante, 2009).

Theme 3: The Importance and Influence of Mentoring and Networking

All 17 participants of this study affirmed and confirmed the importance and influence of mentoring and networking for African American superintendents as well as aspiring African American superintendents and educational leaders. Some of the participants described the importance of having a same race and gender mentor and others said that sometimes the race and gender of the mentor does not matter. Sheila believes that mentoring is a significant influential factor for African American superintendents and educational leaders to be successful, and a key reason she cites for this is the short tenure of African American leaders as well as a lack of adequate preparedness and guidance. She explained, "I think that, first of all, we have to make sure that we are primed and ready for a seat at the table because no one's going to speak for Brown and Black students like we are." When I asked Sheila to further expound on what she means about being primed she said,

> We have to be able to have a seat at the table. We need to be able to have the same tools to bring us there. We have to make sure that we're not narrowing our scope as far as who we ask to be our mentors for guidance and help. When I became superintendent, I had

gone to an organization to ask for support, and I received nothing. And it was a lot of division within the group. And that's when you need to kind of wrap around and say what do you need. How's it going, you know, what can I help you navigate, I'm just checking in to make sure you still have a job. Because we are in and out of these roles quicker than any other person or any other race. We definitely should make sure we have good mentors that can prime us and help us with the tools that we need so that we can be even invited to the table.

Sheila described an example of two African American superintendents that she was friends with for several months and the next thing she heard was they either resigned suddenly or were placed on administrative leave and released from their employment contract.

According to Sheila, the lack of mentoring, guidance, and lack of strong organizations that support African American educational leaders is contributing to the underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency as well as the short tenure that many African Americans experience in the role of superintendent. Additionally, Sheila added that she has had positive and influential mentors that were not black and were not necessarily female. However, she still believes that each circumstance and situation is unique in that sometimes individuals can in fact benefit from having a mentor that is of the same gender and race because of the unique situations and circumstances a person can encounter due to their race and gender. For example, Sheila had a female mentor that was not black who encouraged her to pursue her career as an administrator and helped to negotiate her first superintendent contract. Sheila's perspectives are in line with the critical race theory tenets of whiteness as property, the permanence of racism, storytelling, and experiential knowledge (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), as well as Asante's principles of phenomenology, cultural criticism, uncovering masks, and identifying the imaginative structure of the author by analyzing their use of words to describe their experiences (Asante, 2009).

According to Brenda, having a mentor that is the same race and gender has been very helpful in facilitating her success as a female African American superintendent,

> Yes, I have three mentors, all African American female superintendents. One is retired and two are sitting superintendents. I also meet every Sunday with a group of female superintendents from around the United States. An influential mentor checks on you weekly and is able to communicate with you on issues regarding finance, school board relationships, moving student achievement forward and forming partnerships with the community and community members.

Similarly, Tony said, "We need to network better and have a network system that supports our success." According to Grayson, "Mentors and coaches help us to see what we don't see, and they help us to successfully navigate our course based on their own personal experiences that led to their success." Similarly, Joseph said, "We need to pair up aspiring African American superintendents with sitting superintendents, which will help more African Americans that aspire to the superintendency to be able to do so." Jesse advocated for an internal and external system for mentoring African American superintendents as well as African Americans aspiring to the superintendency. More specifically, he had the following to offer, "Besides competence, African American superintendents as well as aspiring African American superintendents need sponsorship by someone who is 100% vested in their success and gets them connected to other networks that will help them to advance their career goals."

Trudy has had several influential mentors, and they were not African American. The first mentor that Trudy talked about was her superintendent from a time when she was serving as the assistant superintendent. She said that what made him special was that he never asked her to remain in the shadows and always provided her with opportunities for her leadership to shine brightly for others to see, which paved the way for her to pursue the promotion path to the superintendency. Trudy's superintendent had even allowed her to take a paid week of work to

complete her dissertation because "The former County Superintendent said that he believes new superintendents need a mentor." Trudy's second mentor that she talked about was a former superintendent who was a retired, White male working for a search firm, and was now Trudy's new coach. Trudy's mentor met with her once per month and assisted her with some of the challenges she was having with the board by actually visiting a board meeting and studying the culture so he could advise Trudy about what to do. Lastly, Trudy mentioned someone that she considered a side mentor that she worked with on a subcommittee on the state level who gave her advice about how to garner community support by maintaining a positive reputation in the community and thereby increasing her chances of longevity in the superintendency.

> When you are innovative, when you do something, let the community know, he said, because it's harder to get rid of you when everybody says, oh, why are you trying to get rid of her, and she helped with this and that. In some situations you got to put it out there. And it really did help because they're going to think twice when you've done so much that the community is watching."

Organizations like the California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA) helps to prepare aspiring African American educational leaders by offering mentoring networks, mock interviews, and career advancement workshops. Trudy has worked with this organization and believes that this is one organization that can help to increase the pipeline of viable African Americans to the superintendency. She explained, "I think it's been very successful because you have seated superintendents and also…former superintendents just talking about leadership, and I think that it begins by building leadership in the principals." Trudy also believes that, along with central office support, principals can be built up and prepared to successfully pursue the superintendency.

We need to work more with board members because board members are the ones that appoint superintendents and hire so we need to make sure that we're training them to be equity warriors, as well as how you really support a superintendent.

Emma has had several influential mentors that have been both African American and White. Both mentors were males, and Emma considered them to be good mentors because they were very encouraging and supportive of her with her career endeavors and provided her with strategies and tips that helped her to successfully move up with each position. Additionally, they taught her things about how to negotiate her contract as well as how to think like a board member with making decisions as a superintendent in a manner that would be favorable for the things that she wanted to do as the superintendent. She stated that they helped her, "In how to think about a board not just sucking up to them and kissing up to them, but the importance of communication and knowing a board member." This advice was very helpful because it helped Emma to strategically know how to prepare presentations, including what type of data to use and what type of communication style to use in order to be successful with her board members. She learned that "when you did that, you by and large walked away from a meeting making folks happy." Emma said that mentors, in addition to providing good advice on how to lead, also can help a superintendent protect themselves, their self-esteem, and their integrity when they have to leave the position. One of the things that Emma does in retirement is she mentors administrators, and one of the things she encourages them to do is to protect their mind, body, and spirit and to take care of their physical health.

> Because you could get the beat down and you will get the beat down in many different ways. The micro aggressions are cumulative. Yeah, they can take their toll on you. If you're not careful, and these microaggressions are in some way environmental to the system itself. It's kind of like racism for Black men and Black women is everywhere, right. It's in the air you breathe, you know it's there. It's toxic because they put a plant in

your community, but you also know it's toxic because it's environmentally invisible in the way people believe and think about your leadership. It's in the way they think and believe about you as a Black person.

In asking Emma about future steps to take to increase the pipeline of viable African American leaders into the superintendency as well as about the challenges and obstacles for aspiring African American superintendents to be keenly aware of, Emma had a lot to offer, saying, "It's formal and informal networks and it's doing great work all the time." When I asked Emma to further elaborate what she meant by this, she said it's about being consistent in doing excellent work and that when an individual is consistent in doing excellent work it promotes a positive reputation, which leads to recruitment to leadership positions that eventually lead to the superintendency. She continued, "And you'll also have evidence which you always need evidence of your leadership as you move into applying for those for those higher positions." According to Emma, aspiring African American superintendents should also have a doctoral degree because not having an advanced degree can present a challenge and barrier to achieving the superintendency.

> You're setting yourself up right now for those jobs with your doctorate, all of that is going to matter because they'll pull your application because it says Doctor even though every board member doesn't have a doctorate. Or half of them don't. And even though the prior superintendent, who is White only had a masters we all know how that goes but that's okay. When they say Dr. Perry, people are going to lean in.

It is through this process of earning a doctoral degree that others know of the character that one has to get it done. Emma explained,

> It means that you had the stick-to-itiveness and the grit and the perseverance and the character to do the hard work of a giant paper. It means that you were able to do these interviews, tabulate the data, write a big old long essay and defend it to somebody. That's

what it means and that grit and stick-to-itiveness more than your dissertation itself is what will hold you. And what will give you leadership positions for forever.

Emma wanted me to know that another reason why there is low representation of African Americans in the superintendency is because they either do not have a doctoral degree or they started one and did not finish, which leads to being viewed negatively by those in charge of hiring and recruiting superintendents. She said, "No one will fault you if you apply for these jobs with just a master's degree no one will fault you. They will fault you if you have ABD (All But Dissertation) on your resume." Emma also shared with me that although there are superintendent jobs that require doctoral degrees for Whites that they still have a higher chance of being recruited to the superintendency with a master's degree than an African American person. "You could probably get a superintendency with a master's, and a lot of people have Black and White, more White than Black." However, Emma once again emphasized the importance of having the highest qualifications possible in order to be recruited to the superintendency. "But when you're picked, when you're selected, you want it. You just want to ensure that you are just as strong and as tight as you can be."

Mike has a unique perspective about the need for mentoring for African American superintendents and those that aspire to the superintendency by comparing the mentoring organizations and network of support systems for African Americans with Latino organizations and mentoring networks. Organizations that provide opportunities to dialogue and mentor are key as well, according to Mike.

> African Americans need to organize to support and mentor one another like Latinos do. For some reason there is a fear amongst some African American educational leaders that if they share the secrets of success, it is somehow going to take away from my success.

However, he said that a lot of African Americans that aspire to the superintendency do not understand the game of how you win the superintendency and that most importantly, he believes this exists due to the fact that more mentors are needed to guide aspiring African American educational leaders which, in turn, will increase the pipeline of viable African Americans to the superintendency. According to Mike, good mentors allow you to be vulnerable so you can ask the right questions that will help you to be successful. Good mentors can be African American or not. However, Mike said there is a certain comfort that one can take when provided with the opportunity to speak with someone that looks like you and not having to worry about race as a barrier.

John's perspective about mentoring was slightly different than many of his colleagues in that he emphasized the importance of making the education profession more appealing to African Americans. John described his experiences with mentoring and networking in several different ways. John has had mentors as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and as a superintendent. However, his current group of mentors, whom he really just considers as more colleagues that he can trust, are other African American superintendents that are male. John said that there are only three African Americans superintendents in the county in which he is employed, and all of those superintendents are male. These colleagues are described as trusted friends that he can call for advice about how to do certain things, handle certain situations, bounce ideas off of and just to check in and be a little vulnerable. One colleague in particular is described as an experienced superintendent of 10 years who has worked in several districts and helps John with things that he's never heard of or encountered before. John does believe that if we had more mentoring relationships and networks that we could see more African Americans

represented in the superintendency, stating, "There needs to be some mentorship taking place. So that you know people will have that desire to want to get into the superintendency and end up staying in that position." John also said that we need to do a better job of making education and educational leadership more appealing to African Americans.

> I also think that boards of education need to be educated on African Americans in general so that they can go in with an open mindset to be open to hiring somebody who is African American. School boards need to be educated that there are strong African American educational leaders.

Although John doesn't have any experience in working with search firms, he has heard from other colleagues as well as several African American superintendents that he interviewed for his doctoral study that the search firms are gatekeepers and can be a barrier to increasing representation of African Americans in the superintendency.

> They're not even looking at making sure that the population of teachers are a match of their kids. What I mean by that for example, like I told you earlier, I don't have any African American teachers. I got a bunch of African American students.

The participants who talked about the importance of having a mentor that looks like them are in alignment with the critical race theory tenets of the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, the critique of liberalism, experiential knowledge, storytelling, and counter storytelling (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The examples of racist educational leaders who do not believe in promoting African Americans to educational leadership positions as well as the lack of access to leaders about what knowledge is needed to advance in those careers is related to the permanence of racism as well as the whiteness as property. The stories that are being shared by African American leaders in these examples also relate to the critical race tenets of storytelling, counter storytelling and experiential

knowledge. The critique of liberalism relates to these examples in the fact that just because there are laws in the country that are antiracist that does not mean that those in positions of authority comply with those laws intended to perpetuate equal access to job opportunities and, therefore, African Americans need organizations led by those that look like them in order to help them to successfully navigate and pursue their career goals and endeavors. All of Asante's principles are at work in these examples as well because they describe the phenomenology of location and diversity, cultural criticism with the etymological use of words, uncovering masks behind the rhetoric of power, privilege, and position in order to establish how myths are created, as well as knowing the attitude, language, and meaning of the phenom that is expressed by interactions, institutions, and events within a system of politics (Asante, 2009).

Theme 4: Commitment to Social Justice Leadership

All 17 of the participants were able to articulate the importance of social justice leadership and the various ways they have enacted social justice leadership in their various roles as educational leaders and teachers. However, some of the participants were more committed to this work than others, and some of them described the dangers of social justice work as leaders of color with regards to their career and employment opportunities. Additionally, some of the participants described how social justice work, as well as the advocacy for social justice work, has led to their desire to pursue the superintendency as an opportunity to perpetuate social justice work and meeting the needs of equity to ensure that all students, especially African American students, have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. They also advocated for and described the need for more leaders of color because leaders of color are more likely to engage in social justice work aimed at improving equitable outcomes for students of color. Many of these

leaders intentionally have worked in urban areas, socio-economically disadvantaged areas, and areas with predominant populations of students of color that have been largely underserved.

Sheila has enacted social justice leadership by providing antiracism, anti-hate, and antibias training for students as a principal, and she partnered with local businesses and corporations to create a science lab for her school that was predominantly black and brown. As a superintendent she has created an equity in action plan that is intended to put systems and practices in place to improve equitable and inclusive practices. Additionally, she has advocated for support to remove barriers for students of color to be able to access Advanced Placement and honors classes by looking at other criteria for selection other than just test scores and by providing additional support such as boot camps and additional tutoring so that students of color can be more successful in those Advanced Placement and honors classes. She shares that "The times in my role where I have decided to be my most authentic self, I have been the most successful." Sheila said this in regard to doing social justice work because it is a part of her authentic self which she attributes to the success of the social justice initiatives she has led.

> And I think that calculating the risk is always important because of who we are, you know, and we are African Americans in educational leadership and I think that's like part of our DNA. But, people will grant you grace when you have spent the time building relationships.

Sheila stated that when people know that you are an honest and transparent leader it leads to more trust and that even though social justice work comes with political risks individuals will extend grace because of how relationships have been established with honesty, openness, and transparency.

As a teacher Robert taught at inner city schools that needed social justice advocates, and Robert says that he has always been a social justice advocate. Robert said that he has instituted implicit bias and other important workshops about understanding where students come from, their neighborhoods, and how those factors might impact outcomes for those students as well as what can be done to make a positive difference. Throughout his career, Robert has always asked questions about how the data cannot be so predictive, especially for special education students. A specific incident that Robert recalled was when he had an African American special education student transferred from a school to his school for behavior reasons. He saw that the White teacher was behaving in a racially biased manner, and he held the teacher accountable for the behavior by ensuring that the teacher treated the student fairly.

> The White teacher is basically practicing her bias against this kid. So, I then have to hold the teacher in check. Social justice is about doing what's right and using positionality to correct a wrong. So, when it comes to social justice when you can stand alone because of something that's right or wrong.

Robert also said it's about making sure that one has enough information to make an informed decision and questioning systems to see whether or not they are producing equitable outcomes.

Trudy has enacted social justice leadership in multiple ways by creating opportunities to increase equity for students from marginalized backgrounds and by working with others to carry out initiatives and innovations and allowing them to lead the work. Trudy shared that

> I have enacted social justice leadership by bringing forward conversations and creating spaces for people to identify where biases exist and were systemic policies are as well. So I've been involved in changing policies that end up impacting people of color at a different rate.

Trudy has been involved with organizations for African American superintendents, leaders, and African American and English Learner parent advisory councils. Trudy has advocated for the

creation of cultural clubs at schools that create a sense of belonging for students of color, and she

has also involved faith-based community organizations to go into schools to have dialogues

about social justice. State conferences have also been a resource used to enact social justice in

which Trudy has been able to bring in guest speakers to talk about topics of access and equity in

her district as well as driving the work of equity teams that she created in her district. When I

asked Trudy if she's ever come across any trouble in promoting equity work, she said that she

has and that one of her strategies has been to use Whites to do the work and be out front. One of

the best partnerships she had was with the California Teachers Association. Trudy was able to

secure a $200,000 grant to implement unconscious bias training. She also was able to secure a

$200,000 grant from the National Education Association for classified staff to undergo the

training as well "so that when teachers are talking to teachers, teachers that look like them are

saying the right things." This way she was able to use White educators to talk to White educators

about unconscious bias and it was very well received. She went on to explain, "I noticed that

whenever I said something about the work. People will come after me pretty strongly whether

there was a board member saying those slight things. So, what I learned to do is get allies."

Trudy frequently used her White assistant superintendent who was unapologetic about equity

issues and work because he would be able to talk about things in regard to race that did not meet

with so much resistance.

> But he would be the face out there and they would say things to him that they wouldn't
> say to me, but he would put them in check, because he was a true advocate for equity.
> I've had to do a lot of things in the background. I mean I couldn't lead the work.

However, one thing that Trudy wanted to point out is that California is better than a lot of other

places because legislators are actually asking for equity work, and she also served on a mayor's

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council that was looking for ways to facilitate equity work. This perspective is further corroborated with what several research participants had to say as well.

Participants from the South had a different perspective about social justice work and equity. For example, Raymond said that Black superintendents in the South have been terminated from their jobs for advocating for social justice work: "I know of brothers and sisters who have caught some serious heat behind championing equity for Black students with predominantly White school boards." Similarly, Sharon had shared with me that she experienced this as well when she brought culturally responsive school leadership and proficiency to her district. More specifically she was told, "You are being racial by focusing on Black students." Sharon said that what she was trying to do was point out how Black students had the lowest reading scores of any student group in the district and that she simply wanted to help them to be equal with every other student group in the district.

Joseph shared an example from his district when he refused to advocate for an ineffective literacy program that was supported by one of his board members for students of color. Joseph said that the literacy program was not about helping students of color but was about helping that board member get a financial incentive kick back because the board member was friends with the publisher of that literacy program. Joseph refused to support the program because he wanted something that was socially just for students of color in his district, and, as a result of his lack of support for the literacy program that the board member wanted, he was slowly pushed out of his position as superintendent, leading to his resignation. When I asked the superintendents about why they felt their jobs were threatened because of enacting and advocating for social justice work they all had a very similar response in which they directly called it white supremacy. More

specifically, Sharon said, "As a White person that believes in white supremacy, they believe they are better than people of color and that when you are advocating for people of color, they feel that their position of power is being threatened and will ultimately put them at a disadvantage." This quote and experience speak to the tenets of critical race theory with regards to the permanence of racism and whiteness property (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Mike recalled a time that he had to cancel the anti-bias training that he had for everyone in the district because it was making Whites feel uncomfortable and threatened. Mike did not have any support from his school board, and he said that he wished he had done more to convince his school board to continue on with the training because it was helping some of the teachers to identify and recognize their own biases. Jackie said that school boards are likely to support leaders of color with enacting social justice work when it is advantageous to their political school board career and chances of re-election. This relates directly to the concept of interest convergence in that Whites are ok with advancing causes that benefit students of color if there is an advantage and/or benefit that will be enjoyed by Whites (Bell, 1980).

A very specific incident involving social justice that John recalled was when he wrote his back-to-school newsletter in which he talked about the police shootings and murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor from his individual perspective as an African American man. In the newsletter the superintendent said,

> I'm going to, you know, look out for the Black and Brown children in this district. I'm going to look out for all children, but I'm gonna make sure that I'm looking out for Black and Brown children because those are the ones being shot and killed and beaten. Every time that one of them steps outside the door every time my kids step outside the door if I step outside the door. I don't know what's going to happen.

When John's school board members received and read the newsletter they were, as John said,

"pissed." John's board members were very upset about what he wrote and also told him that they did not think that that was part of his job duties and that he should save comments like that for things that he talks about in his personal life. Nonetheless, he ended up all over social media for what he wrote in the newsletter, and he was told by his school board members that people perceived his comments as if they were being directed towards White employees of the district. "Now, do I think that some of them have racial tendencies or are racist? Absolutely. Absolutely, because I've had to deal with some of them. I've had to write some of them up." John had no idea just how upset he would make some of his school board members, and one board member told him that it was not the right place to do it in the form of a district newsletter. Another board member told him to take it all back, and John refused to do so. "I think that, you know, people in this district don't believe that there are racists in this world. Some of them are racist. They don't think that there is racial tension going on." I asked John if he's enacted any other social justice leadership in his various roles in his district, and he said that he has not for fear of removal. However, he did say he is thinking about other strategies and ways that he can promote social justice work in his district in slowly incremental ways.

Emma definitely thinks of herself as a social justice leader. In her role as a superintendent, she was always focused on ending racist and classist practices because she had experienced those things herself as she grew up. She stated, "Some of my greatest accomplishments have been both in high performing and underperforming school districts ironically around issues of justice and what's right for kids." Emma describes herself as a person that has always been about removing barriers. For example, she wanted to remove barriers for kids of color to be able take Advanced Placement classes, implementing college and career

readiness for all students, and creating and fostering a sense of collective community and responsibility. There was a partnership created with the federal government to open up a community wellness center on a high school campus as well as the creation of a three-tiered diploma system that allowed students multiple paths to earn their high school diploma. "So, you could come in with a freshman class of 500 and only graduate 100." Additionally, Emma redesigned an underperforming school to be more nurturing and conducive to positive outcomes for students of color by increasing graduation rates and getting more students to complete their A through G requirements in order to qualify for admissions to a four-year college. For Emma "Moving equity issues by policy have been really powerful. And then also things on both the operational and structural side." Some examples of this provided by Emma included ensuring that all students had safe and clean facilities that were modernized and matched to the same standards in the corporate world. Emma also ensured that her schools were staff with teachers and leaders that had a proven track record for getting positive results, and she structured professional development, communication, and initiatives in alignment with board policy. She explained, "Professional development and the communication lines were designed in such a way where I was getting that stakeholder input and it was cascading both either from board policy up and down the system."

All of what was shared by the participants in doing social justice work as well as the challenges they have experienced are related to the critical race tenets of storytelling, counter storytelling, experiential knowledge, the permanence of racism, and the critique of liberalism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The critique of liberalism relates to these examples in the fact that many of the school boards were ok with standard slow incremental changes that could be

related to social justice work, and interest convergence was at work if a social justice measure was being enacted that would have a positive political reward for school board members (Bell, 1980). All of Asante's principles are at work in these examples as well because they describe the phenomenology of location and diversity, cultural criticism with the etymological use of words, uncovering masks behind the rhetoric of power, privilege, and position in order to establish how myths are created, as well as knowing the attitude, language, and meaning of the phenom that is expressed by interactions, institutions, and events within a system of politics (Asante, 2009). These findings coincide with what was stated earlier in this study in that members of a historically marginalized group practice leadership through different filters of experience resulting in an understanding and practice that incorporates more multicultural or social justice practices (Santamaría, 2014). These findings corroborate with what the research says in that, when educational leaders of color are provided with fair opportunities to access educational leadership positions, such as assistant principal, principal, director, assistant superintendent, and superintendent, they are more likely to have a significant impact on closing achievement gaps for students of color (Khalifa et al., 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalil & Brown, 2015; Santamaría, 2014).

Theme 5: The Importance of Spirituality and Political Acumen in the Career and Employment Experiences of African American Superintendents

At least 9 out of the 17 participants spoke to the importance of spirituality in directing their work as well as their career and employment experiences. All participants talked about the importance of knowing how to navigate politically in order to be successfully recruited, selected, promoted, and retained in the superintendency. I did not ask questions related to being retained in the

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superintendency, but many of the participants wanted me to know how political the job is and how to be retained as a superintendent in the position for as long as possible. Although I did not have spirituality in any of my questions this theme still surfaced very strongly for many of the participants as the reason for why they have done and are doing the work that they do as well as how they have overcome challenges and obstacles in being promoted and retained to the superintendency.

Trudy discussed the importance of God in her work and career path when she said the following,

> My first contract. It was only for two years. It was a two-year contract and people said never take a two year. And I said, I know that God is with me. I'm not worried about the longevity of it. So, I went in and then right after 18 months they gave me a four-year contract.

Trudy said that she has always put her faith and trust in God when it came to any significant challenge or obstacle in her path. Even as Trudy was considering retirement after her first superintendency it was through prayer and prophesy that she felt led to pursue an elected county superintendent position.

> But all this was in God's hands because he was just directing my path. I was on my knees this morning, and the Lord spoke to me, and the Lord told me that you were thinking about retiring. So, whatever you're thinking about doing I just know he wants to use you some more. I wanted confirmation from the Lord. So, I said, Lord, if this is your will, that I run for this position. I want it to be unopposed. So, it's been a blessing. And I know that he put me here for a reason.

Everything worked out, and she was appointed to a county superintendency unopposed. This job also came at a time right before the pandemic and put her in a position to do social justice work in which she was able to help thousands of students to have access to the internet and computer devices that enabled them to do distance learning. Trudy recalled a time when she was about to

go into a difficult and controversial board meeting in which decisions had to be made to cut the budget and eliminate jobs, saying, "I have been cussed out in every language but at the end of the day, you better have God on your side. God has always had a hedge of protection around me." Trudy made it successfully through that board meeting without losing her job and with her integrity and reputation intact. Trudy also recalled a time when she was approached by members of the Mexican mafia who told her that they were watching her and were going to get her if she appointed too many African Americans to different positions in her district. She told them that she is an equal opportunity employer and that she does not make biased decisions. Additionally, she said she prayed about it and out of nowhere a Latino person she worked with in a former district reached out to her to ask her how she was doing, and she told that person about the threat from the Mexican mafia. That individual came out publicly with other prominent Latinos from the community to speak on Trudy's behalf as an equity warrior for all children and people. Trudy explained, "But see, the thing about it is when you do right by people you have allies to that they don't know you know you have allies." Another accolade that Trudy was able to utilize was her award recognition from a state association of bilingual educators for her distinguished advocacy for Latino children. She was the only African American in her state to receive such a recognition. She recalled, "So anyway, I ended up being a peace builder there, but it does affect how they see you differently. There are double standards, you have to work harder. I don't care what anybody says you have to work harder." Trudy never heard again from any members of the Mexican mafia.

Another example Trudy recalled about God protecting her was when she described how a board member who was very oppositional towards her did not win his seat for reelection within

one year of her time as superintendent and was in fact replaced by a board member that shared

similar spiritual beliefs and was very supportive of Trudy.

> But God had put her on that board, so don't underestimate God even in elections that
> could turn over, you might end up having a group that supports you. All you have to do is
> wait to the next election and let God do his thing.

Similarly, Sharon shared an example of how important her faith is to her when she was offered a

second superintendency after being in a district where she was associated with the former

superintendent who was an African American male that was terminated and jailed for perjury.

> That's why it has to be God. Right. There's no other explanation. Because for me to go
> through what I'm going through and for me to get another superintendency I'd be hard
> pressed to find another Black female superintendent who's been through what I've been
> through and has landed another superintendency. Black men do land other
> superintendencies. Black women never do.

John described his appointment to his first superintendency in a similar manner as well by stating

the following, "That was, that was a blessing. That was a gift from God that just came down on

me. I wasn't seeking it at all. God laid it in my hands." John was the only African American

male employed in his district and never thought he could have a chance at obtaining the job.

Jackie said, "You get tested a lot. And so, I will close my door, and I will pray, or I will read my

Bible and other books about God's promises towards me." Jackie said that God has helped her

get through so many challenges and harrowing situations as a superintendent.

Grayson said that although he has not had challenges with regards to his race or his

gender, he has had challenges due to his sexual orientation of identifying as a gay Black man.

Additionally, he had the following to offer, "I have definitely had my share of dirty looks and

negative perceptions with regards to my sexual orientation. However, God has protected me

through all of it and has always given me favor." Grayson also mentioned that every time he

applied for a superintendent job or an executive cabinet job his race or sexual orientation was never brought forth as an issue by anyone at the district, but he's had community members make negative comments about him not being married. However, that has never been a hindrance because Grayson has maintained an impeccable work ethic and reputation. "Whatever job God has ever intended for me to have no man has been ever able to stop what God has planned for me." What is important to note here is that these African American superintendents have battled against racism, sexism, homophobia, and white supremacy through their spiritual and religious beliefs in God. All of Asante's principles are at work in these examples as well because they describe the phenomenology of location and diversity, cultural criticism with the etymological use of words, uncovering masks behind the rhetoric of power, privilege, and position in order to establish how myths are created, as well as the parameters of the imaginative structure of knowing the attitude, language, and meaning of the phenom that is expressed by interactions, institutions, and events within a system of politics (Asante, 2009).

A salient theme that came across from most of the participants with regards to their career and employment experiences had to do with being politically savvy. Grayson said, "Black superintendents get dismissed for lack of political savvy." When I asked Grayson to give me a few more examples of exactly what he meant he said, "Knowing how to negotiate successfully with the teachers' unions, knowing how to build allies across the district and within the community. You must have a support base." Similarly, Tony had the following to offer,

> As African American superintendents we must know how to traverse the political landscape in a different way. We have to be astute of the land mines and be a relationship builder so that when a tough question or situation arises, we will know where they are coming from and how to relate to them.

Clearly, based on these statements, the knowledge and skill of political savvy involves high

levels of competence with interpersonal skills, relationship building skills, and positive problem-

solving skills. According to Joseph, "Carefully spending political currency is the skillful use and

knowledge of the ability to negotiate and navigate power to get things done based on an

individual's position." According to multiple participants, it is this lack of knowledge with

regards to political savvy that is one of the factors that has led to the under representation of

African Americans in the superintendency because this lack of skill is a factor that has led to

terminations for African Americans from the position and decreases the likelihood of selection,

recruitment, and promotion to a second superintendency. In Robert's words,

> And that's something to look for if you're gonna be a superintendent, because if you're going for a seven board, I would say no. I mean, that's just like because you got five people who are on the board because they got an axe to grind. Or they think they can do the job better.

Robert believes that it is more politically advantageous to work for a seven member board versus

a five member board because there are less potential problems with less board members to have

to contend with for the superintendent. Emma had this statement to offer with regards to the

importance of political savvy and the consequences of her political mistakes,

> So, it was not uncommon for me to say in a board meeting, say things like, I know who I work for. I work for kids I always put kids first doesn't bode well politically. I hope you realize that. You can't always live by putting kids first even in the minds of the community it's the trickiest thing, and particularly right when you do, you have a price to pay. And so that's what happened to me.

A key political mistake that Joseph made in his first superintendency was when he brought in a

lot of people from the outside and removed people who were already on the inside. He shared, "I

noticed after I did that that all of a sudden anything I ask for from the board came with additional

questions, additional scrutiny, and additional headaches that made it very difficult for me to do my job." These working conditions led to Joseph leaving his first superintendency in order to pursue his second superintendency.

Several of the participants also noted the benefits of remaining politically savvy as well as the importance of perceptions. For example, Robert said that he had been passed over for promotions to a principalship that he knew he deserved, and it took him eight years before he was offered his first superintendency. He pointed out the following that he believes led to most of his employment promotion opportunities,

> But how I reacted. You know, I had to be very strategic on how I reacted. I didn't pout. I didn't get upset. I didn't, you know, I didn't say woe is me and all that stuff. I just really kept grinding. Then I got an opportunity, and I got an opportunity to open up a brand new elementary school, within that district that you know just opened and the school grew from about 300 students to about 900 in a period of two years. I swear if I can give young African American administrators just any advice at all. Is because I never burned any bridges, because I never did woe is me, because I just always kept positive. But that same grinding attitude that I had such as, first in last out, very personable, all about kids, you know, just…what I've been at my core even back when I was a teacher, you know, just kept those same principles.

This disposition, positive attitude, and strong work ethic is what kept him going and perceived in a positive manner. Similarly, Vince attributed his promotions within his career and employment experiences to maintaining a positive attitude and strong work ethic. He said the following, "Always remember that as a leader you are auditioning every day and people are judging you to see if you should be promoted. Never burn any bridges because it can come back to haunt you." Emma shared a similar experience in that when it was time to part with her board the president wrote an outstanding letter of reference for her to apply for her next superintendent job. She attributed this support to the positive relationships she maintained with the school board, stating,

"No matter what I was always respectful, patient, positive, professional, and I always held to my most important core values." Additionally, Grayson had the following to offer, "School boards and teacher unions talk and because I had a positive relationship with the teacher's union it was a factor that led to me being selected for my second superintendency." Grayson also noted the following to underscore his point, "Strikes by the California Teachers Association are more likely to happen in districts led by African American superintendents." Sheila emphasized the importance of visibility and honesty with regards to political acumen: "Be visible, be everywhere, take advantage of those opportunities to build positive relationships and perceptions. I'm also very transparent and extremely honest."

Most of the participants also described microaggressions that they have to deal with and appropriate ways to respond. Vince said that when he attended a community event people thought that he was a server or entertainer, and he calmly said who he was and what his position was. Sheila recalled a time when she was asked the following by a school board member after being appointed to the superintendency, "Are you sure you can handle that big budget and are you going to be ok talking to those big-time executives of multi-million-dollar corporations in our city?" Sheila responded with, "Yes, I am great with math and budgeting, and yes as long as they speak English and not a language that is foreign to me." Both Jackie and Sheila, while visiting school campuses as superintendents, were mistakenly thought of as parents and were asked if they needed help and why they were roaming around. Jackie also said that she had been mistaken as a substitute teacher or secretary. All of the participants pointed out the differences in perceptions according to gender. For example, Robert said, "We have to be careful that we are not being perceived as a know-it-all or angry Black man or angry Black woman in how we

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respond to microaggressions." Robert also pointed out that, "Women superintendents as well as Black women superintendents get fired because of conflicts between people whereas men get fired for scandals and sexual harassment." Similarly, Raymond pointed out that Black women also get fired if they are perceived as too assertive. With regards to Black men, Raymond said that assertiveness is mistaken for aggression. These experiences speak to the tenets of critical race theory with regards to the permanence of racism and whiteness as property (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). All of Asante's principles are at work in these examples as well because they describe the phenomenology of location and diversity, cultural criticism with the etymological use of words, uncovering masks behind the rhetoric of power, privilege, and position in order to establish how myths are created, as well as the parameters of the imaginative structure of knowing the attitude, language, and meaning of the phenom that is expressed by interactions, institutions, and events within a system of politics (Asante, 2009).

Conclusion

The findings and the analysis of the findings discussed in this Chapter provide insight into the perceptions of the career and employment experiences of African American superintendents. The qualitative method of using semi-structured interview questions allowed the participants to not only answer the questions according to the interview protocol, but it also allowed for them to tell stories that provided meaning, interpretation, and insight of their experiences and to explain how those insights, meanings, and interpretations can be used to equip aspiring African American superintendents with the knowledge they need in order to be successfully recruited, selected, and promoted to the superintendency. The participants also expressed a desire to provide knowledge, wisdom, and insight about how African Americans can

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increase their chances of remaining as long as possible in their first superintendent job as well as what leadership, interpersonal, and technical skills that are needed, along with what steps to take so they can increase their chances of being recruited to a second superintendency. Through one-on-one interviews, the participants in this study have been able to tell their stories, revealing the findings discussed in this Chapter: the influence of racial and gender stereotypes and assumptions on career and employment experiences, the importance and influence of mentoring and networking, navigating the contract negotiations process, commitment to social justice leadership, the importance of spirituality and political acumen in the career and employment experiences of African American superintendents. I discuss these findings and recommendations for practitioners and for future research in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to expand on the current and very limited research pertaining to African Americans in the superintendency and to better understand the experiences of African Americans who have pursued the superintendency. Additionally, another purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perspectives of African American superintendents as well as the factors that they perceived that led to their recruitment, selection, and promotion. The research of the study aimed to clarify not only the role of race and gender in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process but also the role of race and gender within the career and employment experiences of African American superintendents and how they perceived the role of race and gender in their career in employment experiences.

African Americans make up 2% of all superintendencies across the United States despite being 12% of the population, which means that African Americans are significantly and disproportionately underrepresented in this top educational leadership role (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011). In California the statistics are also very similar in that out of 1,037 school districts only 26 are led by African Americans (CAAASA, 2017). Of the African Americans that actually do enter the superintendency, it was found that many often do not get a second opportunity to pursue another superintendency, especially female African American superintendents (Alston, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Wiley et al., 2017). The low representation of African Americans in the superintendency in the United States has been attributed to the bias and discrimination of racism and sexism by school boards and search firms,

lack of knowledge of the importance of political acumen among candidates, and a lack of adequate organizational networks and systems of mentoring that could increase the pipeline of viable African Americans to the superintendency.

The current research on African American superintendents and their perceptions about the recruitment, selection, and promotion process is small and very limited (Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Avelar-Lasalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000). A majority of the small body of research literature has focused on African American superintendents and their longevity by gender and region (Carrier, 2017; Donahoo & Hunter, 2005; George, 2011; Smothers, 2012). The limited amount of research for African Americans who have successfully pursued the superintendency highlights the need for more research to fully understand the career and employment experiences by examining and analyzing these experiences to know more about what led to their successful recruitment, selection, and promotion to the superintendency. Although there is substantial research, both qualitative and quantitative, in general with regards to race and racism in America, there is still very limited knowledge about the role of racism and discrimination that African Americans face in the process of becoming a superintendent.

In order to better understand the perceptions of African American superintendents with regards to their career and employment experiences this study examined how race, gender, political acumen, leadership skill set, and work ethic expectations impacted the recruitment, selection, and promotion of African Americans to the superintendency. The research question that guided this study was:

What are the career and employment perspectives and experiences of African American public-school superintendents in the United States?

I used a qualitative method approach that included semi structured interviews and narrative inquiry in order to understand the perceptions and perspectives about the career and employment experience of African American superintendents. I collected the qualitative data for this study by doing one-on-one interviews with both current and retired African American superintendent participants. Additionally, for each participant I collected data on the gender, years of experience, doctoral degree status, region of the country worked in, type of district worked in, and all employment positions prior to being appointed to the superintendency (See Table 2 and Appendix B). I analyzed the data through the lens of critical race theory as well as Asante's (2009) 5 principles of the Afrocentric method of generating knowledge. I coded the data through inductive and deductive analysis resulting in the following findings: (a) influence of racial and gender stereotypes and assumptions on career and employment experiences; (b) navigating the contract negotiations process; (c) the importance and influence of mentoring and networking; (d) commitment to social justice leadership; (e) the importance of spirituality and political acumen in understanding the career and employment experiences of African American Superintendents. Please see Table 2.

Table 2

Structural Framework for Analysis by Theme in Relation to the Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Theme 1	Framework
Influence of Racial and Gender Stereotypes and Assumptions on Career and Employment Experiences	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism, Imaginative Structure CRT-Storytelling, Counter storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Permanence of Racism, Whiteness as Property, Critique of Liberalism, and Interest Convergence
Theme 2	**Framework**
Navigating the Contract Negotiations Process	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism CRT-Storytelling, Whiteness as Property, The Permanence of Racism, and Experiential Knowledge
Theme 3	**Framework**
The Importance and Influence of Mentoring and Networking	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism, Imaginative Structure CRT-Storytelling, Counter storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, and Critique of Liberalism
Theme 4	**Framework**
Commitment to Social Justice Leadership	Asante's 5–Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism, Imaginative Structure CRT-Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Counter storytelling, The Permanence of Racism, Critique of Liberalism, and Interest Convergence
Theme 5	**Framework**
The Importance of Spirituality and Political Acumen in the Career and Employment Experiences of African American Superintendents	Asante's 5—Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering Masks, Cultural Criticism, Imaginative Structure CRT-Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, The Permanence of Racism, and Whiteness as property

Note: Adapted from ''So When It Comes Out, They Aren't That Surprised That It Is There": Using Critical Race Theory as a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in Education," by J. T. DeCuir and A. D. Dixson, 2004, *Educational Researcher, 33*(5), pp. 26–31 (https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X033005026), copyright 2004 by Sage Journals; "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," by G. Ladson-Billings and W. F. Tate, 1995, *Teachers College Record, 97*, pp. 47-68 (https://www.unco.edu/education-behavioral-sciences/pdf/TowardaCRTEduca.pdf), copyright 1995 by Columbia University; from "Images and Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping, and Teacher Education," by D.G. Solórzano, 1997, *Teacher Education Quarterly, 24*(3), pp. 5-19 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/23478088), copyright 1997 by California Council on Teacher Education; from "From Racial Stereotyping and Deficit Discourse Toward a Critical Race Theory in Teacher Education," by D. G. Solórzano and T. Yosso, 2001, *Multicultural Education, 9*(1), pp. 2–8 (https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.817770), copyright 2001 by Multicultural Education.

I used critical race theory as my lens to analyze, interpret, understand, and explain the data I collected. The data showed that every tenet (storytelling, counter storytelling, the critique of liberalism, interest convergence, the permanence of racism, and whiteness as property) within critical race theory (Bell, 1980; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) was utilized to analyze, interpret, understand, and articulate the data that I collected. Additionally, I utilized Asante's (2009) 5 principles (phenomenology of location, diversity, cultural criticism, utilizing the imaginative structure, and uncovering masks) of the Afrocentric method for generating knowledge (Asante, 2009) to make sense of and interpret what my participants told me. At times I was able to use both critical race theory and Asante's (2009) 5 principles in order to analyze, understand, and explain the data and at other times I used them separately.

This Chapter discusses the summary of the findings and is divided into the following five sections: (a) influence of racial and gender stereotypes and assumptions on career and employment experiences; (b) navigating the contract negotiations process; (c) the importance and influence of mentoring and networking; (d) commitment to social justice leadership; (e) the importance of spirituality and political acumen in understanding the career and employment experiences of African American superintendents. This Chapter also discusses recommendations and implications for aspiring African American superintendents, search firms that recruit superintendents for school districts, boards of education and recommendations for future research in the areas of increasing the pipeline of viable African Americans to the superintendency.

<center>**Discussion of the Findings**</center>

The summary of the findings will be discussed in the order of the five sections outlined above.

The Influence of Racial and Gender Stereotypes and Assumptions on Career and Employment Experiences

The findings were clear that African Americans who are current, retired, or aspiring to the superintendency have endured and will more than likely continue to endure racism and sexism, as well as extraordinary challenges and expectations for how they are to perform in their employment assignments as compared to Whites in the same position. All of these challenges can be expected to come from the board of education, search firms, subordinates, employees, and the community at large. Such findings coincide with what many researchers found about the history and legacy of racism and sexism in the United States and its impact on how African Americans are perceived by their race and gender (Alston, 2000; Avelar-Lasalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Sampson, 2018; Smothers, 2012; Wiley et al., 2017). The findings corroborate the recent research studies that suggest that race and racism is a contributing factor to the low representation of African American males and females in the position of superintendent (Alston, 2000; Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Smothers, 2012; Wiley et al., 2017). The challenges and difficulties that African Americans have had with aspiring to the superintendency as well as with having success while serving as a superintendent coincides with several tenets of critical race theory such as

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whiteness is property, the permanence of racism, storytelling, counter storytelling, the critique of liberalism, and experiential knowledge (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Ladson-Billings (1999) discussed critical race theory in education as a state of existence in which race matters in many areas as far as which racial group gains access to resources over another racial group. This phenomenon can be also attributed to the low representation of African Americans in the superintendency due to the fact that it is still very much a White male dominated position and White males as well as White females have much greater success and access to the superintendency, which also explains their over representation in the superintendency as compared to African Americans. It is actually the permanence of racism itself that leads Whites to believe that they should be predominantly in the position of the superintendency, and it also makes it a white property right (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Delgado & Stefancic (2001, p.17) defined racism as the following, "a means by which a society allocates privileges and status [and] racial hierarchies determine who gets tangible benefits, including best jobs, the best schools, and invitations to parties in people's homes." This relates to the power, privileges, and benefits of the dominant group and how they wield their power, privilege, and benefits to maintain the overrepresentation of White males in the superintendency as well as the underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency.

George (2011) also corroborates what Delgado & Stefancic (2001) are saying with regard to white privilege and how white privilege has created a hierarchy of privilege and exclusionary practices as well as a legacy of systemic racism that permeates itself into so many aspects of our society, including who is perceived as an ideal candidate for the superintendency. This also impacts the ways that search firms, school boards, subordinates, employees, and the community

at large view African American candidates, which has led to great challenges, obstacles, and barriers for African American superintendents as well as other African Americans who are aspiring to the superintendency. Additionally, according to Smothers (2012), the legacy of racism and historical injustices have a direct impact on the underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency. The stories that were shared by these African American superintendents in which they identified challenges, barriers, and obstacles that they encountered to the superintendency are also in line with Asante's principles of phenomenology, cultural criticism, unmasking meaning with etymological use of words, and locating the imaginative structure (Asante, 2009) in that what they shared generated knowledge.

Another finding that also coincided with previous research studies concerns the conditions that African American superintendents are likely to inherit when recruited to the superintendency, which tend to come with issues of poverty, internal conflict, predominant population of minority students, strife, high turnover, and the threat and/or risk of fiscal insolvency (Alston, 2000; Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Smothers, 2012). This is also likely to happen no matter how highly qualified the African American superintendent candidate is, including having an earned doctorate. These challenges and circumstances are extraordinary, and an African American superintendent is still be expected to turn things around quickly and perform at a very high level or risk being terminated. Another correlation found in the research that corroborates with the findings is that African Americans will sometimes be offered a superintendency in a school district that a White superintendent candidate did not want nor could be found to fill. Additionally, this also coincides with the finding that many African Americans, prior to their

appointment to the superintendency, did jobs in educational leadership that were considered dangerous and undesirable work such as Dean of Discipline, Director of Student Support Services, and Assistant Principal in charge of discipline, safety, and security. These roles have led to typecasting for African Americans if the school district needs a superintendent to fill a type of casted role or expectation. All of these conditions and experiences are examples that can also be further understood through the critical race theory tenets of the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, experiential knowledge, and interest convergence (Bell, 1980; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

A research study by Donahoo and Hunter (2005) corroborated with the findings that African American superintendents are more likely to be micromanaged by their school board and local politicians as compared to their White counterparts. Additionally, Donahoo and Hunter (2005) also went on to talk about how African Americans have been employed as a scapegoat or puppet for political agendas, which coincided with a finding about an African American superintendent who refused to do something unethical which led to her termination and being scapegoated. These terminations and scapegoating will inevitably lead to a negative reputation for the African American superintendent as he or she pursues their next superintendency. Regardless of all of these challenges and less than optimal conditions, African Americans have still persisted in their pursuit of the superintendency and have achieved extraordinary success.

Navigating the Contract Negotiations Process

With respect to successfully navigating the contract negotiations process the findings were very clear that there were differences between men and women in terms of outcome as well as the strategy and approach**.** The findings suggested that for the African American

superintendents that do get a second opportunity at the job it is very wise to hire an attorney or 3rd party to do the negotiating. One of the key reasons this strategy was advocated for was because the findings showed that both Black men and women were taken advantage of with their first superintendent contract. One thing that was common between the men and the women was that when African Americans asked for the same things that a White male superintendent asked for in their employment contract it was not received well. The expectation was that an African American should be grateful that they were even offered the opportunity to do the job. Women tended to settle for less than they were truly worth and therefore have chosen to go with an experienced male negotiator, an attorney negotiator, or a third-party negotiator.

Based on my interviews with the participants, I came away with a few takeaways regarding the superintendent contract negotiation process. Superintendents, especially new superintendents, need to have enough time to actually review their contract, as well as what is in that contract with clear, specific, and unambiguous language, so they can clearly know what it is that is expected of them and how the relationship with the governing school board is going to be managed and maintained. The contract should specify how long the appointment is, which should be at least three years, meet the need of the superintendent, and should have specific language that provides not only for contract extensions, but also for consistent salary increases and a salary that is comparable with what other superintendents receive in the local area. Lastly, there should be clear language concerning termination for cause as well as termination without cause that allows a buyout as well as health benefits.

Another finding that coincides with the research regarding contract negotiations has to do with interpersonal style and how individuals are perceived by race and gender based on

interpersonal style. For African Americans it is very important that the style and tone of communication be civil and humble. All too often Black men and Black women have been placed into categories according to their interpersonal style. African American men have been described and misunderstood as angry and aggressive. African American women have also been described and misunderstood as being too assertive which can be interpreted as aggressive and intimidating. However, this is why employing the third party to go in and negotiate on one's behalf is such a salient strategy that will increase the chances of an African American being promoted to the superintendency. One of the pitfalls that has happened in the contract negotiations process is that some African Americans have not been offered the job as a result of how they were perceived in what they asked for in the contract.

The fact that African Americans have to negotiate in a style and manner that Whites do not is problematic. However, this research study is about the perceptions of African American superintendents with regards to their career employment experiences in the recruitment selection and promotion process to becoming superintendents, which is why I believe this became an important point of emphasis for them to share. The fact that the women had to rely on men in order to ensure fairness with negotiating their contract is problematic as well. The experiences that both men and women have had with this contract negotiations process also coincides with what is in the literature concerning the biases and injustices that African Americans face according to race as well as gender (Alston, 2000; Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Bell, 1980; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Jackson & Shakeshaft, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Moorosi et al., 2018; Smothers, 2012; Wiley et al., 2017). Asante's principles of phenomenology, cultural criticism, uncovering masks, and identifying the imaginative structure

of the author by analyzing their use of words to describe their experiences are all in use as these superintendents have described their experiences with the contract negotiation process (Asante, 2009).

The Importance and Influence of Mentoring and Networking

The findings in this area were clear and significant in that African Americans are more likely to have success with being recruited, selected, and promoted to the superintendency but also are more likely to experience support within the superintendency if they are part of a strong mentoring network of other African American leaders in similar positions. It is important to point out that in order to be successful in the superintendency as well as recruited, selected, and promoted to the superintendency not all participants needed a mentor or network of people that were of the same race or gender. However, the majority of participants agreed that having someone to network with or to serve as a mentor of the same race or gender has been beneficial to their success. Unfortunately, due to racism, sexism, and gender bias, individuals have to continue to rely upon others that are of the same race and gender not only to be successful in the superintendency but to be successful with the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to the superintendency. Additionally, there are several research studies that coincide with the importance of having strong networking and mentoring relationships in order for African Americans to be successful in the superintendency (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Smothers, 2012).

The skills that African Americans can learn through strong mentoring and networking relationships are in the areas of interpersonal skills, fiscal and human resources allocation, political acumen, and how to maintain an above and beyond approach and reproach of a work

ethic. All of these things could be challenging and daunting for a new superintendent, and someone who is experienced and successful with the job can pass along beneficial knowledge. The findings are clear that, because the stakes are so high with a superintendent position, a superintendent must have others that they can trust, rely upon, and be vulnerable with. This also takes on an additional level of importance due to the high turnover rate of the superintendency and the even higher turnover rate for African Americans. When someone has someone else to be vulnerable with, they can take risks and trust their growth in skill level, and their confidence in their job will increase (Carrier, 2017). Furthermore, this is important because people do deal with different challenges according to their race and gender, and so it is very beneficial to aspiring African American superintendents to make sure that they have a mentor that they can trust that will help them grow as well as being a part of a professional network that will grow their skills and help them prepare to successfully pursue the superintendency.

Due to the fact that the superintendency is a White male dominated field, African Americans can tend to feel isolated, lonely, and without support (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011). This feeling has led to a number of African Americans leaving the superintendency early never to pursue another superintendency, as was made clear in the findings. Participating in mentoring relationships as well as professional networks has proven to be beneficial for a number of African Americans pursuing the superintendency as well as those that are currently in the superintendency (Carrier, 2017). According to the findings, those African Americans who have had mentors and who have been part of professional networks attest to the fact that these things have made them successful in their pursuit of the superintendency as well as their term of employment. From those that did participate in mentoring and networks, they said that it helped

significantly to demystify processes, procedures, unwritten expectations, hidden expectations, and understanding how to navigate nuances within the job. This demystification was the result of their ability to engage with a mentor and participate with professional networks. Lastly, it is important to note that more women seemed to take advantage of mentoring and networking than men. This is attributable to the fact that a few of the men admitted that they found it to be more difficult to be trusting and vulnerable with others without feeling like their sense of self-worth was lowered by admitting that they needed some help.

The predominant presence of White males in the superintendency has resulted in making African American men and women almost invisible and has put out the false perception that the superintendency is not for African Americans (Alston, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Sizemore, 1986). In most school districts across this country, with the exception of some school districts that have a noticeable number of people of color in both teaching and leadership positions, there are not enough positive representations of African Americans in high positions of educational leadership and teaching (Carrier, 2017; George, 2011). This perception has a direct effect on who is seen as worthy to control the environment, the flow of information, and knowledge production. These perceptions have led to lower levels of representation in both leadership and teaching roles for African Americans, which has directly resulted in the underrepresentation of African Americans to the superintendency. Therefore, the importance of mentoring and networking relationships for African Americans aspiring to the superintendency must be underscored. The underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency also contributes to the low number of scholarly research studies that have been published about African American superintendents.

Commitment to Social Justice Leadership

The findings clearly demonstrated that the participants all had some level of commitment to social justice leadership. Some of them enacted social justice leadership in a proactive manner while others did it in a reactive manner. DeMatthews et al. (2015) asserted that educational leaders should be very thoughtful, proactive, and deliberate with the decisions that they make to enact social justice leadership or else they risk making poor decisions that do not result in making any real change that is impactful. Khalifa et al. (2016) similarly advocated for educational leaders to be very reflective and self-aware as they enact culturally responsive school leadership without which they run the risk of failure. For some leaders this work is at the heart and center of what they do and for others they described it as dangerous and risky at times. Depending on the situation and context, African Americans superintendents can definitely expect to do social justice work and must also be careful in how they carry out that work and how they are perceived as they carry out that work. Many of the participants came from marginalized backgrounds, which is one of the reasons that they express their commitment to social justice work. This coincides with what the literature says according to Santamaría (2014), who explained that leaders of color are more likely to enact social justice work through culturally responsive school leadership. This statement was further supported by the interview data gathered in this study.

Through the interviews with the superintendents, it was evident that many of them regularly incorporated actions and strategies that mirrored the definition of culturally responsive school leadership and culturally responsive leadership by working to liberate students from oppressive educational practices that are detrimental to students of color and those that descend

from historically marginalized and oppressed people (Khalifa et al., 2016). Additionally, according to Khalifa et al. (2016) culturally responsive school leadership affirms, identifies, and institutionalizes practices that affirm the identities and cultural practices of students of color. Moreover, this was demonstrated with examples of the superintendents' commitment to social justice work, such as ensuring that all students and especially students of color were A-G ready, ensuring that students of color have teachers and leaders that look like them, instituting anti-bias and anti-hate training, getting all students online during the COVID-19 pandemic, building a new science lab for students at a school with a predominant population of students of color, promoting STEM and STEAM initiatives, and advocating for the most effective reading literacy programs that would reduce the chances of students of color dropping out of school.

Most participants agreed that social justice work also revolves around being student centered, focusing on practices that directly impact children, promote equity, and always put the needs of children above all else in every decision. Additionally, the participants not only had high expectations for themselves, but they also had high expectations for those that they work with, and they especially had high expectations for student achievement. Furthermore, this commitment was solidified by their commitment to the belief that all students should be afforded the same access to resources and opportunities in order to reach their full potential. Most participants also were able to identify the issues of prejudice, racism, classism, and sexism and how it adversely affects students' lives as well as how they saw themselves in their various educational leadership roles with respect to how they could make a positive impact with a difference. The commitment to social justice by these leaders also coincides with what Theoharis (2007) said about social justice leadership, which is about prioritizing issues that impact

marginalized and oppressed communities by using their leadership skills to advocate for ways to reduce and eliminate inequalities and inequities that have resulted from systemic racism and historical injustices towards marginalized and oppressed communities.

The commitment to social justice leadership by the participants also coincides with what the literature says about leaders of color having an orientation toward social justice due to personal experiences with racial oppression (Bush & Bush, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaría, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Some of the participants also consider themselves to be transformational leaders with social justice at the forefront of their focus and practices (Alston, 2000; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Their advocacy for culturally responsive pedagogy, school leadership, curriculum, and teaching strategies align with what was asserted by Johnson (2006), in which he advocated for culturally responsive pedagogy, teaching, curriculum, and advocating for equity and equitable student treatment outcomes for all students. The participants' willingness to have difficult conversations around racial equity is also aligned with what Santamaría (2014) said in that leaders of color effect change in their institution when they approach their work with a social justice orientation. More specifically, Santamaría (2014) asserted that leaders of color who advocate for social justice are willing to do the following: they have critical conversations that address inequities; they use critical race theory as a lens that informs all aspects of their leadership; they know how to build consensus and work on shared leadership practices; they work against stereotype threat to support marginalized populations in order to reframe how the subgroups are viewed and treated by the educational system; they engage in academic discourse that involves acting as a public scholar and thereby contributing to the body of knowledge about specific populations that are often marginalized,

misunderstood, and left out; they honor the unique experiences of the marginalized communities that they represent; they lead by example; they build trust with all sorts of systems politically, educationally, and economically that results in more access and equity for students of color; they engage in servant leadership.

As I am thinking and reflecting about these leaders and their social justice work commitment, I am also thinking about what this says with respect to critical race theory. The social justice work these leaders are doing is working against the negative effects of the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, and critique of liberalism, and they used their experiential knowledge, storytelling and counter storytelling to provide examples of how they enacted social justice leadership and what that work entails (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Asante's principles of phenomenology, cultural criticism, uncovering masks of power, position, and privilege and using the imaginative structure to make sense out of an experience can be seen throughout the stories and examples shared by the participants (Asante, 2009).

The Importance of Spirituality and Political Acumen in Understanding the Career and Employment Experiences of African American Superintendents

Although I did not ask any specific interview questions with regards to spirituality, this theme still came across from multiple participants in the study. The participants described their spirituality as not only the underlying drive and mission of the work they do, but also as what helped them overcome challenges, obstacles, and barriers. Although I can personally attest to the fact that many African Americans, including myself, are deeply spiritual with deep spiritual backgrounds I did not assume that this finding would come out during the interview process.

However, this finding does coincide with what Bush and Bush (2013) asserted with regards to the interpersonal traits that African American males possess which is strong spiritual faith in God. Although the Bush and Bush (2013) study referred to African American males, I found that the African American females also possessed strong spiritual faith in God. I can also understand and relate to the use of spirituality and spiritual principles to navigate difficult situations and circumstances as an African American educational leader. The manner in which new knowledge was generated about the importance of spirituality in the career and employment experiences of African American superintendents coincides with Asante's principles of phenomenology, cultural criticism, uncovering masks of power, position, and privilege and using the imaginative structure to make sense out of an experience can be seen throughout the stories and examples shared by the participants (Asante, 2009).

One of the participants said that when she retires, she is going to offer a spiritual support group for educational leaders and that she intends to mentor them as well so they can have another type of system of support that cannot necessarily be offered through traditional mainstream educational leadership networks. Another aspect about this finding has to do with how these superintendents identified an entirely different system of support that they attribute to their success as educational leaders. Additionally, they expressed their belief that their spirituality not only assisted in their success but also gave them a lens through which to view the challenges of their work and ways in which to overcome those challenges. They said that educational leaders do have to be careful about how and when as well as if they should share their spiritual beliefs with others. However, they also emphasized that, in the role of the superintendency, as well as other educational leadership positions, individuals will be challenged

and tested and that when individuals lack a spiritual foundation and trusted mentors the likelihood of making mistakes increases.

Participants shared that their spiritual foundations created a sense of calling, purpose, and connection with a higher power. They identified the connections to their spiritual foundation that has allowed them to feel safe to pray about any and everything that bothered them or that they struggled with in their roles as educational leaders. The structure reinforced a certain sensibility that they would not be alone and gave them the strength to carry on when they felt like they were at their weakest and most vulnerable moments. Furthermore, the inclusion of their spirituality aided them in the demystifying things when they just did not understand why they were happening. Most importantly, the finding was clear that a spiritual foundation has been an integral part of planning their career path trajectories as well as the guiding light of their moral compass.

The findings were illustrated the importance of the knowledge and skill of political acumen for African American superintendents as well as aspiring African American superintendents. This finding also coincides with multiple research studies (Alston, 2000; Avelar-LaSalle & Campbell-Jones, 2000; Carrier, 2017; George, 2011; Smothers, 2012; Wiley et al., 2017), and it became clear through the findings that how African American superintendents navigate political situations will determine success or failure in many regards. The studies of Candoli (1995), Fusarelli (2006), Glenn et al. (2009), and Hendricks (2013) confirmed that one of the most important aspects by which a superintendent is judged is related to their personality and how they respond to political situations. Additionally, the studies of Fusarelli (2006), Haar and Robicheau (2008), Hill and Jochim (2018), and Myers (2011) confirmed that successful

superintendents must have exemplary political acumen to get others involved in accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organization. Any superintendent is going to be challenged with political situations; however, African American superintendents are likely to not only be challenged with difficult political situations but judged much more harshly based on how they handle the political situation, which is the direct result of the permanence of racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Tillman (2004), politics is very relevant to the success in tenure of African Americans in the superintendency.

This study suggests that the lack of political acumen has led to the underrepresentation of African Americans in the superintendency. So much of what is involved with educational leaders being promoted in their careers has to do with how they are perceived and, especially, how they are perceived with regards to political situations. The findings affirmed that the knowledge and skillful use of political acumen is what gets African Americans promoted from one position to the next including the superintendency. It is also the lack of skillful knowledge and use of political acumen that leads to demotions and lack of promotions to other positions, which is why it is so important to have a trusted mentor with whom an individual can be vulnerable in order to gain knowledge and wisdom to successfully navigate political situations.

An additional finding related to political acumen has to do with how a superintendent interviews the school board before accepting the position. Most participants said it is better to have a five member school board than a seven member school board due to having to deal with less variations of personalities, desires, and political agendas. However, a political pitfall that one participant wanted to make sure that I knew about is the fact that some individuals pursuing the superintendency do not do their due diligence to study the board to make sure that they will

be a good fit in working together with one another. The political situation and context of working in the school district that the aspiring superintendent is looking for has to also be taken into consideration because when that does not happen the likelihood of problems, conflicts, and an early termination of employment are likely. Asante's principles of phenomenology, cultural criticism, uncovering masks of power, position, and privilege and using the imaginative structure to make sense out of an experience can be seen throughout the stories and examples shared by the participants with regards to expectations for political acumen (Asante, 2009).

Limitations

As with all empirical research utilizing qualitative interviews, findings are limited by the study's design. While the study's findings provide insight to what aspiring African American superintendents need to know with regards to the recruitment, selection, and promotion process, there are some limitations to the research design that should be considered. Narrative research design is limited by the uncertainty that there is genuine trust and quality of voice and respect between the participant and interviewee. Another limitation is my sample size of 17 participants, all of which came from public school districts, which means the generalizability of my study is limited. Another limitation is that I did not interview anyone from charter schools or private schools, nor did I interview anyone from other ethnicities. Finally, another limitation is that I interviewed a few recently retired superintendents that have not worked in education for the last three to five years.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations and implications from the current study. One of the things that I hope changes as a result of my study is the development of more scholarly research

into the underrepresentation of African Americans in superintendency. The findings were

demonstrated the need for more leaders of color and especially African Americans in order to

make a positive difference and impact on the lives of students of color. Additionally, this finding

is related to what was cited in the study with regards to the research that shows the positive

impact on students of color when they have leaders of color who can identify with them and their

needs, as well as similarities in background and upbringing (Bush & Bush, 2013; Khalifa et al.,

2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalil & Brown, 2015; Santamaría, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

It is also my hope that this study will inspire other aspiring African American superintendents

and other leaders of color who aspire to be promoted to the superintendency so that they can

know more about the leadership skill set, requisite interpersonal skills, political disposition, and

factors that should and must be in place in order to be successfully recruited, selected, and

promoted to the position as well as retained in the position. However, it is also important to point

out that this study has also demonstrated the need for stronger networking and mentoring

opportunities for aspiring as well as sitting African American superintendents. Lastly, it is also

my hope that this research study will be utilized to inform the practices of search firms and

school boards in how they recruit, select, and promote African Americans to the superintendency

as well as other marginalized groups who are underrepresented disproportionately within the

superintendency.

**Addressing the Need for Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Anti-bias Education for School
Boards and Search Firms**

For school boards, based on the findings, I recommend training with regards to diversity,

antibias, and implicit and explicit bias in the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to the

superintendency. School boards should also work with search firms to ensure that they are equitable in their practices for how they recruit, select, and promote candidates for recommendation for hire to the superintendency by outlining specific practices and expectations that ensure fairness and equity. Search firms should actively work to recruit diverse headhunters from all racial and ethnic backgrounds in order to bring forth more diverse candidates for the recruitment, selection, and promotion process to the superintendency. The findings demonstrated that most search firms that recruit and select superintendent candidates are run by White men who also are the majority of who does the superintendent job. However, I am certain as more people of color are hired as headhunters for the search firms, we will start to see an increase in diversity of who is being recruited, selected, and promoted to the superintendency.

Colleges and Universities Need to Work Actively to Recruit More Students of Color Into Their Teaching and Educational Leadership Programs

Colleges and universities need to do a better job of recruiting more African Americans to pursue teaching and educational leadership positions which will in turn increase the pipeline of viable African Americans to the superintendency. The reason why I feel so strongly about this recommendation is because it clearly came across in the research study that there are a limited number of African American teachers which leads to a limited number of African American administrators because you have to become a teacher in order to become administrator. Additionally, it is well known that an individual must become a teacher first in order to become a principal. All superintendents are required to have prior experience as school administrators and teachers. Colleges and universities must incentivize students of color with scholarships, mentoring, and strong systems of support networks in order to successfully recruit them into

their professional preparation programs in order to become teachers and administrators and thereby increasing the pool of viable leaders of color to a variety of educational administration and leadership positions including the superintendency.

Organizations and Networks that Support and Develop Leaders of Color Need to Improve How They are Serving Educators

For organizations that support and develop educational leaders there is clearly a need to provide more networking and mentoring opportunities for leaders of color to be paired up with other leaders of color that are in current leadership positions as well as those that are aspiring to educational leadership positions. Organizations like NABSE (National Alliance of Black School Educators) and CAAASA (the California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators) should be providing mentoring opportunities for aspiring African American superintendents and educational leaders by showing them the importance of being a part of mentoring and professional networks so they will be equipped with the knowledge they need about how to create and maintain a positive reputation with regards to their work ethic, accomplishments, and leadership skillset so that, when the right time comes for them to pursue executive educational leadership positions such as the superintendency, they will be fully prepared to assume those positions and lead successfully. Opportunities for mentoring and job preparation should be provided and assigned by region. For example, in California there are 58 counties, and what I am proposing is for there to be a similar model of pre-determined regions throughout the state and country that provides mentoring and job preparation opportunities for aspiring African American superintendents. African American educational leaders need to seek and take on prominent leadership roles in local, state, and national educational leadership

organizations that are part of the mainstream outside of racial affinity groups in order to expand their visibility, credibility, influence, and impact.

Both state boards of education as well as school boards of education should be directly connected with policy changes and recommendations with regards to recruiting more viable leaders of color to educational administration and leadership positions. Organizations such as the national school boards association as well as the national association of state boards of education should work directly with expert researchers, practitioners, and authors on the topic of how to increase diversity in educational leadership roles. Additionally, they should be working directly with key decision makers and influencers at the college and university level as well as state and local governments in assisting with making recommendations for legislative and organizational policies aimed at increasing more diversity in educational leadership positions. I truly believe that these organizations are not as knowledgeable and as aware as they should be with regards to the underrepresentation of leaders of color in key educational leadership positions, nor do I believe that they are aware of how their lack of awareness, implicit biases, and inaction are leading to the continued underrepresentation of leaders of color in key educational leadership positions. However, I do believe that if they were educated about what the research says with respect to the causes of underrepresentation of leaders of color as well as the valuable contribution that leaders of color make in the lives of all students not just underserved students of color, they would want to start to enact policies and actions to increase the number of viable leaders of color to key educational administrative leadership positions including the superintendency. These organizations should be holding both state and national conferences, symposiums and local convenings inclusive of the experiences of leaders of color in executive

educational leadership positions in order to address this concern of the underrepresentation of leaders of color in key educational leadership positions.

Legislative Policy Recommendations

Legislators should be required to read professional and scholarly research about why there is such low representation of teachers and leaders of color in K-12 education. After they read, the legislator should also be required to take action to set policy for increasing diversity in teaching and educational leadership positions proportionate with the demographics and population of the school district that they serve. Search firms are paid with taxpayer money by school boards to recruit, select, and promote candidates to the superintendency, and therefore it should also be public policy that those search firms have diverse representation in who is part of the recruiting of superintendent candidates. If these search firms cannot prove that they are using diverse headhunters to find superintendent candidates, then their contracts with school districts should not be approved. One of the reasons why I am so passionate about this is that I am convinced by these findings that this is one of the key reasons why we have such low representation of African Americans in educational leadership positions, which also, as a by-product, causes the continued cycle of low achievement in schools with students predominantly of color who lack leaders of color that empathize with their struggle and are willing to put their heart and soul into the work of what it takes to raise the level of expectation and achievement for students of color and other marginalized groups.

Recommendations for Aspiring African American Superintendents

For African Americans aspiring to the superintendency, I have several recommendations. The importance of political and interpersonal skills acumen cannot be overstated. So much of

what can hinder African Americans from being recruited as well as retained to the superintendency is the lack of skillful knowledge and use of political acumen and high interpersonal skills. It is the use of this knowledge and skill that leads to the perception that an African American is capable, competent, and trustworthy to do the job. Any superintendent that is going to be successful, regardless of race and gender, must maintain positive superintendent-school board relationships. However, for African Americans it is important to know that many implicit biases will already be at work even before an African American has an opportunity to start or do the job. Being an African American executive educational leader means having to be better than the best. Race absolutely matters with regards to African American superintendents. More specifically, African Americans can expect to be held to a much higher work ethic standard, expectations, and impeccable work histories as compared to Whites.

The possession of a doctoral degree is a must-have to even be considered, along with an extensive work history that shows that they have worked all the educational leadership positions. For example, Whites can go from being a principal to becoming a superintendent without doing other requisite roles. However, such is not the case for African Americans. A preponderance of African American superintendents indicated that individuals and employees who are intimidated by African Americans due to racial biases will not go directly to the superintendent with concerns but instead will go around the superintendent to get things they want, and they will have no conscience or guilt about undermining the professional reputation of an African American superintendent by saying and spreading mistruths and lies when they don't get what they want. Both aspiring as well as sitting African American superintendents need strong networks with colleagues they can lean on as well as mentorships with current African American

superintendents. One of the findings pointed to the fact that African Americans do not support each other as strongly and effectively like other professional networks and organizations for educational leaders of color like CALSA (the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators).

Recommendations for Future Research

In light of the limitations of this research, future studies should focus on interviewing school boards and search firms with regards to how they perceive the recruitment, selection, and promotion of African Americans to the superintendency. Future studies should also consider using a quantitative research design method in order to be able to survey a wider variety of African American superintendents, aspiring African American superintendents, school boards, and search firms in order to get a greater picture of trend data around the recruitment, selection, and promotion process as well as the implications based on the trend data. These quantitative studies should also focus on discrete geographical areas with African American superintendents in to order to make comparisons about compensation and the terms of employment contracts. Additionally, this study highlights the need for more qualitative studies focusing on the experiences of aspiring African Americans to the superintendency as well as those that never got the job so we can have more knowledge and understanding as to the low representation of African Americans to the superintendency. Another qualitative study recommendation that I have is to study the perceptions and perspectives of African American superintendents with regards to their experiences with consultants and attorneys in order to see if there are any differences in experiences as compared to White superintendents. By increasing the number of qualitative studies there will be more opportunities for African American voices to be heard

resulting in a better understanding of these experiences and how knowledge based on these experiences can increase the number of viable African Americans to the superintendency. There is also a need for more women to be included as much as possible because the superintendency, whether led by Black or White person, is still disproportionately dominated by men.

This study also recommends additional research on educating boards of education and search firms on how they can bring forth a more diverse pool of candidates for the superintendency. Based on the findings there are clear biases in the areas of racism and sexism by both school boards and search firms in who is brought forth to be recruited, selected, and promoted to the superintendency. Another reason this is important is because of the low representation of African Americans in the superintendency and because their stories are often marginalized and not part of the broader scholarly conversation. While the current body of literature is growing with regards to African Americans in the superintendency it is still primarily focused on the experience of Whites, which calls for a more substantial amount of research studies to be done. In addition to the contribution of this study's findings to the research, there is a need to further explore and examine ways in which school boards and search firms could be educated on implicit bias, explicit bias, and antibias so that school boards and search firms can become aware of their own biases in how they are recruiting, selecting, and promoting individuals to the superintendency.

The last recommendation for future study is to examine the longevity of African American superintendents that have done the job with multiple years of experience and to find out more about what those factors are that led to their longevity in the superintendency. Another one of the reasons why this is a recommendation for future studies is because it was very clear

from the findings that African Americans rarely get a chance at a second superintendency, especially when they are female, versus Whites that are far more likely to serve multiple superintendencies for multiple years. Out of all of my 17 participants only one had served more than two superintendencies. As a matter of fact, he had served in five different superintendencies with over 15 years of experience. That kind of longevity is worth additional studies for the future, especially in light of the fact that the findings showed much shorter employment tenures for African American superintendents.

Conclusion

This study sought to gain a better understanding of the career and employment experiences of African American superintendents with the recruitment, selection, and promotion process in order to learn more about why African Americans are disproportionately underrepresented in the superintendency across the United States as well as to understand what the factors are that have led to success for those who have been recruited, selected, and promoted to the superintendency. This study examined the role of race, racism, and sexism as barriers for African Americans to successfully access the superintendency while also examining the role of search firms, professional networks, and organizations in assisting as well as hindering aspiring African Americans to prepare for and apply to be recruited to the superintendency. By placing African American superintendents at the center of this research and by privileging their voices in this research this study was able to determine the factors that have led to the successful recruitment, selection, and promotion to the superintendency as well as the factors that led up to African Americans not succeeding in being recruited, selected, and promoted to the superintendency including a second superintendency.

As a social justice advocate and leader my job is to work to reduce and eliminate all barriers of bias that hinder others from being able to achieve their full and God-given potential. Racism, sexism, and discrimination against marginalized and oppressed groups of people has existed for quite some time in this country, which makes this a significant issue of social justice. Additionally, it is this racism, sexism, and discrimination that has also resulted in low representation of African Americans to the superintendency, and the bottom line is that no one should be prevented from being able to pursue such an important job in educational leadership that has such a wide impact on so many lives because of their race and/or gender. Lastly, it is my hope that this study will inspire others at the legislative, university, school board, and search firm level to increase the diversity of the pool of viable candidates of African American descent to the superintendency.

Superintendent Interview Questions

Qs #	Framework	Question
1	Asante's 5-**Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Uncovering, Cultural, Imaginative** CRT-**Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge**	Of all the professions that you could have chosen what led or compelled you to choose a career in education? Follow up: How long have you been working in education?
2	Asante's 5-**Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Imaginative Structure, Cultural, Uncovering** CRT-**Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Whiteness as Property, Interest Convergence, Critique of Liberalism**	Please describe your promotion pathway to becoming a Superintendent? Follow up: What positions have you previously held? Which subjects, grades, locations, and student populations have you worked with and why? Is there anything unique about your path for how you were recruited, selected, and promoted to the superintendency?
3	Asante's 5-**Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Cultural, Imaginative, Uncovering**	Describe the pre-recruitment and recruitment process for [your first superintendency, your most recent superintendency]? Follow up: Were there differences with each recruitment experience? Did you experience any challenges or successes in the recruitment process to becoming a superintendent?

	CRT-**Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Whiteness as Property, Interest Convergence, Critique of Liberalism, Permanence of Racism**	
4	Asante's 5- **Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Cultural, Imaginative, Uncovering** CRT-**Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Whiteness as Property, Interest Convergence, Critique of Liberalism, Permanence of Racism**	Describe the selection process for [your first superintendency, your most recent superintendency]? Follow up: Were there differences with each selection experience? Did you experience any challenges or successes in the selection process to becoming a superintendent? Describe the contract negotiations process.
5	Asante's 5- **Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Cultural, Imaginative, Uncovering** CRT-**Storytelling, Permanence of Racism, Experiential Knowledge, Whiteness as Property, Critique of**	How has your race, gender, or both effected your career and employment experiences? Follow up: Do you believe perceptions about your race and gender impact the ways in which others perceive you?

	Liberalism, Interest Convergence	
6	Asante's 5- **Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Cultural, Imaginative, Uncovering** CRT- **Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Interest Convergence, Permanence of Racism, Whiteness as Property, Critique of Liberalism**	What are some significant contributions you have made in your leadership roles and why? Follow up: Do you believe that any of those contributions contributed to your promotion to the superintendency? How have you enacted social justice leadership in your various leadership roles?
7	Asante's 5- **Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Cultural, Imaginative, Uncovering** CRT- **Storytelling, Permanence of Racism, Experiential Knowledge, Whiteness as Property, Critique of Liberalism, Interest Convergence**	What beliefs do you hold about equity and inclusion for African American Superintendents and why?
8	Asante's 5- **Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Cultural, Imaginative, Uncovering**	Have you had an influential mentor? Follow up: Describe an influential mentor. Was this individual an African American?

	CRT- **Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Whiteness as Property, Permanence of Racism**	
9	Asante's 5- **Phenomenology (Location) Phenomenology (Diverse, Dynamic, Motion), Cultural, Imaginative, Uncovering** CRT- **Storytelling, Experiential Knowledge, Whiteness as Property, Critique of Liberalism, Interest Convergence, Permanence of Racism**	What are some future steps that we can take to increase the pipeline of viable African American leaders into the superintendency? Follow up: What are some challenges and obstacles that you foresee for aspiring African American Superintendents to be keenly aware of?

APPENDIX B

Participant Employment History

Participant Information

Participant (Pseudonym)	Prior Position(s)
Mike	-Teacher (7 years); -Supervisor, SPED programs and substitute teachers (3 years); -Assistant Principal (2 years); -Principal (11 years); -Director of SPED and Student Services (4 years); -Interim Superintendent (4-5 months); -Superintendency 1 (3 years); -Superintendency 2 (2 years)
Sheila	-Teacher (10 years); -Assistant Principal (4 years);

	-Interim Principal (4 to 6 months); - Principal (4 years); -Director of State and Federal Programs (2 years); -Director of Human Resources (2 years); -Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources (5 years); -Interim Superintendent (6 months); -Superintendent (4 years);
John	-Teacher (8 years); -Building manager (2 years); -Assistant Principal (4-5 years); -Middle School Principal (4 years); -Interim Superintendent (1 year); -Superintendent (8 years)
Robert	-Substitute Teacher (5 years);

	-Vice Principal (5 years); -Principal (10 years); -Assistant Superintendent of Administrative/Student Services (2 years). -Associate Superintendent of Schools (1 year) -Superintendency 1 (2 Years) -Superintendency 2 (3 years)
Trudy	-Assistant to the principal for student relations (3 years) -Principal/Director of a Private Christian School (4 years) -Elementary School Teacher (8 years) -Vice-Principal (3 years) -Principal (4 years) -Principal on Special Assignment (3 years) -Interim Director of Special Education (1 year)

	-Assistant Superintendent of Student Services (2 years)
	-Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction (3 years)
	-Deputy Superintendent (5 years)
	-Superintendent of Schools (4 years)
	-County Superintendent of Schools (3 years)
Emma	-Teacher (17 years);
	-Assistant Principal (5 years);
	-Principal (8 years)
	-Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education (5 years)
	-Superintendent of Schools (5 years)
Jackie	- Teacher (5 years)
	-Assistant Principal (3 years)
	-Principal (3 years)
	-Director of Student Performance and Assessment (3 years)

	-Associate Superintendent (2 years) -Superintendent of Schools (4 years)
Reggie	-Teacher (5 years) -Assistant Principal (3 years) -Principal (4 years) -Supervisor of Principals (1 year) -Regional Superintendent (3 years) -Superintendent of Schools (5 years)
Raymond	-Teacher (3 years) -Assistant Principal (3 years). -Principal (4 years) -School Finance Officer (6 years) -Director of Teaching and Learning (1 year) -Chief of Teaching and Learning (3 years)

	-Chief of Finance (2 years)
	-Assistant Superintendent of Accountability (3 years)
	-Superintendent of Schools (3 years)
Robert	-Classroom Instructional Assistant (2 years)
	-Teacher (3 years)
	-Assistant Principal (3 years)
	-Principal (2 years)
	-Director of Human Resources (3 years)
	-Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services (3 years)
	-Superintendency 1 (5 years)
	-Superintendency 2 (7 years)
Sharon	-Teacher (5 years)
	-Assistant Principal (3 years)
	-Principal (6 years)

	-Coordinator of Leadership Development (2 years)
	-Executive Director of Professional Development (2 years)
	-Assistant Superintendent of Schools (2 years)
	-Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools (1 year)
	-Chief Academic Officer (4 years)
	-Interim Superintendent (1 year)
	-Superintendent of Schools (2 years)
Grayson	-Teacher (5 years)
	-Network Officer (1 year)
	-Vice Principal (3 years)
	-Principal (2 years)
	-Area Superintendent (7 years)
	-Associate Superintendent (4 years)
	-Superintendency 1 (3 years)

	-Superintendency 2 (5 years)
Jesse	-Teacher (5 years)
	-Assistant Principal (4 years)
	-Principal (6 years)
	-Assistant Superintendent (3 years)
	-Interim Superintendent (1 year)
	-Superintendency 1 (5 years)
	-Superintendency 2 (4 years)
Brenda	-Teacher (4 years)
	-Assistant Principal (1 year)
	-Principal (4 years)
	-Instructional Specialist (11 years)
	-Assistant Superintendent of Technology (4 years)
	-Superintendent of Schools (4 years)

Tony	-Paraprofessional (2 years)
	-Teacher (6 years)
	-Principal (2 years)
	-Principal (5 years)
	-Supervisor of High School Principals (5 years)
	-Deputy Superintendent (5 years)
	-Superintendent of schools (2 years)
Vince	-Teacher (6 years)
	-Administrative Coordinator of Categorical Programs (4 years)
	-Principal (6 years)
	-Assistant Director (2 years)
	-Administrator of Parent Community Services (3 years)
	-Director of Elementary and Middle Schools (5 years)

	-Superintendency 1 (3 years) -Superintendency 2 (3 years)
Joseph	-Teacher (7 years) -Principal (11 years) -Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent (2 years) -Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Personnel (3 years) -Deputy Superintendent (6 years) --Superintendency 1 (4 years) -Superintendency 2 (5 years) -Superintendency 3 (4 years) -Superintendency 4 (4 years) -State Superintendent of Schools (3 years)

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