

THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF THE PROFESSIONAL BLACK WOMAN IN K-12
EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of Black female leaders in administrative roles in K-12 institutions in Texas. It is not known if one's race or gender and the Intersectionality of these two identifying positions determines Black female's trajectories as school principals. The theoretical foundation for this study is rooted in Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory. The following research question will guide this phenomenological study: How do Black female leaders describe their lived experiences as school principals in K-12 school settings and the multiple ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories? A purposive sampling technique will be used to select eight to ten Black female administrators currently in or retired from leadership positions in Texas. Data collection will involve the use of individual in-depth, structured interviews and responses to journal prompts. This study will include policy implications for developing Black female administrators, which may assist educational organizations in the promotion of cultural diversity and culturally sensitive awareness programs.

Keywords: inequities, injustice, inadequate, suppressed, oppression, marginalization, bias, subjected, disproportionate, Intersectionality, Black Female, Black Women, principals, segregation

Chapter 1: The Intersectionality of the Professional Black Woman in K-12 Education Administration

Granting the fact that there has been some acknowledgement of deep inequities in Texas (Mitchell, 2021), data has shown that these injustices disproportionately impact people of color (Vera, 2018). Black Texans have a long heritage in Texas as they have made contributions to its artistic traditions, literature, and music (Dulaney, 2020). Despite their contributions, Black Texans have been subjected to exclusion from the state's educational system, experienced slavery, segregation, and racial prejudice (Dulaney, 2020). In fact, Texas contained some of the most lucrative yet brutal plantations (Rhodes, 2021). There, slave owners forbade the educational development of their slaves and subjected them to heavy work and inadequate food, which equated to a life engulfed in poverty (Gray, 2019).” These inequities parallel to the historical context of Black education as enslaved people were not permitted scholarly progression by virtue of the fact that they were enslaved and their future was not their own (Peters, 2019). Following the emancipation, “schooling for Black children in Texas was mainly provided by Black educators,” and resources were disproportionately distributed by the government to favor schools serving White students (UH Education Research Center, 2020).” Subsequently, the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) desegregation efforts decimated the pool of Black teachers and, thus, the pipeline of Black administrators.

A rich literature base documents the racism and discrimination that Black educators in Texas are subjected to throughout the teacher to administrator pipeline (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Leonard & Daly, 2017; UH Education Research Center, 2020). In fact, Texas is known for their top-ranked public school districts (Background Checks, 2020) yet Black students in Texas are not seeing their identities mirrored in their classrooms, schools, and amongst district leadership

(Modan, 2021). Data collected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) shows that from 2016 to 2022 the percentage of Black administrators increased from 12.45 to 14.64 percent (TEA, 2022). As well, TEA further indicates that from 2016 to 2022 the percentage of Black regular classroom teachers increased from 10% to 11.1%. Despite the increase in racial diversity in Texas's K-12 classrooms, a study conducted by Bailes and Guthery (2020) indicates that the probability and timing for promotions for Black assistant principals in Texas are affected by their gender and race identities. They further pointed out that White principal candidates are 18% more likely to be promoted to principal than equally qualified Black candidates (Bailes and Guthery, 2020).

In recent years, The Texas "60 by 30" Higher Education Plan has strategically planned to diversify the workforce and school systems with traditionally underrepresented populations (THECB 60x30 Strategic Plan, 2018). Although the Texas "60 by 30" is a critical shift for marginalized populations, Black female educators continue to be "systematically delayed" and denied promotion to administration in the Texas K-12 context compared to their White counterparts despite having equivalent qualifications (Schaffhauser, 2020). In 2021, Texas In regards to race and gender in educational leadership, it is theorized that Black women experience opposition in their leadership trajectories in K-12 institutions because of the Education Agency (TEA) confirmed "that out of 5,793 full-time campus principals, 753 or roughly 7% are Black females (TEA, 2021). Therefore, despite the efforts to diversify K-12 educational leadership, the gap seems to remain.

In regards to race and gender in educational leadership, it is theorized that Black women experience opposition in their leadership trajectories in K-12 institutions because of the interlocking inequalities of race, class, and gender (Burton, 2020) Collins' work (as cited in

Moorosi, P., Fuller, K. and Reilly, E., 2018) emphasized the significance of how White feminism was established on its omission of the experiences of Black women. In focusing on the significance of Black feminist thought, Collins affirmed that the distinction should be conceptualized in a method that exposed the essence of intertwining discriminations of gender, race, and socioeconomic class which further implies that Black women are “impacted by a multitude of social justice and human rights issues.” (Coaston, 2019). This study will seek to discover the conscious perceptions of Black female K-12 principals in Texas and the multiple ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories. By highlighting the trajectory experiences of Black women, district administrators and faculty can develop strategies to better support this demographic in the K-12 setting.

This chapter will provide a broad overview of this study, including the background, problem statement, purpose, and research question. Chapter 1 will also explain how this phenomenological study will advance social justice knowledge and provide an explanation of its significance to the field of education. In addition, Chapter 1 will include a rationale of why a phenomenological method with a socially just phenomenological design was the best fit for the research question under investigation. The final sections of this chapter will contain a list of terms and the assumptions, limitations and delimitations of this study.

Statement of the Problem/Issue

Despite the historical 1954 separate but equal school ruling from *Brown v. Board* (*Brown v. Board*, 1954), there was a continuance of school segregation in Texas into the early 1980s (Texas Observer, 2014). The 2021 U.S. Census data, highlights that White individuals in Texas continue to represent the largest racial and ethnic group as they account for 50.1% of the population (United States Census Bureau, 2021) . Although White students are amongst the

largest racial ethnic group in Texas, trends in enrollment data show a decline in White students who are enrolled in Texas public schools (TEA, 2022). In the 2010-2011 school year, White students accounted for 52.2% of the student population (TEA, 2011) whereas in the 2020-2021 school year, White students accounted for 45.9% of the student population which yielded a 6.3% decline (TEA, 2022). This decline equates to an increase in minority students causing a shift in student demographics and diversity (TEA, 2022).

As student demographics are shifting, it is vitally important that the Texas Education Agency ensure that our public school educator demographics closely mirror the shifts and trends in student demographics (Modan, 2021). However, Black educators continue to face the legacy and historical disposition of segregation in schools, as it has led to an extensive shortage of diverse educators (Learning Policy Institute, 2018). An analysis conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), determined that the trajectories of Black female educators are affected, particularly in terms of leadership roles, because White men tend to hold a greater number of school leadership positions than women relative to the proportion of White men in K-12 instructional positions (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Research up to this point has not provided insights as to how Black female administrators in Texas describe their lived experiences as administrators and the diverse ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories.

Purpose of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of Black female administrators in K-12 institutions in Texas. Texas public school districts employ a large number of White educators and district policy makers, which speaks to the potential of unrealized suppression of Black children's equal access to educational opportunities

as other races (Ford & King, 2014; Morris, 2016, as cited in Rocio, 2020). Ford and King (2014, as cited in Rocio, 2020), determined that Black students within educational programs in Texas are marginally represented due to the lack of representation of Black administrators. The lack of Black administrators enables other teachers, decision makers and policy makers to continue to deny Black children access the same educational opportunities as other races (Ford & King, 2014; Morris, 2016 as cited in Rocio, 2020). In this respect, the intersecting identities that Black females administrators is defined as a silent segregation (Lutz, 2017 as cited in Rocio, 2020) that still exists amongst these women in the 21st century (Ford & King, 2014; Lutz, 2017). As Texas school districts are becoming more culturally diverse (Texas Tribune, 2021), researchers should consider the ongoing need for Black and female administrators. Further, the meaningful lived experiences of individuals should not be disregarded in action research.

Research Questions

This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of Black administrators in districts throughout Texas and the multiple ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories. A framework comprising Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory will examine how the intersecting identities of Black women influences their leadership and career trajectory. The research questions guiding this research is:

RQ 1: How do Black female leaders describe their lived experiences in administrative roles in K-12 institutions?

RQ 2: What are the multiple ways Black female leaders' intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Proposed Study

To explore the research questions, a qualitative phenomenological case study research design will be employed to better understand Black females lived experiences in administrative roles in K-12 institutions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Essentially, qualitative research focuses on the experiences and perceptions that have shaped the complexity of a human situation. This method is thematic and will draw conclusions based on identified themes that arise from data collection and analysis. In addition, collecting data from interviews is inductive and will pose questions that are more open-ended and exploratory.

Creswell (2007) suggested that qualitative studies make up an appropriate research design that provides researchers with a method to objectively evaluate and understand dynamics of a concept. According to Chenail (2011), a qualitative approach subjectively explores the phenomenon in a naturalistic way with emphasis placed on inductive reasoning and explained in a descriptive or interpretive manner. Capturing the lived experiences of Black female administrators provides further insight in current literature surrounding how the intersectional identities of Black females shape their leadership trajectories within K-12 school districts. Black administrators account for 14.64% of the total amount of administrators in Texas. Based on this data Ford & King, 2014; Morris, 2016 as cited in Rocio, 2020 have determined that the limited representation for Black scholars in the state of Texas gives room for decision and policy makers to deny them access to the same educational opportunities as other races. Examining all factors affecting the leadership trajectories of Black females will be analyzed. Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory will be considered in this study and how this phenomenon is distinctive for Black women. A qualitative study of the lived experiences of Black women in leadership conducted by Olow (2021) concluded that all participants emphasized the emotional impact of

being a Black female leader in a White-dominant space. Olow's (2021) study results aligned with critical race theory, which places attention directly on impacts of racism and race while still dealing with the White supremacy's hegemonic system on the meritocratic system and putting attention on social justice and change (Bell, 2000 as cited in Olow, 2021).

Coaston, 2019 further attests that Intersectionality derived from the initial debates focused on Critical Race Theory, and became formally coined in Kimberlee Crenshaw's essay entitled "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex." Crenshaw notes that anti-discrimination scholars tend to focus on either race or sexism, but rarely both. In contrast to Olow's (2021) study, this study will explore the lived experiences of Black female administrators and determine how their intersecting identities affected their trajectories. Likewise, another valuable aspect of conducting this study will be to gain insight into the glass ceiling that serves as an invisible barrier that influences Black women's trajectories in their leadership roles (Barnes, 2017; Davis & Maldonado, 2015) By researching the lived experiences of Black female administrators in-depth, this study will contribute to the existing literature on educational leadership and how Intersectionality shapes the leadership trajectories for Black females.

This study will provide additional research and expand the existing literature that explores the lived experiences of Black females in K-12 leadership roles. According to Crenshaw's theory of Intersectionality, Black females are doubly disadvantaged by race and gender bias in the workplace, presenting challenges ranging from barriers to promotion to obstacles in career growth (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Olow, 2021). Although many Black females have overcome these challenges, overall numbers of Black female leaders are still low (Olow, 2021). Further, examining the lived experiences of Black females in administrative roles and the successes and challenges associated with their respective positions may help to inform

other Black females that have career aspirations for educational leadership and provide ongoing support for success. Describing participants' lived experiences can offer insight to organizations, policymakers, and institutions that prepare educational leaders to better address societal factors contributing to the underrepresentation of Black women in K–12 administrative roles.

Definition of Terms

- Black females: This term refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The term Black females in this study refers to women who identify as having a collective racialized experience in the United States based on their African ancestry and gender (Domingue, 2015).
- Colorism or shadeism is defined as the “prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color” and refers to the prejudicial treatment of people based on their skin color within groups of people who share similar ethnicity traits or perceived race (Walker, 2011)
- Explicit bias refers to the negative attitudes and beliefs about a racial group, deliberately formed on a conscious level (Johnson et al., 2017).
- Implicit bias refers to embedded negative stereotypes that automatically associate with a particular group of people. Implicit biases are often inconsistent with conscious beliefs. Implicit bias can affect decisions and behavior toward people of other races and therefore, lead to differential treatment (Johnson et al., 2017).
- Gender inequalities refer to discrimination against women. Although they may have the same qualifications and credentials as male colleagues, females often get paid much less or less room for career advancement Gardner et al. (2014).

- Glass ceiling refers to the invisible ceiling that prevents Black women from advancing beyond a certain rank in an organization or gaining access to leadership roles even when they have the required qualifications, status or credentials (Barnes, 2017; Davis & Maldonado, 2015).
- Internalized oppression is when people who are oppressed in an ongoing manner for a long time, come to believe the stereotypes and myths about their own group that are communicated by the dominant group. They accept and inculcate the negative image of themselves and absorb their subordinate status as being deserved, normal and inevitable (Hegde, 2022).
- Intersectionality: The term Intersectionality describes how social inequality is experienced as an intersection of several forms of discrimination. Intersectionality will be discussed as a theory that impacts the lived experiences of Black female school leaders (Crenshaw, 1991).
- K-12 Administrator: Superintendents, Principals, assistant or vice principals, and other administrators are responsible for the daily functioning and overall success of their schools. They lead elementary and secondary schools by managing teachers and support staff, overseeing budgets and curricula, and more (Bruens, 2020)
- Marginalization occurs when groups of people by virtue of physical or cultural characteristics are identified by members of the dominant culture as different from desired or mainstream expectations. The designation of difference can cause unequal treatment, including discrimination, exclusion, invisibility, and silenced voices for subordinated groups (Delgado et al., 2012).

- Microaggressions are conscious, unconscious, verbal, nonverbal, subtle, and visual forms of insults directed toward people. Microaggressions are a form of everyday suffering that have been socially and systemically normalized and minimized (Delgado et al., 2012).
- Oppression is an interlocking multileveled system that consolidates social power to the benefit of members of privileged groups and is maintained and operationalized on three dimensions: (a) contextual (individual, institutional and social/cultural), (b) conscious and unconscious (intentional and unintentional); and (c) applied (attitudes and behaviors, policies, practices, norms, values, beliefs and customs (Dominelli & Campling, 2002).
- The 60x30 goal refers to the future prosperity of Texas (TEA, 2015). The 60x30TX Plan was designed to ensure that the state of Texas remains competitive and prosperous for scholars that wish to seek better lives for themselves and their families (TEA, 2015).
- White refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).
- White gaze refers to a specific historical practice, socially cohesive and intersubjective the result of White historical forces, values, assumptions, circuits of desire, institutional structures, irrational fears, paranoia, and an assemblage of “knowledge” that configures what appears and the how of that which appears. On this score, the White gaze involves the correlative constitution of a racialized field that normalizes the marking of Black bodies through a relationship of White power (Yancy, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The criteria for this section are to recognize and acknowledge any potential assumptions, limitations and delimitations associated with this study.

Assumptions

There are a few assumptions within this study presumed to be true. These assumptions will be accepted for this study based on the type of research design, phenomenology, which examines lived experiences as they emerge consciously to an individual person (Detmer, 2013).

To further illustrate, the following assumptions will be present in this study:

1. It is assumed that the participants in this study will be honest and truthful about sharing their lived experiences and answering the open-ended questions truthfully. Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio (2019) explain that phenomenology focuses on the uniqueness of a person's experiences, how those experiences are made meaningful, and how these meanings manifest themselves within the context of the person both as an individual and in their many roles.
2. It is assumed that this study accurately reflects Black females and their leadership trajectories within Texas school districts. Zahavi (2021) posited that phenomenology returns us to the experiential phenomena, rather than making do with mere speculations and theories about their nature. This is assumed to be true given that all participants will share commonalities of academic leadership roles at K-12 public educational organizations across Texas school districts.

Limitations and Delimitations

There are a few limitations and delimitations considered for this study. The limitations are details the researcher will have no control over, while the delimitations will be the characteristics the researcher did have the ability to control. The following limitations and delimitations were present in this study:

1. A possible limitation would be that a transferability may not be determined on all Black female administrators of academia in Texas or of the world, due to the potential participants being limited to Texas school districts (Preston & Barnes, 2017 as cited in Rocio 2020). A strategy to address this limitation would be that the researcher meticulously analyze and explore the responses of each participant because their perceptions and experiences will be considered when addressing the research question for this study (Gattis, 2016 as cited in Rocio, 2020). This strategy may assist with the participants' perceptions being applicable to the common experiences of other Black female administrators within academia (Gattis, 2016 as cited in Rocio, 2020).
2. Ross and Zaidi (2019) define limitations as weaknesses within a research design that may influence outcomes and conclusions of the research. Tufford & Newman, year as cited in Bealle-Davis (2017) show that the researcher is an instrument of analysis throughout the development of a qualitative research study. Therefore, personal obtrusions from the researcher during data collection sessions could pose limitations and detriment to the success of any research study. Researcher preferences could include opinions that may misguide participants. As a Black female who is employed by the same district yet am not in a position of leadership, this researcher will refrain from mentioning her own personal biases and experiences during the interview sessions.
3. In order to offer the most accurate information on the Black females' experiences, Preston and Barnes (2017) posited delimitation of our participants to purposeful

sampling. The researcher will use purposeful sampling to only select participants who are Black and hold leadership roles in K-12 educational organizations in Texas school districts. Consequences associated with transferability of the findings would deem untrue given the purposeful sampling of participants which cannot represent all women of all ethnicities, locations or other occupations outside of academia. A strategy to minimize the impact would be that the researcher used a technique called thick rich description which explains the data in a rich and detailed manner.

When using a thick rich description of data collection, readers can find similarities within other environments, other situations or if findings are justifiable, they can be applied or transferred to a different setting (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007 as cited in Rocio, 2020).

4. Another possible delimitation would be an underlying researcher bias. The researcher is also a Black female employed with Texas school districts. Associated consequences of the applicability of the findings would be in favor of Black female leaders' experiences. Semi-structured interviews and probing questions will be developed to allow for viability in exploration of participants perceptions. Bracketing and probing provide opportunities to gather rich deep-rooted data while eliminating biases and obtrusiveness from the interviewer (Bealle-Davis 2017, Moja-Strasser, 2016; Moustakas, 1994)
5. Interposing personal opinions brings confusion to the genuineness of data. Therefore, it will be imperative to utilize probing and bracketing to weaken the

interjection of personal biases during the interview process. Conducting interviews with a flexible approach ensures that participants are not limited in their workplace recollections. (Moja-Strasser, 2016: Moustakas, 1994) If there is a close-minded approach during interview sessions, there is a risk of confining genuine data. (Moja-Strasser, 2016: Moustakas, 1994) Collected data could possibly mirror the perceptions of the interviewer opposed to the authentic perceptions of the participants (Moja-Strasser, 2016: Moustakas, 1994).

6. Potential limitations for this study could be the consistent underrepresentation of Black female school leaders, unavailability of participants, and limited access to resources. The researcher plans to contact family, friends, alumni organizations, and professional organizations to ensure the identification of Black female K-12 administrators as identifying Black women of this caliber may be significantly difficult to achieve. The researcher only plans to select women who work and live in Texas.
7. The lived experiences of Black female administrators living in other states and countries will not be selected for this study; only Texas residents will receive study invites. Other minority females will not be asked to take part in this study. I will not use comparative data of opposing minority female groups. Including other demographic groups may produce valuable data; however, due to time constraints, their inclusion will not be practical for this study.

Summary

Black women experience opposition in their leadership trajectories in K-12 institutions because of their interlocking inequalities of race, class, and gender (Burton, 2020). Black female

leaders in Texas are minorities in Texas public school districts filled with cultural differences and diversity. By employing a qualitative phenomenological study research design, the lived experiences of contemporary Black female administrators will have a platform for sharing the insights and experiences of their trajectories of leadership in K-12 academia.

Willis and Carmichael, 2011 emphasized the importance of a participant's voice being heard and the ability to share their experiences. Chandler, Anstey, & Ross (2015) proposed the principle of qualitative research emphasizes and honors the participants' own words as generative meaning and knowledge. The next chapter will present an exploration of the framework that guided the development of the research methodology. Chapter 2 will also contain a literature review of relevant studies on experiences of Black females in administrative positions in the K-12 educational environment.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter analyzes the literature that addresses the history and background of the challenges Black females encounter throughout their leadership trajectories. The concept of Intersectionality theory is used to frame the context for this study. This literature review surveys scholarly research in the following areas: job specifications of Black women in K-12 administration, challenges Black women face in leadership roles, and the trajectories of Black women in educational leadership.

This chapter further identifies the need, or the gap, found within the existing literature as evidence of how this study adds to the existing body of knowledge on the adversities Black women face as they pursue K-12 educational leadership. The theoretical foundation is identified and discussed within this chapter. Additionally, the problem under investigation within this study correlates to the theory being discussed. This chapter reviews a culmination of literature related to the topic and ends with a summary of the information discussed within.

Literature Search Strategy

This literature review was developed from scholarly sources obtained through the following databases: Munday Library, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Dissertations, and Research Gate. Key search terms included: Black female leaders, gender-based mentoring, Intersectionality, social challenge barriers, glass cliff phenomenon, glass ceiling phenomenon, bias, Black females in educational leadership, Black women in education, mentorship barriers, stereotypes, misogyny, oppression, bias, marginalization. Statistical data and demographic information were obtained through the official websites of the Texas Education Agency and US Census Bureau.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality Theory

Current literature discusses multiple definitions of Intersectionality Theory; however, the most cohesive and comprehensive definition of this theory relating to this study states that “the theoretical source of Intersectionality theory grew out of Black women’s experiences of marginalization and struggle within Western feminism” (Crenshaw, 1989). This reference to origin was established based on the works of Kimberlé Crenshaw and Bell Hooks. Crenshaw (1989) validated the development of Intersectionality in her article, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist critiques of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” The analysis of this text centered on the multidimensionality of Black women’s experiences with single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences. By single-axis analysis, Crenshaw identifies that the tendency of feminist theory views discrimination as a single-axis framework—one that, in other words, conditions us to think about disadvantage playing out as a single identity. The previously mentioned juxtaposition also revealed the theoretical erasure of Black women and further illustrates the limitations that undermine efforts to broaden feminist and antiracist analysis. Additionally, Crenshaw suggests that the single-axis framework of femininity erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification, and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group.

As a scholar and writer on civil rights, critical race theory, Black feminist legal theory, race, racism, and the law, Kimberlé Crenshaw is officially recognized as the author of the theory of Intersectionality (Coaston, 2019). Crenshaw is a distinguished Professor of Law at the

University of California, Los Angeles (Coaston, 2019). Crenshaw's work has been foundational in critical race theory and in "Intersectionality," a term that she coined to describe the double bind of simultaneous racial and gender prejudice (Coaston, 2019). Her studies, writing, and activism have identified key issues in the perpetuation of inequality for Black women (Coaston, 2019).

Intersectionality has become a significant component for analyzing and understanding the experiences of those who do not belong to any majority group. The use of this theory in research is an attempt to provide a conceptual framework for considering multiple sources of oppression in analyzing the experiences of Black women (Grabe, 2020). Intersectionality further outlines how the aspects of a person's gender and race combine to create different modes of unjustified distinctions and privilege (Runyan, 2018). The experiences that Black women in educational leadership experience can be examined to analyze the prevailing conditions that act as barriers to career advancement (Wentworth-Nice, 2021).

The purpose of using Intersectionality theory in this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the ways in which race and gender interact to shape the experiences of Black female administrators in Texas school districts. Whereas there is research detailing the ways race (Olow, 2021) and gender (Rocio, 2020) shape the lived experiences of Black female leaders there is far less research on the ways these two identifying positions interact to shape leadership trajectories of Black female leaders in public schools relating to Critical Race Theory (Olow, 2021). Critical Race Theory informs this study by the ideas that speak to the lived experiences of the Black race in American society. There is additional research that expounds upon the experiences of Black females on their journey to leadership in public school districts (Rocio, 2020). However there has not been a qualitative phenomenological study that details the

leadership trajectories of Black school leaders in Texas. Considering the historical context of the ongoing oppression of Black females in Texas (Edison, 2022), the lived experiences of Black female K-12 administrators and the multiple ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories is a silent segregation that continues to exist amongst these women in contemporary 21st-century (Ford & King, 2014; Lutz, 2017, Rocio, 2020).

Review of Research and Methodological Literature

Many topics consistently appeared upon researching the lived experiences of Black female K-12 administrators and the multiple ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories. This literature review will focus on the roles of Black females in K-12 administration, challenges Black females face in leadership roles, and the trajectories of Black females in educational leadership. The ideas expressed by Showunmi (2021) established evidence of barriers that Black female leaders face because of racial and stereotypical concepts. Thorpe (2019) further emphasized that Black female leaders are perceived through a negative lens because of deep-rooted stereotypes that mirror the historical ramifications of slavery. Greyling and Steyn (2015) and Rocio (2020) further affirmed that such “degrading stereotypes promote lack of ambition and self-esteem, which results in Black female leaders not being well accepted or respected compared to their White and male counterparts.” Greyling & Steyn (2015) & Rocio (2018) drew a parallel between how Black female leaders are discouraged from further advancing in educational leadership because of normative beliefs and lack of acceptance.

Social Challenge Barriers and Traditional Gender Ideologies

It is taxing for Black females to advance into leadership positions because there are generalizations regarding the ideological concept of Black women in leadership (Showunmi, 2021). One generalization from traditional gender beliefs outlines culturally accepted and normative roles for Black females (Jerald, Ward, Moss, Thomas, & Fletcher, 2017). Greyling and Steyn (2015) and Rocio (2018) posited that ideologies prescribed for women were traditionally relegated to the home, child rearing, teaching, displaying modesty in the matter of their accomplishments; and deemphasizing their leadership capabilities. Besides being a minority woman, ethnic stereotypes compound the negative perceptions of Black female leaders (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Thorpe, 2019). It has been further determined by Greyling and Steyn (2015) and Rocio (2018) that negative stereotypes justifies why women and more specifically women of color lack self-esteem, lack ambition, and further resulting in female leaders not being well-accepted.

Stereotype of Black Woman

The “strong Black woman” stereotype psychologically conditions the Black woman into believing that her feelings and emotions as a human being are not valid as her labor and victories are oppressed (Morgan, 2017). A study conducted by Doherty (2020), affirmed how the dominance of Whiteness stereotypes Black women’s emotional state as only angry or strong. Likewise, Elias’s work (as cited in Doharty, 2019) theorized that Black women in academia encounter the essence of Whiteness with the privileged choice of being able to include their emotions and the range of emotions they may possess, i.e. who gets to be “emotional” and, the “spaces” permissible for their emotional expression (Elias, 1978 as cited in Doharty, 2019).

Yancy (2017) further attests that Whites view the Black body with “racial disgust,” which maintains a racial hierarchy of knowledge that accuses Black women of being angry, inherently biased, irrational, or overly subjective. Doherty (2019) argues that Black women in academia are considerate to exclude their heightened emotions during conflict because “racial assumption” is that the Black female needs to be placed under control and needs “White discipline.” Yancy (2017) discovered that silencing the Black voice is fatal for the Black female as the conscious decision of expressing one’s emotions must be strategic for survival.

Colorism and Afrocentric Texture

Ample amounts of Black Americans have grown up recognizing the underlying tones of colloquial expressions like “If you’re White, you’re right, / If you’re yellow, you’re mellow, / If you’re brown, stick around, / If you’re Black, get back” (Maddox & Gray, 2002, as cited in Hall, 2017). Hunter, 2007, as cited in Hall, 2017 showed that despite the progress that Black people have made in contemporary U.S. history, literature shows that colorism remains an ongoing issue. Colorism or shadeism was defined by Alice Walker as the preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color” and refers to the prejudicial treatment of people based on their skin color within groups of people who share similar ethnicity traits or perceived race (Walker, 1983, as cited in Thorn, 2021).

Hannon and DeFina determined that skin-tone bias creates favorable opportunities and preferential treatment for people with lighter skin tones in education and employment (Hannon and DeFina, 2014 as cited in Hall, 2017 & Bagalini, 2020). Likewise, it is further found that an extensive amount of scholarship exhibits that social and economic privileges are awarded to Black individuals with lighter skin because of their phenotypic resemblance to Whites and their

assumed superior social value compared to their more melanated counterparts (Dixon and Telles, 2017). Regarding “melanated” Black women, a “gendered colorism” study conducted by Hall (2017) found that since society rewards those who have Eurocentric features, deeper hued Black women felt unattractive and assume that despite their intelligence, they have nothing to offer society. In consensus with Hall (2017), Dillard (2016) determined that colorism stereotypes combined with ethnic hair textures imposed social standards on Black women.

Challenges of Black Female Leaders

Black female leaders in academia were once Black girls who attended school and experienced stigmas of degrading stereotypes (Rocio, 2021). Minority children are exposed to racial oppression that devalues and disempowers their existence (Priest, Slopen, Woolford, Phillip, Singer, and Kauffman, et al., 2018). These significant barriers of oppression are foretelling of conscious and unconscious behaviors of teachers to young Black girls (Dovidio JF, Gaertner SL, Kawakami K, Hodson G, 2004 as cited in Priest, Slopen, Woolford, Singer, and Kauffman et al., 2018). Stigmatized non-white children and adults experience differential treatment and poorer outcomes in a multitude of settings including: teaching methods and classroom practices, academic expectations and judgement of ability and attainment, school discipline and employment and workplace conditions (Priest, Slopen, Woolford, Singer, and Kauffman et al., 2018).

While current literature reflects the oppressive inequities that Black women have faced as K-12 scholars, their leadership roles are accompanied with tests of internal fortitude as well, some of which remain in the contemporary era of educational leadership (Burton, Cyr, and Weiner, 2020). Studies conducted by Byrd, 2009; King, 1988; Nkomo, 1992; and Parker, 2005 determined that Black female leaders in education have felt that their voices were devalued,

unheard, and overlooked. Neely's 2018 study revealed that as Black women gain leadership advancement in K-12 education, they find that racism and sexism played key roles in their journeys. Morris (as cited in Rocio, 2021) further posited that the repercussions of slavery and segregation are still clear in educational leadership. A study conducted by Howard (2017) further emphasized that Black female leaders are given positions of less significance or they are located in impoverished and minority communities. Additionally, although Black female educators feel moved to lead in K-12 schools, their exposure to oppression encourages an attitude of defeat before she steps foot on the academic leadership ladder (Amour, 2020).

Concrete Ceiling phenomenon.

In contrast to the "glass ceiling" that White women have to break through, Black women have to shatter the "concrete ceiling" (Catalyst, 2018 as cited in Bonsu, 2018). The concrete ceiling, similar to the glass ceiling, is an obstruction for the professional advancement of Black women and unlike glass, concrete is not transparent and is tougher to break through. Rusch (as cited in Thorpe, 2019) posited that Black female leaders face exclusion from district power networks and gender role expectations. A study conducted by Osterheldt (2021) further determined the scars that Black female leaders endure as they shatter their "concrete ceiling." Osterheldt's (2021) expressed the emotional trauma that being "the excellent few" creates. In fact, Rachel Rollins described the anguish of normalizing roles for Black women in leadership positions:

You are the canary in the coal mine for many of these concepts, Rollins says. We don't get the benefit of failing upward as so many others do. We can't be mediocre and stumble into a CEO position or the presidency. We have to be beyond exceptional and even still we are questioned." (Rollins, 2021 as cited in Osterheldt, 2021)

Trajectories of the Black Female Leader

Current literature has determined that Black females' trajectories in predominately White organizations are maintained through merit rather than privilege. Black females must work their way up the leadership ladder and earn higher education credentials to compensate for the lack of mentoring and sponsorship that their White male and female counterparts are privy to (Mayberry, 2018). Consistent with the ongoing diligence that Black female leaders in Mayberry's (2018) study possess, the study further determined that work ethic and assertiveness cultivate the career trajectories for Black female leaders in education as well. Compounding research conducted by Johnson & Fournillier (2021) further investigated the impact of the "strong Black woman" stereotype on Black female leaders' trajectories. The results contended that the qualities of Black female leadership are stereotyped by the racist barriers that society has placed on them.

Glass Cliff

Current literature confirms that progressive bottlenecking remains an obstacle to the pathway to academic leadership for Black women (American Council on Education, 2017). More employers are concentrating on the gap of gender equity in leadership; however, women only account for just over 30 percent of key management roles across all sectors (Edith Cowan University, 2021; Bureau of Statistics, 2018). A study conducted by Bailes & Guthery (2020) found that the first steps to access school leadership roles for women and people of color are the steepest. This unmeasurable plunge shows the "glass cliff phenomenon" which builds on the idea of the "glass ceiling", according to Ryan and Haslam (as cited in Slater, 2020). In contrast, when women ascend to the glass cliff, they've gained leadership positions; however, they proceed into potentially treacherous scenarios that ideally lead to failure (Slater, 2020). Much the same, Ryan and Haslam (as cited in Slater, 2020) explain that women are likely to be placed in positions of

leadership in circumstances of general financial downturn as well as downturn in organizational performance. In this way, such women can be seen to be placed on top of a 'glass cliff' in the sense that their leadership appointments are made in problematic organizational circumstances and hence are more precarious. Similar to Ryan and Haslam, a study conducted at Utah State University by Cook and Glass determined that the glass cliff phenomenon was found prevalent for Black individuals transitioning into positions of leadership (Cook and Glass, 2014 as cited in Slater, 2020). Cook and Glass (2014) detail that minority leaders face challenges that begin at the point of promotion and go beyond underrepresentation; as a result, they are more likely to be appointed to struggling firms, creating greater obstacles to successful leadership than their white male peers. To further illustrate, when Dr. Isabel Geathers was offered a leadership opportunity at an organization, she found intense and problematic interactions between leadership and staff members (Geathers, 2020 as cited in Slater, 2020). Thorpe (2019) confirms that Black female principals are hired for a diversity quota. Usually, Black principals are employed in districts or schools that are impoverished and service mainly Black and Latino scholars (Thorpe, 2019). Thorpe, (2019) further found that Black female principals who serve predominantly White schools are stereotyped and experience bias, leading them to often doubt their abilities and skill set. Thorpe (2019) further confirmed that the "glass ceiling that Black females break through and the "glass cliff" that they embark upon reduces their trajectories to continue their climb of the educational leadership ladder.

Besides deep-rooted assumptions, Motro et al. (2021) examined the "angry Black woman" stereotype as well and showed its effects on how others perceive and react to the angered expressions of Black female leaders. Motro et al. (2021) further determined that Black female anger triggers internalized stereotypes, which ultimately leads to lower performance

evaluations and poorer assessments of leadership capabilities. The impacts of firmly established stereotypes require Black female leaders to show ongoing perseverance in their commitment to excellence (Allen & Lewis, 2016; Moreland, 2018; Mayberry, 2018) as unenlightened assumptions regarding discontentment (Johnson & Fournillier, 2021) compiled with suppressed conceptualizations (Motro et. Al, 2021) suggest that beliefs, systems, and processes limit and control Black females' preparation for (Bailes, L. P., & Guthery, S. 2020) access to (Jackson-Dunn, 2018) attainment of (Bailes, L. P., & Guthery, S. 2020) and incumbency in public school principal positions (LP Bailes, 2020)

Summary

Chapter 2 unpacked the theoretical framework of Intersectionality which charted the path and development for the research method. The literature review connected numerous amounts of resources and background information to examine resemblances more in-depth. Data from previous studies formed the foundation for current research and thoroughly, created the gap for needed research or more studies. There was a need to understand how Intersectionality affects the leadership trajectories of Black females in K-12 leadership. A summarization of studies was fully examined as well as what the researcher thought the need for future research would be. Results as a whole exhibited common themes, such as: racism, sexism, isolation, gender inequalities, unspoken expectations, colorism, glass ceiling, glass cliff, "angry Black woman syndrome, and Black women feeling devalued, unheard, and overlooked. Based upon a culmination of the findings, a determination was created on how these studies individually led up to the research gap. Overall, the studies' recommendations and suggestions proved that there was a need for more research regarding Black female leaders in K-12 educational leadership. There is

a need for further study to determine how Intersectionality affects current Black female leaders trajectories.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain awareness of the lived experiences of Black female leaders in K-12 educational institutions in Texas. This study sought to better understand how Black females intersecting identities of race and gender interact to shape their leadership experiences in K-12 schools. With phenomenology as the research design, this study deeply explored the lived experiences of Black female trajectories in educational leadership. This chapter describes the methodology and methods used to answer the research questions in which this study is based upon. Additionally, the study reviewed the phenomenon under evaluation while collecting relevant data pertaining to the research questions. This chapter also answers why the chosen method and design were the best approaches to answering the questions under investigation. The population and sample sizes were discussed as well as the sources used to collect the data for this study. The trustworthiness of qualitative data is assured through multiple perspectives throughout data collection to ensure data are appropriate. Lastly, this chapter evaluated the management of the data collection procedures along with the steps of the analysis process and the ethical considerations.

Research Questions

This study explored the lived experiences of Black female K-12 administrators and the multiple ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories. As described previously, a framework comprising Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory was used to examine how the intersecting identities of Black women influences their leadership and career trajectory. The research questions guiding this study were:

RQ 1: How do Black female leaders describe their lived experiences in administrative roles in K-12 academia?

RQ 2: What are the multiple ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories?

Purpose and Design of the Proposed Study

To investigate the research questions, a qualitative phenomenological research design was used to better understand the trajectories of Black female leaders in K-12 organizations in Texas (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within research design, phenomenological methodologies are used as opportunities to expound upon or grasp the phenomena based on one's narrative illustration of experience (Patton, 2015 as cited in Olow, 2021). Phenomenological research methods manifested from social scientists and has developed in meaning and application throughout recent decades (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers using phenomenological-based studies often seek to explore the complexities of a situation in context, allowing for investigation of a topic or issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell 2018, as cited in Olow, 2021 further suggests that qualitative studies suffice as an adequate research design providing researchers with a method to objectively evaluate and understand the dynamics of a concept, which in this case provides further insight into the lived experiences of Black female leaders. Qualitative research further provides an opportunity to heighten and amplify the voices of participants and to discover the depths of a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The historical factors regarding Black women and their professional experiences are varied due to their cultural environment, gender discrimination, inequities, microaggressions, and oppression within the workplace (Miles, 2012, as cited in Flowers-Taylor, 2021) Black women often experience racial discrimination from superiors and colleagues, and they are often quiet because of feelings of being out of place, isolated, and marginalized (West, 2015, as cited in Rocio 2020). Black female leadership in K-12 schools is a topic of importance as it signifies obstacles and employment practices that affect Black women in those settings.

Research Population and Sampling Method

The targeted population from which the sample was selected was comprised of Black female administrators that lead in public K-12 schools in Texas. The researcher extended the requisition to Black female administrators via social media platforms. The invitation contained the purpose of the study,

eligibility requirements and the researcher's preferred method of contact. This method allowed for a purposeful sample of Black female leaders who were interested in being considered for participation. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). A study conducted by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also determined that purposeful sampling is used when the investigator desires to gain insight and for that reason must choose a sample from which a significant amount be learned.

The researcher selected eight participants for the sampling frame to provide information-rich data. Participants were selected according to the following: they considered themselves to be Black or African American, be female, and are current administrators in Texas. These standards provided the sample for Black female administrators whose trajectories may have been affected based on their gender, racial, and professional identities.

Instrumentation

Individual Interviews

For this phenomenological study, two instruments for data collection were employed throughout the research process: Semi-structured interviews and journaling. Semi-structured in-depth interviews are commonly used in qualitative research (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). This method of interviews encompasses dialogue between researcher and participant, accompanied by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes and comments (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The method also allows the researcher to collect open-ended data, to explore participant thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular topic and to delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). DeVos et al. (2005) further indicated that the researcher can utilize semi-structured interviews to gain a detailed picture of the participants' beliefs, perceptions or accounts of a particular topic. Therefore, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to collect data from the participants to explore their lived experiences as Black female leaders in K-12 institutions in Texas. The

interviews spoke to the phenomenon of how the various ways race, gender, class, and "colorism" may have shaped the trajectories of Black females in K-12 administrative positions in K-12 school districts in Texas. The interview data provided from each participant recounted their experiences with detailed, in-depth descriptions that only they can provide. The semi-structured interview questions that will help to explore the lived experiences of the participants are as follows:

1. In your opinion, what are the lived experiences of Black female administrators in the K–12 educational setting?

1A: Describe your experiences as a Black female administrator in K–12 educational settings .

1B: How, if any, do you believe your experiences have differed as a Black female compared to your White female counterparts?

1C: How do you feel those differences impact your daily experiences in your administrative role?

Semi-Structured Interview Question 2:

2. What factors contribute to the continued effectiveness of Black females in their principals roles in the K–12 educational settings?

2A: Tell me about some barriers you have experienced, if any, when you began your role as a principal?

2B: Please share any barriers you have experienced, if any, while serving as a school administrator?

2C: Please share any microaggressions you have experienced, if any, and how you deal with them?

Semi-Structured Interview Question 3:

3. To what extent does your organization's culture and espoused values impact the trajectories of Black female administrators?

3A: What barriers, if any, impact your career progression?

3B: What glass ceilings, if any, have you identified that are challenging for other Black women within educational organizations?

3C: What strategies, if any, should organizations employ to support Black females in reducing those barriers?

Journaling

In addition to semi-structured interviews, the researcher also used journaling as an opportunity for Black female school leaders to speak directly to their experiences with Intersectionality and to provide further insight into the research question. According to Bailey (2018), journaling encourages writers to remain mindful and present while keeping perspective. As well, it provides an opportunity for emotional catharsis while supporting emotional stability for a greater sense of confidence and self-identity (Bailey, 2018). The participants in this study were Black women who were working as school leaders during the data collection time frame. The researcher expected that they have potentially experienced situations that could illustrate their experiences with Intersectionality. Using journals from participants provided rich data of value to the research study. In order to capture up-to-date thoughts and experiences of the participants, the researcher created an online journal through Google docs. According to Tenny (2021), researchers should implement over one method of data collection to reexamine their understanding of the research topic or phenomenon. Not only did the journals provide an opportunity for the researcher to determine and analyze supplemental data, but they also caused the participants to engage in their own self-reflection as they captured their own thoughts about Intersectionality and its effects on their administrative trajectories as Black women. The journal prompts that drove this rich data were:

JP1: Can you illustrate a time where you felt that your race, gender, socioeconomic status, or colorism played a part in how colleagues and campus stakeholders treated you? How did it make you feel? Were you able to address it? If so, was the issue remedied?

JP2: What do you believe will open pathways for Black female educators to become and stay school administrators? Have your race and gender played a part in your internal desire to stay the course as a K-12 school administrator?

Data Collection

In order to begin data collection, approval was obtained from the IRB at St. Edward's University. Once this step was completed, the participants received an invitation to participate in the study compiled with an outline of the studies' tentative dates. Besides the outline, the email explained the purpose of the research, as well as the methods and procedures. Participants were informed about the ethics and confidential nature of the study, which protected them and their interests. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, and they each signed a consent form. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the research study at any time.

Interviews

The first method of data collection was semi-structured Zoom interviews. "Zoom is a communications platform that allows users to connect with video, audio, phone, and chat (Zoom, 2022, para.1). Deakin University (n.d.) describes individualized interviews as narrative inquiries as they reveal deeper understanding and provide unique perspectives about a situation. These narrative inquiries often give a voice to marginalized populations whose perspectives are generally unsought (Deakin

University, n.d.). More specifically, Allen (2017) stated that using open-ended interview questions allows researchers to retrieve more options and opinions, giving the data more variation than would be possible with a closed-question or forced-choice survey. The overarching goal of this study was to record the lived experiences of Black female administrators in K-12 educational settings in Texas.

These interviews were performed individually and included a series of ten open-ended questions to address the research questions. Each question was vetted by three experts to validate their accuracy and reliability. Question vetting is reviewing and evaluating question items according to specified criteria intending to detect flaws and to edit them to improve their quality (Wadi, 2012, as cited in Gopalakrishnan & Udayshankar, 2014). The experts selected to vet the semi-structured interview questions were Black female leaders that have all served over 20 years in education. Their professional experiences in education closely mirrored the experiences of the participants. The interviews were recorded using Zoom and were transcribed verbatim. The interview guiding questions were followed closely while considering that probing and follow-up questioning did occur.

As the researcher employed this process, she kept a journal where she could jot down her thoughts after completing the interviews so that she could keep note of personal perceptions and be sure not to inject them into the research. Similar to the researcher not injecting personal perceptions, Fink, 1972 (p. 5-27) determined that epoché refers to the researcher understanding the studied phenomenon with individual assumptions. Likewise, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016 describes epoché as when the researcher withdraws his or her own prejudices and biases to refrain from judgment before analyzing the interview data.

Journaling

The second method of data collection included the participants engaging in the online journaling process. The journaling process was implemented to ensure that the data was triangulated. The online

journals were accessed via Google Docs. Google Docs allows researchers and participants to collaborate on online documents with secure sharing in real-time from any device (Google, 2022). The researcher and participants were the only people who could view the responses. The researcher asked the participants to complete a journal prompt prior to their individualized interview and a journal prompt post interview . Dimitroff, Sliwoski, O'Brien, & Nichols (2016) attests that journaling can provoke the thoughts and emotions of participants to provide comprehensive data. Dimitroff Sliwoski, O'Brien, & Nichols (2016) further concluded that journaling about personal thoughts and feelings develops insight about a specific phenomenon, compassion for self, and awareness. Parallel to Dimitroff Sliwoski, O'Brien, & Nichols (2016), Adams (2013) provides a detailed analysis that journal writing supports cognition organization, helps one articulate intuition, and regulates emotion.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis process allowed the researcher to look for potential patterns that may provide a richer understanding of the phenomenon of Intersectionality and how it affects the trajectories of the Black female K-12 school leader. Therefore, the first step in the data analysis process was organizing and preparing data from the details and themes that were constructed from the interactions between the researcher and the research participants (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This included acquiring a detailed transcription of the semi-structured interviews from Zoom and gathering the written journals from Google docs.

Creswell (2018) determined that the construction of themes becomes validated through the analysis of qualitative data. In connection to Creswell (2018), Kiger and Varpio (2020) determined that thematic analysis of data, allows researchers to study the personal relationships that reveal the voices of the oppressed. The intellectual perception of oppressed individuals is their response to their environment based upon the environmental stimuli (Cherry, 2022). The second step towards data analysis was reading

through the data to obtain a general sense of its overall meaning. The researcher kept in mind that the participants provided their individualized perceptions based on their experiences (Stangor, Jhangiani, & Tarry, 2022). The researcher focused on what the participants were saying and the impression of the overall depth, credibility, and use of the information provided (Creswell, 2018).

The third step in the data analysis procedure was coding. The researcher used concept coding and category development to interconnect categories to synthesize themes. Saldana (2021) attests that cyclical coding filters, highlights, and focuses the pronounced features of phenomenological data for generating themes, concepts, or building a theory. Saldana (2021) further advocates that qualitative codes are essential elements of the research story that when clustered together according to similarity, actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis of their connections. Once the coding process began, a list of topics were generated and then grouped together into categories (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher then abbreviated topics as codes and scribed the codes adjacent to the suitable segments of the text (Nowell et al., 2017). After the abbreviation of topics, an alphabetical list of abbreviations and codes were created. The final step was organizing the data into categories (Nowell et al., 2017).

The fourth step in the data analysis process was developing a description of categories, people, and themes (Creswell, 2018). The themes that emerged through the analysis of data were identified as significant findings of the research study. The Zoom transcripts of this study were color coded by themes. Since this study used a qualitative approach, it allowed for nuanced codes to emerge as data was analyzed. For the final step, the researcher determined how the themes would be represented in correspondence with the research questions (Nowell et al., 2017). This interpretation of data was a combination of information learned from current literature and the study.

Limitations of the Research Design

There were few limitations to this study. One of the most significant limitations was the willingness of the participants in the study during the data collection process. Another limitation was that the results only included Black female leaders who responded and volunteered to take part in the study. The sample size limited some findings that were potentially important in addressing the phenomenon. Without a question, the design of the study, potential researcher's bias, and the data collection process were ancillary limitations as well.

Validation

Documentation from the Texas Education Agency, was used as a part of the initial compilation of the population identified. Additionally, a cross-referenced check of the documentation was performed with the National Center for Education Statistics. The actual findings of Black female administrators in Texas is unknown yet their sum is unparalleled to the fluctuation of Black students enrolled in public schools in Texas. Posting an invitation for potential candidates on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram helped to elicit candidates that work and reside in Texas.

Credibility

The potential threats to the credibility of this study were if a participant were not factual or truthful in their responses. Credibility is defined as the measure of truth and accuracy of the participants' recollections within a qualitative study (Connelly, 2016; Maul, 2015; A. Kretser, 2019). The principle of honesty refers to ensuring that the investigator will provide results with fidelity and as they are (Kretser, 2019).

Dependability

This study aimed for dependable results. Dependability is defined as the solidity or consistency of data so that others can duplicate or reproduce a similar study and retrieve similar findings and conclusions (Korstjens, 2018). Shenton 2004, as cited in Rocio, 2020 established that if a similar study is to be reproduced with the same participants, research methods, and context, there should be replicated findings. Shenton 2004, as cited in Rocio, 2020 confirmed that keeping all documentation of transcripts and audio recordings while having a clear alignment and in-depth description is how researchers establish dependability. Essentially, if dependability is established and applied to another study of the same context, the findings should parallel similar conclusions.

Expected Findings

While my position and biased opinion want to explain the modes of Intersectionality that Black female leaders endure, I fully understand that the data and current literature needs to determine the validity of the hypothesis. I found that current literature exposes how Intersectionality affects the trajectories of Black female administrators in K-12 educational settings. I expected all participants to share their lived truths while navigating a system that is not designed for Black female leaders. Keywords that I heard while analyzing the data were: glass cliff, microaggressions, oppression, and racial and gender bias.

Ethical Issues

The ethical issues regarding this research were the protection of human subjects and the risk to their careers and researcher bias. Rocio (2020) states that researcher bias is an individual's personal interpretation that can lead to an unreliable analysis of the findings. The fact that the researcher is also a Black female administrator conducting a study on the lived experiences of other Black females administrators created researcher bias. The researcher used a bracketing process to eliminate researcher bias. Broomé (year, as cited in Rocio, 2020) determined that bracketing was setting aside one's beliefs in order to theorize a phenomenological attitude of fortitude.

Each participant was adequately informed on the specifics of this research study, which included the utilization of pseudonyms to protect their identities from risks or interference with their careers. Each participant participated voluntarily and was proficient in making an informed decision on the aforementioned consent.

Conflict of Interest Assessment

McNeal (2017) attests that Black female school administrators defy the widely held notion of the deep-rooted ideologies that relate to who and what a school administrator is supposed to be. McNeal (2017) further found that Black female school administrators experience uphill tribulations in earning respect because they are stereotyped by these ideologies and expectations. Black female administrators are often placed in a token status as central office personnel seek to even the playing field or fulfill community-based demand (McNeal, 2017) Ideally, their administrative attributes are ignored and disregarded just so that they can be the one to fill the status quota or to deal with troubled schools (Moore, 2013 as cited in McNeal, 2017). The experience for Black female administrators is complicated as they must stand out and satisfy the requests to meet quantities for gender and racial oppression (Moore, 2013,

as cited in McNeal, 2017). As well, they must play their stereotypical role while functioning under non-stereotypical conditions (Moore, 2013, as cited in McNeal, 2017).

Researcher's Position

The researcher's story began on Bergstrom Military base in Austin, TX. In reflecting on my life as a second generation college student, I think of all the hardships that my parents endured as they paved the way for continued education. Although times were tough, my parents continued their education as my father completed his Master's degree in Ministry from St. Edward's University, and my mother completed her Bachelor's of Science degree from St. Edward's University and her Medical degree from the University of Texas. In every facet of life, I was encouraged to continue my education. After twenty years of teaching in the classroom, I decided it was time to return to school to focus on school administration. I followed my parents' legacy by completing my Doctorate of Educational Leadership from St. Edward's as well. In the K-12 public sector that I am employed, I am the only Black female and Black female administrator. My calling is to explain the narrative of Black female administrators in K-12 education and provide gateways for up-and-coming generations of Black educated females to achieve administrative positions in K-12 education.

Ethical Issues in the Proposed Study

Considering that this study will involve people who will take part and contribute to the understanding of lived experiences of Black females in K-12 administrative roles, safeguards will protect the participants' rights. Creswell 2018, as cited in Olow, 2021 explained potential ethical issues that may surface during the study and how to avoid those conceivable issues from happening. Therefore the researcher plans to protect the participants' rights by getting approval for the research design from the IRB, getting signed and written consent from the participants

prior to them taking part in the study, and using pseudonyms to protect identities. Further, participants will all be over the age of 18 and will be informed of the research process throughout the duration of the study.

Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter discussed the population and sample selection and the research question that best examined the phenomenon under investigation: How does Intersectionality affect the trajectories of Black female leaders in K-12 educational settings? Credibility regarding reliability and validity were discussed as well as ethical considerations for this study were determined. Potential limitations and delimitations were taken into consideration. As this study moves further, Chapter 4 will introduce the data analysis process and an examination of results. Chapter 4 will also describe the knowledge gathered from the narratives of each participant. Concurrently, Chapter 4 will detail the data collected from the participants' description of their lived experiences.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black female school leaders as they related to the construct of Intersectionality. The goal of this study was to illustrate the barriers that Intersectionality presents for Black female school leaders. This chapter presents a narrative description of the participants. Findings are an analysis of the participants' lived experiences and perceptions revealed through individual interviews, participants' journaling, and a review and analysis of relevant documents. This chapter concludes with a summary.

Data collection procedures included gaining approval from St. Edward's IRB and obtaining signatures of consent from each of the participants. Each participant was informed that their participation in the research was confidential and voluntary. The interviewer conducted semi-structured interviews with participants and collected responses to journal prompts from each participant. The researcher analyzed the participant's data by using the data analysis process as outlined in the data analysis procedures. This included rereading the data while coding and searching for themes. This process provided the researcher with answers to the following research questions:

RQ 1: How do Black female leaders describe their lived experiences in administrative roles in K-12 institutions?

RQ 2: What are the multiple ways Black female leaders' intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories?

Description of the Sample

The participants were sought out through purposful sampling, in that each participant had to meet the study’s requirements of being a Black female who served in an administrative capacity in a K-12 public educational setting. These requirements provided the researcher with participants whose lived-experience of the phenomenon and professional and social identities correlated with the needs of the study. Participants were from several different regions in the state of Texas. These regions included the Upper Gulf Coast, North Texas, East Texas, and Central Texas. The researcher wanted to gather an extensive range of experiences from varied regions with the expectation that Black female leaders would encounter diverse experiences based on where they lived and served. Each participant completed a demographic profile and the following variables were reported: years of service, geographical region, and administrative title. See Table 1.

| Table 1 | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|---|
| Participation Code | Geographical Region | Years of Service | Position in Leadership |
| P1 | Upper Gulf Coast | 22 | Principal |
| P2 | North Texas | 12 | High School Assistant Principal |
| P3 | East Texas | 30 | Elementary Principal |
| P4 | Upper Gulf Coast | 18 | School Assistant Superintendent |
| P5 | Central Texas | 15 | Senior Manager Curriculum and Instruction |
| P6 | Upper Gulf Coast | 15 | Special Education Coordinator |
| | | Average= 18.66 | |

A considerable amount of the experiences shared were sensitive, therefore pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure confidentiality; this included their names and other identifying information. During one of the interviews, one participant expressed concern about revealing her identity based on her unique experiences. Therefore, it was imperative that the researcher made the participants comfortable while sharing their experiences so that their narration would be transparent and fluid in context.

The researcher created a table that loosely identifies each participant, to include several pieces of information (see Table 2). In addition to pseudonym and position, the researcher included years of experience, marital status, geographical region, and highest degree earned.

| <i>Pseudonym</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>Years of Experience</i> | <i>Highest Degree Earned</i> | <i>Geographical Region</i> | <i>Marital Status</i> |
|------------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Haylee | Principal | 22 | Doctorate | Upper Gulf Coast | Married |
| Keisha | High School Assistant Principal | 12 | Doctorate | North Texas | Married |
| Michelle | Elementary Principal | 30 | Master's | East Texas | Married |
| Reese | School Assistant Superintendent | 18 | Doctorate | Upper Gulf Coast | Married |
| Chloe | Senior Manager Curriculum and Instruction | 15 | Master's | Central Texas | Married |
| Hannah | Special Education Coordinator | 15 | Doctorate | Upper Gulf Coast | Married |
| | | 112 total years of service | 66% Doctorate | 50% Upper Gulf Coast | 100% Married |

There were four participants with Doctoral degrees and two with Master's degrees. Majority of the participants hold a Doctorate degree. Acknowledging the educational attainment of the participants describes their professional credibility and level of expertise in their field. The participants' years of experience were valuable so that the reader could understand how some have learned to navigate their career trajectories despite the barriers they may have faced. The administrators' work experience in education varied from 12-30 years of experience, where the average equated to 18.66. The researcher would also like to note that collectively, the participants bring 112 years of service and experience to the study.

Although identities remained confidential, the researcher chose to disclose the participants marital status to give the reader a comprehensive depiction of the participants. The chart also includes the regions that the participants are from as well as the highest degree obtained. The researcher chose to include their regional location as their direct location could possibly provide an association based on what was reported.

Data Analysis

After the participants' interviews were recorded and journals were written, the researcher organized and prepared data from the details and themes that were constructed from the interactions between the researcher and the research participants (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This included acquiring and analyzing a detailed transcription of the semi-structured interviews from Zoom and gathering the written journals from Google docs. As the meaning of the collected data was ascribed, the construction of themes were validated (Cresswell, 2018). In the second step of the data analysis process, the researcher focused on the overall depth of the participants' narratives (Cresswell, 2018). The researcher thoroughly read through the data to grasp the significance of the information provided, while being mindful that the participants provided their authentic perceptions. The third step in the data analysis procedure was coding.

The researcher used concept coding and category development to interconnect categories to synthesize themes. Once the coding process began, a list of topics were generated and then grouped together into categories (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher then abbreviated topics as codes and scribed the codes adjacent to the suitable segments of the text (Nowell et al., 2017). After the abbreviation of topics, an alphabetical list of abbreviations and codes were created. The final step was organizing the data into categories (Nowell et al., 2017).

The fourth step in the data analysis process was developing a description of categories, people, and themes (Creswell, 2018). The themes that emerged through the analysis of data were identified as significant findings of the research study. The Zoom transcripts of this study were color coded by themes. Since this study used a qualitative approach, it allowed for nuanced codes to emerge as data was analyzed. For the final step, the researcher determined how the themes would be represented in correspondence with the research questions (Nowell et al., 2017). This interpretation of data was a combination of information learned from current literature and the study.

Practical Application of Findings

This section culminated in the individual interview responses of six Black female administrators. This section also introduces the results of the theories that evolved from the lived experience as a whole. The research process began with the semi-structured interviews which were completed by Zoom conferencing. Each of the interviews was transcribed by Zoom. Each participant was provided the opportunity to review her transcribed interview for accuracy and member checking.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher implemented the Find method in Google Docs to analyze the data. First, the researcher input all of the transcribed interviews into Google docs. After the interviews were added to the system, the researcher began to reread and review the transcribed interviews looking for themes and commonalities amongst the participants. In order to fully grasp the participants' portrayals of their lived experiences, the researcher reread the interviews multiple times.

The researcher was able to facilitate the coding of data and clustering of statements into themes and subthemes based on paralleling statements from participants.

The participants' journal responses were analyzed by the researcher. There were two journal prompts. The journals provided an opportunity for the researcher to analyze supplemental data. Additionally, the researcher wanted the participants to engage in their own self-reflection as they captured their independent thoughts about Intersectionality and its effects on their administrative trajectories as Black women. Along with self reflection, the researcher wanted to provoke thoughts of situations where participants got the impression that if they were White or male those situations would have a different outcome.

Theme Development

After clustering paralleled phrases that were phenomenological in context, the researcher then created themes that were existential and phenomenological in context (see Table 3).

Table 3.

| <i>Theme Number</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Silence in times of Injustice |
| 2 | Having to prove oneself |
| 3 | Blatant Disregard |
| 4 | Lowered Morale |
| 5 | Trajectory Obstruction |

The descriptive titles of the themes as shown above in Table 6 consisted of: (1) Silence in times of Injustice, (2) Having to prove oneself, (3) Blatant Disregard, (4) Lowered Morale, (5) Trajectory Obstruction. The themes are addressed below along with the research questions to which they correlate. They are also addressed with the sub themes that were developed out of the

information gathered from the transcripts of the participants' interviews and journal prompt responses.

Silence in times of Injustice. For Participants, the lived experience of Black female leaders in K-12 academia consisted of many attributes that culminated as a whole. The following general structure addresses the research question: How do Black female leaders describe their lived experiences in administrative roles in K-12 institutions? As an administrator, participants noticed that there are unspoken codes when White teachers and White administrators discuss Black students. These students are referred to "those outside of the neighborhood" or "those on the other side of the tracks."

"It's been a struggle as the only Black female administrator because it's hard for me to see the way some of the Black kids are treated. They'll talk about the kids from the other side, and I know what that means. They're not saying it, but I know what it means. So I'm always having to tell people you know it doesn't matter so let's not go there."

This attitude of differentiated treatments towards Black students lead to a felt-sense of silence for Black female administrators in the face of injustice. Participants battled with speaking up for Black and minority students for the sake of avoiding confrontation. Participants encountered being treated with kindness by colleagues and other staff members while cringing at the sight of microaggressive and racially motivated acts towards Black students. Participants feel that they fight an intrinsic war of advocating for Black students and feeling responsible for every Black child on their campus.

“It’s unfortunate that systemic oppression and the corruption of our school districts has caused our Black students to not have a teacher or an administrator that looks like them. We are the true pioneers for our students. I feel a sense of obligation to Black students. If not me, then who? There seems to be an unspoken rule and expectation that Black administrators have the magic to address concerns and alleviate trauma for Black students and Black families.” (Participant 2)

Participants encountered an emotional weight because of their awareness of the mistreatment of Black students. They further found that helping them navigate being Black in a world fueled with racism and sexism encouraged them to lead campuses where they can bring about change in the face of injustice.

“It was reported to me that one of our teachers told a Black student that they will only amount to a high school dropout and sell drugs. After a full investigation, they weren’t reprimanded until the end of the school year. It infuriated me to know that some educators kill the dreams of Black and Brown students.” (Participant 5)

Participants found that other Black female administrators in the same organization felt intimidated and threatened by their presence. Instead of reaching out and being supportive, they used their platforms for character assassination. Considering the heavy workload that leaders are contended with, participants found it easier to keep silent about their issue and muster through their distress.

“I once overheard a Hispanic male colleague describe how he wanted to eliminate all of the Black female leaders in our district. He further went on to say that since our student population is majority Hispanic, our administration and leadership team should mirror

them as well. I remember the angst I felt in overhearing this attitude of injustice, but I knew that I had to select my battles wisely. Therefore, I chose to stay silent despite my burning desire to go off.” (Participant 3)

“I was told this year that they just want me to do the work, but not be up front about who did it. I’m responsible for doing the work, but I’m supposed to give them the credit.

When I asked for an explanation, they stated that I needed to get the work done because it’s part of my other duties assigned. They further told me that whenever I am asked about my other duties assigned, I need to give credit to the other administrators but not necessarily to myself.” (Participant 6)

Table 4 provides more empirical examples of participants’ direct quotes related to silence in times of injustice:

Table 4.

| <i>Table 4. Participants’ Comments on Silence in Times of Injustice</i> | |
|---|---|
| Participant Code | Empirical Examples of Expression |
| P1 | “The way our Black students are treated wouldn’t be so alarming to me if I were a different race.” |
| P2 | “If I were a White administrator and saw Black students being mistreated, it would be business as usual.” |
| P3 | “Black students with disabilities are sent to behavior centers instead of receiving the accommodated supports that they need in the classrooms.” |
| P4 | “Other administrators refuse to work with Black students. They refer “those students” to me because they feel that we have a greater association because of our racial identities.” |

Table 4. Participants' Comments on Silence in Times of Injustice

| Participant Code | Empirical Examples of Expression |
|------------------|---|
| P5 | “When I question why our Black special needs students are being put in General Ed and placed in the back of the class with an iPad and I receive push back from the other administrators and the teacher, I feel like its me against the district.” |
| P6 | “I’ll never fail to recollect when a White administrator asked me, ‘How do you handle them?’ In my mind I told him that Black students aren’t to be ‘handled,’ but I just walked away to avoid confrontation. |

Having to prove oneself. The next important theme that emerged from this study was the participants' innate battle to repetitively have to prove themselves as an instructional leader on campuses. The following synthesis addresses the research question: How do Black female leaders describe their lived experiences in administrative roles in K-12 institutions? The participants described how their abilities, credentials, recommendations, thoughts, and ideas were frequently questioned. The participants described how they were not trusted enough by their colleagues to perform their duties as leaders. This continuous scrutiny in multiple situations led to a repetitive cycle of participants having to prove their capabilities of being an educational leader.

“I’ll never forget the day when an administrator was called to a classroom because of an irate student. When I arrived as the ‘administrator on duty,’ the teacher’s assistant yelled across the classroom ‘oh no, we need a more aggressive administrator!’ As I pulled the student out of the classroom, the teacher’s assistant proceeded to follow me and the student to see if I was ‘handling the situation accordingly.’ I explained to her that I can

handle the student and that I need you to stay in the classroom to monitor the others. I find myself having to prove my authority with certain teachers on campus because I do not look like them and I happen to be the only female administrator on campus.”

(Participant 6)

Table 5 provides more empirical evidence of participants’ accounts in relation to this theme:

Table 5.

| <i>Participants’ Comments on having to Prove Oneself</i> | |
|--|---|
| Participant Code | Empirical Examples of Expression |
| P1 | “No one ever questioned the decisions of our Superintendent because they assumed that he was a White male. The reality was that he was a fair skinned Black man with silky hair who never validated his identity. As a Black female leader, my decisions and ideations are always challenged and questioned.” |
| P2 | “The Black parents and Black community stakeholders question my qualifications and devalue my authority. I find it sad that I find myself bending over backwards to prove to them that I’m qualified.” |
| P3 | “In a predominantly White district, I was never given an opportunity to interview for a leadership position. I had to transition to a rural, title 1 school district before I had a fighting chance.” |
| P4 | “As a Black female, I find that other colleagues believe that you only fit into a low socioeconomic school or a school that needs behavior assistance. Having to prove my ability as a strong educational leader has been an uphill battle.” |
| P5 | “Once I secured my seat at the leadership table, I found that I must prove myself to be smart everyday.” |
| P6 | “ Since Black women rarely occupy leadership roles in K–12, there is a constant need to prove yourself over and over.” |

Blatant Disregard. The next prevalent theme that emerged from this study was the participants' blatant disregard of their intelligence, wisdom, and expertise. The following analysis of data speaks to the research question: How do Black female leaders describe their lived experiences in administrative roles in K-12 institutions? The participants felt that regardless of their leadership experience and their reliability for decision-making and solutions, none of those positive attributes were of importance because her abilities were completely disregarded and ignored. This sense of being ignored was prevalent as other colleagues were reluctant to take heed to their leadership skills .

“There was a student. We had a guest speaker, so only our eleventh and twelve graders were able to go to the auditorium to hear the guest speakers. Our auditorium has steps right in front of it, and there was a student just sitting on the stairs by himself. I'm like, what are you doing? Why are you sitting right here? He said that he's not classified as a senior yet, so he couldn't go in the Senior Assembly. But all the kids in his class were seniors, so he had nowhere to go. His teacher was in the auditorium, so there was nowhere for him to go. I was like, Well, okay, I get it. Even though he's off a cohort, we're gonna catch up. He's gonna graduate this year, it's gonna happen! But I was just like, okay. If someone already told you that you can't go, in my head, I'm not gonna, you know, throw my weight around and say, forget what that person said going in there. I'm not going to do that. So I said, Okay, sweetie. I'm always cracking jokes with the kids. I said, I don't want you to just sit here look like no one looking like no one loves you. Just go in my office. Go have a seat in an actual chair, because he's sitting on the floor. Um! A few minutes later my associate principal came back with the student, and she was like, ‘He just needs to sit right there

and just wait for the bell.' I told her that I sent him to the office because he's just in there on the floor, and she was like, Oh, I didn't know you sent him there. Well, I'll just have him stay back on the stairs. Two teachers were right there, and they were just like, 'Huh!' Because it didn't make sense. Okay, he can't sit in the assembly if we just absolutely can't have him sitting in the assembly. Does he still have to sit on the floor? That rubbed me the wrong way. But you know that one person that has a tendency of overstepping their boundaries with everybody? Whether it's intentional or not, I don't know, but it happens, and it's one of those situations where quite frankly, I just feel like I don't care anymore, like I really don't have fight in me anymore."

Lowered Morale. The next pivotal theme that emerged from this study was the participants' innate battle to repetitively deal with lowered morale on campuses. The following synthesis addresses the research question: What are the multiple ways their intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories? Participants determined that acquiring an administrative position in K-12 was tough to achieve. Yet they found that their real challenge was they face discrimination from all sides.

"As our campus principal, I recall having to ask my assistant principal who happens to be a Black male, to lead conversations with district higher ups, because I knew that my voice wouldn't be heard and the result would be that our students would lose out on opportunities." (Participant 3)

"During a mentoring session with a Black female teacher, I was told that my long braids were 'unprofessional' for an administrator." (Participant 2)

Participants feel that they are expected to tailor who they are and how they express themselves because of their White and male dominated society. Being indirectly coached on how to act and

present themselves, participants feel that they've been unfairly labeled as too difficult to work with or too aggressive. These Participants feel like they lost interest in going the extra mile for the campus.

“I attended a meeting with our Special Education teacher and our Special Education district leader who both happen to be White females. As I explained to the district leader that our special education department is in need of assistance because of several occurrences that our campus was not qualified to address, I was then told that the district did not have the means to help “all students,” and we would have to figure it out at the campus level. As I continued to advocate for our special education department, the district leader talked over me and turned to my special education teacher and asked her to ‘reason with me.’ I couldn’t help but wonder had I been White or male, would I have been deemed as unreasonable. (Participant 4)

“I manage the supervisor (a Black female) of Reading Academies for our district. The supervisor has a team of about nine women who all happen to be Black, and I'm their senior manager. The Reading Academies team also has twenty-five implementation coaches which happens to be a racial and gender mixed group. I've had to be very stern with the group about meeting deadlines and ensuring that our productivity is exceptional. Last year, they made sure that we both received something for Boss's day but this year they made sure to give the supervisor that I manage something but nobody gave me anything. This is the context of how our ‘culture’ treats us. There's just so much to do, and I've just decided that you have to choose your battles here because it can be a very toxic environment. The lowered morale creates days where I don't want to be here.” (Participant 2)

Participants further found that their morale is lowered and they are poorly motivated when they witness accommodations being given for other administrators and not them. Their experience is that they are expected to take the brunt of the work and just to deal with it because it's their job and they don't have any other option.

“There's other women, White women, particularly, that are on the leadership, and they are whenever something gets too hard, they'll start crying. If they can't handle it, then they can cry, and then they don't have to do the job. Well, I had a day where I was so angry, I was so frustrated, and I was so tired. The day where a tear fell from my eye. Their response to me was, get yourself together because the work needs to be done.”

(Participant 6)

Trajectory Obstruction . The next significant theme that emerged from this study was the onset of trajectory obstruction. The following data analysis addresses the research question: What are the multiple ways that Black female leader’s intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories? When participants initially transitioned into leadership, they felt that the looming attitude regarding Black female leaders is that they can save the world. Participants are finding that school districts have embraced systemic changes that negatively affect Black and minority students. Participants further discovered that their desire

See Table 6

Table 6.

| <i>Participants Comments on Trajectory Obstruction</i> | |
|--|--|
| Participant Code | Empirical Examples of Expression |
| P1 | “I would stay in education longer, or stay as an administrator if I felt like the black kids had a fair shot.” |
| P2 | “When i'm at a football game, or on volleyball duty, the parents are not warm and friendly towards me.” if I had more, you know parents who were: more friendly and inviting and just accepting, I might, you know, consider staying a little bit longer, but I just don't feel I still feel like an outsider here. This is my third year, at which point and I still don't feel like I've assimilated.” |

Participants Comments on Trajectory Obstruction

| Participant Code | Empirical Examples of Expression |
|------------------|--|
| P3 | <p>“It’s really hard to come to work some days because my work environment is toxic, and it's emotionally draining, because all the crap I got to deal with, and that's just the interpersonal relational side. It's not the work like I just got to get something done, and like the actual administration.”</p> |
| P4 | <p>“My entire life I have been looked at as someone who is very professional, demure, and poised. I've even been called "classy", which I hate. I've been compared to Black women such as Michelle Obama, Beyonce, Dianne Carroll, and Lena Horne. While these are meant to be compliments, I can't help but feel that I'm being placed on a pedestal above other Black women. Once, someone actually said to me, "oh, you're one of the good ones". Being a young professional, I knew what it meant, but I had no idea how to address it. I knew that it was being meant as a way to say that I'm an "acceptable Black" and not like the other, less desirables. Hearing that from another Black woman was shocking to me. That's when I learned how normalized colorism is within the Black community. I stared at her and just said "hmmm" and walked away. I felt disgusted.”</p> |
| P5 | <p>“My school has been open for 20 years, I am the 1st Black female administrator.”</p> |
| P6 | <p>There was a time when I felt that my race and gender played a part in how my colleagues treated me. I was one of two of the only black female administrators on a predominantly white male dominated administrative team. I remember times where I and the other black female administrators felt ostracized in major campus level decision making. We would not be informed by administrative meetings etc... I felt like I wasn't a part of the team. I felt excluded. I did address it by asking the Head Administrator the reason I was not included but he would give excuses everytime. I served in the position for 3 years and left after the 3rd year. The Lord opened up other doors of opportunities for me.</p> |

Participants described the unequal opportunities that Black students face. They have seen where district policies have left Black students with less access to high-quality curriculum, insignificant science labs, outdated technology; large class sizes; and fewer qualified and experienced teachers. They gave detail to how they’ve seen uneducated and low-income Black youth

continue to fall victim to the criminal justice system. They further attest that they've purposefully selected education as a career choice because of their desire to help Black students overcome their barriers and excel.

“The whole purpose of me transitioning from law enforcement to education was to help stop our children from going through the revolving door of the criminal justice system. I feel like I can reach them within educational organizations, or, you know, working in education.” (Participant 6)

Limitations of the Study

As with any research study, this investigation includes some limitations. Limitations of a study are factors that could influence the results of the study and affect the generalizability of the findings. There were several limitations to this study. School leaders are the individuals responsible for leading instruction in school buildings and as a result, they are very busy during the school year. There were times when a few of the participants became unavailable for scheduled interviews because of job interruptions. The researcher tried her best to avoid potential interruptions by scheduling interviews outside of the school day; however, some emergencies occurred and adjustments were made as necessary. The researcher went into this study knowing that she had to be prepared for this and embed flexibility within her research time frames and schedules. Additional limitations of the study were:

- The researcher has been an educator since 2004. She first became a school leader in 2022. She served as an assistant principal during the time that she conducted this research. It became vitally necessary that the researcher bracket out her thoughts through journaling during the entire process and it was not easy; however, she managed to maintain my biases and refrained from injecting them into the research.
- This research was conducted with participants from different areas across the country. An additional limitation could be that had the research occurred within one specific school district, the findings and

outcomes may have been completely different because the conditions that the school leaders work in could be more favorable or less favorable in terms of them being Black and female.

- Findings may not be transferrable or generalized to all double minorities, i.e. Hispanic women, Asian women, etc. because different races and cultures are regarded differently and each have different stereotypes.
- Some of the participants may have not told the entire truth or embellished some of their responses for the purposes of the study.

Summary

Chloe's quote represents the essence of this research when she said, “Why does it appear that being a strong Black woman means that I can do more or do something better than anyone else? I’m so tired of the strong Black woman trophy. It begins to wear down on you!” In terms of exploring the lived experiences of Black female school leaders, this chapter offered descriptions of participants, presented the results of the data analyses, and identified the themes that were revealed. The participants’ answers were tied into the research questions for organization and association purposes. It is important for the reader to comprehend the data in terms of the guiding research questions. As the researcher completed data analyses of the data collected from individual interviews and the journal responses, she arranged the findings and coded the answers which resulted in five themes being identified. Deeper insight of the participants experiences unfolded. They explained feeling the need to prove their credibility and hard earned right to be in their positions. They recounted the sense of having to work harder than their non-Black and non-female counterparts to establish their capabilities. Being in their role made them highly aware of the stereotypes assigned to them because they are Black and female.

Chapter Five presents a summary and discussions of the results, discussion of the results in relation to the Literature, implications and limitations to the study, recommendations for future research, and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of Black female leaders in K-12 educational institutions. Particularly, the goal of this study was to illustrate the barriers that Intersectionality presents for Black female school leaders. The study involved a sample of 6 Black female school leaders serving in varied Texas regions. The participants were employed as educational leaders who oversaw teachers and staff. This chapter presents a discussion of findings, a discussion of the results in relation to the literature, implications of the results for practice, and recommendations for further research. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

Discussion of the Results

Two research questions guided this research. RQ 1: How do Black female leaders describe their lived experiences in administrative roles in K-12 institutions? RQ 2: What are the multiple ways Black female leaders' intersectional identities shape their leadership trajectories? In order to answer these questions, two types of data were analyzed. Through reading the transcripts of the interviews and reviewing the answers to the journal prompts, the researcher perceived that the participants reported unfavorable experiences as Black female school leaders. Five themes were revealed and from those themes, several subthemes were identified as well. The five identified themes suggest the following: (1) The clear message to Black women has been to shut up and suffer in silence. Black women's silence in educational leadership has empowered inequality for themselves and Black children. Black women have stayed silent in times of injustice in fear of

repercussions against them. (2) Having to prove oneself after obtaining degrees and licensures that distinguish Black women as educational leadership experts, they continue to feel that they have to prove themselves to others. Their Intersectionality seemingly negates their knowledge and causes their colleagues and peers to question their decisions despite their titles. (3) Black female school leaders employ several effective leadership strategies when making decisions to ensure that their thoughts and ideations are not disregarded. The conscious and calculated steps they take when making decisions ensures that those decisions will not be ignored or overturned. (4) Black female school leaders continue to endure lowered morale in their positions as they face uphill battles in tearing down years of negative connotations regarding their race and gender. (5) Black female leaders continue to lead educational campuses while feeling like their thoughts, ideas, and decisions are taken for granted causing them to question the length of their trajectory. They remain as instructional leaders because of their goal to support Black youth in underserved and disadvantaged schools. Despite their desire to pay it forward, the obstructions that they face cause them to want to leave the professional altogether.

The most significant theme that emerged from the research is that Black female administrators are exhausted with having to prove their value as instructional leaders. They expressed that they are not given the paralleled respect that is automatically extended to other staff members who happen to be White and/or male. The idea of having to exert energies to protect their hard-earned positions has indirectly caused an abundance of work for them. They further feel that they are not seen as trustworthy and reliable; which has lowered their overall morale and is an obstruction to their trajectories as school leaders.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

This phenomenological study on the experiences of Black female school leaders was guided by two research questions. The questions sought to better understand how Black females intersecting identities of race and gender interact to shape their leadership experiences in K-12 schools. The study's results yielded findings that go beyond conjecture and actually provide valuable insight into what they do each day. The discussion section provides answers to the research questions in relation to the theoretical literature in which this study was grounded.

Discussion Related to the Literature Review

The theoretical findings within this research linked Chapters Two and Four. The foundational framework for this research was grounded in Crenshaw's (1989) theory of Intersectionality. This section will provide insight on how Crenshaw's (1989) theory illuminates the findings of this research.

Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory embodies a multitude of oppressions. It is important to note that Black female school leaders elevate beyond the limitations they face each day. Working in biased contexts for Black females can be complex depending on whom she is interacting with. Krivkovich et al. (2022) and Wingfield (2020) determined that both racism and sexism adversely affect Black women through stifled leadership opportunities and persistent doubts of competence, intelligence, and skill. Participants in this research described that in their leadership position, they are unable to remain true to their authentic self. Their acute awareness of racial hierarchy means that they cannot appear angry, irrational, or overly subjective. Collier-Thomas (1982), as cited by Peters and Nash (2021) developed an understanding of how inequality impacts contact between women who differ by race and ethnicity.

“Historically, Black women have shared with Black men the discrimination and deprivation that characterized their sojourn from slavery to freedom. They share with white women some legal prescriptions that have limited their access to public institutions. However, despite the common problems, their historical experiences in every area of American life have been in very specific ways different from that of Black males and white females (p. 174).

Paralleling to Collier-Thomas (1982) as cited in Peters and Nash (2021), Hurtado (1989) as cited in McNeal (2017) advanced the notion of how systemic inequality impacts barriers between women who differ by race and ethnicity. Collier-Thomas (1982) as cited in McNeal (2017) further explained the apparent differences between Black and White women. White women do not face as many societal injustices because of their connection to White men, the most privileged and pristine group in American civilization (Collier-Thomas, 1982 as cited in McNeal, 2017). Although some facets of inequities do exist for White women, they still benefit as the daughters, mothers, and wives of White men. Black women are not awarded this same privilege. Hurtado further noted that

“The definition of woman is constructed differently for White women and women of color, though gender is the marking mechanism through which the subordination of each is maintained” (p. 845).

When interviewing Hannah, she described her experiences as an administrator at an all Black campus. She stated that, “it’s sad to say this but, even my own people dont support my hard work and efforts.” She further stated that, “my job would be so much easier if I were White.”

The semi-structured interviews and journal prompts developed the 5 themes that reflected the literature review regarding social challenge barriers, trajectory obstructions, and the glass

cliff phenomenon. These themes are indistinctively interlocked to the theory of intersectionality and illustrate how Intersectionality impacts the lived experiences of Black female leaders. As the themes evolved, the researcher found that the participants intersecting identities were barriers that caused roadblocks against their trajectories. A summary of each individual theme that emerged within the data is discussed more in-depth considering the existing body of knowledge.

The initial theme that emerged from the participants' lived experience surrounding the phenomenon of how Intersectionality affects the Black female leader was being quiet in the face of injustice. The participants felt that being Black and female suppressed their ability to speak up for every wrong doing. The literature review detailed the barriers of being vocal in times of oppression. This unconscious behavior stems from the oppressive inequities that Black women faced as K-12 scholars. As the repercussions of slavery and segregation are evident in educational leadership (Rocio, 2021), it is determined that Black female leaders in education feel as though their voices are devalued, unheard, and overlooked (Byrd, 2009; King, 1988; Nkomo, 1992; and Parker, 2005).

As Black female leaders continue to be aware of the limitations of their voice, they find that they are tirelessly having to prove their value and their worth as instructional leaders on their campus. The literature review posited that Black female leaders face exclusion from district power networks and gender role expectations. Rachel Rollins further described the anguish of normalizing roles for Black women in leadership positions:

“You are the canary in the coal mine for many of these concepts, Rollins says. We don't get the benefit of failing upward as so many others do. We can't be mediocre and stumble into a CEO position or the presidency. We have to be beyond exceptional and even still we are questioned.” (Rollins,2021 as cited in Osterheldt, 2021)

The participants in the study recounted numerous occasions where they felt an innate battle against being scrutinized and always having to prove themselves. All of the participants are over qualified for their positions in regards to degrees obtained, leadership abilities, and credentials, yet their decisions continue to be questioned. The participants are afraid to fail in their roles. This ongoing sense of fear and continuous scrutiny is exhaustive in nature and speaks to the theme of blatant disregard.

Black women in leadership positions continue to face blatant disregard for their authority and influence as they are faced with social challenge barriers and traditional gender ideologies. The participants recounted how their ongoing efforts, accomplishments, and ideas are blatantly disregarded because of their intersecting racial and gender identities. Shadeism and colorism were discussed in detail in the literature review. These themes correlate with blatant disregard as studies confirm that society tends to reward those with Eurocentric features (Hall, 2017). Hannon and DeFina determined that skin tone bias creates favorable opportunities and preferential treatment in education (Hannon and DeFina, 2014 as cited in Hall, 2017 & Bagalini, 2020). Participants narrated how the continued disregard and lack of respect leaves them poorly motivated and lowers their morale.

Another prevalent theme that arised out of the data analysis was the lowered morale that Black female administrators are subdued with. Although low morality was not directly mentioned in the literature review, it was an undertone that was implied through all themes. Every semi-structured interview and journal response hinted at the participants daily frustrations of disregard and disrespect. There was an overall sense of dissapointment with the unspoken biases that filtered through Texas schools. Their exasperations are paralleled to ideas expressed from Showunmi (2021) which established that Black female leaders face ongoing barriers

because of racial and stereotypical concepts. The overall consensus from the participants was that they are tired of trying to support young Black scholars while being seen through a negative lens because of the historical ramifications of slavery. Our Black female administrators are disgruntled, which leads to them not wanting to continue on their career paths in education.

Participants found that the racialized barriers that they face each day are obstructive catalysts for their career trajectories. They noted how their White female colleagues advanced in their careers, while they continued to remain stagnant. Moreover, the participants found that they were placed at high needs and low-socioeconomic campuses with the expectation of turning around a “failing campus.” This supports the glass cliff phenomenon mentioned in the literature review which details Black women accepting impossible positions only to be unsuccessful in their plight. Participants have embraced the harsh reality that their racial and gender identities are barriers to their career trajectories. As much as they want to advocate for the education of Black children, they are exhausted and worn down from racially motivated and negligent mistreatment.

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain awareness of the lived experiences of Black female leaders in K-12 educational institutions in Texas. The findings and conclusions of this study created awareness for district administrators and Black women desiring to pursue leadership in educational organizations. In the following sections, the researcher will describe what the data findings have implied in practice, policy, and theory.

Practice

Based on the findings, the researcher will discuss how this study can be applied into professional practice. Multicultural leadership programs with an emphasis on merit and equal opportunity can be implemented to support Black women currently in leadership; to provide resources and assistance to

Black female teachers who plan to pursue leadership in the future, and to create awareness for educational leaders in becoming culturally sensitive to the experiences of Black women. This notion is supported by previous research recommending extensive research on programs that implement multicultural awareness and focus on diversity mentorship (Barnes, 2017; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Mahoney, 2016; Morris, 2016; Phelps-Ward et al., 2017). Educational organizations and school officials can utilize the data from this study to better understand the lived experiences of Black female leaders.

Policy Implications

The researcher found that Black female administrators have experienced oppression and ongoing trajectory obstructions because of their Intersecting racial and gender identities. To address these inequities, several concrete policies at varying levels can be implemented to lower trajectory obstructions and increase morale for Black female leaders. Our state and federal government can offer tax breaks and loan forgiveness to Black female school leaders, particularly those who lead multicultural, impoverished, and or high-poverty campuses. Educational leadership preparation programs can foster partnerships with current Black female school leaders so that they can mentor and guide up and coming inexperienced Black female school leaders. School districts can establish leadership pathway opportunities for Black female educators who desire to go into educational leadership. This focus on early recruitment can further close the secondary and post-secondary achievement gaps. Additionally, developing clear and systemic mentoring programs for Black female educators could potentially increase their desire to pursue school leadership positions.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical foundation for this study was grounded in Intersectionality theory. Intersectionality theory argues that there is a single-issue approach to how society considers both racism and sexism (Coaston, 2019). Since Black women are both Black and female, the Intersectionality of their racial and gender identities are a unique phenomenon that are not the same for other women (Coaston, 2019). The intent of this study was not to disprove or prove a theory, but to examine personal accounts of the phenomenon under investigation. The findings of this study can help school districts gain

awareness of the lived experiences of Black female school leaders. Further, it can set a precedence that the theory of Intersectionality is an overlapping dilemma that leads to trajectory obstruction.

Chloe detailed how her parents ensured that she went to private school with students that did not look like her. She recounted how she only dated White males growing up and her social experiences were with White families. She did not experience racial discrimination while growing up. However, once Chloe went into education, she experienced gender inequality, isolation, and racial discrimination from her colleagues. Intersectionality theory affirms that Black women's "intersecting identities" means that they are impacted by a multitude of social justice issues (Coaston, 2019). As could be expected, all of the participants in the study experienced stereotypical behavior from colleagues and superiors as detailed in the literature review and the data analysis results. This study can support school leaders in their understanding of how culture, race, and gender are interlocked and inseparable for the Black woman, affecting her leadership trajectory which makes her experience different than other women.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this research was to explore and document the lived experiences of Black female school leaders as in relation to Intersectionality. The goal of this study was to illustrate the barriers that Intersectionality presents for Black female school leaders. A study that investigates the self-efficacy of Black female school leaders should be conducted. It would be valuable to see if their individual beliefs in what they can achieve influences their actions and how much effort they put into the selected action. It would also be beneficial to determine why Black women have worked in education and obtained certifications to become principals and superintendents only to represent a small minority of campus and district administrators. Those conclusions would be remarkable to record and note. An alternative recommendation for future research would be to conduct this study from a contrasting viewpoint of another minority school leader that differs from the Black female perspective. This could be someone who experiences other intersecting identities or someone who is only identified as a minority. The outcomes of such a study could correlate to this research to notate extensions or deviations of findings. An alternative

study to further expand the base of Intersectionality in education, could seek to determine the impact that Black female leaders have on their teachers and students. The research could focus on the participants' journeys and include input from the teachers and students that they lead. This study could gain a deeper understanding of why Black female leaders are important.

Additional recommendations for future research are:

- Analyze educational leadership programs to determine if they successfully prepare minority school leaders for what they will experience during their job.
- Investigate and identify the mentoring and professional development opportunities available to Black women in or aspiring to be in educational leadership.
- Determine the coping strategies that Black female leaders use to manage their professional and personal lives despite the varied barriers they face.
- Expand this study to a mixed-method approach. The mixed-method approach would allow researchers to explore the qualities of both qualitative and quantitative data in the study. This would provide more in-depth information (Creswell & Plano, 2007).

Conclusion

In Hannah's interview she summed up the comprehensive thoughts of the participants in the study when she stated, "I am not equipped with White privilege. If I looked like the people making the decisions, then it would be easier for me to advance. However, I don't identify with them." The overarching goal of this research was to illustrate the ongoing oppressions that Black female school leaders face. All six participants presented their narratives on their lived experiences as public school administrators in Texas. Additionally, they recounted how they are able to find the will power to pay attention to the needs of their staff, students, and community stakeholders while promoting equity, quality instruction, and a safe work environment. The themes that emerged through the analysis of this study included: silence in times of injustice, the need to prove oneself, blatant disregard, lowered morale, and trajectory obstruction. The findings of this study empowered the researcher, who shares similar

intersecting identities with the participants. To review the responses and get first hand exposure of the unfiltered emotions that the participants have had to suppress gives the researcher justification to continue her work. This continuation is not limited to Black females in educational leadership, as the researcher plans to seek opportunities to promote authentic conversations about race and gender across multiple contexts in education. The researcher hopes that the participants are satisfied with how she has illustrated their experiences, feelings, and thoughts. The researcher has given voice to their lived experiences and brought their realities, which were previously silenced, out in the open, with the desire to counter the master narrative of what was understood as an educational leader.

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APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. In your opinion, what are the lived experiences of Black female administrators in the K–12 educational setting?

1A: Describe your experiences as a Black female administrator in K–12 educational settings .

1B: How, if any, do you believe your experiences have differed as a Black female compared to your White female counterparts?

1C: How do you feel those differences impact your daily experiences in your administrative role?

Semi-Structured Interview Question 2:

2. What factors contribute to the continued effectiveness of Black females in their principals roles in the K–12 educational settings?

2A: Tell me about some barriers you have experienced, if any, when you began your role as a principal?

2B: Please share any barriers you have experienced, if any, while serving as a school administrator?

2C: Please share any microaggressions you have experienced, if any, and how you deal with them?

Semi-Structured Interview Question 3:

3. To what extent does your organization's culture and espoused values impact the trajectories of Black female administrators?

3A: What barriers, if any, impact your career progression?

3B: What glass ceilings, if any, have you identified that are challenging for other Black women within educational organizations?

3C: What strategies, if any, should organizations employ to support Black females in reducing those barriers?

APPENDIX C

Journal Prompts

JP1: Can you illustrate a time where you felt that your race, gender, socioeconomic status, or colorism played a part in how colleagues and campus stakeholders treated you? How did it make you feel? Were you able to address it? If so, was the issue remedied?

JP2: What do you believe will open pathways for Black female educators to become and stay school administrators? Have your race and gender played a part in your internal desire to stay the course as a K-12 school administrator?