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A Comparative Analysis of Female Leaders in Urban Educational Settings

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FEMALE LEADERS IN URBAN

EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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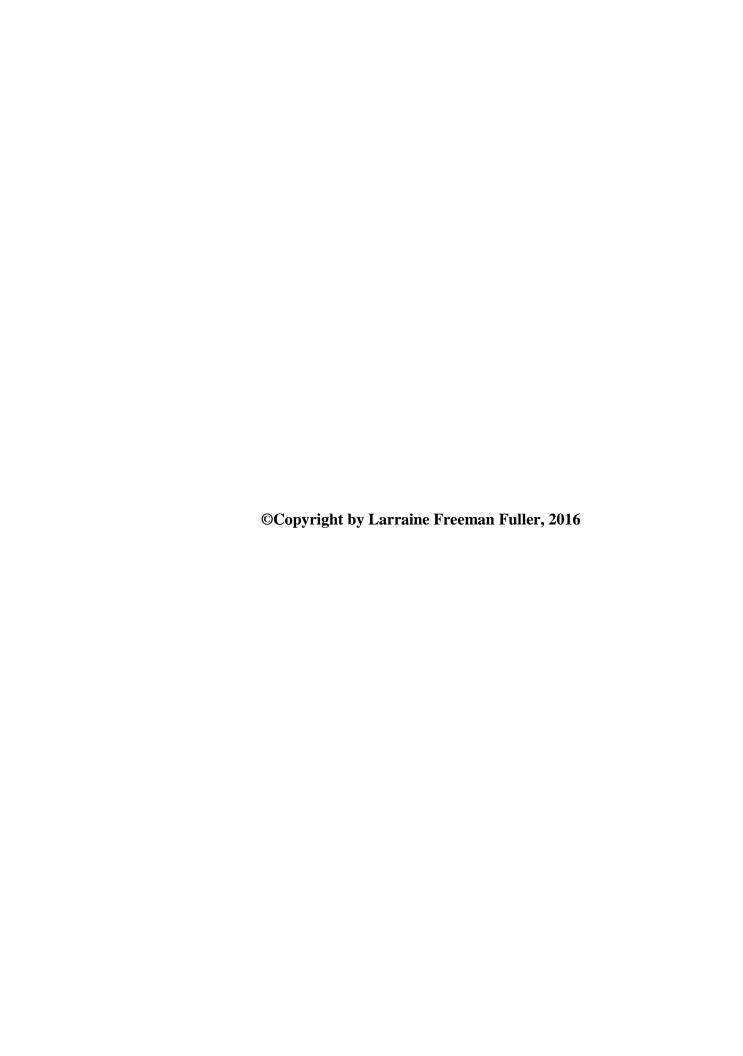**John Carroll University**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the following people: My parents, Walter Freeman III and Ella Freeman, my oldest brother Walter Freeman IV (Jr.), my husband Lee Everett Fuller, daughter Aubrey Elise Fuller, son Landon Everett Freeman Fuller and uncle, Larry Freeman. ***Mom and Dad***, you raised us in a loving home with lots of support. You believed in each and every one of us and allowed us to be ourselves, no matter how different, or unique. I appreciate you for allowing me to blossom into the woman that I am today, for all of your words of wisdom (even those not sought) and for guiding me along the way. I love you for instilling in me to do my best and to never give up. You have always encouraged and supported me in all of my academic endeavors. I thank you for raising me to be an independent, strong, woman and child of God. You have always been there for me and now you are there for my sweet babies. Thank you for helping me raise them to be intelligent, self-sufficient, beautiful, headstrong, God fearing adults. I LOVE YOU MORE THAN WORDS CAN EXPRESS!!!! ***Jr.***, I thank you for being a wonderful big brother and role model. You have inspired me in more ways than you will ever know. I have learned so much from you. Your inner strength and persistence taught me to never give up and to always strive to accomplish my goals. You have always believed in me and for that, I thank you. I love you very much and miss you terribly...more than you will ever know. ***Ralph***, you are the best "middle" brother I could have ever wanted. I appreciate your work ethic, smile and sense of humor. Thank you for being you and always believing in me. I love you!! ***Jimmy,*** you are the best "little" brother that I could have ever wanted. Thank you for always being there and assisting me through this process when you could. You have always supported me and believed in me. I love you!! ***Lee,*** from the beginning you have been in my

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FEMALE LEADERS IN URBAN

EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

LARRAINE FREEMAN FULLER

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore the ways in which race and gender impact the leadership effectiveness of female leaders in urban school districts. An effective educational leader demonstrates certain leadership qualities. Realizing that barriers will inevitably accompany the leadership role assumed, the leader must be able to identify these barriers and work to overcome them.

Six educational female leaders participated in this study. As a result of this study, four themes emerged. The themes identified how the leaders viewed their leadership style, ways to lead effectively and how others perceived them. The information that was revealed through the interviews of females in educational leadership roles will be beneficial to other females who are considering pursuing similar positions. History demonstrates that the majority of leaders in education are men, however, studies of this nature may inspire women to balance the field.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Some people believe that women have a sixth sense. A sense to know when

something is not right… a sense to know when danger is imminent. Imagine being a

woman in a position with no escape, and if there is one, it is by throwing yourself through

a glass window. For some women, this position is caused by threat of fire or an ensuing

predator. For others, this position is stagnancy, mediocrity or middle management.

Whether it be a glass window or glass ceiling, imagine the courage it must take to make

the first step and the collateral damage associated with such a feat.

Throughout history there have been many women with the courage, determination

and resolve to break through the glass ceiling. Women such as Margaret Thatcher, Mary

McLeod Bethune, Condaleezza Rice, Rosa Parks, Marie Curie, and Maya Angelou, to

name a few. If we were to conduct a comparative analysis of these women, what

common threads would come to fruition and is it possible to discover which moral fibers

made them so successful in each of their endeavors? Each of these women was viewed

as highly successful, effective leaders of their time. Whether they were appointed to a

leadership position, inherited a leadership position or simply saw a need, they desired to

make a difference. How were these female leaders able to circumvent barriers, and what lessons can be learned from these great historical figures?

The paradox of the matter is that as time passes, it does not appear as if we are closing the gender disparity gap, and if we are, we are not closing it fast enough. There should be exponential growth in a movement toward equality, opportunities, support and representation for female and female minority leaders, but research supported in this study acknowledges that women are still under-represented in leadership roles.

As I conducted a comparative analysis of today's female leaders in urban educational settings were there common threads? How were today's female leaders able to break through the glass ceiling? How did they acquire their leadership roles? Did race play a role in their success? How were they viewed by others? Was their leadership style questioned and compared to that of men? How did they view themselves and did they feel successful in those challenging roles? The real question to ask is, how far have we *really* come since Marie Curie won her second Nobel Prize in 1911? (Des Jardins, 2010).

 "In 2013, 13.4 percent of education administrators were Black or African American, 2.6 percent were Asian, 5.8 percent were Hispanic or Latino" (Dorning, 2014). Clearly there is an issue with the low number of women in educational leadership positions. To be a *minority* female in educational leadership poses a double concern. Where are they? Are we saying women are not as qualified as men? Are women simply not applying for these positions? If the latter is the case, why is that? How are we supporting our women once they aspire to possess these important roles and once they actually acquire them?

Women are just as qualified as their male counterparts in attaining educational leadership roles. The key is to be confident in the role and to command the respect of other colleagues, which often does not occur. According to Lafreniere and Longman (2008, p. 389), "because male leadership roles have been the norm for so many years, leadership tends to be perceived as a masculine domain." Unfortunately, there are many people, male and female, who still believe this. That belief continues to make it difficult for females to succeed, once they do acquire educational leadership roles.

For some reason, women have been and continue to be seen as invisible. Regardless of how strong they are or effective they are in their leadership roles; they still do not seem to exist. This will inevitably deter women from striving to attain higher positions in education. Therefore, why are we shocked that women remain underrepresented in educational leadership roles?

Perhaps if there were programs created which specifically sought to promote women to leadership roles, we might see a difference. Once in these roles, however, there would need to be some type of mentoring program in order to retain them. Hopefully, eventually, women would become more respected in the eyes of their peers and subordinates.

Statement of the Problem

There is a gender disparity gap in female leadership in urban educational settings due to barriers, whether advertent or unintentional, that interfere with, or prevent, females from attaining or desiring leadership positions in urban educational settings. Barriers include, but are not limited to:

- Glass ceiling

- Historical stigma of females

- Vilification of female stereotypes and female leaders

- Female subordinates as saboteurs

- Homogeneous leadership training for a heterogeneous population of leaders

- Disproportionate amount of females to achieve the same status as men

- Lethargic paradigm shifts to accept female leadership

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and examine the experiences of six female leaders and the way in which race and gender impacted their role as leaders in urban educational settings. Although their leadership positions and educational environments may vary, these women have been able to circumvent barriers to "break through" the proverbial "glass ceiling." Through the use of skillfully prescribed questions, participants in this study were asked to articulate their views on successful leadership, leadership experiences as females, the impact and effectiveness of female leadership, and the role that race played as a female leader. This information was compared and analyzed to formulate an overarching theme that represented the unified whole.

Significance of the Study

While there are large bodies of research on the glass ceiling, gender disparity, female leadership styles, and minority females in leadership, there is currently little research that focuses on an introspective qualitative study that addresses the self-perception of female leadership in urban educational settings. The next logical step was

to create empirical evidence through a study that addressed a comparative analysis of female leaders in urban educational settings.

This study is significant in education as it provides ways to assist females in leadership roles. It also informs universities of courses to offer females who assume these leadership roles. School districts have insight into the leadership effectiveness of females in urban educational settings. The themes that emerged in the study were used to benefit female leaders yet inevitably impacted the teaching and learning process. Through the improvement in the teaching and learning process, student academic success is achieved.

Setting for the Study

The participants in this study were female educational leaders in a K-12 urban school district. The urban school district was located in Northeast Ohio. The overall demographics of the student body for the district were: Asian or Pacific Islander-.9%, Black, non-Hispanic-66.9%, Hispanic-14.4%, American Indian or Alaskan Native-.2%, Multiracial-2.9%, and White, non-Hispanic-14.6%. The students average daily attendance for grades PreK-12 was 38, 725. The total percentage of female students was 48.2% while the total percentage of male students was 51.8%.

The female educational leaders were individually interviewed. The ethnicity of the participants was as diverse as possible. All of the six female educational leader participants hold their Master's Degrees. The demographics by urban educational settings were as follows:

Participant 1 (P1): Building #1: K-8

Demographics of student body. There were a total of 251 students in the student body. Out of 251 students, 98% were African American, 1% was Caucasian and 1% was other. There were 169 male and 82 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 15 total members of the staff. Out of 15 total members of the staff, 30% were African American, 65% were Caucasian and 5% were other. There were 2 males and 13 female staff members.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American female. There was one assistant principal. He was an African American male.

Participant 2 (P2): Building #2: Pre-K– 8

Demographics of student body. There was a total of 286 students in the student body. Out of 286 students, 99% was African American and 1% was other. There were 145 male and 141 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 17 total members of the staff. Out of the 17 total members of the staff, 70% were African American, 28% were Caucasian, and 1% was Hispanic. There were 4 males and 13 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American female. There was one assistant principal. She was an African American female.

Participant 3 (P3): Building #3: K-8

Demographics of student body. There was a total of 400 students in the student body. Out of the 400 students in the student body, 97% were African American, .50% was Caucasian, .50% was Hispanic, .50% was Asian, 1% was Arab, and .50% was other. There were 195 male and 205 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 22 members of the staff. Out of the 22 members of the staff, 59% were African American and 41% were Caucasian. There were 6 males and 16 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American female. The assistant principal was an African American male.

Participant 4 (P4): Building #4: Pre-K–8

Demographics of student body. There was a total of 300 students in the student body. Out of the 300 students in the student body, 33% were African American, 59% were Caucasian, 1% was Asian and 7% were Latino. There were 182 male and 118 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 16 members of the staff. Out of the 16 members of the staff, 100% were Caucasian. There were 2 males and 14 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American male. The assistant principal was an African American female.

Participant (P5): Building #5: K-5.

Demographics of student body. There were 263 students in the student body. Out of the 263 students, 51% were African American, 45% were Caucasian, 2% were Hispanic, and 2% were other. There were 116 male and 147 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 29 members of the staff. Out of 29 members of the staff, 17% were African American and 83% were Caucasian. There were 5 males and 24 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was a Caucasian female. She did not have an assistant principal.

Participant 6 (P6): Building #6: Pre-K-8.

Demographics of student body. There were 459 students in the student body. Out of 459 students, 99% were African American, .50% was Caucasian and .50% was Hispanic. There were 173 male and 286 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 25 members of the staff. Out of 25 members of the staff, 56% were African American and 44% were Caucasian. There were 7 males and 18 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American female. The assistant principal was an African American male. The Curriculum Instructional Specialist was an African American female.

Research Questions

This qualitative study sought to analyze the introspective views of female leaders and their perceived effectiveness as women in urban educational leadership positions. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is successful leadership as defined by female leaders in urban school districts?

2. Do leadership experiences differ for women working in urban school districts depending on their race?

3. How does the female gender impact leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

4. How does race impact female leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

Leadership Effectiveness. The ability to communicate/collaborate well with others, establish a clear vision, encourage and motivate staff, and increase student achievement.

Glass Ceiling. Term used to describe the invisible barrier that keeps women from climbing the corporate ladder.

Urban. Is used to refer to school districts with high student poverty and very large population and enrollment. It also refers to high student minority population and average parental educational attainment (as defined by the Ohio Department of Education).

Female subordinates as saboteurs. The idea that some women deliberately take action to weaken the platform of female leadership for their own personal motives.

Homogeneous leadership training for a heterogeneous population of leaders. The idea that leadership training is gender biased toward males and males therefore receive better leadership training because it is tailored toward their masculine characteristics.

Leader. Term used to refer to a K-12 building level administrator.

Summary

There is a gap between the number of women in educational leadership positions when compared to their male counterparts. This is possibly due to several reasons. The reasons range from female saboteurs to the existence of a glass ceiling, just to name a few. How is it that some female educational leaders are able to overcome barriers in order to become very successful in their position? Does their race play a role? This

research attempted to disclose answers in an effort to assist school districts, universities, and women who accept the challenge and assume these educational leadership positions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

With the recent introduction of the Common Core, there has been increased accountability in school districts. School districts are seeking effective, successful educational leaders. It is common to find that the success or failure of an organization is often attributed to the leader. The leadership style of the leader may certainly play a crucial role in the direction of a particular organization. However, many people also believe that in addition to one's leadership style, the race and gender of the leader also contribute to the success and/or failure of an educational institution.

Although women have been in educational leadership roles for decades, they are often not as highly regarded as men. Despite the fact that women are intelligent, visionaries, problem solvers and highly devoted to the profession, they frequently continue to be invisible. Women continue to lag behind men in obtaining leadership positions in both K-12 and higher education (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). Dunbar and Kinnersley further add that 40% of faculty and staff positions are held by women while only 21% of women hold the position of president in higher education. This issue also exists in K-12 education. In 2008, the total number of elementary or secondary female

administrators was 230,600 out of a total number of 445,000 education administrators. Unfortunately, minority administrators only made up 20.5% of all school administrators in 2009 (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). African American or Black consisted of 10.7%, and Asians consisted of 2.6% while Hispanic or Latino made up 7.2% (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). According to Newton (2006), only 14% of superintendents are females, despite the fact that 65% of the educational workforce are females. The percent of female superintendents increased to 24.1% in 2011 (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young & Ellerson, 2011). Women are definitely under-represented in top leadership positions.

It is common knowledge that various leadership styles exist…some prove to be effective in certain settings…some, however, do not. In an exploration of successes and/or failures of each, is it fair to attribute them to the race or gender of the leader? What about their individual skills, personality, or leadership style?

Gender Differences

The infamous quote "Men are from Mars; Women are from Venus" implies that there are innate differences between the two sexes. Men elect to do things in one manner and women in quite another. Is one way more correct than the other? Why do more men hold top leadership positions in educational settings than females especially since there are more female educators than male educators?

Unfortunately, women face different challenges while in leadership roles than do men. Women are not afforded the same opportunities. They lack the support of others; often this includes other women. They are underrepresented in leadership roles. According to Kim (2008), women and leadership have had a conflicting relationship for

centuries because society limits leadership to the male population. The glass ceiling exists and this impediment blocks women from advancement, and women of color have even less opportunities. Women do not always receive the same level of respect in which their male counterparts receive.

Several studies have reflected that female managers need to work harder than men in order to gain recognition, and that often this leads top female leaders away from the leadership style characterized by soft skills and emotional understanding (Muhr, 2011). Some women often feel they must sacrifice self, relationships, family or other aspects of their life, in order to advance in leadership roles (Levitt, 2010). However, this should not be the case. Women should be advanced due to their work ethic, success and leadership effectiveness.

The style in which one leads often is the source of the perception that others have of them. In other words, leadership style can impact others' opinions of the leader. The stereotyped interpersonal leadership styles attributed to women include collaborative, transformation, and context-driven (Levitt, 2010). According to Black & Magnuson (2005), personality traits, professional goals and vision are reflected in one's leadership style. Perhaps a certain leadership style will promote strong leadership effectiveness for female educational leaders.

While women have traditionally been described as sensitive, emotional, caring, kind and even nurturing, men are said to be analytical, tough, and confident as educators (Brinia, 2012). When either male or female educator transitions to a leadership role, typically the male continues to be the same yet the female becomes even stricter. This is because women have to overcome certain stereotypes regarding their management

abilities, and have to prove that they are good enough to cope with the position and have the ability to impose themselves (Brinia, 2012). It is believed that becoming more "masculine" will lead women to be more successful as leaders. According to Levitt (2010), for fear of being perceived as having a separatist attitude, many women tacitly agree to "play the game," a game whose rules were made by the men who typically held the power. Women therefore attempt to move ahead professionally by "falling in line" with the traditionally male-oriented routes to success.

In fact, Hilary Lips, a Radford University professor, discovered the following as a result of her gender studies research: (a) It is an expectation that women will combine leadership with compassion and they are disliked if they do not, (b) People listen to and take direction from men much more easily than they do from women, (c) Women who promote themselves and their abilities do not receive the approval from others and, (d) In some contexts, women require more validation than their male counterparts in order for them to be accepted in leadership roles (Feibelman & Haakmat, 2010). Women have much to overcome if they desire to be successful in leadership positions. Not only do they have to overcome certain gender stereotypes, but their own perception of self. The female must be a strong individual to acquire a leadership role in urban educational settings and to then maintain her position.

Leadership Style

There has been a proliferation of scholarly research over the past 30 years focusing on leadership styles, their success, and how they are related to gender (Young, 2011). Early research focused on leadership styles using terms such as autocratic and democratic, directive and participative and task-orientated and interpersonal orientation

(Young, 2011). Democratic versus autocratic leadership (or the similar dimension of

participative versus directive leadership) is the extent to which leaders behave

democratically by allowing subordinates to engage in the decision making process while

autocratic leaders discourage subordinates from participating in the decision making

process (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Task-oriented style, on the other hand,

according to Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, (2001), is defined as being concerned with

accomplishing assigned tasks by organizing task-relevant activities while interpersonally

oriented style is defined as a concern with maintaining interpersonal relationships by

tending to the morale and welfare of others. Autocratic, directive and task oriented

leaders all share similar characteristics while democratic, participative and

interpersonally oriented leaders share similar traits.

While the leadership styles mentioned above were accurate in measuring some

forms of leadership, many researchers in the 1980's and 1990's turned their attention to

other leadership styles by distinguishing between leaders who are transactional and

those who are transformational (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

This effort was initially inspired by Burns' (1978) argument that existing

analyses of leadership style left out some of the most important aspects of

effective leadership. To capture these neglected aspects, he proposed that

researchers study a type of leadership that he labeled transformational.

Such leaders set especially high standards for behavior and establish

themselves as role models by gaining the trust and confidence of their

followers. They state future goals and develop plans to achieve them.

Skeptical of the status quo, transformational leaders innovate, even when

the organization that they lead is generally successful. By mentoring and

empowering followers, such leaders encourage them to develop their full

potential and thereby contribute more capably to their organization. Burns

contrasted leaders with these characteristics to transactional leaders, who

establish exchange relationships with their subordinates. Such leaders

manage by clarifying subordinate responsibilities, monitoring their work,

and rewarding them for meeting objectives and correcting them for failing

to meet objectives (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001 p.787).

Women, unlike men, have generally been associated with transformational

leadership because they are more interested in transforming a person's feeling of self-

interest into what works best for the organization (Lowe, 2011). They are also

associated with being interpersonally oriented, democratic, participatory and

transformational with their leadership style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Men

have generally been associated with transactional leadership because they tend to be

more task-orientated, autocratic and engage in a pattern of behaviors involving a series

of exchanges based on rewards and punishments (Lowe, 2011). Due to the fact that

women have greater tendencies toward transformational leadership, and because

transformational leadership is positively associated with the overall success and

satisfaction of the organization, those institutions that choose to promote female

leaderships have a good chance of growth and success (Lowe, 2011).

While there is much research that supports correlation between gender and

leadership style, there is also research that renders the correlation inconclusive. For

example, Jill Robinson, from the University of Redlands, and Jean Lipman-Blumen,

from Clarement Graduate University conducted a study from 1984-2002 with 2,371 male and 1,768 female middle and senior managers in the United States. The results from this study indicate that not only are traditional gender role stereotypes not sustained, but that also counter-stereotypical patterns exist (Robinson & Lipman-Blumen, 2003).

In addition, research supports that if a female leader leads in a masculine manner, she will do well. According to Hekman (1999), women often opt to adopt a masculine style of leadership in order to gain acceptance and respect in such a male-dominated world, or more specifically dress or behave in a particularly masculine way. As a result, women have often been referred to as "cyborgs" in the past. Muhr (2011) states that "Cyborg" (cybernetic organism) is used to describe someone who is part machine and part human. Is it fair to say that a woman must adopt masculine leadership attributes in order to be effective or successful? If true, this logic would insinuate that transactional leadership is the most respected and desired form of leadership.

Empirical research comparing the leadership style of women and men yields a pattern of findings that is more complex than that generally acknowledged by social scientists and writers of popular books on management (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). For example, while Robinson and Lipman-Blumen (2003) found some counter-stereotypical patterns in gender leadership behaviors, they also acknowledge that there has been a significant decrease in men's collaborative and contributory behaviors, which are often considered transformational, while women saw an increase in these areas. In the end, the role of a school administrator is multifaceted and complex. While some leadership styles are preconceived to have the most positive impact on educational

administration, many scholars have argued that there is no best way to lead (Naidoo, Muthukrishna & Hobden, 2012).

Race

Working as an administrator in a large, urban district is one of the most challenging jobs available. These administrators deal with poverty, transiency, truancy, educational neglect, along with a myriad of other social issues that impact the educational process. These jobs are not often taken by white males, or even white females. These jobs are being taken by a growing number of African American women who are "stepping up to the plate" to meet this almost insurmountable challenge (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). Bloom & Erlandson (2003) continue that some feel that the challenge is so great that school boards intentionally offer African American females these positions to shield members of their own race.

Faced with the tremendous challenge of leading in an urban district, one may think that these African American female leaders should be revered for taking on such a challenge. Unfortunately, these African American female principals, due to their gender and race, are forced to not only deal with internal and external pressures to effectively lead schools but also have to navigate through the scrutiny that they sometimes encounter (Boris-Schacter & Langer, 2006; Crenshaw, 1989; Sernak, 2004; Tillman, 2004).

As if the challenge of leading in urban districts is not difficult enough, there is a whole other set of responsibilities associated with being an African American female leader. Angela Davis stated in her 1989 book, *Women, Culture, Politics* that women must strive to lift as they climb. Davis further contends that it is not enough to rise from the ashes to be successful, there is an unwritten rule that African American female

leaders will "lift" the black community as they go to make it better for all. Black

community survival refers to the fact that Black female leaders play a vital role in

improving the black community (Rosser-Mims, 2010).

African American female leaders have a skillset that may offer them the best

opportunity for success in urban settings. First, women have a propensity to act as

transformational leaders (Lowe, 2011). This leadership style has been proven to be an

effective method of leadership in urban school settings. Second, African American

female leaders are more vested in their product, (African American students), than any

other type of leader. For example, in a study conducted by Jean-Marie (2013):

> The participants (African American female leaders) understand what they do as
>
> educators is important for the future of African American students. The collective
>
> mission of these women is to provide students with the necessary tools to succeed
>
> academically, emotionally and socially in the dominant society… They (African
>
> American female leaders) are concerned about the lack of preparation and the
>
> academic achievement of many African American students in public schools and
>
> universities (p.634).

Jean Marie (2013) further states that:

> The strategic interventions advocated by the participants include: caring,
>
> nurturing, and sensitivity to the experiences of their students, and the belief that
>
> given the proper support African American students can achieve academic
>
> success. The participants are a bridge between the school and community.

While there are many challenges associated with being a leader in an urban school

setting, and there are an entirely different set of challenges associated with being an

African American female leader, who better to meet the needs of African American students than qualified African American female leaders.

Barriers

Surely in any profession there are times when we all feel that we have reached an insurmountable barrier. This barrier serves as an obstacle that prevents us from accomplishing the task at hand. Often this barrier can assume many different faces…funding, politics, unwillingness of team members in the organization to participate, etc. The frustration that is felt is immense when this occurs. Now, take that frustration and multiply it by…a billion. How do you feel? Welcome to the world of being a female attempting to climb the corporate ladder. Several barriers exist which prohibit women from accomplishing their goals: the "glass ceiling," lack of support of other females, racism, sexism, credibility as a leader, etc.

While women have made greater strides at gender equality at home and in the workplace, they remain underrepresented in leadership roles and are still considered an anomaly compared to men when in positions of leadership (Chin, 2011). Unfortunately, often they are caught in a dichotomy between their gender and expectations of leadership (Burkman, 2010). According to Buttignol & Diamond (2003), the school community wants a principal (female) who is compassionate, caring, and collaborative yet staff and parents want someone who is also firm, decisive and willing to provide direction.

Women are not always viewed as credible leaders. Although "dress for success" applies to both men and women, the appearance and behavior of someone may project "un-leader like" images and perceptions associated with gender and ethnicity that may have little to do with leadership (Chin, 2011). Chin further states that since women are

defined by fashion, what they choose to wear could be a distraction or fit stereotypic images of being too feminine or too ethnic, and therefore, not representative of a leader. Chin (2011) feels that women face another challenge to being credible and that is their communication style. Chin adds that women are typically ignored or not called on to speak by others, when they have soft, high pitched voices which may be perceived as being less commanding than a loud, booming male voice (2011).

Studies involving women in leadership have demonstrated that often, women prefer not to use a directive, authoritarian approach due to a perception that in assuming that role, they behave inappropriately (Brunner, 2000; Lips, 2003). Burkman (2010) continued that women naturally have a tendency to be nurturing and to collaborate often which breeds a stereotype of weak leadership. This is often believed without considering the success of the organization. Dana & Bourisaw (2006) further add that such negative sex-role stereotypes negate the opportunities of women in educational leadership. However, both situational and transactional leadership have been understood and practiced toward the end of the twentieth century by schools and school district leaders.

Does the so called "glass ceiling" truly exist? According to Ismail and Al-Taee (2012), it does. They understand that there are many obstacles on the steep path to leadership for women and that there remain important barriers for women in navigating their careers. They also believe that the "glass ceiling" is a metaphor for the barriers women encounter when trying to attain positions of leadership. Furthermore, Ismail and Al-Taee (2012) add that this "glass ceiling" provides one explanation as to why the number of women in senior leadership positions is less than that of men because it

represents one key barrier that impedes the career advancement of women in organizations across nationally.

Throughout time women have faced the following challenges while in leadership roles (Aladejana & Aladejana, 2005; Celikten, 2005 & Whitehead, 2001; Coleman, 2003):

1. "Cultural stereotype of professional roles"

2. "Male dominant culture"

3. "Lack of acceptance by male subordinates"

4. "Sexual harassment"

5. "Marital and extended family problems"

6. "Lack of parental support"

7. "Lack of support from upper administration"

8. "Lack of support from female friends and family"

9. "Lack of respect from students"

Coleman (2003) also encountered other areas of concern, such as isolation and some type of procedure for challenging the male stereotype of leadership. Since it is assumed that women are nurturing, caring and tolerant and men are the opposite, according to Burkman (2010), expectations are created that deter successful leadership practices due to these stereotypes which limit positions that are available to women.

It is important when exploring women in leadership to be familiar with certain key terms that have been used when referring to women. Funk (2004) uses the term "blue flamers" to refer to those women who rise quickly in their positions yet do not have the support of other women who work with them or may even be sabotaged by women

working with them. Women in Australia refer to this concept as "tall poppy syndrome" (Polley, 1996). It is referred to in this way because as poppy grows in Australia, it is common for the taller poppy to have its head cut off. Hence, as women grow and attain certain leadership positions, other women often "cut them down." This really resonates in educational leadership. One might think that due to experiences with discrimination, women principals would promote greater sex equity, according to Adkinson (1981). However, that is not the case. Many women in educational leadership positions have experienced a variety of forms of negative treatment from women teachers as well as women superintendents.

"Horizontal violence" is used to describe this negative treatment and the harm that some women do to other women in the workplace (Funk, 2000). It is also commonly referred to as "lateral violence." This type of violence refers to the acts that occur between colleagues in which bullying occurs. Acts of bullying can be covert or overt in nature. Additionally, these acts can be verbal or non-verbal aggression (Funk, 2000).

With the review of the literature, I intend to find answers to my research questions and to delve into the phenomena of women and leadership and the issues associated with being a woman in leadership. This topic is especially important to me as I am a woman in leadership who is aware of some of the possible problems that may be encountered on my journey to the top, not only as a woman, but as an African American woman.

Historically, females have been viewed differently in society than their male counterparts. Since the beginning of time, a woman's role centered around her family. She was responsible for raising the children, caring for her husband, cooking, cleaning and any other responsibilities that encompassed the overall well-being of the family. The

thought of her having a job, outside of the family, was infrequent, yet possible. But the thought of her being the breadwinner of the family and earning more than her husband was absolutely unheard of. The man, however, was expected to work outside of the home and to earn an income that was sufficient enough to take care of the family. Right or wrong, whether we agree or disagree, this view of women existed for some time, and for some may still exist.

In 1940, Eleanor Roosevelt stated that there may be a day in government, in business, and in the professions in which women will be looked upon as people (Hoyt, 2007). She further stated that, "we are, however, far from that day as yet." Mrs. Roosevelt would find great pleasure in knowing that there has been an increase in the number of women leaders which is a direct reflection of dramatic changes in society (Hoyt, 2007). As more and more women accepted leadership positions, researchers began to look at gender and leadership and the possibility of differences in leadership styles. Initially the differences reflected that women were inferior to men and they lacked the necessary skills and traits to lead successfully, according to Hennig & Jardim (1977). A more popular view reflects quite the opposite; women excel in their leadership roles (Hoyt, 2007).

Leadership in Education

Leadership has been depicted in several different ways. Despite the fact that people have attempted to define it, there are certain key components that have been identified regarding successful leadership (Northouse, 2007): (a) Leadership is a process, (b) Leadership involves influence, (c) Leadership occurs in a group context, and (d)

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Leadership involves goal attainment. Northouse (2007) defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."

Leadership is a process in that it takes time to lead others. It takes time to learn and implement the appropriate strategies to use with others. Leadership, done well, should be interactive. Leaders and followers have an effect on one another (Northouse, 2007). This affect should be a positive one in order to promote growth on behalf of the leader and staff.

Influence involves leaders having an effect on their followers. This influence can be positive or negative. Per Northouse (2007), "influence is the sine qua non of leadership." Leadership is not capable of existing without influence. Quite naturally, leaders have a great deal of influence over followers.

Leaders typically work with groups of people at a time. They work with the group to accomplish a common goal. Without the assistance of the group, the leader is not effective or truly able to make a difference. Working together with the group allows the leader to foster positive relationships with staff members. Leaders should be open, honest and transparent with staff.

Typically, leaders have goals to accomplish. These goals should be clearly articulated to staff. Leaders must work well with others in order to meet deadlines and accomplish their goals. Goals should be established in order to promote student growth and achievement. By working together, the leader and followers are able to make a difference in the lives of their students.

Finnigan (2012) speaks to the importance of teachers being able to trust leaders. Finnigan (2012) further states that this relationship is "especially crucial in low-

performing schools." When a rapport has been established between the leader and followers (members of the staff), a mutual respect and trust is created. Finnigan (2012) contends that effective managers do not micromanage but instead they demonstrate respect for the teachers' expertise. If leaders trust staff, there will not be a need to micromanage.

There are many facets of leadership in education. The leader is responsible for establishing the vision, setting goals, articulating these goals clearly, setting high expectations, focusing on instruction, monitoring performance and achieving goals, just to name a few (Finnigan, 2012). The leader's role is crucial to the overall success of the organization. A good leader will meet goals but a great leader supersedes them.

Diversity in Leadership

African American leaders in the educational arena are noted as having a good rapport with the population of families they serve. Brown and Beckett (2007) performed a case study that involved a black principal who was serving families from diverse economic backgrounds, and ethnicities in urban school districts. Findings of this research indicated that the African American principal had better success engaging with students and their families because of identification with the population.

This study revealed how an African American principal pushed past the obstacles of ethnicity, and socioeconomic walls to build relationships between district leaders in urban school districts. The goal of this approach was to bridge the gap and create a universal system of how leaders respond to student behaviors regardless of their ethnic diversities. As a result of successful collaboration among the leaders' various programs,

policies were created that promoted positive behaviors and academic success in students'

achievement (Brown & Beckett, 2007).

Leaders who participate in building communities of urban school districts and

support unified policies and programs need the participation of teachers, students and

parents; however, it is the role of teachers to create an environment in which there is an

atmosphere of academic success and positive behaviors. Brown & Beckett (2007)

discovered that leaders of diverse communities need to be able to lead everyone

effectively. This means they must develop communication skills, and look at their

surroundings through the lens of all people from diversified socio-economic and cultural

backgrounds.

Leaders in urban school districts face challenges on a regular basis. Needless to

say, it does not matter whether one is a veteran or novice leader in an urban school

district, the task of leadership can be difficult. Treadway, Brill & Hernandez (2007)

studied leaders who enrolled in the Leadership Support Program for 3 years and

discovered that novice leaders were struggling with existing administrators who lacked

regard for their position. It was reported in this study that the novice leader observed

disciplinary actions of students as being one of the main concerns in this study. This was

due to conflicting views between administrators and teachers of how to discipline

students' actions. Incidents such as these create problems for everyone involved in

leadership and, for this reason, the principal in this study created a consequence plan that

was positive; however, there were conflicting views between teachers, and leaders

regarding disciplinary actions versus fairness to students.

Tredway et al (2007) concluded that leaders should communicate with others in their community and not become resistant to changes and new ideas. Every day as a leader presents new challenges to overcome. This is why leaders in urban school districts need to be supported by one another and in agreement to ensure that disciplinary plans are part of the curriculum.

In this study, one of the reported challenging issues for novice leaders was effective communication with teachers. Treadway et al (2007) indicated that fear of making bad choices, and identity are two concerns of rookie administrators. As a result of this distress, the leader's decisions are influenced by the stated factors. Successful leaders in the San Francisco Bay Area school district are noted as being closely related in similarity to those in urban districts. Despite the challenges of urban schools, opportunities for academic support were created. Leadership Support Program (LSP) was influential in the success of this district. Leaders were taught how to exchange their fears of leadership for instructional information and practices by means of leadership training. Finally, it was noted in this research that positive reflections suggest that leaders need to visualize themselves as designers, teachers, and advocates of learners in a community.

Leadership in Urban School Districts

In order to be effective, a principal must be able to face many different challenges. He/She should be strong and should possess the necessary skillset to maintain a safe learning environment for students and staff. In suburban school districts, resources are usually adequate and students have support from home, have food and access to doctors, if needed (Cuban, 2004). Parents in urban school districts desire the

same resources for their children. Unfortunately, they reside in areas that are not always safe or that do not afford these opportunities for their children.

Specific challenges exist in an urban educational setting which require a different type of leader. These challenges include, but are not limited to, transiency, single parent households, poor attendance, poor academic success, poor behavior, at risk students, low expectations of students, lack of resources, and large class sizes. "Discouraged teachers and wary parents are also common features of the urban school landscape" (Cuban, 2004). Regardless of these conditions, the principal is expected to maintain an environment conducive to learning and should possess high expectations for all students.

Leadership done effectively in an urban school environment has six components:

1. "Ensure effective teaching and learning"

2. "Focus on data and outcomes"

3. "Lead learning communities"

4. "Nurture student and staff efficacy"

5. "Build school culture, climate, and community"

6. "Manage effectively" (Anderson & Louh, 2005).

With a focus on high-quality instructional strategies, the urban administrator is able to support the staff through a variety of resources. Data is used as a means to inform instruction. Urban administrators are able to understand data and are able to use "diverse forms" of it.

The leader is able to maintain high expectations for all students. He/She is able to get student and staff "buy-in" through a positive school climate. A positive school climate is established through specific practices and building-wide rituals. "Principals

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have the fiscal, organizational, and operational skills needed to support high student achievement in a high-quality school" (Anderson &Louh, 2005). Positive relationships established with students, staff and the community will allow the leader the ability to make the necessary changes to improve the overall culture of a building.

Teachers have a unique and special obligation to move and stretch students academically and behaviorally. This is especially important in school districts where expectations for student achievement is low. The role of the leader is a very important one as he/she must establish the vision of the school, promote "buy-in" from staff and students and must develop and maintain these high expectations. High expectations should constantly be discussed with staff and monitored to ensure that they are being met.

Working in an urban school environment presents challenges that differ from those of other educational settings. The leader has to deal with low expectations, transiency, single family households, poverty, poor attendance, poor behavior, lack of parental involvement, high drop-out rates and low academic achievement, in addition to all of the other responsibilities for which an educational leader is held accountable. As instructional leaders, urban setting leaders are responsible for the academic success or failure of all students.

Unfortunately, urban schools are typically branded with the stigma of "failure" (Flessa, 2009). This failure is related to academic success, safety, behavior, the failure to close the achievement gap, and the failure of staff to hold high expectations for all students (Flessa, 2009). The urban leader has much to overcome in order to make a difference. It can be done however, with the right leader.

It is important that staff know the vision and goals that are established by the urban educational leader. Per Katzell & Thompson (1990), goals that are clearly defined by leaders promote higher individual performance and ultimately have a positive effect on student motivation. By collaborating with staff, the leader is able to gain insight from them, while building a rapport. Relationship building in urban educational settings is significant and goes a long way with both students and staff.

According to Cuban (2004), educators (staff and administrators) must "provide moral leadership to build proud, engaged, and humane young men and women of high moral stature." It is the responsibility of the building leader to lead staff to change. By changing staff and the culture in the building, urban school students and communities will experience success. While urban and suburban leaders may share similar responsibilities, the urban leader also has to contend with diverse families who speak many different languages (Cuban, 2004). The leader will not only have to deal with different languages but also have to deal with a variety of cultures and values (Cuban, 2004).

The urban leader affects the members of the staff. A leader with a positive outlook will be able to get staff to work hard. Staff will be more apt to work diligently to meet the expectations of the leader. The leader can motivate staff to bring exciting, real life application to the classroom. He/she can motivate staff to use innovative and creative instructional strategies to the students. The urban educational leader must be willing to take risks. These risks are all in the name of student achievement. The students deserve it!

Summary

Leadership encompasses a great deal. It involves establishing a vision, establishing goals, clearly defining and articulating these goals to staff, accomplishing these goals, establishing a rapport with staff and students, promoting "buy-in" from staff, maintaining high expectations for students, being an instructional leader, and maintaining an environment that is safe and conducive to learning. This, however, is not all that a leader must do in order to experience success in his/her role.

Female educational leaders have and still remain underrepresented in leadership roles in education. Although the percentage of females in leadership roles has increased, they are still viewed differently than their male counterparts. Women are still viewed as weaker than men, not as intelligent as men, and often more emotional than men. Many females in educational leadership roles have overcome stereotypes and challenges associated with being a female leader. This can be attributed to a variety of factors.

Being an educational leader in an urban setting presents many challenges. Overcoming these challenges can be done yet it requires a great deal of effort, time and dedication. A strong leader who possesses high expectations for all, the desire to make a difference, patience, ability to develop a rapport with the community, staff, and students, can meet the needs of a challenging urban school community and can have a positive impact.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Women are often viewed differently in leadership roles than their male counterparts. This may be due to many reasons such as the lack of a strong personality or identity. However, those who are successful in their educational leadership positions have shown to be successful for a variety of reasons. The purpose of this study was to analyze leadership effectiveness of women in educational leadership. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is successful leadership as defined by female leaders in urban school districts?

2. Do leadership experiences differ for women working in urban school districts depending on their race?

3. How does the female gender impact leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

4. How does race impact female leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this study was to understand the various experiences that females in educational leadership roles face on a daily basis. Those experiences promoted leadership effectiveness among some female leaders yet, not among them all. Perhaps several factors contributed to this. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), researchers begin with an area of concern rather than a theory to prove.

Subsequently, through the collection of data and a systematic analytic process, themes began to emerge. By interviewing the female educational leaders, and listening to their individual stories, the researcher was then able to tell the story from the perspective of all of the participants by taking the stories apart and putting them back together (Merriam, 2002).

Each participant in the study had a story to tell. Some of the stories were similar and others were completely different. The actions, interactions and social processes of the people should be grounded in data from the field and the theories that emerged from the data should be grounded in the data as well, according to Creswell (2007).

Through critical theory approach, human beings are empowered to surpass any constraints that have been placed on them by race, class and gender (Creswell, 2007). Critical theory moves beyond understanding or explaining a phenomenon. It is a type of social theory that aims to critique and change society as a whole. Critical theories "dig beneath the surface of social life and uncovers the assumptions that keep us from a full and true understanding of how the world works" (Horkheimer, 1972).

According to Max Horkheimer (1972) in order to be adequate, critical theory must meet the following criteria:

1.   Explain what is wrong with current social reality

2.   Identify the actors to change it

3.   Provide clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social

     transformation.

This theoretical framework allowed the researcher to look at the issues often associated

with being female leaders in urban educational settings, collect data and attempt to

provide suggestions to improve the issue.

Research Design

      This qualitative research represents an ethnographic study. I chose this design

due to the fact that the method of data collection was interviews and through these

interviews, I was able to describe and interpret the culture of a group. The group

consisted of women in leadership roles in urban educational settings. The goal of an

ethnographic study is to describe or interpret the culture of a particular group (Merriam,

2002).

      One major aspect of ethnography is culture. Culture, however, has several

different meanings and "has been studied from a number of perspectives" (Merriam,

2002, p. 236). According to Merriam (2002), a popular meaning of culture refers to the

behaviors that people exhibit based on their knowledge. This knowledge also affects

their views of the world. From this standpoint, the researcher describes what it is that

people do, what people make and what people use (Merriam, 2002).

      Another view is "to see culture as embodied in the signs, symbols, and language

or the semiotics of culture" (Merriam, 2002, p. 236). With this view, the researcher

concentrates more on what people say and what is taken for granted. The researcher

becomes very involved with the group that is being studied. He or she is immersed in the data collection process and considers the participants' personal feelings and ideas in addition to what is observed. The culture is said to be thickly described.

Procedures

Prior to beginning my study, I applied to the Institutional Review Board at Cleveland State University to seek approval to conduct my research, then purposely chose the participants. I called upon a few educators with whom I have professional relationships and asked them for the names of any females in leadership positions that they knew. The female educators that served as participants in the study worked in an urban school district, located in Northeast, Ohio. They were also female educational leaders at the building level. Although those were the primary stipulations for participation in this study, I also attempted to make the group as racially diverse as possible.

Once I obtained the contact information for the participants, I began calling or e-mailing them to explain the purpose of my study. I made contact with the majority of names on the list. Many of the possible participants on the list either did not return my call or e-mail or stated they were not interested in being interviewed for the study. The first six female leaders who agreed to be interviewed, served as participants in the study. If they agreed to participate, I scheduled a time to meet with them at a place of their convenience to conduct the interviews. The interviews ranged from one to two hours, depending on the participant. All of the interviews were taped and later transcribed.

After being transcribed, the interviews were checked for accuracy twice. They were proofread once by the researcher and once by the participants. A copy of the

transcribed interviews was e-mailed to the participants to verify accuracy. The

audiotapes and transcribed data were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of my

committee chair, located in Julka Hall.

Description of Setting

All of the educational settings were located in an urban school district in

Northeast Ohio. The overall demographics of the student body for the district were:

Asian or Pacific Islander-.9%, Black, non-Hispanic-66.9%, Hispanic-14.4%, American

Indian or Alaskan Native-.2%, Multiracial-2.9%, and White, non-Hispanic-14.6%. The

students' average daily attendance for grades PreK-12 was 38, 725. The total percentage

of female students was 48.2% while the total percentage of male students was 51.8%.

The six participants were K-12 building level administrators. The demographics by urban

educational settings were as follows:

Participant 1 (P1): Building #1: K-8

Demographics of student body. There were a total of 251 students in the student

body. Out of 251 students, 98% were African American, 1% was Caucasian and 1% was

other. There were 169 male and 82 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 15 total members of the staff. Out of 15 total

members of the staff, 30% were African American, 65% were Caucasian and 5% were

other. There were 2 males and 13 female staff members.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American

female. There was one assistant principal. He was an African American male.

Participant 2 (P2): Building #2: Pre-K– 8

Demographics of student body. There was a total of 286 students in the student body. Out of 286 students, 99% were African American and 1% was other. There were 145 male and 141 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 17 total members of the staff. Out of the 17 total members of the staff, 70% were African American, 28% were Caucasian, and 1% was Hispanic. There were 4 males and 13 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American female. There was one assistant principal. She was an African American female.

Participant 3 (P3): Building #3: K-8

Demographics of student body. There was a total of 400 students in the student body. Out of the 400 students in the student body, 97% were African American, .50% was Caucasian, .50% was Hispanic, .50% was Asian, 1% was Arab, and .50% was other. There were 195 male and 205 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 22 members of the staff. Out of the 22 members of the staff, 59% were African American and 41% were Caucasian. There were 6 males and 16 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American female. The assistant principal was an African American male.

Participant 4 (P4): Building #4: Pre-K–8

Demographics of student body. There was a total of 300 students in the student body. Out of the 300 students in the student body, 33% were African American, 59%

were Caucasian, 1% was Asian and 7% were Latino. There were 182 male and 118 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 16 members of the staff. Out of the 16 members of the staff, 100% were Caucasian. There were 2 males and 14 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American male. The assistant principal was an African American female.

Participant 5 (P5): Building #5: K-5

Demographics of student body. There were 263 students in the student body. Out of the 263 students, 51% were African American, 45% were Caucasian, 2% were Hispanic, and 2% were other. There were 116 male and 147 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 29 members of the staff. Out of 29 members of the staff, 17% were African American and 83% were Caucasian. There were 5 males and 24 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was a Caucasian female. She did not have an assistant principal.

Participant 6 (P6): Building #6: Pre-K-8

Demographics of student body. There were 459 students in the student body. Out of 459 students, 99% were African American, .50% was Caucasian and .50% was Hispanic. There were 173 male and 286 female students.

Demographics of staff. There were 25 members of the staff. Out of 25 members of the staff, 56% were African American and 44% were Caucasian. There were 7 males and 18 females.

Demographics of administrative team. The principal was an African American female. The assistant principal was an African American male. The Curriculum Instructional Specialist was an African American female.

Participant Selection Process

The participants in the study were purposely selected. They were female leaders in an urban educational setting. Six women were selected and I purposely made the final participant group as racially diverse as possible. The first six female educational leaders, who agreed to be interviewed, served as participants in the study. Their number of years in education, number of years in their leadership position, age, experience, and building level varied as well.

Participant 1 (P1) was African American and was the principal in a K-8 building. She has worked in her current position for two years and in the current building level for three years. She has been in education for a total of fourteen years. Her assistant principal was an African American male.

Participant 2 (P2) was African American and was the Curriculum Instructional Specialist in a PK-8 building. She has worked in her current position for two years and in the current building level for two years. She has been in education for a total of fifteen years. Her principal was an African American female.

Participant 3 (P3) was African American and was the principal in a K-8 building. She has worked in her current position for ten years and in the current building level for twenty-two years. She has worked in education overall for a total of twenty-two years. Her assistant principal was an African American male.

Participant 4 (P4) was African American and was a deputy principal in a PK-8 building. She has worked in her current position for three years and in the current building level for twenty-seven years. She has been in education for a total of twenty-seven years overall. Her principal was an African American male.

Participant 5 (P5) was Caucasian and was the principal of a K-5 building. She has worked in her current position for nine years and in the current building level for twenty-one years. She has been in education for a total of thirty-eight years overall. She did not have an assistant principal.

Participant 6 (P6) was African American and the principal of a PK-8 building. She has worked in her current position for twelve years and in the current building level for twenty years. She has been in education for a total of twenty years. Her assistant principal was an African American male. Her Curriculum Instructional Specialist was an African American female.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an ongoing process that works simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 2002). The analysis of data in qualitative research is unfolding and emergent. The strategy used to understand the data collected is the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2002). The constant comparative method focuses on recurring regularities and assists in placing data into categories. This method allows the researcher to note where differences and similarities in the data exist. The comparisons allow for themes and categories to develop.

After interviews were transcribed, they were compared. Initial analysis involved the study of the data as reported by the participants followed by a consideration of

patterns within and across these participant levels. The data were compared in an effort to create a master list of repeated response patterns. The comparisons were grouped into themes and categories. Categories and themes supported the purpose of the study. The coding of the data assisted in the process of understanding the data.

Trustworthiness of Interpretation

Study themes were achieved through the use of one method of data collection – interviews - and through the use of participants who brought different perspectives to the study. The use of interviews and diverse participant perspectives created greater trustworthiness in the interpretation of the data. In addition, the researcher maintained an inventory of codes, where she documented each idea represented in the data as a code, noted its meaning, provided an exemplar of the code, noted its ongoing status in the analysis, and looked for relationships across codes. The researcher used the guidance of peer review through her frequent discussions of emerging interpretations with dissertation chair, methodologist, and several critical friends with expertise in the district and topic of study (Merriam, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

The decision to not conduct this study in the district in which I am employed was not an easy one. I really wanted to see how others perceived the females in leadership positions in my district. I also wanted to see how the females perceived themselves in their roles. It would have been interesting to see how the female leaders in my district would respond, especially since I work so closely with all of them. However, I wanted to avoid any uncomfortable situations for my colleagues. I did not want them to fear being honest with me or be uncomfortable sharing their experiences. Perhaps we shared similar

experiences? Did we view our race and gender as valuable attributes in our roles as

educational leaders in our district, or have we traveled distinctly different paths?

Researcher's Perspective

Although I am an African American female, I did not grow up in a diverse

community. The community in which I lived was middle-class and predominantly

Caucasian. In fact, there were only two minority families in the entire community for

many years. My family was one of them. I did not attend a diverse school either. I

attended a Catholic school for grades 4-8, and attended a small high school in a suburb in

Northeast Ohio for grades 9-12. Coming from a family in which education is highly

valued, I have two Bachelor's Degrees, one Master's Degree in Education and am

currently pursuing a Doctoral Degree in Urban Education with a Specialization in

Administration.

Regardless of the approach to qualitative inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces

many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and

dissemination of qualitative reports (Creswell, 2007). Quite naturally I come with some

biases on the topic. As an African American female educational leader, I have concerns

of my own. However, hopefully I did not allow those biases to interfere with my

research. I sought to remove any biased interferences by not sharing my own personal

experiences as an African American female in an educational leadership role. I also

allowed participants to review their transcribed interviews for accuracy.

The topic of women in educational leadership is very important to me. I am

currently an Assistant Principal in a suburban school district in Northeast Ohio. The

school district has a diverse student body, but not an overly diverse faculty or staff. Ironically, the administrative team is extremely diverse.

As a minority female in an educational leadership role, I am very interested in this topic and desire a change. A change regarding the perception and treatment of women in leadership roles. Every female in a leadership role has a different story to tell regarding her experiences yet there are always common threads. The feeling of not being respected simply because of your race or gender is an unsettling one. After decades of women in leadership roles, it is difficult to fathom how women can still be made to feel "invisible," unimportant, or challenged on just about every decision made.

Summary

The purpose of chapter 3 was to focus on the methodology section of the study. It explained the research design and the way in which participants were selected. It further explained the procedures for data collection and data analysis. The data was coded and categorized. Emergent themes developed which supported the study. The research design was intended to respond to the research literature on the effectiveness of females in educational leadership roles. Through this research, findings suggested possible changes for schools, universities and females in educational leadership roles. It also suggested helpful strategies to assist females in leadership to acquire their roles, sustain their roles and to be effective in their roles as educational leaders.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the leadership effectiveness of females in educational leadership positions. The information that was revealed through the interviews of females in educational leadership roles will be beneficial to other females who are considering pursuing similar positions. These results will also be useful to others who may work with females in this and similar fields.

These results will allow females to have a voice regarding their effectiveness as leaders. They will be able to express their thoughts about the glass ceiling, how they encourage other staff members to assume leadership roles, how race and gender might impact their leadership effectiveness, and how their leadership experiences may differ. History demonstrates that the majority of leaders in education are men, however, studies of this nature may inspire women to balance the numbers in the field.

Research Questions

This research study was designed to understand the experiences that women in urban educational leadership settings have, and to explore their differences and similarities. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is successful leadership as defined by female leaders in urban school districts?

2. Do leadership experiences differ for women working in urban school districts depending on their race? How does the female gender impact leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

3. How does race impact female leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

Participants

Six women in urban educational leadership settings served as participants in the study. They were all leaders at the building level in an Ohio urban school district and were purposely selected. All possessed a Master's degree and were from diverse backgrounds. The only requirement for participation in this study was that they had to be female educational leaders at the building level and in an urban school district. Age, years of experience and building level were diverse. Although the ethnic makeup of this population was diverse, it was heavily skewed toward African American females. The participants were purposely selected. Educators with whom I have a professional relationship suggested a list of female leaders to interview; the first six who agreed to be interviewed, made up the list of participants. I made contact with the majority on the list of possible participants. Many did not return my call or e-mail or did not desire to participate in the study.

Participant 1 was an African American female principal from an urban school district in Northeast Ohio. She worked in a K-5 building level and has been working in this school for 3 years. She has worked in her current position for 2 years and has

worked in education for a total of 14 years overall. She decided to go into education as an alternative career path because she majored in math while an undergraduate student in college.

Participant 2 was an African American female educational leader from an urban school district in Northeast Ohio. Her exact title was Curriculum Instruction Specialist. She worked in a PreK-8 building level and has been working in this building level for 3 years. She has been in her current position for 2 years and has worked in education for a total of 15 years overall. As a young child, she loved "playing school." Her father was a high school teacher and would come home and share stories about his day. She was always intrigued by his daily experiences and decided to go into education since she enjoyed working with kids.

Participant 3 was an African American female principal from an urban school district in Northeast Ohio. She worked in K-8 building level and has been working in this building level for 22 years. She has been in her current position for 10 years and has worked in education for a total of 22 years overall. Her mom had a big influence on her decision to become an educator. Her mother was a daycare provider at home, taught Sunday school at church, and worked with children whenever she could. Her mother always wanted to become a teacher but her family could not afford to send her to college. Since her mom always stressed the importance of getting a good education, she decided to become an educator.

Participant 4 was an African American female educational leader from an urban school district in Northeast Ohio. Her exact title was Deputy Principal. She worked in a PreK-8 building level and has been working in this building level for 27 years. She has

been in her current position for 3 years and has worked in education for a total of 27 years overall. As a student, she loved Physics and Theater. She wanted to major in Physics initially in college, but felt that her math skills were not strong enough. So, she decided to study education. She wanted to be a teacher who was able to instill a love of learning and inquiry, similar to what her Physics teacher in high school had done. Through a series of practicums and student teaching, she discovered her focus grade levels and areas of interest.

Participant 5 was a Caucasian female principal from an urban school district in Northeast Ohio. She worked in a K-5 building level and has been in this building level for 21 years. She has been working in her current position for 9 years and has been in education for a total of 38 years overall. She always knew that she wanted to go into education. She was the oldest of seven siblings. She began babysitting at the age of ten. It had always been her passion.

Participant 6 was an African American female principal from an urban school district in Northeast Ohio. She worked in a PreK-8 building level and has been working in this building level for 20 years. She has been in her current position for 12 years and has worked in education for a total of 20 years. She decided to major in education in college and to become an educator because she enjoyed the idea of being able to share some of what she felt she wasn't able to understand as a student in school.

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data were collected and used to answer the research questions. The six participants were interviewed. Interviews were then transcribed and coded. The Theoretical Framework used was Critical Theory. Critical Theory aims to "critique and

change society as a whole" (Crossman, 2014). It seeks to identify something that is

wrong, discuss ways to change it and to then provide goals that are both practical and

attainable in order to promote social transformation (Crossman, 2014). The responses to

the interview questions were placed into four different groups. The four different groups

reflected the four research questions.

Several different color highlighters were used to recognize (highlight) common

phrases, words, thoughts, ideas, etc. of each participant. Emergent themes developed as a

result of common phrases that appeared throughout the participants' responses to the

research questions. This shed light upon the lives of female leaders in urban educational

settings, how they acquired their roles, how they were viewed by others, how they

viewed themselves and if, in fact, they have been able to break through the glass ceiling.

Through use of the critical theory approach, the female participants had a voice regarding

their leadership effectiveness. By locating commonalities in their responses, the

researcher is better able to discover the emergent themes in order to "promote social

transformation" in the world of education with regard to females in leadership roles

(Crossman, 2014).

The interview responses also addressed if they have been successful in their roles

and if race or gender played a role in their success. The interview questions allowed

female educational leaders the opportunity to have a voice. A voice about their

leadership and a means to express how they viewed themselves in their roles. It also

allowed the participants an opportunity to ponder how they promoted others in the district

and how others viewed them in their roles as female educational leaders.

Responses

The six female participants provided feedback about the glass ceiling, their leadership style, their gender, their race, successful leadership, leadership effectiveness, their relationships with staff, and potential barriers they may face in their role. They also discussed their strengths, ways in which they encourage subordinates, ways to acknowledge subordinates, how others view them, and how they view themselves.

Race did not appear to impact their leadership effectiveness. Most of the participants, regardless of their race, reported that a lack of money, the teachers' union and the contract were barriers they had encountered in their role as educational leaders. It was commonly reported that their subordinates responded appropriately when given a directive or asked to do something, regardless of race. As long as staff had sufficient amount of time to complete a task, and an explanation of why the task was necessary, staff did not have an issue with completing the task.

The participants encouraged their staff to assume leadership roles in a variety of ways. Most of the female leaders reported that they believed in finding the strengths of their staffs. Once they knew their strengths, they were able to recommend specific staff members for leadership roles within the building. Often, the participants reported that staff needed to be "pushed" or "pulled" in order to assume leadership roles.

Shared leadership is the style of leadership that described several of the female participants. They believed in allowing the staff to have a voice. They wanted staff to participate in the overall success of the building. By "pushing" or "pulling" staff members to become teacher leaders, the participants were promoting and encouraging staff to expand their horizons, and to come out of their comfort zones.

When asked about the existence of the "glass ceiling," two stated that it may exist but they have not experienced it. One felt that as an African American female, it definitely exists. Another believed it does exist so she strategically thinks of ways to avoid hitting it. The last participant stated that the glass ceiling exists in her head.

Research question #1. *What is successful leadership as defined by female leaders in urban school districts?*

Interestingly, there were several different definitions offered to define success. As a leader, one is constantly being evaluated. Successful leaders set goals, meet these goals and are able to get staff to follow their lead. Three participants (P2, P3, P6) discussed the importance of goal setting and accomplishment of these goals. Another stated that success is being a visionary and getting others to buy into your vision, as well as developing relationships with others. She also defined success as facilitating student individual growth and playing a significant role in their accomplishments.

Participant 3 mentioned having followers on your team. "My definition of success would be to set goals and then to achieve those goals within the time line that I've set to achieve them." (P6)

> My definition of success would be when you are able to accomplish a goal that you have set out to accomplish. I think when you have people that are on your team that are willing to do the work that is asked of them, that's pretty much my definition of success. (P3)

> As I think about a definition for success, as it relates to being an urban school administrator, I would have to say that it stems from positive relationships with students, the community, parents…positive and trusting. And that you move

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students. That they grow. And you understand each child as an individual, but

collectively, moving an organization, understanding that you're leading a learning

organization. That you're successful with your relationship with adults and that

you provide consensus. That you're also looking just beyond what's happening

now, and that you are visionary, and that you get people to buy into your vision.

(P4)

My definition of success is when one has obtained or reached their goal or

goals that they have set for themselves, whether it is a short term goal, finishing

college, working on a Ph.D., is that you've completed the task or goal that you've

set for yourself as being successful. (P2)

Being able to recognize one's strengths and challenges are essential to

professional and personal growth as a leader. Reflecting on ways in which leadership can

improve will inevitably assist with student achievement. All six participants discussed

aspects of being a strong leader. Several said that they collaborate well with others (P3,

P6).

A few others stated they identify those who have strengths in multiple areas in

their building (P5, P6). Participants also stated that being caring and a good listener are

strengths. In addition, communication and getting others to accept your vision as a leader

are areas in which they do well. Staff members respect leaders with a clear vision who

are able to articulate that vision well. "I am a good listener. I can communicate well to

get people to get on board of what needs to be done. Not forcefully, but with a nice push

or tact" (P2).

I would definitely have to say, open lines of communication; and then just the shared leadership. I have a leadership team, and pretty much…there are some decisions that I have to make, just being the principal, but listening to them, the open door policy… and being able to give up some of my power and say, okay, let's go ahead and try it your way. I think that's what makes me…those are my strengths as a leader. (P3)

My strengths as a leader are that I trust people and I don't always feel like I know everything. So, I'm a team leader. So, I always draw on other people's strength. So, I am not the end-all-be-all of everything that needs to be done within the building. However, I make sure that I identify people who have strengths in multiple areas, that way, we have multiple people on the team who can do positive things. (P6)

Being an educational leader involves encouraging others to assume leadership roles beyond the classroom. All participants expressed ways in which they accomplished this. Once they recognize the strengths in their staff, they are better able to recommend or encourage areas for them in which to work.

I identify strengths of people and then try to train them up so they're successful in their leadership roles or, for example, have teacher leaders who are successful at multiple things. But, making sure you verify the strengths of other people. (P6)

I encourage my teachers to become master teachers. I encourage them to go on to be involved in processes where they can influence other teachers and help them to learn what to do. I also, have …when we've interviewed people for other jobs, other positions and maybe didn't hire them… I've encouraged them to

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go into other situations such as going to...become an assistant principal or going

into another administrative area because I see their strengths. (P5)

Within the faculty, there are always people that you see that they have

certain skillsets or abilities in their teacher leadership, where you feel that they

would be excellent at assuming leadership roles. Whether it is committee, whether

it is leading professional development or it's like pushing them to the next

level. So, I think with successful planning, just as someone…my principal

pushed me to take on leadership roles and to leave teaching and move into

administration, I'm doing likewise. There are people that you need to push, and

there are people that you need to pull along and there's people that simply…they

have the skills and talents, you tap into those and let them lead. You assist them

but let them lead, whether they remain in teaching positions and they are teacher-

leaders, they're still leaders in their role. So I think every opportunity where you

can allow someone else to lead something, you have to afford them that

opportunity." (P4)

This research question addressed the definition of successful leadership according to

female leaders in urban school districts. Per the responses taken from the interview

questions, female leaders in urban school districts would define successful leadership in a

variety of ways. A successful leader is first able to set goals and then accomplish

them. They are able to get others to "buy-in" to their vision/goals through their shared

leadership.

Shared leadership is established through trusting others and recognizing their

strengths, since as the leader, one does not know everything. As a successful leader, it is

okay to give up some power to those you trust to get the job done. Successful leadership

promotes positive relationships with students, parents, community members and

inevitably, the staff. Being a good, active listener, and having open lines of

communication allow staff to feel valued and desire to assist in the overall success of the

building.

A successful leader is able to recognize the strengths of staff. Areas of deficiency

are noted as well. The leader trains the staff member so that they are able to be

successful in a leadership role. The staff member is encouraged to assume a leadership

role that fits his/her strengths. It is important that the leader allows opportunities for

teachers to be leaders. Often, teachers are encouraged to become teacher leaders. Just as

these educational leaders were pushed or pulled to pursue leadership roles, they are now

pushing, pulling or encouraging members of their staff to do the same.

Research question #2. *Do leadership experiences differ for women working in*

urban school districts depending on their race?

The role of an administrator presents challenges on a daily basis. Administrators

have a great deal of responsibility. Unfortunately, barriers arise from time to time. Often

barriers create issues that prevent administrators from assisting students in being

successful.   The female participants appeared to share similar thoughts regarding barriers

that they face in their role as educational leaders. Money was the largest barrier that they

all faced. Interestingly, race did not seem to be a factor when discussing this barrier.

Regardless of race, the participants felt that this impacted their role and prevented them

from being able to totally service the children in their buildings.

Only one participant felt that her race played a role in her acquiring her position as an educational leader…

> I believe yes that it did for this particular position because my population is almost 100% African American and it would be appropriate to have someone that students can identify with that is the same race and who can identify with the things and the needs that they need in the building. (P6)

The other participants did not feel their race played an integral part in them acquiring their position as educational leaders. They believed that the best person for the job was hired. That best person just so happened to be female…and for the majority of them…an African American female. Many of the female leaders acquired their leadership roles as a result of being encouraged by someone they knew in a leadership role:

> I don't believe so. In my…when I first started moving up the ladder, I was actually a teacher in the building where I became an assistant principal, and so it was a really easy move for me. I don't think it had anything to do with race or anything. It was just my principal encouraged me to go back and get my administrative license and I went ahead and got it, and then like I said, I was able to move up as an assistant principal in the building where I was a teacher, and then of course I just kept moving on and got my current position as a principal. But, I don't feel like race played a role in it. Again, by us being such a large district, they just look at people that have proven to be leaders and …we have a wide variety of African Americans, white, male, females... So I don't think my race played a role in acquiring my current position. (P3)

"I don't think that it played a role. I interviewed for the position. I interviewed well. I was moved on to the next level; from there I had to interview with the principal who then decided that I was her choice for her building." (P2)

"I don't think that race played a role. I think it was more my gender played a role in the position, but race, no." (P1)

> I know that…I don't think it did, honestly in my current role or when I came into
> educational leadership, I would have to say it was not. I was placed in a school
> that had an African American leader, but prior to that one, it had always been a
> Caucasian leader. So…in my current situation we're the first African American
> team there too. So, I would have to say not… (P4)

In addressing the research question that dealt with leadership experiences differing for females working in urban school districts depending on their race, of the six female participants, one African American leader felt that she acquired her position in the building due to her race. She felt that her race was an asset in her building since the majority of her students are African American and they would benefit from having a role model who looks like them. The other participants did not believe their race played a role in acquiring their jobs. In fact, they say they simply moved up the ladder. They began as a teacher in their district, were encouraged by one of their administrators to consider going into administration, and then decided to pursue a leadership role.

While the glass ceiling exists to some of the participants, it only exists in the "head" of the Caucasian female. This is interesting because she is the only participant who states this. The Caucasian female, in essence, is putting a limit on what she is able to do. The African American participants do not believe this. They believe in working

diligently and do not mention a limit on what they are able to do. They recognize that barriers exist but work hard to overcome them (money, the budget, the teacher's contract, etc.).

All of the participants feel that their subordinates respond well to them once they have a conversation with them and provide enough time to accomplish the task. They believe in meeting with staff to provide clarity and explanations for the work that needs to be done. It does not appear that leadership experiences differ for female leaders working in urban school districts depending on their race.

Research question #3. *How does the female gender impact leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?*

The majority of the participants responded that they have a shared leadership style. They preferred to share their responsibilities with members of the staff. A shared leadership style will develop teamwork among staff and allow them to have a voice. It will also promote teacher leaders in the building. A few participants stated that with this type of leadership, more work is able to get accomplished, which would free them up to focus on other areas of concern in the building. Two mentioned being transformational leaders or being situational leaders or a combination of both (P1, P4).

I believe in a shared leadership style. And in looking at…situational as well. Again, I go back to that, I don't believe there is a cookie-cutter style to fit every situation. And so, I find myself adapting to what the situation is, depending on who the person is, and I like to be fair, and so I…do think it depends a lot on what the situation is, who the person is, and as far as the shared leadership, I just

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feel like if they have a say-so in what's going on, then they would be more willing to follow. (P3)

I would say my leadership style is predominantly transformational, blended with situational. So, when I mentioned earlier about being adapting and flexible, you have to have those with the basic morality and integrity and ethical components to that. But, accepting things just because the way they are, for many children is simply not appropriate and …so for me, transformational and situational are probably the top two. (P4)

Transformational would best describe my leadership style. …the school was in academic emergency, and I entered the leadership role as an assistant and for a year. I watched a leader who was ineffective, really take the building from being in academic emergency into an even heightened alert just because there was no leadership in place. So, it was a lot of things that I had to change, and I think because of that, that's why I would appoint it as being more transformational in my style. (P1)

All of the participants, with the exception of one, felt that female leaders lead differently than their male counterparts. The participant who was the exception stated that she didn't think there was a response to that question:

There's a variety of leadership styles that I've observed, because that's all that I can speak to. There are some that are pretty dominant. I have witnessed some females that don't talk appropriately to staff. I think that the ones that are most successful, know how to balance being a driver and a pusher, along with establishing relationships. And so, I would say that some do, some don't. I don't

know if there's a typical way that a male leads and a typical way that a female

lead, so to definitely answer that question…I don't think there is an answer to that

question. (P4)

I think sometimes males do lead different than females because…

sometimes a lot of ego that shows up in male leadership roles, is because the ego

will show up where they have to be in charge whereas a female sometimes has the

nurturing. I want to make sure everybody feels like they're a part of it. So there's

a difference in the style because a female tends to be more nurturing and more

open to multiple people being a part of the goal setting and goal attainment. (P6)

From my experience, yes. I think that because I've only had one…two

female leaders that I've been under. Majority of my experiences has come from

male leaders and I think my delivery of leadership also mirrors more of a male

role…although, I cannot get away from the emotional side because that's who I

am and I'm always being a mother when I'm thinking about my children in the

building. I've taken on the characteristics of some of my great male leaders

who…what they state is what they mean. If it's in the best interest of children,

they don't sway, and then they build a team around them that they know will help

them carry out their vision. (P1)

I do believe we are different. Again, it's because, obviously our brains

work differently than men. And the men are all about getting things done,

quickly, and exactly the way it is and they are also better at getting people to do

things for them…or delegating I guess should say. But, I think women…we

are…we are not as good at delegating. I'm not as good at delegating. I feel bad

asking people to do things that I should be doing… I think I should be

doing. But, then, that's where it gets looked at being a micromanager and the fact

that it's not ever the way I feel. It's just I didn't want to ask anybody to do

something more than what I can do. So, men don't seem to have that same

problem. And listening to other men in principal jobs, I find that they are…

they're more demanding… and I might compromise more than a male would.

(P5)

The majority of the participants believed that there is a shortage of males working

in education- in their district. Due to this shortage, female educational leaders are more

prevalent at the building level in the participants' districts. However, this has not always

been the case. A few believed their gender is a desirable attribute in their building and

others do not. One felt that there are pros and cons to being a female leader in her

district…

I think that there are pros and cons. I think that in some aspects it's revered as

being good because we bring those other qualities; but I think on another level,

that it can be a hindrance because...because we are emotional. We're emotional

creatures and that's who we are and sometimes that…having that sense can also

cause us to make judgements that are emotional-based, as opposed to having

substantial evidence. So, I think that it goes both ways. (P1)

I would have to say no, because again, I think they go with whoever they

think can get the job done. And if you can't get the job done, then of course, they

take the steps that are necessary to get rid of you. But, I don't think that it has

anything to do with gender. (P3)

Of course not. Men are in such shortage in education, so who wouldn't

like to have a male teacher… a male administrator. But you know, males do not

typically go into education at a high rate as females so, there's more females to

choose from than the male gender. So, no it's just more females than males to

choose from. (P2)

"I think my capabilities and competencies are more of a desirable attribute as a

leadership role." (P4)

The female gender impacts leadership effectiveness, in urban school districts, in

several positive ways. The female participants believed in a shared leadership style. They

valued the work ethic of their subordinates and did not fear "giving up some of the

power." Females are believed to lead differently than males. Females are more

compassionate and understanding. They allow staff to share in the leadership of the

building.

Since there is a shortage of males in education, finding a female for a leadership

role is not difficult, nor is it highly sought after. The participants did not feel that they

acquired their position due to their gender. However, they did feel that being a female in

a leadership role in urban school districts is an attribute.

Research question #4. *How does race impact female leadership effectiveness in*

urban school districts?

The female educational leaders did not think they faced barriers due to their

race. One thought that perhaps due to her age she did. Another felt that regardless of her

race or gender, her position would be challenged. One participant stated that she had not

faced any barriers as of yet and another felt that her race was an attribute.

No, I don't think so. I really don't think that I have …there's any barriers because I'm a white lady. Maybe because I'm older…no, that doesn't even really fall into it. So, I don't think that race or gender or any of that has really held me back, nor do I think it's pushed me up in this case. Not in my situation and not in our urban district. (P5)

I don't think that I face barriers…and I can only detail it towards this particular position…although there are some staff within the building who is going to challenge regardless of if I am African American or female. But, it's one or two of the systemics that they're going to challenge and it's…just depends on what I'm asking or requiring that they do that they want to challenge. That's why I think I have to go a little bit further than some of my counterparts by always making sure that I have the data to support whatever I'm speaking on. (P1)

"So far, I can say that I have not faced any barriers in my current role due to my race. So, I just haven't had to face any barriers because of race, so far." (P3)

"I don't think that I face barriers in my role because of race. I think actually it's an attribute because, as I said earlier, people can identify with me and they know that I am a part of the team and not an outsider in the team." (P6)

Participants did not believe that their race caused their subordinates to treat them differently or respond to them a certain way. In fact, the majority of them stated that staff respond to them, the way in which they do, simply because of their title. They respond because they are the leaders in the building. One participant felt that her character is what caused staff to respond to her the way they do…

I think my subordinates respond to me the way that they do because they respect me because I show myself as someone who is valid and respectable. So, the things that I do prove that I am a positive leader and the things that I do as far as setting up procedures and policies and goals and monitoring those things are the reasons why my subordinates respond to me the way that they do. But, I don't think that it has anything to do with race, more so character. (P6)

"I don't think they respond because of my race. I think they respond to my title more so than my race. It's more so my title, who I am, what I can do, what power I have, what power I don't have, what I can do for them, more so than race." (P2)

I would say no. I would say they respond to me the way they do just because I'm the leader of the building. And so, I'm the one that evaluates them, or a large majority of them. I mean, we split up the responsibilities, but I've never had an issue, so far, because of…that dealt with race. And then, my students are all…ninety-five percent African American. There is a large portion of my staff that is African American. But I think they respond to me the way that they do, like I said, just because I'm the leader of the building. But, it doesn't have anything to do with race. (P3)

No, I don't think they do at all. I don't think that that has anything to do with it. Because…I've…we have worked really hard over the last couple of years to get more of a diversity in our staff. Our staff was mostly Caucasian females and we saw that so we've put in…we had a bigger effort to get more males and to get more…I still need to get somebody that's Hispanic… (P5)

It does not appear that race impacted female leadership effectiveness in urban school districts. No one stated that they faced barriers due to race. Participants stated that subordinates respond to them, the way in which they do, not as a result of their race or gender, but because of their position. Staff will inevitably challenge them simply because of their position rather than their race…or gender. One participant believed that her race is an attribute, rather than a hindrance.

Emerging Themes

While the study sought to compare the leadership experiences of females in educational leadership roles, several themes emerged as a result of coding the data. The six females that participated in the study possessed a variety of educational experiences, were from diverse backgrounds, and worked in diverse building levels. Although the female leaders shared their individual experiences, there were many similarities.

Participants responded to twenty-six questions. Throughout these questions, the six female educational leaders shared many common responses regarding their leadership. There were four dominant recurring themes that presented themselves throughout the data. The four themes that emerged were (a) goal setting and accomplishment, (b) shared leadership, (c) encouraging/promoting staff, and (d) engaging in active listening.

Goal Setting and Accomplishment

One of the common themes that appeared throughout the data was goal setting and accomplishment of these goals. Goal setting is an integral component of leadership. The staff needs to know what to focus on for the school year. Goals should be specific and attainable. Staff frequently should be reminded of the goals and necessary steps to

accomplish them. Regardless of the question, the six participants often referred to the importance of setting goals and of reaching them. In order to be a credible leader, one needs to have a vision (goal) and a plan to accomplish it. Once the goal is clearly articulated to staff, staff are better able to support and "buy-in" to the vision (goal).

When defining success, three of the six female educational leader participants discussed goal setting and accomplishment. In their opinion, they see themselves as successful when they first, set goals and second, accomplish them. It doesn't matter whether it was a short term goal or a long term goal, the point is that you set a goal and accomplished it.

Participant 2 stated…

My definition of success is when one has obtained or reached their goal or goals that they have set for themselves, whether it is a short term goal, finishing college, or working on a Ph.D. It is that you've completed the task or goal that you've set for yourself as being successful.

Participant 6 referred to time lines in her response. She said, "My definition of success would be to set goals and then to achieve those goals within the time line that I've set to achieve them."

When asked a question about the differences between female educational leaders and their male counterparts and the differences in how they lead, all except for one participant believed that yes, females do lead differently. They go on to include the ways in which female and male leaders differ. Two of the six participants mention goals (P3, P6). Goals appeared to be an important aspect of leadership among the females. In fact, one participant reported the following:

I think sometimes males do lead different than females because…sometimes a lot

of ego that shows up in male leadership roles is because the ego will show up

where they have to be in charge. Whereas a female sometimes has the nurturing…

"I want to make sure everybody feels like they're a part of it." So there's a

difference in style, because a female tends to be more nurturing and more open to

multiple people being a part of the goal setting and goal attainment. (P6)

Participant 5 added,

…I don't necessarily know that we like lead differently. I don't believe so

because at the end of the day, we're trying to accomplish a goal and so you know,

we know what we need to do in order to get that goal accomplished. So, for the

most part, we do whatever it is going to take to …the goal is continuous

improvement for our buildings, and so we're doing whatever we need to do in

order to reach that goal…

The participants were asked to define effective leadership. An effective leader is

able to assist staff to accomplish any goals that were established for the building.

Participant 3 defines effective leadership in her own words, "Okay, my definition of

effective leadership would be…again, coming up with a goal and meeting that goal,

having the input …being able to take input from others…"

Participants were also asked about the behaviors that one must exhibit to be

characterized as an effective leader. A variety of responses were shared such as being a

good listener, demonstrating flexibility, being open and being a goal setter. Participant 6

expressed the following:

So, to be an effective leader, you have to know the goal that you're trying to achieve. So, if you don't know the goal that you're trying to achieve, you're not going to have actions to get to where you're trying to be. So, part of it is, once you've set your goal, then figuring out the actionable steps that you're going to do to achieve that goal. So, that is important to being a leader and to make sure that you're successful as a leader.

Establishing a vision, similar to a goal, was mentioned as well. Regardless of which term is used, the bottom line is to have focus as a leader so that others will want to follow you. In order to become a credible leader, you should have a vision. This vision must then in turn, be shared with staff. Staff will be better committed to the teaching and learning process and to your goal (vision, focus). They will be better equipped to assist you in attaining the vision/goals for the entire organization…

I think an effective leader has to be a strategic thinker. They have to have a vision and they have to have a plan to complete the vision. And then, I think that they also have to be able to exhibit their ability to carry out the plan to a fault. If you have a vision, if you have strategically thought out a plan that encompasses your vision, you have to see it all the way through and I think that having those main characteristics is what enables you to be an effective leader. (P1)

Shared Leadership

Collaborating with staff and sharing the responsibilities for the overall success of the building is important. It has been my own personal experience that this seems to be a characteristic of female educational leaders. Male leaders tend to be more dominating in their leadership approach and seldom desire to ask for the input of others, especially the

opinion of subordinates, I have observed. Female leaders are more nurturing and seem to value what others have to say and value how they feel. They are more understanding and appreciate the honest feedback of others. They believe in teamwork and treating the work environment like a family. They have a vested interest in the well-being of each staff member and in the staff member's personal life. I have worked for several male leaders and have found that they do not always value the opinions of others, ask about staff member's families, or believe in a shared leadership.

By sharing one's leadership with staff, the leader is allowing them to participate in the success of the building. Through my own personal lens, I have seen that this promotes teamwork and demonstrates an appreciation of staff and an appreciation of their efforts at having an effective school. In order to establish a shared leadership, the leader must first communicate her vision/goals well. She must be willing to give up some of her power and allow others an opportunity to lead. Realizing that by allowing others the opportunity to lead, there may be a few bumps in the road, the leader must be ready to accept the fact that mistakes may occur. I have had the pleasure of working with a female leader who communicated her vision to the staff then stepped aside to allow them to work. She knew that mistakes would occur and explained that it was okay and she would be there, every step of the way, for support.

Many of the participants in this study admitted that they believed in having a shared leadership style. They recognized the talents and strengths of each member of their team and used the staff accordingly. The female leaders tended to develop a rapport with staff and trusted them to take over certain projects or trusted them to develop new ways to engage students. They believed in developing master teachers and in

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relinquishing control to them. This does not happen overnight but with a conscientious

plan, which is established by the educational leader. Of course, at times, there are

decisions that the leader must make simply because they are the educational leader in the

building and are held accountable for everything. On several occasions, members of my

staff have told me that they understand and accept the fact that I am ultimately in charge

and held accountable for the success of the building.

According to several participants, they were successful as leaders due to their

strengths. One of their strengths is getting staff to "buy-in" to their vision/goals. They

did this through a shared leadership approach. They were not afraid to allow staff to

experiment and try new things. They supported staff and provided all of the necessary

resources they needed in order to complete a task and to complete it well. When asked

what your strengths are as a leader, participants offered the following responses…

> My strengths as a leader are that I trust people, and I don't always feel like I
>
> know. So, I'm a team leader. So I always draw on other people's strengths so I
>
> am not the end-all-be-all of everything that needs to be done within the
>
> building. However, I make sure that I identify people who have strengths in
>
> multiple areas, that way, we have multiple people on the team who can do
>
> positive things. (P6)

> I would definitely have to say, open lines of communication' and then just
>
> the shared leadership. I have a leadership team, and pretty much…there are some
>
> decisions that I have to make, just being the principal, but listening to them… the
>
> open door policy. I think they are more willing to do work for me just because
>
> they know that I care about them-just like things… asking about their families and

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"how did that surgery go?" or "how's your mom doing?" …things like that. And so I think that's what makes me a …I think that's one of my strengths as a leader, is just having that open ear and being willing to give up some of my power and say, "okay, let's go ahead and try it your way. (P3)

And then, the other thing that I think I've really grown into being is that I have recognized the talents of my staff and it really do…let them go with the things. So, recognizing their talents, and letting them know that is also one of my strengths…I do that and people really do like it. So, it's a matter of recognizing where people's …other people's strengths, other people's needs, other people's concerns, and touching them personally and that makes a difference. (P5)

Many of the participants agreed that the style that best describes their leadership is a shared leadership style or one in which "I don't do all the work." (P2) This type of leadership addressed how being the female gender impacted leadership effectiveness in urban school districts. By being open to the opinions of others and admitting that as the leader of the building, you do not possess all of the answers, you are allowing others to step up and assume leadership roles as well.

The participants further added that since everyone was supposed to be on the same page and working towards a common goal and representative of a team, they believed in distributing their leadership to qualified members of the staff. As the leader, however, you still have to check on the status of the work that you have others doing in the building from time to time. Two participants say that their style is transformational. A few state that they adapt their leadership style to the situation and

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therefore possess a situational style of leadership or a combination of the

two…situational and transformational…or shared and situational…

> I believe in a shared leadership style…and in looking at…situational as
> well. Again, I go back to that, I don't believe that there is a cookie-cutter style to
> fit every situation. And so, I find myself adapting to what the situation is,
> depending on who the person is, and I like to be fair, and so…I do think it
> depends a lot on what the situation is, who the person is, and as far as the shared
> leadership, I just feel like if they have a say-so in what's going on, then they
> would be more willing to follow. (P3)

> My leadership style is more of a distributive leadership. I like to get
> multiple people as a part of my team to make sure that we're all on the same page
> because I cannot do it all. And what happens a lot of times is that people see me
> as the head of the school and that's not what it always is. We're all on the same
> team, so we're all working towards the goal. And it's better if you break it down
> so that multiple people are doing the same things but you always have to trust and
> verify, once you are giving roles to other people. (P6)

Encouraging/Promoting Staff

A definite strength of many female educational leaders is the ability to
encourage/promote staff. Once the talents of various staff members are recognized, part
of being a successful leader is possessing the ability to move that staff member to the
next level. The next level might be a teacher leader or perhaps a department chair, head
of a committee in the building or even an administrator.

Sometimes, the staff member has not even considered assuming a role beyond that of a classroom teacher. Often, the staff member is not aware of all of the possibilities that exist beyond the walls of the classroom. It is vital that the educational leader recognizes positives within the staff member and assists…pushes…pulls…or does whatever it takes, to get that staff member to the next phase. Training may also be a necessary component the staff member needs to be successful in another role in the building or even the district.

When asked in what ways the female leaders encourage others to assume a leadership role, participants shared that first they identify the areas of strength and the areas of improvement for the staff member. Then they encourage certain teachers to become master teachers. They push them or pull them so that they will be successful in their new leadership roles. The participants stated that they seek to find those staff members who are competent when encouraging/promoting them to leadership roles. They do not recommend everyone for a leadership role…

> I'm thinking about just the staff in my building, having been around them for so long. Of course I know their strengths and I know their weaknesses. And sometimes I just tap people… hey, I need you to be on my leadership team. I see that you're a natural leader. I need you to be on my leadership team. Or sometimes I encourage them to just go ahead and apply for an administrative position, whether it's getting involved in more classes to take on a leadership role, or if it's someone that already has the classes and just haven't done anything with the degree or the license yet… (P3)

Within the faculty, there's always people that you see that they have certain skillsets or abilities in their teacher leadership, where you feel that they would be excellent at assuming leadership roles. Whether it is committee, whether it is leading professional development or it's like pushing them to the next level. So, I think with successful planning, just as someone…my principal pushed me to take on leadership roles and to leave teaching and move into administration, I'm doing likewise. There are people that you need to push, and there are people that you need to pull along and there's people that simply…they have the skills and talents, you tap into those and let them lead. You assist them but let them lead, whether they remain in teaching positions and they are teacher-leaders, they're still leaders in their role. So I think every opportunity where you can allow someone else to lead something, you have to afford them that opportunity. (P4)

Now, if you are on my team, this is something that they would say, that I push them on a lot. I'm always looking for leaders within the building. I do understand that I can't do it by myself. So one of my charges is, is to find people that I think are competent enough to be able. And I do push them to do, and it's been okay… (P1).

Encouraging/promoting staff is an example of successful leadership among the female participants. The participants make reference to previous principals with whom they have worked. The principals have encouraged them to pursue leadership roles. Often these women were "pushed" or "pulled' to go into administration. Someone believed in them and they, in turn, now believe in someone else.

By getting others to see their true potential, the leader is able to build a rapport with the staff member. By entrusting the staff member with important leadership tasks within the building, the leader is able to demonstrate flexibility and an ability to relinquish some control to staff. This shows staff that they are supported, trusted, valued and respected. It is believed that they are able to do great work for the improvement of the building. It is saying that the leader is unable to do everything by herself and she trusts that the person being encouraged and promoted will do just as great a job as she at completing a task.

Encouraging and promoting staff is a strong skill to possess. Recognizing not only the challenges of others, but also their strengths is not always easy to do. The participants have learned the power and importance of this because someone encouraged and promoted many of them. This skill has contributed to them becoming successful educational leaders in their field.

Engaging in Active Listening

Another common theme among the data is engaging in being an active listener. Participants acknowledged that as an active listener, they demonstrate how they value their staff. Their feelings, thoughts, ideas, etc. are valued. Even if they do not really have the time to listen or want to listen, they do it out of respect for their staff member. It is a means by which the leader develops a rapport with staff and maintains that rapport.

Others feel important when time is taken to listen to them. Having an open door policy with staff allows them to express their ideas, thoughts, and suggestions. It also allows them a platform to vent or to discuss personal issues, if necessary. The female

educational leaders stated that being an active listener is a strength of their leadership. It contributes to ways in which they are successful in their roles.

Being a good listener takes practice and time. It involves freeing one's mind so that she can concentrate solely on the person speaking. It involves being able to hear the person speak and listen well, without interruption. Body language and facial expressions play a role as well. It is not an easy skill.

When asked about the behaviors that one must exhibit to characterize an effective leader, several participants mentioned the importance of being open and honest as a listener. They discussed having an open ear and never believing that they know everything. When staff are listened to, they are more apt to perform well for their leader…

> I personally believe that you just have to have shared leadership because, again, in my situation, when my teachers feel like they are being listened to, that they have an input in what's going on, they're more willing to follow. I believe that you have to have an open ear, because if they feel like you cared, then I think that they're more willing to work for you. (P3)

"I'm a good listener. I communicate well and can get people on board..." (P2)

"You have to be an active listener…" (P4)

> I would definitely have to say, open lines of communication; and then just the shared leadership. I have a leadership team, and pretty much… there are some decisions that I have to make, just being the principal, but listening to them, the open door policy. I think they are more willing to do work for me just because they know that I care about them –So, I think just having the open lines of

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communication, having a listening ear, and even times when I don't feel like

listening to anything that they have to say to me, I still sit there and act like I'm

really invested in what you have to say. And so I think that's what makes me a…

I think that's one of my strengths as a leader, is just having that open ear… (P1)

By listening intently to the concerns of the staff, it shows that the leader is

invested in them. Regardless of how hectic the day, staff deserve to be listened to. The

lines of communication should always remain open and honest so that both parties

(leader and member of the staff) feel free to express themselves.

Engaging in "active listening" differs greatly from simply "listening." In active

listening, the leader is able to repeat what the staff member shares with her. She is also

able to summarize what was said at the end of the conversation. It usually involves

nodding the head, which symbolizes that the staff member has all of the leader's

attention. Most of the participants' view this as a strength of theirs.

An open door policy is often difficult to maintain. Especially with all the

responsibilities that are placed on the educational leader. It is however, important to

being transparent with staff and demonstrating that you care about them and value what

they have to say.

Summary

The six female participants appeared to enjoy sharing their experiences as

educational leaders. They enjoyed discussing interactions with staff, their individual

strengths as leaders, the glass ceiling and the differences between male and female

leaders. They also had an opportunity to think about the type of leader they are, from

whom they adopted their style and what makes them successful.

All of the participants found value in being successful, effective educational leaders in their district. As a result of coding the data from the interviews, four themes emerged. By goal setting and accomplishing these goals, sharing their leadership, encouraging/promoting their staff, and engaging in active listening, these female leaders are able to demonstrate their successful leadership effectiveness. While race does not appear to be a major factor with regard to their leadership effectiveness, being a female does for a few.

The majority of the participants felt that they were successful as leaders when they were able to set goals and accomplish them. Being a good, active listener and communicating well was also mentioned. While all participants believed that they were successful leaders, a few commented on the fact that they can still improve. One felt that she was on the road to becoming a successful leader. Another stated that no matter what others thought, she is definitely successful as a leader. They all mentioned that there is room for improvement and that they are constantly changing and improving in the area of leadership.

In conclusion, leadership is a role that the participants embrace. They know what it takes to be an effective leader in their building and work hard to meet the challenges of their position. They believe strongly in involving staff in the teaching and learning process and in changing the overall success of the building. They understand the importance of goal setting and the accomplishing of these goals, in order to be credible as a leader. By sharing their leadership, staff are able to "buy-in" to the culture of the building and promote change if necessary, for the betterment of student success.

Ultimately, staff feel valued as stakeholders in the educational process. Encouraging and promoting staff is something that the female participants do constantly.

Whether staff are "pulled" or "pushed" along, the participants believe in recognizing staff for the strengths and talents and in encouraging/promoting them to a leadership role. Being a good listener takes time and practice. The participants understand their staff and that being an active listener, regardless of the topic, is important to them. Even when the female participants do not have much time to listen to staff, they do. Despite the fact that these female urban educational leaders recognize what it takes to be effective, they also recognize that they are a work in progress. They have accomplished a lot in the role, yet still have work to do. They are open to growth, both personal and professional. All great leaders are!

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Overview

With an increase in school accountability, there has been additional interest in the effectiveness of school leadership. It is common to find that the success or failure of an organization is often attributed to the leader. The leadership style of the leader may certainly play a crucial role in the direction of a particular organization. Many people, however, are of the mindset that in addition to one's leadership style, one's race and gender may also have an impact on the success and/or failure of an institution.

Men and women may occasionally lead differently and sometimes are treated differently by others. Many people may believe that men are more respected than women in leadership positions. Oftentimes a woman's success in leadership is defined by her ability to adopt male behaviors. However, those points notwithstanding, there is a plethora of women who routinely and consistently demonstrate their ability to not only obtain leadership roles, but more importantly, to succeed in those positions.

The purpose of this study was to explore and examine the ways in which race and gender impact the leadership effectiveness of female leaders in urban school districts. An effective leader demonstrates certain leadership qualities. A leader should be confident

as well as knowledgeable. Realizing that barriers will inevitably accompany the leadership role assumed, the leader must be able to identify these barriers and work to overcome them.

In this comparative analysis of female leaders in urban educational settings, a qualitative approach was taken. In this ethnographic study, the similarities and differences among the six female participants were analyzed through their individual "voices" in the interviews. The reviews of literature and interviews were used to determine the theoretical framework. Critical Theory involves "critiquing and changing society as a whole" (Crossman, 2014). It seeks to identify something that is wrong, discuss ways to change it and to then provide goals that are both practical and attainable in order to promote social transformation (Crossman, 2014).

Six female educational leaders were interviewed. The six participants were purposefully selected from a large urban school district in Northeast, Ohio. The participants worked in different educational levels (ex. elementary school and middle school) and all possessed a Master's Degree.

The participants' responses to the interview questions addressed if they have been successful in their roles and if race and/or gender played a role in their success. The interview questions allowed female educational leaders the opportunity to have a voice. A voice about their leadership and a means to express how they viewed themselves in their roles. It also allowed the participants an opportunity to ponder how they promote others in the district and how others view them in their roles as female educational leaders.

The primary research methodology employed the use of interviews. The interviews were transcribed and then coded. Four themes emerged from the data. The themes were: Goal Setting and Accomplishment, Shared Leadership, Encouraging/Promoting staff, and Engaging in Active Listening.

Chapter 4 discussed the results of the research. I mentioned specific interview responses as they relate to the research questions. The participants expressed their thoughts with regard to their roles as urban educational leaders… specifically, their thoughts about the meaning of success, how they encourage others to become leaders, the glass ceiling, and barriers they face. Data revealed that the leadership effectiveness of females in urban school districts is complex, but may not be severely impacted by race or gender.

Findings and Implications

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007, p. 3). School districts are looking for leaders who possess strong leadership qualities. The overall goal of every district is to graduate students who are critical thinkers who are able to become productive members of society. This does not occur by mistake. The leader must be focused, have a clear vision, articulate that vision well to others and make all decision in the best interest of students, in order to accomplish the vision. Districts need a strong leader; one who is confident, knowledgeable and effective. It is important that the leader is well respected and trusted by staff in order to promote the vision.

Historically, males have dominated leadership roles in education. This was largely due to the fact that women were viewed as inferior to men and as lacking the

traits needed for success in an organization (Book, 2000). Females are every bit as

capable of being good leaders as their male counterparts (Wang, 2015). The fact that

there has been an increase in females in "leadership positions" and in "academia" has

encouraged an interest in the study of female leaders (Northouse, 2007).

Studies focused less on if females could lead and more on whether the styles of

leadership differed for male and female leaders. Studies revealed that females sought to

gain the insight/input of subordinates (democratic approach) while male leaders did not

(Northouse, 2007). Other studies reflected that female leaders experience prejudice from

others while in leadership roles (Northouse, 2007). While males were viewed as agents

of change, females were simply seen as care takers of others. However, female leaders of

color "often face racial or ethnic prejudice" (Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

The glass ceiling is *c*onsidered to be an invisible barrier that keeps female leaders

from ever reaching top positions. Per Northouse (2007), there are reasons to break this

barrier that are broadly beneficial. First, it will allow everyone the opportunity to assume

a leadership role, regardless of gender. Second, organizations will be represented with all

types of people. Lastly, "group member diversity is associated with greater group

productivity" (Forsyth, 2006).

In this comparative analysis of female educational leaders in urban settings, four

themes emerged. The themes emerged as a result of allowing the female leaders to have

a voice. They expressed their thoughts on being a leader, if they were successful, how

they encourage others in their district, their strengths, etc. The emergent themes were:

(1) Goal Setting and Accomplishment (2) Shared Leadership (3)

Promoting/Encouraging Staff and (4) Engaging in Active Listening.

The six female participants answered twenty-six interview questions. Through these interview questions, the research questions were addressed as follows:

Research question #1. *What is successful leadership as defined by female leaders in urban school districts?*

The female educational leaders defined successful leadership in urban school districts as their ability to set goals and to then accomplish these goals. They believe in being a visionary and being able to get others on their team to "buy-in" to the vision. Successful leaders are able to form positive relationships with others (staff, students, parents) and are also able to facilitate student growth.

Effective, successful urban school leaders are able to recognize not only their own strengths and areas of deficiency, but those of staff members as well. They work hard to overcome their own challenges and assist others with theirs. They are able to encourage others to grow and are able to develop them into leaders. They are trustworthy and honest. These female leaders believe in collaboration with their staff, listening to their ideas and in sharing their leadership. Ultimately, the overall goal of successful leadership is student achievement.

Research question #2. *Do leadership experiences differ for women working in urban school districts depending on their race?*

While leadership experiences may differ for some females, it does not appear to differ for the female participants working in urban school districts, depending on their race. In fact, regardless of their race, all stated that money was a barrier for them. They mentioned that lack of funding prohibited them from truly being able to provide assistance to their students. All of the participants stated that they followed the natural

course to becoming a leader; they were all classroom teachers, were encouraged by someone to become a leader, and interviewed for leadership positions in their districts. Once obtaining the assistant principal position, some became principals and others are still assistant principals.

Only one participant reported that she believed her race was a benefit to her obtaining her position as an educational leader. She believed that the students in her building needed to have someone as a role model who looked like them. Previously, that had not been the case. She believed that her race was a positive characteristic that afforded her the leadership position in her district. The race of the six female participants does not have a negative or positive bearing on their leadership experiences, for the majority. Urban leadership experiences for these female participants do not differ depending on their race.

Research question #3. *How does the female gender impact leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?*

The participants stated that there is a shortage of male leaders in their districts. This, however, was not always the case. Currently the majority of the leaders in their urban school district are females. While some of the participants felt that being a female in an urban school district positively impacted their leadership effectiveness, others did not. One female participant stated that her "capabilities and competencies" attributed to her getting the job and doing well in her position.

Many of the participants acknowledged that they have a shared leadership approach. They want staff to have an opinion and value what they have to offer. Staff are open to their feedback and the leaders welcome theirs. One of the participants shared

that she wants staff to feel a part of the organization. Females tend to be more nurturing and want staff to share in the goal setting and goal attainment process, according to a participant. Female leaders are more open to the ideas of staff than male leaders.

A few of the female leaders also added that they are transformational leaders. This type of leadership is characteristic of many females. The participants believed that their male counterparts lead differently. The Caucasian leader felt that male leaders delegate better than she does and often are more demanding. She does not feel comfortable asking staff to assume more responsibility.   Another participant stated that she has worked with great male leaders and has adapted her style of leadership after them. Her previous male leaders had the quality of saying exactly what they meant. If a decision was in the best interest of the students, they did not sway their decision to fit the needs of the adults.

The female gender impacts leadership effectiveness in positive ways according to many participants. Typically, female leaders are nurturing and open to feedback from staff. The female leaders are compassionate and understanding. They value the work of their subordinates and allow them an opportunity to share in the overall climate of the building. Although the participants did not believe that they acquired their leadership positions simply because of their gender, they did feel that it was an attribute to them as strong, effective female leaders.

Research question #4. *How does race impact female leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?*

Realizing that one of the challenges of being a leader is overcoming the barriers, the female participants did not believe that they faced barriers due to their race. They

believed that barriers would automatically be associated with being the leader of the building. One of the participants stated that she possibly faced barriers because of her age. Another offered that her race was an attribute, as her students would be able to identify with her.

Subordinates were respectful with the female leaders. When asked to do something, they responded positively. The female leader participants felt that this was due to their title, rather than because of their race or gender. One participant responded that her staff interacted positively and respectfully with her because of her character and how she interacted with them.

It did not appear that race had an impact on the leadership effectiveness of the urban educational leaders. The female leaders stated that they experienced challenges in their roles, simply because of their title. No one reported that their race or gender impacted their leadership effectiveness as leaders in urban educational settings.

According to a study conducted by Blumberg & Greenfield (1980), successful leaders of schools demonstrate the following common characteristics:

1. "A clear sense of mission"

2. "Well-defined goals"

3. "Self Confidence"

4. "A commitment to high standards"

5. "Actively participate" and

6. "Active involvement in the change process"

By consistently incorporating the above five characteristics in daily practice, leaders are demonstrating that they are totally vested in the educational process and

desire a positive culture of change. The leader of the school should be a positive role model for others…staff, students and the community. The female urban educational participants also describe their leadership effectiveness by the importance of setting goals and actively listening to staff, which are two similar components mentioned in Blumberg and Greenfield's study of successful school leaders.

The majority of the female leaders expressed that they believe in goal setting and in accomplishing these goals. They believed that this aided them in being successful as leaders. Shared leadership is another important aspect of their leadership as females. Through this type of leadership, "a feeling of influence and ownership in organizational success" is created by the leader (Leech & Fulton, 2008).

Quite often, females are described as transformational leaders when compared to their male counterparts (Northouse, 2007). This is probably due to transformational leaders being "concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings" (Northouse, 2007). Male leaders are not typically concerned with the feelings or emotions of staff members.

Interestingly, only one of the females defined her leadership style specifically as "transformational," yet several of them described their leadership style as such. They mentioned that they have a shared leadership style, engage in active listening and promote and encourage staff to assume leadership roles. These all reflect some aspect of being a transformational leader. By sharing their power, these females are in essence creating a "sense of covenant" (Leech & Fulton, 2008). Through this sense of covenant, loyalty, reliability and trust are inevitably established.

Transformational leadership reflects a process that takes place between the leader and the followers (Northouse, 2007). The leader is able to build trust and foster collaboration with other people. Staff are celebrated and encouraged to be the best. The female participants all demonstrated aspects of being transformational leaders. As a result of this type of leadership style, others feel good about themselves and about contributing to the greater good (Northouse, 2007).

There is much to be learned from these female educational leaders. Not only can their insight be beneficial to other female leaders in education, but female leaders in corporate America. Males can learn from them as well. Although the study addressed females in urban educational settings, leadership is leadership and can apply to suburban settings as well. The four themes that emerged can be used in any setting and is broadly beneficial.

Perhaps the most important concept to remember is that females are just as strong and intelligent as males. We are able to lead organizations well. We are able to positively contribute to the teaching and learning process and we are able to make a difference in the lives of our students. With the right confidence and support, we are able to make a positive difference in any educational setting. We should no longer be seen as invisible, weak and incapable of leading. We are competent, strong, intelligent, transformational leaders who are capable of leading a successful organization.

As a result of this comparative analysis, the findings reflect that female leaders in urban educational settings, regardless of their race or gender, are effective. The females viewed themselves as successful and effective in their roles as well. Subordinates did not treat them differently because of their race or gender. The participants did not see their

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race or gender as a hindrance in their position. Instead, many saw it as a positive attribute. Just because males and females lead differently, does not mean that one is inferior to the other. Females may elect to adapt their style of leadership to mirror a previous successful male leader with whom they worked. They may also choose to continue to develop as a leader in an effort to assist other future leaders along the way.

Limitations

This qualitative study sought to explore the ways in which race and gender impact the leadership effectiveness of female leaders in urban school districts. There were several limitations in this study. These limitations did not cause problems for the study. They do, however, provide additional information about the scope of the study.

- The first limitation is the fact that all of the participants were from the same urban school district. It would have been beneficial for the research data to contain information from a variety of urban school districts. The data could have been compared to see if depending on the location, city, etc., female educational leaders had different experiences.

- The second limitation is that the pool of participants would have benefited by more diversity. The majority of the participants were African American females. Having greater diversity would have better addressed the questions regarding race and leadership.

- The third limitation is that there were no participants from a high school setting. All participants worked in elementary or middle school settings. Often, experiences differ for the leader depending on the building level.

- A final limitation is that interviews were the only source of data collection. Personal observations of the participants while at work, interacting with other administrators, staff, students and parents, would have offered more detailed information.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the study gave female leaders a voice regarding their leadership effectiveness, there is a need for more studies of this nature to be conducted. There is a rich body of literature which compares female leaders to their male counterparts. However, by looking at female leaders exclusively and their leadership effectiveness, school districts and universities are better able to support the needs of females in their roles.

The majority of the female participants in this study stated that someone they knew professionally (typically their principal when they were classroom teachers) encouraged them to assume more of a leadership role. This encouragement often leads to the participants' desire to seek degrees in Educational Administration and opportunities for leadership positions. Given that finding, it would be beneficial to learn what percentage of females were encouraged by their principals and how they were supported in acquiring administrative positions.

It would also be of research interest to study mentorship programs that assist females in leadership positions. Focus groups could be established as a forum for discussing common issues in leadership, along with issues associated with gender and race.

Finally, female leadership experiences in suburban school districts also deserve to be noted by study. Those experiences could be compared and contrasted to those of females in urban school districts which may serve to deepen our knowledge of the overall strengths and areas of need related among all females in educational leadership positions. Interviews, focus groups and observation could all serve as ways to collect data. An ethnographic case study would provide very useful data. All of this research could better assist universities in developing programs to support females in leadership positions. It may also be beneficial for school districts as they would be able to provide more meaningful mentorship experiences to those in need.

Recommendations for School Districts

In order to promote females in educational leadership roles, school districts should recognize the talents of those females who possess leadership qualities. These females should be given an opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity and assigned a mentor to assist them. Regardless of the gender of the mentor, it should be someone with whom the female leader can relate. This relationship may be crucial to the success of the prospective female leader, and would create an opportunity for the development of a strong support system.

Future female leaders would also benefit from training and networking with a wide array of other experienced leaders. Regularly scheduled meetings that encourage both professional development and personal growth among district administrators may create a comfort zone for new female leaders. This practice may be beneficial for the prospective female leader's strengths, while simultaneously improving her areas of need.

Diversity and inclusiveness are positive attributes to any school district. This message should be a part of the vision and mission of the district. School districts can promote diversity and inclusiveness by being transparent and by regularly engaging in open and honest conversations about diversity. Those in top leadership roles in school districts should frequently assess the leadership potential of all females, and oversee fair and equitable opportunities for promotion within the district. Finally, school districts should review recruitment practices and align themselves with nondiscriminatory practices.

Summary

"Leadership involves influence; it is concerned with how the leader affects followers. Influence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without influence, leadership does not exist" (Northouse, 2007, p.3). A strong, effective leader is crucial to the success of an educational setting. Staff responds well to one who is a visionary, sets goals and accomplishes them and one who seeks to find teacher leaders. This leader should also entrust staff with specific duties in order to maintain a safe environment that is conducive to the teaching and learning process.

The review of literature, research study and results of the data all support females maintaining leadership positions and their leadership effectiveness. Females are just as capable of being strong, effective leaders as their male counterparts. Society has slowly accepted females in these roles. In an ideal environment, females would be supportive of one another. Those in leadership roles should design mentoring programs that will support the needs, ambitions, and strengths of aspiring women in leadership. Universities

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could also support these endeavors by developing programs that address these needs as well.

This comparative analysis sought to compare female leaders in urban educational settings. Specifically, it sought to determine whether or not race and gender had an impact on their leadership effectiveness. As a result of this study, four very important themes emerged. These themes assist females in being effective in their role. The four themes were as follows: (a) Goal setting and Accomplishment,(b) Shared Leadership, (c) Promoting/Encouraging Staff, and (d) Engaging in Active Listening. This is a great way to inform future female urban educational leaders about keys to successful leadership.

Gone are the days in which females are subservient to males or only work in classrooms as teachers. As intelligent agents of change, females are able to serve as effective leaders in any educational setting. It is important for females to encourage other females to consider leadership roles and to assist them on their journey if necessary. Hopefully, greater numbers of females will desire leadership roles and make every effort to pursue them.

Prior to conducting this research study, I believed that my results would reveal challenges for women in educational leadership positions due to their race and gender. While it appears that race and gender has had little impact on leadership effectiveness for the six female leaders who participated in this study and therefore may not be an issue for them, the topic should still be addressed. There are many women who continue to face challenges in their roles. The literature review discussed several of these challenges that women face. Perhaps race and gender were not areas of concern for these participants

because they work in urban educational settings yet, other areas were a concern but were not disclosed during the interview process. It is also possible that the women chose to answer the questions in a way that would not expose any challenges faced due to their race and/or gender in order to avoid controversy in their district. Working in an urban educational setting presents different challenges than those in suburban educational settings.

It is difficult to believe that most, if not all, women do not face some sort of challenge as educational leaders. As a female educational leader in a suburban district, personally, I do believe that my race and gender have some impact on my leadership effectiveness. I have often been reminded that I obtained my position simply because of the fact that I am not only a female, but an African American female.

Having this information prior to beginning my new leadership role, has encouraged me to prepare differently than I may have done, had I not had this information. Realizing that others saw me first as an African American female as opposed to a leader was a bit discouraging. Rather than attempt to address challenges on my own, I became part of a network of other African American female leaders who supported one another through obstacles and barriers.

I would like to believe that districts are seeking the right person for the job…regardless of race or gender. There are certain characteristics that the urban educational leader must possess in order to meet the growing needs of students. The females in this study discussed them. I am hopeful that society is moving into a positive direction of change with regard to female leaders. Not only with regard to female leaders in educational settings, but with minority female leaders in educational settings as well.

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APPENDICES

Cleveland State University

APPROVAL MEMO

July 06, 2015

TO: Professor Brian Harper and Student Larraine Fuller

FROM: John J. Jeziorowski, CSU - IRB

RE: #30286-HAR-HS [Reviewer Govoni Transfer]

Dear Investigators Harper and Fuller:

      I am in receipt of your email (with attachments) of 20150703@0324pm in response to my ACTION MEMO dated June 15 following the preliminary review of your CSU IRB protocol submission #30286-HAR-HS *"A Comparative Analysis of Female Leaders in Urban Educational Settings."* You have now addressed all of the items of interest resulting from the extended review and are hereby approved (EXPEDITED – 7) to commence with your investigation as of this day/date (Monday, July 06, 2015). You will be receiving written confirmation of this approval from the CSU IRB office in the very near future. Both myself and reviewer Govoni want to wish you the very best of luck in your investigative endeavors. It has indeed been both a privilege and a pleasure to be of assistance to you throughout this review process!

Respectfully expressed,
John J. Jeziorowski, Primary Reviewer
CSU IRB Protocol Submission #30286-HAR-HS

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Cleveland State University

Informed Consent

My name is Larraine Fuller and I am a doctoral student at Cleveland State University. I am conducting research, under the instruction of Dr. Fred Hampton and Dr. Brian Harper, at Cleveland State University on female leaders in urban educational settings. The purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which race and gender impact the leadership effectiveness of female leaders in urban school districts. Through this research I hope to gain a better understanding of how female leaders are perceived and the stereotypes associated with being a female leader in an urban educational setting.

I would like to interview you for my research study and ask you some questions. The interview should take anywhere between one to two hours to complete and will be audio recorded. Your name will not appear in the research. A pseudonym for you will appear throughout the study. The audio files that will be created as a result of the audio recording will be stored in Julka Hall room #358.

There are 31 open-ended questions to answer. There are two possible risks associated with this interview. One is that some of the questions may stir up unpleasant or upsetting memories of things that may have happened to you. In the event that this does occur, you can stop answering that question and I will move on to another question. I have the names of several counselors who are available and willing to speak with you if you would like to further discuss your feelings. A second risk is that someone may be able to figure out who you are based on your responses.

Your participation in this research is completely your choice. If, at any time, you want to withdraw from the research, you are free to do so.

**I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may contact Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630. **

Please sign below the following paragraph:

I have read and understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. Additional questions and information can be addressed to Dr. Brian Harper at (216) 687-2000 or b.harper1@csuohio.edu. I may also contact Larraine Fuller at (216) 509-3008 or lfreeman479@gmail.com.

_____ _____
Signature   Date

_____ _____
Printed name   Date

_____ I agree to be audio recorded

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is successful leadership as defined by female leaders in urban school districts?

2. Do leadership experiences differ for women working in urban school districts depending on their race?

3. How does the female gender impact leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

4. How does race impact female leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: What is successful leadership as defined by female leaders in urban school districts?

1. What is your definition of success?

2. How do you define successful leadership?

3. Do you feel that you are a successful leader? What makes you successful?

4. Do you believe that you are referred to (viewed; considered to be) as a successful leader by others?

5. What are your strengths as a leader?

6. In what ways do you encourage others in your district to assume a leadership role?

RESEARCH QUESTION # 2: What are the experiences of female leaders in urban educational settings?

1. Do you face any barriers in your role as an administrator? What are they?

2. How do your subordinates respond to you when asked to do something (given a directive) by you?

3. Do you believe that the "glass ceiling" really exists? How so?   How does this affect you as an educational leader?

4. What leadership stereotypes do you feel exist in your role as a leader?

5. Do you believe that your authority is challenged due to being a Caucasian female in a leadership role? An African American female in a leadership role?

6. Do you feel race played a role in acquiring your position as an educational leader? Why or why not?

7. Do you feel gender played a role in acquiring your position as an educational leader? Why or why not?

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: How does the female gender impact leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

1.   Do you believe that your gender is a desirable attribute in your role as a leader in your district?

2.   Do you believe your level of success as a leader has been impacted by your gender?

3.   What behaviors do you feel one must exhibit to characterize an effective leader?

4.   What leadership style best describes your leadership?

5.   From whom have you adopted this style of leadership?

6.   What is your definition of effective leadership?

7.   Do female leaders lead differently than their male counterparts? Why do you believe this?

8.   Are there many female leaders in your school district? Why do you think this?

RESEARCH QUESTION #4: How does race impact female leadership effectiveness in urban school districts?

1.   Do you believe that your race is a desirable attribute in your role as a leader in your district? Why or why not?

2.   Do you believe your level of success as a leader has been impacted by your race? Why or why not?

3.   Do you believe that your subordinates respond to you the way they do because of your race? Can you give an example?

4.   How do you recognize staff for their accomplishments?

5.   Do you face barriers in your role due to your race? How so?