2-8-2024

Experiences of Female African American Educators When Seeking Leadership Positions

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MS, University of Phoenix, 2008

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Disproportionality and lack of representation of African American females in educational leadership roles constitute a significant issue. The present study focused on exploring the experiences of female African American educators when seeking leadership positions in elementary and secondary education. The purpose of this study was to bring more awareness to this issue. Providing insight into the lived experiences of eight female African American educational leaders may create more equitable hiring policies and practices. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality served as the theoretical frameworks. The research questions addressed (a) how elementary and secondary female African American educators described their experiences with obtaining the leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, and director and (b) how elementary and secondary female African American educators described why there was a significant disparity between Caucasian and African American females who obtain leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director. Common themes that emerged from the data consisted of various job interview questions not being reflective of the job description, interviewers simply going through the motions, and interviewees experiencing systemic racism. This reflects the need for positive social change in order to prevent racial disparities. The results of this study may assist educational leaders and policymakers in creating and implementing fair and equitable leadership hiring processes for all applicants.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my study to every female African American educator who has endured or experienced any form of systemic racism. I would like to also dedicate my study to every African American female, who has ever been overlooked or passed over for someone less qualified to fill a leadership role. Lastly, I dedicate this study to all of the martyrs, and to other African American females, who have paved the way for women like me to feel empowered and inspired to conduct this study. Because of their courage, because of their tenacity, and because of their will to fight and advocate for equity, fairness, and justice, I too felt the power within to be encouraged, motivated, and inspired. Many courageous African American females, including myself, have chosen to be a light, making a difference in our world, and as Elaine Dutton stated, "If you desire to make a difference in the world, you must be different from the world." Therefore, I have become empowered and inspired to "Fight the good fight," as John Lewis so eloquently stated and modeled during his lifetime of heroic social justice advocacy. Because of these amazing people, who have served as exemplar social justice leaders and advocates, I dedicate my study to each of them because their actions made me realize, "If not me, then who; if not now, then when." Thank you!

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This study focused on exploring the experiences of female African American educators when seeking leadership positions in elementary and secondary education in the United States. There is a significant disproportionality that exists for female African American educators in comparison to Caucasian women, and African American women encounter more challenges than Caucasian women when seeking leadership (Aaron, 2020). The population studied was female African American educators in a city within the southeastern part of Georgia. For this study, leadership positions were defined as assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, and director.

Female African American educators have continued to struggle when seeking leadership positions and have continued to face challenges even though they are often already leaders in education. African American females encounter double jeopardy in the form of intersectional identity in relation to racism, ageism, and sexism (Aaron, 2020). Burton et al. (2020) also indicated that female African American leaders encountered intersectional identity, but in a different form, which was gendered racism; therefore, female African American leaders needed to seek out methods of support in order to cope with the challenges. Trying to understand why female African American educators encounter more challenges in comparison to the dominant race will assist policymakers in assessing the effectiveness of current state equity policies and local school district policies. This research study will provide educational leaders with the opportunity to determine if current policies need to be implemented or revised in order to ensure that

schools districts in the southeastern Georgia school districts are affording all educators a fair and equitable chance when they seek leadership.

For this dissertation, I identified a gap in the research literature. One particular gap in the literature was the lack of clear equity policies at the Department of Education level within a southern state of the United States. The lack of clear equity leadership policies has impacted local school districts, leaving leaders with the autonomy and flexibility to make decisions that have not reflected equity in leadership. There was very little literature that explored the experiences of female African American educators in public schools who have sought the following leadership positions: assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director.

This phenomenological study included literature that explored the issue that African American females encountered more challenges when seeking leadership and the lack of understanding as to why this population encountered these challenges, and there was a need to develop strategies to deconstruct notions of incompetence, intimidation, and Black women stereotypes (Aaron, 2020). According to the 2021 Teacher Leader Workforce Report, the percentage of African American female leaders was 38.7%, in comparison to Caucasian women leadership at 57.8% (Flamini & Steed, 2022). This was a 19.1% difference, which was an extremely huge percentage gap that reflected the importance of working towards implementing equity policies that would potentially improve the racial disparity in educational leadership (Flamini & Steed, 2022). Even though Aaron's study focused on the harsh impacts of the challenges for African American females, the Teacher Leader Workforce Report data provide educational

leaders and policymakers with the clear reality of the results that occur when African American females are stereotyped because of their intersectional identity. This disparity in the data also further clarified why there was a need to bring light to the racial disparity and disproportionality that exist for the female African American population. Understanding why African American females have been perceived as less competent, more likely to be intimidated, and given stereotypes for who they are is vital because many of these women are more than qualified for various leadership roles, possessing the education and experience. However, they have not often been afforded the opportunity in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts for higher leadership roles outside of the classroom.

Potential social implications of this study would potentially help policymakers and educational leaders create policies that would ensure that districts have established fair and equitable hiring practices. In addition, social implications of this study would aid in ensuring that equity is clearly defined at the state level with clear policies for school districts to implement at the local level. The rationale for conducting this study was the need to continue to inform and emphasize the racial disparities that exist among female African American educators in leadership. Through the equity lens, the hope is that district leaders, local leaders, and policymakers will take the opportunity to reflect on their current hiring practices, equity policies, and current leadership positions to assess the impacts of their current plans and decision making. With the recent implementation of equity strategic priorities, the social implications of the findings of this study will hopefully bring about positive equitable change. Ideally, in the next few years, school

districts in this southeastern state should see an increase in African American female educators serving in the leadership roles identified in this study.

Chapter 1 addresses the background of the issue, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study. In addition, Chapter 1 documents the research question, the theoretical framework, and the nature of the study. Lastly, this study includes definitions, assumptions, limitations, and the significance of the study. A summary is presented as a conclusion to the chapter.

Background

Addressing the research study questions required a thorough review of similar scholarly grounded literature. Reviewing similar literature and public policies that related to this study was necessary. Public policy is an action plan that encompasses what the government and school officials do or do not do about a problem that comes before them for consideration and possible action (Center for Civic Leadership, 2023).

Hopefully, the results of this study will provide a great opportunity for school leaders and the Department of Education officials for this state in the southeastern part of the United States to clearly specify and implement policies that local schools should incorporate in order to decrease the disproportionality that exists in educational leadership between African Americans and other races. Public policy may take the form of laws, regulations, or sets of laws and regulations that govern a particular issue, and ultimately policy is aligned toward a specific goal or desired state (Project Citizen, 2023). For the purpose of this study, equity in leadership was the critical policy component that was essential for this study. According to Cobbold and Sahlberg (2020), equity has

become a central principal in educational policy leadership, and across the world, and people have various meanings of equity and its interpretations. The lack of clear equity leadership policies in the southern state identified in this study leaves the lack of guidance for local school districts, primarily metro school districts to follow, which is needed to ensure consistency and fairness. Therefore, there is a need to require an ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of current equity policies and the lack of clear equity policies within metro school districts. The assessment of these policies will ensure that African American females have a fair chance when seeking leadership.

After reviewing literature on the experiences of African American females and the underrepresentation of various educational leadership roles, I determined that the gap in the literature was that scholars do not definitively know the root cause as to why elementary and secondary female African American educators continue to encounter negative experiences and challenges when they seek leadership in a southeastern city within Georgia. Nor do scholars know the effectiveness or impact of Georgia's Department of Education policies as they relate to equity. Through exploring the lived experiences of African American females who had sought leadership roles such as principal, assistant principal, director, coordinator, and instructional coach, I sought to address and fill the gap in the literature.

Problem Statement

Disproportionality and the lack of representation among female African American educational leaders exists in elementary and secondary education in the following roles: principal, assistant principal, coordinator, instructional coach, and director. For this

particular study, with the overwhelming percentage of educated qualified female educators, understanding why there is disproportionality among African American females in comparison to Caucasian females is unclear. There is very little literature to support the rationale as to why the lack of equity exists. Obtaining knowledge of the lived experiences of African American females who have encountered challenges, barriers, and struggles when seeking leadership was extremely beneficial in possibly helping to bring awareness to human resources (HR) personnel, district leaders, and government officials in an effort to lead to creation of clear hiring regulations and policies that would help eliminate the opportunity for biases, stereotypes, and systemic racism that have led to the unfair advantages that continue to hinder African American females from obtaining certain leadership roles. Many African American females are more than qualified in comparison their counterparts but either fail to be given the opportunity or give up seeking leadership.

African American females have encountered multiple challenges when seeking leadership. Burton et al. (2020) reported that African American females identified in their research study that discrimination came at a cost; for instance, participants felt diminished, and even though some tried to fight for themselves, there were some African American females who resigned from their positions. According to Johnson and Fournillier (2022), diversity and inclusion were additional key elements that were critical in advancing the creation of equitable representation for underrepresented communities. Although the results of these studies were different, they both encompassed the common theme of African American females' struggles in educational leadership. The results of

both pieces of literature are very similar, and they significantly related to the issues identified in my study.

As a result, a qualitative phenomenology study was selected to explore the experiences of female African American educators when seeking leadership. According to Patton (2015), a phenomenological study captured the essence of what people experienced, the descriptions of what people experienced, and how it is that they experienced the phenomenon. Through the use of a phenomenology study, my hope was that educators and policymakers in this U.S. southeastern city would better understand the challenges that African American females endured as they sought leadership and that this might lead to the implementation of clear and effective equity policies at the state and local levels, not just at the federal level.

President Biden signed an executive order that would prevent and eliminate race and gender biases at the federal level. This executive order could ideally serve as a guide for state departments of education across the United States. The executive order signed by President Biden states the following:

> President Biden signed Executive Order 13985, on Jan. 20, 2021, that states the following: Section 1: Policy. Our nation deserves an ambitious whole-of-government equity agenda that matches the scale of the opportunities and challenges we face. It is therefore the policy of my Administration that the Federal Government should pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and

inequality. Affirmatively advanced equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of Government. Because advancing equity requires a systematic approach to embedding fairness in decision making processes, executive departments and agencies must work together to address inequities in their policies and programs that serve as barriers to equal opportunity. Each agency must assess whether, and to what extent its programs and policies perpetuate systematic barriers for people of color and other underserved groups impacting their opportunity for career advancement. Such assessment will equip agencies to develop policies and programs to deliver resources and benefits equitably to all. (Exec. Order No. 13985, 2021)

Although this is a federal mandate, it is clear that underserved communities, and for the purposes of this study, African American females, are still marginalized and adversely affected by inequality. This executive order was signed in 2021; therefore, it speaks to the necessity to persistently advance equitable opportunities systematically that will ensure fairness in decision-making processes even in our educational institutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenology study was to explore the experiences of African American female educators in elementary and secondary education who have sought leadership positions in a southeastern metro city of Georgia. After I researched the equity policies at the department of education level for this state, it was clear the polices that relate to equity are not clearly explained in order to ensure that school districts understand how to create or develop policies that align with state policies within the

department of education (Equitable Access to Effective Educators, 2015). For instance,

the state that was the focus of the study developed an Education Equity Plan in 2015 with

the contributions of the U.S. Department of Education, the Council of State School

Officers, the Equitable Access Support Network, the Center of Great Teachers and

Leaders and Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, and the Accountability

Reform Center. In accordance with the requirements of ESEA Section 1111 (e) (2), this

Equity Plan addressed the importance of leadership, including specific steps to ensure

that Georgia's schools are led by effective leaders. Nevertheless, the Equity Plan does not

clearly explain how the plan will ensure equity in leadership as it relates to gender and

race. On the other hand, the current Georgia Leader Keys Effectiveness System that the

Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has established references key performance

indicators that leaders are expected to adhere to in order to help foster fair and

professional hiring practices. For instance, under the Human Resource Leadership

performance indicator, it states under Human Resource Management that leaders are

expected to foster effective human resource management through the selection, induction,

support, and retention of quality instructional and support personnel (GaDOE, 2023).

Unfortunately, the expectations for this outcome are not clearly articulated. Under the

Professionalism and Communication key indicator, the professional indicator indicates

that leaders must foster the success of students by demonstrating professional standards

and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development, and contributing to the

profession (GaDOE, 2023). This professional standard does reference fostering ethics,

but again, there are not any clear examples of this standard, leaving leaders to their own

interpretation. This issue has left school districts in a predicament in which they will need to create, determine, and infer the existence of equity as they develop their own local-level equity policies.

The lack of clear equity policies at the state level has also left room for ambiguity at the local school district level. For example, in 2022, ABC Schools created "The Blueprint for the Future." Equity was established as one of the district's four strategic priorities for ABC School District. ABC defined equity as every child receiving what they need to develop their full academic potential. However, in a board policy in 2020, it was clearly stated that the incorporation of equity was implemented with the goal of the district redesigning systemic programs and initiatives to address and reduce educational equity. Ironically, the reasoning for implementation of the original equity policy did align with the district's current "blueprint" equity goal. On the other hand, QRS Schools, a school district in surrounding metro Atlanta, outlined a different approach in 2022. This school district outlined as one of its 2022 Strategic Plan Initiatives a "Focus on Culture," and the purpose of this initiative was to ensure that the district retained employees and ensured employee engagement and positive perceptions in employees. QRS developed "Consistency of Leadership" within their strategic plan, acknowledging that there is a disconnect in the district between supervisors and leaders, and their goal as a district was to build consistency, clear expectations, and connections across these leaders. In order to achieve these outcomes, according to a 2022 strategic plan for QRS Schools, they developed a strategic approach based upon research that would support leaders as they

worked to shift the culture in their schools and offices to align with district leadership development efforts.

Lastly, the final school district, EFG Schools, does not have any goal that focuses on equity in leadership hiring. There are a few indicators outlined in the district's strategic plan that could be closely connected; however, it is not clear. For instance, one core belief of the district is to ensure that the district embraces the cultural diversity of their community and strength. In addition, Goal 3 in the strategic plan focuses on recruiting highly qualified staff, developing highly performing staff, and retaining highly effective staff. In this plan, there is no mention of equity to aid in ensuring that the issue of this study is improved.

The strategic priorities or plan for ABC, EFG, and QRS, three of the largest school districts in a southeastern metro city in Georgia, are consistent with the results of Cobbold and Sahlberg's findings that determined there is a need across the world to establish a clear explanation and meaning of equity to ensure that it is achieved (Sahlberg, 2020). In addition, there is an immediate need for both districts to review their policy expectations and outcomes to ensure alignment.

Research Questions

The research was based on the following research questions:

RQ1: How do elementary and secondary African American female educators describe their experiences with obtaining the leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director?

RQ2:   How do elementary and secondary African American female educators describe why there is a significant disparity between Caucasian and African American females who obtain leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that I chose for this study was critical race theory (CRT). Derrick Bell, who coined the term *critical race theory*, defined CRT as a body of legal scholarship, involving existentially people of color who were ideologically committed to the struggle against system racism institutionalized in and by law. Bell also indicated that Caucasian theorists who supported CRT were usually cognizant of and committed to overthrowing their own racial privilege (Bell, 1995). According to Simba (2020), CRT was created in response to the mid-1970s conservative, reactionary attack on the achievements of the civil rights struggle and the failure of liberalism to address racial issues both ideologically and in public policy. CRT has also been incorporated in various studies in order to better understand American education and reform, especially as it relates to educational leadership (Khalifa, 2013). Even though Khalifa applied CRT to educational leadership, further explaining how it impacted African American females who sought leadership, Bell, Simba, and Khalifa all believed that CRT was an overall response to the attack on the civil rights struggle and the failure to address racial issues both ideologically and in public policy.

CRT served as the foundational theory in order to provide a better understanding of the need for American educational leadership policy reform. Intersectionality, which

was later birthed out of CRT, served as the modern theory. The core tenets of CRT are the following: Racism is socially constructed because it is not biologically real, racism is ordinary or colorblind, interest convergence, material determinism, and uniqueness of voice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). A group of scholars developed CRT, and their work challenged the ways in which race and power were constructed and represented in American society as a whole, aiming to understand how a regime of Caucasian supremacy and its subordination of people of color had been created and maintained in America (Khalifa, 2013). Intersectionality theory is the concept that African American females are discriminated against because they are African American females, and they encounter a combination of race and sex discrimination in which they receive little protection; this is a common political and theoretical approach of discrimination that marginalizes African American females (Crenshaw, 1989). According to Aaron (2020), intersectionality was later coined as the modern form of CRT to address the overlapping of identities that created discrimination for people of color. Although CRT served as the grounded literature, intersectionality aligned as well because it addressed the overlapping issues of racism, discrimination, and gender identity. As I applied the tenets of CRT, it was imperative to indicate the importance of intersectionality that was later phrased as such by Kimberle Crenshaw as well because it outlines the modern-day framework. CRT served as the grounded literature and framework for this study because it reexamined the terms by which race and racism have been negotiated in the consciousness of America, setting the stage for the abandonment of integration and assimilation, instead accepting colorblindness (Crenshaw, 1989). Therefore, because my study addressed the challenges

that African American females have faced when seeking leadership in elementary and secondary education, the overlapping issues of gender and race were highlighted through using CRT and intersectionality. The tenets of CRT in conjunction with intersectionality helped to explain what has been sometimes referred to as "double jeopardy" or overlapping identities that lead to the oppression that African American females have faced when seeking leadership. Proponents of CRT seek to eliminate racism and other forms of oppression while empowering groups, such as African American females, who have been historically marginalized (Bell, 1995). I hope that this study will lead to a commitment to social justice that centers around clear equity policies and justice with a particular focus in the area of educational leadership and hiring policies.

Through this phenomenological study, I have provided firsthand perspectives through the voices of African American females, who have been victims of oppression as they have sought leadership in elementary and secondary education. Through their stories, society can better understand the systematic racism that continues to exist, and this may lead to the implementation of clear and effective equity policies that may eliminate or minimize disproportionality that exists among various ethnic groups, particularly African American females. Through firsthand accounts, participants' experiences will provide relevant evidence to support that racism is still an invisible norm as identified by Derrick Bell through CRT.

Nature of the Study

Through this study, I explored the experiences of female African American educators when they seek leadership positions. Through a qualitative phenomenological

research design, I explored the lived experiences of African American females who have sought leadership roles in a U.S. southeastern city in efforts to better understand why there has been lack of representation of African American females serving in leadership. Through using a qualitative phenomenological study with the tenets of CRT, I hoped that this research study would provide strong and impactful literature to support the research questions. According to Burkholder et al. (2019), phenomenology involves the collection and analysis of people's perceptions related to a specific, definable phenomenon. For the purposes of this study, "lived experiences" and "perceptions" were used interchangeably to describe how the participants understood the phenomenon, gave meaning to the phenomenon, and related to the phenomenon.

Through the use of individual interviews, this phenomenological study provided more insight into the possible connections that existed between the tenets of CRT and the experiences that a marginalized group of people have continued to experience since the inception of CRT. Each research subject offered an opportunity to share their experiences in order to gather data that would potentially help to provide an in-depth understanding of the participant's leadership experiences. This phenomenological study provided data collection through interviews that presented the lived experiences of qualified African American females who shared their perceptions of their experiences when they sought leadership. The outcome of this study may convince school leaders and policymakers of the importance of generating more discussion around the challenges surround the disproportionality that exists in educational leadership positions and the possibility of

implementing policy changes that will improve the issue of racial disparities that exist for African American females serving in educational leadership roles.

It is my hope that this phenomenological study will bring more awareness to this research problem and shed light on the need for positive social change as it relates to the racial disparities that exist for African American females serving in educational leadership roles. Policy change may lead to ensuring that African American females are afforded a fair chance when they interview for leadership roles, which may lead to African American females being fairly considered for hire as well. Exploring African American females' perspectives through the equity lens may better explain the gap in the literature regarding the lack of equity in leadership positions. As a result of this study, human resource educational leaders, district leaders, and department of education leaders may be better positioned to develop and create clear hiring policies that will ensure that African American females are given fair chances to be interviewed and selected for the specified leadership roles in this dissertation.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions were used in this research study:

African American women: Female American citizens who are of African descent. *Black women* and *African American women* have the same meaning and are used interchangeably.

Critical race theory (CRT): A theoretical framework that was created in response to the mid-1970s conservative, reactionary attack on the achievements of the civil rights struggle and the failure of liberalism to address racial issues both ideologically and in

public policy. Critical race theorists argue that White racism is a hegemonic socially and historically constructed cultural force in American society, and CRT challenges the legitimacy of White supremacy and its potent tactic of using the power ideology of "color blindness," and the ways in which legal systems reinforce White interest even when seemingly advancing rights for people of color (Simba, 2020).

CRT offers a lens through which to understand that America is built upon a premise of racism rooted in society, and that certain actions are taken to ensure European dominance; CRT also conveys that racism can be eliminated through action and discourse, and that people of color do have value and merit in society.

Discrimination: The denial of opportunities, equal rights, and just treatments to a specific group of individuals.

Equity: A term that refers to acknowledging that people have different circumstances and providing the necessary resources and opportunities so that people can achieve an equal outcome; it is the absence of systemic disparities.

Intersectionality: A term that identifies that African American females' experience of overlapping forms of discrimination in which they receive little protection; this is a common political and theoretical approach to discrimination that marginalizes African American women (Crenshaw, 1989).

School leadership: For the purposes of this study, school leaders hold one of the following positions higher than a teacher: coordinator, director, instructional coach, assistant principal, or principal.

Marginalization: This term refers to the act of placing a person or thing in a position of lesser importance. For the purpose of this study, marginalization is the act of isolating, placing, or confining African American females to a less powerful position (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Phenomenology: A qualitative research design that encompasses a collection and analysis of people's perceptions or lived experiences regarding how they relate to a phenomenon, understand a phenomenon, or give meaning to a phenomenon that captures the real meaning of human experiences surrounding a phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2019).

Theoretical framework: A theoretical framework is a published, identifiable theory that frames a study and explains the relationships within a study (Ravitch & Riggan, as cited in Burkholder et al., 2019)

Assumptions

Various aspects of the study were believed to be true but cannot be demonstrated to be true. These aspects were critical to the study. Prior to conducting the interviews with the participants, I made various assumptions. For instance, I believed that the interviewees would provide truthful and heartfelt information regarding the barriers, challenges, and systematic issues that participants had encountered when they sought leadership. In addition, I believed that the interviewees would provide insight into how clear equity policies at the state and local levels would possibly lead to a decrease in the number of overwhelming challenges that African American females face when seeking leadership because these policies would serve as a mechanism to hold leaders

accountable when they interview for leadership positions. I also believed that interviewees would share that they had experienced Caucasian females expressing that their leadership journey was easier, reflecting a sense of entitlement. In addition, I assumed that eventually, educational leaders would acknowledge their own biases and traditional stereotypes. Assuming that these assumptions were true, it was possible to administer and conduct a study that would allow me to draw conclusions regarding the possibilities from the study itself.

Scope and Delimitations

There were specific aspects of the research problem addressed in this study that exhibited boundaries, and these boundaries were out of my control. Unfortunately, due to the magnitude of my study, I only focused on a sample population to explore my research. Therefore, certain populations were excluded. Nevertheless, my study does have transferability over into other populations.

In this phenomenological study, I explored the lived experiences of African American females who sought leadership positions in elementary and secondary education. My sample population consisted of African American females in metro school districts in southern Georgia. Throughout this study, further understanding of why barriers existed that hindered African American females from obtaining specific leadership roles identified in the research questions in comparison to Caucasian females was achieved. Due to the sample population, it was extremely unlikely that this study would serve as a representation of the entire educational sector; however, it can be used as a great indicator of the of the presence of the research issue that may exist in districts

of similar size. This study also has the ability to transfer over into other positions in education. For instance, my study excluded rural areas and all areas outside of the metro cities in Georgia. My study also excluded some leadership positions such as superintendents and executive directors. Because my study only focused on the following leaders—instructional coaches, directors, coordinators, assistant principals, and principals—transferability can carry over into rural areas, suburbs, and similar cities, as well as other leadership roles.

Limitations

The foreseeable limitations of this research study may be due to the lack of existing state equity policies. The lack of clear equity policies may have impacted how school districts approached hiring for leadership positions in their districts. This could have limited educational leaders who interviewed, with necessary process and procedures, hiring rubrics, or resources that would have possibly helped them to eliminate issues that could have stemmed from systemic racism or biases. Without clear equity policies at the state level, this is a significant barrier that could have hindered the progression that African American females would like to see or need. Prior to 1993, there were not any studies of female African American principals and assistant principals. The powerful theory that was used in many of the studies that dealt with racial disproportionality among female leaders was CRT, which emphasized that some people are privileged while others were not. This theory led to the determination that African American females must behave differently to be successful. Identifying African American females with this label created the image that they must reinvent themselves,

and this philosophy appeared to exist predominantly for people of color. According to Lomotey (2019), there needs to be more research related to African American females and their leadership as principals. African American females were found to be oppressed based upon race, gender, class, and age. While African American females across different countries were living with the challenges of class, race, and gender, one study indicated that these women attained principalship under different circumstances (Moorosi et al., 2018). While both studies provided background to support the challenges that African American females endured in leadership, the latter study addressed the impact of the importance of principalship preparation programs in helping African American females receive the necessary supports that may help lead to obtaining successful leadership roles. Therefore, there were limitations that created challenges to understanding the sense of urgency that this research problem poses.

Significance of the Study

The study was significant because it provided clarity into the gap in the literature. By conducting interviews through the perspectives of African American females who had experienced challenges when seeking leadership positions in elementary and secondary education, there was a possibility that future polices could be created to improve this disproportionality. Also, the results of this study may potentially aid school district leaders as well as local and state educational leaders in becoming aware of possible hidden biases and stereotypes, as well as the need to implement, revise, or assess their district's equity policies. My hope is that this study may contribute to positive social change because African American females have experienced challenges and obstacles for

years as they have sought leadership positions in education, and this particular population is still currently underrepresented.

This study was needed in order to clearly bring awareness to the lack of equity that has existed for African American females in leadership in elementary and secondary education, but also signal to HR leaders, district leaders, and the Department of Education for Georgia, so that leaders will act appropriately and with a sense of urgency in potentially creating explicit, effective HR policies that will ensure equity in hiring for marginalized female leadership.

Summary

The aim of this dissertation was to allow for more insight into the continuous disparities that African American females face when they seek leadership. In addition, Chapter 1 addressed the background of the issue, the problem statement, and purpose of the study. Chapter 1 presented the research question, the framework, and nature of the study. Lastly, other critical areas of documented concepts or definitions, assumptions, limitations, and significance of the study and summary will be addressed. In Chapter 2, I document the literature review strategy, define the theoretical framework, and provide additional synthesis of the existing literature to the two research questions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The issue that prompted me to search the literature was the need to explore the reasons why there is a significant underrepresentation of female African American leaders in elementary and secondary education. The makeup of African American females in leadership is 12.9% in public schools, while Caucasian females make up 75.1% of the principal roles (National Center of Education Statistics, 2019, as cited in Peter & Miles, 2021). Trying to understand the root cause of this disproportionality and the reasonings that female African American educators encounter challenges may assist policymakers in assessing the effectiveness of current diversity, equity, and inclusion policies or the need to implement or revise current policies in their school districts. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of elementary and secondary female African American educators who had sought leadership positions within education in a southeastern city in Georgia and these educators' perceptions of their school district's hiring policies.

Various studies have been conducted regarding constructs and methodology similar to those in my study. For instance, Aaron (2020), in exploring Black women through similar constructs related to gender, race, and intersectional theory, found that female African American principals experienced harsher challenges when applying for leadership positions. For example, the difficulties that principal-qualified African American females faced were contributed to by the unconscious biases possessed by others, primarily of the dominant race (Harris, 2022, as cited in Delapenha, 2022).

According to Weiner et al. (2019), the experiences and opinions voiced by African American females who qualified for leadership positions were often ignored. Cuellar (2020), who conducted a similar study, addressed the lack of explicit policies that would assist in providing clear expectations related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Cuellar made it clear that if leaders wished to have excellent schools, they needed to be socially just (Shield, 2014, as cited in Cuellar, 2020). As a result, even though these studies have similar constructs and methodologies, the overlapping issues of race and gender remain a concern. Factors determining which population generally ends up being selected for leadership roles include whom a person knows, rather than that person's knowledge and experience; inequity in principal-prepared programs; and lack of support. Therefore, there was a need to deconstruct perceived biases or notions of competencies associated with African American females. Even when African American females have achieved leadership positions, such as a principal role, it is important to understand why challenges persist. Unfortunately, African American females have continued to endure challenges and obstacles as they have struggled to climb the ladder, and they still endure challenges when they achieve leadership roles as well.

After researching current literature published within the last 5 years, I found that statistical data provided a representation of the percentage of minorities in leadership and issues related to barriers when African American females sought leadership. The data indicated that more work needs to be done to establish clear equity policies. For the 2020–2021 school year, out of the 9,009 school-level leaders, the majority of the educator leader workforce was 57.8% Caucasian, and the African American leadership percentage

was 38.7%. By definition, according to a *Georgia K–12 Teacher & Leader Workforce Report* (Flamini & Steed, 2022), leaders consisted of individuals in the following roles: directors, assistant principals, principals, coordinators, and instructional supervisors. Even though the percentage provided does not indicate the breakdown by gender, the fact that there was a significant disproportionality between the two races was alarming.

The concept of intersectionality was the modern theme used to apply to the disproportionality that African American females face when they seek leadership. Aaron (2020) conducted a study focused on the lived experiences of female African American principals in order to bring awareness to racialized and general experiences in elementary and secondary education utilizing intersectional theory. As it related to intersectionality, this theory provided insight into how multiple traits of a person overlap or intersect to compound discrimination, sometimes referred to as "double jeopardy" (Aaron, 2020). In a similar study that focused on female African American superintendents, Coleman (2022) found that the number of female African American superintendents did not proportionality reflect the population of educators in the field. Even though the latter study focused on a different aspect of leadership, which was a superintendent position, it was extremely important and relevant to the current study because it reinforced the concern and issue that much more work needed to be done to address the racial disparity and disproportionality that exists in relation to educational policies.

In addition, both pieces of literature were vital to the current study because they provided supporting information that connected to my study. Female African American educators continuously must prove themselves and endure systematic racism simply

because of their race and gender. If school system leaders believed that African American females were qualified to teach children and serve as administrators, then the problem that needed to be addressed was why African American females were not revered as qualified leaders in school districts. African American females have represented a large percentage of the educator population in the United States; nevertheless, Caucasian females have been more likely to ascend to a leadership role than African American females, even if they matriculated through the system as teachers, principals, and assistant superintendents (Coleman, 2022). Both Coleman (2022) and Aaron (2020) provided accounts of African American females' perceptions regarding how they were impacted by race and gender even though they possessed various levels of education. Their study also included common themes, such as racial stereotypes and the perceptions of African American females, that led to the need to further address how districts implement and develop strategies to address negative experiences and challenges that African American females face and endure when seeking leadership.

School districts and state education departments must clearly establish policies that address hiring and recruiting practices. In addition, policymakers need to ensure a holistic approach that considers students and educators. It is important that policymakers include intersections among multiple cultural aspects in order to develop socially just practices in relation to the development of effective leadership policies.

Literature Search Strategy

Over the course of conducting this research study, there were various library databases and search engines used. The following databases and search engines were

used: Google Scholar, ProQuest, Walden University Library, EBSCO, Thoreau, and SAGE. Various combinations of search terms were used in order to narrow my search and gather research that would help to gain more insight into this study. The following key terms were used, either in combination or separately: *women of color*, *diversity equity inclusion policies*, *education, racism, discrimination, school leadership, educational leadership and equity*, *equity in Georgia educational leadership*, *socio-cultural*, *Black feminism*, *cultural competence*, *gendered leadership*, *Black women educational leaders*, *micro-aggression*, *principal preparation*, *race-gender intersectionality*, *social justice*, *racial biases*, *systematic racism*, *critical race theory*, *intersectionality*, and *Black female leaders in education*. The terms listed above were specifically used in the various search databases because they were loosely aligned with my topic. In addition, after reviewing supporting literature, I found that many of these key terms overlapped and were also used in similar studies.

For my topic, there was very little literature regarding how the southeastern state in the United States is specifically addressing the inequities that exist among African American females in comparison to Caucasian women in educational leadership. Due to this limitation, in order to complete this study, it was pertinent to include current literature regarding equity in educational leadership as identified in this southeastern state. This was intentionally identified in order to bring awareness to the need to create clear policies that school districts in this state can adhere to in order to ensure that African American females have a fair chance when seeking leadership roles. For instance, some districts use a rubric as a rating system to determine the best qualified

candidate for superintendent; if a rubric can be used for a position such as this, it would serve as a legitimate measurement to use for other leadership positions.

In addition to including the state's current equity plan, I reviewed similar dissertations that were closely correlated with my topic in order to research their concepts, application, and outcomes. I also reviewed school districts that currently have similar equity policies in order to understand how they are working to improve the racial disparity and disproportionality issues that exist as they relate to African American females who seek leadership.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework that I chose for this study was Critical Race Theory (CRT). Derrick Bell, who coined the term *critical race theory*, defined CRT as a body of legal scholarship involving existentially people of color who are ideologically committed to the struggle against discrimination affecting African Americans, which has been institutionalized in and by law. Bell (1995) also indicated that Caucasian theorists who support CRT are usually cognizant of and committed to overthrowing their own racial privilege when it serves to help their own self-interest. According to Simba (2020), CRT was created in response to the mid-1970s conservative, reactionary attack on the achievements of the civil rights struggle and the failure of liberalism to address racial issues both ideologically and in public policy. CRT has been used in order to better understand American education and reform, especially as it relates to educational leadership (Khalifa, 2013). While each scholar has their own perception of CRT, all proponents of CRT agree that the theory will aid in addressing the critical racial issues

that have continued to negatively impact African Americans. For the purpose of this study, I focused on applying four CRT tenants. First, I used the tenant "racism is ordinary." This tenant recognizes racism as ordinary because it is not rare but exists explicitly and implicitly across various aspects of society. For instance, racism is embedded within systems and institutions, like the legal system, which replicates racial inequality. Second, the tenet of CRT that emphasizes that racism is socially constructed was addressed in this study. This concept focuses on the belief that strict categories of race are something that human beings have created because, ultimately, human beings are the same except for their skin color. Unique voice of color was the third tenet applied in this study. Through the elaboration of the lived experiences of African American females when seeking leadership, others can better understand the importance and significance of this issue in hearing their personal accounts. My hope is that this will lead to logical and fair selections when hiring for leadership. Lastly, the recognition of intersectionality served as the third tenet applied in this study. Because African American females experience overlapping identities, such as race and gender, intersectionality was necessary to incorporate in this study because it provides a clear presentation of the issue that African American females experience overlapping discrimination as they seek leadership.

African American Female Educator Experience
in Obtaining Leadership Experience

African American females have experienced various challenges when seeking leadership opportunities in education. According to Burton et al. (2020), African

American females have experienced the burdens of gendered racism in their roles as

leaders. Racism and associated cultural constructs have placed one group in the position

to feel as though they can oppress another race based on their ethnicity (Fluehr-Lobban,

2006, as cited in Watson and Booker, 2019). For instance, school leaders are influenced

by racism, and they influence racism themselves upon others (Watson & Brooks, 2019).

As a result, it was determined that is important for leaders in education to self-reflect and

educate themselves on issues such as equity, oppression, and racism, in order to ensure

that they do not perpetuate racism. Understanding the hidden form of perceived

superiority influences others into believing that cultures that are different from dominant

groups are inferior. Therefore, it is important for Caucasian leaders to understand that

their own attitudes and behavior have a significant impact on how others view those in

the minority.

A study conducted by Burton et al. (2020) was significant to my study because it

was a phenomenological study of 10 female African American educators, who shared

their lived experiences, in which the results indicated that there was a need to discuss

gendered racism in educational leadership. Johnson and Johnson (2022) found through

providing a safe space for African American females to share and reflect upon their

experiences and share their accounts firsthand as they navigated academic leadership in

programs that these programs had not met diversity needs for all ethnic groups and

genders. Through the CRT tenet termed "uniqueness of voice," this study shed light on

the perceptions of African American females. Even though the previous two studies used

the same approach, they yielded slightly different outcomes. According to Burton et al.,

the results of their study indicated that African American females felt that they were viewed as less competent and that they were unfairly viewed as such because of the color of their skin. On the other hand, Johnson and Johnson focused more on the results of aspiring leadership programs, discovering that through providing a safe space for African American females to share and reflect upon their experiences as they navigated academic leadership in programs, such as aspiring leadership programs, they were able to discover that these programs had not met diversity needs for all ethnic groups and genders. Through their hermeneutic phenomenology study, Johnson and Johnson determined that through the intersection of race and gender, their study provided insight into the importance of increasing diversity in leadership because it is a priority. Both studies concluded that allowing African American females the opportunity to share their lived experience was critical and vital, bringing awareness to the issue of underrepresentation and the challenges of systematic racism that exist in elementary and secondary education. As it relates to the current study, in the year 2023, the issue of diversity and the lack of equity is still an issue in various institutions and organizations, even after the monumental accomplishments of African American females in various careers levels. The current study has shed light on the challenges that African American females have faced and continue to face as they seek leadership. Not only does the study reiterate the issue that racism does exist, but the study emphasizes the burdens placed on African American females. This study strengthened the argument that leaders of educational organizations should assess their current policies and practices and strive to seek changes within their operational structures and policies.

Racism influences leadership practices. One of tenets of CRT is that "racism is ordinary," meaning that racism is the typical or usual way that society does business. For example, racism has become embedded into institutions and laws, and the outcome of the justice system has been become so traditional that society has become immune and accepting of how institutions operate. Another tenet of CRT focuses on the issue that racism is socially constructed, meaning that race is something that society has created because underneath skin tone, people are the overall the same (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). According to Brooks and Watson (2019), institutional racism paralysis (IRP) occurs in people, schools, leadership, and policies. Some organizations may be characterized as perpetuating institutional racism, which means that racist attitudes and behaviors have become so engraved in people towards various cultures that inequity in schools has become a part of school values, beliefs, and norms, especially as it relates to controversial topics about race. CRT provides an operative race-conscious lens to critically examine the degree to which race impacts IRP in organizational cultures (Conyers & Wright, 2021). Because IRP occurs in people, schools, leadership, and policies, it is essential for organizations to establish system-wide policies at the district, state, or national level in order to help ensure the elimination of negative practices at various levels or eliminate racism altogether in an organization's structure. As a result, Brooks and Watson's study helped to identify the existence of racism in educational institutions. Because racism has become the norm for decades, this supported the CRT tenet that "Racism is ordinary," which means people have become colorblind.

Because racism has seemed to become embedded in institutions and laws, this has continued to create a challenge for African American females in education. The negative impacts of the social construct of racism is ordinary as it relates to whiteness in leadership education has continued to pose an issue because society has become immune to specific groups and genders who have traditionally served in leadership (Chunoo et al., 2020) found that leadership education must entail both a social justice process and a socially just goal that helps to bring to the forefront the following issues of oppression, power, privilege, identity, and intersectionality. Critical Race Theory was a needed response to the attack on the Civil Rights achievements (Simba, 2020). Even as the study conducted by Chunoo and other scholars reflects the mindset of our society today, it is even more important to assess the slow progress society has made, and how much more work needs to be done to eliminate these challenges. By addressing the issues discovered in the earlier study, this would aid in helping districts determine what may be potential courses of actions. For instance, it would be imperative to analyze the current status of any organization, such as assessing current hiring and recruiting practices. It was important in order to determine the existence of whiteness and other imbalanced social processes that devalue leadership styles and the capabilities of marginalized communities. Until organizations assess their current status in order to determine if there are effective processes and policies in place that will contribute to the issue of improving the disproportionality that exist among African American females in leadership, then African American females will continue to face challenges as they seek leadership. Until society recognizes that there are internal factors that impact how districts lead and how

school systems dictate the best candidates for leadership, then and only then can educational institutions see real change. There must be unapologetic challenges to systems of power and oppression, and necessary changes must be demanded. This literature was essential to the current study because it supported the fact that there was a problem as it related to the underrepresentation of African American females in elementary and secondary education, and leadership has continued to act ignorant creating barriers to necessary change.

The failure to address racism only permeates further racism. Social constructionism is one of the tenets of CRT. This tenet focuses on the issue of race serving as product of social thought and relations emphasizing that racism is systematic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). Chunoo et al., suggested that future educational research can be rigorous, but is necessary as we discuss systemic racism; therefore, possible considerations are implementations of social justice theories to frame studies, usage of action research designs, and interpretating the findings against the backdrops of equality, equity, and fairness are important. According to Conyers and Wright (2021), the government has played a significant role in the lack of change and the racial injustices that have existed in our nation for years. As a result, Critical Race Theory provided an operative race conscious lens to critically examine the degree to which race impacts IRP in an organizational culture. This is why, in the field of education, African American females continue to be underrepresented and struggle to obtain leadership positions in comparison to their counterparts. Critical Race Theory has questioned colorblindness as a method that has perpetuated race inequality. This literature was extremely vital to this

current study because it provided support to show the slow progress that has been made in the area of systematic racism against African American females. It further provided more insight into part of the problem. The reality is that some people choose to sit by idle as if there is not a problem. Ignoring the problem does not resolve the issue; it only permeates the issue.

Another tenet of Critical Race Theory is interest convergence. According to Conyers and Wright (2021), interest convergence acknowledged that the dominant group permits or allows racial justice progress when it only benefits their interest. Interest convergence is also known as "materialism determination," and is explained as an approach in which racism advances the interest of elite Caucasians and working-class Caucasians (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). Both explanations added further clarity as to the reason why African American females in leadership have not made significant progress over the years. However, it also has added clarity as to why some African American females and males have been promoted in educational leadership. At times, the decision to promote these individuals are only executed when it was proven that it would benefit the Caucasian race.

As it pertains to this study, the incorporation of diversity, equity, or inclusion has been done in an effort to address racial inequities and biases that have prevented people of color or African American females from achieving growth and progress when it has been deserved. According to Conyers and Wright (2021), nervousness can lead to an administration being stagnant or dormant. Because of fear of making a mistake or upsetting stakeholders, this can halt institutional change. It has been years since the

inception of the landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education, and education inequities and segregation remain pervasive within our nation's school system (Warren, 1954, as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 2022). Literature has suggested that even with the inception of Brown v. Board of Education, which was a significant landmark case in history for African Americans, it still served the interest of elite Caucasians (Bell, 1995). Brown v. Board of Education helped pave the way in assisting African American females, who still endured challenges when seeking leadership positions. Unfortunately, some of the challenges have continued over the year because some people were and are afraid to advocate for the necessary change. In the field of education, history has proven that Caucasian men and women have continued to serve in leadership for years, with African American females slowly receiving the opportunity. Understanding why this continues to occur and why people continue to turn a blind eye to this issue, would help to provide a better understanding as to why there is an immediate need to address this problem. As Albert Einstein stated, "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look and do nothing."

It is important for leaders in elementary and secondary education to understand the lack of an increase of African American females in educational leadership metaphorically is a slap in the face to women of color, who are qualified, and these actions have an adverse impact on students. Lomotey (2019), found that Black principals can make a difference in the lives at Black students; however, research has continued to show that female African American principals continue to be oppressed because of race and gender (Collins, 2004; Hooks, 1981; Shooter-Looden, 2004, as cited in Lomotey,

2019). Moorosi et al. (2018) believed through conducting a study using the Intersectional Theory, this would address the overlapping discriminatory issue of three Black women principals, and the shortage of Black females in educational leadership. Both studies concluded with similar results. Through the Intersectionality lens, which is a multi-layered form of discrimination that reflects the experiences of Black women, this theory addressed the gaps revealed by feminist and anti-racist dialogues in the experiences and struggles of women of color (Crenshaw, 1991 as cited in Moorosi, 2018). Even though the former study found that African American females make a huge positive impact in the lives of their students, both studies provided insight into the benefits intersectionality of race and gender for African American females. Both studies found that African American females can achieve success in leadership. This was truly impactful because even though African American females are often overlooked or often not acknowledged for their successes, these studies support the importance of the necessity of ensuring that African American females receive a fair chance when they seek leadership. In addition, these studies recognized the importance of acknowledging female African American educators for their successes.

Disparities in Obtaining Leadership Positions in Education

Due to the educational disparities that have existed in education, it was important that educational leaders and policymakers work toward ensuring that more work is done in the area of educational equity. According to Cobbold and Sahlberg (2020), equity has become a central principal in educational policy leadership, and across the world; however, people have various meanings of equity and its interpretations. It is important to

provide a clear explanation and meaning of equity to ensure that equity is achieved. Equity in education should refer to equity in outcomes and incorporate both the individuals and the social group, which is the area of focus when attempting to close the equity gap, raising the bar, and ensuring that everyone gets what they need to achieve a desired result. This is important because no society can truly be acknowledged as a democracy while some groups are discriminated against (Cobbold & Sahlberg, 2020). Through the Intersectionality Theory, Burton et al. (2020), determined that social inequities exist as multiple traits such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity overlap for Black women. Sadly, for years, school leadership has historically been defined as the dominant profession for Caucasian men (Boris-Schacter et al., 2006 as cited in Burton, et al., 2020). Therefore, it was first important to provide a clear definition of equity to ensure that equity policies were clearly created and implemented with fidelity. When equity is effectively implemented, this will ensure that disparities or social inequities that existed in education no longer exist. While diversity is not equity, Cobbald and Sahlberg's study provided insight into the need for the increase of diversity which helped to ensure that more Black women were given a fair chance at leadership, especially if they were as qualitied as their counterparts. Cobbold and Sahlberg (2020), agreed that continued research in diversity in educational leadership would allow for a path in which policymakers and educational leaders could sufficiently inform and address pertinent policies as it related to diversity. On the other hand, diversity needs for all ethnic groups and genders have not been met in aspiring leadership programs (Johnson & Fournillier, 2022). This tied back to the Critical Race Theory tenet, racism is ordinary, meaning it is

the way society operates (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). Therefore, the earlier study supported the fact that society has normalized the behavior of African American females failing to receive support as they seek leadership even in programs such as aspiring leadership programs. This issue cannot be overlooked. This is why it is important that aspiring leadership programs provide support for all aspiring leaders. Johnson and Fournillier's study provided insight into the need for educational institutions to further explore and assess their current leadership programs that have impacted African American females, especially as it relates to equity polices. Based upon the lack of aspiring leadership programs not meeting the necessary equity expectations as it relates to providing supports for female African American educators, it would be pertinent to review current processes in district level aspiring leadership programs and aspiring principal programs. Through the process of interviewing female African American administrators, listening to their lived experiences, and hearing their challenges faced as they sought educational leadership positions, my hope is that this will illustrate the dire importance of developing organizational leadership-based strategies and the need to gather more narrative evidence from this underrepresented group.

Through the tenet of uniqueness of voices, more awareness has been brought to the issue of the racial disparities that exist when African American females seek leadership. Incorporating Critical Race Theory in education has empowered researchers to work towards the elimination of barriers through understanding the various ways people of color experience oppression by race and gender (Lobue, 2021). After researching principal programs, Jang and Alexander (2022) found that 48% of African

American females make up principal positions in public secondary schools. This particular literature provided relevant research exposing the challenges that African American females face in secondary schools as it related to promotion, lack of promotion at various levels, and the existence of more Caucasian dominance in education. One disturbing result of this study hinged on the fact that African American principals served as leaders in schools with relatively higher percentages with students of color (Jang & Alexander, 2022). Unfortunately, African American females were faced with the reality of being Black females in American (Edwards, 2020). According to (Kramer, 2020, as cited in Edwards, 2020), gender biases are common in the American workforce. These are the harsh realities for female African American leaders, not just in education, but in the United States workforce. While the above studies provided important implications for policy and leadership preparation, Kramer and Edwards' stats provided insight into the life of African American females in America. For instance, the limited number of female African American administrators required policymaker's immediate attention. In addition, this study highlighted the need to increase the number of female African American principals, and through this study, it was determined that districts needed to monitor their practices to assess whether there was any system of discrimination unique to female African American candidates or racial and gender biases in the hiring committee. Lastly, it was determined that principal preparation programs should address the intersectional influences stemming from race or gender or other labels that create barriers for women of color.

Implications for the latter study determined that policymakers should prepare and implement intersectionality informed policy interventions that specifically support leadership by female African American principals. Even though African American females have experienced more challenges as they aspire to seek leadership, for years this has historically been an issue for African American females in the leadership roles. The goal of this study is that hopefully it will continue to shed light on the racial inequities perpetuated through school systems. Through reviewing the historical context, this is a current reminder that hundreds of years later, school systems continue to exist within the same mindset in which was the foundation of racism and discrimination that was rooted in American systems and laws that Derrick Bell elaborated on through Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1995). The disenfranchisement and systematic challenges that Black people have experienced stems all the way back to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation; as a result, this has continued to impact how people of color are impacted in the system of education (Peter & Miles, 2021). Progression has occurred, but unfortunately African American females who seek leadership are still fighting for the right to be given a fair chance. African American citizens were not afforded the opportunity to serve as a teacher or administrator until the first part of the twentieth century. In addition, as a result of race and gender, African American female's experiences were significantly different from African American men and Caucasian men and women. This research is significantly important to the current study because it supports the fact that no other race or gender can truly understand the challenges of African American females.

Even with the education and professional training, African American females are limited to opportunities in education. The National Center of Education Statistics found that the majority of school aged students are children of color, and the majority of teachers and principals are 80% Caucasian. Furthermore, the make-up of African American females in leadership is 12.9% in public schools and Caucasian females make up 75.1% of the principal roles. In addition, African American females who are assistant principals are systematically denied advancement to principalship, which indicates that African American females are 18% less likely to be given the opportunity in their district (National Center of Education Statistics, 2019, as cited in Peter & Miles, 2021). This is significantly important because it supports the issue regarding the challenges and systematic racism that African American females face in education. For instance, there was a slight increase in female African American superintendents increasing from 24.1% to 28.68% over the last ten years. Even though there was a slight increase, this increase still is not enough. The statistics are vital to this study because outlines the disproportionality and underrepresentation of African American females in leadership. In addition, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, African American females ranked among the most educated of all races and genders in the United States; however, these highly educated women earn substantially less than Caucasian males and females. This is an extremely significant problem that reverts back to systematic racism that originated hundreds of years ago in our society. This is the reality; therefore, our society must continue to have these tough conversations that are necessary in order ensure that equity exists in organizations, implemented with fidelity.

As the focus of this study addressed the realities of African American females who were underrepresented in the realm of education, Coleman (2022) found that the number of female African American superintendents do not proportionality reflect the population of educators in the field. It is clear, all people face adversity serving as a superintendent; however, African American females face additional issues related to the marriage, children, and location (Bernal et al., 2017, as cited in Coleman, 2022). Even though both studies are not the leadership position identified in my study, these studies provide additional support that validates the range of racial disparities that exist in education leadership as it relates to African American females.

This was extremely important and relevant to the current study because it reinforced the fact that much more work needs to be done. If school systems feel that African American females are qualified to teach children and serve as administrators, then the problem that needs to be addressed is why are these people not revered as qualified as leading school districts. African American females represent a large percentage of the educator population in the United States; nevertheless, Caucasian females were more likely to ascend to the superintendency role at a higher percentage than African American females even if they matriculated through the system as teachers, principals, and assistant superintendents.

Other disparities have existed for years as well. For instance, for decades, people have not been hired based upon qualifications, but based upon who people knew. According to Delapenha's (2022), qualitative study that explored how principal qualified Black women in Florida faced challenges, the following issues were determining factors

in who received leadership positions: it was based upon who you know, not what you know, inequities in principal-prepared programs, and there was a lack of support. According to (Harris, 2022 as cited in Delapenha, 2022), the difficulties principal-qualified Black women face may be contributed to the unconscious biases. According to Weiner et al. (2019), the experiences and opinions voiced by African American females who qualify for leadership positions are not adequately detailed. This research was relevant to the current study because the women, who volunteered in this study, faced challenges to include systematic biases and roadblocks throughout their career. The focus of this current study continued to shed light on the problem that has continued to plague the world of education as it relates to equity. African American females face more challenges as they seek leadership than Caucasian men and women. It is important to note that African American females have felt the need to obtain a level of higher education in order to place themselves in the position to even be viewed as competent and qualify. The representation of men and women in leadership and administrative positions are highly disproportionate. This study depicted the obstacles that African American females faced in their lives that reflect the various difficulties that hinder the advancement for them in elementary and secondary education.

More research studies have centered on the fact the mostly African American females are as qualified as the Caucasian counterparts who seek leadership. For the purposes of this study, it was important to understand what is typically required in a leadership capacity, but it was not finite. According to the 2021 Teacher Leader Workforce Report, in order to serve in most leadership positions, an educator is required

to hold a certification beyond a classroom certificate; this certification in Georgia is a Leadership certificate at a Tier I level or Tier II level (Flamini & Steed, 2022). According to Poekart (2020), education policies are a representation of the relationships within a society, and these relationships influence the practice of leadership for professional learning through the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of educators. For years, the relationship within a society has not been equity focused. This is why female African American educators still continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles. According to Poekart (2020), it is important to advance leadership professional learning toward educational equity. Through this professional learning opportunity, equity professional development programs centered on examining intersection inequities affecting students, and the calls for educational leaders to commit to enacting change will lead to the progression inequities in education (Brown and Crippen as cited Poekart, 2020). This was critical for my study because it provided suggestions for policymakers and educational leaders to consider should they decide there is a need to provide more equity focused learning opportunities at the state level and within local school districts.

As a result, the problem that prompted me to search the literature was to explore the reasons as to why there is a significant underrepresentation of female African American leaders in elementary and secondary education and why this particular population experiences more challenges than the majority when seeking leadership within education. Trying to understand the root cause of this disproportionality and the reasoning that female African American educators endure unfair barriers will assist policymakers in assessing the effectiveness of current equity policies, lack of explicit

equity policies, or the need for clear explicit policies at the state Department of Education and local school districts within this Southeastern Georgia city.

There was a need to address the gap in the literature. Although researchers have investigated this issue, the topic has not been explored in this way: There is a gap in the literature regarding studies that assessed the impact and effectiveness of equity policies that have been implemented in public-school districts in this United States Southeastern city, and there is very little literature that explored the experiences of Georgia's public school African American female educators, who have sought the following leadership positions within education: assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director. Obtaining the perspectives from African American females was important to this study because they are the underrepresented population. Scholars do not definitively know the root cause as to why elementary and secondary, female African American educators continue to encounter negative experiences and challenges when they seek leadership in this United States Southeastern city's public-school districts, nor do scholars know the effectiveness or impact of the state's Department of Education's policies as it relates to equity that serves as a guide for public-school districts in Georgia.

As indicated earlier, there is a need to address the gap in the literature because if society continues to fail to do address this gap, the barriers that continue to impede African American females from obtaining leadership positions will continue to exist, and these barriers will continue to the prevent necessary progress needed to remove the inequities that exist in this United States' Southeastern school districts. After thorough research, there was a lack of clear policies at the state level within the Southeastern state

used in this study that will ensure equitable access to effective and qualified female

African American leaders. Even though the state has established an equity plan that was

data driven to ensure that there was equitable access to effective leaders, it lacks clear

policies that will decrease the disparity that exist between African American females and

Caucasian females. The state has established an Effectiveness System with four critical

components that were designed to ensure that fair supports were in place and that leaders

felt a sense of belonging (Equitable Access, 2015). In 2022, ABC Schools created a

blueprint, and equity was established as one of the district's four strategic priorities.

Therefore, the district identified a need for this priority. One year later, at the December

2023 board meeting, equity continued to be a major focal point as it related to the

district's hiring practices. The Board Chairperson adamantly expressed the need for the

district to revise their current postings of job positions, as well as their selection process.

While although there were some board members, who had a difference of opinion, the

reasoning for this revision to the current policy, per Chairperson, this would potentially

prevent issues of nepotism and also ensure equity in hiring. The Board Chairperson

emphasized since the district had a long history of nepotism, revising the current policy

would allow for more transparency to the public. In addition, this revision may afford

every qualified person an opportunity to apply and potentially interview. This was

extremely important because it reflects the importance of my study, and this concern

reflects the long history of hiring issues that continues to be a problem for ABC school

district in 2023.

On the other hand, QRS Schools, a surrounding school district outlined a different approach in 2022. This school district outlined as one of their 2022 Strategic Plan Initiatives a "Focus on Culture," and the purpose of this initiative was to ensure that they retained employees and ensured employee engagement and positive perceptions as employees. QRS also developed "Consistency of Leadership," within their strategic plan that acknowledged there was a disconnect in the district between supervisors and leaders, and their goal as a district was to build consistency, clear expectations, and connections across these leaders. In order to achieve these outcomes, QRS School district planned to develop a strategy based upon research that would support leaders to shift culture in their schools and offices that aligned with district leadership development efforts.

Lastly, the final school district, EFG Schools, does not have any goal that focuses on equity in leadership hiring. There are a few indicators outlined in their strategic plan that could be closely connected; however, they are not clear. For instance, one core belief of the district is to ensure that the district embraces the cultural diversity of their community and strength. In addition, goal three in the strategic plan, focuses on recruiting highly qualified staff, developing highly performing staff, and retaining highly effective staff. In this plan, there is no mention of equity.

The current explanations regarding equity for all three school districts do not clearly reflect that there is an alignment with the state's department of education's equity expectations that would ensure leadership equity among African American females and other demographics. This is a major reason as to why more work needs to be done in the area of educational equity to ensure that African American females are able to obtain a

fair chance when seeking leadership. It is clear that policy assessment, implementation, execution, and assessment need to occur.

After researching the equity policies at the Department of Education in this particular in the Southeastern state in the United States, it is clear the polices that relate to equity are not clearly specified to ensure that school districts understand how to create or develop policies that align with state policies within the Department of Education (Equitable Access to Effective Educators, 2015). For instance, this particular state, which is the focus of the study, developed an Education Equity Plan in 2015 with the contributions of the United States Department of Education, the Council of State School Officers, Equitable Access Support Network, Center of Great Teachers and Leaders and Collaborative for Effective Educator Development, and the Accountability Reform Center. In accordance to the requirements of ESEA Section 1111 (e) (2), this Equity Plan addressed the importance of leadership that includes specific steps to ensure that Georgia's schools are led by effective leaders. Nevertheless, the Equity Plan does not clearly explain how this will ensure equity in leadership as it relates to gender and race. As it relates to Educator Support and Development, currently the GaDOE is launching a new pilot for teacher evaluation and leader growth. According to the GaLeads initiative, this new pilot is expected to provide ownership for professional growth and a clear pathway for career advancement (GaDOE, 2023). This is critical to ensuring that diversity and equity and leadership reflects improvement in Georgia's public schools. Even with the current Georgia's Leaders Keys Effectiveness System, under Human Resource Leadership and Professionalism and Communication are the closest two

indicators that provide a point of reference for school districts so that district leaders and school leaders can work towards improving the racial disparities that exist for African American females, who seek leadership positions.

For instance, under the Human Resource Leadership performance indicator, it states under Human Resource Management, leaders are expected to foster effective human resource management through the selection, induction, support, and retention of quality instructional and support personnel. Under the Professionalism and Communication key indicator, this professional indicator states that leaders must foster the success of students by demonstrating professional standards and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development and contributing to the profession (GaDOE, 2023). These current performance indicators are the examples of observable, expected behaviors. These are the expected performances that leaders are expected to adhere in order to indirectly ensure equity in leadership. It is extremely important that leaders understand how to effectively lead so that people serving under their leadership will believe they have can obtain a fair and equitable chance when seeking leadership. Unfortunately, the lack of clear equity policies as it relates to leadership has left school districts to create, determine, and assess equity on their own at the local level. The lack of clear equity policies at the state level has left room for ambiguity at the local school district level.

The strategic priorities or plan for ABC, EFG, and QRS school district, which are large school districts in the Southeastern city of Georgia bare similar results of Cobbold and Sahlberg's findings that determined there was a need across the world to establish a

clear explanation and meaning of equity to ensure that it is achieved (Sahlberg, 2020).
Based upon the school district's explanation of equity or lack thereof, this further
reinforces why there is a gap in the literature that fails to address the need for equity in
leadership in order to ensure that African American females receive a fair chance when
they seek leadership opportunities.

Summary

The focus of chapter two was to document what has been already written about
this study's topic and provide a summary of the themes found in the literature. What is
known about the tenets of Critical Race Theory served as the framework of this study.
The tenets applied in this study were intersectionality, interest convergence, race as a
social construct, uniqueness of voice and racism viewed as ordinary. This present study,
through analyzing various current policies in three Southeastern United States school
districts, and through the analysis of the perceptions of African American females, who
have experienced leadership challenges, helped to provide insight in the gap in the
literature that exist as it relates to equity policies at the state and local level. The gap will
help policymakers and educational leaders to understand the importance of developing a
current equity plan at the state level so that local school districts within the state will have
a guide.

Chapter 3 addressed the research design for the current study, the study's purpose,
the research questions, the central phenomenon, the research tradition and rationale for
the study. In addition, the role of the researcher was included, the methodology, issues of
trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and the summary were included.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenology study was to explore the experiences of female African American elementary and secondary educators who had sought leadership positions in a southeastern city in Georgia. After researching the equity policies at the department of education in one state in the southeastern part of the United States, it was clear that the polices that relate to equity are not clearly specified to ensure that school district leaders understand how to create or develop policies that align with state policies within the department of education (Equitable Access to Effective Educators, 2015). For instance, the state that was the focus of the study developed an Education Equity Plan in 2015 with the contributions of the U.S. Department of Education, Council of State School Officers, Equitable Access Support Network, Center of Great Teachers and Leaders and Collaborative for Effective Educator Development, and Accountability Reform Center. In accordance with the requirements of ESEA Section 1111 (e) (2), this Equity Plan addressed the importance of leadership and included specific steps to ensure that Georgia's schools are led by effective leaders. Nevertheless, the Equity Plan did not clearly explain how this plan would ensure equity in leadership in relation to gender and race. This left school districts to create, determine, and infer the existence of equity as they create their equity policies. The lack of clear equity policies at the state level leaves room for ambiguity at the local school district level.

The major sections of Chapter 3 consist of an introduction that identifies the purpose of the study. The research design and rationale follow and provide a synopsis as

to why the selected research design was chosen. Following the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher is addressed; in this section, any personal or professional relationships are identified. Potential biases are noted, along with any potential ethical issues. The methodology section is next, and last, the procedures for any pilot studies and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data are included.

Research Design and Rationale

The research was based on the following research questions:

RQ1:   How do elementary and secondary African American female educators describe their experiences with obtaining the leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director?

RQ2:   How do elementary and secondary African American female educators describe why there is a significant disparity between Caucasian and African American females who obtain leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director?

The central concepts of the study were the lived experiences of female African American educators in elementary and secondary education as they sought leadership. This study provided insight into how African American females understand their experiences. In addition, the study included perceptions of the meaning that African American females give to their experiences. The research tradition selected for this qualitative study was phenomenology. According to Moustakas (1994), the empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to an experience in order to obtain a comprehensive description that provides a reflective structural analysis of the essence of

the experience. In comparison, Burkholder et al. (2016) explained phenomenology as a collection and an analysis of people's perceptions related to a specific definable phenomenon. These scholars maintained that using a phenomenological research design would help others better understand a person's perception of an event, which is also sometimes phrased as a "lived experience." It is extremely important to understand the word "perception." Perception is explained as the primary source of knowledge, and this is also explained as a source that cannot be doubted (Moustakas, 1994). Understanding a person's lived experience or perception of an event assists a researcher in grasping how an individual relates to a phenomenon and how a person understands a phenomenon, and it helps in better understanding the meaning of the phenomenon.

The rationale for this phenomenology study stemmed from the fact that little is known regarding the research study topic. A phenomenology study is typically used as a research design when little is known about how people experience a particular phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2016). After searching the literature, I found that there were works on similar topics that related to Black females or African American females in certain leadership roles, but they did not have any relevant connection to the current study, which focused on multiple leadership roles and the challenges that African American females face, and they did not clearly identify why this population is underrepresented and seemingly tends to experience more challenges that Caucasian females. Therefore, I was motivated to conduct this study. I was also motivated by another study in which the research determined that there needed to be more research related to African American females in leadership as principals because they were found

to be oppressed based upon gender, race, and class. The significant disproportionality between the minority and the majority, and the fact that little is known about this issue, further motivated me to conduct this study. Because of these critical factors, a phenomenology study appeared to be the most reasonable and realistic approach to use to gain knowledge in order to bring awareness and social change in this area.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to serve as a data tool, collecting, organizing, and analyzing people's perceptions and information and formulating the results of the data. The people whom I interviewed served in various roles in education. These individuals' positions consisted of teachers, district personnel, and local school leaders. Their roles consisted of teacher, coordinator, director, and instructional coach.

Because I had similar experiences as the individuals interviewed, it was challenging not to be biased; however, as the researcher, my goal was to remain objective. There were not any ethical issues because I followed all policies and protocols as required by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB at Walden University is responsible for ensuring that all Walden University research complies with the university's ethical standards as well as U.S. federal regulations.

Methodology

The methodology selected for this study was a phenomenological approach. According to Moustakas (1994), the empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to an experience in order to obtain a comprehensive description that provides a reflective structural analysis of the essence of the experience. In comparison, Burkholder

et al. (2016) explained phenomenology as a collection and an analysis of people's

perceptions related to a specific definable phenomenon. When using a phenomenological

approach as a researcher, one must determine the underlying structures of an experience.

This is done by interpreting descriptions divulged by the participant regarding their

experience.

For this phenomenological study, the selected population consisted of educators

who served in various roles such as teachers, instructional coaches, assistant principals,

coordinators, and directors, and their years of experience in education varied. More

importantly, these participants had direct relationships to the phenomenon. The specific

individuals selected for the study, who volunteered, were intentionally selected based

upon their experience and their ability to connect to the study. The participants were all

African American female educators in metro Atlanta who had leadership aspirations,

sought leadership roles, or encountered leadership challenges. This was the rationale for

the participant selection. I aimed for eight to 10 participants, which is a reasonable

number for interviews in a phenomenological study (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Participants were contacted first by verbal communication or email. My goal was

to interview eight participants, and that did transpire. Typically, in a phenomenological

study, the long interview method involves data collection on a topic, obtained informally,

in an interactive process using open-ended questions. The interview process is effective

because it begins with a social conversation that creates a relaxed, trusting environment

(Moustakas, 1994). It is extremely important for the researcher to make the interviewee

feel welcomed, comfortable, and relaxed; the hope is that within a professional, trusting

environment, objective data on the participant's perceptions can be obtained. The Walden University IRB approval number for this study is 10-11-23-0166477.

Instrumentation

Interviews served as the instrumentation tool. A structured protocol was implemented for the interview process. A brief opening concerning the purpose of the study was provided, along with the expectations for the interview process. Participants were verbally asked if they consented to the interview a second time, even though they had consented via email prior to the interview. Following the brief opening, participants were asked a series of questions that elicited a response related to the research questions and the study topic.

Primary data and secondary data are two forms of data that can be used in qualitative studies. For this phenomenological study, data were collected through interviews. In a phenomenological study, interviews involve an informal, interactive process of providing a brief overview, followed by open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994). I followed this process.

Data Analysis

Once the data were collected, I followed the process of identifying common themes (Moustakas, 1994). I was able to identify common themes in order to organize my data and make this interpretation process more streamlined. I synthesized the results in the next steps. Administering this process helped with organizing and determining similarities among the participants, and this process made it easier for me to synthesize and draw conclusions (Moustakas, 1994).

In order to obtain the interview data more precisely, I used the platform Zoom. Zoom is a communication platform that allows people to connect using video, audio, phone, and chat (Zoom, 2023). To provide the interviews with a precise and accurate transcription, I used audio recording. This also allowed me the opportunity to review the data obtained. This ensured validity and captured every word that the participants shared during the interview. I developed the same questions to ask every participant.

The research was based on the following research questions:

RQ1:   How do elementary and secondary African American female educators describe their experiences with obtaining the leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director?

RQ2:   How do elementary and secondary African American female educators describe why there is a significant disparity between Caucasian and African American females who obtain leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director?

Interview Questions

1. Based upon your current position, please explain why you believe you were selected to work in this role.

2. Please describe your experiences or experiences when interviewing for a leadership role in education.

   Follow-up only if raised by the respondent: If there was any part of the interview that seemed to reflect bias, stereotyping, or racism, would you

please provide an example or clarity regarding one of these particular areas?

3. As an African American female, what are some of the challenges or barriers you may have experienced as you sought a particular leadership role?

4. If you have ever been turned down for a leadership position, would you please share some of the reasons if you were provided the rationale as to why you were not selected?

5. To what degree do you believe there is a significant disparity between Caucasian and African American females who obtain leadership positions of assistant principal, principal, coordinator, instructional coach, or director?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me before we end the interview?

Follow-Up

I administered a follow-up process after conducting the interviews. I sent an email to each participant providing them with a transcription of their interview. Participants were asked as a form of "member-checking" to reach out to me if there were any errors in my interpretation of their responses or if there were any discrepancies in the transcription. Participants were asked to notify me within 24 hours, or no later than 48 hours. The participants were asked to provide a reasonable time in order to conduct the follow-up interview. The participants were offered the opportunity to use the same data collection tool as before, Zoom, to participate in the follow-up interview. Participants were also afforded a phone call option for convenience and flexibility for the follow-up process.

Issues of Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is the extent to which one can have confidence in a study's findings. There are various ways to examine and analyze the trustworthiness of a study. The following are examples: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For the purposes of this study, I focused on credibility and transferability. Credibility involves the criteria to establish the credibility of findings and interpretations that are plausible to the participants. Transferability involves the ability to take the study's finding and apply them to another comparable study. These two criteria were selected because through the lived experiences of the participants, this study continued to shed light on the realities of the challenges that African American females endure when seeking leadership positions in education.

Even though some people may view the challenges of these African American females' lived experiences as subjective, the experiences were very much real to these participants. In addition, there are similar issues in education in which African American females are underrepresented, so this study could be used to support these issues. For instance, there is a similar study related to superintendents in education. African American females are underrepresented in this particular educational leadership position as well, even though this role was excluded from my study. In a study that focused on superintendents in education, Coleman (2022) found that the number of female African American superintendents did not proportionally reflect the population of educators in the field using intersectionality. Therefore, this is a clear example of transferability.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves internal validity through data collection, analysis, and interpretation based upon multiple voices, methods, investigators, and theories. In this study, I accomplished triangulation by using a spreadsheet to keep track of common themes through obtaining research from primary and secondary sources. By using CRT and an intersectional framework, I was able to organize the common themes identified among the interviews. I also obtained research from primary and secondary sources. Further, I organized thematic schemes or categories, and I obtained primary data through interviews.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is a form of internal validity that involves credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer briefing was obtained through engaging in analytical discussion with a neutral peer. After this study was conducted, I shared my study with a male Walden PhD student, who was also pursuing his degree in public policy and administration. He was also a leader in his profession. My goal was to seek his objective feedback, and he did provide feedback for me take into consideration in relation to the tone of my study and checking for misalignment. Lastly, my goal in obtaining feedback from a neutral perspective was to help me identify any indications of personal bias that I might have included in my study. I was very appreciative of this peer for checking for alignment in my paper.

Member Checks

Member checks is a form of internal validity that ensure credibility through testing data, analytical interpretations, and conclusions with stakeholder to ensure accurate representations of their perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each participant received a copy of their transcription of their interview in order to ensure accuracy of their information.

Track Description

Track Description is a form of external validity that allows for transferability. A description of procedures, context, and participants, data will allow the opportunity for transferability to a similar situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). A rich description of the participant lived experiences across three large school districts allowed the opportunity for similar districts of the same size to use this study should they have similar issue.

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Ethical Procedures

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In order to conduct a study, ethical procedures must be adhered to; therefore, as a student, I was expected to follow the IRB process. As the researcher, I obtained permission or informed consent from the participants, whom I interviewed. As it relates to ethical issues or concerns, as the researcher, I was obligated to mask the participants. I implemented a strategic plan to recruit the participants for this study. Once the participants provided a verbal consent, they were required to email a written consent confirming their participation.

There were not any issues with power dynamics. I did not serve in a supervisory role for any of the participants. The participants received clear communication regarding

the purpose of obtaining their information with an explanation regarding how the data would be used for this study.

The data and participants will remain anonymous. The information for this study was stored on my personal computer. This email flyer shared with the participants included the title of my study and a few sample questions. The email included the protocol for the interview process via Zoom. After the participants voiced their interest in serving as a participant, they were emailed the informed consent letter. The participants received a copy of the interview transcript within seven days of their interview in order to ensure the accuracy and validity of their interview. In order for me to ensure that I acknowledge any potential bias, I remained objective, professional, and neutral.

Summary

Chapter 3 addressed the research design for my study, the study's purpose, the research questions, the central phenomenon, the research tradition, and rationale for the study. Lastly, the role of the researcher was included, the methodology, issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and summary were included.

Chapter 4 consisted of the proposal check-in. This chapter included reminders for the researcher moving forward. Chapter 4 also consisted of the introduction, the pilot study, if necessary, the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, the results, and the summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the results of interviews conducted for this phenomenological study. This chapter documents the setting, demographics, and results of the data collection process. The sample population consisted of female African American educators. Evidence of data trustworthiness is included in the study.

Setting

Eight interviews were conducted with African American females currently in leadership positions using the Zoom electronic platform. Five educators worked in ABC school district. Two educators worked in EFG school district. Last, one of the educators worked in QRS school district. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Demographics

The participants for this study were eight female African American educators: two assistant principals, three teachers, one coordinator, one athletic director, and one instructional coach. All of these educator participants possessed a master's degree or higher at the time of seeking their leadership positions. The participants also possessed between 7 and 10 years of educational experience prior to seeking their first leadership role. All of the educators interviewed for multiple leadership roles, and they all sought more than one leadership position. The leadership roles consisted of instructional coach, assistant principal, principal, coordinator, or director.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred through semi structured individual interviews conducted via Zoom technology. The interview process lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. Each interview was conducted in a manner to protect participant privacy. The interviews took place via Zoom.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved coding and categorizing data to identify emerging themes. Inductive reasoning was applied during the analysis and coding. Codes and emerging themes were documented on an Excel spreadsheet for referencing. The codes were first documented in order to determine the emerging themes.

Figure 1

Major Data Theme Word Cloud

Evidence of Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is the extent to which one can have confidence in a study's findings. There are various ways to examine and analyze the trustworthiness of a study. Trustworthiness can be made evident in qualitative research by applying several concepts, including the use of ethical data collection by ensuring respect and honor for the participants, and by developing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the analysis.

Credibility

Credibility involves the criteria to establish legitimacy of findings and interpretations that are plausible to the participants. These criteria were selected because through the lived experiences of the participants, this study would shed light on the realities of what African American females endure when seeking leadership roles. All participants were extremely honest and transparent in expressing their experiences for each interview question. Every participant from start to finish conveyed their responses in a manner indicating that they truly wanted to express their voice in order to see improvements and positive changes in relation to the challenges and barriers that African American females face when seeking leadership positions. The research adhered to the credibility requirements as each participant was provided with a transcript of their interview and afforded the opportunity to provide any necessary revision for additional clarity. No information was received from any of the participants' responses to provide revisions for additional clarity, and there was no indication that any portion of the interview was misconstrued.

Transferability

Transferability involves the ability to take a study's findings and apply them to another comparable study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study explored the lived experiences of African American female educators as they sought leadership positions. Even though I focused on leadership roles such as assistant principal, principal, director, coordinator, and instructional coach, the findings of this study are applicable and transferable to any educational leadership roles. The sample population was from city school districts; however, the study's findings are transferable to school districts of a similar size and demographics across the United States. It would be unlikely that there would be major differences based upon past literature and current literature. There is a significant likelihood that the issues that existed in these southern school districts are also occurring across the United States as well.

Results

In this section, each interview question is noted with a summary of the findings for that question. To add depth to the data, participant quotes are incorporated to support each question, along with the common themes. Specific examples of data, such as quotes from the interview transcript, have been incorporated to support each question. Lastly, a few discrepant cases are included in this section.

Interview Question 1

Interview Question 1 was as follows: Based upon your current position, please explain why you believe you were selected to work in this role. Seven out of the eight participants indicated they were hired for their current role based upon their qualified

educational work experience and education. Two out of the eight participants indicated

they believed they were selected because their leader was familiar with them and

believed they would be a great fit. A few quotes from the interview participants that

brought life to their lived experience are as follows.

Participant 2 shared her personal experience of why she believed she was selected

for her current role.

Well, I have been in my current role now for 19 years. I had lots of experience. I

had lots of knowledge. I also worked with families in the district previously where

I was a coordinator. The fact that I came to the district with the leadership

certificate, and the fact that there were no other Black people in the department, I

think that may have swayed them a little bit.

Participant 5 shared her personal experience of why she believed she was selected for her

current role.

I've been the department chairperson for 4 years, and I've been working at this

school for 7 years ago. When I first interviewed for the position, I was hired

solely as the French teacher, and after a few years of working in the school, they

interviewed everybody in the department, and I was offered the position of

chairperson only because there were some negative dynamics within the

department, and I was told that I was the best fit for that at that time.

Participant 7 shared this explanation of why she was selected for her current role:

I do believe that me being an African American female did help me in being

selected for the assistant principal position. The current administration team at

that point was African American, and I do think that because of our student population, it did help me in that regard.

Interview Question 2

Interview Question 2 was as follows: Please describe your experience or experiences when interviewing for a leadership role in education. Three of the eight participants indicated that some of the interview questions were not reflective of the job description or requirements. Three of the eight participants indicated that during the interview process, it seemed as though the interviewers were simply going through the motions, and they appeared to already have someone else in mind. Three of the eight participants indicated that the interview panel or interview experience felt very intimidating. A few quotes from the interview participants that brought life to their lived experience are as follows.

Participant 1 shared her best depiction of her interview experiences:

There were some experiences that were different based on the communities that I interviewed in and the persons or people that I interviewed with, and just to be clearly transparent, what I found was if I interviewed in a more affluent area, the questions seemed to be based on you know. For example, I have been told, "We normally don't hire outside of our school; we usually hire within our cluster," so I was usually asked questions such as, "What are you going to bring to the job, if you were to get it?"

Participant 3 shared her best depiction of her interview experiences.

I've always kind of felt like the questions that I was asked didn't necessarily make me feel like I was even being considered, and the people interviewing me were going through the formalities. I have gone through a process of even putting together an entire lesson or my portfolio, and I have noticed that the people interviewing me basically were not paying attention.

Participant 4 shared her best depiction of her interview experiences.

My experience was that the questions they were asking seemed to relate to trying to gauge my ability, not necessarily relating to teachers or to students. So, I kind of had to think about myself as a change manager, and I felt like that was an enormous responsibility for somebody who was an instructional coach. I felt like a lot of questions were about the culture of the school, how I would fit in with the culture of the school, which is also important. Many questions as I expected were not about the actual job description as an instructional coach. There were no questions relating to my knowledge of standards or how to move teachers along the tiers as we do as instructional coaches; There was very little of that.

This follow-up question was asked if needed: If there was any part of the interview that seemed to reflect bias, stereotyping, or systemic racism, would you please provide an example or clarity regarding one of these particular areas?

Five of the eight participants stated that they experienced either bias, stereotyping, or systemic racism during the interview process. A few quotes from the interview participants that bring life to their lived experience are as follows.

Participant 1 shared her lived experience.

In relation to stereotyping, I would hear that working for a Black female is by far the hardest thing that you will do, if you are hired by an African American female. Also, those interviews with African American women seemed to be really tense.

Participant 5 shared her best depiction of bias in an interview:

In regards to bias, during one interview, the interview panel was all African American women, who, from my understanding were monolingual, and they knew of my Haitian heritage. I found that they did not connect with my heritage. It just seemed as if being Haitian was almost held against me at one point. The women interviewing me were not warm, and I just found that they were very hard on my answers.

Participant 6 shared her best depiction of bias and system racism during her interview experiences:

During my interview for assistant principal, I think just from the initial look of the panel, it did seem to reflect some bias or systemic racism. I would say this because as I stated, I remember looking at that panel and thinking, okay, there are women, so that's good. That's really good, so I know that there are leadership positions available for females because they are sitting in this room interviewing me, but I did notice that there were no people of color. Not just speaking of African American, but there were no African American people represented at all, male or female, during that particular screening meeting. There was a thought that something might be going on, or could be going on, because this interview was

not reflective of me when I was looking back at the people who were screening

me.

Participant 7 shared her best explanation of how her interview experience appeared to be an indication of something significant. Participant 7 stated,

I do think that there is. I do think that there is this belief that at a White school, or a school that serves a predominantly a White student population, that they don't necessarily think that it is beneficial to have an all-Black administration team, and that to me is indicative of something.

Interview Question 3

Interview Question 3 was as follows: As an African American female, what are some of the challenges or barriers you may have experienced as you sought a particular leadership role? Four of the eight interview participants conveyed that their biggest challenge involved one of following: Due to their race, they did not fit the mold, or they did not have a fair experience due to the interview process being conducted by a panel that was not diverse. A few quotes from the interview participants that bring life to their lived experience are as follows.

Participant 2 shared her lived experiences of challenges and barriers that she experienced throughout seeking leadership positions.

I will say that I am very assertive, not aggressive, but I am assertive, and I don't necessarily fit into a mold. Because I exude confidence, and I am assertive, I can think beyond what normal people can really think about or see. I think out of the box. I think beyond what's in front of me. I don't just go along to get along. I

always try to do what I believe is for the good of the whole or the best options for

those that I'm trying to serve. I just think that certain supervisors or those people

who are selecting coordinators, want people that they can control.

Participant 5 shared her lived experiences of challenges and barriers she experienced

throughout seeking leadership positions.

Some of the other positions that I interviewed for in the past, not just particularly

leadership, but most of the time, the panels were either half and a half. For some

reason or another, I always had a favorable experience when it was a mixed panel,

versus an all-African American panel, and on top of that, mix means gender as

well. I found that in my experience of interviewing, when the panel was consisted

of all Black women in leadership interviewing you, you have less of a chance to

get a position than if it's a mixed panel, in terms of race and gender.

Participant 8 shared her lived experiences of challenges and barriers she experienced

throughout seeking leadership positions.

For the role of athletic director, right off, it is a male-dominated position in my

opinion; therefore, I have experienced disparities when I interviewed for athletic

director in leadership. In my second interview, I felt as if my darker hue could

have played a role, just by the language or the display of the principal's

mannerisms. This display was particularly different with this principal versus

when she was interviewing male counterparts. I never really got a smile or daddy

eyes. You know, I got more eye rolls, and just preconceived judgments of who

maybe they thought I was, just by how I looked. For example, there were

comments made like, "Yeah, I'm pretty to be Black statements," in which I believe were very inappropriate for a professional setting.

Interview Question 4

Interview Question 4 was as follows: If you have ever been turned down for a leadership position, would you please share some of the reasons if you were provided the rationale as to why you were not selected? Seven out of the eight interview participants explained that they never received an explanation or rationale after interviewing for leadership. Ironically, one out of the seven participants indicated that after not receiving a rationale, she decided to ask after not receiving a leadership opportunity following the second interview. Even after receiving the rationale and deciding to work harder to possibly get the chance if she were to apply in the future, she was still denied a leadership opportunity for the third time. A few quotes from the interview participants that bring life to their lived experience are as follows:

Participant 2 shared her experiences following her interview for the role of a coordinator.

I never received a rationale until after my second interview. I decided to ask my supervisor why I was not selected for the position. After the second one, I was told that I did not have enough experience, when actually I did possess the experience. The second time I applied for a position, the director actually changed the scope of the position and hired someone who did not even have leadership.

Participant 3 shared her lived experiences of challenges and barriers she experienced throughout applying for the role of instructional coach positions. She stated,

> Never. I've never received feedback from any of the leadership interviews that
>
> I've mentioned.

Participant 4 shared her lived experiences of challenges and barriers she experienced throughout applying for the role of instructional coach positions.

> I never received in any further explanation, and I know a lot of companies that
>
> provide this information, but for whatever reason I have no idea. I was just always
>
> at a loss.

Interview Question 5

Interview Question 5 was as follows: To what degree, do you believe there is a significant disparity between Caucasian and African American females who obtain leadership positions of Assistant Principal, Principal, Coordinator, Instructional Coach, or Director? All eight interview participants indicated that it is their belief that there is a racial disparity as it relates to the number of African American female leaders in comparison to Caucasian leaders. A few quotes from the interview participants that bring life to their lived experience are as follows:

Participant 1 shared her best perception as to the reason she believes racial disparities exist between African American females and Caucasian females in educational leadership roles.

> Yes, I believe there is a racial disparity. Initially, I believed it was because of
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> what the hierarchy looked like in the district office. Much of what the district
>
> office looked like was what I felt the clusters looked like across the district. So, I
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> think because of what it looked like at the top, it just really trickled down to the

schools that way, so I felt like that was the reasoning for the disparity. I think whatever happens at the top, definitely trickles down within the different clusters.

Participant 4 shared her best perception as to the reason she believes racial disparities existed between African American females and Caucasian females in educational leadership roles.

I have to speak on two different districts. In my perspective, because being in EFG Schools coming from ABC Schools, even though it's a few minutes of a drive, it is like being in another world. Here in EFG Schools, where I am currently, I don't see a disparity as much; I barely see any. Four years ago, when I was just coming from ABC School District, I did not see a lot of assistant principals, who were Black women, but I saw a lot of Caucasian women, who were leading schools. Filling those roles of instructional coaching or coordinator; it felt like they were out of reach. When I was in ABC School district, I didn't see many Black women, especially not younger Black women in leadership roles. Now I'm trying to make sense of what is going on. In ABC Schools, I was really thrown off because I know racism played a big role in a lot of the ways things were done, and being a product of ABC schools, from when I was in elementary school, until I became a teacher there 20 years later, race always felt like it was it was huge, and this is the way the school system operated.

Participant 6 shared her best perception as to the reason she believes racial disparities exist between African American females and Caucasian females in educational leadership roles.

There is a significant disparity, and what I've noticed is when I was interviewing for a position, let's say because I've had several different principals who have led me; I've had a Black female. I've had a White female. I've had a White male, who led me. I found that when I'm having discussions with other female leaders, and you ask them about how they got their position, and I would compare it to my own, I would feel like with Caucasian females in particular, a lot of their opportunities to become leaders is sort of based on who they know; how they're connected. Whether or not they had the same qualifications as I did, it was that they were given the opportunity to grow. They're going to get on the job training. Like I might have more degrees, more experience, all those things. My perception was you were hired because of who you know. Now, when I got my leadership position, I felt like it was I didn't really know anyone. I think it was based on my skill set, as I said before, but interestingly enough, the commonality that I had with my Black female counterparts, who were also assistant principals, was that it was hard between us. You're clawing for the same types of opportunities because they don't come up as often, and you sort of want to stick with leaders who are like you, like other Black female leaders, but we're having to fight so hard just to even get noticed for leadership positions, and that kind of works against us as a group.

Participant 7 shared her best perception as to the reason she believes racial disparities exist between African American females and Caucasian females in educational leadership roles.

I think this is a reality, and I've been in ABC School district now starting year

twenty-one. One of the things that I know is that they really try to match

administration teams so that they are reflective of the student and community

population, and I definitely understand the rationale for that. I understand the

research behind that. Children and communities need to see people in positions of

power that look like them for so many reasons, but here's the unintended

consequence of that for the Hispanic assistant principal or principal for the

African Americans or for just the leader that is of a minority background,

naturally, we are going to be placed at schools that reflect our race. That happens

quite frequently, because we feel like the community is going to be more

accepting and more at ease, and work better with us, but what happens is this gets

into the larger systemic issues. What happens is, we become the principals and

assistant principals disproportionately at Title I schools, and again, that gets into

the racial disparities, health disparities, and financial disparities.

Participant 8 shared her best perception as to the reason she believes racial disparities

exist between African American females and Caucasian females in educational leadership

roles.

Yes, there is a disparity. Over the years, through officiating, I've met a lot of

Caucasian administrators. We are the minority and to experience many of the

biases that I have experienced my whole life, it is because I feel like sports mirror

society. I have wanted to indulge in every facet of athletics so I can get a well-

rounded look for the ongoing research of biases that women experience. White

women in leadership that I have befriend, when I listened to their stories, they

seem to have a different story of how they became leaders. It seems to me that it's

quite easier. It was just I was recognized, and I help all around. This just fell in

my lap. Not like, I had to do twenty interviews.

Interview Question 6

Interview Question 6 was as follows: Is there anything else that you would like to

share with me before we end the interview? Three of the eight participants reiterated the

importance that African American females, who seek leadership experience challenges

that create emotional lasting impacts. Therefore, it is important for African American

female educators, especially African American female leaders to support each other,

instead of creating obstacles. Two of the three interview participants conveyed that there

needs to be more training on cultural competence to help aid in improving the problem of

racial disparities. A few quotes from the interview participants that bring life to their

lived experience are as follows:

Participant 3 expressed her additional comments that she believed would be

beneficial to add as she wrapped up the interview process.

I just appreciate you doing this study because as a Black woman in education,

who is seeking leadership positions, it's been really hard. There's something going

on, and to know the obstacles that I've met in education trying to transition

outside the classroom, I know there's something there. This definitely should go

beyond education because I know there's a story out there for Black woman in

general.

Participant 5 expressed her additional comments that she believed would be beneficial to add as she wrapped up the interview process.

> When you have a teacher for 28 years, in the field, who has applied to a variety of leadership positions, such as coordinator positions, instructional coach positions, assistant principal positions, and you are not giving me a chance; you are going to lose me, and this is how counties lose good teachers, good leaders. So human resources definitely needs to take that into consideration. We need to have more cultural leaders that understand our plight for our students.

Participant 6 expressed her additional comments that she believed would be beneficial to add as she wrapped up the interview process.

> I wish that we as African American females could kind of almost like join forces together to become leaders and not feel like we have to step on each other to get ahead. I know that the way the system is set in place, as I said before, oftentimes it's based upon who you know, not what you know. I feel like we have to find a way to get around that and pull each other up through the ranks. We have pull each other up through leadership. So, thank goodness, I've made those connections because if I hadn't, I think that I would probably still be in an assistant principal role, where I wouldn't want to be, or I wouldn't have had the opportunity to grow.

Participant 8 expressed her additional comments that she believed would be beneficial to add as she wrapped up the interview process.

I just think that your research is important and significant to continue to validate these processes as minorities attempt to matriculate in the leadership field. A representative from HR should go around to every interview. I think there's enough county leadership and administrators that could get trained to handle the interview process, and it could be a little bit more systematically done to help the HR representatives and the leadership leaders at the school. There could also be a checklist to help them help those candidates who may not get the job that explains how we can improve; if it's too much for them to give a letter that could just help that person or that candidate.

Summary

After analyzing the data, it was very interesting to assess the number of interviewee response similarities, along with slight distinctions among responses. Many of the interview participants shared lived experience that brought light to the current status of educational society that supports the research topics. For instance, the majority of the educator participants believe that based upon their experiences, racial disparities existed between Caucasian and African American females. This supported the two research questions.

Based upon the interview participants, their lived experiences further helped to bring light to the injustices and disproportionalities that continues to exist in education leadership for African American females. Based upon the first interview question, many of the interview participants explained why they were selected for their current position. Three of the eight participants are still serving as teacher after possessing six years of

teaching experience. Even after possessing at least a Master's Degree, these teaches have not been hired for a leadership role even after applying multiple times.

In addition, five of the eight educators have experienced various obstacles when seeking leadership that are far more different than their Caucasian counterparts. However, the interesting part that was even more significant and was truly disheartening was that the majority of these female African American educators experienced challenges when seeking leadership from other African American females.

Several common themes emerged from the participant's data. The emerging themes consisted of the following: "the educators believed they were selected for their current position based upon years of experience and education," "during interviews, some questions were not reflective of the job description," "interviews with Black women were more intense," "during some interviews, it felt as if the interviewers were simply going through the motions because they already had someone in mind," "experiences of systemic racism, stereotyping, or bias," "feeling of not fitting the mold," "never received an explanation for not receiving the leadership position," "belief that racial disparities existed between African American females and Caucasian females when obtaining leadership positions."

There were only a few discrepancies among the interviewees, but this was based on the leadership positions they sought and current school districts. These factors impacted the challenges encountered. For instance, examples of discrepancies consisted of the following: "selected for leadership due to the current leadership connection," "no feeling of bias, stereotyping or system racism during the interview," "treated differently

than males interviewed for the director role," "lack of organization within the department who conducted the interviews," "were provided an explanation for not receiving the leadership role without asking," "more cultural competence is needed for educational leaders and HR personnel."

In conclusion, the findings of this phenomenological study reflected similarities from past studies presented in the study. My study further supports the issue that exist for African American females that is significantly different for Caucasian men and women. The findings in this study reflect the racial disparities and challenges that African American females continue to face as they seek leadership roles in education. This issue impacts African American females in ways that are unjust, and these individuals desire justice and fairness so that they can excel as leaders in education.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The final chapter of the dissertation presents the integration, synthesis, and evaluation of the study data as they relate to the study research questions. Also presented are the conclusion and recommendations for future study. This phenomenological study was conducted in order to explore the experiences of female African American educators in elementary and secondary education who had sought leadership positions in a southeastern metro city in Georgia.

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of female African American educators when they sought leadership positions. The literature review revealed the gap in knowledge that explained why African American females who work in elementary and secondary education experience challenges when seeking leadership positions. My goal was to attempt to contribute to the body of knowledge by determining the barriers and challenges that were created and established by school districts and policymakers that continue to create systemic barriers and additional outliers that have never been addressed but impact a plethora of African American females who seek educational leadership roles.

Through this qualitative research design, I explored the lived experiences of African American females who sought leadership roles in a U.S. southeastern city in an effort to better understand why there was a lack of representation that continues to exist for African American females serving in leadership.

Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, I was able to analyze the data, providing a powerful, impactful analysis of the data obtained from the participants to further support the research questions. Through individual interviews, these data provided insight into the connections that existed between the tenets of CRT and the experiences that a marginalized group of people have continued to have since the inception of CRT. Each research subject had an opportunity to share their experiences as I sought to gather data that would potentially help to provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences as they sought leadership. Data collection occurred through interviews that presented the lived experiences of qualified African American females who shared their perceptions of their experiences when they sought leadership. Ideally, the results of the study will prompt additional discussion among educational leaders and policymakers about how to ensure equity in hiring educational leaders. As a result, policy changes may occur that may improve racial disparities that have existed for African American females for decades in relation to serving in educational leadership roles.

It was very interesting to assess the similarities and the slight distinctions between my study data and the grounded literature used to support this study. Many of the interview participants provided lived experiences that shed light to the current status of educational leadership disparities in the southern state of Georgia. The first critical aspect of the key study findings supported that fact that there was a significant disparity between African American females and Caucasian females. Another significant aspect of the study dealt with issue that African American females experienced more challenges as they sought educational leadership opportunities in comparison to Caucasian females. In

addition, a significant finding in this study was that many African American females worked for years before they were given an opportunity to serve in the most basic leadership role, and the reality was that more African American females worked for decades, even after applying multiple times for leadership, and still were denied the opportunity.

Furthermore, this study provided more information to support the fact that African American females may possess higher levels of education and experience and still are given the excuse that they are not qualified or are simply passed over for less qualified Caucasian females or males. As a result, there were several themes that emerged from the study. The emerging themes consisted of the following: "belief of being selected for their current position based upon years of experience and education," "during interviews, some questions were not reflective of the job description," "interviews with Black women were more intense," "during some interviews, it felt as if the interviewers were interviewers were simply going through the motions because they already had someone in mind," "experiences of systemic racism, stereotyping, or bias," "feeling of not fitting the mold," "never received an explanation for not receiving the leadership position," and "belief that racial disparity existed between African American women and Caucasian when obtaining leadership positions."

There were only a few discrepancies among the interviewees, but this was based on the leadership positions sought and current school districts. These factors impacted the challenges encountered. Examples of discrepancies consisted of the following: "selected for leadership due the current leadership connection," "no feeling of bias, stereotyping or

system racism during the interview," "treated differently that males interviewed for the director role," "lack of organization within the department who conducted the interviews," "provided an explanation for not receiving the leadership role without asking," and "more cultural competence in needed for education leaders and HR personnel."

There were some outliers that the majority of the participants did not experience, but this did not have a major impact on the findings. The majority of the findings from this study may aid in addressing the issues in this study. For example, the majority of the interview participants in this study communicated that not only did they experience challenges from Caucasian leaders, but they also had experienced challenges from females who looked like them. This was a very significant statement because as there has been a struggle for years to see African American females even serve in leadership roles, the most disappointing discovery was to hear that there were instances in which some African American females have experienced challenges that have been created by other African American females. This is pertinent because this was something that was identified in the literature, and to hear this in the data collection process was troubling.

Interpretation of the Findings

Interpretation of the findings was conducted by comparing interview findings to the peer-reviewed literature. It was important to reflect on how the intersection of race and gender impacts African American females who seek educational leadership positions. It is important to revisit the systemic barriers and challenges that hinder African

American females who seek the leadership positions in this study. There were various similarities and slight distinctions.

After data collection, common themes emerged that helped to provide more clarity and insight into the need for more use of CRT and intersectionality, which has helped to provide a concise way to continue more conversations and assessment in relation to policies in education that address equity in educational leadership, racial disparities, and disproportionalities that exist for African American females serving in educational leadership roles.

African American Female Educator Experience in Obtaining Leadership Experience

According to Burton et al. (2020), the results of their study indicated that African American females felt that they were viewed as less competent and that they were unfairly viewed as such because of the color of their skin. Some of the interview participants shared their belief that during the experience seeking leadership, they experienced people in leadership obtaining roles, in which they were less qualified, and in turn this could be inferred that they were less competent, based upon their skin color. For example, Participant 2 shared her perspective:

> Let me just say in terms of the disparity, I have seen people that I believe to be less than competent, walk into leadership roles. I have worked with people, as teachers, or as assistant principals, who have obtained principals, jobs, directors. There is even a person now who serves as a director in my department, who is not Caucasian, but she has Caucasian-like skin, and that person, who was brought in

has no educational background, except for having a master's degree in something, but that person has no classroom experience, has never taught, had no real experience with directing an entire program. That person was only in charge of managing. So yes, I've seen it. I've seen those people who I have worked with as assistant principals, who I did not think did the best job; be promoted. The former executive director in our department was an assistant principal where she was working prior to coming to our office. I was part of the team that brought that school on, and honestly, she was incompetent because as the assistant principal, the parent coordinator actually did all of the coordination of the data and everything we needed as we worked with that school, but that person would later, Caucasian, be accepted into the aspiring principal's program and later offered the job.

According to Brooks and Watson (2019), institutional racism paralysis (IRP) occurs in people, schools, leadership, and policies. Some organizations may be characterized as perpetuating institutional racism, which means that racist attitudes and behaviors have become so engraved in people towards various cultures that inequity in schools has become a part of school values, beliefs, and norms., especially as it relates to controversial topics about race. Three of the eight participants indicated that some of the interview questions were not reflective of the job description or requirements. Three of the eight participants indicated that in the interview process, it seemed as though the interviewers were simply going through the motions and appeared to already have someone else in mind. For example, Participant 1 stated,

There were some experiences that were different based on the communities that I

interviewed in and the persons or people that I interviewed with, and just to be

clearly transparent, what I found was, if I interviewed in a more affluent area the

questions seemed to be based on you know.

In addition, Participant 6 shared her experience:

During my interview for assistant principal, I think just from the initial look of the

panel, it did seem to reflect some bias or systemic racism. I would say this

because as I stated, I remember looking at that panel and thinking, okay, there are

women, so that's good. That's really good, so I know that there are leadership

positions available for females because they are sitting in this room interviewing

me, but I did notice that there were no people of color, not just speaking of

African American, but there were no African American people represented at all,

male or female, during that particular screening meeting. There was a thought that

something might be going on, or could be going, but this interview was not

reflective of me when I was looking back at the people who were screening me.

Because IRP occurs in people, schools, leadership, and policies, it is essential for

organizations to establish system-wide policies at the district, state, or national level in

order to help ensure the elimination of negative practices at various levels or in order to

eliminate racism altogether (Brooks & Watson, 2019). Chunoo et al. (2020) found that

leadership education must entail both a social justice process and a socially just goal that

helps to bring to the forefront issues of oppression, power, privilege, identity, and

intersectionality. CRT was a needed response to the attack on the Civil Rights

achievements (Simba, 2020). Even as the study conducted by Chunoo and other scholars reflects the mindset of society today, it is even more important to assess the slow progress society has made, and how much more work needs to be done to eliminate these challenges. Addressing the issues discovered in the earlier study would aid in helping districts determine what may be potential courses of action. In connection to my study, some of the participants encountered similar experiences. For instance, when discussing systemic racism, biases, or racism, all of the participants believed that one or more form existed in their county. For instance, Participant 6 stated,

> I do think that there is. I do think that there is this belief that at a White school, or a school that serves a predominantly White student population, that they don't necessarily think that it is beneficial to have an all-Black administration team, and that to me is indicative of something.

> Furthermore, four of the eight interview participants conveyed that their biggest challenge involved the issue that due to their race, they did not fit the mold. Social constructionism is one of the tenets of CRT. This tenet focuses on the issue of race serving as product of social thought and relations, emphasizing that racism is systematic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). Chunoo et al. (2020) suggested that future educational research can be rigorous but is necessary in discussions of systemic racism; therefore, possible considerations are implementations of social justice theories to frame studies, usage of action research designs, and interpreting the findings against the backdrops of equality, equity, and fairness. Participant 2 shared her perception of the challenges she experienced because she did fit into a certain box.

I will say that I am very assertive, not aggressive, but I am assertive, and I don't

necessarily fit into a mold. Because I exude confidence, and I am assertive, I can

think beyond what normal people can really think about or see. I think out of the

box. I think beyond what's in front of me. I don't just go along to get along. I

always try to do what I believe is for the good of the whole or the best options for

those that I'm trying to serve. I just think that certain supervisors or those people

who are selecting coordinators, want people that they can control.

In addition, Participant 8 shared her perception of the challenges she experienced because she did fit the mold. Participant 8 stated,

I have been judged base upon my skin color or based upon how I looked. At

times, I was more than qualified than the males my principal would hire. After

being my school for years and having turnovers in leadership, my leaders would

always try to justify why I was not given the opportunity to serve as a director. I

wondered if it was my hair texture or the way looked because I look young for my

age. Nevertheless, even with my experience and educational background, I have

continued to be overlooked.

The majority of the educator participants believed that based upon their

experiences, racial disparities existed between Caucasian and African American females.

According to Conyers and Wright (2021), nervousness can lead to an administration

being stagnant or dormant. Fear of making a mistake and upsetting stakeholders can halt

institutional change. Based upon some of the interview participants, there belief was that

through their experience of working in ABC School District, leaders had become so used

to how things were in the past, it almost seemed as if this had become the norm and change might upset certain stakeholders. Two of three interview participants conveyed that there needs to be more training on cultural competence to help in improving this problem. Participant 7 stated,

> There needs to be more cultural competence awareness and training.

In addition, Participant 4 shared her experience that reflected the impacts of the refusal of districts to work harder to implement institutional change that includes the significance of cultural awareness.

> In my perspective because being in EFG Schools coming from ABC Schools, it is like being in another world. Here in EFG Schools, where I am currently, I don't see a disparity as much; I barely see any. Four years ago, when I was just coming from ABC School District, I did see a lot of assistant principals, who were Black women, but I also saw a lot of Caucasian women who were leading schools, and filling those roles of instructional coaching, coordinator, it felt like they were out of reach. In addition to just feeling out of reach because maybe I thought that I wasn't professionally qualified for them for different reasons. I moved to the EFG School district I didn't see Black women, especially not younger. I was younger, and that time, I didn't see younger Black women in leadership roles. Now I'm trying to make sense of what is going on. In ABC Schools, I was really thrown off because I know racism played a big role in a lot of the ways that things were done there, and being, a product of ABC Schools, from when I was in elementary

school, until I became a teacher there 20 years later, race always felt like it was it

was huge, and this is the way the school system operated.

As it related to the current study, it is important for leaders in elementary and

secondary education to understand that the lack of an increase of African American

females in education was not just a slap in the face to women of color, who are qualified,

but these actions also have an adverse impact on students. Lomotey (2019), found that

Black principals can make a difference in the lives at Black students; however, research

has continued to show that African American female principals continue to be oppressed

because of race and gender (Collins, 2004; Hooks, 1981; Shooter-Looden, 2004, as cited

in Lomotey, 2019). Moorosi et al. (2018) believed through conducting a study using the

Intersectional Theory, this would address the constructs of three Black women principals,

and the shortage of Black women in educational leadership. Both studies, resulted in

similar results; through the Intersectionality lens, a multi-layered from of discrimination

that reflects the experiences of Black women; this theory addressed the gaps revealed by

feminist and anti-racist dialogues in the experiences and struggles of women of color

(Crenshaw, 1991 as cited in Moorosi, 2018). Based upon my study, many of the

participants validated that through their experiences, some of their districts are firmly set

on hiring people that matched their demographics verses based upon qualifications.

Participant 7 expressed her experience with being hired based upon her ethnicity.

I do believe that me being an African American female did help me in being

selected for the assistant principal position. The current administration team at

that point, was African American, and I do think that because of our student

population, it did help me in that regard.

This participant also indicated that when she was denied for the second interview

for the assistant principal role, it was due to the fact that Human Resources

communicated to leadership that they could not hire an all-Black staff. Therefore, when

districts fail to hire based upon qualification verses color, they are continuously allowing

systemic racism to exist in their schools.

Disparities in Obtaining Leadership Positions in Education

Through the Intersectionality Theory, Burton et al. (2020), determined that social

inequities exist as multiple traits such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity overlap for

Black women. Sadly, for years, school leadership has historically been defined as the

dominant profession for Caucasian men in particular (Boris-Schacter et al., 2006 as cited

in Burton, et al., 2020). The majority of the interview participants had some believe that

race, gender, or both impacted their chances for obtaining leadership roles. For instance,

Participant 5 stated,

> In regards to bias, during one interview, the interview panel was all African
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> American women, who, from my understanding were monolingual and they knew
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> of my Haitian heritage, and I found that they did not connect with my heritage. It
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> just seemed as if being Haitian was almost held against me at one point.

In addition, Participant 2 shared her experience based upon her race and gender.

> Honestly, I will just say that all too often, and I have been in the workforce for
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> quite some time, first in corporate America for 10 years, and then this is my 31st

year in education; what I have seen over the years is that Caucasian women have an advantage over African American women. It seems that we always have to prove ourselves, but it appears, in my opinion, that they can come in with minimal skills and be hired, and be promoted, and serve as supervisors over people who are much more experienced and have many more credentials than them.

Incorporating CRT in education has empowered researchers to work towards the elimination of barriers through understanding the various ways people of color experience oppression by race and gender (Lobue, 2021). After researching principal programs, Jang and Alexander (2022) found that 48% of African American females make up principal positions in public secondary schools. This particular literature provided relevant research exposing the challenges that African Americans women face in secondary schools as it related to promotion, lack of promotion at various levels, and the existence of more Caucasian dominance in education. All eight of the participants indicated that they believe racial disparities exist between Caucasian and African American females. For instance, Participant 3 shared a very startling and disturbing experience as it related to racial disparities.

> I think that it is just a weird. In understanding my career path, I've always known that I wanted to go beyond the classroom in education; it's not really assistant principal, but definitely instructional coach. I wanted to be a teacher of teachers. It was my plan, and so I was always told by people that you have to do this, and you have to do that. I had my little check my list of things that I needed to accomplish, things that I wanted to do to make myself available, and basically show

administration that this is what I wanted, and my expectation from them was that they would see me, and they would put me in positions where I can show where I can coach staff or I can coach people within my department . Having worked with several different districts, it just comes more natural for certain people. I just see others; it's like certain things are just handed to some people, and oftentimes, I see them doing significantly less work than me to basically put themselves out there.

Incorporating CRT in education has empowered researchers to work towards the elimination of barriers through understanding the various ways people of color experience oppression by race and gender (Lobue, 2021). After researching principal programs, Jang and Alexander (2022) found that 48% of African American females make up principal positions in public secondary schools. This particular literature provided relevant research exposing the challenges that African Americans women face in secondary schools as it related to promotion, lack of promotion at various levels, and the existence of more Caucasian dominance in education. After interviewing the study participants, the majority conveyed that they had gone on multiple interviews, some more than ten, and even after multiple years of teaching and leadership experience, they still were not offered an advanced leadership opportunity. Four of the eight interview participants conveyed that their biggest challenge involved the issue that due to their race, they did not fit the mold. In addition, they did not have a fair experience due to the lack of the interview process being conducted by a panel that was not diverse. Participant 1 shared her challenge with going on over ten interviews before every getting an assistant principal opportunity.

With the 11 interviews that I had, coming out of ALP, I was never directly given a rationale for the reason I was being turned down from a principal directly. I will say it wasn't until maybe my ninth or my tenth interview that it was finally shared with me that I needed to speak more from the lens of a leader rather than a teacher. I always thought after hearing that, how am I supposed to speak from the lens of a school leader, if all I've ever been was a teacher. I've been a teacher leader, and I could definitely speak to that. But how am I supposed to speak through the lens of an instructional leader when I haven't had the opportunity or the experience? In addition, Participant 8 stated, "For the role of Athletic Director, right off it is a male dominated position in my opinion; therefore, I have experienced disparities when I interviewed for Athletic Director in leadership. In my second interview, I felt as if my darker hue could have played a role, just by the language or the display of the principal's mannerisms. This display was particular different with this principal versus when she was interviewed male counterparts. I never really got a smile or daddy eyes. You know, I got more eye rolls, and just preconceived judgments of who maybe they thought I was just by how I looked.

Limitations of the Study

As it relates to the limitations to the study, there were limitations or shortcoming that were beyond my control. However, there was not any indications of a lack of trustworthiness that arose from the execution of the study. Importantly, the results of my research study, are only applicable to the population I interviewed and may not be

generalizable outside of this population. In addition, while my study may be applicable to other similar populations, it may not be generalizable. For instance, since this study identified the lived experiences of African American females who work in three large city school districts in the southern Georgia, the results of this study may not be applicable to charter schools, rural school districts, or private school district. Even though these school districts may experience similar issues, the study may not be generalizable.

The first limitation was the sample size. Due to the sample size that was used in my study, the number of people interviewed per school district could be considered a limitation. The second limitation was time constraints. Due to the time constraints of the participants working in education, we needed to coordinate an interview time that worked around their busy schedule. The majority of the participants had additional duties outside the normal 8-5 schedule, so in order to ensure that I was able to interview the participants prior to the Thanksgiving Break, I needed to work around their schedule and make it convenient as possible using Zoom. The third limitation was reaching saturation with the sample size used in the study. I was able to reach saturation, after concluding my eighth interview. However, the sample size could pose as a possible limitation. I would have loved to obtain at least three people to interview for each district, but that was not the case. The fourth limitation was lack of support with sharing my study from one of the local organizations within my state educator organization. I initially thought and believed that their president would volunteer as she indicated with sharing the study with her members. This was the initial agreement. However, this person never followed up to clarify that she had indeed shared the study with her members. In essence, people who I

assumed who would share my study helping me to recruit volunteers did not support me as they initially indicated. This was a significant limitation considering that some of these individuals are educators, who willing indicated that they would assist and helping me possibly obtain volunteers. I learned a lot through this process about the true character of people, and the reality that everyone who expresses their support, they are not always in support of another person's goals especially if they have not accomplished this huge accomplishment of completing a dissertation. Nevertheless, I was able to obtain all of the volunteers I needed for my study. These were the limitations to my study.

Another limitation stemmed from an outlier. I did not have the opportunity to ask more questions outside of what I had already prepared. There were some responses shared that prompted additional questioning outside the scope of my study. My study focused on the lived experiences of African American females as they sought leadership roles, but through my interviews, all of the participants shared valuable perspectives as it related to how Human Resources could work to improve how they approach the hiring process as well. If I had expanded my topic from the beginning, this would have allowed me the opportunity to include their responses to this in my study. These were the limitations to my study.

Recommendations

Future recommendations for further research were grounded in the strengths and limitations this study. For instance, some of the recommendations for further analysis consisted of the following: clear educational leadership equity policies at the district level, clear Human Resource policies or practices at the district level, tangible resources

that could serve as a scoring rubric to be used in the interview process, and more involvement from Human Resource personnel during the interview process. These are the suggested recommendations needed to further this study.

First and foremost, clear equity policies should be established at the state level and local level. School districts should not be left to interpret what the expectations are at the state level as it relates to ensuring equity in leadership hiring practices. The Department of Education that was used in this study has a lack of clear equity policies as it relates to ensuring equity in leadership, and this has led to the misalignment in the metro school districts identified in the study. Further recommendations are needed to assess any updates at the state and local level in order to determine if there are any improvements in addressing the gap that exist among the disproportionality that exist among African American females serving in educational leadership and their counterparts.

For example, there needs to be more Human Resource involvement during the interview process in order to ensure impartiality when hiring for leadership positions. In addition, HR should consider providing leaders with resources, such as actual scoring rubrics that justify why someone was deemed qualified for a role, but also to provide valid reasoning as to why someone was denied for a position. Based upon this study and through research, it was repeated that oftentimes that it appeared that interviewers were simply going through the motions because they already had someone else in mind. It was often communicated that during the interview processes, interviewers appeared to reflect a lack of organization or failing to ask questions that related to job description. It is

imperative that leaders are equipped to ask the appropriate questions. When people carve out the time to interview for a job, this involves their time, and this opportunity should always be conducted with the highest level of professionalism. Having more HR involvement in certain leadership hiring roles would assist in ensuring that interviews are conducted with fidelity and in a manner that ensures all females are afforded a fair chance regardless of race and gender.

Implications

There are positive potential social change implications of my study. There are opportunities for social change at the state level and district level that would potentially help policymakers and educational leaders create policies that would ensure that districts have established fair and equitable hiring practices. In addition, social implications of this study would aid in ensuring that equity is clearly defined at the state level with clear policies for school districts to implement at the local level. The rationale for conducting this study was the need to continue to inform and emphasize the racial disparities that exist among female African American educators in leadership. Through the equity lens, the hope is that district leaders, local leaders, and policymakers will take the opportunity to reflect on their current hiring practices, equity policies, and current leadership positions to assess the impacts of their current policies, hiring protocols, and decision making. With the recent implementation of equity strategic priorities, the social implication of the findings of this study will hopefully bring about positive equitable change. Social implications will consist of changing the cultural mindset for the criteria of education leaders to reflect equity, creating intersectionality and equity informed

policies that support African American females, and the revising of effective aspiring leadership programs. Hopefully, in the next few years, school districts in this Southeastern state will present data that reflects an increase of female African American educators serving in the leadership roles identified in this study. Furthermore, the gap that currently exists in the disproportionality between African American females and Caucasian females will hopefully have significantly closed. Using the Intersectionality Theory and Critical Race Theory, my hope is that researchers and educators will be able to see that race and gender are no longer serving as the issue that has continued to create a barrier hindering African American females with the opportunity to obtain leadership positions.

Question 1 and Question 2

Further research will need to be conducted to determine the structure and process that is required for administrators to follow when conducting leadership interviews. Some interview participants indicated that during the interview process, some leaders were not organized, some questions did not related to the job description, and less than the majority of the people who obtained leadership expressed that their leadership journey was not as challenging because they were eighter fortunate to have someone give them a chance based upon the fact that they already knew their work ethic or simply because when they were denied they were provided with a rationale as to why. Because of this explanation, they were at least able to determine that this was due to their lack of experience or qualifications.

Question 2 and Question 4

Further research still needs to be conducted to further understand why systemic racism continues to create a barrier when African American females are interviewed. For example, five of the eight participants explained when interviewed by Caucasian females or males, they were treated as if they did not fit the mold, or the interview process reflected a process of going through the motions. Ultimately, this in addition to not receiving an explanation, has created a further issue because based upon the interview participants in this study and literature, African American females are left wondering why, and oftentimes, it has been revealed that the individual selected was of another race or gender and less qualified.

Question 5

Further research would be beneficial because based upon the literature and data collection obtained in this study, it was further determined that racial disparities continue to exist between African American females and Caucasian females. However, with the school districts identified in this study, the school districts failed to provide a clear equity policy that will help to prevent or improve the disproportionality that exist among African American females and their counterparts. The literature and lived experience shared in this study reflect the emotional impact and the career impact that has hurt and crippled African American females as they seek leadership. One anomaly that emerged was that some of the challenges that these females faced were based upon race and gender. At least three participants conveyed that during their interview processes with other African American females, the environment was intimidating and unwelcoming.

Sometimes these participants experienced feelings of jealously from these female African American leaders, who interviewed them, and this was very surprising to the participants.

Conclusion

In summary, the supporting literature validates the fact that female African American educators experience challenges when they seek leadership. These challenges consist of gender and racial barriers, systemic racism, and the lack of support. The harsh reality is that the root cause of these barriers has occurred for decades, even stemming all the way back as far as Brown v. Board of Education. It has been years since the inception of the landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education, and education inequities and segregation remain pervasive within our nation's school system (Warren, 1954, as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 2022). Literature has suggested that even with the inception of Brown v. Board of Education, which was a significant landmark case in history for African Americans, it still served the interest of elite Caucasians (Bell, 1995). The expectation since this landmark was that hopefully African American females would not continue to endure leadership challenges, but they are because people are afraid to stand up and advocate for the necessary change. After conducting this study, there was overwhelming literature to support the fact that the issues that African American females face when they seek leadership. These common themes were identified in the literature and also through the data collection process through obtaining the lived experiences of African American females when they seek leadership.

Each volunteer expressed a strong interest in sharing their voice to contribute towards making a difference in hopes of achieving the issue of racial disparities that exist

in educational leadership. These leaders were extremely knowledgeable, educated, and very familiar with the hardships that women of color face as they seek leadership when they are more than qualified educationally and through work experience. Every participant agreed that there are racial disparities and more challenges for African American females, who seek leadership. This issue is not a rural or city issue, it is national issue as well, as supported by the literature. As long as educational leaders and policymakers continue to take a passive approach towards addressing this issue, African American females will continue to experience the challenges provided in the study or similar.

My hope is that this study will provide possible guidance for the state department of education to assess their current leadership hiring practices to align with the federal government's expectations for hiring. Even though states have the autonomy to create their own laws, if systemic racism continues to create barriers for females of color, which led to the creation of an Executive Order by the President of the United States at the federal level, then it is evident that states need to get on board and align their equity policies with this policy. It is vital that as a society that we take action that reflects that all nationalities and genders are afforded a fair chance when they seek leadership positions. By conducting the qualitative Phenomenological Study, using Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality, I was able to determine some of the systemic racial challenges that African American females face. Racism Permeates Racism, and lastly, there is a significant disproportionality and racial disparity that exist among African American females in educational leadership roles.

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Appendix A: Email Invitation

Email Invitation Template

Subject line:
Interviewing African American Female Educators in October
(Thank You Note & Starbucks $10 Gift card)

Email message:
There is a new study about the lived experiences of African American female educators, who have experienced challenges when seeking leadership roles, such as assistant principal, principal, coordinator, director, or instructional coach. This study could help educational leaders and policy-makers better understand the need to assess current hiring practices, current aspiring leadership programs, and current equity policies that could help all aspiring leaders. For this study, you are invited to describe your lived experiences when seeking the specified leadership positions.

About the study:
- One **30-60 minute** Zoom **audio only recorded** interview
- You would receive a **$10 Starbuck's gift card** & a **"Thank You"** note for an expression of gratitude.
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:
- 18 years old or older
- Experienced challenges when seeking leadership
- African American female educator
- Educator in metro-Atlanta Public Schools (Fulton or Gwinnett)

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Shawania Marshall, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during October – November 2023.

Please email Shawania Marshall to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Based upon your current position, please explain why you believe

   you were selected to work in this role?

2. Please describe your experience or experiences when interviewing

   for a leadership role in education?

Possible Follow-up if needed: If there was any part of the interview

that seemed to reflect bias, stereotyping, or systemic racism, would

you please provide an example or clarity regarding one of these

particular areas?

3. As an African American female, what are some of the challenges

   or barriers you may have experienced as you sought a particular

   leadership role?

4. If you have ever been turned down for a leadership position, would you please

   share some of the reasons if you were provided the rationale as to why you were

   not selected?

5. To what degree, do you believe there is a significant disparity between Caucasian

   and African American females who obtain leadership positions of Assistant

   Principal, Principal, Coordinator, Instructional Coach, or Director?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me before

   we end the interview?