African American Female Superintendents: Resilient School Leaders

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> Some of us go to the train station and we get in that front car and get ready to pull off and don't even look back to see if anybody got on. And we wonder why what we're trying to do isn't working. No one is hooked up to the engine, they're not even at the station. (Dr. Abigail Myles, 2010)

> If you could educate every single child to graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary, you can change generational poverty in one generation. Not multiple generations. One generation. (Dr. H.B. Lundy, 2010)

Last, but certainly not least, I want to acknowledge and document this period in history that I thought would never come: the election of an African American male as president of these United States. President Obama, may the children of this country benefit from your leadership.

Dedication

In memory and honor of my mother, Bernice Jacqueline Clemons, who wanted the world to know how much she loved and cared for "her baby" and "how proud she was of the work that she was doing to support the success of children." You died too young and before you had a chance to see your grandbabies as adults and to see me finish my dissertation.

With respect and honor to my grandmother dear, Dr. Hallie B. Hendrieth-Smith, who stands tall with grace and dignity in support of education for all children, especially the children of Minneapolis. You have been the wind beneath my wings. Your courage and ability to retain a sense of self through your professional and personal journey have served as an inspiration. You make it look so easy and effortless.

To my daughter Briana, I have seen you grow into a strong and independent young lady, who continues to care about others.

All three strong, resilient, and committed!

Abstract

Six African American female superintendents who had served as superintendents in at least 2 school districts were interviewed to understand ways in which they responded to barriers and adversity in their roles, with a particular emphasis on issues related to sexism and racism. Study participants shared that they work to engage the community and build relationships with stakeholders. They also reported being courageous and clear in defining where they would take a stand. This required knowing who they are and being true to personal values and ethics. These African American female superintendents reported having strong religious faith and benefitting from the love, support, and encouragement of parents, family, and friends. They identified listening as critical to their success. Mentoring new and aspiring African American women superintendents is one way they intentionally give back to the profession. They expressed the need to be continuous learners and to work hard while still striving to achieve life–work balance.

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Prologue

I was born in historic Selma, Alabama, 5 years after 1954's U.S. Supreme Court case, Brown v. Board of Education—the decision that forbids segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race. Selma during this period was a racially segregated town where Dr. Martin Luther King and other community and national activists took the historic march to Montgomery to protest peacefully for the basic right to vote for Blacks. Though issues of race were always present, members of the Black community took pride in whatever work they could find and most of all in the ability to acquire an education, though often in segregated settings and schools.

As far back as ancient Egypt and from generation to generation, education was viewed as important and as the great equalizer (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Regardless of socioeconomic status, material possessions, or community status, getting a good education and going to college were seen by Blacks as avenues for increased job opportunities and participation in decisions that would impact the lives of individuals and the entire community. Accordingly, Scott (2005) wrote that "education is a form of social policy; a means by which society distributes power and privilege. The level of entrance into the occupational work is significantly determined by the level that is attained in the educational world" (p. 14).

President Barack Obama, in a speech on race, communicated his experiences as an African American male and recounted the 200 years of experiences of other African Americans in the United States. He challenged the African American community to continue "on the path to a more perfect union," a path that allows them to embrace the

past without becoming victims of the past. He challenged African Americans to "bind our grievances—for better health care, jobs and schools, to the longer aspiration of all Americans—we must always believe that we can write our own destinies" (Obama, 2008). This speech was full of optimism and hope for all of America. As Bell (1980) posited, however, history has demonstrated that the ability of African Americans to write their own destinies should be "interpreted with measured enthusiasm," and it is only through interest convergence—when basic rights converge with self-interests of Whites—that African Americans have had increased opportunities.

I remember standing in the registration line at Alabama A & M University trying to think about what major to choose. My strong connection to the teaching profession and my lack of exposure to other options did not allow me to assess if other occupations were available to me. After college, I explored opportunities to work in expanded occupational areas beyond education open to African Americans and spent 12 years working for a financial institution. I did not realize that increased choices and opportunities available to me and others would begin to have an adverse impact on the pipeline of African Americans in the teaching profession. Studies by Glass (2000a and 2000b) as well as by Bjork and Keedy (2001) found that as more lucrative and prestigious professions became open to women and people of color, the pipeline to leadership positions in education also decreased.

During the time I spent employed as a financial analyst for one of the largest financial institutions in the Midwest, I was also an active volunteer in the Minneapolis Public Schools. Little did I know that volunteering and giving back to my community

would have such a personal and professional impact on my life. I no longer gained personal satisfaction from my employment. My volunteering experience led me to rethink my career path. I am currently superintendent of the Minneapolis Public Schools.

I felt that I had more to give to children for whom the system had failed; of equal importance, I felt that I could influence others who worked with children. This belief led me to enter the Collaborative Urban Educator (CUE) program, an alternative licensure program supported by the Minnesota State Legislature to recruit mid-career individuals from underrepresented populations into the teaching profession. Thus began my career as a fifth-grade classroom teacher in the St. Paul Public Schools. I taught for several years before acquiring a Master of Arts degree in education with a focus on curriculum and instruction (1992) and becoming a National Board certified teacher (1995). I then decided to get my administrative licensure and accepted a principal position at Elizabeth Hall Community School in Minneapolis. I later chose to pursue my superintendent's licensure and became deputy superintendent for the Memphis City Schools. Twenty-five years after beginning my professional career, my passion continues for giving back to the community and making a difference in the lives of its most vulnerable members.

My career path of "moving up" or "moving through the chairs" is supported by the research of Black and English, as well as Carter, Glass, and Hord (as cited in Tallerico, 2000a, p. 74). After reading Tallerico's (2000a) book, a certain amount of optimism about my ability to gain access to a superintendent's position increased due to the following identified parallels between my experience and the research:

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- Prepared for the position by completing the rigorous requirements for superintendent licensure (p. 77);

- Followed highly valued career trajectory: teacher, [high] school principal, and central office administrator (p. 90); and

- Worked closely with a respected and effective superintendent in an environment that mirrors the context for my career aspirations (p. 74).

However, my optimism began to wane after reading an article in Education Week (Gewertz, 2006) regarding the resignation of four Black female superintendents. I began to realize that accessing the superintendency was only half the hurdle; retaining the position presents another set of challenges.

As I thought about my own career path, through each position change from teacher to principal, I found an abundance of individuals who looked like me—of African descent and female—and who shared my same values and vision for children's success. As I sought further advancement opportunities in district leadership, the role models were less visible and available. Black women superintendents are rare, which makes me further appreciate the opportunity to have worked with a successful Black woman superintendent for more than 2 years. White female superintendents are available in greater numbers; however, their numbers are still no match for the White and Black male superintendents, and their experiences cannot be equally transferred to those of Black women (Tillman & Cochran, 2000). Tillman and Cochran (2000) suggest that more research is needed in areas of racial and gender equity that should lead to sustained inquiry into the experiences

and perspectives of Black women superintendents as well as women superintendents from other underrepresented groups (p. 55).

Allen, Jacobson, and Lomotey (1995) and Revere (1987) conducted research studies focused specifically on the demographic profiles of African American female school superintendents. Their research found that Black women superintendents are older than White male superintendents (36 years of age or older), began their careers as classroom teachers, and have been employed 20 to 30 years in education. Revere found no predictability in career patterns among study participants. His study remains one of "the few research efforts aimed specifically at examining issues related to Black women superintendents" (as cited in Tillman & Cochran, 2000, p. 45).

The resignations of four prominent Black female superintendents in cities across the country, including San Francisco, Cleveland, and Minneapolis, led me to think more about the rarity of Black women in these roles and the challenges that continue to serve as barriers to long and successful tenures. I began to wonder whether race and gender constraints played a role in the tenure of superintendents. However, I realized I did not want to limit this study to a deficit model of thinking about how race and gender led to the loss of position. Instead, I wanted to develop an understanding of the ways in which successful Black female superintendents respond to barriers and adversity in their roles and thereby retain their positions.

A review of the literature reveals the beginnings of research on resilient women administrators; however, there is little evidence of this research on Black women administrators. Christman and McClellan's (2008) study sought to understand how

women administrators sustain their administrative roles, evaluating whether their resiliency rests on a feminine type of leadership. They found that "gender identity and leadership are more complex than to simply fit them into one gender construction model or another and when interacting in particular episodes, resilient women leaders embrace or disclaim one gender norm for another to varying degrees" (Christman & McClellan, 2008, p. 3).

Having been the deputy superintendent of two public school districts, one in Tennessee and one in Minnesota, I began to realize that adversity and challenges—such as scarcity of resources, political pressures, student achievement and the achievement gap, and unexpected crises—will continue to exist in large urban school districts that serve populations of extensive diversity and immense poverty. How the superintendent addresses these everyday dilemmas and challenges often determines how long she keeps the top job. My experience in Tennessee provided a unique opportunity most people do not receive even in an internship experience: I was able to observe how a successful African American female superintendent responded to unbelievable challenges, retained her position, stayed true to her core values, and decided to go forward to acquire a new superintendent's position.

As I continued in my doctoral studies and pursued a position as a superintendent, I decided that I wanted to understand better what it takes to be successful in my role as an educational leader and to identify experiences to assist me in becoming prepared for a superintendent's position. This study completes the requirements for a doctorate, and it also helps me better understand the African American female superintendents on whose

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shoulders I stand. Understanding the experiences of African American female

superintendents who continue to remain in their positions will add to the knowledge base

for other African American female educators interested in the position of superintendent.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Research

"If Black women don't say who they are, other people will and say it badly for them."
— B. Christian (1985)

My grandmother, who is now 97 years old, grew up at a time when women were expected to work in the home or make a living in gender-specific occupations that were even more limited for Black women; times were difficult if you were Black and living in Alabama. Alabama during the first half of the 20th century was situated in the center of the segregated south. It continues to hold a footnote in history as the cradle of the civil rights movement and the birth of the 1965 Voting Rights Acts (Garrow, 1978). Segregated communities, businesses, and schools were the norm. Opportunities to break away from the impact of segregation were rare and presented many challenges. One of the more notable challenges that received national attention occurred in 1963 at the University of Alabama. Then Governor George Wallace engaged the National Guard in his infamous "stand at the schoolhouse door" in an attempt to prevent the integration of the school by two black youths, Vivian Malone and James Hood (Levinson, Crookson, & Sadovnik, 2002).

Although times were tough historically and economically, my grandmother was able to graduate from college, begin her teaching career at an all girls' boarding school in Alabama, and later have leadership positions within the Minneapolis Public Schools. In a conversation with a superintendent who knows my grandmother, she shared that my grandmother would have been a superintendent if times had been different during her

employment in Minneapolis. Though pleased by this statement, I suspected that things may not have been so different had my grandmother's interest in a superintendent's position come today.

According to Glass (2000a), an underrepresentation of women in the superintendency continues despite their overrepresentation in the teaching profession and the university programs that prepare them. This underrepresentation also is reflected in the research on Black women in the superintendency (Blount, 1998; Gewertz, 2006). Although the number of women superintendents has nearly doubled, from 6.6% of all superintendents in 1992 to 13.2% in 2000, the majority of superintendents (86.8%) continue to be male (Kowalski, 2006). Tillman and Cochran (2000) reported that schools and departments of education continue to perpetuate the predominance of White men and have generally failed to provide adequate support for diversity in professional preparation programs. They further posited that administrative coursework is taught from the White male superintendent's perspective and that issues of gender, race, and ethnicity create "silent preparation programs" (Tillman & Cochran, 2000, p. 55).

The 2005 resignation of four female urban school superintendents highlighted another challenge for African American female superintendents: the challenge of keeping the top position. Limited but increasing research seeks to describe how successful Black female superintendents address the adversity and challenges that ultimately determine how long they retain their positions, while staying true to their core values and having the freedom to acquire new superintendent positions. Brunner (1998) found that studies are limited concerning administrators' experiences. Continued research is necessary, as it

will "provide guidance and support for women in the superintendency" (p. 178). A review of the literature on leadership, race, and gender along with the study of resiliency models, is the foundational area of focus for this study.

Background and Context

A noticeable difference exists between the number of male and female superintendents in the United States. Although there have been studies on the superintendency, it has not been until recently that these studies have included the experiences of women (Blount, 1998; Gewertz, 2006). There is an even greater paucity of research on African American women in the superintendency (Alston, 2005).

The typical experiential background for a superintendent is that of a White male, whose career is more likely to follow a normative path described in studies (Glass, 1992). According to Banks and Yeakey (1995), Johnson (1996), and Adkinson (1986), "powerful (although largely invisible) influences within the educational system, the administrator profession, and society reflect and reinforce long standing tradition of Caucasian male leadership of American Institutions" (as cited in Tallerico, 2000a, pp. 81–85). White, non-Hispanic workers will continue to remain the overwhelming majority in the administrative workforce, with White males holding almost 90% of positions in management, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. As studies by Bailey and Green indicated, sex and race continue to matter in our culture, which further suggests that the playing field is still not leveled (Tallerico, 2000a).

According to Shakeshaft (1989), the fact that more women are reaching the top leadership position in school districts can be tied to a shift in the modern women's

movement. The feminist movement "refocused attention on underrepresentation of women in leadership and was accompanied by increased activism by women's administrator organizations, the creation of a women's caucus in professional organizations, expanded career options for women overall, and increased efforts to bring women into school administration" (Tallerico & Blount, 2004, p. 646).

Superintendents across the state and the country are faced with multiple challenges, including improving student achievement, closing the achievement gap, collaborating with external partners, managing day-to-day crises, and maintaining strong financial and operations management. Wong and Jain (1999) found that these challenges lead to a continuous lack of resources and a loss of public confidence.

African Americans and members of other minority groups may experience aggrandized difficulties in their positions as superintendents in urban school districts due to: a) competing with other districts in attracting and retaining qualified and experienced teachers, b) experiencing teacher shortages, c) and lacking access to instructional materials and tools for student success. Brunner (2000) stated that women have two battles: one for children and one for themselves. How these superintendents manage such additional complex challenges and how they develop the confidence to weather such storms is related to their ability to be resilient.

Resiliency

According to Saleebey (2002), resiliency refers to the practice of operating with a strength perspective, which stresses the capabilities, assets, and positive attributes of human beings rather than their weaknesses or pathologies. Greene (2002) describes

resilience as being developmental and leading to strengthening a person's competence. Bonnano and Galen (2007) define adult resiliency as the ability of adults to maintain relatively stable and healthy psychological functioning when dealing with events such as the death of a close relation or a violent or life-threatening situation.

The study of resiliency dates back to the 1940s and 1950s during a period in which a dominant focus in the field of psychology was mental disorder. As such, most of the early research on resilience focused on children and adolescents and the various coping strategies they use to survive risk factors, such as poverty and family dysfunction. Benard's (1991) research on the resilience of children identified key protective factors, as well as four basic attributes of resilient children. This research began to inform studies on the topic of the resiliency in adults who are exposed to personal and work-related stress. Resiliency theory that emphasizes drawing on strengths as a means of dealing with adversity helps to inform and affirm leaders in using their personal assets to move ahead when faced with extremely challenging circumstances.

A review of numerous articles on resilience and several resiliency models led to the use of Patterson and Kelleher's (2005) dimensions of resiliency in this study as it serves as a comprehensive framework that has been applied in the educational context, specifically with understanding how school superintendents perceive their experiences as superintendents from a resiliency perspective. As shown in Figure 1, Patterson and Kelleher (2005) identify six dimensions of the resiliency cycle: (1) adversity strikes, (2) interpretation of adversity, (3) resilience capacity, (4) actions to achieve resilience, (5)

successful outcomes, all resulting in (6) increased resilience capacity for future adversity.

This model is described more fully in Chapter 2.

DIMENSIONS OF RESILIENCE

Adversity Strikes

Interpretation of Adversity

Past and Current Reality	*Future Possibility*
• Assumptions about reality	• Personal Influence
• Causes of adversity	• Personal expectations
• Risks posed by adversity	• Personal focus

Resilience Capacity

Personal Values	*Personal Efficacy*	*Personal Energy*
• Core values	• Competence and confidence	• Physical fuel
• Educational values	• Strong connection to others	• Emotional mastery
• Program values		• Mental focus
• Spiritual wellspring		• Spiritual wellspring

Actions to Achieve Resilience

• Enact personal values	• Employ personal efficacy	• Invest personal energy

Successful Outcome

Increased Resilience Capacity for Future Adversity

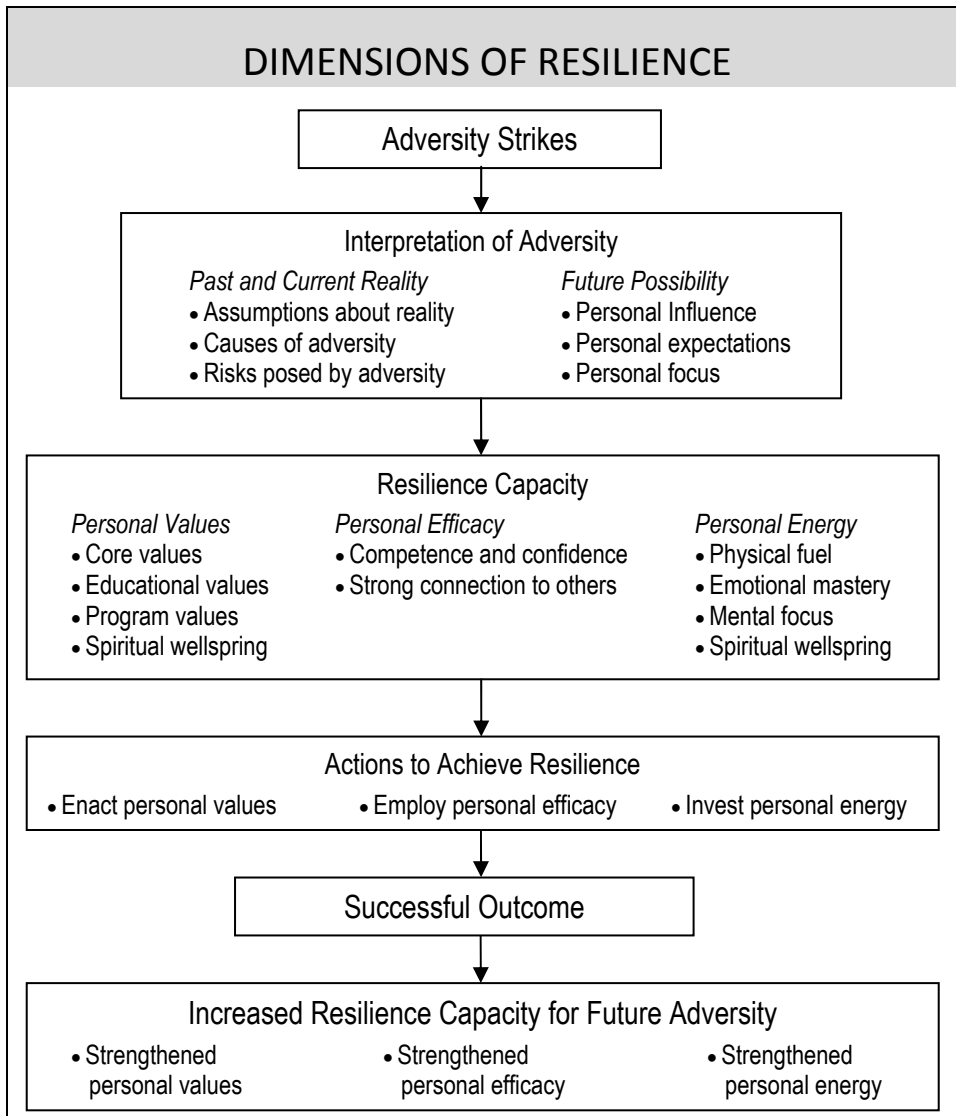| • Strengthened personal values	• Strengthened personal efficacy	• Strengthened personal energy

Figure 1. Dimensions of resilience. (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005)

Other resiliency frameworks are identified that assist with identifying how resiliency factors in one's life. Benard and Marshall (1997) developed the Framework for Tapping Natural Resilience based on their combined knowledge about the capacity of children and adults for healthy functioning. Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, and Kumpfer (1990), developed a resiliency model that demonstrated that when stressors, adversity, and risks are present, individual and environmental protective factors can act as buffers. While all of the models reviewed define resilience and provide examples of "bouncing back" from difficult experiences, Patterson and Kelleher's (2005) model, aligns more closely to this study of Black female superintendents for several reasons. First, the model is based on the disciplines of various areas such as psychology, sociology of organizations, and on their experience of serving in the same roles as the individuals in this study, from teacher to superintendent to university professor. Second, their interviews of educational leaders, including superintendents and school improvement leaders, provide the model with a practical application that is closely aligned to the role of the individuals who participated in this study.

Statement of the Problem

The efforts of Black women to ascend to and remain in the top leadership position in school districts have been fraught with challenges. Many of these challenges are documented through the individual experiences of superintendents and in limited studies by researchers who understand that the lack of representative literature has an "unfortunate side effect: maintain the current marginalization of women and people of color from the ranks of administration" (Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000, p. 533).

African American female superintendents continue to be underrepresented in the position of superintendency, leading a small fraction of the nation's approximately 14,000 school districts. Statistically, White males continue to hold 80% of the top leadership positions, women hold 15% of the positions and only 5% of these positions are held by male or female minorities of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Gewertz, 2006). Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) reported that racial minorities made up 2.2% of all U.S. superintendents in 1981–1982. This percentage increased to 3.5% from 1992–1993 and to about 5% (2% African American, 2% Hispanic, 1% American Indian, and less than half of 1% Asian or Pacific Islander) in 1998. According to the American Association of School Administrators (2007), the racial distribution is 93.8% White and 6.2% other ethnicities.

African American female superintendents report having to constantly prove themselves capable while also grappling with negative assumptions, both of which make holding the top leadership role even more difficult. Barbara Byrd-Bennett, former superintendent of the Cleveland, Ohio, school district, describes the challenges: "I've always had to make sure that at every moment, I'm at the top of my game…at every meeting, I feel as if I'm going into the courtroom prosecuting or defending someone, and I'd better have an airtight case" (Gewertz, 2006, p. 1). The departure of top female superintendents in Minneapolis, Cleveland, and San Francisco in the last decade should serve, like a canary to a miner, as a signal to African American women who are interested in becoming superintendents as well as to institutions that prepare individuals who aspire to become superintendents.

According to McCabe and Dobberteen (1998), knowledge of the role of superintendent as experienced by women, as well as the satisfaction and problems associated with serving as superintendent, can assist women in determining whether their aspirations should include becoming a superintendent of schools. McCabe investigated the perception of 270 female superintendents regarding the role of superintendents of schools by asking them survey questions concerning possible career constraints. Respondents identified the following constraints: a) the superintendent's role is still considered masculine, b) career expectations are affected by societal gender roles, c) career expectations are affected by family routines and practices, and d) stereotypical gender-related attitudes and behaviors are still expected (p. 2). Alston's (2005) research identified constraints that Black female administrators encounter en route to the superintendency. She identified the following constraints: a) absence of networking and support systems, and b) absence of knowledge of internal organizational structure and few role models from whom to gain such knowledge.

Until recently, little attention has been given to the perspective of females and people of color in research on educational leadership (Banks, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1989). Disagreement among educators and scholars continues regarding the impact that race and gender have on the superintendency. Glass (2000a), in a survey of school administrators, found that most female superintendents believe that gender is a barrier to attaining the superintendency; however, the same survey reported that nearly 93% of the females in the study were rated either "good" or "excellent" by their school boards. In Alston's (1999) study of Black female superintendents, participants did not perceive race and

gender as major obstacles to the superintendency. This supports Tallerico's (2000b) assertion that the historically disenfranchised see things differently than the historically privileged.

Though barriers exist, "the tenacity and resilience of those Black women who meet the challenges of the superintendency and are successful has not been studied extensively" (Alston, 2005, p. 676). Alston (2005) further suggested that research should answer the following questions: (1) What is it about these women that motivates them to remain in these leadership positions?; and (2) What strategies do they draw on to develop the work with and against institutional sexism, racism, and apathy? (p. 677).

The present study seeks to answer these and other questions about successful African American women superintendents.

Study Purpose and Questions

Long-term trend information on the demographics and experiences of the superintendency are developing but while "there is a small but growing knowledge base on women in educational administration, there is a paucity of research available on Blacks in the superintendency and even less on Black women in the superintendency" (Alston, 2005, p. 675). This lack of available research also extends to statistical information and demographic data. Tillman and Cochran (2000) called for the collection and maintenance of better demographic data to "accurately document the numbers of Black women and other underrepresented populations in the superintendency and other administrative roles" in order to conduct deeper analyses on progress in recruitment and retention in relationship to other superintendents. Bell and Chase (1993) were the first

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researchers in this area to provide disaggregated data to make short-term comparisons by both race/ethnicity and sex (Jackson, 1999). Studies by Shakeshaft as well as Tyack and Hasot refer to the absence of gender and race as an intentional "conspiracy of silence" (as cited in Alston, 2000, p. 527).

According to Barritt (1986), the strongest rationale for a qualitative study is "heightening the awareness for experience that has been forgotten or overlooked. By heightening awareness and creating dialogue, it is hoped research can lead to better understanding of the way things appear to someone else and through that insight lead to improvements in practice" (as cited in Creswell, 1998, p. 94). Qualitative research as used today is the "deep involvement in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups and is emotion laden, close to the people and practical" (Creswell, 1998, p. 19). A review of the literature reveals that the few studies to date that have focused on the study of Black female superintendents have used qualitative inquiry and phenomenological theory. Such methodology allows the researcher to understand the perception of participants with an understanding to the meaning of their experience. The present study asked African American female superintendents to identify components of their leadership that make them resilient and to provide examples of how they sustain themselves in their work. Findings were intended to assist other African American females who are interested in acquiring and maintaining the position of superintendent. The present study also was intended to serve as a research-based resource for higher education institutions that are interested in developing and supporting African American

female superintendents, as well as for school boards and leadership organizations committed to supporting success for African American women.

This study examined what it takes for African American female superintendents in K–12 public school systems to be resilient and grow stronger in the face of adversity. Specific research questions were:

- In what ways do African American females respond to barriers and adversity in their role as superintendents?

- What specific processes or strategies do African American female superintendents employ to overcome adversity? Racism and sexism?

- How do African American female superintendents develop the confidence and resiliency to manage the complex challenges of their districts? and

- What motivates African American females to remain in the position of superintendent?

Definition of Terms

Key terms used in the study often have multiple meanings depending upon their uses and contexts. While I do not embrace one meaning over another, having a common language will allow the reader to establish critical understandings as they relate to the impact of the terms on the design and results of the study. Additional information on these terms and the relationship among major concepts will be introduced in the literature review in Chapter 2. For the purpose of the study, the following definitions were used:

African–American: a term that describes an American citizen of African descent and especially of Black African descent born in the United States (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2008).

Black: a term that describes individuals having dark skin; relating to any of various population groups having dark pigmentation of the skin; relating to the African American people or their culture (Black, 2008).

Ethnicity: a term that represents social groups with a shared history, sense of identity, geography, and cultural roots that may occur despite racial difference.

Gender/sex: terms used to encompass the social expectations associated with femininity and masculinity. The rules for femininity and masculinity are grounded in the biological/anatomical distinctions between women and men (Lips, 2003).

Race: the socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes including but not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structures of people (Singleton & Linton, 2006)**.**

Resilience/Resiliency: a dynamic process that encompasses positive behavioral adaptation that an individual exhibits when s/he encounters significant adversity or trauma. Resilience is a two-dimensional construct concerning the exposure to adversity and the positive adjustment outcomes of that adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).

Superintendent: the chief executive officer of a school district employed by a board of directors to improve education.

Significance of the Study

A recent historical event, the 2008 presidential election, which resulted in the appointment of the first African–American president of the United States, offered an illustration of the role that race and gender have had on individuals aspiring for top leadership positions. Female presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton's primary election concession speech summarized the gender challenge:

> It is now unremarkable for a woman to win primary state victories, unremarkable to have a woman in a close race to be our (presidential) nominee, unremarkable to think that a woman can be the President of the United States. And that is truly remarkable. (Clinton, 2008)

It is no longer remarkable that an African American woman can lead a school district. What is remarkable, however, is that African American female superintendents continue to be represented in low numbers although they hold the highest percentage of doctorates awarded to African Americans and the highest percentage of doctorates awarded in education (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006). According to the Fall 2007 survey conducted by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, 56% of doctorate degrees were awarded to Whites, 17% to internationals, 11% to Blacks, 7% to Asians, 5% to Hispanics, 1% to American Indian, 1% to other, and 2% unknown.

There continue to be gaps in the study of the superintendency. As suggested by Immegart (1988), little research involving real-life people and events has been conducted on this position of responsibility and importance. Moreover, the existing research is likely to follow the normative careers of White males (Glass, 1992). According to Tillman and Cochran (2000), the unique experiences of Black women superintendents and other

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underrepresented groups should be explored individually rather than treated as one large group with common experiences, as a study of this specificity could "impact the awareness and attitudes about social justice issues among members of various professional education communities" (p. 55).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has provided the background and context of the study, the purpose of the study and guiding research questions, significance of the study, and a brief definition of terms. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature, which addresses African American women, with subtopics on the history of education, leadership theory, and research on the superintendency and resiliency. Chapter 3 presents the research design, interview methods, data collection, and data analysis, and describes both limitations and delimitations of the research. Chapter 4 presents brief descriptions of the background of each research participant and responses related to each research question. Finally, Chapter 5 offers a set of synthesized findings, along with articulating connections between past research and the present study and presenting implications and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Concepts and research from several different areas can illuminate the experiences of resilient African American female superintendents and have helped frame this exploratory study. Following a brief summary of educational history that traces the changing role of Black women, this review of literature addresses the following content areas: leadership theories that focus on women and successful leadership, the role of the superintendent, feminist theory, critical race theory, and resilience. Each of these provides content for understanding the leadership of the superintendents who are the subjects of this dissertation.

A Brief History of Black Education and

the Role of Black Women in American Education

Carter G. Woodson's book, *The Education of the Negro*, documented the history of American education for Blacks (Woodson, 1998). Little is recorded on the experiences of Black women and their impact on antebellum education; some parallels, however, can be found with that of women in general during this period. Much of the information that exists regarding the educational experiences of Black women can be found in denominational records and histories, collected papers of Black leaders, biographies, and autobiographies, along with other primary and secondary sources (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

Slave owners went to great lengths to prevent their slaves from learning to read for fear slaves would question their status and ultimately rebel. Explicit laws establishing

severe penalties for teaching slaves to read were enacted across the South. South

Carolina, in 1747, adopted what Weinberg (1971) called "the first compulsory ignorance

law in America" (as cited in Keber, 1983, p. 14). However, benevolent slave owners

continued to teach their slaves to read and in turn slaves, specifically women, began to

teach children to read, both at great personal risk (Giddings, 1984; Collier-Thomas,

1982). Some slaves were taught to read in order to be instructed in the spiritual and

Christian values of slave owners. Others shared what they learned with their peers in

secret, despite the fear of being caught. Through perseverance, Black people taught each

other to read because they saw this as a way to communicate with each other, share their

experiences, better their position in life, and ideally find their way to emancipation

(Giddings, 1984; Collier-Thomas, 1982; Keber, 1983). According to the census of 1850,

half of the 500,000 free Blacks were able to read and write (Sowell, 2001). Considering

public sentiment toward women at this time, women likely comprised a smaller

percentage of the overall number of Blacks able to read and write.

Sarah Mapps Douglass established a school for Black children in the 1820s.

Abolitionists also supported schools by sending money to help pay teacher salaries and

other expenses. Harriet Beecher Stowe sent $1,000 of royalties from her book *Uncle

Tom's Cabin* to a Black girls' school in Washington. The end of slavery brought the

"domestication" of Blacks and shifted the mindset of wealthy land owners from that of

owners of individuals as property and animals to that of family; abuse was often replaced

with benign protection, which prompted obedience and loyalty. The end of slavery did

not lessen the widespread resistance to educating Black children who were now free,

especially in the South. In cities where free Black communities existed, greater possibilities were available to Blacks and women to receive an education.

Although increased opportunities were available for Blacks to get an education, many Blacks received their education from church Sunday schools. At the end of the 19th century, increased formal opportunities to attend various types of schools were established for freed Black children and adults, including Black colleges such as Hampton and Tuskegee, two institutions that are still considered flagship historic Black universities. The first Black women to receive Ph.D. degrees were Sadie T. Mossell Alexander, University of Pennsylvania; Georgiana Rosa Simpson, University of Chicago; and Evan Dykes, Radcliffe (Keber, 1983).

Social and economic forces in the early 1900's separated the experiences of White and Black women and created a middle class of women known as the "cult of the lady," which began to challenge women's identity around class and color. True womanhood was associated with the role of woman as homemaker, mother, housewife, and family tutor of social and moral areas, thus inspiring the slogan, "a woman's place is in the home." This thinking further separated the experiences of White and Black women, as Black women moved into the labor force because of their need to support their families. Patterson and Engleberg (1978) as well as Matthaei (1982) noted that advancements in opportunities for women to acquire positions that were typically male dominated came as a result of increases in job vacancies based on occupational growth, turnover, wars, or a deterioration of the job's working conditions and overall attractiveness to men. However, Black women were denied access to factory jobs as well as any jobs that society

considered acceptable to White women, which in turn contributed to a social impression of them as "less than" White women since they lacked the "attributes of true women" (Giddings, 1984, pp. 47–48).

Black women's status as teachers came late in the 19th century. After the 1900s, Black women received education in higher numbers and found employment in rural areas. According to the 1890 U.S. census, there were 15,000 Black teachers and college professors, of whom 7,864 were female and 7,236 male. It was during this period that the number of Black women began to exceed Black men in the teaching profession, and this trend has not reversed to date. The number of Black teachers continued to grow; of 21,267 Black teachers counted in the 1900 census, 13,524 were women and 7,734 were Black men. A decade later, the number of Black teachers grew to 29,772 with over two thirds, 22,547, being women (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

As Black women teachers increased in numbers, they sometimes had difficulty finding teaching positions in Black schools until the 1880s because White teachers were the first to get jobs in Black schools. This left Black women working in rural areas where the pay was less than that of both female and male White teachers as well as Black male teachers (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

Another way to view the development of Black women's roles in education is through the history of women's work more generally. Western traditions prior to the 20th century held clear distinctions and divisions in the labor force that were consistent for work in the home as well as for paid employment in various fields, including education. Reskin (1984) found that there were essentially two kinds of work: men's work was

outside the home and women's work—paid or unpaid—was in the home. The common sentiment of the time was that women did not need an education and were not needed to work in occupations that men typically held. According to Blount (1998), a woman was expected to rely on the knowledge and skills of men and to respect her husband's moral and legal authority to lead the household.

From the 19th century to the early 20th century a shift began to take place, and jobs that were previously held by men began to be acceptable work for women. Teaching was one of the professions included in this shift, along with secretarial work, nursing, and bank telling. To complicate role definitions further, as women began to work outside the home, available jobs continued to be stratified by gender. Some occupations (e.g., the construction profession) were entirely associated with a specific gender (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Shakeshaft (1989) found that at this time men continued in their historical role of holding almost all positions in schools save that of the elementary school "principal teacher." Legislation such as Title IX, the civil rights movement, and affirmation action may have brought on more recent occupational shifts and developments that have helped to shift women into previously male-dominated professions, including medicine, law, and construction.

Even after this shift, a form of labor division continued to exist in which either of the sexes made up the entire population of employees in a particular profession, e.g., males in construction roles and females in teller roles (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Reskin (1984) identified yet another form of division in which gender stratification existed within the same work setting, e.g., hospitals where nurses and clerical workers are

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typically women and doctors and hospital administrators are most commonly male.

Gender stratification also extended to K–12 American schools where administrative and

leadership roles were male dominated and women in large numbers served as teachers.

In education, queuing theory, in which two parallel and interrelated valuing

processes determine who fills which occupations in a particular labor market, can be

useful in examining the continuing shift in labor division. Thurow (1972) analyzed how

sex segregation, "[although] persistent is not static" and how the school superintendency

"illuminate[s] complexities associated with women's inroads into historically male work"

(cited in Tallerico & Blount, 2004, p. 634). Reskin and Roos (1990) divided queuing

theory into two concepts—job queues and labor queues—that further explain

complexities in understanding future trends and patterns in the superintendency. In job

queues, individual candidates for employment rate occupational areas and jobs within

those areas in their desirability and hierarchy. In labor queues, employers rank workers in

hierarchy from the least attractive to the most attractive. Individual employment choice

and preparation can often be mediated by sociocultural norms and values that influence

occupational segregation and stratification by sex and create or constrain opportunities

for groups that have a lower rank in labor queues.

What, then, was the evolution of the work of Blacks and, more specifically, of

Black women? While men's and women's roles were being defined and redefined in the

19th and 20th centuries, Blacks were maneuvering their own place in society (Giddings,

1984). As noted above, no major scholarly work exists that comprehensively traces and

evaluates the history of Black education in America from the colonial period to the

present (Collier-Thomas, 1982). According to Collier-Thomas (1982), the shifting role of Black women can be understood by following their individual contributions—what they did and how they responded to issues—at different periods in history. Black women and Black men shared the experiences of moving from slavery to freedom. Legal battles gave Black women the same protection and proprieties that White women enjoyed. The unique position of Black women gave them a distinct place in history and continues to challenge their place along the axes of race and gender. According to Giddings (1984), Black women became the linchpin between two of the most important social reform movements in American history—the struggles for Black rights and for women's rights.

Educational Leadership

Because Black female superintendents are important leaders in education, the existing research about educational leadership is an important grounding for framing a study of them. Leadership has been a topic of great interest and research for the past century. The literature is replete with research describing a wide range of leadership theories and models that focus on the importance of leadership, the recruitment and development of leaders, and the relationship between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2001). In the early 1900s, leadership research was based in the scientific movement and the "great man theory." The scientific movement was grounded in the work of Weber (1947), which focused on hierarchical structured organizations, and Taylor (1947), which emphasized scientific management. This research on leadership examined the traits of leaders and viewed leaders as having inborn leadership traits, including intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Northouse, 2001). Frank E.

Spaulding, upon assuming the superintendency of schools in Ware, Massachusetts, in 1895, was in "a confident state of mind," stating, "I had already learned much which I knew would serve me well" (p. 13). Spaulding led in an era in which Cuban (1976, p. 127) identified businessmen and school district superintendents as supporting the expertise of "schoolmen":

> If superintendents could convince lay boards of their expertise,
> professionalism, and the rational approach to decision-making, then few
> boards could challenge them in an era of almost unanimous agreement that
> organizations should be run scientifically and efficiently. Schoolmen
> became experts.

Research during the middle of the 20th century focused around style of leadership and broadened the scope of leadership research to include the behaviors of leaders and what they do in various situations. Studies by Blake and Mouton (1964) identified styles of leadership based on surveys of hundreds of leaders. During the 1960s and 1970s, more leadership theories were introduced that began to examine the ways in which different situations demand different kinds of leadership. Hersey and Blanchard (1969) stressed that leadership is composed of both directive and support dimensions; directive is one-way communication and supportive is two-way communication. Each must be applied appropriately in a given situation. Blanchard's (1985) Situation Leadership–SLII model included four areas related to situational leadership: supportive, delegating, coaching, and directing.

The 1960s and 1970s brought research on contingency, suggesting that effective leadership is contingent on matching a leader's style to the right setting. The leader's effectiveness depends on how well the leader's style fits the context. Fiedler (1967)

developed the 'least preferred coworker scale,' in which an individual scored high if motivated by relationships and low if motivated by tasks. House (1974) stated that effective leaders are those who clarify the paths to attaining goals and help subordinates overcome problems, thereby increasing subordinates' satisfaction and productivity. This formed the foundation for path–goal theory, a reinforcement of change in the subordinate by the leader.

Leadership–member exchange theory as developed by Graen, Haga, and Cashman (1975) is centered in the interactions between leaders and followers. Leaders work differently with followers depending on whether they are members of either in-groups or out-groups, which further define level of influence versus job status. Organizations gain from having leaders who can create good working relationships.

Bass (1985) identified transformational leadership theory which motivates followers to do more than expected by: a) raising followers' levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealized goals; b) getting followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organization; and c) moving followers to address higher level needs. Leaders engage with others and create a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. Taking motivation in a slightly different direction, transactional leadership focuses on the exchange that occurs between leaders and followers. According to Graen (1976), leaders offer something in exchange for performance.

Much of the literature on educational leadership has neither recognized nor included women, though more recently scholars have created literature on women in

leadership. However, the bulk of the literature continues to exclude women of color. School administration and leadership literature continue to be "male dominated and male defined (largely White male), that is explained, conceptualized and seen through the eyes of males" (Mertz & McNeely, 1998, p. 196).

Women in Educational Leadership

Upon assuming the superintendency of the Chicago Public Schools in 1909, Ella Flag Young made the following prediction: "In the near future, we will have more women than men in executive charge of the vast education system" (AASA, 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Seventy-one years would pass before another woman would be selected to lead the Chicago Public Schools, but Flag Young's prediction serves as a reflection of the momentum among women during this period in history. Women were taking on more leadership roles and seeing an increase in opportunities for employment outside the home, especially in the area of teaching.

According to Blount (1998), in the early 1900s women accounted for approximately 70% of teachers, but it was not expected that these same teachers would ascend to top leadership positions in the educational systems where men were employed in large numbers. This past century has presented greater opportunities for women in leadership positions than ever before. According to Getskow (1996), women hold nearly 16% of CEO positions at 453 colleges and universities in the United States (as cited in Alston, 2000). This is in contrast to the public education sector, where the most recent nationwide survey of superintendents conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA, 2000) suggests that not much has changed in the number of

women leading school districts. As Moran (1992) noted, women represent less than 5% of the 15,000 superintendencies and 20% of the principalships across the country. Of the nation's 13,728 district superintendents, the majority are White and male. Fifteen percent are female, and 5% are of racial or ethnic minorities, regardless of sex/gender (Gewertz, 2006).

Shakeshaft (1989) noted that since the beginning of the 19th century, school leadership was dominated by White males, except in the role of the elementary school principal. Up until the late 18th century, teaching was done by men, and when teaching positions became available, they were taken by White women. According to Shakeshaft (1989), few women held administrative positions during the period between 1820–1900, and those who did managed public schools; however, the majority of female administrators at this time founded and led their own schools. By 1928, women held 55% of elementary principalships, 25% of county superintendencies, 8% of secondary principalships, and 1.6 % of district superintendencies (Alston, 2000).

The evolution of women in management and leadership dates back to the 1950s and is characterized by the ebb and flow of women's presence in leadership positions. Brunner (2000) in her book, *Principles of Power, Women Superintendents and the Riddle of the Heart*, reports that the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency despite their dominance in teaching positions is well documented over the years, with 88% to 99% of positions still being held by men. During the 1950s and 1960s, women were considered different from men, while in the 1970s women were considered the same as men. Again, in the 1980s, women were seen as different from men and from the 1990s

to the present day women appear to have been considered the same as men. Much of the research of this period is focused almost exclusively on White women, yet generalized to all women.

The body of research on women and management fits with the emphasis on teamwork in organizations. Brunner's research from the late 1990s to the present concerning women superintendents and women in power presents the following findings: a) women as leaders delegate leadership, b) women are less directive and value teamwork, c) women share power and use consensus in decision making, and d) women view power in relational terms and define power as either "power with" versus "power over" (Northouse, 2001; EdPA 5322 lecture, Fall 2002; EdPA 5001 lecture, Spring 2002).

Black Women in Educational Leadership

According to Brown (2005), the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision played a major role in increasing the underrepresentation of African Americans in school administration. According to Brown (2005), after the Brown decision, "within a 3-year period from 1967–1970 Black principals in North Carolina decreased from 670 to 170, in Alabama from 250–40, and in Louisiana in the period of 1966 to 1971 the number of Black principals decreased from 512 to 363" (p. 586). This was due to the fact that as Black schools closed, their principals did not gain positions in the newly integrated schools.

America's schools have become increasingly diverse, with a number of schools in large urban districts having a majority enrollment of African American students. This

diversity in student population has drawn greater attention to the number of African

American school and district leaders (Brown, 2005). Foster suggested that there is a lack

of African American leaders that can be linked to a shortage of African American

teachers in the leadership pipeline, the rate of recruitment and retention of African

Americans into leadership preparation programs, and the eventual appointment of

African Americans to leadership positions (as reported in Brown, 2005). The majority of

African American leaders are employed in large urban districts where challenges such as

lack of resources, underfunding, teacher certification, and student achievement are

constant challenges. These challenges ultimately have a direct effect on the performance

and tenure of African American leaders. Therefore, it is critical that programs preparing

individuals for leadership positions balance theory with practical experiences so that

participants are prepared for the realities of the position (Brown, 2005).

Black women leaders have defined leadership not only as a service to a school or

an institution, but also as involvement in social change. Historically, Black women took

on roles as community activists, public speakers, and civil and women rights' advocates.

Black women have been the stabilizing and consistent force in communities (Murtadha &

Watts, 2005). Porter reported that The Ohio Literary Ladies Society "probably did more

toward the establishment of schools for Black children than any other group of the time"

(as cited in Giddings, 1984, p. 49). Black leaders drove the building of institutions from

elementary schools to colleges. During the latter part of the 18th century, schools were led

and operated by African American leaders. These institutions—like Selma University,

founded in 1878 and attended by my grandmother—created a mass movement in

education leadership and reinforced the theme of freedom and the importance of education to sustaining freedom (Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

Booker T. Washington, a former slave, embodied the thinking of Black leaders of the period who posited that rather than struggle with Whites over issues of social and political equality, Blacks should work toward economic "competence" that would win the respect of Whites. Washington garnered the support and respect of Whites and Blacks as a leader of his time. Lucy Laney, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Nannie Helen Burroughs were recognized educational leaders who built schools to meet the needs of the Black community. Their leadership, along with the women's club movement and sisterhood organizations, served as a form of educational leadership and worked for social reform and progress. Another leader during this period, Anna Julia Cooper, was one of the few Black individuals allowed to attend Ohio's Oberlin College. She suggested that "the most useful education for Black children helped them to take their proper and honored place in society" (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 600). Cooper believed that education for Black children required "training the mind and empowering the spirit" (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 600). Her views were opposite to those of Booker T. Washington; she felt "the means and ends of education were justified only when there was meaningful purpose fostering in students the ability to think, analyze, and act" (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 600).

The establishment of organizations like the National Council of Negro Women and the Black Women's Baptist Convention focused on education as the foundation to uplift the race. Both organizations supported education through contributions,

fundraising, and political supports. According to Bennett, Nannie Helen Burroughs'

commitment to altering the condition of women coincided with that of many Black

women educators of the time period, illustrating the camaraderie and cooperation among

Black women leaders, who were "working closely together on a national basis, diffusing

their energies among the National Association for Colored Women, the International

Council of Women for the Darker Races, the National Association of Wage Earners, and

various Republican leagues and other organizations" (cited in Murtadha & Watts, 2005,

p. 103).

Organizational and leadership theorists have not attended to contexts and ways in

which African Americans lead. There continues to be a lack of research on women and

people of color by scholars and researchers of leadership. According to English, current

theorists' treatment of Black women in research is inadequate and gives a mere nod to

their existence, which leads to a "deficiency in understanding leadership from the

perspective of diverse cultural groups who fight for an equity society" (as cited in

Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 606). As this dissertation research hopes to address this

deficiency directly, the next section of the literature review focuses on leadership for

success, both historically and currently.

Leading for Success

Historical Perspective

The first part of the century saw "an era of almost unanimous agreement that

organizations should be run scientifically and efficiently; schoolmen became experts"

(Cuban, 1976, p. 127). Successful leaders like Spaulding who assumed the

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superintendency in Ware, Massachusetts, in 1895, were able to "exercise formal authority within a relatively predictable and orderly environment" (Johnson, 1996, p. 4). Spaulding's success would be attributed to his superior administrative skills, due to his ability to gain a "free hand in determining policies and practices, declaring that educational policies should not be imposed on the new superintendent by the board of education" (as quoted in Johnson, 1996, p. 5). Spaulding's work took place during a period in which stability and predictability were the rule. Sixty years after serving as a superintendent, Spaulding acknowledged the current context for leaders would require a more "modern" process with "a committee(s), represented by teachers, parents, students, as well as other groups working democratically" (as quoted in Johnson, 1996, p. 5).

Contemporary Perspective

Today's educational challenges are more complicated than those of the era in which Spaulding led. The "great man theory" of leadership is being redefined in today's context. Leaders today are serving in times that are dynamic and unpredictable, requiring versatility, responsiveness, and resiliency. Earlier studies on leadership identified what Stogdill (1948) referred to as a constellation of traits and characteristics that enable individuals to be successful leaders. However, it is understood that behaviors that work in one district setting may be less successful in another. It then becomes even more important that leaders' qualities, traits, and characteristics should match those of followers, otherwise they will be irrelevant and thus unsuccessful (Johnson, 1996). Johnson (1996) reported that superintendents work within a "set of embedded contexts. Each of these contributes to demands and opportunities for leadership by defining not

only what changes are possible or likely but also how change may be accomplished" (p. 14).

Successful leaders can be defined by their actions and by their unique competencies and skill sets that drive performance (Kowal & Hassel, 2005). Even when leaders are specifically hired to match the needs of an organization, they must take time to study existing cultures before taking actions. Watkins (2003) claimed that the first 90 days of a leader's tenure are the most critical and observed that this is the time leaders have the most influence.

Many empirical research studies in both the business and educational sectors identify effective characteristics of successful leaders (Collins, 2001; Bolman & Deal, 2003; AASA, 2000). Collins (2001) found that Level 5 leaders are those individuals who are disciplined people with disciplined thoughts and disciplined actions. These leaders also a) consistently demonstrate a mix of humility and professional will with a desire to place company achievement ahead of personal success; b) set up successors for success; c) display modes and self-effacing reserve; give others credit for success; d) demonstrate unwavering resolve to improve and sustain success; and e) cultivate Level 5 leadership by providing an example of hard work.

Kotter's (1998) three decades of research identified substance rather than style as key to leadership. He further asserted that "core behavior is key on the job—not surface detail and tactics, a core that changes little over time, across different cultures, or in different industries" (p. 2). Kotter's (1998) research on leadership and change identified four characteristics of effective leaders: 1) deeply interested and passionate about their

area of business; 2) constantly seeking ways to grow and learn so they can further help

their employees and organization grow; 3) willing to take risks; and 4) driven by goals

and/or ideals where the collective achievement of the group is larger than what any single

person could accomplish on his/her own (p. 7). Closing the distance between their current

state and their goals is what motivates them to achieve, as do the eight action-oriented

steps that successful leaders take when creating sustainable change: 1) create a sense of

urgency; 2) put together a strong enough team to direct the process; 3) create an

appropriate vision; 4) communicate the new vision broadly; 5) empower employees to act

on the vision; 6) produce sufficient short-term results to give their efforts credibility and

to disempower the cynics; 7) build momentum and use that momentum to tackle the

tougher change problems; and 8) anchor the new behavior in organizational culture (p. 8).

According to Kotter (1998), having all of these characteristics or strategies separates

successful leaders from mediocre and unsuccessful leaders. Successful superintendents

have all of these characteristics and use these strategies in their daily regimen.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) created eight

general professional standards for the superintendency that provide benchmarks for

improving the selection, preparation, and development of superintendents. However,

these standards have not been without criticism. Cuban (1994) noted the absence of

standards that address accountability for student academic performance, teaching

improvement, and principal performance. Other reformers asserted that the use of these

standards for licensure prevents competent executives in other areas, e.g., business, the

military, and politics, from occupying the position (Kowalski, 2006). The standard

superintendent licensure competencies include: 1) leadership and district culture; 2)

policy and governance; 3) communicative/community relations; 4) organizational

management; 5) curriculum planning/development; 6) instructional management; 7)

human resources management; and 8) leadership values/ethics (AASA, 1993).

Bolman and Deal's (2003) model of four frames of leadership can be used to

assist leaders with analyzing how they spend their time in the operation of the district as

well as analyzing approaches needed to solve problems. The four frames are: 1) structural

frame—emphasizes goals, specialized roles, and formal relationships; 2) human resource

frame—sees the organization as much like an extended family, made up of individuals

with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations; 3) political frame—sees

organizations as arenas, contests, or jungles; 4) symbolic frame—treats organizations as

tribes, theaters, or carnivals. According to Bolman and Deal (2003), "the ability of

leaders to use multiple frames is associated with greater effectiveness for managers and

leaders presenting more than one way to respond to any problems or dilemma" (p. 17).

They further asserted that "leaders often exist in a 'psychic prison' with the inability to

see old problems in a new light or find more promising ways to work on perennial

challenges" (p. 7).

The leadership strategies and approaches above represent business and education

and are different, yet have similarities. Bolman and Deal (2003) found "the ability to use

multiple frames was a consistent correlate of effectiveness in developing a holistic picture

of complex systems" (p. 319). Further, "[e]ffectiveness as a manager was particularly

associated with the structural frame, whereas the symbolic and political frames tended to

be the primary determinants of effectiveness as a leader" (p. 318). Wimpelberg's (1987) research on school principals in "nine effective and nine less effective schools found that principals of ineffective schools relied almost entirely on the structural frame, whereas principals in effective schools used multiple frames" (p. 318). This research further suggests the "primary determinant of success in certain jobs, especially those of chief executives, is political savvy" (p. 319). The matrix below illustrates how these models intersect in concepts and methodology in successful situations:

Table 1.

Matrix Comparing Models of Leadership Style

Bolman & Deal (2003)	AASA (1993)	Kotter (1982)	Collins (2001)
• Structural Frame	• Leadership and district culture • Organizational management • Curriculum planning and development • Instructional management • Leadership values/ethics	• Set goals and policies under conditions of uncertainty	• Confront the brutal facts; (best in world, economic engine); • Technology accelerators; "flywheel," not "doom loop"
• Human Resource Frame	• Human Resource Management	• Motivate, coordinate and control large, diverse group of subordinates	• "Level 5 leadership" • First who, then what
• Political Frame	• Communicative/ community relations • Policy and governance	• Achieve "delicate balance" in allocating scarce resources; get support from corporate staff and other constituents	
• Symbolic Frame		• Develop credible strategic premises; focus on core activities that give meaning to employees	• Never lose faith; hedgehog concept (deeply passionate); culture of discipline

The Superintendency

Research on the superintendency is another body of literature important to framing this study. In recent years, the phrase "school superintendent" has taken on a broader definition than that of the local school district to include positions at the state as well as intermediate district levels (Kowalski, 2006). In 1804, Congress used the term *superintendence* (Cuban, 1988, p. 111). The term *superintendent* was originally used to describe 19th century mill managers, Lutheran church officials, and Methodist church leaders, and it was later used to name leaders of local school districts. The first state superintendent was appointed in New York in 1812. Forty years later, each Northern state and some Southern states had followed the lead of New York by creating state superintendents as well. Today, all states in America have state-level superintendents (Kowalski, 2006). Some are appointed to the position, while others are elected. Appointments and elections vary from state to state. According to Cuban (1988), the first local district superintendent was appointed in 1837 in Buffalo, New York.

The role of the superintendent has evolved over the last century. During the period from 1895 until the early 1900s, school superintendents were considered master teachers. The role of the superintendent began to shift considerably with community and economic demands. According to Kowalski (2006), communities selected superintendents who "looked like leaders"; leadership was a quality that had political merit because the public would view the superintendent as competent. Some superintendents were selected because they were connected to those making the appointment and others because they were male (Kowalski, 2006, p. 131). Callahan

(1962) presented other roles of the superintendent over the last century. According to

Johnson (1996), from the early 1900s until the 1930s, superintendents presented

themselves as "efficiency experts" able to accomplish schools' goals through efficiently

managing human and financial resources. This role would change how schools were

operated due in part to the industrial revolution's influence in what was considered a

"business-dominated, efficiency-conscious society" (p. 178). During this period, school

boards deferred to the judgment of the superintendent.

From the 1930s to the mid-1960s, superintendents began to take on a more

democratic leadership style. Once again the role of the superintendent evolved due to

changes in the environment that resulted in part from the conditions of the country

following the Great Depression and other events such as the civil rights and women's

movements, the Brown v. Board decision, and the Vietnam War. Citizens were no longer

willing to allow decisions to be made in isolation from their individual and group interest;

they wanted to be heard.

From this period to the 1980s, superintendents were expected to understand

scientific inquiry and apply theory to the challenges and practices of education. During

the 1980s through the last part of the century until the present, the superintendent's role

has become more demanding and complex:

> Superintendents work within a set of embedded contexts. Each of these
> contributes to demands and opportunities for leadership by defining not
> only what changes are possible or likely but also how change may be
> accomplished. (Johnson, 1996, p. 14)

For decades, scholars have conducted research studies on the personal leadership

traits of school leaders and how these traits can contribute to individual and school

success. Stogdill (1948, 1974) contended that a constellation of traits enables individuals

to lead, yet these constellations are not known. As Wills (1994) concluded,

> So much for the idea that a leader's skills can be applied to all occasions;
> that they can be taught outside a historical context or learned as a "secret"
> of the control of every situation. A leader whose qualities do not match
> those of potential followers is simply irrelevant; the world is not playing
> his or her game. (p. 67)

Women in the Superintendency

Gender disparities continue to exist in key leadership roles in K–12 school

districts, with no significant change in the patterns between women teaching and leading

schools. This underrepresentation is most evident in the superintendency. According to

Bell and Chase (1993) as well as Shakeshaft (1989), women led 5.6% of K–12 school

districts in 1993 as compared to 1.6% of school districts in 1928.

Several "interrelated conceptual models" adapted from social sciences have

explained the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency:

- *The meritocracy model* is further defined by Hansot and Tyack as

  "internal barriers" (as cited in Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996, p. 82), and by

  Ortiz and Marshall (1988) as "person-centered explanations" (p. 130). All

  three studies explain the underrepresentation as being due to

  "psychological orientation" (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996, p. 643). This

  model assumes that competent people are promoted according to their

  abilities, their personal characteristics, and their traits and individual

  attitudes like confidence and motivation. This often translates into gender

  segregation by role; meritocracy would suggest women are not assertive

enough, they do not want power, they are unwilling to play the game, and they do not apply for the jobs. Shakeshaft (1989) identified this as blame the victim model.

- *The organizational perspective* is further defined by Estler (1975) as a "discrimination model" that turns attention away from the individual to the institution and from emphasis on the internal obstacles to the external obstacles to women's integration into educational leadership roles. It dispels the notion that women act in self-limiting ways, focusing instead on how the institution itself locks women into low power and dead end positions. This model further argues that structural and systemic barriers exist that work against any candidates who are not White males.

- *The women's place model* is further defined by Shakeshaft (1989), who identified the root causes of inequities within the social structure of society. This model points to cultural and social norms that support discriminatory practices. Schmuck (1980, p. 244) explained, "The folkways and norms of the society coincide with different socialization patterns and channel women and men into different areas of work, which are assigned differential pay and status" (as cited in Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996, p. 644). This model further asserts that the lack of women as role models and in positions of authority is based on differences in gender expectations and sociocultural stereotypes about how women look and

behave, which also contribute to underrepresentation of women in the role

of superintendent.

All of these models both provide a broader understanding of why there is an underrepresentation of women in the superintendency and offer insights into why women exit the top leadership position. Glass et al. (2000) posited that women have fewer opportunities "to gain experience in finance, administration, and community relations, areas viewed by 80% of superintendents as essential to their success" (as cited in Kowalski, 2006, p. 320). Glass and colleagues further asserted that this lack of experience and training "in managerial skills is what most often dooms superintendents' tenures, regardless of their sex or race" (Gewertz, 2006, p. 2).

Glass, Bjork, and Brunner's (2000) analysis of the 10-year study of the American school superintendent, a survey conducted by AASA to which 297 out of 2,262 superintendents responded, drew further conclusions regarding the lack of increased representation of women in the superintendent's position:

- *Poorly positioned*: Women are not in positions that normally lead to the superintendency. Seventy-five percent of elementary classroom teachers are women, while nearly the same percentage of superintendents either served in a secondary or central office administrative position before becoming a superintendent. This suggests that secondary school teachers have increased entry points to move into positions that lead to the superintendency.

- *Lack of credentials*: Women tend to be neither as experienced nor as interested in districtwide fiscal management as men. Most school boards claim a keen interest in the instructional program, but see management of fiscal resources to be a critical component of the superintendency. In this area, women in central office have limited experiences.

- *Glass ceiling*: School boards are reluctant to hire women superintendents. Most boards are represented predominantly by men. Eighty-two percent of women superintendents indicated that school board members do not see them as strong managers, while 43% of male superintendents agreed that school boards also view women as incapable of managing a school district. Other reasons for a glass ceiling include: a) women are not gaining superintendent credentials in preparation programs, b) women enter the field of education for different purposes, and c) women enter the profession too late.

- *Personal preferences*: Women are not interested in the superintendency for personal reasons. Superintendents spend more than 50 hours a week working and women often decide not to become a superintendent until they have raised their families due to the demands on the superintendent's time from the community and board members. Careers often include three positions that span up to 17 years.

The study also offered insights into strategies to overcome these challenges to attract women:

- *Change the nature of the superintendency*. Provide district-level support to alter the work load for superintendents so they have more time for critical tasks and family life.

- *Make it possible for women superintendents to excel in what they like to do*. Boards could shift expectations regarding day-to-day budget and fiscal management to an assistant superintendent with more external monitoring and allow more hands-on activities for instructional programs, which will use the superintendent's expertise to improve its performance on high stakes testing.

- *Provide incentives to women to gain the superintendent's certificate*. State-funded yearlong superintendency internships would allow women to gain a close view of the position. The use of carefully chosen mentors might influence more women into the superintendency.

- *Reward districts and search firms for hiring women or minority superintendents*. States could provide financial incentives to districts who hire women. These incentives could include grants to cover first-year salaries.

The challenges faced by a female superintendent do not end with her getting the position. The research suggests that despite greater access by women to these programs, their tenure in the position is tenuous (Christman & McClellan, 2008). The recent departures of African American women from several large school districts has sparked a wave of interest in this top position along with a renewed focus on the role of race and

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gender in the superintendency (Gewertz, 2006). Gewertz's (2006) article, along with my

own experiences in top leadership positions in districts, has compelled me to discover

what it means to be prepared to assume the top leadership position within a district and to

gain a better understanding of what it takes to remain in the position.

Black Women in the Superintendency

According to Revere (1987), the opportunities for Black women to become

superintendents prior to 1956 were limited (as reported in Alston, 2000). Collier-Thomas

(1987) suggested that what representation did exist was "sparse and concentrated in

predominantly southern states where districts served African American populations

exclusively or primarily" (as cited in Kowalski, 2006, p. 321). Though clear

documentation does not exist on Black women in the superintendency prior to 1956,

Revere (1987) revealed that Velma Dolphin Ashley (1944–1956) was likely the first

Black woman superintendent in the country. Barbara Sizemore is recognized as the first

Black woman to be appointed a principal—Chicago Public Schools, 1963—and later the

first Black woman to lead a large urban school district—Washington, D.C., schools,

1972. By 1970, the number of Black women superintendents had increased to three with

further increases noted in subsequent years: 11 Black women school superintendents in

1982, 15 in 1983, 29 in 1984, and 29 in 1985 (Revere, 1985). (See Table 2)

Table 2.

Number of Female Superintendents and African American Female Superintendents Based

on Research Studies (Jackson, 1999, p. 146)

Year	# Districts	# Female Supt.***	Percent*	# Black Female Supt.***	
1910	5,252	329	6.26	n/a	
1970	10,380	71	.68	3	
1982	13,715	241	—	11	(Arnez)
1983	n/a	n/a	—	15	(Ebony)
1985	16,000	—	—	29	(Revere)
1989	11,007	284	6	14	(Bell & Chase)**
1991	10,683	424	5.6	19	(Bell & Chase)
1993	14,000	800	7.1	32	(Jackson)
1995	14,000	800	7.1	45	(Alston)
1996	14,000	800	7.1	33	(Jackson)

*Percent of all superintendents
**Bell and Chase (1993) used only K–12 districts in their studies
***Approximate figures from AASA

More recent data presented by Coleman (2004) at the National Alliance of Black

School Educators demonstrated that the number of Black women superintendents has

increased, but not in proportion to the growth in the superintendency. According to

Coleman, Collins, and Harrison-Williams (2004), Black women represent 114 of the

approximately 15,000 superintendents in the country with Mississippi having the largest

number at 13 and Illinois the second largest number at 11.

Ella Flag Young, who in 1909 became the first female superintendent of the

Chicago Public Schools, was quoted earlier, but this longer quotation documents her

beliefs about the role of women in the superintendency:

> Women are destined to rule the schools of every city. I look for a large
> majority of the big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a
> woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women
> than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. It is a
> woman's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part
> of the work and yet be denied leadership. As the first woman to be placed
> in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no
> mistake has been made and to show cities and friends alike that a woman
> is better qualified for this work than a man. (Blount, 1998, p. 1)

Holding the top leadership position would afford women an opportunity to yield

significant educational influence and develop increasing social, political, and economic

power (Blount, 1998).

This literature review has thus far traced the history of Black education and Black

women's role in it and research on educational leadership, leading for success, and the

superintendency. I now turn to three additional topics that are central to understanding

Black female superintendents' experiences: feminist theory, critical race theory, and

resilience.

Feminist Theory

Not surprisingly, feminist theory is an important area of literature that helped

frame this study of African American female superintendents. Leadership theories

developed during the 19th and 20th centuries focused on males as the prototype of

leadership models and effectiveness, "ignoring the contributions of feminist based

leadership" (Rusaw, 2005, p. 386). The foundation for feminist theory began to take hold

with the civil rights, human rights, and suffrage movements, among other areas (Giddings, 1984). The emergence of feminist leadership theory in the 1960s and 1970s focused on women in management and more androgynous styles of leadership that captured the best of both men's and women's ways of leading.

Feminist theory posits a feminist epistemology of women's experiences that rejects themes shaped and conditioned by males because such themes presume to be gender free, but in fact take the male experience to be the human experience, resulting in a distortion of human social life and human thought (Harding & Hinkikka, 1983). Men have had more formal authority to define gender expectations. They were seen, according to Lips, as "experts who held more high stakes positions, and generally are accorded more credibility, authority, and power than women; men's judgment about most matters, including women, have more impact than women's judgment" (as cited in Lips, 2003, p. 11).

Feminists have different views, but they share the notions that inequalities between men and women should be challenged; that women's experiences and concerns are important; and that women's ideas, behaviors, and feelings are worthy of study in their own right. Condon (1999) noted that some women are uncomfortable with the term 'feminist,' as it is often defined in terms that have been distorted and discredited (as reported in Lips, 2003).

Feminist theory, although no longer defined exclusively by male experts, often focuses on the narrow experiences of White women (Lips, 2003). The power relationships between men and women tend to privilege men; similarly, the power

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relationships between cultural and ethnic groups have privileged the viewpoints of middle-class White women (Lips, 2003). Bartky (1990) referred to this as suffering from double ontological shock: first, the realization that what is really happening is quite different from what appears to be happening; and second, the frequent inability to tell what is really happening at all (p. 199). As early as 1851, Black women attempted to bring attention to their experiences as being different from those of White women. One such example is that of Sojourner Truth, a Black woman raised in slavery who, while in attendance at a women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio, rebuffed the definition of "woman" being used in American debates about women's suffrage (Lips, 2003).

Calas and Smircich (1996) identified seven streams of feminist concepts that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and shaped feminist leadership theory:

- *Liberal feminism*, which evolved from the positivist viewpoint popular in the 18th century, views feminism as a quest for social equality, autonomy, and self-fulfillment;

- In *radical feminism*, the origins of gender domination are social institutions under control of patriarchal structures of power;

- According to *psychosocial feminists*, inequalities of power spring from relationships embedded in social institutions and reproduced in gender socialization relationships;

- *Marxian feminists* observe oppressive inequalities, both economic and social, that are created and reinforced by institutional relationships;

- *Socialist feminists* expound on Marxian victimization of gender to include all individuals marginalized by differences in race, age, disability, and sexual orientation.

- *Post-structuralist/post-modernist feminism* evolved from existing feminist thought and is concerned with contextualized or particularized viewpoints;

Rusaw's (2005) analysis of feminist critique literature about leadership models in studies by Burnier, Gilligan, Hartsock, Mumby, Cox, Crenshaw, Bailey, and Helgeson, identified five themes:

- Differences in interpersonal relationships and constructions of social knowledge

- Commitment to care in leader ethics and relationships. Compassion and social responsibility are seen as necessary to helping others and their environment; it is also necessary to balance aims of social justice.

- Standpoint theory. Feminist theory recognizes different human viewpoints are based on phenomenological or lived experiences. Experiences are articulated from the standpoint of marginalized persons.

- Criticism of dominant organizational power structures. Institutional bias is a main barrier to equitable treatment and equality of opportunity.

- Pluralistic versus singular leadership. Feminist theory focuses on collaborative, interpersonal relationships aimed at higher social purposes. It highlights identifying power in consensus, using mutual influence to set

and achieve goals, heeding multiple viewpoints in decision making, and

achieving equality based on shared lived experiences.

Rusaw (2005) concluded in her review of feminist leadership theory that "future

research could provide a critical analysis of seeing through the 'Glass Ceiling'—feminist

views of values in career success" (p. 390).

Critical Race Theory

Another literature with the potential to frame this study is critical race theory.

Research by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced critical race theory as a

"powerful theoretical and analytical framework within educational research." The theory

challenges claims of objectivity, color blindness, neutrality, and meritocracy while

embracing the concepts of "naming one's own reality" or "voice" in educational research

where form and substance are closely connected through counter-storytelling (p. 56). In

response to what was considered a failure of legal studies to "adequately address the

effects of race and racism in U. S. jurisprudence," legal scholars Bell, Delgado, and

Freeman identified critical race theory as a means of "focusing directly on the effects of

race and racism, while simultaneously addressing the hegemonic system of White

supremacy on the 'meritocratic' system while also focusing on change and social justice"

(DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 27). According to Delgado (1995), there are at least three

reasons for naming one's own reality in legal discourse:

1. Much of reality is socially constructed;

2. Stories provide members of out-groups a vehicle for psychic self-
   preservation;

3. The exchange of stories from teller to listener can help overcome ethnocentrism and the conviction of viewing the world in one way.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) had earlier presented other reasons for "naming one's own reality":

1. *The psychic preservation of marginalized groups*. Storytelling allows members from minority groups to move away from self-condemnation and to heal wounds of pain caused by racial oppression;

2. *The impact to the oppressor*. Dominant groups construct stories that justify their power and maintain their privilege. Stories by people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar racism.

DeCuir and Dixon (2004) also identify counter-storytelling among four other prominent tenets of critical race theory that can be helpful and illuminating in educational research:

1. *The permanence of racism*: acceptance of racism as having had a dominant and permanent role in American society.

2. *Whiteness as property*: analysis of the history of race and racism in the United States and the role jurisprudence has played in reifying the conception of race, the notion that Whiteness can be considered a property interest.

3. *Interest convergence*: notion that civil rights gains were superficial "opportunities" because they were basic tenets of U.S. democracy and granted only inasmuch as they converged with the self-interests of Whites.

4. *Critique of liberalism*: examination of three basic notions embraced by liberal legal ideology:

    a.   *Colorblindness*: ignoring race and racism's persistence and permanence in the construction of people of color as *Other*.

    b.   *The neutrality of the law*: equal opportunity for all, regardless of race.

    c.   *Incremental change*: Gains for marginalized groups must come at a slow pace that is palatable for those in power; discourse supports equality, rather than equity (pp. 27–29).

Resilience

The study of social sciences dates back to the last century; however, the study of resiliency—the understanding of "human adaptability"—is a relatively new focus of study in the area of psychology. Whereas most research on resilience has focused on children and adolescents, increasing numbers of studies are beginning to surface on the topic of the resilience of adults who are exposed to personal and work-related stress. This research has implications for the study of Black female superintendents.

In Langston Hughes' (1922) poem, "Mother to Son," a mother shares her life experiences with her son and encourages him to persevere even when times are tough:

> Well, son, I'll tell you:
> Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
> It's had tacks in it,
> And splinters,
> And boards torn up,
> And places with no carpet on the floor—
> Bare.
> But all the time

I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair. (Hughes, 1922)

The crystal stair, a metaphor for the mother's life, includes strong imagery to provide motivation. The experience of women who reach the top leadership positions in schools has been as challenging as the climb expressed in the poem, and those who have made the climb define the concept of resilience.

A review of the literature shows that resiliency theory traces its origins to schizophrenia research led by Norman Garmez and has expanded its contemporary scope across many social, medical, educational, and commercial contexts. The research and interest in resiliency theory have created challenges for those interested in understanding the complex nature of the construct. An increasing number of books, articles, and citations in various search engines have only added to what Maluccio (2002) refers to as a "many-splendored construct" (p. 596). Benard (2004) reported that a review of social science indices in the 1980s revealed searches for "resilience" and its derivatives 24 times. The 1990s revealed 735 references, and the current database contains double the 1990's number of total entries.

Writers have used the term *resiliency* to describe everything from panty hose that do not run and athletic teams that rebound to individuals who persevere and organizations

that bounce back. According to Saleebey (2002), resiliency refers to the practice of operating with a strength perspective, which stresses the capabilities, assets, and positive attributes of human beings rather than focusing on their weaknesses or pathologies. Bonanno and Galea (2007) defined adult resilience as "the ability of adults in otherwise normal circumstances who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disruptive event such as the death of a close relation or a violent or life-threatening situation, to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning... as well as the capacity for generative experiences and positive emotions" (pp. 20–21). Bonanno (2004) defined it as "an individual's capacity to resist maladaptation in the face of risky experiences" (as cited in Roisman, 2005, p. 264). The American Psychology Association's practice directorate (APA, 2002), in a study of the responses of individuals who have experienced terrorism, defined resiliency as "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors" (p. 1). In short, resiliency is "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

Block (1993), through his study of psychology, noted the various ways of characterizing "human adaptability" and its constructions like "ego-strength," "coping," "self-efficacy," "resilience," and "emotional intelligence," among others (p. 3). Thorndike (1904) coined the term "Jingle Fallacy" to describe when two phenomena that are different are labeled the same or equivalent. Block (1993) used the term "hardiness" as an example to describe "a measure based on responses to a questionnaire, and measure based on infrequency of physical health problems" (p. 4). Kelly (1927) later created the

term *Jangle Fallacy* to describe two labels with different names labeled the same. The alternate labels of "adaptability" create a challenge for understanding the various terminologies and whether they are a result of differences in conceptualization or more a "Jangle Fallacy." For purposes of this study, the definition consistently used in this review is delineated in Chapter 1.

Much debate among researchers continues in regard to the definition of the construct of resiliency. Greene (2002) identified the following common themes throughout the research on resiliency:

- Resilience can be viewed as a complex interplay between certain characteristics of individuals and their broader environments;

- Resilience consists of a balance between stress and the ability to cope;

- Risk factors that stem from multiple stressful life events and protective factors that ameliorate or decrease the negative influence of risk contribute to resilience;

- Resilience is dynamic. It depends on life context;

- Resilience is developmental. Being successful strengthens a person's competence.

- Resilience is most important at life transitions.

The study of resiliency dates back to the 1940s and 1950s during a period when much of the focus of psychology was on mental disorder. Garmesky, a researcher studying schizophrenia, began to notice a difference in how the children of schizophrenics responded to having a mentally ill parent. Revich and Shatte (2002) noted

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that the National Institutes of Health targeted increased resources to researchers who would focus their research on mental illness and to explore and document its many varieties (as reported in Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). The term *resiliency* began to be used to describe how individuals used various coping strategies to survive risk factors such as poverty and family dysfunction, among others. This narrow definition positioned resiliency as a deficit model, one that explained how "people would narrow the gap between their adversity and what they needed to function in survival mode" (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p. 1).

In 1998, the American Psychological Association, led by Martin Seligman, shifted away from the deficit model and began to describe resiliency as a positive psychology, one that supports strength as its foundation. Werner and Smith (1992) published "Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood," which chronicled 30 years of research that traced the childhood to adulthood lives of individuals who had experienced adversities such as extreme poverty or family dysfunctions like divorce, alcoholism, or mental illness. The study revealed that many of the high risk children succeeded and took advantage of the opportunities available to them after high school; this led researchers to determine that "people faced with chronic or crisis adversity can rise above the survival mode, transition through the recovery mode, and find the necessary strength to grow into resilience" (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p. 2).

Much research has followed and supports the premise that resilience can be both learned and taught. Longitudinal studies have shown that some children who come from at-risk families may need interventions to be successful in life while others from the same

background will become competent adults. Benard (1991) found that resilient children have four basic attributes:

- *Social competence*: the ability to elicit positive responses from others, thus establishing positive relationships with both adults and peers;

- *Problem-solving skills*: planning that facilitates seeing oneself in control and resourcefulness in seeking help from others;

- *Autonomy*: a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over one's environment; and

- *A sense of purpose and future*: goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future.

Benard (1991) also suggested that resilient children have key protective factors:

- *A caring environment*: at least one adult who knows the child well and cares deeply about the well being of that child;

- *Positive expectations*: high, clearly articulated expectations for each child and the purposeful support necessary to meet those expectations; and

- *Participation*: meaningful involvement and responsibility.

Information from this research on children can inform research on adults. Drawing upon and using strength as an emphasis, resiliency theory can help leaders use their personal assets to move ahead when faced with adversity. Block's (1993) longitudinal study began in 1969 with 130 subjects from nursery school children to young adults. The study focused on ego-control and ego-resilience at ages 3, 4, 5, 7, 14, 18, and 23. Block defined ego-control as "the degree and kind of control individuals exert

over their impulses" and ego-resilience as "an individual's ability to modify their [sic] characteristic level of ego-control" (Block, 1993, p. 5). He further explained that an ego-resilient person "tends to be resourceful and adaptive when confronted by new situations" (Block, 1993, p. 5). His findings related to gender may have a connection to women and how they are socialized.

A review of the literature on resilience and resiliency identified several resilience models or frameworks to assist with the understanding of how resiliency factors in one's life. This paper will present a few of these models to illustrate how the study of resiliency continues to be researched and applied.

Patterson and Kelleher (2005) identified three dimensions of resilience (Figure 1): (1) interpretation of current adversity and future possibility; (2) capacity to tackle adversity; and (3) actions needed to become more resilient in the face of adversity. They also identified four phases in a resilience cycle that school leaders move through when faced with adversity. The model begins with a disruption to "normal conditions" with the understanding that not all disruptions may qualify as adversity (Figure 2):

- *Stage One: Deteriorating*: Everyone encounters this stage in the cycle; an unhealthy phase in which to remain, although it can promote healthy discourse if the anger and frustration are constructively handled. This phase should be temporary. If one continued in this phase, functioning at a professional level would be difficult.

- *Stage Two: Adapting*: reverse trajectory upward, "bounce back" stage in which personal actions are taken to turn things around. Reduced anger,

confronting denial, and assuming less of a victim role are necessary

transitional steps to a better place. Those who plateau at this stage end up

in survival mode; survival is necessary but should not be considered the

final step.

- *Stage Three: Recovering*: return to status quo, to how things were prior to

  adversity. Plateauing at the status quo leads back to adequate functioning,

  but it does not lead to growth from the experience and the possible lessons

  that adversity teaches.

- *Stage Four: Growing*: learning from adversity and moving to a sustained

  level of strength and resilience. Each phase is surpassed and individuals

  transcend to a level where they begin to flourish because of the crisis.

  According to Pearsall, "We thrive when we surpass and transcend our

  prior level of functioning, regain and even accelerate our upward

  psychological trajectory, and seem to have mentally and emotionally

  benefited from our suffering" (as cited in Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p.

  15).

THE RESILIENCE CYCLE
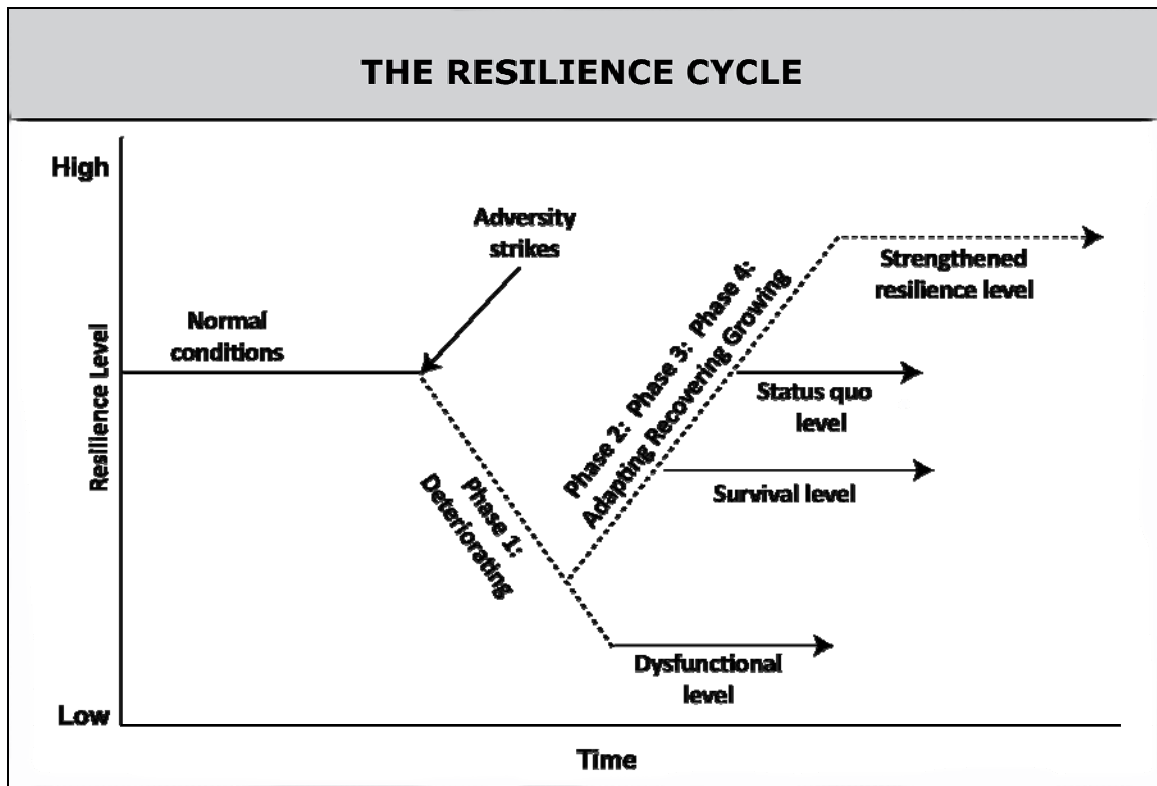
Figure 2. The resilience cycle. (Patterson & Keller, 2005)

Patterson and Kelleher (2005) posit that a person's "level of optimism (or pessimism) serves as a filter for interpreting adversity that strikes" and that "interpretation of adversity directly affects your response to the adversity and your overall resilience" (p. 19).

Both Sophocles and Nietzche argued that optimism "prolongs human suffering" and "that it was better to face cold, pessimistic facts of reality and get on with one's life" (as cited in Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p. 20). Current research by Carver and Scheier (2003), as well as others, reflected a shift from this early definition of optimism to one of "a trait possessed by all people to varying degrees" (as cited in Patterson & Kelleher,

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2005, p. 20). More recent research on optimism by Seligman demonstrated that optimism can be learned and, according to Reivich and Shatte (2002), strengthened (as reported in Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Optimism research includes the following:

1. Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn (2003) found that optimistic individuals have better social relationships as well as higher levels of physical health, academic and athletic performance, recovery from illness and trauma, pain tolerance, self-efficacy, and flexibility in thinking (as reported in Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p. 21).

2. Optimists see adversity as a challenge, transform problems into opportunities, put in hours to refine schools, persevere in finding solutions to difficult problems, maintain confidence, rebound quickly after setbacks, and persist (as reported in Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p. 21).

3. Luthans (2002) found that optimists are easily motivated to work harder, are more satisfied and have higher morale, have high levels of motivational aspiration and set stretch goals, persevere in the face of obstacles and difficulties, analyze personal setbacks as temporary, and tend to feel upbeat and invigorated both physically and emotionally (as reported in Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p. 21).

Table 3 presents the key questions and focused areas that, according to Patterson and Kelleher (2005, pp. 19–20), affect people's optimism.

Table 3.

Key Questions and Focused Areas that Affect Optimism

Key Questions	Focused Areas
1. What is past and current reality?	1. What are my expectations for success?
2. What assumptions do I hold about reality?	2. What will be the focus of my efforts?
3. What are the causes of the current adversity, including my own contribution?	
4. What are the risks posed by the adversity?	
5. What are future possibilities?	
6. What is my ability to influence future events?	

The questions are the "interpretation filter that is activated to make sense of past and current reality as well as future possibilities that grow out of present adversity" (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p. 22). The Pessimism–Optimism Scale further illustrates how optimism/pessimism relates to an individual's resilience (Table 4).

Table 4.

Pessimism–Optimism Scale (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005)

Category	Unrealistic Pessimists	Realistic Pessimists	Realistic Optimists	Unrealistic Optimists
Interpretation of reality				
Assumptions about reality	Deny that the assumptions are true	Acknowledge that the assumptions are true, magnify their negative impact, and see them as barriers	Acknowledge that the assumptions are true and refuse to accept them as barriers	Dismiss the assumptions as insignificant to progress
Causes of current reality	Find other people and forces totally at fault	Accept some responsibility, but primary cause is others	Accept responsibility for their contribution to the current reality	Assume that they know the causes, but don't invest the time to assess reality accurately
Risks posed by current reality	Greatly overestimate the risks caused by adversity	Understand the risks and place undue weight on the negative	Accurately assess the risks by striving to have enough data to judge	Discount the risks and refuse to see how they may jeopardize the future
Interpretation of future possibilities				
Ability to influence future	Refuse to see how they can make any difference	Believe that any difference they may possibly make won't be worth the personal effort	Believe strongly that they can positively influence the future, within certain constraints	Assume that they will, without a doubt, have a major influence on the future

(cont.)

Category	Unrealistic Pessimists	Realistic Pessimists	Realistic Optimists	Unrealistic Optimists
Table 4. (cont.)				
Expectations for future success	Can't see any possibility for a positive future	Hold low expectations that anything good will happen	Believe that good things may happen, but it will require a lot of work	Assume that the best-case outcomes will happen
Focus of future efforts	Focus exclusively on worst-case outcomes	Heavily emphasize the negative side of the problem	Acknowledge problems, but choose to emphasize the positive possibilities	Focus only on perfect solutions

Much research has been conducted on the characteristics of resilient adults. Konrad and Bronson (1997) revealed that resilient people "have a sense of humor and alternative ways of looking at things" and "have a sense of purpose and high expectations (for themselves, or someone has high expectations for them)" (p. 188). Blechman and Culhane found that resilient people "have good prosocial coping skills" and "deal with challenges well regardless of controllability" (as cited in Konrad & Bronson, 1997, p. 189).

Benard and Marshall (1997) developed the Framework for Tapping Natural Resilience based on their combined knowledge about the capacity of children and adults for healthy functioning. The foundation for tapping resilience begins with the leader's belief about human functioning and the natural capacity for resilience. Their work in scientific resilience research led to the development of a planning framework with five components:

- *Belief.* Are all children, youth, and adults at promise even if they do not realize it?

- *Conditions of empowerment.* What are the conditions of empowerment revealed by research and best practice?

- *Program strategies.* What program strategies and approaches will create conditions that tap resilience?

- *Evaluation, individual outcomes.* What results can we realistically expect for children, youth, and adults when we tap resilience?

- *Evaluation, societal outcomes*. What happens at family, organizational, community, or societal levels?

The resiliency model developed by Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, and Kumpfer (1990) demonstrated that when stressors, adversity, and risks are present, individual and environmental protective factors can act as buffers. Three critical messages are suggested in this model: a) disruption and dysfunction are not automatic outcomes of adversity; b) an initial dysfunctional reaction to adversity does not have to be permanent; and c) resiliency over time can lead to positivism and meaning from encounters with stress and other adversities. Resilience reintegration is the positive growth or adaptation via disruption as opposed to the one-dimensional definition to bounce back. Increased energy toward growth and improvement is a requisite for resilient integration; according to resiliency theory, this increased energy is innate resilience (Richardson, 2002).

Richardson (2002) offered a resiliency model with four key areas as foundational paradigms exemplifying benefits:

1. Clients have the choice of personal growth in the wake of their disruptions. Immediate outcomes of disruptions that are characterized by hurt, loss, guilt, or fear bring an awareness and opportunity to connect with one's resilience. True resilient reintegration may be the strengthening of one's union with her or his spiritual source of strength.

2. Enriching planned disruptions may be the solutions to stagnation. Clients will be able to see that after taking "leaps of faith" into disruptions, there is the opportunity for resilient integration.

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3. Clients can become process oriented by looking for the "silver lining" as they work through disruptions and reintegration.

4. Finding meaning and purpose in disruptions helps value experiences.

This study's focus is on successful Black women superintendents and their ability to be resilient when faced with a disruption to the normal conditions in which they work. It must first be acknowledged that these disruptions or adversities may be along a continuum of "extremes," depending upon the "significance" attributed to the disruption. The conditions under which a superintendent works and the nature of the superintendent's role may be different from that of an elementary school principal, so for purposes of this study the litmus test for adversity is defined by the relative experience of the individual (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005).

After reviewing numerous articles on resilience and several resiliency models in this literature review, Patterson and Kelleher's (2005) resiliency cycle serves as a comprehensive framework for understanding how Black women superintendents perceive their experiences as superintendents from a resiliency perspective. With the limited opportunities for Black women to gain access to the superintendency and the constant challenges to the position, how does the Black female superintendent become resilient within the complex context of being Black and female?

Conclusion

As far back as the late 1800s, the office of school superintendent has been recognized as the most influential position in public education. Political pressures and social forces have shaped the role of the superintendent and the public's image of the

position. Consequently, the position has evolved from teacher–scholar to applied scientist to communicator (Kowalski, 2006). Cuban (1976) acknowledged that as each new role emerged, expectations waxed and waned, but none became irrelevant.

Grounded in history, this review of the literature has focused on research related to educational leadership and the superintendency, with women and African American women as critical subtexts. The review also included feminist and critical race theory, as well as resiliency theory. In most cases, the review of research did not reveal consistent or comprehensive studies that acknowledged or included the experiences of African Americans.

Leaders across the state and the country are faced with multiple challenges to improve student achievement, close the achievement gap, collaborate with external partners, maintain a strong finance and operations management, and manage day-to-day crises, among others. How an individual manages these complex challenges and how she develops the capability and confidence to weather such storms is related to her ability to be resilient.

Black female superintendents are faced with the same challenges as other superintendents. However, they must also review the critical factors necessary for them to understand how to deal with these challenges in order to keep the leadership position and emerge from the experience with greater resiliency and strength to face even more constant challenges.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methods

A qualitative research design that employed the use of interviews was used to explore the experiences and perspectives of African American female school superintendents in regard to resiliency in the face of adversity. Qualitative methods allow for a more nuanced understanding of the phenomena being studied and are not intended to result in generalization of information to a population (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). This chapter presents a rationale for the study design and describes the methodology used to conduct this study, including specific procedures employed for sampling, instrumentation, data collection, data organization, and data analysis. The methods employed were intentionally crafted to address the following research questions:

- In what ways do African American females respond to barriers and adversity in their role as superintendents?

- What specific processes or strategies do African American female superintendents employ to overcome adversity? Racism and sexism?

- How do African American female superintendents develop the confidence and resiliency to manage the complex challenges of their districts? and

- What motivates African American females to remain in the position of superintendent?

Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry

Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social

or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). Creswell (1998) further posited qualitative inquiry as a legitimate mode of human and social science exploration that is unique to study design and "takes the reader into the multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it in all of its complexity" (p. 15). In 1964, Kerlinger's treatise on research designs presented the distinction among various types of quantitative research (as reported in Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research is now viewed as having reached the same level of maturation as quantitative research, due in part to the clear link between the qualitative traditions to specific disciplinary research designs (Creswell, 1998). Further, Creswell (1998, p. 17) offers the following considerations to guide decisions about whether qualitative methods are an appropriate choice for particular study topics and questions:

- *The nature of the research question*. Research questions often start with *how* or *what*, which also assist with describing occurrences over the course of the research.

- *The topic needs to be explored*. Variables cannot be easily identified, theories are not available to explain behavior of participants or their population of study, and theories need to be developed.

- *The need to present a detailed view of the topic*. The wide-angle lens or the distant panoramic shot will not suffice to present answers to the problem, or the close-up view does not exist.

- *The need to study individuals in their natural setting.* This involves going out into the field of study to gain access and gather materials.

- *The interest in writing in a literary style.* The pronoun "I" is used as the writer engages in a storytelling form of narration.

- *The amount of sufficient time and resources* to be spent on data collection and analysis.

- *The audiences are receptive to qualitative research.* This includes graduate advisors to publication outlets and editors.

- *The researcher's role as an active learner* who can tell the story from the participants' view rather than that as an "expert" who passes judgment on participants (pp. 17–18).

Of these eight considerations, there are several of particular relevance to the present study: the nature of the research question—all of the research questions begins with *how* and *what*; the amount of sufficient time and resources—all of the superintendents who participated in this study are busy school leaders and several of the interviews had to be rescheduled due to unexpected events; the audiences are receptive to qualitative research—the experience of Black female superintendents is not a story that is being told, therefore, the interest is widespread; the researcher's role as an active learner—the ability to interview a group of individuals with experiences that are not often told becomes a learning experience for the researcher.

Sample

Sample sizes in qualitative studies are typically smaller than those in quantitative research. Purposeful sampling is often employed as it involves intentional selection of participants who are likely to share rich information with respect to the study purpose (Patton, 2002). Creswell (1998) defines a target population as a "group of individuals with some common defining characteristics that the researcher can identity and study" (p. 145). The target population for this study was African American female school superintendents. The participants were selected to participate in this study based on their experience profile and relevance to the research problems and questions.

To identify qualifying participants, the Directory of African American Superintendents was obtained from the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), an organization known to have the most comprehensive list of African American superintendents. According to a presentation at the 2007 NABSE conference, African American female superintendents nationwide represent less than 1% of the total number of superintendents. Specifically sought were African American female superintendents nationally who met the following qualifying characteristics considered for this study:

- African American women superintendents currently practicing in pre-K–12 school districts; and
- Experience as superintendent in at least two separate school districts.

The study of African American female superintendents who meet the criteria above were specifically identified as women who had the potential to provide an in depth

understanding of ways to respond to and rebound from adversity. It was expected that the population and sample for the study would be small due to the small number of African American female superintendents, especially given the additional criterion of having served in two school districts as superintendents.

The researcher reviewed the directory and identified names of female origin as well as names that could be female or male; for example, names with initials only or names that were gender neutral. The district website for each of the potential study participants was accessed to determine whether the superintendent was female and was still in active employment. In the case of superintendents who were no longer at the district but were listed in the directory, a web search was conducted to determine the gender and active employment status of the superintendent. Of the 114 women on the NABSE list, 12 were identified as meeting the selection criteria and subsequently were invited to participate in the study.

The 12 African American female pre-K–12 superintendents who were identified as meeting the selection criteria for participation in the study were sent, by means of the U.S. Postal Service, and also by emailing, a cover letter (See Appendix A) that described the purpose and significant of the study. A letter of informed consent (see Appendix B) also was sent. Eight of the 12 superintendents confirmed their desire to participate in the study. Interviews could be scheduled, however, with only 6 of the 8 consenting superintendents. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of each study participant. Letters of informed consent were signed and returned to the researcher.

Instrumentation

Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit, "Interviews allow us to find out what is *in* and *on* someone else's mind, to gather their stories" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Qualitative interviews were conducted with 6 African American female superintendents.

Patton (2002) identified three basic approaches for collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews: 1) the formal conversational interview, 2) the general interview guide approach, and 3) the standardized open-ended interview. According to Patton (2002), a general interview guide approach identifies "the questions or issues that will be explored during the interview," and it ensures that "the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation" (p. 343). For these reasons, the general interview guide approach was selected for use in this study. Interviews yielded in-depth information that aided in developing an understanding of the experiences and views of African American female school superintendents, in particular ways they continue to be motivated to serve their communities.

An interview protocol (see Appendix C) with questions created from themes identified in the literature review was used for interviews. The general areas of inquiry were: strengths, challenges, and resiliency. Prior to conducting the interviews with consenting participants, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with an African American female superintendent who was not participating in the study in order to confirm the functionality, feasibility, and ease of response for each question. Given the feedback provided by the pilot superintendent, the researcher decided to inform the study

participants that more time would be needed for the interview. More time was allotted so the interview study participants could talk more informally at the end of the interview about topics not covered under the study, if they so desired. More time also was viewed as necessary to allow more probing, with an intentional focus on connections to race and gender on each of the relevant questions.

Data Collection

As mentioned previously, there were 12 African American female preK–12 superintendents who were identified as meeting the selection criteria for participation in the study. Only 6 of the 12, however, were able to schedule time for the interview. Individual interviews were conducted with each of the 6 participants by means of Skype.

At the beginning of each interview, the study participant was thanked for participating, provided information about the significance of the study, informed that the session was being taped, and reassured that information would be kept confidential. Each interview was disc-recorded to ensure accuracy of the data collected. Using the general interview guide described above, questions were asked in sequential order to aid in identifying themes from the data. Frequently, however, responses flowed in ways that varied from the original sequence but that were meaningful and connected for the respondent. When appropriate, probing questions were used to gain additional data that led to a deeper understanding of the information reported. At the end of each interview, study participants were asked if they had further questions about the study, including ways in which data would be organized, presented, and used. They were then thanked

again for their time and participation. Each interview lasted between 1 hour and 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

The researcher collected each participant's interview on a CD using Skype. Each study participants was assigned a pseudonym for anonymity. Verbatim transcripts from each interview were created, saved as a Microsoft Word document, and then imported into the qualitative software package QSR NUD*IST. Copies of each transcript were sent to each participant inviting them to comment and make additions or other changes as they viewed appropriate. None of the participants responded to this invitation with either changes or concerns.

The researcher reviewed each transcript to gain a holistic understanding of each superintendent's story in order to discern themes identified in the literature review, as well as emergent themes related to the resiliency framework or additional topics shared as relevant by the interviewee. Data were organized and analyzed with the aid of QSR NUD*IST. Nodes were created with themes identified in the research and across the 6 interviews. Topics included assets/strengths, challenges/barriers, resilience, and motivation. Data categorization assisted the researcher with analyzing responses within and across each interviews. Findings that emerged from the analysis were captured using descriptive writing.

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Delimitations and Limitations

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This study purposely focused on an extremely small population of educational leaders: African American female superintendents who were currently in

superintendencies in American preK–12 school districts and who had also had experience as superintendents in at least two separate districts. Other African American superintendents—those who were male, those who were not currently serving as superintendent, and those who had not held a superintendency in more than one district—were excluded from the sample. This specificity led to an important limitation of the study. Of the 12 superintendents who were invited to participate, 8 confirmed their desire to participate in the study, but for a variety of reasons only 6 interviews (50% of the population) were ultimately completed. The consistency of the 6 interviews suggests that this small number may not have been an insurmountable concern, but it is not clear how the 6 superintendents who agreed to participate differed from those who did not, which is a serious limitation. The fact that the researcher was herself a member of the population points to the potential value of the existing interview data.

Another limitation stems from the interviews that were conducted. First, the researcher conducted only one interview of each superintendent, a minimal amount of data, though getting even that time was a major feat. Second, the fact that the interviews were conducted on Skype, rather than in a face-to-face format, may have limited the interviews' outcomes. On the one hand, the value of being in the same room with an interviewee stems from the interpersonal interaction and the chance to observe subtle details that may not come across in an electronic format. On the other hand, feasibility demanded that Skype be used as the data could not otherwise have been collected. The dearth of extant research documenting the lived experiences of Black female

superintendents suggested the importance of collecting as much data as possible in any manner possible.

A final limitation of the study stems from its use of psychological resiliency theory and research that has historically been focused on youth and adolescents. An assumption was made that concepts of resiliency would apply to the population of African American female superintendents, and, indeed, they appeared to help explain the experiences described.

CHAPTER 4

Review of the Results

This chapter presents a comprehensive set of findings that resulted from interviews with African American female school superintendents. The purpose of the study was to examine resiliency in the context of the superintendency of African American females in K–12 public school systems. This study asked African American females to recall how they responded to barriers and adversity in their respective roles as superintendents. They were also invited to identify processes or strategies employed to overcome institutional sexism and racism. They were asked how they developed the confidence and resiliency to manage the complex challenges of their districts. Finally, they were asked to share what grounds them and motivates them to remain in the position of school superintendent.

Participants

Twelve African American female superintendents of K–12 school districts in the United States met the criteria for this study—that is, they had served as superintendent in two school districts. Six of them completed interviews. Of the 6 who did not participate, 2 were no longer superintendents, 1 declined to participate due to district responsibilities, 1 was involved in a car accident and was on medical leave, and the latter 2 individuals had committed to participate in the study but ultimately were not able to do so. It is not surprising that only half of the initially identified sample were able to participate due to such extreme time constraints inevitable in the work. Due to the relatively small number of African American female superintendents in this country, each participant was

assigned a pseudonym to protect her identify. To further protect participants from being identified, information on age, marital status, and other demographic and work history was not requested as a part of this study. Five of the six participants have doctoral degrees and one is a doctoral candidate.

According to Brown (2005), a majority of African American leaders are employed in large urban districts where challenges such as lack of resources, underfunding, teacher certification, and student achievement are constant. The African American female superintendents included in this study, however, were situated in a more varied array of locales that included urban, suburban, rural, and county school districts. Regardless of district locale, however, responses indicate that each of the superintendents in this study has experienced similar challenges. Most of the districts led by the study participants were racially and economically diverse.

African American Female Superintendents' Profiles

Below are the profiles of the 6 African American female K–12 school superintendents who served as participants in this study. The profiles begin with a general description of each superintendent including her response to being asked for three words that describe her. After introducing all of the superintendents through these profiles, their collective, sometimes varied, responses to four research questions are presented.

Interviewee #1: Dr. Abigail Myles

"I'm energetic. I'm smart because you've got to be smart to do this job. You absolutely have to be on your toes and I love children." Dr. Myles was leading her third school district after being a superintendent in the Midwest and in another district in the

South. She entered a prestigious training program for superintendents and took her first leadership position in a small suburban school district.

Interviewee #2: Dr. H. B. Lundy

"I'm hardworking, relational, and dedicated. I also have a deep belief in the capacity of education to be transformative in children's lives and in the community well-being." Dr. Lundy was leading her fourth school district after serving as superintendent in the Midwest and in the South. She began her career in a small suburban school district. Dr. Lundy serves on the executive board of several national organizations.

Interviewee #3: Superintendent Claudia Nelson

"I'm creative, persistent and passionate." Superintendent Nelson was a new superintendent in the South having served as superintendent in a district in the Midwest. She is completing a doctorate in educational leadership and policy.

Interviewee #4: Dr. Bennice Webster

"Knowledgeable, well-organized, personable." Dr. Webster accepted a third superintendent's position in the East that began in July 2010 after serving as the superintendent in another Eastern school district.

Interviewee #5: Dr. Deborah Fields

"Courageous, passionate, and competent." Dr. Fields was serving in her third superintendent's position. She entered a prestigious training program for superintendents and took the top leadership position soon after graduating. She has served as superintendent in the Southern and Eastern regions of the United States.

Interviewee #6: Dr. Ester Hoskins

"Tenacious, knowledgeable, and courageous." Dr. Hoskins was serving in her second superintendent's position. She is the only study participant who served in a leadership position at the state level and K–12 level.

Each of the superintendents who participated in this study shared that they enjoyed and benefited from the love, support, and encouragement of their families. Four of the 6 superintendents were born in the South and one was born outside the continental United States. Each superintendent shared that her religious faith provides balance and strength to lead her K–12 organization. All of the superintendents identified opportunities to mentor aspiring superintendents as well as serve on various local and national boards. They are also affiliated with a host of professional and community organizations that work to promote public education. While each superintendent set aside time to participate in the interview, 2 of the 6 were more open in sharing their personal experiences and stories. When asked questions about the situations in which they have been resilient, they were quick to share stories that were deeply personal during which their conversational styles were more relaxed and less guarded.

Table 5.

Summary Profile: Matrix Comparing Characteristics of Interviewees

	Superintendent Pseudonym	Doctoral Degree	Traditional Advancement*	Three-Word Description
Interviewee #1	Abigail Myles	X	X	Energetic, Smart, Sharp
Interviewee #2	H.B. Lundy	X	X	Hardworking, Relational, Dedicated
Interviewee #3	Claudia Nelson		X	Creative, Persistent, Passionate
Interviewee #4	Bennice Webster	X	X	Knowledgeable, Well-organized, Personable
Interviewee #5	Deborah Fields	X	X	Courageous, Passionate, Competent
Interviewee #6	Ester Hoskins	X	X	Tenacious, Knowledgeable, Courageous

*Traditional advancement is defined as advancing through the role of teacher, principal, associate superintendent, other district leadership, and superintendent.

Responses to Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine ways by which African American female superintendents in K–12 public school systems become resilient and persevere in the face of adversity. Below is a collective set of findings drawn across all participants related to each of the four research questions.

Research Question #1: In what ways do African American females respond to barriers and adversity in their role as superintendents?

The 6 African American female superintendents who participated in this study reported being frequently presented with challenges, barriers, and adversities. As evidence of this on a small scale several of the original interview times were rescheduled due to emergencies or events that required the immediate attention of the superintendent with often rapid decision making and communications.

Each superintendent was asked to share a particularly challenging situation and ways in which she responded. The situations described were diverse, involving discipline, adults' abuse of power, public scrutiny, and personal attacks. The strategies for approaching the situations, however, were consistent. The superintendents used prior experience and also made sure they were familiar with the community and context. They brought others to the table so that a wider circle of people could be informed of a particular response, even if those people were not involved in making the decision. As time and circumstance allowed, processes may have been facilitated that fostered ownership of responses as well. Examples are shown here:

> In my case, there was a principal who failed to report the football coach for having affairs with students and got one girl pregnant. So I fired the principal and the football coach and the principal assembled a lot of pressure because he was well known, well regarded. The coach's teams always won. He was sort of symbolic of the community. But he also created a culture where young women were not respected and so their complaints about this individual were ignored. I'll never forget [Name] from the school board, she came up to me and she said, 'Well, this happens all the time, you know, you may be overreacting.' And I said, 'No, I don't think so.' I think that you have to establish some boundaries so adults know their children will always be protected. For years people had known, but the men who had been superintendents prior to my being

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superintendent ignored the problem. The men were willing to use the 'Boys will be boys,' explanation for everything, and sometimes you just can't do that. You have to define where you will take a stand. (Superintendent Lundy)

I would say the most challenging situation I had was passing the referendum in my last school district. During this time a local media person also went on a campaign to sabotage everything I said and did. It was a relentless campaign. I became much more vigilant about things I said and more proactive about every situation because he never missed an opportunity to try to highlight something that he thought was not okay. Because of my experience, growing up in the segregated South, he would have to do a lot to really—in terms of attacks—to really wear me down despite the fact that it was a continual barrage of attacks. He was used to the perception of the angry Black person who was prone to lose it in public and say things. I don't really have those triggers because I worked with ED students and I taught in jail and in detention. So you aren't going to push those triggers unless I want to be pushed. I think that baffled this person because I didn't fit that normal profile. (Superintendent Nelson)

When I first got there, I expelled two students. I had local ministers coming in and telling me I was being unfair. This kid was playing a sport and he was on a bus smoking marijuana. A parent found and reported him. It was not the first time he'd been discovered and protected his whole life. We had no doubts about what he was doing and he was expelled from school. It was not the first time. I discovered that. He'd been protected his whole life. It was a clear message to the community that I wasn't going to tolerate drugs and alcohol and that stuff on our campuses. People didn't speak to me for years. The community was a little surprised that a female was making this decision because they only had male superintendents up until that point. I think that shocked them a little bit and put them on their heels a little bit in terms of knowing what to expect with me, but they knew there were limits as to what I was going to tolerate. With my predecessor, if your child got into trouble but you were somebody that they deemed important, you would have gotten special treatment. It was a small town, so that was the history. I came in and said, 'No, it doesn't matter if it's child X or child Y. It doesn't matter if they live up on the hill or they live in the trailer park. It really doesn't matter. If you violate this rule, you violate the rules.' (Superintendent Webster)

When I came to [district], the board had approved a framework for a new student assignment plan. The challenge was that I was hired in July. The prime work was approved the spring prior to July and nothing had been done. There was no team in place. Public schools typically don't have a systematic way to execute, plan, evaluate. Not ever wanting to fail and not

ever having failed, I wasn't going to start now. We clearly articulated [to the board] there was no plan and that we couldn't move forward and if they wanted success, this was what we needed to do. The good news is, on my board I have educated working folks or people that have retired from the corporate world, so they clearly understood and knew what project management was. That allowed us to take the time to build the time line, to build the benchmarks, to write the statement of work, to put the teams together and to do all these audits and to create our strategy plan. That was a huge challenge because you come in with all these expectations for change and you get here and go, 'Holy s_ _ _. We don't have a plan. I don't have people with capacity.' A previous board and superintendent came up with the framework. I worked with my team to implement the plan successfully. (Superintendent Field)

Some of the more challenging issues I have had to deal with came when I was a state superintendent. District A was in court for low academic achievement for decades, the board corruption, and this and that. The judge asked the state to take over the school system immediately. I was asked to leave my state position and go over there (to the district) for 6 months while they did a national search. And, of course, I ended up staying 4 years. I was seen as a tool of the White Republican administration as a matter of fact, after I left the first state board meeting where I was appointed, a reporter said, 'I just heard in the courtroom from someone who said you're a kerchief-head, you're an Aunt Jemima. What are you going to say?' I looked at him and said, 'Well, time will tell, won't it?' After I'd been in [district] for a while, even the most vocal of the Black community, while they never, ever accepted the takeover, I think I gained their respect on a personal level. I was an African American woman who had tremendous understanding about urban education, about what the children needed. I was clearly focused on the need to get our instructional program moving and that I was not going to get off track because of all this rhetoric and nonsense. I think in the end, begrudgingly almost, the most vocal of them left me alone and allowed me to actually consider reopting my contract to the point where [current district] really had to persuade me to come. I did not want to leave at that point because we were beginning to get some traction. We still had a lot to do. We were digging out of a deep, deep hole, but we were beginning to get traction. So I think that probably was one of the most challenging situations I've ever faced. (Superintendent Hoskins)

I married and delivered my child a year later. Speculation began about whether or not I was married when I was carrying my child. It was an emotional challenge. One of my board members went on talk radio to make an issue and to create confusion. I decided not respond because it

had nothing to do with my job. The rest of the board was supportive. This was a unique and emotional challenge in which definitely the fact that I was female and African American in the South had an impact. (Superintendent Myles)

The superintendents who participated in this study expect adversity and challenges. They understand that the position that they hold requires them to develop a high tolerance for ambiguity and complexity. When presented with these challenges and/or adversities, some of their own making, they understand the need to focus on opportunities and to expect good things to happen despite adversity. They are clear about the values they hold and attempt to align values with actions. These resilient school leaders are willing to act on what matters even when the stakes are high.

These 6 individuals spoke unanimously about the importance of being true to their beliefs and values. All valued the experience of having worked in different roles and at different levels in a K-12 district and saw it as an asset in their role as superintendent. Each expressed the belief that her individual strengths and the assets she brings to the position must be used along with the development of a strong team to improve the overall performance of the district and to address the various challenges. Three exemplary verbatim quotations illustrate this point:

> Another asset is the fact that I have grown up in the educational system, and my training as a special education teacher and my administrative experience as a high school principal and a district administrator. I think all are very strong competencies that add to my strength. (Superintendent Fields)

> A strength I bring is I was a middle school English teacher and worked my way through the system at various levels—middle school, elementary. I had a high school license so I had knowledge of the high schools as well. Then I went on to be assistant principal and principal and work at various levels of the organization. I believe I had a lot of knowledge about

instruction, teaching, and learning. I think that has been a tremendous
asset to me in this role. (Superintendent Hoskins)

A real strength is my ability to build an administrative, executive team that
buys into the vision that I have. That's been one of the most rewarding
aspects of the job for me, to identify leadership and then to have those
individuals buy into what I wanted as the school districts develop. You
have to be patient and have the ability to listen to people and get their
ideas and thoughts about things. (Superintendent Lundy)

Five of the six superintendents expressed the need for being up-to-date on

educational reform and understanding the research on best practices for improving

student achievement. One of the six superintendents, however, shared that it is critical to

also have content knowledge related to finances and understanding the budget.

There is a body of content knowledge that you absolutely need to know if
you're going to be a good superintendent. Some of that has to do with the
financial aspects, so that you can zero right in on a budget and know
whether or not your CFO is telling you the truth. (Superintendent Webster)

All 6 superintendents stressed the importance of communications and of listening.

Honoring people's ideas, experiences, and backgrounds was viewed as important for

understanding diverse views and cultures of the various district stakeholders. Several

superintendents expressed the need to not ignore the school board in the stakeholder

group. One superintendent identified continuous communication with the board and

keeping the board informed about major issues as central to her work. She explained,

Another key element is how frequent [sic] you connect with your board. I
was trying to figure out how I balance that. If there is something
confidential and critical, I will send them a confidential memo. I try to put
them in a position where they would not be caught off guard about
anything. (Superintendent Webster)

The 6 African American female superintendents in this study were confident in

their abilities and skills as leaders and understood that their experience with success and

failure have been important to their work and will ground their future success. Communicating a vision about the district's work to various stakeholders has taken on even more significance for these superintendents over the years due to declining resources and waning support for public education. Thinking systemically about the district's work and understanding how to communicate are critical and frequent emphasis of communications.

Research Question #2: What specific processes or strategies do African American female superintendents employ to overcome adversity? Racism and sexism?

Presented in Table 6 is a summary of the strategies identified by the superintendents who participated in this study.

Table 6.

Summary of Strategies

	Strategies
Racism	• Asking a set of questions • Form alliances with community organizations • Mental, emotional mastery • Enact personal values • Invest personal energy • Understand core educational and personal values
Sexism	• Asking a set questions • Employ personal efficacy • Use "back door" to get work done • Make sure your voice is heard • Understand core educational and personal values

Four of the African American female superintendents framed their experiences as women and as women of color. The other two required probing questions from the researcher to ground and then articulate their experiences about school districts led by males and more specifically, White males. Women are now acquiring more top leadership positions and are finding themselves testing external notions about who is a leader and characteristics of leaders. The study participants who grew up in the South had a clear view of how they thought about race and gender. For the women who are currently working in the South, it is clear that the history of Black women and their treatment in the South seems to have changed little. One superintendent shared,

> Women are in some really great positions down here [but] still use the
> back door entrance to get stuff done. You know, they're not equal partners
> at the table. And so you've got to understand where you are and how
> people are seeing you when you talk. (Superintendent Myles)

The superintendent who was not working in the South could relate to her colleague's experiences of feeling invisible or dismissed. She offered a specific example involving a staff person who made a key decision about a grant without consulting her. She stated,

> A grant proposal for over 2 million dollars was submitted to a foundation.
> I received a call to ask my thoughts about the proposal. I told them I
> needed to look into the proposal. When I asked the individual—a White
> male—he said, "Oh, okay, we should have brought you in." I asked him
> this question: "Would you have initiated a grant opportunity for over 2
> million dollars with the [preceding superintendent, a white male]?" His
> response took a long time. He said, "You know, I don't know." So, I think
> that the answer to the question is he would not have. (Superintendent
> Lundy)

One superintendent talked about the inner circle of the "old boys" network and

how difficult it is for women to break through the levels to the top tier of the various

educational organizations and structures. She offered,

> My approach has been to insert myself into the arenas, and if they have
> difficulty with it, they just have to have difficulty with it. I have not shied
> away from speaking up and being seen and involving myself in issues that
> I think are important, but you do know that there is a small circle that
> you're not a part of and will never probably be a part of. (Superintendent
> Hoskins)

One superintendent shared the experience of being the only African American

leader in the entire district and how her colleagues had stereotypical ideas about her. She

discussed that,

> Some of them felt that "Black women are sapphires*," if you understand
> the term. Some people think we're like pack mules—we're just going to
> carry everything and if you say you're not going to do it, we're going to
> do it and see that it gets done. (Superintendent Myles)

> *Sapphires* is a Jim Crow term that refers to Black women as rude, loud,
> malicious, stubborn, and overbearing; today's term—Angry Black
> Woman.

The "achievement gap" continues to be the most salient challenge that African

American superintendents have to overcome. Each superintendent discussed how critical

it is to close the gap in the work of her district. Yet they also expressed both surprise and

resignation that our present society is not outraged. One offered a specific example,

> The system had three major disportionality reports with no progress and
> no strategy to close the achievement gap, and they'd talk about it every
> year. It took a person of color as a superintendent to say, "This isn't good
> enough. How are we addressing this issue?" When we talk about having
> high expectations for all groups of students and the expectation that they
> all excel at a high level, people say, "That's all you talk about." Well, let
> me say that if White kids and other kids are performing at high level then
> we're doing something right for them, because every time we intervene or

do something, our White students' performance actually increases and our African American population's achievement does not. (Superintendent Fields)

African American female superintendents who participated in this study were cognizant of the fact that on a daily basis they must challenge the negative perceptions of not only the urban school districts they serve, but also must address questions about whether they, as school leaders, are capable of doing the challenging and complex work that is demanded. They described working hard to earn the respect of their communities. They understand that their position and title only get them a seat at the table. They all reported having to assert themselves in policy deliberations and to be strategic and intentional to make sure that their voices are heard as women and as African Americans.

Research Question #3: How do African American female superintendents develop the confidence and resiliency to manage the complex challenges of their districts?

The challenges faced by a female superintendent do not end with her getting the position. The superintendents in the study all agreed that they are resilient. Each superintendent described what supported her in developing the confidence and resiliency to manage the district she leads. All of the superintendents reported being raised in supportive families and communities where educational attainment was important. Several also reported being given opportunities that were not defined by gender roles. Three superintendents shared their experiences:

> I had good support from my family who wondered why I was doing this crazy stuff. They would certainly support me wherever I went and whatever I was doing. I could always pick up the phone and call my mother or call my sister, who was in a lateral position. She [my sister] had to deal with boards and other people so she could give me good counsel many times. (Superintendent Lundy)

I feel like I have a strong family and strong family ties. My mother and grandmother were both teachers and they were strong women. I also had strong people in my community who were strong advocates for women. Having strong parents and strong women in my life and also having a father and other men in my life who were strong advocates influenced my being able to see and appreciate my own capacity. (Superintendent Nelson)

I attended Historical Black College A. At College A, they ingrained in you that you could conquer the world. That was the other defining experience in my life. They bought in all kinds of important African Americans in my college years who were successful from various backgrounds and demonstrated a can-do attitude. These people weren't always successful on their first try, but they eventually made it. This helped me develop the belief that other people who are in these positions are no better than you are. That's my firm belief, that they aren't any smarter than I am. They don't work any harder than I do. They certainly don't deserve it more than I do. So if I get knocked down, it doesn't mean I shouldn't try it again. (Superintendent Webster)

Several of the superintendents talked about having strong mentorships from the beginning and throughout their careers. One superintendent noted that it is absolutely necessary that the mentor is a good fit. She stated:

You are only as good as the mentor they assign you. Just because they are superintendents and they're experienced doesn't necessarily mean they're good and will be a good fit for you based on their background, to work with your situation or your particular style. (Superintendent Nelson)

One superintendent noted that throughout her career she has connected with more male than female mentors. She reflected,

Black women have always moved forward under the coattails of a White person, historically, because there's not a Black person that can get you there. I don't even think there is a Black person today that can get you there. Isn't that sad? (Superintendent Myles)

All of the African American female superintendents identified religious faith and optimism as key characteristics drawn upon when addressing challenging issues. Three superintendent tell their experience,

My faith has been really important to me. I don't think I could be resilient without a strong family, without strong faith, and without strong and caring adults who were there to support me and to encourage me to see myself in a leadership role. I think early on those three things—my faith, my family and other adults, particularly other women leaders, but not exclusively women leaders, were important. My personal faith in God would be one important element of resiliency—my spiritual connection. (Superintendent Field)

I was raised in a very strong religious family—Baptist. I was taught you keep working and don't give up. Your faith is going to take you through. I remember my father used to say, 'Honey, God isn't going to give you a cross that's too heavy for you to bear.' That saying, it's in the Bible, that verse, and so I just believed that. Whenever there was something that made me think, 'this is just awful. I don't think I can deal with this,' before my parents died I would call them up and my father would say, 'Remember now, you know, He's not going to give you anything you can't deal with.' And I would say, 'Well, I think He's pretty darn close.' (Superintendent Hoskins)

I have a belief in God and I try to go to church as often as I can. I consider myself to be a Christian woman and I don't believe that God puts me in places that I'm not supposed to be. So, if I'm here, it because this is the place where God wants me to do my work. (Superintendent Myles)

One superintendent also reported that a spiritual connection is important, but also expressed the importance of balance. She offered,

My ability to balance health, exercise, fun, and work is important. You can work yourself to death if you don't have that balance. If you don't have some kind of spiritual connection, if you don't have balance in your life you can't be resilient. One of the things I have learned is that I have to know when to let my body and my mind rest. (Superintendent Myles)

Each of the superintendents in this study shared the importance of faith, family, friends, and others as critical to their early development into confident and resilient leaders. Faith and spirituality were not only seen as worshiping but also how you lived your life. They believed treating people properly and with respect, regardless of how bad the situation, was important to being true to their values. They all expressed that,

ultimately, having a healthy mind and body was important to being able to serve in the role of superintendent and meeting the goals of improving academic outcomes for students.

Each superintendent described her leadership in relationship to, not only service to a school or an institution, but also involvement in social change. These women leaders understand that they work within a set of "embedded contexts" and that they have to use power and influence differently to make change. Two offered,

> There is also the whole leadership context. You've got to be able to understand situational leadership, and some people even talk about something called situational ethics; you'll hear that from a lawyer. (Superintendent Fields)

> You have to rely more on your people skills and your influence skills because the average superintendent is not a woman and people have typical ideas about whether a woman can lead. That's part of the culture, not just in our vocation, but in our nation and is exemplified in the U.S. Senate and it's exemplified in the executive branch. It's even exemplified on the Supreme Court. So in every aspect of American culture there is this underlying assumption about the characteristics of leadership, where leaders are not people of color and not women. (Superintendent Webster)

> Sometimes I'll be in a situation where something is clearly a test of power. People are expecting the traditional response to be one where power is defined and established and I think what I've tried to do is take the high ground. Doing so means listening to people and responding to them in a respectful manner, but not buying into the power dynamics. (Superintendent Nelson)

Research Question #4: What motivates African American females to remain in the position of superintendent?

The women who participated in this study believe in their ability to make a difference and they believe that they cannot accept failure. They also believe in the

capacity of education and its ability to transform the lives of people in poverty. Several

reflected,

> I'm in awe of the change that can happen in one generation. Think of it: If
> you could educate every single child to graduate from high school and go
> on to postsecondary, you could wipe out poverty in one generation. Not
> multiple generations. One generation. When you think about that and
> you're at a school where you see a lot of poor kids, a lot of kids who are
> immigrants, a lot of kids who are new to this country, you realize we've
> got an opportunity to change lives. It's pretty darn transformative. It's
> such a great gift to be able to impact lives like this. I think that's what hits
> you, every day. (Superintendent Lundy)

> I am grounded by the firm belief in and commitment to building stronger
> classrooms and instructional settings for all kids to achieve, to close the
> achievement gap. I'm so passionate about creating success for our students
> and especially students who have not been successful. (Superintendent
> Fields)

> I want to prove that a system that serves students in poverty can work. If
> you can get students who live in poverty to learn at high levels, you can
> change the conversation in this country. So for me, that's been part of
> what's kept me here. (Superintendent Hoskins)

The African American female superintendents who participated in the study

reported that they were motivated to remain in the superintendency because they were

able to make a difference in the lives of students and families and because they

understood that education could transform families. One of the superintendents was very

clear that she identified with the children and families she serves. Four of the African

American female superintendents felt they were in a position to create the best programs

for kids and to have an impact on closing the academic achievement gap. Several of the

African American female superintendents shared a belief that early access to an equitable

education would dramatically improve options and possibilities for all students. These

African American female superintendents also reported having to work against negative

perceptions of being African American and female. They challenged traditional stereotypes regarding race and gender through their leadership work. Several expressed their love for the work and the celebration of achieving "wins" on behalf of kids.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study were not intended to suggest that the experiences of the 6 African American female superintendents in K–12 public school districts who were interviewed can be generalized to all such superintendents. Instead the findings were intended to provide a more nuanced understanding of the phenomena of the resiliency of study participants.

All of the superintendents experienced traditional advancement to the superintendency, moving from teacher to principal to district administrator and last to superintendent. Five of the six superintendents have a doctoral degree, with one pending. There is recognition among the superintendents that they must have a doctorate to be taken seriously by their peers. They also understand that having a degree is not enough and they must assemble a strong team as well as exercise leadership that acknowledges/understands the context in which they are leading.

Themes of the findings from this study align with some of the findings from the literature and research on resiliency, most notably research conducted by Patterson and Kelleher (2005). Other themes on leadership, spiritual grounding, knowledge of educational reform, along with further discussions and conclusions are found in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

The position of public school superintendent has been held predominately by

White males, and as a result the research has represented the White males' experiences

and perspectives. There is no long-term trend information on the demographics,

leadership characteristics, and experiences of African American female superintendents.

Although "there is a small but growing knowledge base on women in educational

administration, there is a paucity of research available on Blacks in the superintendency

and even less on Black women in the superintendency" (Alston, 2005, p. 675). The

primary purpose of this study was to ask African American female superintendents in K–

12 public school systems in the United States to identify what makes them resilient and

enables them to face the adversity inherent in their leadership. This study also asked

African American female superintendents to provide examples of how they sustain

themselves in their work in order to assist other African American females who are

interested in acquiring and maintaining the position of superintendent. The specific

research questions were:

- In what ways do African American females respond to barriers and
  adversity in their role as superintendents?

- What specific processes or strategies do African American female
  superintendents employ to overcome adversity? Racism and sexism?

- How do African American female superintendents develop the confidence
  and resiliency to manage the complex challenges of their districts? and

- What motivates African American females to remain in the position of superintendent?

According to Barritt (1986), the strongest rationale for a qualitative study is "heightening awareness for experience that has been forgotten or overlooked. By heightening awareness and creating dialogue, it is hoped that research can lead to better understanding of the ways things appear to someone else and through that insight lead to improvements in practice" (p. 20). Clearly, qualitative methods align well with the purpose of this study.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study were intended to provide an understanding of resiliency as understood and described by the 6 study participants, while also adding to the paucity of research on African American women in the superintendency. Many themes emerged across the interviews with each of the African American female superintendents. Similarities as well as distinct differences between the interviews and the existing literature emerged among the interviewees. Both are addressed in the discussion.

Each superintendent was asked to share a particularly challenging situation and ways in which she responded. Each situation described was diverse, involving discipline, adults' abuse of power, public scrutiny, and personal attacks. Patterson and Kelleher's (2005) resiliency cycle lends itself to the flexibility of the various situations shared by the superintendents who participated in this study. Each situation began with a disruption to "normal conditions" where the superintendents constructively handled frustration at the constant disruptions by maintaining focus on the core work. Superintendents moved

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through the various phases from deteriorating at a dysfunctional level, through stages of adapting, recovering, and growing, to a level where they begin to flourish because of the crisis; to a level of strength and resilience, which led to moving to a level of strength and resilience.

Patterson and Kelleher (2005), posit that a person's "level of optimism (or pessimism) serves as a filter for interpreting adversity that strikes" and that "interpretation of adversity directly affects your response to the adversity and your overall resilience" (p. 19). The superintendents in the study provided three words that describe themselves that also point to their level of optimism. They shared that they are persistent, passionate, courageous, optimistic, positive, among others words to describe their belief that they can positively influence the future and that good things will happen but will require a lot of work.

All of the superintendents who participated in this study experienced traditional advancement to the superintendency, moving through the role of teacher, principal, associate superintendent, and other district leadership. Each saw traditional advancement as a strength in their role as superintendent, especially as it relates to the core mission of school districts, improving academic outcomes for students. Academic outcomes are subtle at best in the research on African American female superintendents. Glass, Bjork, and Brunner's (2000) analysis of the 10-year study of American school superintendents showed that most school boards claim a keen interest in the instructional program, but see management of fiscal resources to be a critical component of the superintendency. Glass et al. (2000) posited that women have fewer opportunities "to gain experience in finance,

administration, and community relations, areas viewed by 80% of superintendents as essential to their success" (as cited in Kowalski, 2006, p. 320). Glass and colleagues further asserted that this lack of experience and training "in managerial skills is what most often dooms superintendents' tenures, regardless of their sex or race" (Gewertz, 2006, p. 2).

Superintendents who participated in this study, the majority of whom work in large urban school districts where challenges such as lack of resources, underfunding, teacher certification, and student achievement are constant, cherished strong support networks and inner circles that included family, colleagues, friends and mentors. The existing research corroborates the challenges these superintendents face and also suggests that these challenges ultimately have a direct effect on the performance and tenure of African American leaders (Brown, 2005). The research is less clear in the support structures beyond mentors that support superintendent success.

The superintendents in this study who are in the top leadership positions in their districts find their leadership questioned based on internal and external notions about who is a leader and leadership characteristics. Several superintendents shared experiences about working hard to earn respect from peers and having not only a place at the table, but also having their voices heard. The study participants who grew up in the South had a clear view of how they thought about race and gender. For the women who are currently working in the South, it is clear that the history of Black women and their treatment in the South seems to have changed little. The superintendent who was not working in the South could relate to her colleagues' experiences of feeling invisible or dismissed. She

offered a specific example involving a staff person who made a key decision about a grant without consulting her. When she asked if he would have done the same thing when the previous superintendent [White male] was leading the district, his response was that he did not know. This superintendent knew, however, that the staff member's actions would have been different. One superintendent shared the experience of being the only African American leader in the entire district and how her colleagues had stereotypical ideas about her. Others expressed the need to have an advanced degree and to be more knowledgeable than their colleagues as critical. The research was silent in the area of respect for leadership in the role.

In responding to the first question, "What strengths or assets do you bring to the superintendency?", almost all of the superintendents recognized that their prior life and work experiences were beneficial to their ability to collaborate with stakeholders and communicate effectively, both strong strategies for problem solving. They also noted that hiring the right people for the job was a talent that was critically important to being the superintendent. Hiring the right people to complement their own abilities while also, as Jim Collins (2001) would say, placing them in the right seats on the "bus," was a recurring theme.

The African American female leaders defined the importance of their leadership not only in terms of improving schools or school districts, but also in terms of advancing social change, specifically increasing equality and opportunity for children. According to Murtadha and Watts (2005), women historically took on roles as community activists, public speakers, and civil and women's rights advocates. Clearly, the superintendents

who participated in this study viewed and enacted their work in similar ways that aligned to the roles of community activists and public speaker. Study participants reported advocating for the children and the families they serve and communicating frequently their vision in order to garner support and buy-in from various stakeholders.

The study participants identified challenges and constraints they experienced as superintendents. All study participants shared their perspectives about school boards. Each recognized the importance of having a supportive school board as well as the importance of frequent and open communications with board members. Although several superintendents shared challenges pertaining to their work with school boards, they worked diligently not to allow these challenges to keep them from focusing on the core work. It should be noted, however, that dysfunctional school boards were cited as creating challenges to maintaining focus on students and their academic achievement. One study participant shared how the perception of African American women superintendents can also be a challenge. These perceptions include people thinking of them as pack mules as well as an awareness of the need to be careful with how they present themselves in their personal attire.

The African American female superintendents who participated in the study reported that they were motivated to remain in the superintendency because they were able to make a difference in the lives of students and families and because they understood that education could transform families. One of the superintendents was very clear that she identified with the children and families that she serves. Four of the African American female superintendents felt they were in a position to create the best programs

for kids and to have an impact on closing the academic achievement gap. Several of the African American female superintendents shared a belief in early access to an equal education and what it would mean in terms of possibilities for all students. These African American female superintendents also reported having to work against negative perception and being viewed in preconceived ways as it relates to their leadership role. Therefore, several expressed their love for the work and celebrated the "wins" on behalf of kids. This is corroborated in the literature where Black women took on roles as community activists and being stabilizing and consistent forces in communities (Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

Implications

Gaps continue to exist in the study of the superintendency because, as Immegart (1988) suggested, little research involving real-life people and events has been conducted on this position of responsibility and importance (as reported in Johnson, 1996). This research study adds to the developing research base on the experiences of African American female superintendents. Much of what the superintendents shared during the interviews is supported in the literature; however, there are developing themes that are implied or silent in the literature that need further exploration and study. Tillman and Cochran (2000) suggest that more research is needed in areas of racial and gender equity that should lead to sustained inquiry into the experiences and perspectives of Black women superintendents as well as women superintendents from other underrepresented groups (p. 55). A review of the literature reveals the beginnings of research on resilient women administrators; however, there is little evidence of this research on Black women

administrators. Patterson and Kelleher's (2005), model draws on the research on resiliency, identifies three dimensions that have the ability to be applied to real life situations, and ultimately identifies six strengths of resilient leaders.

Implications for Policy

The policy implications of this research study are numerous. The study findings and the literature review both point out the importance of an intentional policy discussion regarding the need to understand the experiences of African American female superintendents and to provide support for their development and ultimate success. Currently traditional superintendent programs are designed to follow the White male's experience and perspective and do not take into account the experiences of diverse populations. More and more programs like The Broad and Harvard Superintendent's program, both year-long programs that also provide an internship and a mentor, understand the need to attract a diverse group of individuals and to provide an in-depth study of the superintendency. The superintendents in this study are courageous individuals driven by their values and their interest in improving the conditions of the students they serve. This passion, knowledge, and interest are not unique to these individuals.

Study participants referenced the support they had while aspiring to the position of superintendent and also the need to have a network of other superintendents in order to be successful. These mentor relationships were informal and provided support during challenging times. Many of the women in this study belong to a unique sisterhood that keeps them connected in ways that allow them to be "real" and to share their most

vulnerable thoughts and challenges. Establishing a strong mentor program is critical to the development of superintendents. Having a mentor is important to the success, but having a "sisterhood" goes beyond policy to practice. State departments should strongly consider educational resources to support funding yearlong superintendent internships with carefully selected mentors who might influence more women to enter the superintendency by gaining a close view of the position. Carefully designing learning opportunities and selecting the right mentors might influence more women to consider the superintendency.

School boards should reconstruct district-level support to alter the workload for female superintendents so that they have more time for critical tasks and family life. They should support the superintendent by funding a position to shift the day-to-day expectations regarding fiscal management to another district leader with external monitoring. They should allow more hands-on activities for instructional programs in which most African American female superintendents have experience and expertise which could be used to improve student performance.

Implications for Superintendent Development

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) created eight general professional standards for the superintendency. These standards, along with accountability for student academic performance, teaching improvement, and principal performance should be used to improve the selection, preparation, and development of superintendents (Cuban, 1994).

Tillman and Cochran (2000) reported that schools and departments of education continue to perpetuate the dominance of White men and generally fail to provide adequate support for diversity in professional preparation programs. They further posited that the coursework is taught from the White male superintendent's perspective and that issues of gender, race, and ethnicity create "silent preparation programs" (Tillman & Cochran, 2000, p. 55). The majority of African American leaders are employed in large urban districts where lack of resources, underfunding, teacher certification, and student achievement are consistent challenges. These challenges ultimately have a direct effect on the performance and tenure of African American leaders. Therefore, it is critical that programs preparing individuals for leadership positions balance theory with practical experiences so that participants are prepared for the realities of the position (Brown, 2005). Understanding the "real" experience of African American female superintendents would enhance preparation programs, and more emphasis on management areas such as finances is critical to success. Glass et al. (2000) posited that women have fewer opportunities to "gain experience in finance, administration, and community relations, areas viewed by 80% of superintendents as essential to their success" (as cited in Kowalski, 2006, p. 320). They further asserted that this lack of experience and training "in managerial skills is what most often dooms superintendents' tenures, regardless of their sex or race" (Gewertz, 2006, p. 2).

Implications for Practice

The day-to-day work of being a superintendent demands that policy, research, and theory along with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to interface with past and

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current reality and future possibilities are needed and all are shaped by the individual's personal values, efficacy, and energy. Practice is where the resiliency of the superintendency is tested each day through actions and communications (Patterson and Kelleher, 2005).

Across the country a set of licensure competencies that serve as general professional standards for the superintendency are now being required. These licensure standards can also serve as a guide to understanding superintendents' daily regimens in the operation of their districts as well as how they approach problem solving. Cuban (1994) is critical of the absence of standards that address accountability for student academic performance, teaching improvement, and principal performance.

African American female superintendents usually have great expertise and experience in academics. Having someone who takes the lead for the managerial role allows the superintendent to focus on other areas of the district. It should be clear that the superintendent, as the sole employee of the board, is the one that ultimately is responsible for every aspect of the district. The superintendent must have a clear accountability system that gives her confidence that the managerial work is being done with integrity and excellence.

Implications for Further Research

Each of the superintendents participating in this study provided information about her experiences as the leader of a preK–12 school district. The questions that were posed to each superintendent provided insight into the challenges and opportunities she faces each day as she tries to bring together a community focused on achieving better outcomes

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for students. Resiliency was clearly evident among these African American female leaders.

Further research should be conducted to understand better the experiences of African American female superintendents. Specifically, the following should be pursued:

- Repeat the research study with additional African American female superintendents who work in diverse settings. The literature is focused more on superintendents who work in urban settings.

- Expand the methodology to include triangulating data from the interviews with superintendents, school board members, community members, and key internal constituents so as to provide greater understanding of the context and understanding of the challenges faced by the superintendents.

- Explore more deeply the challenges, opportunities, and various forms of support experienced by superintendents in order to inform policy and practice related to initial superintendent preparation and ongoing professional development. The review of research and the interviews point to a lack of alignment between the needs of superintendents and the policies that support the core work and ongoing growth.

- Trace the pathway to the superintendency and the supports and constraints that are present in the position.

- Explore African American female experiences in other district leadership roles.

Final Perspective

This study began as a completion of the requirements for a doctorate degree and quickly changed to a mission to understand more about the superintendency, the position that is least understood yet has the highest visibility and responsibility in a community. Gewertz (2006), reported in *Education Week* that the departure of top female superintendents in Minneapolis, Cleveland, and San Francisco was like the canary to a miner, a signal to African American women who are interested in becoming superintendents as well as to institutions that prepare individuals who aspire to become superintendents. Like the canary in the mine, the women who participated in the study alert us to expecte the unexpected. They have accepted that they will have challenges to keep the "main thing the main thing", preparing students for college and career**.** Yet, they continued to persevere and were able to make change on behalf of the children and the communities they served. In many ways these women were willing to experience the challenges of the position without compromise. However, using the canary in the mine analogy to suggest that African American female superintendents are *unwittingly* the group that will be the first to test the potential risks, that they are moving forward *not* knowing the dangers , does not describe these six individuals. The 6 African American female superintendents in this research study knowingly and courageously accepted the adversity inherent in the role and understand the undeniable privilege it is to serve the next generation of citizens; they continue to "sing".

The superintendents' spirited and passionate responses to interview questions demonstrated their tenaciousness, strong drive, and refusal to fail the children and

communities they serve. Ultimately, however, it was important to all of them to love the work and to remember to keep a sense of humor. When asked if they were resilient, the 6 African American female superintendents who participated in this study all responded with an energetic, "Yes!"

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IRB Form Item 5.2: Interview Protocol

Principal Investigator: Bernadeia H. Johnson
                                            john2352@umn.edu

Research Title: African American Female Superintendents: Resilient School Leaders

1. Strengths
    a. What strengths or assets do you bring to the superintendency?
    [pause for response]
    b. Probe as needed
        i.   Related to being a female?
        ii. Related to being African American?

2. Challenges
    a. What challenges or constraints have you experienced as a superintendent?
    [pause for response]
    b. Probe as needed
        i.   Related to being female?
        ii. Related to being African American?

3. Specific situations and respective responses
    a. Identify a situation that was particularly challenging for you as a superintendent.
        i.   Describe the situation
        ii.   Share the ways in which you responded
        iii. As you think about your responses…
            1. Do you think that being female influenced how you responded? If so, in what ways?
            2. Do you think that being African American influenced how you responded? If so, in what ways?
    b. Is there another situation that was also particularly challenging for you as a superintendent?
    [follow same protocol above]

4. Resiliency
    a. Do you consider yourself a resilient person?
        i. If yes, what do you think has supported you in becoming a resilient person
        [pause for response]
            1. Probe as needed

      a. Influential persons
      b. Background experiences (child, adult)
      c. Influential experiences
      d. Personal values (core, educational, spiritual)
      e. Personal energy (mental focus, physical fuel, emotional mastery)
   ii. If no, what would support you in becoming more resilient?
     1. Probe as needed
      a. Influential persons
      b. Background experiences (child, Adult)
      c. Influential experiences
      d. Personal values (core, educational, spiritual)
      e. Personal energy (mental focus, physical fuel, emotional mastery)

5. Grounding
 a. What would you say grounds your practice as a superintendent?
[pause for response; paraphrase after participant responds]
 b. What motivates you to remain in the superintendent's position?
[pause for response; paraphrase after participant responds]

6. Other African American and female superintendents
 a. According to data presented at the National Association of Black School Educators, African American female superintendents represent 114 of the approximately 15,000 superintendents in the country with Mississippi having the largest number at 12 and Illinois the second largest number at 11. Why do you think this is the case?
 b. What recommendations do you have for other AA females who might be considering the superintendency?

7. FINAL WORDS
 a. Given that the primary purpose of my study is how to examine what it takes for African American female superintendents in K–12 public schools to be resilient, what would you want to be sure others heard or read or understood after reading the findings from this study?
   i. [pause for response]
   ii. Probe: why is this message so important to you?
 b. What three words would you use to describe who you are as a superintendent?
 c. Is there anything else you would like to add to help me understand your experience as a superintendent and, specifically, the ways in which being an African American female affects you as a superintendent?

APPENDIX B

IRB Form Item 8.2: Research Letter of Invitation

Principal Investigator: Bernadeia H. Johnson
                                john2352@umn.edu

Research Title: African American Female Superintendents: Resilient School Leaders.

[DATE]

Dear [African American Female Superintendent]:

I am currently a doctoral student in the Educational Policy and Leadership Department at the University of Minnesota. Under the guidance of Drs. Jennifer York Barr, and Neal Nickerson, my faculty advisors, I am conducting a study on African American females who have demonstrated resiliency in their role as superintendent. I am also interested in the ways they perceive gender and race as factors in how they enact their role as superintendent, as well as influences on their resiliency.

Current literature inadequately addresses the experiences of the African American female as a school district leader, often representing white males and women in general experiences as that of African American women. I am inviting you to participate in this study. By participating you have an opportunity to contribute to the knowledge base about the actual experience of African American female superintendents. Your participation is completely voluntary.

To assist with understanding the expectations for participating in this study, I have outlined the general expectations below:

- Commitment to an audio-taped interview which will last between 1–2 hours in length (any follow up may require additional time),
- Commitment between June 2010 and December 2010.

After the audio-taped or Skyped interviews have been transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcripts and my interpretations of the information prior to submission of the final draft of my study. This will ensure that I have accurately represented your comments as well as to correct any direct quotes. This draft will also be reviewed by the members of my dissertation committee prior to final publication. It is also feasible that parts of this research study may appear in educational publications and/or related presentations.

If you accept this invitation to participate in this research study, please complete and return the consent form in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope no later than

June 15, 2010. For your convenience, I will also email the letter of invitation as well as the consent form. Due to the small size of the representative group, I will make follow up calls to determine your interest in participating in the study.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout this process. Data collated as a part of the interview process will be kept private and no names will be reported or disclosed in this study. Furthermore, records will be stored in a securely and accessible only to the researcher. The anticipated risks of this study are minimal, if any at all. If you have any additional questions regarding your participation in this study, please feel free to contact me or my faculty advisor, Dr. Jennifer York Barr at (612) 625-6387 or yorkx001@umn.edu.

I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this exciting project that will contribute to the knowledge base and expand the presence and research on the African American female K–12 school superintendent. As a district leader, I fully recognize the many complex demands on your time. I thank you in advance for your support and attention. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Most graciously,

Bernadeia H. Johnson
Doctoral Candidate, University of Minnesota
Superintendent Designee of Minneapolis Public Schools

APPENDIX C

IRB Form Item 10.3: Consent Form

You are invited to be in a research study of K–12 African American female superintendents. You were selected as a possible participant because you are considered a successful African American female superintendent and you have served a superintendent in at least two school districts. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by: Bernadeia H. Johnson, doctoral student in Educational Policy and Administration at the University of Minnesota.

Background Information
The purpose of this study: to examine what it takes for African American females to be resilient in their positions as superintendents of K–12 public school system.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following thing
- Participate in an audio-taped, one-to-one interview with me. It is expected that the interview would extend from one to two hours.
- Participate in a follow-up communication with me for the purpose of clarifying, elaborating, or checking for understanding. It is not likely that a follow-up communication would be requested, but in the event that it seems necessary, I must inform you of the possibility.
- Consider reviewing the transcript of your interview so that you can choose to add, edit, or delete portions as you see fit. Such a review will not be required. You will be sent the transcript, then be provided with a two week period to respond or not. If I do not hear from you within that period, I will assume you are satisfied with the transcript.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study
Participation in this study is not associated with any significant risks, however, you should be aware that although your responses are anonymous (meaning, your name would never be used), findings that emerge from the study will be identified as having come from African American female superintendents. Due to the relatively small numbers (about 114) of African American female superintendents in the country, and the focus of the research, readers of this report may assume that you were either one of the superintendents interviewed or that you subscribe to the majority view of the respondents who participated in the study.

Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym that will ensure anonymity. Each interview will be audio-taped or Skype recorded in order to collect data and to ensure validity and reliability of information collected. The audio-taped or Skyped recordings will be transcribed for coding by the researcher and shared with the study participants to allow the opportunity for additions, delections or edits to be made. After the completion of the dissertation the data will be destroyed.

The Primary Investigator will terminate the study if she is unable to identify participants for the study or if all individuals who agreed to participate in the study become non-responsive to requests for interviews.

The benefits to participation: There continues to be a paucity of research on the strategies successful African American female superintendents. This research study seeks to contribute to the literature base that will assist such aspiring and current superintendents. You may not benefit personally from being in this research. Other African American females, however, will benefit from having access to the experiences of successful superintendents. One additional consideration for you, it is typically the case that the interview process itself provides an opportunity to reflect on and make sense of one's experience. This, itself often is viewed as a useful, if not positive experience.

Compensation
You will not receive any form of compensation from participation in this study. You will, however, be provided with an executive summary of the findings.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible for you to be specifically identified. Research records will be stored securely and only the primary researcher (Bernadeia H. Johnson) and her faculty advisors (Professors York-Barr and Nickerson) will have access to the records. The raw data from the tape or Skype recordings will be destroyed after the research study is completed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions
The researcher conducting this study: Bernadeia H. Johnson. You may ask any questions you have now before the research begins. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at (612) 760-3008/(612) 668-0640 or john2352@umn.edu. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Jennifer York-Barr at (612) 625-6387 or yorkx001@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line at the University of Minnesota, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

APPENDIX D
Human Subject Review Board Approval Form

Date: 06/04/2010
To: Bernadeia Johnson (john2352@umn.edu)
From: irb@umn.edu
Subject: #STUDYNBR# - PI #PILASTNAME# - IRB - Exempt Study Notification

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #2 SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

Study Number: 1005E83152

Principal Investigator: Bernadeia Johnson

Title(s): African American Female Superintendents: Resilient School Leaders

This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota RSPP notification of exemption from full committee review. You will not receive a hard copy or letter.
This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

The study number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

Research that involves observation can be approved under this category without obtaining consent.

SURVEY OR INTERVIEW RESEARCH APPROVED AS EXEMPT UNDER THIS CATEGORY IS LIMITED TO ADULT SUBJECTS.

This exemption is valid for five years from the date of this correspondence and will be filed inactive at that time. You will receive a notification prior to inactivation. If this research will extend beyond five years, you must submit a new application to the IRB before the study's expiration date.

Upon receipt of this email, you may begin your research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

You may go to the View Completed section of eResearch Central at http://eresearch.umn.edu/ to view further details on your study
The IRB wishes you success with this research.