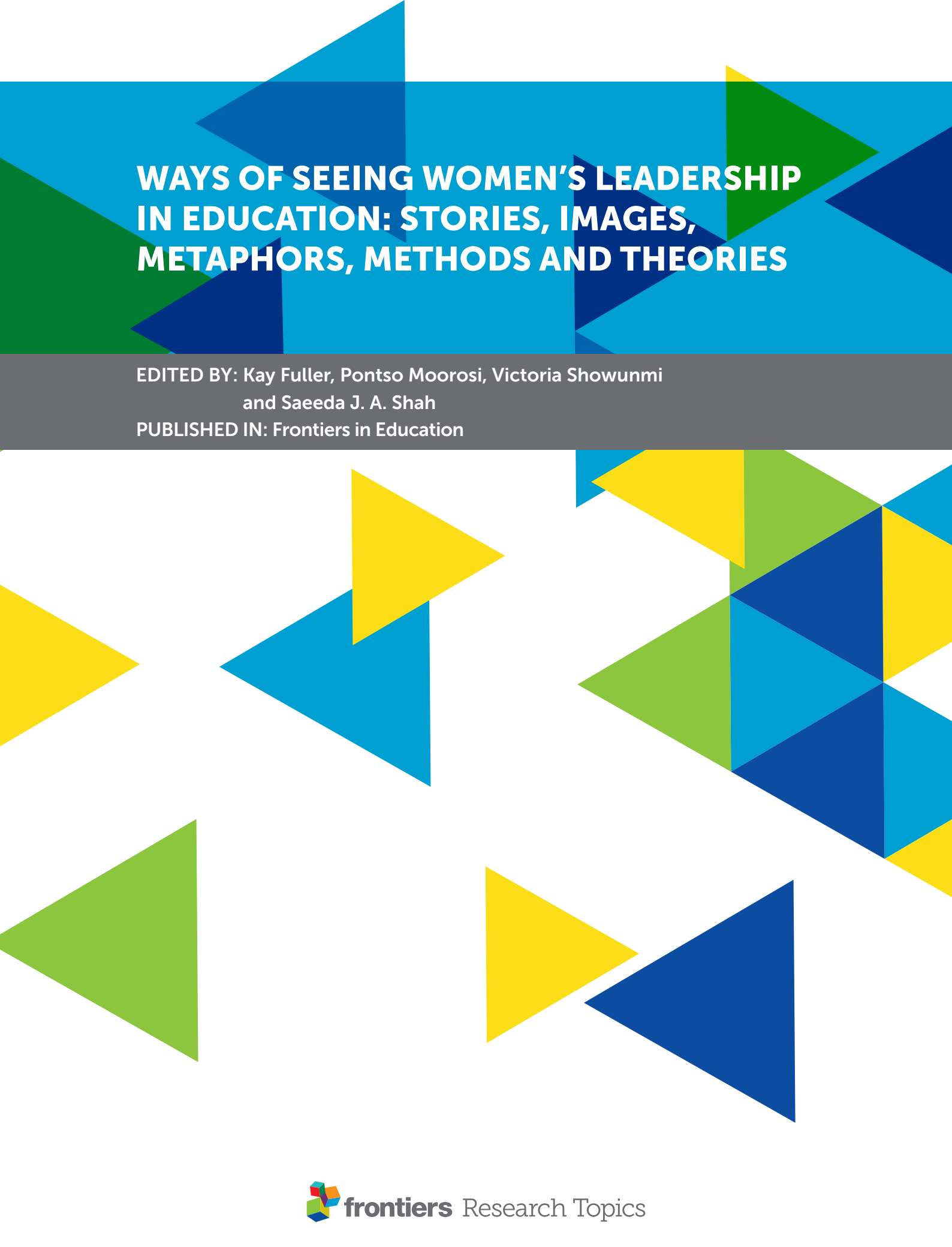




WAYS OF SEEING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION: STORIES, IMAGES, METAPHORS, METHODS AND THEORIES

EDITED BY: Kay Fuller, Pontso Moorosi, Victoria Showunmi
and Saeeda J. A. Shah
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WAYS OF SEEING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION: STORIES, IMAGES, METAPHORS, METHODS AND THEORIES

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Editorial: Ways of Seeing Women's Leadership in Education—Stories, Images, Metaphors, Methods and Theories

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Keywords: women, gender, feminism, educational leadership, images and metaphors, methods, theories

Editorial on the Research Topic

Ways of Seeing Women's Leadership in Education—Stories, Images, Metaphors, Methods and Theories

INTRODUCTION

Gender and educational leadership remains a focus for scholarly interest precisely because gender inequalities remain. That is the case 30 years on from the publication of seminal works that established gender and women in educational leadership as a focus for research (Shakeshaft 1987; Blackmore 1989; Dillard 1995). Scholars continue to document women's under-representation in leadership (Alston, 2005). This Research Topic focuses on accounts of doing leadership (e.g. Cook), as well as showing how their inclusion transforms leadership theory e.g. by incorporating gender, feminist, intersectionality and Afrocentric theories (e.g. Gullo and Sperandio, Tripses and Lazaridou, Malachias et al., Williams). Feminist epistemology ensures women's experiences and ways of seeing are central to the research purpose and process; that women as leaders are not solely the object of the researcher's gaze. In particular, feminist standpoint theory recognises there is epistemic privilege so that situated knowledge, what is known and the ways it can be known, is shaped by the positionality of knowledge producers. A reflexive approach prompts feminist researchers to reflect deeply on context, as well as their positionality, in relation to the focus of research. The theme of this Research Topic—"Ways of seeing women's leadership in education: stories, images, metaphors, methods and theories"—reflects collective experiences from diverse perspectives. Earlier versions of these eighteen papers were first presented at the seventh Women Leading Education across Continents conference at the University of Nottingham, UK in the summer of 2019.

STORIES

Papers draw on individual narratives, as autoethnographies (e.g. Fuller, Kappert, Williams) and narrative inquiries (e.g. Cook, Reilly, Showunmi). Annette Kappert complements her presentation of critical cultural autoethnographical stories of leadership with fictionalised stories and poetry using a historical lens to illustrate the value of conducting research into a female Black and Minority Ethnic educator's personal and

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professional experiences; she “gives voice to previously silenced and marginalized experiences” (Boylorn and Orbe 2014 p. 15).

Victoria Showunmi offers a view on narrative inquiries based upon leadership through a lens of gender, race and class. The paper takes the reader through a journey of difference as it navigates with the voices of women leaders across three countries. Elizabeth Reilly's work in the context of Rwanda explores and gives voice to Rwandan women leaders. The research draws on African feminist theories that explicitly challenge Western theories of gender and focus on “mov[ing] gender research towards post-colonial and indigenous approaches and the construction of knowledge derived from the experiences of girls/women in their specific locations and histories” that emphasize agency, resilience, and persistence (Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010 p. 620).

Pontso Moorosi uses narratives to portray the construction of leadership identity by three women leaders in African schools. These women's stories demonstrate how a leadership self-perception instils a sense of agency that facilitates leaderful actions to strengthen leadership identity. Women's stories of leadership identity development are gendered and shaped by values instilled from childhood that shape their leadership dispositions. The paper highlights the intricate nature of self-perception, gender and leadership identity, arguing that these aspects cannot be left to chance if we are serious about leadership development and increasing the pool of women in leadership.

Sheralyn Cook explores the stories of two women's professional and personal struggles turning around the New Zealand schools they led during turbulent times.

IMAGES AND METAPHORS

Sharon Curtis's paper positions the experiences of Black women leaders as a metaphorical visualisation of a single thread. A thread that manoeuvres and meanders apparently aimlessly, not through choice, but enforced by navigating a way through institutions and systems, fuelled with micro aggressions, convoluted racial barriers and obstacles placed in their paths and journeys as Black women reach for and sustain leadership positions.

Innovative work, exploring the metaphors and images used to describe leadership in a range of cultural contexts, reveals how differently we conceptualise women's leadership across continents (e.g. Randell and Yerbury, Burkinshaw and White). Shirley Randell and Hilary Yerbury attempt to break the mould, through the use of metaphors as a way to understand women's leadership across two different continents. The paper draws on the notion that leadership is generally thought of as “a good thing”, as something important carried out by people with desirable attributes, such as courage and insight, or with attractive personalities and communication skills. However, using metaphors that highlight the obstacles women face, for example, the glass ceiling, glass cliff, sticky floors and the labyrinth is ubiquitous in educational leadership. Instead, they demonstrate women's alternative use of metaphors from the natural world.

Paula Burkinshaw and Kate White explore the use of images and metaphors to describe doing leadership across two

generations of women leaders in higher education in two different country contexts. This innovative approach draws from experiences of an older generation of women in top leadership in the UK and a younger generation in middle leadership in Australia. They established that the older generation of women leaders conforms to metaphors and images of masculinist leadership thereby maintaining the status quo, while the younger generation use more positive images of leadership to disrupt the status quo. They portray an alternative model of leadership constructed on re-negotiated terms that bear more prospects for equality.

METHODS

Rosangela Malachias et al. innovative use of film narratives reveals women's activist leadership as community educators and film-makers in the Baixada Fluminense region near Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. These stories: of a Black deaf woman teaching the history and culture of black deaf people; and “a young black woman, graffiti artist, filmmaker, actress, and pedagogical specialist with a master's degree in Education” demonstrate that educational leadership can be found in communities even when there is limited recognition of it in the academy.

Pen Mendonça demonstrates the power of graphic illustration in articulating and exploring women's leadership through values-based cartooning. She provides a powerful personal account of her work with women leaders working in higher education and with grassroots movements. Her use of visual methods is innovative in the field of women, gender and feminism in educational leadership. Both papers expand the field to consider the leadership of women's leadership activism in education.

Kay Fuller has developed an intersectional life grid at 7 year intervals in her critical autoethnography to reveal reflexivities of complacency, reflexivities that discomfort and reflexivities that transform in a scholarly and professional career in educational leadership.

Historical research by Jenny Tripses and Angeliki Lazaridou make certain that women are written into the field to ensure we know “where we have come from, and where we are going”. In particular, they focus on the lives of two women with long-lasting and powerful legacies—one Greek, the other American—Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley lived and worked in the 19th century.

Qualitative methods such as narrative inquiry (e.g. Cook, Moorosi) and life story (e.g. Cunneen) bring out the depth of emotions, feelings and images attached to the gendered stories of women's lives. Analyses of quantitative data enable analysis of larger datasets about women's ways of doing leadership (e.g. Calderone et al., Reed and Reedman).

Diane Reed and Ashley Reedman use quantitative methods to compare leader resilience by gender and age. Based on an on-going study that involves women and men, this innovative work shows that resilience increases with age for both genders. This work centres important life aspects such as well-being, resilient

aging and quality of life. Increasingly, wellbeing is receiving attention as an important element to work-life balance for women in leadership and Reed and Reedman's work is on point.

Gina Gullo and Jill Sperandio's paper investigates the career paths and perspectives of current and aspirant superintendents in Pennsylvania. The research uses a mixed method approach which includes both quantitative and qualitative tools. Initial findings suggest, that there are similarities and differences in career planning preferences by men and women aspirant superintendents indicates an understanding by women of the insider pathway potential to overcome bias regarding women in leadership roles. As this career path is frequently not an option, women must choose not to aspire or to prepare themselves for possible gender bias in hiring when applying as outsiders.

THEORIES

To illustrate how structural inequalities operate at multiple levels, scholars show how the use of gender (e.g. Gullo and Sperandio), feminist (e.g. Calderone et al., Tripses and Lazaridou), critical race (e.g. Curtis), intersectionality (e.g. Fuller, Showunmi) and other social theories (e.g. Kappert) enables us to think about and articulate our ways of seeing women's leadership in formal and informal educational settings for learners of all ages.

Laura Burton's et al. paper examines how ten Black female school leaders coped with gendered racism and the costs associated with doing so. Their use of adaptive and maladaptive strategies, more or less affirming, highlighted the ways both types of strategies were effective and enabled participants to persist and succeed in their leadership roles.

Calderone et al. draw on feminist life course theory to understand how women's perspectives on the accessibility of the (United States) superintendency have shifted in recent times to become a largely contingent decision—a strategic, individual-level assessment focusing on the favourability of district work conditions to their success as leaders.

Patricia Williams draws on African-centred pedagogy, African womanism, and transformational leadership to explore her

leadership practice in a Charter School in an autoethnographical account that locates her experience in a neoliberal context.

COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

Importantly, these papers document the collective experiences of women leading education across continents. Of course, there are accounts of similarities and differences among the women whose leadership stories are told. Collectively, the papers present women leaders in their heterogeneity. There are accounts of challenges faced and overcome; of resistance enacted and agency exercised against the backdrop of institutional, systemic and societal misogyny and racism. Importantly there are accounts of abundance in their cultural and leadership capital.

In this collection of papers, intercontinental perspectives are presented from South America (Malachias et al.), North America (Burton et al., Calderone et al., Gullo and Sperandio, Reed and Reedman, Williams), Europe (Cunneen, Curtis, Fuller, Mendonça), Africa (Moorosi, Reilly), Asia (see comparative scholarship) and Australasia (Cook). Cross-continental perspectives are found in comparative scholarship (Burkinshaw and White, Randell and Yerbury, Showunmi, Tripses and Lazaridou) and the transcontinental life histories of educational leaders (Kappert).

However, the underrepresentation of papers in this collection from South American, African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries, when scholars from those continents presented their research at the conference in 2019 reveals the persistence of coloniality in knowledge production and dissemination in the field of women, gender and feminism in educational leadership. It persists despite best efforts to decolonise the conference (Fuller et al., 2020).

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All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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“Unbroken, but Bent”: Gendered Racism in School Leadership

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Black women experience the burdens of gendered racism in their roles as school leaders, yet little is known about how these leaders cope with those experiences or how such coping might impact their ability or desire, to persist and thrive in such positions. This phenomenological study examined the experiences of 10 Black female school leaders and how they coped with gendered racism and the costs associated with doing so. Findings show coping occurred through both adaptive and maladaptive strategies, which we label as “more affirming” or “less affirming,” to highlight how both enabled participants to persist in their leadership roles. More affirming (i.e., adaptive) strategies included reliance on faith, social relationships and professional networks, and advocacy roles to confront, manage, and problem solve around their experiences of gendered racism. Less affirming (i.e., maladaptive) strategies included denial or avoidance, buffering and boundary setting, and in a few cases, exit. Further, findings revealed the costs or tolls borne by participants included internalizing gendered racism, doubting leadership skills and competence, anger at having to operate in a gendered racist context, and resignation. By acknowledging and naming the gendered racism Black female school leaders face and the energy required to exert to cope with it, these findings highlight the need to discuss gendered racism in educational leadership and professional development programs. Further, these findings suggest anti-racist practices by White allies, including shifting the burden of gendered racism to them, is critical to the disruption of practices privileging Whiteness in educational leadership.

Keywords: educational leadership, intersectionality, gendered RACISM, women, leadership

INTRODUCTION

Racial and gender discrimination in school leadership is widely known to exist (e.g., Shakeshaft, 1989; Peters, 2010; Muñoz et al., 2014; Jean-Marie et al., 2016), and can impact who gets access to these roles and their treatment within them (Cognard-Black, 2004; Tillman, 2004; Myung et al., 2011). Scholars recognize addressing negative discourses around race and gender are necessary for future generations of Black women in school leadership (Wrushen and Sherman, 2008). What has not been examined in detail, but we sought to accomplish in this research, was how Black women experiencing gendered racism in their roles as school leaders cope with those experiences. Further, as noted in previous work examining coping with gendered racism (Lewis et al., 2016), we sought to highlight the costs associated with coping and the extent those costs impact Black female school leaders in their roles.

As scholars interested in using our research to engage in, and promote, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal approaches, it is our hope that by focusing on these issues, we can provide scholars, educators, and practitioners insights into the strengths and struggles of Black women

educational leaders. Further, we hope this work will challenge these same individuals to seek change at the individual and organizational level so facing and coping with gender racism is no longer a burden placed on Black women or other minoritized groups.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Gendered Racism/Intersectionality

We ground our work using an intersectional frame as the influence of sexism and racism cannot be parceled out as discrete experiences for our participants (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1991). Intersectionality provides “critical insight” (p. 2) that race, gender, ethnicity and other identities “operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Collins, 2015, p. 2). Intersectionality allows us to call attention to social identities often treated as marginal or invisible, while allowing us to highlight the “complex nature of power” (p. 5) and note the “gap between social categorization and the complexity of intersubjective experience” (p. 5) as there is not one social label that can help us explain the complexity of an individual’s lived experience (Harris and Leonardo, 2018). In the intersectional frame, Essed (1991) advances gendered racism to examine the intertwining influences of sexism and racism to describe the experiences of Black women.

Gender, Race, and School Leadership

School leadership has historically been defined as the domain of men in general, and White men in particular (Boris-Schacter and Langer, 2006). Some Black women, as a result of differing lived experiences including exclusion from “established power structures” (Peters, 2012; Santamaría and Jean-Marie, 2014; Newcomb and Niemeyer, 2015, p. 787) are shown to lead differently than their White counterparts, male or female. For example, when leading in lower resourced and/or more urban settings, Black women are known to approach leadership from an ethic of care (Dillard, 1995). This type of nurturing and supportive leadership has been described as “othermothering” (Bass, 2012; Newcomb and Niemeyer, 2015). Further, they are more likely to be driven by social justice goals and spirituality (Newcomb and Niemeyer, 2015). Spirituality can be a driving influence of their leadership too, as some describe “heeding the call” (Newcomb and Niemeyer, 2015, p. 792) to serve as leaders (Witherspoon and Taylor, 2010). They also tend to lead in more culturally competent ways (Wood and Eagly, 2012; Newcomb and Niemeyer, 2015) and emphasize “shared” forms of leadership, approaches shown as successful in fostering continuous improvement (e.g., Hallinger and Heck, 2009).

While the evidence suggests Black women are likely to engage in leadership in productive ways (Jean-Marie, 2013), they are also more likely to experience “complex and intersecting racialized and gendered role expectations above and beyond those expected of other administrators” (Reed and Evans, 2008, p. 488) in their roles as school leaders. For example, the “double-jeopardy” hypothesis describes how Black women are punished for violating social roles stereotypically ascribed to both Black

men and White women (Beal, 1969; Bell and Nkomo, 2001; Young and Skrla, 2003; Settles, 2006; Rosette and Livingston, 2012; Weiner and Burton, 2016; Burton and Weiner, 2016). Others argue Black female leaders receive responses mirroring those given to White males (Rosette et al., 2019) and thus are not penalized for such behaviors.

Jean-Marie’s (2013) work about Black female principals found her participants, like many Black female school leaders, were placed in low performing schools and pigeonholed as “fixers” (Brown, 2005; McCray et al., 2007). In addition, they faced the “triple jeopardy” of gender racism and ageism by those they supervised, parents and community members, and their superintendents. They also experienced subtle biting comments about their capabilities to be successful and had to engage in additional work to access their leadership positions. As leaders, they actively coped with experiences gendered racism by forming a shared bond, supporting one another while also relying on their spirituality to recognize a higher calling to leadership.

One reason it is often incumbent on Black women to create their own support structures is that they are less likely to receive formal support (e.g., mentoring, networking) than their White or male colleagues (Peters, 2010; Muñoz et al., 2014) and face far more challenges. They are also less likely to be recognized for having “leadership potential,” and take longer to become school leaders (Cognard-Black, 2004; Peters, 2010; Myung et al., 2011). Once in leadership positions, they experience extra scrutiny in the role (Mendez-Morse, 2003; Boris-Schacter and Langer, 2006), receive lower performance evaluations (Rosette et al., 2019), have shorter tenures (Christman and McClellan, 2008), and experience higher stress levels (Peters, 2012). Yet they persist, which suggests a need to look at the strategies which enable and empower them to cope as well as the potential costs of such strategies. Reed (2012) highlights coping strategies used by these leaders that allowed them to be successful. “The actions of these leaders are in line with the literature that discusses a long-standing tradition of Black women school leaders making quiet, but steady advancements on behalf of the children they serve” (p. 56).

Coping

Experiences of gendered racism are linked to negative health implications including increased psychological distress (see Lewis et al., 2017 for a review). Past research that has explored the coping strategies or attempts to manage internal and external demands (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004) of Black people (e.g., Feagin, 1991; Daly et al., 1995; Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Benkert and Peters, 2005) has historically and problematically used inherently White measures. More recent research looks specifically at responses to racial microaggressions and the coping mechanisms individuals of color rely on (Neville et al., 1997; Utsey et al., 2002, 2007; West et al., 2010; Greer, 2011). For example, Lewis et al. (2013) note that individuals who experience gendered racism first evaluate the situation as stressful, make a secondary assessment to either engage in or opt out of addressing the situation (i.e., picking and choosing battles) and then utilize coping strategies. Those strategies included resistance (e.g., using your voice as power), collective (e.g., using

support networks), and self-protective (e.g., Black superwoman or becoming desensitized).

Other literature focused on the experiences of racial microaggressions, categorize coping strategies as either adaptive or maladaptive (Utsey et al., 2008; Forsyth and Carter, 2012; Holder et al., 2015). Adaptive strategies empower the individual to confront racism, problem solve, reframe, or manage gendered racism (Harrell, 2000; Mellor, 2004; Forsyth and Carter, 2012; Vassilliere et al., 2016) and include leaning on relationships (Harrell, 2000), spirituality and faith (Thomas et al., 2008), and setting boundaries (Franklin and Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Holder et al., 2015). Maladaptive strategies are those which enable an individual to disconnect or attempt to remove gendered racial experiences and stressors (White et al., 2019) via avoidance and disengagement (Lewis et al., 2013), denial (Mellor, 2004; Thomas et al., 2008), or hypervigilance and preparation (Utsey et al., 2008; Holder et al., 2015).

We build on this existing scholarship regarding the experiences of Black women in school leadership and the work of Lewis et al. (2013) regarding how Black women cope with gendered racism. However, we also wish to trouble the idea these strategies are either adaptive or maladaptive (Forsyth and Carter, 2012; White et al., 2019) as both are used by individuals who successfully persist and cope. Thus, for our purpose here we name these strategies as “more affirming” and “less affirming.” We do so to highlight the potential difference in the psychic and physical costs experienced when utilizing them. Further, we also take into consideration whether our participants’ experiences of coping align with the “Strong Black Woman” race-gender schema (Woods-Giscombé, 2010), a “set of cognitive and behavioral expectations for African-American women, notably standing up for oneself, exhibiting self-reliance, and taking care of others” (Watson and Hunter, 2016, p. 425). Our study was guided by the following questions:

1. How do Black women in school leadership cope with the challenges of gendered racism?
2. What are the tolls experienced by Black women as they do so?

In the sections to follow, we outline the methods used to guide our study, including detailed discussion of our analytic process and how we worked to ensure trustworthiness of these analyses. We then share a table of themes and supportive codes and a detailed discussion of our findings. Finally, we examine how our findings support and advance current literature regarding Black women’s experiences in coping with gendered racism in educational leadership.

METHODS

This research was supported by a grant from President Obama’s White House’s Advancing Equity for Girls and Women of Color initiative. In keeping with other exploratory studies examining how participants coped with gendered racism (e.g., Lewis et al., 2016), we took a phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell and Poth, 2018) to this research. Phenomenology moves researchers to examine participants’ lived experiences through

their descriptions, stories, and narratives (Moustakas, 1994). The larger purpose being to condense these individual experiences to a description of the universal essence of a given set of experiences (i.e., phenomenon) (Creswell and Poth, 2018). As we discuss in more detail below, we modeled our data analytic approach largely after Lewis et al.’s (2016) likewise phenomenological study of gendered racial microaggressions on Black women at a predominately White university and thus used a dimensional analysis (Charmaz, 2014) with both inductive and deductive coding. Finally, it is worth noting that part of the power of phenomenology and one reason we selected it, particularly in the context of capturing and describing participants’ recollections and stories via “thick” descriptions (Finlay and Agresti, 1986), is that it calls upon the researchers to engage in “bracketing” and to acknowledge and suspend one’s own beliefs and assumptions regarding the phenomenon of interest.

Sample

We utilized a purposeful criterion-based sampling technique (Patton, 1990) to recruit school administrators (principals and assistant principals) who self-identified as Black women ($n = 10$). Participants came from three U.S. states in the Northeast and were recruited via social and professional networks to support trust building and relatability given the sensitive nature of the interviews (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007). Our sample included one high school assistant principal, two middle school principals, three elementary principals, one elementary school assistant principal, one Headstart principal, and one principal of a k-12 charter school. The participants led schools in a variety of settings, including urban, suburban and rural school districts across the Northeast. They averaged 16 years of experience in education and three had more than 20 years of experience. The women varied in age from 33 to 56, all were married with children and in heterosexual relationships.

Data Collection

In keeping with other phenomenological studies looking at gender racism and Black Female leaders, we favored interviewing as our data collection approach (Weiner et al., 2019). Participants were provided a copy of the institutionally approved informed consent form prior to the first scheduled interview. Upon our first scheduled interview, all participants reviewed the informed consent form, asked questions if desired and agreed to participate and be recorded. Participants were interviewed three times over the year for ~1 h each interview. The interview structure was based on Seidman (2006) and focused on the participants’ experiences of gendered racial discrimination, the first interview centered around their professional history and experiences in preparation programs, the second focused on their current position, and the third on their future work and reflections on their experiences. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. While we address our positionality more below, there are always power dynamics present during interviewing (Seidman, 2006) and we were particularly sensitive to the racial dynamics given our identities as White women.

Data Analysis

As suggested by Charmaz (2014) when using a dimensional analysis, we first engaged in open coding ultimately engaging with both inductive and deductive coding (Boyatzis, 1998). We began by randomly selecting four interviews from the first round for research team members to independently code and discuss. We then independently began our coding by each writing gerund-based phrases (e.g., converting “So it’s really my faith, that gives me the resilience to stay at it.” to “My faith really giving me the resilience to stay at it.”) to describe the participants’ words (Charmaz). We then wrote interpretations of the phrase in the context of the larger piece of text as the basis for the codes e.g., “The participant feels her faith is a source of her resilience in the role”). We then met to discuss and refine our understandings into an initial set of codes (e.g., “Coping Mechanisms,” “Resistance,” and “Tolls”). After, we applied these codes to other interviews from the same collection round, generated larger themes into which we sorted the data, and then used the same process across the other interviews.

For our deductive codes, we used work on coping and coping for Black women in particular (e.g., Utsey et al., 2008; Forsyth and Carter, 2012; Lewis et al., 2013; Holder et al., 2015; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2019) to support the next steps in the dimensional analysis, mapping and axial coding (Charmaz, 2014). All interviews were again recoded. Researchers met frequently to discuss emergent findings and work to ensure reliability and robust conceptualization. As an example, in the independent coding stage, one of us coded interview data around leaving a leadership position as a cost to coping with gendered racism in educational leadership, while the other coded leaving as a less-affirming coping strategy, but not a cost. We then engaged in discussions of these coding differences, returned to the literature and to our data to understand how our participants made meaning of leaving their positions.

We established credibility of our findings as detailed by Lincoln and Guba (1986), first by prolonged engagement with our participants through 3 h long individual interviews with each participant over the course of 1 year. Second, participants were also sent their transcripts and included in discussions of initial findings for the purposes of member checking (Maxwell, 1992). Transferability of our findings was established by providing detailed descriptions of our themes and relevant quotes in support of those themes (see **Table 1**). All participants were identified using pseudonyms and they provided consent to have their quotes included in the discussion of findings.

Positionality

As White women who examine issues of gender bias and leadership in our research, we had previously not examined gendered racial discrimination. We came to this work while studying aspiring principals as we were made aware of the disparities in messaging and opportunities participants received based on their gender and/or racial identities (Weiner and Burton, 2016). This work, along with readings and discussions with participants exposed us to the ways racial discrimination and gender bias operate in the school leadership space. We

are committed to using our research to make leadership more inclusive and have expanded our work to that end. In this way, the “choice” we have to engage in this work is a form of privilege which we must recognize along with other forms of our privilege, including race, gender identity, class, and academic background. These shape our beliefs and views, and also provide a certain level of power and access. We recognize a need to continually reflect on these privileges, to self-analyze, and then act. We also recognize our backgrounds impacted how we interacted with participants during interviews and vice-versa, as well as how we made sense of the data. While we have experienced gender discrimination, we do not claim to understand the experiences of our participants. Instead, intend to use our access to share the powerful experiences and resilience of our participants and to challenge the racist and gender discriminatory institutional structures in which we participate (Scheurich and Young, 1997).

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. First, though robust in terms of the recommendations for phenomenology (Creswell and Poth, 2018), our sample size was still small with women who held different types of school leadership positions in different kinds of schools and districts. As such, some of the contextual nuances of being in a particular geographic location (e.g., urban center vs. rural district) or serving in a particular kind of learning environment (e.g., middle school vs. head start program) was not captured. Future studies with larger, and perhaps more uniform, samples might be helpful to better understand how these contextual factors also play a role in the coping mechanisms available to Black female school leaders and the impact of these strategies. Second, to build our sample we focused solely on identity issues related to a singular race (Black) and gender (female). Future studies that explore a broader range of intersecting identities (e.g., ethnicity, ability, language, sexuality; O’Malley and Capper, 2015) would be helpful and enhance our understanding of the nuanced experiences of Black female school leaders. Finally, despite our efforts to invite participants into the larger research conversation, our approach was more traditional, and the interviewers were of a different race than the participants. Together, the elements bring up questions about participants’ comfort sharing their truth as well as our ability to interpret in ways aligned with their experiences. With that said, and following the work of Moorosi et al. (2018), we began our interviews by talking about our backgrounds and why, as White women, we were interested in their experiences and conducting this research. While this approach cannot change the nature of privilege and how it operates in researcher-participant relationships, it does facilitate researchers’ ability to “be reflexive on our positionality and in taking the ‘political responsibility’ to speak for those we represent” (Moorosi et al., 2018, p. 154). To further support these efforts, a more participatory methodology would provide participants more control and ownership over their narratives and is a direction we hope to move in the future. We look forward to seeing others do the same.

TABLE 1 | Themes, subthemes, definitions, and example quotes.

Theme	Subtheme	Definition	Example quotes
More Affirming (i.e., Adaptive) Strategies		Affirming strategies that enabled participants to persist and succeed in their leadership roles	
	Faith		"So it's really my faith, that gives me the resilience to stay at it. I'm here because God put me here for a reason."
	Collective Support		"If not for my advisor, my mentor...if not for her I wouldn't have made it. She was the best; she was an angel. She was a godsend. She helped me through every step of the way."
	Advocacy (student-focused)		The students for me, definitely. Providing them with the best education that we can and giving them the ability to pursue their dreams is definitely the motivation for me...
Less Affirming (i.e., "Maladaptive") Strategies	Advocacy (solution-focused)		"I interviewed to leave. As I was interviewing, I thought, 'No, you can't just walk away. You've got to at least create, recreate, a strong neighborhood school'."
		Strategies that enabled participants to disconnect from or avoid gendered racism	
	Avoidance and Denial		I don't think about that [racism]. It affects me and I do think about that, but I also know that, in order for me to help children, I got to look beyond certain things.
	Buffering and Boundaries		I would never make myself so vulnerable, ever again, in a workspace... I am taking this as a learning experience. Because I will have my armor on from the very first day in any next space.
Costs to coping	Leaving	The act of voluntarily removing oneself from a position	[no supporting quotes]
		Toll on participants' personal lives, and their physical and emotional health	
	Self-doubt		"There are those patterns or behavior where I'm left to wonder like, 'What is this really a-, you know, what is this really about? Is this about. ...me as a Black woman or is it something, something else?'"
	Recognition with Resignation		Some people don't have to do any of that work. ...For example, if there was a White man who was in charge of the building, [they] may never have to have those kinds of conversations or may have to have them, ...or could engage them in a very different, perhaps less thoughtful or energy consuming way.

FINDINGS

More Affirming (i.e., Adaptive) Strategies

Grounding our findings in the literature, we utilize the terms adaptive and maladaptive (Utsey et al., 2008; Forsyth and Carter, 2012; Holder et al., 2015; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2019) but shift to call them "affirming" or "less affirming" to highlight the ways both types of strategies were often effective in enabling our participants to persist and succeed in their leadership roles.

Turning first to what we refer to as more affirming (i.e., adaptive) strategies, our participants relied on faith, social relationships and professional networks, and advocacy roles to confront, manage, and problem solve around their experiences of gendered racism. Consistent with the literature, these strategies empowered the women to address instances of racism.

Faith

When considering responses to stress that fostered strength or persistence, our participants described the importance of faith in coping with the challenges of gendered racism in their experiences as principals. We describe faith-based coping as a belief in one's "calling" to a particular place or position as coming from God or finding confirmation of one's task in what one believes. In this way, success was not measured by effectiveness in the realm of school but on the support and development of children. Michele clearly articulated this, "So it's really my faith, that gives me the resilience to stay at it. I'm here because God put me here for a reason."

Nicole stated faith was a foundational part of her coping as she forged through adversity and challenge as a Black woman in educational leadership, "It can only be my faith. Because without it, I have nothing. I have nothing. Because none of it makes

sense. I can't make it rational." When addressing some of her more difficult days as a principal, Marissa too described faith and prayer as critical to get through those challenges and her wish to make meaningful impact on those she leads, "sometimes my only prayer is let me help somebody today. Let me help someone to be in a better position, you know if it's a family, if it's a teacher, if it's a custodian, just let me help someone today." She drew strength from her faith and recognized that, despite the challenges she regularly faced, there was a higher calling to her leadership.

Another participant, Marlene, recognized how her faith helped her to shift the stress she experienced via challenges to her leadership to help center her on the meaningful work she accomplished through her leadership. "Faith is a very important part of it, part of me, and it helps to keep me in a place of not really holding on to things and, and letting it go and then really understanding like, 'Well, how is it that you can help this situation?' Because it's not going to do anybody any good to say, 'Oh, you know, you just don't like me because I'm a Black woman'."

Rosa directly addressed the importance of faith as she directly confronted the gendered racism she experienced. "I can always say [regarding those who degrade her], 'You don't have a final say. My God has the final say.' Of course, that could be a survival technique that we use because the buck can't stop at you because I don't trust you with it." Here she acknowledges the importance of faith as a "survival technique" noting that without faith, she would relinquish her power to confront gendered racism to those who hold discriminatory views toward her.

Collective Support

All participants spoke of someone or several people who they leaned on and served as a source of strength or encouragement. For some, like Marisa, a mentor provided professional support, "If not for my advisor, my mentor...if not for her I wouldn't have made it. She was the best; she was an angel. She was a godsend. She helped me through every step of the way." Others, like Michele, had a spouse who supported them, "I will say the other real motivator for me at the time was my husband. He was extremely supportive, and I think he probably saw it as something that I could really do, before I even really had the full confidence to do it."

Most importantly however, many of the women spoke to how trusted colleagues, whether they be other Black women, colleagues of color, or other administrators, provided encouragement. Kamele commented, "I have two other principal friends. We call each other. I usually spend 10 to 15 min on my ride in talking to one of them. We talk every day. And we end our conversation with, 'Okay, don't get fired.'" Similarly, Rosa noted, "I had my other, the administrator who was hired at the same time, I had her in the building but then I've always had my own little administrator crew...And they're Black and White."

Sheila too relied on a fellow administrator, "I have another colleague who started with me, and we did everything together...and even on her roughest days, she'll be like, we can do this. We need to do this and this is why, so I have that."

Several participants also credited these relationships with keeping them sane or from going crazy. Marlene shared,

...We talk frequently to try and help each other kind of understand, 'is this me? Is it other people? How can i impact that perspective? Is this something from a cultural standpoint? Is it something from a different mindset? What is...Help me unders-...Right now, i'm angry so i'm not able to really kind of understand. so she's that person in the mirror that i...sometimes able to say to her, "well, you know you have this perception of..." we can talk honestly...So then i shared with her how other people may see her... It is good to have somebody to talk to. It's like, i'm not crazy. I'm not.

Shelby too celebrated her fellow female Black administrators and how they helped her to not feel alone as well as how this reality decreased the pressure she felt to represent her race and gender in her responses,

Because I'm not the only administrator of color even in the building that day. They [faculty] have me, they have [Female administrator of color #2], and they have [Female administrator of color #3]. Their impression is not just based on their dealings with me. It's based on a broader spectrum of people, because even if they're not dealing with us, they're dealing with parents. At least they're not basing how they feel about a whole group of people on their interactions with me... can breathe a little bit.

Reinforcing Shelby's position regarding the importance of being connected with other Black female leaders, a few participants noted the potential for greater impact and support coming from reaching out to and connecting with other Black women in such roles. Janelle recalled the positive impact of a forum for minority principals had for her,

I joined a forum here, but that was helpful. It was folks of color talking about, "What is it like to be the person in the suit, but still this person, and what you bring?" That was just... it was an outlet. It was an opportunity. It was offline, but it was formalized in the sense that my superintendent knew about it. That they actually supported it financially for me to be a part of this forum, because we needed to talk about what it meant to be a leader of color, and what those complexities were, as it were. That provided an opportunity for us to kind of do that.

Expressing similar sentiments, Kamele reflected on her recent work building a collective support network with other administrators of color, "So next time something comes up, of course I'm going to remember I have something to call him about, and we just start building that..." However, she also recognized that her White colleagues appeared to, "do that better than we do. Maybe it's because it's a larger group of them or because some of them were in other, some of them have other friendships or relationships with people that are higher up in the district because they actually brought them here. So, they already have that." Here Kamele highlights her need for social capital and how she might foster mutually beneficial relationships in the future.

Just knowing other women of color or having friendships was not enough to serve as a support mechanism, participants

repeatedly emphasized the types of conversations necessary for these relationships to be meaningful and a source of encouragement. For Kamele, one such gathering of women lacked substance and she expressed frustration, “We didn’t leave with a call to action. We didn’t go deep enough into you know, why we need to be together. The conversation was a little lighter than I would have thought, and we haven’t developed norms so that ...” The need to unpack gendered racism in an in-depth way led her to seek out intentional conversations, “I didn’t let them in as much because I was too busy, they were too busy, but now I can talk to them more and say, ‘This is what... This is... I’m gonna tell you this. Let me tell you what happened today. Does this about [sound] like bullshit to you,’ and they can affirm like, ‘Yeah, that is.’”

Advocacy

Despite the adversity and challenges to their leadership, our participants found ways to address those challenges using more affirming coping strategies. We broadly defined these strategies as advocacy approaches to coping. Subsumed under advocacy were strategies focused on helping and supporting students, families, and members of the community, or working toward solutions to address issues in the school or community. Sheila captured this sentiment, and was one a majority of our participants described, when she reflected on why she took up a leadership position in her school (leaving a position outside education), “I know there’s a bigger purpose of why I’m doing what I’m doing.”

Student advocacy

This approach to coping, and for some participants their reason to persevere, was centered on providing support or making changes to the benefit of students and those within the community. Rosa reflected on the importance of being a Black woman in educational leadership, why she chose to work in her district, and how her identity impacted the students she led. She also noted how her students looked like, and had similar experiences to, her own children. “I’m thinking about spaces that have children who look like me. Who need to see me. You know what I mean? I’m looking for places that aren’t too large, because then you just feel like a cog in the wheel. And something that’s not too far away from my own children, because they need me too.”

When considering why she entered educational leadership, these sentiments were in the forefront of Sheila’s thinking. Further, she understood that empowering those in the community was critical to make change.

I didn’t really start really thinking about it until I got into a leadership role and seeing how that could influence but at the same time we have to find ways of supporting families, not use it as an excuse or a crutch either, because I struggle with that personally. It’s like, I get you had a bad experience, but now I’m telling you I’m going to help you and support you so you can break that cycle in the family.

Terri also described the joy she derived from seeing her students succeed, noting their successes provided her the motivation to persist despite the challenges she faced in her role. “The students for me, definitely. Providing them with the best education that we can and giving them the ability to pursue their dreams is definitely the motivation for me,... when you see them so happy on graduation day, with their whole life ahead of them, it’s always so exciting.”

Solution focus

Another approach utilized by our participants to cope in the face of challenges to their leadership focused on finding solutions to problems. As Kamele described, she addressed such challenges by developing new opportunities for engagement and dialogue.

So there was a lot of trying to see if they can get me to change and do things that they wanted me to do, but instead of coming to me directly, they would go to him and present as if it was a union issue. And I had to push back and show how this is a union issue and then I’ll address it. If not, then this is how it’s going to stand. And then I created an advisory committee.

As outlined below, when Marisa reflected back on the stress she faced in her role as a school leader, she described a desire to leave her position, but then comes back to the work she does being a source of support and means to cope with those challenges. “I thought about leaving this year, strongly, for the first time ever. I interviewed to leave. As I was interviewing, I thought, ‘No, you can’t just walk away. You’ve got to at least create, recreate, a strong neighborhood school’.”

Less Affirming (i.e., “Maladaptive”) Strategies

Participants also relied on strategies which enabled them to disconnect from or avoid gendered racism via denial or avoidance, boundary setting, and in a few cases, exiting. While in the initial framing the use of the term “maladaptive” to describe these strategies suggests they are somehow ineffective, we suggest that, for these women, a conscious choice to rely on one strategy over another depended on the situation, their role, and/or how often they experienced gendered racism in their current position. Moreover, we argue these strategies can be deemed effective in that they empowered these women and enabled them to persist. However, these previously oft-named “maladaptive” strategies also inflicted a larger toll on participants’ health and well-being and thus our use of the term “less affirming” to describe them.

Avoidance and Denial

The most prominent of the less affirming strategies participants relied on, was the avoidance of facing or addressing acts of gendered racism they encountered as leaders. And yet, despite this approach, these participants were no less aware of these biases or their impact than those who relied on other strategies. As Janelle reflected in her decision to “ignore” the gendered racism she faced, “I also don’t want to be the one to always bring in race, but it’s still such a big piece of the puzzle. That’s why we can’t talk about it, I don’t know. We’re very passionate about it, but I don’t know.” Sheila too spoke of the frequency of gendered

racism, “Oh, clearly. It’s laughable and, because we’d all be crying all the time if we actually thought about it that much,” and her choice to avoid dwelling on such experiences, “I don’t think about that. It affects me and I do think about that, but I also know that, in order for me to help children, I got to look beyond certain things and yeah, there are certain structures in place and my goal is to break through them.” Both women acknowledged the discrimination they faced and their efforts to not let gendered racism occupy their minds or sway them from their important work as leaders.

Marlene, who utilized this strategy more frequently than other participants, was hesitant to name race as a reason she was passed over for a principalship earlier in her career. However, when the interviewer prompted further, she added, “You know, everybody else has their things, but in terms of me being able to move away from, a negative perspective... You know... ‘it’s always racism.’ It’s not healthy for me [to question the potential racism], so that’s why I have to opt out of that.” She continued, “Because it’s not going to do anybody any good to say, ‘Oh, you know, you just don’t like me because I’m a Black woman.’ Or, you know, you know, not gonna help anybody. Not gonna help me, not gonna help that person.” For Marlene, reflecting or addressing gendered racism felt like too much to tackle, particularly given the frequency and regularity of these experiences. Her decision to avoid confronting the offender occurred as an effort to remain positive but also out of concern for how others might perceive confrontation.

Nicole said she avoided addressing gendered racism in her work in the Northeast because she felt it was relatively less than what she experienced growing up. “You know what? Because I was raised in the South, I come with a whole different outlook on stupidity and racism. Once your grandmother gets hit in the head with a gun by a police officer during the Civil Rights era, you kind of have a whole thicker skin because for me, it’s a shame that you have not progressed as far as you have.”

While avoidance “worked” for several participants in so much that it helped them cope, it is important to recognize that avoiding or denying gendered racism did not protect them from the emotional toll it inflicted. As Kamele explained,

I was talking about something that happened months ago and then I realized that you know what, I had never really unpacked it. I put it in the back and... I’m not saying that it wasn’t going to bother me, but I wasn’t going to you know, give the time or space to think about it. But then months later it came up again, so it must be there and it must be affecting me in some way. But I just don’t have the time or the space to unpack it.

Kamele’s comments suggest that while avoidance may “work” in the short term to keep her grounded and in the work, its farther reaching effects may cause more harm than good, and exacts a high toll (i.e., emotional, physical, psychological).

Buffering and Boundaries

Participants used buffering and drew boundaries around themselves to make space between themselves and the personal impact of discrimination when they felt it could no longer be

ignored or tolerated. The boundary line for Sheila was racism aimed at her children, “We just have way too much work to do to be focused on it, but I guess I started thinking about it more and more as my own children are going through school and how they’re impacted with different things.” For Marlene, a participant who frequently relied on avoidance or denial as a strategy, felt the need to address discriminatory statements if they were repeated or followed a “pattern.” She said, “People will make some not so good statements, but when there are patterns of mis... patterns of that kind of behavior, then that’s when it just has to be... It has to be addressed.” In this way, her line seemed to be related to frequency and saturation.

Buffering, while similar to boundary drawing, worked to create distance or cushion between oneself and gendered racism whether in the present or the future. For some participants, such as Rosa, who felt her current work environment was hostile and discriminatory, buffering meant building up the resources to prepare and protect herself from future assaults.

And I don’t want it to take any more. Because I think I can move on to a different work environment, and even if the same things happen, I would have an armor the next time. I would never make myself so vulnerable, ever again, in a workspace... I am taking this as a learning experience. Because I will have my armor on from the very first day in any next space.

Similarly, Sheila reflected on her reliance on buffering via keeping a distance when she started her work as a leader, “I knew I was going to be by myself, I knew that I wouldn’t have allies, and so I knew I just had to observe. I knew it worked, so I had to figure out how it worked, and then just started taking notes and got to know who the key players were and who I knew couldn’t stay on the staff if I wanted to bring any change.”

Nicole too created buffers between herself and others by, as she explained it, putting potential issues regarding her identity and how she might be experienced on the table before others did so.

Right, so now I just take it off their shoulder. I just take the burden off their shoulders so usually if I get up in front and start talking to them, I say, “Okay, I’m going to tell you, I’m going to be direct, but it’s not threatening. I’m going to always be six-foot and a half inch tall because I’m not shrinking. For the life of me, I’m always going to be indigenous to this country and West Africa, okay? None of those things are going to change. Let’s just put that out in the air,” so I remove the proverbial elephant in the room so they [don’t] get to say anything because... I say, “No, Remember, I told you I was going to be direct, yet not threatening. If you’re intimidated, that’s something you have to deal with because I’m just speaking my truth. If you’re intimidated by that, that’s really an internal feeling that you have to deal with because no one can intimidate me unless I allow it. Don’t allow it. You’re intimidated by what I’m saying, and you don’t know enough about the subject. Go learn about the subject, then you won’t feel intimidated.”

In each of these experiences, the participants found a way to protect or distance themselves from the nearly constant assault of gendered racism, these boundaries or buffers enabled the women to persist if even for a time, before the next attack. Notably, these

buffers or boundaries need to be redrawn as different experiences of gendered racism may require different ways to buffer from those experiences.

Leaving

It is critical to note that by the time of writing this paper, three participants left their positions and two left education altogether. While a tremendous loss for their students, schools, and districts, we choose to frame this strategy as less affirming but demonstrative of resilience. For the women who made the choice to leave, they recognized the constant barrage of gendered racism in their positions as leaders, the toll these experiences had on them, drew a line, and decided enough was enough. We recognize too, however, that for other participants, this strategy was not an option. Despite facing constant discrimination at work, these women served as the primary providers for their families, and or had extended family relying on them, thus leaving a secure job was not an option. Additionally, for others, leaving a position for which they have dedicated so much time, energy, and emotional support, did not feel to be a viable choice.

Costs to Coping

In these workspaces with these behaviors toward you, that are diminishments, that are microaggressions, that is the selective incivility. All of these things that exist, right? From a social perspective. This kind of social science. These constructs. They're real. But who am I supposed to be in the face of that, is the question? Am I supposed to be pumping my fist? Am I supposed to be strong but silent? Am I supposed to be resilient? Am I supposed to be like, "I can take it," and then come out on the other side stronger? "You can't break me." I've been, not broken, but bent. (Rosa)

Rosa eloquently articulates the challenges of gendered racism and the impact on our participants despite their coping strategies. Indeed, though these strategies helped the women to survive and for many, to thrive, in their work, not surprisingly, these coping responses came with costs. These women bore these costs in their personal lives, their physical and emotional health, and for some, their leadership positions themselves. In this section, we explore some of the costs borne by our participants. We have named these as tolls our participants carried as a result of being Black women in school leadership. Tolls included internalizing gendered racism as a burden they had to hold, doubting their leadership skills and competence, anger for having to operate in a gendered racist context, and resignation. For some, the costs associated were very close to the surface, as Michele recognized her exhaustion and the physical price she pays as a result of the discrimination she faces. "I definitely get weary in it, definitely say, sometimes I don't want to do it anymore. I feel like it's taken a toll on me physically." She goes on to discuss the internal battle she wages to maintain her emotional health,

I have to find a way to find that light and not sway over so far into the darkness that I just feel, because then I feel that my power is gone. I give my power away, I give my hope away and then I'm really a victim because I'm like I can't, I would have, I could have,

I should have... I don't want to live over there, so it's a constant battle to not go that far over there.

This struggle was evident for Rosa too, as she grappled with the burden of staying "above the fray" and not giving over her real and justifiable anger. She notes, evoking Michelle Obama, "But I don't feel like going high, while people go low anymore. I feel angry."

Self-Doubt

Experiences of gendered racism exacted a price on participants as they often internalized these experiences; questioning if the negative critiques and messages they received resulted from individual shortcomings or failures in their work as leaders. As Kamele explained, while she understood at an intellectual level that much of what she faced was discriminatory, it did not change her feeling that she should be able to succeed in spite of it—that it shouldn't matter. "I could just say that it's [the negative feedback she receives] because I'm a woman, I think it would be harder because then I can say, 'Well, I don't want to be that woman,' but for me, it was so many things. It was race, which no one ever talks about. So, I was even afraid to even think it."

Rosa too struggled to unpack the challenges and insidious nature of gendered racism she faced in her role,

I need some kind of way to make sense, because it keeps coming back to the psychological impact, that's what I want you to get at, at some point. That there's a psychological impact on this constant second guessing what's going on there, what is it? Is it race, is it gender, is it age, is it where I am?

Marlene also shared this self-doubt regarding the source of the negative experiences she faced. "There are those patterns or behavior where I'm left to wonder like, 'What is this really a-, you know, what is this really about? Is this about... me as a Black woman or is it something, something else?'" As Janelle described, she sought out professional development support in to mitigate the self-doubt she experienced as her leadership was continually challenged. "That's why I asked for a coach, because I'm starting to question myself."

Michele reflected on the cost of persevering when others are constantly questioning your capabilities as a leader,

It is exhausting, right? It keeps me in this space of questioning myself, my work right. It keeps me in the space of confidence wise, "Well, maybe I'm really not as smart as I think I am. Maybe I've just over-estimated who I am and what I can accomplish." And it is really heavy.

Recognition With Resignation

While there were clearly costs to trying to work around or through discrimination, so too were their costs when participants attempted to fight it. Participants reported feeling diminished and resigned as a result of such efforts. Resignation that despite their efforts to address others' biases, success was limited and often produced diminishing returns. Marlene named this phenomenon as she recognized the privilege held by those who

do not experience gendered racism and her frustration at having to advocate on her own behalf.

Some people don't have to do any of that work.... For example, if there was a White man who was in charge of the building, [they] may never have to have those kinds of conversations or may have to have them,... or could engage them in a very different, perhaps less thoughtful or energy consuming way.

Shelby also noted her experiences with explicit gendered racism and how she disallowed herself to respond with anger, as the costs would be too high in terms of her ability to continue in her leadership role.

And so that's kind of, you have to take that in sometimes. And it's tough, it's tough, it's tough because you're dealing with people that are not necessarily very open to the fact that you're an African American woman. So, I've had some moments. I've had a student say to me 'I don't want to talk to you, I want to talk to a White person'. So, it's you learn from it and you have to come in, I guess for me, and I say to kids all the time 'if I held grudges, I wouldn't be able to do this job'.

DISCUSSION

This study looked to share the experiences of Black women in school leadership in K-12 education and examine how they coped with gendered racism as school leaders. We also sought to shed light on the costs associated with this coping. Findings revealed that these Black female leaders' experience of coping with gendered racism were reflective of the strong Black woman (SBW) race-gender schema documented in previous research on the experiences of Black women (Woods-Giscombé, 2010). These women's experiences also reveal that the SBW race-gender schema cannot be understood on a binary of either positive (empowering) or negative (energy depleting), but their experiences in the SBW schema are more holistic (Watson and Hunter, 2016). Participants' experiences of coping with gendered racism in their roles as school leaders were at times less affirming (maladaptive) and exacted costs to their well-being. Yet they also used strategies that were affirming, drawing strength in their support of students, addressing challenges in their schools and communities and using faith to ground their purpose as leaders (Woods-Giscombé, 2010; Abrams et al., 2014).

Further, our findings support work by other scholars who are critical of the SBW schema as it negatively impacts the emotional well-being of Black women (Watson and Hunter, 2016). Our participants developed coping strategies to navigate gendered racism in their work, but they also described the costs paid to utilize these coping strategies. We did not specifically ask about health or health outcomes as a part of this research, though some participants did mention negative impacts on their physical well-being in addition to the negative impacts on their emotional well-being (Corbin et al., 2018).

We note throughout the paper that we troubled the term maladaptive coping and instead labeled this coping as a less-affirming coping strategy. Shorter-Gooden (2004) also problematize maladaptive coping, including avoidance coping, as

this coping strategy is not always related to negative outcomes and for some, including our participants, can be beneficial as they must exist under oppressive circumstances that they are not able to change. However, West et al. (2010) noted increased depressive symptoms in those who used more avoidance coping. Also, work by Utsey et al. (2008) found that coping through avoidance, "attempting to forget the situation or minimize the negativity of the situation, or engaging in distracting activities," (p. 312) did not reduce stress of those experiencing gendered racism. Our findings do not provide definitive support for avoidance as a beneficial coping strategy, but some participants who relied more on avoidance as a coping strategy persisted in their leadership positions, while other participants who did not use this strategy left their positions soon after our research concluded. Those who may have "paid" a higher toll with this form of coping used this strategy to persist in their leadership roles.

We are careful here to note that we do not endorse the SBW schema but want to call attention to the coping strategies utilized by our participants grounded in affirming and strengthening approaches, which we termed as more affirming strategies (Adams-Bass et al., 2014). Our participants had opportunities to exert power, influence change, and counter stereotypes in their roles as school leaders and these opportunities served to support our participants as they coped with gendered racism in their leadership roles (Watson and Hunter, 2016). However, these women had to cope in the workplace primarily on their own, without organization level supports in place acknowledging their experiences as different from predominantly White (male) school leaders. They found coping supports which are characterized as strength in SBW schema manifest "in the form of obligatory and volitional independence" (Abrams et al., 2014, p. 508). There were no formal organizational level supports, the burden of gendered racism was on our participants and they were expected to find the strength to hold this burden.

Implications

Here we offer a few (though not an exhaustive list of) implications for educational leaders, policy makers and educators. One is to create formal and informal spaces for Black women educational leaders to engage in conversations regarding their experiences as school leaders. These spaces should not be considered as places only to "vent" difficulties and challenges, but spaces to share insights, opportunities and strategies that can lead to meaningful policy changes and structural changes to improve the experiences of these leaders. These leaders must be heard by those in positions of power (i.e., still most often White men) and they must receive support for their decisions to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities they experience as school leaders. In addition, gendered racism must be named and discussed in educational leadership programs and in professional development programs (Weiner et al., 2019). These discussions are not "only" for Black women, but for all emerging professionals. The burden of addressing gendered racism must shift from those who experience it to those who witness it and by their silence allow it to continue and negatively harm their colleagues.

Further, we must shift the burden of coping with gendered racism from Black women in school leadership to a critique of how Whiteness is privileged in school leadership and how this privilege must be disrupted in all organizational practices (training, education, access, support, advancement). One, but clearly not the only, way to begin to shift this burden is to construct antiracist, feminist, White allyship (Erskine and Bilimoria, 2019) of Black women in school leadership. White allyship is

a continuous, reflexive practice of proactively interrogating Whiteness from an intersectionality framework, leveraging one's position of power and privilege, and courageously interrupting the status quo of predominantly White corporate leadership by engaging in prosocial behaviors that foster growth-in-connection and have both the intention and impact of creating mutuality, solidarity, and support of Afro-Diasporic women's career development and leadership advancement in organizational leadership (Erskine and Bilimoria, 2019, p. 2).

Allyship is a critical step to place the onus of gendered racism not on those who experience it but on those who benefit from the power and privilege of Whiteness. Specific steps, though not exclusive, that can be taken in White allyship include engaging in critical self-reflexivity and interrogating Whiteness, building

trust and high-quality relationships, and providing solidarity and support (Erskine and Bilimoria, 2019). As Janelle reminds us,

Understand how uncomfortable this is for me. Not because I have an issue of talking about equity and injustice. But I don't need you to see...I don't need to be the barrier, because you think, "This is this Black woman, and this is her agenda." So, we need to understand we're all in this continuum, and we need to approach it from, always a place of learning.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Gender and the Superintendency: The Power of Career Paths

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Purpose: The gender gap in educational leadership is a national social justice issue. Despite efforts to increase the number of female superintendents in the US, representation remains low. This article investigates the career paths and perspectives of current and aspirant superintendents in Pennsylvania.

Research Design: This mixed methods study used an electronic survey with both quantitative multiple choice items and qualitative open-response items.

Findings: The gender gap persists Pennsylvania with possible perpetuation by female assistant superintendents' disinterest in the positions. The insider path (ascending into the superintendency from inside the school district) was preferred and perceived as most optimal; however, more superintendents and assistant superintendents pursued outsider career paths (ascending into the superintendency from positions outside of the district). Aspirant superintendents considered insider paths most optimal due to interpersonal factors while superintendents based perceptions on intrapersonal factors. Outsider paths were most optimal based on applicant traits according to superintendents while assistant superintendents cited various drivers with no prominent theme. Superintendents chose insider paths due to interpersonal factors and outsider paths due to district traits.

Conclusions: Similarities and differences in career planning preferences by men and women aspirant superintendents indicates an understanding by women of the insider path's potential to overcome bias regarding women in leadership roles. As this career path is frequently not an option, women must choose not to aspire or to prepare themselves for possible gender bias in hiring when applying as outsiders.

Keywords: gender, career path, mixed methods, educational leadership, superintendents, women, leaders, administration

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Gender equality in education remains a significant social justice issue. Research has clarified gender differences in decision-making and problem-solving as well as benefits stemming from diverse approaches to organizational planning (Folkman, 2015). As a result, gender equity in leadership positions grows in both ethical and strategic importance (Swers, 2002; Rhode, 2003). Female teachers need women in top leadership positions to inspire and mentor them to take up the challenges of leading and to provide visible role models for female students developing leadership skills (McKinsey and Company, 2010).

National estimates suggested the number of women holding top educational leadership positions increased from 13% in 2000 (Glass and Franceschini, 2007) to 27% in 2015 (Robinson et al., 2017), but this slow growth would not close gaps until at least 2040 (Young et al., 2018). Such meager reductions despite social justice gains are unclear but may include a deficit of aspirant women leaders (Glass, 2000; Williams, 2003) and ongoing discrimination (Skrla, 2000; Brunner and Grogan, 2007; Kim and Brunner, 2009).

This article presents the findings of a study examining gender differences in aspirant and current Pennsylvanian superintendents' perspectives of career planning: the choice to pursue an insider route in the current or neighboring district or an outsider route in unfamiliar, non-local districts. While aspirant superintendents offered perspectives of the process, current superintendents shared both perceived and experiential understandings of the pros and cons of insider and outsider career paths. Together these findings inform career-planning recommendations for female aspirant superintendents that may help to promote gender equity in educational leadership.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE

The Construct of Gender

While sex refers to a classification made at birth defined by genitalia or chromosomal representation, West and Zimmerman (1987) asserted that gender refers to, "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of formative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (p. 127). Stated plainly, gender refers to behaving and thinking in ways that align to others' expectations for either a male or female—or "doing gender." Although still a generally acceptable construct for gender, other conceptualizations include the constructivist and deconstructivist views. Constructivism asserts that gender begins with sex assignment at birth and is reinforced throughout life (Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1990; Lorber and Farrell, 1991). A deconstructivism view of gender focuses more on sex category expectation similarities as they are deconstructed by differences into gendered norms. A more modern definition of gender incorporates both constructivist and deconstructivist assertions into a broad definition: "Gender refers to those social, cultural, and psychological traits linked to males and females through particular social contexts" (Lindsey, 2016, p. 11).

For the purposes of this paper, we discuss gender in terms of male/man or female/woman as identified by the participants despite the potential for a full spectrum of gender identification by school leaders. Our use of polarized gender classifications aims to attribute findings to those perceived as male or female in a society where a gender spectrum is not yet widely recognized. Blount (1996, 2000, 2005) highlighted the fear of homosexuality in education (which we extrapolate to gender diversity) noting historically severe sanctions against those failing to conform to gender roles or exhibiting same-sex desires. Such intolerance continues in schools as evidenced by recent debate on transgender bathroom usage in schools. Gender polarization

served to increase participation in this study in light of such fear while generalizing consideration of these findings to any individual typically identified as "female" regardless of his or her placement on the gender spectrum. As most bias is experienced due to others' perceptions, this over-generalization serves to mimic the experiences of individuals per externally-pressured gendered roles and the differential treatment stemming from those roles.

Female Assistant Superintendent Career Choices

It is the authors' belief that women pursuing careers in educational leadership select options they believe will counter barriers and play to their strengths based on their understanding of potential challenges, stereotypes, and biases they may face. Examining the career decisions of 40 female teachers in the UK, Smith (2011) noted the importance of acknowledging women's agency and examining the interrelationship of the individual woman within her social context. Smith argued that to limit an analysis of women's under-representation in leadership positions to internal and external barriers to progression "...would be to deny women's agency. Women can, and do make decisions for themselves, and take steps to shape their own lives and careers..." (p. 2) including that relating to how and whether to consider formal leadership positions.

Several studies indicated women find alternative career paths that do not follow the typical progression (see Schein, 1971) traditionally used by men to access the US superintendency (Glass, 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2017). Kim and Brunner (2009) found 50% of the women in their study followed an alternative career path to the superintendency that did not include the high school principalship at all. Polinchock (2014) and Sperandio and Devdas (2015) described a plethora of career paths taken by female superintendents with no dominant pattern, but many transitioning through central office positions to the assistant superintendency. These studies support our hypothetical framework that female assistant superintendents both choose to aspire to the superintendency and position themselves for the superintendency in novel manners.

Insider/Outsider Paths to the Superintendency

Aspiring superintendents choose whether to apply as an insider (within the school district where they currently work and are known) or an outsider (in a district outside their own where they are less known or not at all known) with most following an insider path (Robinson et al., 2017). Carlson (1961, 1972) first examined insider-outsider, or in his terms place- or career-bound, superintendent career paths in a study of the benefits and hiring patterns of male superintendents. Place-bound superintendents benefited from district knowledge, experienced longer tenures, had a good reputation in the district, had difficulty initiating change, challenges with authority and group management, and felt a forced need to tighten existing policies. Districts usually hired place-bound superintendents when satisfied with current school functioning. Conversely,

career-bound superintendents had a better bargaining position leading to higher salaries and better benefits, greater flexibility, and less aversion to change, but felt mandated to enact change (even when seemingly unnecessary), expected to implement new policies and expand staff, and generally expendable. School boards hired career-bound superintendents to initiate change in the face of unacceptable school performance. Moreover, insiders were well-known in districts and often avoided relocation or commute time increases while outsiders often experienced the inverse.

Carlson went on to categorize the behaviors of male insiders and outsiders: The insider... adapts or modifies his performance to fit the office. ... The place-bound superintendent seems to derive status from the office; he does not bring status to it. ... He performs within the framework established by the predecessor rather than by creating a new framework. The performance of the outsider, on the other hand, does add something to the role. The office is modified rather than the person. His performance changes the office and ... holds possibilities of increasing the status of the office (Carlson, 1961, p. 227).

Considering the presence of gender biases in the hiring process, the malleability of either the professional or the profession seems important. If school boards customize insider superintendents to the needs of the district and outsider superintendents customize the position to personal and district needs, school boards may consider the benefits/risks of hiring a female to district goals, while females consider the (dis)advantages of locales to professional growth.

Employment Queuing Theory

Considerations related to superintendency acquisition are conceptualized by Tallerico and Blount (2004) under Employment Queuing Theory, which posits that candidates rank positions by desirability (job queue) in direct parallel to employers' ranking of candidates by attractiveness (labor queue) resulting in the best jobs going to the most preferred candidates. Women hold the agency to rank jobs by hierarchy of desirability—by locale here—in direct parallel to districts' rankings. Tallerico and Blount go on to define three potential outcomes of female incorporation into school leadership: resegregation, ghettoization, or integration. Resegregation reflects the migration of female dominance in the classroom to the superintendency akin to “White Flight” where a segregated group moves into a potentially desegregated occupation only to find themselves once again segregated. Ghettoization would bring women into leadership positions under lower wages with fewer benefits and higher work demands similar to practices in much of the modern business world. Integration would create a gender-blind view of these roles resulting in a more equal distribution by gender in school leadership potentially fraught with the same challenges of the Colorblindness movement (see Kang and Lane, 2010). Considering this framework, women are empowered by job queuing, but must overcome issues created by labor queuing that drive suboptimal school leadership feminization discourses. Applied to this study, women may use insider-outsider career paths to navigate gender-biased labor queues in ways that would reflect their own hierarchies

of desirability using considerations situated in socio-cultural contexts rather than stand-alone motives.

Second-Generation Gender Bias

Women navigating career paths to avoid gender biases may actually be avoiding second-generation gender bias rather than more explicit forms of gender bias. Second-generation gender bias refers to hidden barriers to women's success such as a lack of role models, organizational structures and practices historically designed to fit men's lives, fewer available professional network opportunities, and cultural expectations (Ibarra et al., 2013). “Second-generation bias does not require an intent to exclude; nor does it necessarily produce direct, immediate harm to any individual. Rather, it creates a context—akin to “something in the water”—in which women fail to thrive or reach their full potential” (Ibarra et al., 2013, p. 6). As such, women might use an insider path to capitalize on networking opportunities unavailable through outsider paths or pursue jobs in districts with a history of female leaders to avoid organizational and cultural structures that inhibit female career progression.

Stereotype Avoidance

Dawley et al. (2004) hypothesized that the insider route would be more advantageous to female applicants in helping them overcome the societal perceptions that leadership is a male trait. They noted:

People tend to rely on past experiences or stereotypes when a situation is new, ambiguous, or stressful. Because of this, people are less likely to rely on stereotypes when they deal with a person that they know well or if they are in situations in which they have had previous experience. Thus, the more well known a female successor is to her organization, the more likely that she will be judged on previous impressions and performance, not on stereotypes (p. 681-682).

When extended to female superintendent aspirants, gender biases and stereotypes might be more easily overcome by a woman who is well-known or an insider in the district; thus, driving our hypothesized benefit via an insider or nearby-district career path.

The Pennsylvania Superintendency

Pennsylvania provides a unique environment for superintendency research with 500 school districts, each with their own superintendent and many with additional assistant superintendents. These districts are often small and close together providing opportunities for inter-district networking and communication, which allows leaders to self-promote to more than one district. Close proximity allows cross-district moves without relocation or significant commute time changes. Furthermore, Pennsylvania employs a greater percentage of female superintendents than the national average with 29% females (as compared to 27% nationally) as of the 2014-2015 school year (PDE, 2015), and has experienced sizeable turnover in the superintendency with 104 new hires for the 2014-2015 school year. Together, these factors provide an ideal platform for the study of female superintendency career paths.

The Study

The purpose of the present study was 2-fold. First, the study sought to understand how men and women aspiring to the superintendency perceived the insider vs. outsider career paths in relation to achieving their goals. Second, the study investigated both the overall gender gap and whether gender differences existed in hiring patterns of insiders/outsiders by school boards through an examination of current Pennsylvanian school superintendents' first superintendent positions. The research questions were as follows:

- (1) Does a district leadership gender gap currently exist in Pennsylvania?
- (2) How do assistant superintendents aspiring to the superintendency in Pennsylvania perceive and act on career paths and does this differ by gender?
 - a. Which career path do assistant superintendents consider the most optimal, and what influences this perception?
 - b. Do preferences and application histories align with perceptions of optimality?
- (3) Which career path did current superintendents in Pennsylvania follow to gain their first superintendent position, and what influenced their choice of track?

In addition to providing recommendations for women aspiring toward the superintendency, findings from this study contribute to the understanding of the underrepresentation of women in leadership and the need for gender awareness and equity in school leadership hiring practices.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Participants

A list of all Pennsylvanian superintendents and assistant superintendents, obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), directed a search for the email addresses of those administrators. Of the 748 administrators, 687 active email addresses were obtained through school district website searches of which 460 were superintendents and 228 were assistant superintendents. Each potential participant was emailed up to three times with a request to participate in an online survey. After 2 months of data collection, 295 of the 687 emailed administrators responded, resulting in a response rate of 43%. Of these respondents, 100 identified as assistant superintendents or central office staff and 195 identified as superintendents resulting in individual response rates of 44 and 42%, respectively.

Survey

The researchers developed a survey inquiring about participants' career paths inclusive of preferences, perceptions, commute/residency changes, and district familiarity. The survey, designed and administered through Qualtrics Software, comprised of multiple choice (quantitative) items and open response (qualitative) items, which differed for each participant based on previous answers identifying current position, chosen/preferred career path, and related items. The survey was piloted with 10 university personnel (including a current

assistant superintendent and retired superintendent). Prior to responding to the survey, all participants electronically signed an informed consent form that included the consent to publish statistics from their data and direct quotations providing no identifying information were included.

Quantitative Data Analysis

After the survey response period ended, data were extracted from Qualtrics and imported into SPSS for analyses. Data were dummy coded and missing data were not included in analyses. Descriptive statistics and chi-squared tests were used as appropriate to investigate the findings. Chi-squared tests are appropriate for determining differences when data represent frequencies, compared data are mutually exclusive, each participant can contribute only one point of data for each test, the groups are independent, there are two categories of data, and data are derived from a simple random sample (Field, 2013). The sample used here is considered random as the entire population of Pennsylvania administrators was aimed for inclusion and the responding principals were not controlled. Another assumption of the chi-squared test is that the assumed value for at least 80% of cells is five or more. Some data did not meet this assumption, so for all analyses inclusive of the "nearby district" and/or "both paths" options, a secondary analysis was run collapsing nearby district into "outsider path" and excluding "both paths" responses to increase sample cell size and analytical accuracy. All secondary analyses were run using identical analytical methods to the original analysis. A *post-hoc* power analysis was conducted using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007, 2009), a statistical program that determines power and sample sizes, and effect sizes were calculated with eta squared tests.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative survey items were analyzed using a dual-cycle deductive approach (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2014). During this analysis, data were analyzed thematically in relation to the question items during initial coding. Emergent themes were refined during the secondary coding cycle and further contextualized with the data to create meaning. Themes were triangulated for credibility via literature comparison, expert review (two superintendents and two assistant superintendents), and coding by a second researcher (Patton, 1999). Support for themes was confirmed by direct quotations.

The Mixed Methods Design

The use of a concurrent mixed methods was most appropriate for this study because it allowed for sensemaking of both numerical trends and analysis of the present phenomenon (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Use of a phenomenological qualitative approach empowers researchers to study the lived experiences and understand the perspectives of individuals (Patton, 2014). Combining this approach with chi-squared tests allowed the researchers to look at patterns in superintendency acquisition and application, which better contextualized and informed the data findings.

Limitations

As is typical of any location-based study, results may only describe Pennsylvanian superintendents and aspirants and not generalize to the population at large. Similarly, this study suffered from low power due to a small sample size as is typical of administrative research. Finally, exploration of intersectionalities could not occur in this data. The school leader demographics in Pennsylvania have an established low level of racial/ethnic diversity and salary-linked homogeneity of socioeconomic status making such data uninterpretable and thus not collected. In fact, as of 2010 only 6% of superintendents responding to a national survey identified as African American or Hispanic/Latino (Glass, 2000). Sexual/romantic orientation (see Diamond, 2003) was also excluded due to high levels of controversy potentially stemming from persistent homophobia (Blount, 2000, 2003, 2005; Tooms, 2007; Williams, 2018). Studies inclusive of race/ethnicity, sexual/romantic orientation, and related demographics remain of critical importance and should be conducted using a more qualitative and intimate approach to account for the low sample size requirements and sensitive nature of topics.

FINDINGS

Of the 228 assistant superintendents and 460 superintendents contacted, 290 leaders responded to the survey. Ninety-two assistant superintendents and 192 superintendents completed the entire survey resulting in response rates of 40.4 and 41.7%, respectively. Participant demographics are presented in **Table 1**. Chi-squared tests revealed superintendent level (full or assistant) differed significantly by both gender and age, Gender: $\chi^2(1) = 19.61, p < 0.001, \phi = 0.260$, CI 95% [0.160, 0.388]; Age: $\chi^2(9) = 18.39, p < 0.05, \phi = 0.252$, CI 95% [0.174, 0.381].

Assistant Superintendents Superintendency Pursuit

A chi-square test of independence indicated superintendency aspirations differed significantly by gender, $\chi^2(1) = 6.31, p < 0.05, \phi = 0.265$, CI 95% [0.059, 0.448], with gender explaining 26.5% of the variance in superintendency interest. Males aspired toward the superintendency 1.3 times more often than females. Despite interest in the superintendency, only 40.3% of female aspirant superintendents previously applied for superintendent jobs; however, this difference was statistically insignificant suggesting application history did not differ by gender, $\chi^2(1) = 0.83, p = 0.361$. The relationship between interest in the superintendency and application history by gender is displayed in **Figure 1**.

Of the 39 assistant superintendents who had already applied for a superintendent position, 53.8% applied exclusively to positions outside their district with an even split of the remaining applicants applying to either exclusively internal or both position locales. A chi-square test of independence indicated that application history was independent of gender despite trends as displayed in **Table 2**, $\chi^2(2) = 2.33, p = 0.311$. This independence was maintained in the planned secondary analysis (see Quantitative Data Analysis), $\chi^2(1) = 0.16, p = 0.690$.

TABLE 1 | Descriptive data by gender.

	Male		Female		Total	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Position^a						
Superintendent	74.6	144	23.3	48	66.2	192
Assistant super.	51.1	45	48.5	47	31.7	92
Age						
25–35	1.0	2	1.0	1	1.0	3
36–45	25.9	50	20.6	20	24.1	70
46–55	44.6	86	52.6	51	47.2	137
Older than 55	28.5	55	25.8	25	27.6	80
Years in Position						
<1 year	15.5	30	16.5	16	15.9	46
1–3 years	33.2	64	34.0	33	33.4	97
4–6 years	28.5	55	38.1	37	31.7	92
7+ year	22.8	44	11.3	11	19.0	55
Total ^b	66.6	193	33.4	97	100.0	290

Percentages are subgroup representations across gender unless otherwise stated.

^aPositions do not include data for central office personnel. These 6 respondents represent 2.0% of the total sample.

^bPercentages across TOTAL represent those of males or females across the sample.

Perceptions

Career path perceptions are displayed by gender in **Figure 2**. A chi-square test of independence revealed that career path preferences did not significantly differ by gender, $\chi^2(3) = 7.66, p = 0.054$. In secondary analyses, the relationship between preference and gender was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 6.81, p < 0.01, \phi = -0.38$, CI 95% [−0.583, −0.100], indicating notable differences in preferences by gender when preferences existed. A chi-square test of independence indicated perceived optimal career path did not significantly differ by gender, $\chi^2(3) = 6.01, p = 0.111$; however, secondary analyses revealed a significant relationship explaining 29% of the variance between the perceived optimal career path and gender in those considering either path advantageous, $\chi^2(1) = 4.11, p < 0.05, \phi = -0.289$, CI 95% [−0.537, −0.040]. Qualitative analyses revealed four themes of career path perception: interpersonal factors, intrapersonal factors, applicant traits, and district traits. **Table 3** demonstrates the sub-themes supporting the major themes by gender and career path.

Superintendents Career Path

A chi-square test of independence revealed that superintendents' initial career paths to the superintendency did not significantly differ by gender, $\chi^2(1) = 2.09, p = 0.149$. Superintendents appeared to increase commute times rather than relocate and did not consider themselves well-known in hiring districts when following outsider career paths as demonstrated in **Table 2**. A chi-square test of independence demonstrated that both commute time and relocation were independent of gender, commute: $\chi^2(2) = 1.58, p = 0.453$; relocation: $\chi^2(1) = 0.11, p = 0.743$. No female superintendents reported being well-known

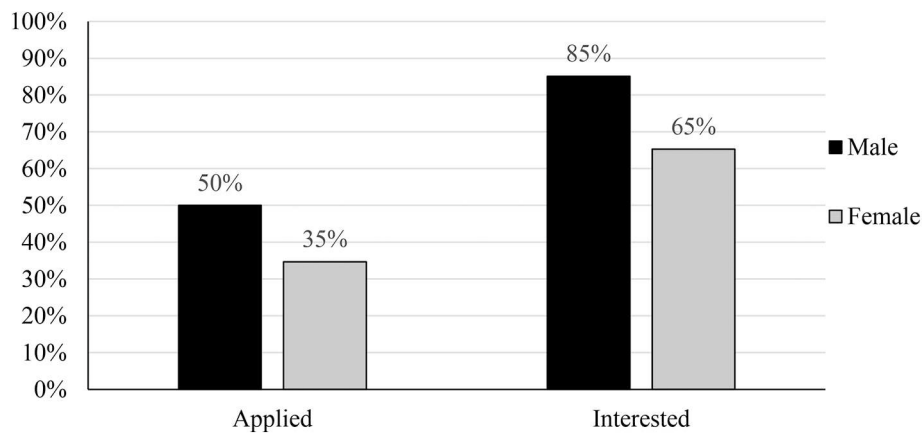


FIGURE 1 | Assistant superintendents who are interested in the superintendency and those who already applied by gender.

in hiring districts indicating a difference of note despite the inability to accurately calculate a valid chi-squared value (zero cell size error).

Perceptions

Most superintendents believed their career path choice helped them achieve their current position as demonstrated in **Figure 3**. A chi-square test of independence found perceptions of career path helpfulness differed by the chosen career path, $\chi^2(1) = 18.82$, $p < 0.001$, $\phi = 0.320$, CI 95% [0.187, 0.427], and explained 32% of the variance between perception of career path helpfulness and chosen career path. Insiders perceived the insider career path as beneficial toward their career goals more often than outsiders. There were no significant relationships when career path benefit was examined in relation to gender using chi-squared tests for gender and insider benefit, $\chi^2(1) = 0.28$, $p = 0.596$; outsider benefit, $\chi^2(1) = 0.22$, $p = 0.881$; or benefit of insider vs. outsider, $\chi^2(2) = 2.10$, $p = 0.351$. The qualitative sub-themes supporting the four major themes of career path perception are displayed in **Table 3**.

DISCUSSION

The Gender Gap

The gender gap in school leadership persists in Pennsylvania based on statistically fewer female superintendent and assistant superintendent respondents than male respondents. In fact, females made up only 33% of the entire responding sample and only 23% of the superintendent sample. The proportion of female superintendents in this study aligned with state data indicating that 29% of superintendents were female. Conversely, assistant superintendents were relatively balanced with only a 2% difference between the representation of males and females. Although this seems to indicate a promising future for gender equality in the superintendency, interest and application patterns suggest perpetuation of inequities.

Aligning with trends in recent literature, male assistant superintendents were 1.3 times more likely than their female

counterparts to report interest in the superintendency (Glass, 2000; Superville, 2016). Such a discrepancy is alarming because it provides a clear mechanism for the perpetuation of the gender gap in district leadership. If women remain uninterested in the superintendency, males will continue to drive educational leadership and related decision-making with more male-oriented understandings, priorities, and approaches. Furthermore, a continued male over-representation in the superintendency has the potential to reinforce stereotypes that only men can lead effectively. Researchers must begin to investigate this disinterest and explore strategies to attract more women to top-level leadership positions in education.

This female lack of interest in the superintendency gains further prominence when considered as a factor contributing to the gender discrepancy in leadership. Women often enter the superintendency later in their careers, which may perpetuate gender discrepancies (Glass, 2000; Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones, 2010; Robinson et al., 2017). This study failed to confirm such findings in current superintendents, finding a relatively equal male:female distribution by age range, where the largest difference by gender was only 8% (46–55 age group). Superintendents tended to be older than assistant superintendents, but gender distributions were similar across age groups for each position. This indicated that female superintendents and assistant superintendents represented similar age groups but could not determine at what age positions were entered. Future studies should consider adding an additional survey item to address this limitation.

Even so, women may begin their leadership journey at later ages. Assistant superintendents demonstrated a slightly more discrepant age group distribution although no significant differences were present. While 83% of both male and female assistant superintendents were in the albeit broad 35 to 55 years old age range, male superintendents represented the first decade more frequently than females who more frequently represented the later decade. This delayed superintendency progression by women is also reflected in AASA's 2015 data (Robinson et al., 2017) and The New York State Council of School

TABLE 2 | Summary of quantitative data.

	Insider %	Nearby %	Outsider %	Both %	<i>n</i>
Assistant Superintendent					
Application history (m,f)	23.1 (18.2, 29.4)	NA	53.8 (50.0, 58.8)	23.1 (31.8, 11.8)	39
Preference	48.6 (35.0, 65.6)	20.8 (30.0, 9.4)	4.2 (5.0, 3.1)	26.4 (30.0, 21.9)	72
Optimal application route	41.7 (37.5, 46.9)	18.1 (25.0, 9.4)	8.3 (12.5, 3.1)	31.9 (25.0, 40.6)	72
<i>Application History</i>	30.0 (26.7, 33.3)	NA	70.0 (73.3, 66.7)	NA	30
<i>Preference**</i>	66.0 (50.0, 84.0)	NA	34.0 (50.0, 16.0)	NA	53
<i>Optimal Application Route*</i>	61.2 (50.0, 78.9)	NA	38.8 (50.0, 21.1)	NA	49
Superintendent					
Path to first Superintendent position	52.3 (49.3, 61.2)	NA	47.7 (50.7, 38.8)	NA	189
	Yes/Increased %		No/Decreased %	Unchanged %	<i>n</i>
Assistant Superintendent					
Did you apply for the superintendency in the past?	40.3 (45.0, 34.4)		59.7 (55.0, 65.6)	NA	72
Are you interested in the superintendency?*	76.7 (88.4, 66.0)		23.3 (11.6, 34.0)	NA	90
Superintendent					
Do you think your chosen path was helpful?	83.2 (82.6, 84.8)		16.8 (17.4, 15.2)	NA	184
Did you have to relocate for the superintendency?	36.7 (37.5, 33.3)		63.3 (62.5, 66.7)	NA	90
Were you well-known in your new district?†	20.9 (26.0, 0.0)		79.1 (74.0, 100.0)	NA	91
Did your commute time change?	47.3 (43.2, 63.6)		21.8 (22.7, 16.7)	30.9 (34.1, 18.2)	55

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, † difference by gender established but not statistically testable.

Top percentages represent overall proportion of responses in category. Bottom percentages represent the proportion of responses by gender (males, females). Italicized data indicate items recategorized dichotomously as insider or outsider. Responses of "nearby" were grouped with "outsider" responses and "both" responses were dropped.

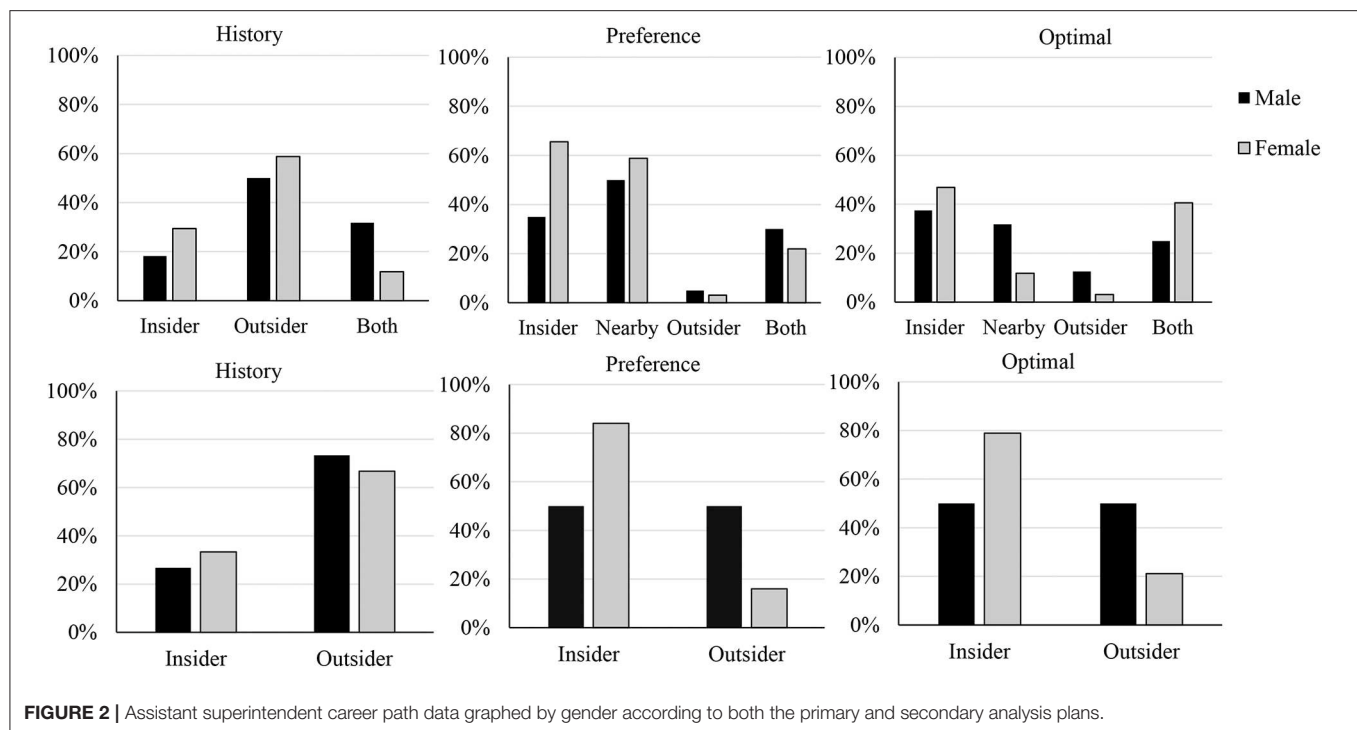
NA, not applicable.

Superintendents (NYSCoSS)'s 2016 data demonstrating possible generalizability of findings. In their report, NYSCoSS wrote:

Where the differences [between men and women] remain stark are the significantly higher proportion of unmarried/unpartnered women, and the higher proportion of men with school-aged children. Given the time and stress demands of the superintendency, much more work needs to be done to understand these differences and whether (or perhaps, how) traditional gender roles around family responsibility impact the path to the superintendency (NYSCoSS, 2016, p. 6).

Although this study only begins to explore the effects of those paths and how to work around any related biases, the presence of related findings confirms the need for more research investigating such impacts.

Cultural changes present a possible mechanism for age similarities despite district leaders' genders. As the NYSCoSS (2016) study indicated, family responsibilities are no longer defaulted to the female household leader. In fact, the typical modern American nuclear family consists of dual earners often sharing many parental responsibilities (Lindsey, 2016). These dual earning families often engage in egalitarian marriages where, "partners share decision making and assign family roles based on talent and choice rather than traditional beliefs about gender" (Lindsey, 2016, p. 235). This counters concerns related to the maternal wall (see Williams, 2003) where women are limited in their ability to pursue career goals earlier in life, if at all, due to the requirements of motherhood. As both men and women share previously feminine duties, effects of the maternal wall may become weaker, allowing women to enter leadership roles earlier. Indeed, only male superintendents cited



family as a factor contributing toward their superintendency career path choice. One assistant superintendent described his current disinterest in the superintendency as follows:

There are currently several positions available in districts throughout Pennsylvania. I have three daughters in school and I do not wish to pull them from school to relocate. Nor do I wish to become a weekend Dad! I will not sacrifice taking care of my own children to move away to take care of everyone else's children. My "Dad cap" is more important to me than a "Superintendent's cap" at this point in my life.

As familial gender roles continue to blur, more flexibility may emerge in the career paths of both men and women in education despite the pattern where males are more likely to have children while superintendent (Robinson et al., 2017).

Assistant Superintendents' Career Path Perceptions and Preferences

Optimal Career Path

Assistant superintendents aspiring to the superintendency typically considered the insider career path most optimal for acquiring a superintendent position based mainly on interpersonal factors within their current district such as reputation and relationships, which is consistent with the findings of Kelsey et al. (2014). Assistant superintendents also discussed the importance of district familiarity as a secondary factor supporting perceived optimality of the insider career path. One assistant superintendent wrote:

"[I have] 30 years in district and [worked in] a variety of roles. I have developed strong trusting and respectful relationships with members of all stakeholder groups. I know the district well, at all levels and departments."

In a characteristic statement of the insider respondents, this assistant superintendent discusses his history (reputation), relationships, and familiarity as reasons for thinking that the insider career path provides the best chance for becoming a superintendent. Another assistant superintendent mentioned her relationships and reputation as replacements for a lack of previous superintendent experience:

"I do not have experience as a superintendent and believe I would be more likely to be seriously considered by the board in my current district, where they know me and my work."

These assistant superintendents appeared to consider interpersonal factors important to creating an advantageous path to the superintendency through an insider career path; however, less than half of all assistant superintendents (even when separated by gender) considered the insider path optimal when options of "equally effective" or "nearby district" were available choices.

The second largest group of assistant superintendents consider neither the insider nor the outsider career path to the optimal career path toward a superintendent position. A comparable proportion of female assistant superintendents considered no career path optimal and the insider path most optimal; meanwhile, a smaller proportion of male assistant superintendents considered no career path optimal than those

TABLE 3 | Summary of qualitative results.

Reasons for:		Optimality ^a			Efficacy ^b		Choice ^b	
Theme		Insider	Nearby	Outsider	Insider	Outsider	Insider	Outsider
Interpersonal factors	M	Relationships Reputation	Networking		Relationships Reputation		Suggested/Mentored	Poor Relationships
	F	Relationships Reputation	Reputation		Relationships Reputation		Suggested/Mentored	Poor Relationships
Intrapersonal factors	M	Familiarity Family Location	Location		Familiarity Financial		Family Familiarity Timing	Family Location Ready for Change
	F	Familiarity	Location	Family	Familiarity		Familiarity Location Timing	Location Ready for Change
Applicant traits	M		Qualifications			Experience New Ideas New Perspective	Drive to Help Opportunity	
	F		Qualifications			Experience New Ideas New Perspective	Drive to Help Opportunity	
District Traits	M	Opportunity Coaching Request to Apply	Super's Age Opportunity	Super's Age Opportunity	Super's Age Opportunity Request to Apply	Opportunity	Predetermined Transition Request to Apply	Better District Opportunity Request to Apply
	F	Coaching			Request to Apply		Request to Apply	Better District Opportunity Request to Apply

^aBased on assistant superintendent responses.

^bBased on superintendent responses.

considering the insider path or a nearby path most optimal. Nevertheless, at least one quarter of each gender and nearly one third of the full assistant superintendent sample reported no perceived advantages to the insider, outsider, or nearby career paths.

Approximately one-fifth of assistant superintendents considered the nearby district career path most optimal with a substantially larger proportion of males than females responding in this way. This finding is unexpected because the high density of Pennsylvanian school districts creates the potential for nearby districts to provide benefits similar to insider career paths despite being outside districts. One male assistant superintendent considering the nearby district career path optimal captured this notion in his response:

“By living in a metropolitan area, there are naturally many districts and possibilities of openings.”

With the previously found insider career path benefits to female leaders (see Dawley et al., 2004), a high proportion of female assistant superintendents were expected to perceive the nearby district career path in Pennsylvania as optimal. It is possible that nearby districts were not perceived to provide similar benefits as shown by the lack of qualitative responses noting any relationship to nearby districts. In the only female response noting location

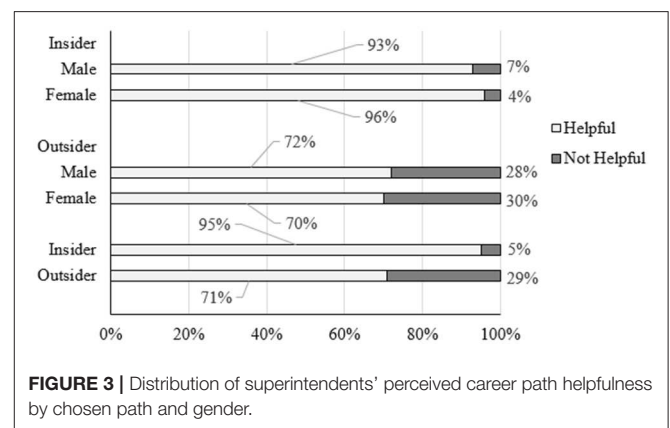


FIGURE 3 | Distribution of superintendents' perceived career path helpfulness by chosen path and gender.

as a reason to consider the nearby district optimal, the assistant superintendent wrote:

“At this time, I do not have any intention of applying for a superintendent position in my current district due to the distance from my home. I believe a superintendent must live in very close proximity to the district in which he/she leads.”

Here, it is unclear if the respondent realized “nearby district” referred to a district near to her current district rather than one

close to her residence. More distinct defining of the “nearby district” career path may be necessary to better understand perceptions of the path by female assistant superintendents in Pennsylvania.

Male assistant superintendents considered the nearby district career path most optimal based on the age of his current superintendent, professional networks, location, and experience. One male assistant superintendent clarified the driver of superintendent age in stating:

“...our current superintendent is young, very successful, and likely to be in my current district for some time, which means my chances outside the district are probably better.”

Others demonstrated the potential of the nearby district career path could mirror that of the insider path. One wrote:

“I have established networks as an assistant superintendent and believe that my reputation would be a positive in a local district.”

While a second male assistant principal noted:

“Born and raised in the same county. Familiar with the demographics and the system.”

In both responses, the men assimilate the benefits of an insider career path into a nearby district career path by expanding insider benefits to a broader domain where reputation and familiarity reach beyond the current district into those situated nearby.

Outsider career paths were rarely perceived as most optimal for acquiring a superintendent position with only 8.3% of assistant superintendents aspiring to the superintendency choosing the path. Men more frequently perceived the outsider career path as optimal when compared with women, yet both groups perceived other paths or no path at all as more optimal than the outsider path. The most common reason for selecting the outsider path was related to opportunity and older superintendents up for retirement. One assistant superintendent captured this idea succinctly:

“It is all about the opportunity. Currently, the nearby district superintendents are new or newer.”

Outsider career path potential seems more directly linked to lacking opportunity in current or nearby districts. One assistant superintendent described prior interviewing experiences where jobs went to local alumni despite his repeat runner-up statuses:

“...there is no getting past established nepotistic practices that prevail in the region regardless of the advantages my resume, life skills and military experience bring to the superintendency application process. The end state? I will have to relocate and interview where the need is great and the applicant pool is not as extensively filled with a local favored alum...”

Without local connections, assistant superintendents may feel obliged to move to areas where district needs overcome potential nepotism. Nevertheless, the small proportion of assistant superintendents considering the outsider career path optimal combined with given reasons for insider and nearby district

optimality indicate reputations and relationships may drive decreased outsider potential more than nepotism.

To further evaluate, data were dichotomized, and non-preferences were dropped in a secondary analysis. Here, nearly two thirds of included assistant superintendents considered the insider career path most optimal. Interestingly, when this data was delineated into male and female responses, males showed no driving preference with 50% preferring each career path while nearly 80% of females considered the insider path most optimal. This statistically significant difference demonstrates not only a gender specific difference in perceived optimality, but also a difference between how men and women perceive and experience the superintendent hiring process.

Women rising through an insider career path may experience less gender bias due to past experiences and reputations that dismantle typical gender stereotypes (Dawley et al., 2004). Studies demonstrated women led in more effective ways and especially so in domains that would build such reputations and make an impression during interactions with others. Folkman (2015) conducted a study comparing the measured competencies of men vs. women (defined by self-identified gender). In comparing bias about females with the measured competencies, Folkman wrote:

The bias of most people is that females would be better at nurturing competencies, such as developing others and relationship building...[but] the competencies with the largest differences between males and females were taking initiative, practicing self-development, integrity/honesty, and driving for results...while men excel in the technical and strategic arenas, women clearly have the advantage in the extremely important areas of people relationships and communication. They also surpass their male counterparts in driving for results. (pp. 168-169)

These competencies provide a mechanism for building a strong, positive leadership reputation, which may create an advantage for women when using the insider career path. Nonetheless, the potential need of female assistant superintendents to use a specific career path demonstrates a continuing second-generation gender bias (see Ibarra et al., 2013). If second-generation gender bias is—in fact—a culprit in the school district leadership gap working through a potentially necessary use of insider career paths, then mechanisms for overcoming such bias are required. Ibarra and colleagues suggested that just by educating people about second-generation gender bias both women and men begin to develop work arounds and even break down some of the hidden barriers. In the same sense, district hiring committee and female assistant superintendents might benefit from second-generation gender bias awareness building if the insider career path is actually more optimal for aspirant superintendents.

Application History

Assistant superintendents did not seem to apply for jobs based on their perceived optimal career paths. Despite considering the insider career path most optimal, more than half of the sampled assistant superintendents applied for superintendent positions only as an outsider. Although outsider application

histories seem counterintuitive to perceptions of the insider path as optimal, there is only one district where a candidate might apply as an insider and 500 districts in Pennsylvania where the same candidate could apply as an outsider. Some of these outsider application histories may simply be driven by a lack of superintendent turnover in the assistant superintendent's current district, which mimics assertions of those considering nearby district career paths as optimal due to young and effective superintendents in their current district. Another possible mechanism of the outsider applications could be alignment with preferences as opposed to optimality perceptions.

Preferred Career Paths

Preferences did not align with patterns seen in application histories but aligned with those seen in optimality perceptions instead as displayed in **Figure 2**. More females preferred a specific career path than considered a specific path optimal, while males more often considered a specific path optimal than preferred either path. This is congruent with males' near exclusivity in citing district traits as contributing to path optimality. Females provided more intra- and inter-personal reasons for perceived path optimality, which may stem from preferences. Counter to our hypotheses, men more than doubled women in likeliness to consider a nearby district as the most optimal career path despite the potential of these districts to offer similar advantages of familiarity as home districts; however, women preferred both insider and nearby districts confirming hypothesized outcomes. When dichotomized, the differences in preferences and perceived optimality by gender are stark. This may suggest that women are tied to home districts, hold relationships important, or oppose change more frequently than men; however, without related qualitative data no clear determinations of the roots of this substantial gender difference are possible. With striking resemblance to patterns in perceptions of optimal career paths as demonstrated in **Figure 2**, an integration of optimal career path with preferred career path warrants further exploration.

Superintendents' Career Path Patterns and Perceptions

Career Paths

Similar proportions of superintendents entered their first superintendency position as insiders and outsiders both overall and for males; however, a slightly higher proportion of female superintendents entered their first position via the insider career path. Although statistically insignificant, this trend indicates at least a slight advantage of the insider career path for females and mirrors recent data (Robinson et al., 2017).

Superintendents often attributed their career path choice to intrapersonal factors despite career path. While insiders reported choices based on familiarity and timing, outsiders reported location. Of particular interest, only men responded as choosing a career path based on family. One man provided the following reasons for choosing the outsider career path: "Familiarity with the district. Avoid relocating my family." Despite research around the maternal wall and structures facilitating second-generation gender bias (Williams, 2003; Ibarra et al., 2013), only men seemed to feel the concerns of family life when choosing how to approach

the superintendency. This may result from a higher incidence of having children while superintendent as was found in AASA's 2015 Mid-Century assessment (Robinson et al., 2017).

Second to intrapersonal factors, insiders frequently noted planned transitions and applicant traits drove their career path choice. This fusion is well-described in a female superintendent's words:

"I did not apply for my position. However, having an in-depth knowledge of the district and having engineered many of our major initiatives, definitely provided me with insight into the qualities and skills necessary to keep our district on its current trajectory of ongoing improvement."

Outsiders most often attributed their choice to district traits including opportunity (or a lack thereof) and a better overall district. One male outsider superintendent wrote: "The superintendent at my previous district will be there for several more years...I would have stayed if the job would have been available." A female respondent noted, "Inside position not open." while another male outsider respondent placed opportunity in conjunction with intrapersonal factors:

"Many different factors. The Superintendency was not open in my district at the time; the Superintendency was something I was striving for at the time of my move. I was told I was going to make a great Superintendent. I felt it was the right time to make the move."

Responses seem to indicate superintendents tend to consider the district fit and personal fit when making outsider decisions.

Interpersonal factors were infrequently mentioned for both insiders and outsiders. Similarly, outsiders rarely noted planned transitions and never noted applicant traits as choice drivers. Only one male insider attributed his career path choice to opportunity, a district trait.

Open response items indicated location (intrapersonal) and school district quality (district trait) were more important for men than women as shown in male responses such as, "I liked the district and it decreased my travel time," and, "Good district close to home." It is possible only men had the opportunity to be selective about districts due to women's need to overcome bias. One woman wrote, "You generally have to overcome the way you are viewed. If you've worked in district, have done a great job, there is a concern that your area will not be sustained. I think it's a perception issue." Nonetheless, data trends indicated that women experienced an increased commute time more often than men when becoming superintendent although neither gender typically relocated for a superintendency position.

Only men reported being "well-known" when moving to the superintendency as an outsider. Second-generation gender bias may drive this issue through networking challenges such as the "old boys" network and fewer external networking opportunities, but the advantage of relations and mentorship is undeniable (Kelsey et al., 2014). Women and school districts should work toward making external connections to facilitate nearby district opportunities and awareness. A male superintendent using the

outsider career path from out of state summed up the potential of Pennsylvanian school district density, “I moved from a state which had 24 superintendents to one which had 500. The opportunities were greater to become a superintendent outside my district...”

Perceptions of Career Path Efficacy

Although neither career path appeared drastically more effective when looking at position acquisition proportions, the insider career path remains lucrative. Insider career paths offer a single job opportunity as opposed to outsider career paths offering multitudinous opportunities—as many as 500 in Pennsylvania alone. As such, opportunities to employ an insider career path are often scarce. With over half of all women entering the superintendency through this career path, one must consider how the insider path’s advantages may better align with the needs of female applicants.

Overall, superintendents believed their career path was helpful with 83% of all responses suggesting helpfulness. When broken into male and female, the response distributions were nearly identical to the overall responses. However, perceptions of career path efficacy were statistically different when separated by insider and outsider paths. More insiders considered their career path helpful than outsiders, but with little differentiation by gender as displayed in **Figure 3**.

Approximately 96% of female superintendents agreed that the insider path was beneficial to their career progression. Many women cited intrapersonal factors, applicant skills, and district traits as reasons for the efficacy of the insider career path. One female superintendent explained:

“I was promoted from Principal to Assistant Superintendent to Superintendent within the same district over a 12-year period. My work ethic and competence was known to the Board.”

Here, reputation and familiarity seemed to develop a relationship where bias might be avoided.

About 93% of male superintendents choosing the insider career path also considered it very effective citing the same contributors as women (inter- and intra-personal factors and district traits). Aside from the many responses reporting requests to apply for superintendency positions, a characteristic male response was:

“I had experience with the district - understanding the district’s culture and expectations from the community. I demonstrated an ability to lead and help the district continue to move forwards and help students and teachers succeed.”

Like female insiders, male insiders linked career path efficacy with reputations and relationships.

Although a lower proportion, most outsiders considered their career path helpful in attaining their first superintendent position. Outsiders almost exclusively associated path efficacy with applicant traits such as experience and potential to bring new ideas and/or perspectives. A female using the outsider path wrote, “I brought fresh ideas and a broader view of education. I

had experienced [in] the educational world outside of my current district.” A male using the outsider path further explained:

“Many times an outsider can take a different perspective. An outsider does not have connections to anyone and can be objective. As an outsider, one must work on developing relationships with all stakeholders before attempting to transform any components of the district. If drastic change is the direction of the board, it is much easier for an outsider to do so.”

When districts require change, this superintendent suggested outsider career path potential increases similar to Carlson’s (1961, 1972) findings. This mimics responses citing more opportunity as a driver of outside career path efficacy. Nonetheless, major change is infrequent leading to a potentially infrequent outsider benefit scenario.

Superintendent-Assistant Superintendent Congruence

While superintendents’ career path usage was relatively equal, assistant superintendents applied as outsiders more often, but they preferred and perceived the insider path as more optimal. When delineated by gender, males matched the hiring data in preferences and perceptions, but continued to apply as outsiders more often. Females better approximated the hiring data in application history but differed more on perceptions and preferences with much higher proportions citing insider paths. This disconnect is not entirely surprising for application history due to the potential for many more outsider application opportunities; however, the perceptions and preferences fail to facilitate more effective career path use—especially for females. These gender differences are reflective of the occupational sex segregation through differential job queue agency as explored in Talerico and Blount’s (2004) work. Despite job queuing by hierarchy of desirability, females must match a biased labor queue that appears to find more attractiveness in male applicants. As such, men have more agency to act on desirability hierarchy facilitating a potential ghettoization of women entering the superintendency where less attractive jobs go to female applicants.

Differing opinions about outsider career paths support quantitative discrepancies between assistant superintendents and superintendents. It is possible that the experience of acquiring a superintendency position changes the perspectives of aspiring superintendents. With many more opportunities to apply as an outsider, superintendents may develop a clearer understanding of the outsider path in their journey to the superintendency resulting with a more molded perspective. Future studies should explore this change in perspective to develop a better overall understanding of the outsider superintendent hiring process.

Conceptualization in the Pennsylvania Context

Low reports of nearby district potential/preference and lower proportions of perceived efficacy by superintendents employing the outsider career path remain surprising considering the multitude of school districts in Pennsylvania. With such dense

opportunity, aspirant superintendents have potential access to insider-like experiences in technically outsider districts. Nearby districts provide a potential inside/outside career path—especially in Pennsylvania. In the highest density areas, districts are often no more than 5 miles apart. It is here that superintendents are likely to network and become involved in cross-district activities due solely to high proximity. With experience in outside districts, aspirant superintendents might develop similar quality relationships and reputations in those outside districts. When faced with a need for change, the district will have positive views of the potential superintendent but also access to new ideas and perspectives. Based on perceived supports for the efficacy of different career paths, this could create the ideal career path. Perhaps districts and/or superintendents are unaware of this potential or proximity limits the novelty of nearby applicants. Whatever the cause, the potential for the Pennsylvania nearby district career path is heightened by the findings of this study and requires more exploration.

Implications for Future Research

Two pressing issues revealed by this study are the disconnect between successful career paths and application histories and the disconnect between assistant superintendent and superintendent perceptions of career path helpfulness. These issues provide a plethora of future research directions including an exploration the differences in these perceptions and practices through both exploratory and theory-driven methodologies. As inequities are again confirmed in this study, future research must continue to explore gender bias in educational leadership and how this impacts a woman's desire to aspire to the superintendency. Lacking female interest in the superintendency is a major concern warranting future exploration of how educational systems can support female leadership interest and attainment. Studies could explore traditional and non-traditional gender roles in educational contexts, second-generation gender bias, and patterns of choice in female leaders across a variety of contexts to begin to clarify lacking interest in the superintendency.

This study should be replicated in other states with different school district densities and replicated in Pennsylvania including districts known to have strong inter-district relationships and/or programming. Furthermore, more diverse areas should replicate the study in a manner fit to explore intersectionalities inclusive of race/ethnicity, social class, disability status, and sexual orientation. In replication, questions should be reworked to add clarification where possible and different methods of qualitative data collection should be used to better understand why superintendents and assistant superintendents interact with career paths in the ways demonstrated in the data. Some areas for further exploration of career paths derive from desirability and might include peer references, urban-rural classifications, socio-economics, school effectiveness, and school popularity. Furthermore, the additional exploration of these paths from the perspective of hiring committees could allow for a better exploration of how hiring committees could operate more equitably.

Implications for Future Practice

Although superintendent career paths were similar both overall and by gender, even an equal proportion of insider career path employment suggests an imbalance. With the 499:1 opportunity ratio of taking an outsider vs. an insider career path in Pennsylvania, one would expect a much larger proportion of superintendents to follow outsider career paths. Even so, the distributions were similar overall and insider-heavy for females. This trend reflects assistant superintendents' reported preferences and perceptions of optimality, but it seems that something more must occur in the hiring process to produce internal success so often.

If reputation and relationships drive internal superintendent hires, outsider applicants might not be receiving a fair evaluation. This labor queue to job queue imbalance allows an environment where favoritism can thrive. As such, hiring committees must remain cognizant of potential nepotism in hiring practices. Alternatively, leaders with proven track records and district familiarity might be the best candidates for the job and simply perceive superintendency attainment rooted more in interpersonal factors than applicant traits despite a reverse perspective by hiring committees. In this condition, positive relationships and reputations would stem from individuals' qualifications for the job and history of demonstrated ability. Regardless, female aspiring superintendents must better understand the efficacy factors involved in career paths in order to procure superintendent positions in more lucrative and bias-mitigating manners.

With only a quarter of superintendents identifying as female, women are undeniably under-represented. Women must begin to use career path agency to overcome an occupational queue imbalance. Women should develop positive reputations and relationships both inside and outside of their district to extend the insider career path advantages to nearby districts where new ideas and perspectives could provide dual insider/outside career path benefits. Female leaders must explore the current literature to understand what works in hiring in order to overcome second-generation gender bias and begin to equivocate the male to female representation in the superintendency not only statewide, but also nationwide.

Although women infrequently mentioned bias, differences in drivers of career path perceptions suggest a bias in occupational queuing where women enter the superintendency with less available agency in a potentially ghettoized manner. Men mentioned family as driving their career path choices, frequently demonstrating more job desirability allowance. Here, Williams (2003) maternal wall seems more paternal. While possible that women have internalized family responsibilities to the extent that family is not considered when reflecting on career paths, data from this study cannot make that determination. Instead, interventions to removed maternal wall disadvantage become relevant to men as well. All parents could benefit from interventions such as in-district childcare or more flexible work and sick time, but if men use the privileged potency of their voices, such interventions might begin to enter work environments more quickly.

Findings from this study repeatedly indicated the potential challenges associated with second generation gender bias such as male-oriented processes and practices and fewer female networking opportunities. As such, district hiring committees and aspirant superintendents would benefit from formal gender bias training including professional development on the different kinds of gender bias, ways to overcome such biases, and how to move forward toward bias-free interactions without moving into a “blame game” situation (Ibarra et al., 2013; Kahn, 2019). Furthermore, this training could begin to tackle the larger problem of homophobia toward school leaders noted in scholarly literature (Blount, 2000, 2003, 2005; Tooms, 2007; Williams, 2018). Even a general review of implicit biases (unconscious biases) could facilitate more informed behaviors across school personnel.

Summary of Findings

The gender gap not only still exists in Pennsylvania, but also appears likely to continue if changes do not occur. Females remain less interested in the superintendency and seem to have less agency in job desirability choices. This introductory ghettoization only holds the potential to drive more women away from the profession. Women seem to benefit from relationships and reputation but were completely unknown in outside districts during initial superintendency attainment. While the high-density district situation in Pennsylvania offers a potential for nearby districts to mirror internal hiring advantages, lacking mentoring and networking opportunities for women present a barrier to this process. In short, the proportion of female superintendents in Pennsylvania is unlikely to grow based on the present study due to ineffective career path preferences and

perspectives, diminished job queue agency, unknown potential of nearby school district career paths, and the sheer quantity of outside districts as compared to inside districts in Pennsylvania alone. Women must begin to observe effective career paths and expand their agency to avoid potential gender bias and increase the efficiency of their superintendency procurement to empower themselves until the equity of hiring committees increases.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Lehigh University Institutional Review Board. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

GG is an educational equity consultant and adjunct professor, she teaches methodology courses in educational leadership, advises doctoral students, and focuses her research on unintentional bias in educational leadership through mechanisms such as implicit bias and gender roles. JS is retired Associate Professor at the Lehigh University, she teaches educational leadership, and her research has focused on issues of women in educational administration, both in the USA and internationally.

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Put Your Big Girl Knickers on! The Experiences of Two Female Leaders in New Zealand Primary Schools Turning Schools Around

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This chapter examines the experiences of two female leaders in New Zealand state primary schools and their experiences of turning their schools around. Leading schools through times of change and challenge is complex, especially when issues of school underperformance and student achievement are intertwined. In some instances, such circumstances result in educational authorities imposing an intervention such as a “turnaround” program. Each year a small number of New Zealand schools are considered “underperforming” and require external leadership assistance, usually from the Ministry of Education. This support is implemented through a statutory intervention mechanism aimed to address underpinning issues such as governance and leadership matters, low student academic achievement, issues of finance, and student and staff safety and well-being (Ministry of Education, 2017). While statutory interventions have been enacted in New Zealand since 1994 as a mechanism to “turn a school around,” there is little research about what this experience is like for educational leaders in primary (elementary) schools, or how it affects their professional and personal lives. Within the turnaround school literature, educational leaders are often positioned as “heroic leaders,” usually male, seeking to change the school’s climate and culture. However, there is little literature discussing how female educational leaders approach school recovery processes. With sparse acknowledgment of the effects this work has on a leader’s professional and personal life, it is within these spaces that this research on female leaders’ experiences is situated. This study was part of a doctoral research project undertaken in 2016 to explore New Zealand primary school leaders’ perceptions and experiences of working to turnaround schools and addressing complex and challenging circumstances within their schools and communities. Using Dewey’s theory of experiences, the professional and personal experiences of two female leaders’ leading such schools are focused on to understand how their leadership is, in Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) terms, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. The research revealed the professional and personal struggles both women encountered in their journey to turn their schools around, and contributes critical findings to the research focused on women’s experiences when turning schools around.

Keywords: women’s leadership, school leaders lived experiences, school leadership, statutory intervention, turn around schools

OVERVIEW

This paper begins with an insight into my own experiences as a woman leading a school through an intervention process to provide a contextual foundation and position my own experiences as a woman leader within the narrative of the research. In this chapter, I draw from my doctoral research that explored New Zealand state primary [elementary] school principals' [school leaders] perceptions and experiences of Ministry of Education statutory appointees to address issues within their schools. The names of the participants and their school, including my school, were changed to protect the identity of the school leader, and past and present staff, students, and community members (including parents) associated with each school.

An overview of New Zealand's recent historical educational context and the changes introduced following the neo-liberal reforms of the later 1980s is provided. This includes the measures the Ministry of Education introduced in the early 1990s to support schools who were struggling to adapt to self-governance. Possible contextual issues surrounding challenging/underperforming schools are discussed. Society's positioning of school leaders is considered and I draw attention to the barriers female education may experience as they seek school leadership positions or promotion. Moving on from this, I consider some factors affecting school leaders as they seek to lead schools through government-sanctioned interventions.

Attention to the experiences of two female school leaders who participated in my doctoral research. Using Dewey's theory of experiences, I examine the professional and personal experiences of these leaders to understand how their leadership is, in Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) terms, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. The findings are shared to reveal some of the professional and personal countervailing pressures the women encountered in their journey to address circumstances in their schools. Continuing from their leadership experiences, I consider how these experiences present a darker side of school leadership that is often unspoken or acknowledged by principals and education authorities. I conclude with a discussion of the key understandings and considerations obtained from my research.

PROLOG

Mid 2009, I was appointed as the school leader of Porokaiwhiri School, a small full primary school (children aged 5–13 years) situated within a small village in the Waikato region, North Island, New Zealand. Prior to my appointment interview, my initial research into Porokaiwhiri School indicated that there were possibly some Ministry of Education concerns about the school. The contact person listed on the job advertisement was the statutory appointee [limited statutory manager (LSM)], rather than the school board of trustees chairperson or an education consultant. My pre-application queries indicated the LSM was supporting the school to tidy their finances and bookkeeping, and to appoint the

incoming leader. The 2008 ERO (Education Review Office) review specified some concerns regarding the learning and achievement of students, but the report indicated these concerns had been resolved and the school received a 3-year review.

Based on my own research and the information supplied by the LSM and the appointment committee at my interview, I did not expect there to be any major issues or concerns that would immediately require my attention. Therefore, I was not prepared for the multiple countervailing pressures and significant issues that were to be the reality of teaching, and leading and managing, Porokaiwhiri School.

Shortly after my commencement, I encountered significant countervailing pressures that included the school's substantial financial debt. My health began to suffer due to long hours spent at work, including numerous weekend and school holidays. A number of times during the school week I would not have time for lunch as I was continually dealing with challenging student and teacher behavior. Student behavior presented substantial long-term pressures, as did their engagement with learning and low levels of academic achievement. The teachers held deficit views of the student, continually engaged in punitive punishment and were disengaged from their teaching. Overall, the school experienced little support from parents and community; student enrolment was declining and there was limited school engagement with external educational agencies and services.

Working in this complex environment, I wondered if other school leaders' experiences of leading high-need schools under statutory intervention were similar.

INTRODUCTION

While statutory interventions have been enacted in New Zealand since 1994 as a mechanism to "turn a school around," there has been limited research into the performance of statutory intervention processes (see Manion, 2008; Office of the Auditor-General, 2008, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2014a,b; Udahehuka, 2016, 2017a,b). These reviews have continually raised concerns about the consistency of monitoring schools and the lack of transparent intervention processes. The reviews also question the effectiveness and impact of statutory interventions on schools. No studies have been undertaken into the long-term impact of a school's intervention. An unpublished Master of Education thesis considers the processes three male New Zealand secondary principals used to turn around their schools (Barker, 2011). However, there is still no research on New Zealand primary school principals, especially those leading small schools under intervention, nor is there New Zealand research into the experiences of women leaders and the personal cost as they seek to turn around underperforming primary schools. With sparse acknowledgment of how statutory interventions affects women leaders' professional and personal lives, it is within these spaces that my research on women principals' experiences is situated.

Historical Context of New Zealand Education

The effects of the neo-liberal reforms in New Zealand closely follows those experienced in the United Kingdom and the United States (Thrupp, 2005). By 1987 the centrally controlled New Zealand education system was under review; it did not reflect the ideology of a decentralized system where state-owned enterprises had to compete in the open market and the self-interested individual had the right to choose their service providers (Ranson, 2008). In 1989, the New Zealand government introduced the Education Act 1989 (Kelsey, 1997) and implemented “Tomorrow’s Schools” (Lauder et al., 2012). “Tomorrow’s School” would be self-managing with a five member elected board of trustees overseeing the governance of a school (New Zealand School Trustees Association, 2010a). It was assumed that each board would “properly reflect the composition of the community” (Codd et al., 1990, p. 18) and that amongst the trustees there would be members skilled in such areas as administration, finance, and policy making. The school board would be able to employ, discipline and fire their staff; manage the school’s finances which initially included staff salaries (Lauder et al., 2012). School boards would also maintain the school property and purchase the necessary resources, including staff professional development and training (Kelsey, 1997; New Zealand School Trustees Association, 2010b).

In the years following the implementation of Tomorrow’s Schools, the Education Review Office (ERO) and the Ministry of Education began to recognize that some schools and their board of trustees were struggling with the demands of governing and leading self-managing schools effectively and efficiently. Despite being provided with recommendations for improvement by ERO, some of these schools, at all levels throughout the school—the Board of Trustees, leader, and staff, demonstrated that they lacked the capacity, skill, knowledge, and experience to act on these recommendations to improve the situation within the school (Wylie, 2012).

However, while the legislation was in place for the Ministry of Education to provide “safety net interventions” (Thrupp, 2005, p. 47) for struggling schools, there was a reluctance to do so as this went against the ethos of self-governing schools (Wylie, 2013). By the late 1990s, much of the individual school support had shifted away from individual schools to providing school initiatives to clusters of low-performing schools. These initiatives focused on identified needs such as student literacy, student retention, community engagement, and increasing teacher assessment knowledge and understanding (Thrupp, 2005; Wylie, 2009).

While Ministry support for struggling schools had improved, a number of schools with specific contextual concerns still struggled to operate. These contexts included very small schools (with <50 students—teacher-leader plus one other teacher schools), schools with <100 students, schools serving low socio-economic areas, schools with high percentages of high-priority students (such as minority or special needs students), and isolated rural schools. All these schools struggled to fulfill and retain teaching positions and maintain a board of trustees (Education Review Office, 1999).

Statutory Intervention in New Zealand Schools

New Zealand research literature and information obtained from the Ministry of Education indicates one in every 16 New Zealand schools has had an intervention in the past 3 years, with nearly 85% of these schools serving extremely low-socioeconomic and isolated communities (Redmond, 2017). Policy documents in New Zealand (such as The Education Act of 1989, Part 7A) acknowledge that some struggling schools require more specific and targeted support, and additional resources to improve conditions within the school and address any underpinning governance issues. Current legislation outlines six different levels of statutory intervention to address the identified issues promptly and effectively, with the intention to reduce the likelihood of intensive intervention later on Ministry of Education (2015).

Of the six statutory interventions, my research involved schools placed under the three most complex and lengthy interventions. The Minister for Education publically announces through the *New Zealand Government Gazette* (the government’s official newspaper) (New Zealand Government, n.d) when a school has been placed under one of the following three interventions. The first level of the three interventions is section 78(M) of the Education Act. Section 78(M) involves a limited statutory manager (LSM) working with and alongside the school board of trustees (Ministry of Education, 2015). The LSM holds specific areas of responsibility such as finance, personal, or curriculum matters, while the board of trustees continue to govern all other areas of the school.

The next two levels of intervention are the highest. Section 78(N)(1-3) occurs when a board resigns, or the board has been dissolved by the Minister for Education, or there are not enough people to form a board. Under this legislation, the school board of trustees has been dissolved and a commissioner holds all the roles and responsibilities of the governing board (Ministry of Education, 2015). The terms LSM and commissioner identify the specific role and responsibility, while the collective term for both these roles is “appointee.”

The overall aim of any intervention focuses on rebuilding Board of Trustees capabilities and capacity “to perform its functions and exercise its powers in such a way as to ensure that every student at the school is able to attain his or her highest possible standard in educational achievement” (Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 10). The Minister for Education has the right to intervene at the governance level of the school when there are “reasonable grounds to believe that the operation of the school, or the welfare or educational performance of their students is at risk” (Ministry of Education, 2013). At all times the aim of any intervention is for minimal involvement from the Ministry and for the school to address concerns themselves, returning to being a fully functioning, self-managing board. The final, negative outcome for any school is closure.

It is common for a school under statutory intervention to be removed from the standard 3-yearly ERO review cycle and be placed onto a 1-2 years longitudinal reviews which allows ERO to monitor improvements and sustainability of progress (Education Review Office, 2016). Research into the correlation

of issues identified in statutory intervention schools and the school's longitudinal report, highlight specific school contextual concerns such as those identified in 1999 remain dominant, and significant internal school challenges around governance (including finances), leadership, and teaching and learning, continue to exist (Manion, 2008).

LEADING TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

Internationally, governmental identification and sanctioning of underperforming, struggling, declining, failing schools, or schools experiencing challenging circumstances vary (see Berwick, 2015; ETI, 2015; Stotsky and Holzman, 2015a,b; ACARA, 2016; Education Scotland Foghlam Alba, 2017; Ofsted, 2017; Estyn, 2018). For example, within New Zealand, such schools are placed in a statutory intervention that is led by a Ministerial appointee. In the United States of America, "school turnarounds" are common, while in England and Wales, schools are placed in "special circumstances." For ease of reading, I shall use the generic phrase "turnaround" when discussing various government-sanctions intervention processes used to address challenging (including underperforming, struggling, declining, and failing) schools.

The international literature on addressing turnaround schools suggest a two-three timeframe for initiating and sustaining school improvement or intervention program is desirable (Clarke, 2005; Kutash et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2010; Pepper et al., 2010; Robinson and Buntrock, 2011; Wallace Foundation, 2013; Liu, 2018). This timeframe is also present within New Zealand's Ministry of Education statutory intervention processes. Critics of the 2-year turnaround timeframe claim there is little evidence to support the sustainability of the changes and people's abilities to maintain the intensive focus post-intervention (Southworth, 1998; Smarick, 2010; Lynch, 2012; Stotsky and Holzman, 2015a; Kelly and Clarke, 2016). Authors such as Kowal and Ableidinger (2011), Fairchild and DeMary (2011), and Peck and Reitzug (2014) claim the timeframe to address challenging complex issues is insufficient and most schools require between 3 and 5 years for the issues to be addressed, and up to 7 years for the changes to be fully embedded.

COUNTERVAILING PRESSURES

Internationally, government school turnaround mandates promote the urgency for school leaders and interventionists to address issues within challenging schools quickly. However, these mandates often present countervailing pressures for those charged with turning around these schools. Theoharis (2007) coined the phrase "countervailing pressures" to describe the push "n" pull school leaders may experience as they seek to implement and embed change. Countervailing pressures may occur from a number of "situations, incidents, issues and people" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 5) and are often present when a leader wants to lead the school in one direction, but someone, or something is hindering, diverting or stopping the process. In this sense, countervailing pressures may enable or hinder the

leaders work (Møller, 2012) and be present within the very "structures, functions, routines, and roles" (Spillane, 2005, p. 143) of school leadership. Other times a school leader may need to work against the directions of education authorities, especially when the leader perceives this is not in the best interest of the students or school, by actively or subtly challenging the status quo or slowing down the process of change. In this sense, leaders can be both the "catalyst [of change] and the agent of support" (Hallinger and Heck, 2011, p. 4).

Countervailing pressures associated with cultural (Cavanagh et al., 2012), socio-economic (Ahumada et al., 2016), societal and political considerations and issues (Goldstein and Woodhouse, 2000) can be school stressors, affecting some schools to greater or lesser extent than others (Reynolds, 1995; Tomlinson, 1997; Nicolaidou and Ainscow, 2005; Muijs, 2014). School leaders may also experience countervailing pressures based on societal assumptions of who a leader is and this may include assumptions based on leaders inherited characteristics such as about gender, culture, and race. Internal school countervailing pressures may exist around peoples' resistance to change and pressure of time—both within and from the school and community for example.

Each school has its own set of unique set of problems and challenges (Dinham et al., 2011; Duke, 2014). Leithwood et al. (2010) argue the right combination of "contextual, compositional, cyclical, contingent, and conditional factors" (p. 39) present schools with a "perfect storm." School leaders undertaking turnaround work are "sensitive to the unique challenging circumstances faced by [their] school" (Jang et al., 2008, p. 225). School leaders will adjust their leadership style and dispositions to best match the current situational context of the school (Morris, 2014), at that particular time (Fairchild and DeMary, 2011; Papa and English, 2011; Bouchamma, 2012; Notman, 2015), and "stage of the school's development" (Harris, 2002, p. 17). Yet by doing so, a school leader may experience some unexpected countervailing pressures. Overtime, continual countervailing pressures may adversely affect principals' health and well-being. I shall address some possible countervailing pressures for leaders of turnaround schools in the following sections.

Societal Countervailing Perceptions

School leadership is complex, unpredictable, and laced with multiple countervailing pressures that require resolution on a daily basis. Each school, its context, circumstances and situation are unique. Thus, each school may present unique challenges or countervailing pressures for school leaders. Leaders of struggling/challenging schools face immense pressure to address issues swiftly, particularly those affecting students (Moctezuma, 2017). New Zealand's Ministry of Education (2008) state school leaders must have the "personal and professional qualities, knowledge, and leadership skills" (p. 8) required to turn around schools. Educational leadership literature indicates school leaders seeking to turn around schools must have the dispositions and be committed and passionate about working in schools (Nicolaidou, 2005; Medina et al., 2014). Furthermore, turnaround leaders should have the skill and authority to implement change (Kowal and Ableidinger, 2011). While Lochmiller and Chesnut (2017)

acknowledge and promote the importance for leaders to have high levels of mental focus and emotional energy to manage their own emotional state.

Heroic or Savior Leaders

Educational leaders who lead schools during government sanctioned intervention processes are often positioned as “heroic,” “charismatic,” or “white knight” leaders who seek to address students’ low academic performance by changing the school climate and culture (Goddard, 2003; Spillane, 2005; Starr, 2014; Mann et al., 2017). The discourses around these leaders suggest schools and communities want strong (male) leaders in times of crisis or significant change (Harris, 2003; Ainscow et al., 2005; Caldwell et al., 2012; Shulman and Sullivan, 2015; Holmes, 2017). These discourses, while affirming societies typical hierarchical positioning of school leaders as authoritarians with who yield power and control (Abrahamsen and Aas, 2016; Holmes, 2017), negatively affect the likelihood of women leaders being appointed to undertake this work.

An alternative to the heroic and charismatic discourses is the “savior” where leaders (often women) have “sacrificed everything for the school, including [their] personal life” (Møller, 2012, p. 455). Within school turnaround literature, savior leaders are presented as dedicating their life’s work, including personal finances, to their school. Savior leaders challenge policies that disadvantage disengaged students and lead with tough- and soft-love leadership (Berkovich and Grinshtain, 2018). These leaders draw on community good will and engagement to address areas of concerns such as the physical condition of the school. By contrast (Thomson, 2009), refutes the savior view suggesting some turnaround leaders may be driven more by “ego than altruistic work” (p. 58).

Heroic and savior discourses disregard the nature of schools and the relational practices necessary to bring about change. In contrast to the heroic, charismatic and savior leadership discourses, *glass elevator* theory considers the seemingly accelerated promotions male leaders experience while *glass ceilings and cliff* theories highlight the barriers women experience while seeking leadership positions or promotion.

Glass Elevators, Ceilings, and Cliffs

In contrast to the difficulty women report in obtaining leadership positions, males report experiencing little/no difficulty gaining leadership appointments or promotions. Researchers, such as Eagly (2005) and Weiner and Burton (2016) speculate some male leaders are being appointed through a process of “*cherry picking*” (whereby the exiting/retiring male principal picks their successor) or they experience the “*glass elevator*” affect (leadership pathway is smoother than that experienced by females with similar skills, experience, and qualifications). Concerns are also raised that males obtain positions through the “old-boys” network whereby experienced male leaders encourage, groom, mentor, and “sponsor” younger males to apply for leadership positions (Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Torrance et al., 2017; Weiner and Burton, 2017).

A number of researchers (for example Eagly and Sczesny, 2009; Thomson, 2009; Cook and Glass, 2013; Weiner and Burton,

2016; Wyland, 2016) note many women leaders continue to “face challenges in achieving legitimacy” (Eagly, 2005, p. 461) due to gender stereo-typical views, prejudicial disadvantages and discrimination within and outside the education profession (Eagly and Carli, 2003). As a result, women leaders are more likely to experience the invisible, but very real “*glass ceiling*” affect when applying for promotion, regardless of their experience, competency, and academic qualifications (Eagly and Carli, 2003; Cook and Glass, 2013; Franquiz, 2013; Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Glass and Cook, 2016).

Gardiner et al. (2000), Grogan (2002), and Shakeshaft et al. (2007) suggest many women leaders do not receive the same level of support, grooming, mentorship, or sponsorship that their male counterparts receive, thus preserving the glass ceiling. These authors draw attention to the importance of same “race, gender, and culture” (Shakeshaft et al., 2007, p. 112) mentors in helping women leaders to “see” themselves in leadership roles. Mentors can help women to overcome perceived barriers to promotion, and entry “hidden” institutional knowledge and understandings (Grogan, 2002). Further, mentors can support women to access development of professional networks and professional development (Gardiner et al., 2000; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Collins, 2015; Torrance et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019).

Leadership research also indicates women leaders are increasingly appointed to *glass cliff* positions (Haslam and Ryan, 2008; Ryan and Haslam, 2009; Bruckmüller and Branscombe, 2010; Ryan et al., 2011; Weiner and Burton, 2016). Glass cliff theory highlights the likelihood of women being appointed to top leadership positions in organizations that are struggling, at-risk of failing or in a crisis than males (Ryan and Haslam, 2005). One posited theory suggest this move signals to stakeholders that the situation is being addressed, especially if the current situation can be linked to previous [male] leaders (Bruckmüller and Branscombe, 2010; Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Kulich et al., 2015). Other theories suggest women “soft” authentic attributes such as high emotional intelligence and relational skills (Glass and Cook, 2016) promote alternative ways of leading and encourage inclusive, cohesive, and supportive work environments (Ryan et al., 2011; Kulich et al., 2015) required in organizations undergoing turnaround processes.

Regardless of the rationale, women leaders experience a double-bind—utilize authoritative leadership styles and be labeled as “tough” or be authentic to themselves and be perceived as “lacking” leadership skills, especially if the organization continues to fail (Eagly, 2005; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Glass and Cook, 2016; Weiner and Burton, 2017). As such, glass cliff positions be hostile and highly dangerous for women leaders and society in terms of future leadership positions and overall negative generalizations of gender stereotyping.

The limitations of the heroic and savior discourses, as well as the glass elevators, ceiling, and cliff theories, is the premise that leaders fit neatly into these various categories. A number of school leaders’ public narratives continue to support these assumptions as these stories are “positioned and presented ... within a specific moment in historical time and situated in expectations” about the audience (Møller, 2012, p. 453). These narratives enable leaders to construct and maintain

their “public self” and people’s perceptions of their leadership skills, knowledge, and ability (Møller, 2012). Yet, hidden within these leadership discourses and narratives are the real stories, identity, and experiences of school leaders (Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Linn, 2011). School leaders seldom discuss their personal sense of purpose, their fallacies and courage, or the barriers and difficult moments they have experienced while leading a school. Consequently, educationalists and society have little knowledge of how leading challenging schools such as those under government intervention, affect principals’ professional and personal lives.

Loneliness and Isolation

School leaders working in turnaround schools are under extreme daily pressures (Jongewaard, 2006). Within educational research literature, concerns of leader isolation, alienation, and loneliness are acknowledged in relation to the experiences of novice school leaders. Novice school leaders are more likely to experience a sense of loneliness and isolation (Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Patuawa, 2007; Northfield et al., 2011; Starr, 2011; Northfield, 2014). Educational leadership researchers (for example Herlihy and Herlihy, 1980; Northfield et al., 2006; Starr, 2011; Northfield, 2014) found novice, transferring and women school leaders are more likely to experience isolation than male leaders who have been in their current school for 3 years or more. It is therefore probable that positional isolation (Wesson, 1998; Lindorff, 2001; Raymond, 2007; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Spillane and Lee, 2014; Waytz et al., 2015; Liljenberg and Andersson, 2019) is associated with a lack of professional networks and professional socialization (Crow, 2006; Robinson et al., 2019) as much as it is able establishing oneself as the leader of the school. School leaders in small and/or rural schools are likely to experience geographic and social isolation (Starr and White, 2008; Halsey, 2011; Lock et al., 2012; Wildy and Clarke, 2012; Sayce and Lavery, 2013; Cornish and Jenkins, 2015) where the physical distance between schools and communities make it difficult for leaders to establish professional and social relationships outside of their community. It is possible then, that women leaders leading isolated, rural schools may experience a greater sense of loneliness and isolation than males in similar contexts. Some women leaders also note additional cultural and societal pressures of “constantly negotiating their coexisting roles” as professional/wife/mother (Torrance et al., 2017, p. 29). While others indicate the level of support and encouragement they receive from their families, enable them to obtain and retain school leadership positions (Robinson et al., 2019).

Principals may also experience a sense of isolation when working educational authorities. For example the three male secondary principals involved in Barker (2011) research noted “feelings of isolation, frustration and anger, abandonment and a lack of trust” (p. 98) from the Ministry of Education, school board of trustees and ERO, as they sought to understand how their respective schools had declined. Additionally, like many school leaders, these principals noted feelings of isolation and stress due to the long hours they worked to address internal school issues. Stephenson and Bauer (2010) state, “isolation significantly impacts physical and emotional burnout” (p. 14) affecting a

school leader’s quality of work life and can have long-lasting negative effects on the leaders health and well-being.

School leader networks and being involved in ongoing PLD may provide opportunities for professional and social networks to develop. Hadfield and Jopling (2012) state most inter-school networks “arise from informal head teach [principal/school leader] groups” (p. 115). These groups enable reciprocity of knowledge and information, share vision and educational goals for the district, and social relationships to develop (Friedkin and Slater, 1994; Billett et al., 2007; Chapman, 2008; Dhillon, 2013). Other benefits may include inter-school teacher and leader visits, collaborative professional development, access to previously unknown sources of support for families and new places for students to visit. Other benefits include the development of social-support groups amongst school leaders and having someone to discuss school and/or leadership concerns with away from the locale of the school (Siciliano, 2015). Informal networks, such as those developed outside of education can also help women leaders connect with others, thus increasing their chances of having “insider knowledge” about forthcoming positions or internal school issues (Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Robinson et al., 2019).

However, Kelchtermans et al. (2011) warn that feelings of isolation, alienation, and loneliness may intensify after professional gatherings and “ultimately result in increased loneliness” (p. 102) especially if the school leader is returning to a challenging situation. As a number of women leaders report feeling marginalized and isolated by their professional male counterparts at leadership meetings, attending conferences may further enhance their sense of isolation (Gardiner et al., 2000; Collins, 2015; Torrance et al., 2017). Educational research indicates it is particularly important for women leaders to establish their network of trusted friends, colleagues, and mentors (Gardiner et al., 2000; Robinson et al., 2019). This network can provide understanding, knowledge and awareness of both the overt and covert aspects of their role and provide them with support, encouragement, guidance, and advice. Networks can help reduce feelings of professional and social loneliness and isolation and stress (Dussault and Barnett, 1996; Gupton and Del Rosario, 1998; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Patuawa, 2007).

PRINCIPAL WELL-BEING

Redding and Morando Rhim (2014) claim there is a cost involved for the school leader when leading a challenging school such as one under a statutory intervention. Often this cost is considered in terms of hours worked and workload (Oplatka, 2017; Eacott, 2020). More recently, research and surveys on the hidden “cost” on school leaders’ health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to their workload, is increasing (for example Hodgen and Wylie, 2005; Howard and Mallory, 2008; Phillips and Sen, 2011; Riley and Langan-Fox, 2013; Riley, 2014, 2015, 2017; Beusaert et al., 2016). Yet, school leaders themselves do not speak out for fear of being found wanting, or being judged as not coping nor suitable for a school leader’s role (Sachs and Blackmore, 1998; Beatty, 2000; Leithwood and Beatty, 2008; Blackmore, 2013).

Leading and managing a school is emotionally charged work. Leaders are continually engaging with others and must walk an “emotional tightrope” which includes “controlling emotions” in some very challenging and complex situations (Timms et al., 2006, p. 344) in order to maintain their professionalism and the emotions of others (Sachs and Blackmore, 1998; Pratt-Adams and Maguire, 2009; Mills and Niesche, 2014). However, Grayson and Alvarez (2008), Phillips and Sen (2011), and Timms et al. (2006) warn the long-term emotional dissonance of continuously disregarding personal feelings and well-being can have serious physiological, psychological, and psychosocial implications for a leader. These implications include depression, alcoholism, and health problems (Dussault and Thibodeau, 1996). More concerning, if a school leader becomes burnout, they may experience heightened feelings of emotional fatigue, mental, and physical exhaustion and hopelessness which is a precursor of depression and suicidal behavior (Gold, 1984; Oplatka, 2002; Hadley and MacLeod, 2010; Segal et al., 2017). Their leadership style and management of the school may become “unhealthy and dysfunctional” (Kelehear, 2004, p. 31), compounding any issues within the school. Leaders then become “caught in a double bind” (Herlihy and Herlihy, 1980, p. 8) of either wanting to “fight” or “flight” various “situations, incidents, issues and people” (Theoharis, 2007, p. 5).

Emotions are not something “to be controlled and played down” (Kelchtermans et al., 2011, p. 95). School leaders positive thoughts, emotions, and beliefs about their school may be the very thing that keeps them returning to their school day after day, regardless of the tough, difficult, or challenging moments and countervailing pressures. When school leaders feel positive about their school and their role, and when they receive appropriate and individualized support, emotional exhaustion decreases and self-efficacy increases (Beausaert et al., 2016) and the school culture and overall health and well-being, benefits.

METHODOLOGY

A narrative inquiry underpinned my ontological and epistemological positioning for this research. I believe we independently gain knowledge and understanding of our world through experiences. Yet, it is through our interactions with others, that our understanding and knowledge is enhanced, developed, and extended. We then apply this new, existing knowledge, to our future interactions and experiences (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1938) states “all human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and communication” (p. 38). He believes with “every experience enacted and undergone” (Dewey, 1938, p. 35), we are changed in some way; we are not the person who first entered into the experience as the person who emerges from the experience.

Barkuizen et al. (2014) suggests the main strength of narrative inquiry is the use of people’s stories to “make sense of their experiences ... it is important to understand phenomena from the perspectives of those who experience them” (p. 2). These stories provide differing perspectives of an event and “often uncover issues that had not previously been visible” (Barkuizen

et al., 2014, p. 5). It was through the gathering of the participant leaders’ stories that I sought to make visible the experiences of two women New Zealand primary school leaders as they led their school through the statutory intervention. It was important I understood the context of the stories being shared, how each leader positioned their social and cultural realities, and how these may have influenced or affected their leadership experiences. I also needed to understand that for each leader, every time they revisited and retold their experiences, their memory and views of particular events might change and evolve as they “explore[d] memories and [gained] deeper understanding” of their experiences (Polkinghorne 2007, in Clandinin and Murphy, 2007, p. 644), and their understanding of these experiences may have also changed with time. It is through the leaders’ narratives that I will understand how their leadership of a school under statutory intervention is, in Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) terms, constituted, shaped, and expressed.

Purposeful Sampling

The participant leaders in my research were identified through the process of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002; Ritchie et al., 2014). The selection criteria was limited to New Zealand state primary school leaders who had led their school through a statutory intervention. The school type [either contributing (Years 1–6) or full-primary (years 1–8)], size (under 150 students), and socioeconomic status of potential schools was important (but not limited to). These criteria purposefully narrowed the number of potential primary schools to 803, of which 264 schools were serving low-socioeconomic communities. From this pool, 38 schools met the following criteria: the school had to have recently been, or was still, under statutory intervention, with the school leader leading the school for some or all of this process. I purposefully selected schools located outside of my home region, and I sought gender-balance amongst the participants. The schools were identified through public-access websites such as the *New Zealand Government Gazette*, the official newspaper of the government. The *Gazette* publishes the names of schools that have entered into, changed between, or been removed from, statutory intervention (New Zealand Government, n.d). Ministry of Education’s *Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI)* site [a site for schools and teachers to obtain information, resources and curriculum material (Ministry of Education, n.d)] was also accessed. This site contains all pertinent information about school location, size (number, year level, and ethnicity of students), socioeconomics, and school leader’s name.

Accounting for recent changes in leadership, I had a potential research pool of 22 leaders as prospective “information-rich” (Patton, 2002, p. 46) participants with recent knowledge and experience of statutory interventions. From this list, I randomly phoned the identified schools to speak to the school leader. It was important for the success of this research that I authentically connect with participants if I was to hear their lived experiences, their realities, of leading a high-needs school through a statutory intervention (Polkinghorne, 1995; Bush, 2012; Dimmock and Lam, 2012; Josselson, 2013; Patton, 2015). To achieve this, I briefly acknowledged my insider-research position by sharing

some of my professional experiences of leading a school through a statutory intervention (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007; Pelias, 2011; Bold, 2012; Busher and James, 2012; Munn-Giddings, 2012). I wanted school leaders to know that I too had experienced situations and events that may have been similar to what they had recently experienced. I wanted them to be fully aware that my research traversed sensitive territory. I was also aware that for some leaders, this might be the first time they had the opportunity to share their professional and personal experiences of leading a school through a statutory intervention, without worrying about professional or personal consequences (Josselson, 2013). Of the six leaders who agreed to participate, three withdrew over the research period for professional or personal reasons. This left three participants, one male and two women.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Each school leader was interviewed three times over a New Zealand school year. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 min with several interviews lasting longer than this as the participants raised a number of other topics including leadership issues and general school, staffing, finances, and curriculum concerns. In these instances, my position as an insider-researcher appeared to have shifted to one of a colleague discussing leadership issues. I was very cognizant that each participant may have needed the opportunity to talk to a “stranger on the train” (Josselson, 2013). A semi-structured interview guide was used for each interview (Sparrowe, 2005; Kvale, 2007; Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). Each interview was digitally recorded and field notes were made following each interview. I transcribed each interview verbatim and the transcript was returned to each participant for member checking (Henn et al., 2009; Knox and Burkard, 2009; Dimmock and Lam, 2012; Josselson, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Over multiple readings of the transcripts, overarching themes began to emerge. Code/theme books were allocated to each participant. Significant information were grouped and recorded verbatim, margin notations indicated the original transcript and page (or instance 2:7 meant interview 2, page 7). Some information such as a comment about the statutory appointee was coded to multiple themes (for example Appointee, Challenges, Impact on Principal, and Knowledge about SI). At this stage of data analysis, the coding was an open process in that the data was coded “in everyway possible” (Glaser, 1978, p. 56). Thus the books were “collection points for significant data” (Lewins et al., 2010). (Glaser, 1978) suggests this type of coding is inductive and enables a variety of themes to emerge. Repeated themes were continually refined with several hierarchies of themes and subthemes developed, refined, and discarded along the way (Ryan and Bernard, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2006). This process allowed me to interact with, and move “inward and outward, backwards and forward” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 50) between the text and the principals experiences. The final process of data analysis revolved around the continuity of time (Dewey, 1938; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Using continuity of time enabled me to present the hierarchy of themes as chronological and sequenced events (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002; Coulter, 2009).

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. Firstly, the scarcity of New Zealand literature on school leadership during challenging circumstances such as a statutory intervention has resulted in the wide use of international literature. Therefore, transference of international situations and contexts to the New Zealand educational context is not always manageable. There are limitations present within the wider research and the findings presented in this chapter. There may be limitations in applying these findings to a larger cohort of New Zealand school leaders, or to leaders leading schools in other education systems.

Secondly, the small sample size, and the research focus specifically on school leaders leading a small New Zealand state primary school under challenging conditions, makes it inappropriate to generalize these findings to other school leaders. Lastly, my interest in school leaders’ experiences of statutory intervention originates from my own personal experiences of leading during such circumstances. Therefore, when interviewing, analyzing, and presenting the findings and discussion, I am conscious of my insider-research positioning and possible biases toward particular ideas. This was addressed through member checks and supervisors’ feedback.

THE NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL LEADERS AND THEIR SCHOOLS’ CONTEXTS

The two women primary school leaders who participated in my research had been leading and managing their respective schools through 12–18 months of statutory intervention before I interviewed them. Susan, Matai School and a declining situation.

Susan and Matai School: A Declining Situation

Susan was a New Zealand trained teacher with 15+ years’ experience prior to accepting the senior leadership position at Matai School. At the time of Susan’s interview, Matai School was located in a rural, semi-isolated farming village. The socioeconomic rating of the school of 8 (with 10 being the most affluent communities, 1 being extremely low-socioeconomic rating). Matai School was classified as a full-primary (Years 1–8), but often “lost” Year 7&8 (aged 11–13) students to boarding school (Years 7–13) or area schools (Years 1–13).

Upon arriving at Matai School, Susan noted the school roll had decreased from an expected 27 students (at the time of her interview) to 12 students. She noted issues with student behavior and social skills, non-engagement with learning, and low student achievement. For the next 5 years, Susan worked to stabilize the school, addressing multiple issues along the way, and re-engaging the community with the school. She was proud of the progress and achievement of Matai School and the roll had increased to 47 students. This was just three students shy of Matai School employing a third full-time, Ministry-funded classroom teacher. Susan felt things were coming together nicely when community issues began affecting Matai School.

On reflection, Susan believed relationships amongst community members had been volatile for about a year. She

noted various community members falling out with one-another, affecting the school as parents withdraw their support not only from the community, but the school as well by withdrawing their children. Notably, Susan felt the local parent-teacher association (PTA) had begun to overstep their role as they started voicing their views on how the school should be lead and governed, including what learning the students should be doing and when. An incident occurred when the board of trustees sought a new board member. Susan shared the PTA had encouraged the newly appointed member to apply for the position, in the hope that the group would obtain more detailed information about the running and governance of the school. More importantly, the new member disclosed to the board that the PTA wanted to run the school, and wanted Susan to resign. When the new member did not agree with this plan, they lost the support of the PTA members, and later resigned from the board.

With a declining school roll, the board was unable to fill vacant seats (Boards consist of five elected parents/community members). In consultation with Susan, the board decided to contact the Ministry of Education for assistance. Susan and the board believed the fastest way of obtaining support for Matai School was for the elected board members to resign, effectively triggering a Section 78(n-3) (school operating without a governing board of trustees). The Ministry of Education appointed a commissioner (a person who holds the full duties and responsibilities of the board) to govern the school.

Grace and Pohutukawa School; Stepping Into the Situation

Pohutukawa School was located in a small rural town. The primary industry was farming with supporting industries; a number of people commuted to a neighboring larger town, or the region's city, for work. Pohutukawa School was a full-primary school with a social-economic rating of 3 and historically "lost" some Year 7&8 students to the intermediate school (Middle school) in the neighboring town. Other students were "poached" by out-of-zone schools who provided free transportation. The school roll consistently sat between 100 and 120 students.

The Minister for Education appointed a commissioner to govern Pohutukawa School under Section 78n(1-2)—concerns for the governance of the school and student well-being and academic achievement following the previous leader's resignation and then the full school board of trustees. In the months prior to Grace's appointment, Pohutukawa School had two consecutive interim school leaders.

Grace is a New Zealand trained teacher with over 20 years' experience. Pohutukawa School was her third senior leadership position. Grace has always moved between classroom teaching, senior management, and school leadership positions depending on the needs of her family, or her desire to upskill or work in different sized schools. Immediately prior to her appointment at Pohutukawa School, Grace had worked as a deputy school leader in a small school that had been under a statutory intervention—section 78(m) (limited statutory manager working alongside the school board). In total, Grace had ~7 years of school leadership experience.

When I interviewed Grace, she had been a professional leader of Pohutukawa School for about 18 months. She was unaware of the issues surrounding the departure of the previous school leader or school board. Prior to her appointment, Grace knew the school was having trouble and was currently under statutory intervention, as the commissioner interviewed Grace for the leadership position. She applied for the position as she felt she had the experience and the capability to lead the school out of this situation. Grace vividly recalls driving into the region for her appointment interview. She felt an instant connection with the region as her family whakapapa back to the area [whanau tangata (family ties) to the land]. She remembers driving past the maunga (mountain), a significant landmark in the region, and telling her husband "that's my mountain." She stated she had often heard other people identifying or connecting with their maunga—both culturally and spiritually, but had never understood what they were meaning. Grace understood this immediately upon her connection with "her" maunga.

CONTEXTUAL COUNTERVAILING PRESSURES

Both Susan's and Grace's stories highlight significant commonalities and differences of the professional and personal pressures they met as they worked to address the issues within their respective schools. Throughout Susan and Grace's leadership of their schools, they experienced countervailing pressures from a number of "situations, incidents, issues, and people" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 5). For example, while they acknowledged the urgency in addressing the issues, at different stages of the statutory intervention, they found themselves challenged and significantly impacted by these issues and various people in different ways (Redding and Morando Rhim, 2014). At the same time, there were incidents when the leaders actively or subtly challenged the status quo or the statutory appointee. In this sense, Susan and Grace were both the "catalyst [of change] and the agent of support" (Hallinger and Heck, 2011, p. 4). In the following sections, I focus on two significant countervailing pressures the leaders experienced.

Isolation and Lack of Support

A significant emotion felt by both leaders was their feeling of isolation and a lack of support from educational agencies and authorities. In Susan's circumstances, her network of fellow leaders was geographically determined and she seldom attended local or regional school leaders meetings or PLD (professional learning development) due to travel distances or teaching commitments. Although she had been Matai School's professional leader for 9 years, this was still her first senior leadership position. She had no experience being a school leader in other areas of her region or within New Zealand. While Susan had participated in a mentoring program for first-time school leaders, she had not maintained connect with this group of school leaders or her mentor.

I've received very little professional support over the past 7-9 years. There were always petty things like bus zones and routes

causing division. As a school, we were never invited anywhere and no one came to visit us. Other local principals are all male, they socialize together, both professionally and personally. I'm not included - I don't get invited to principal's events or end-of-term drinks.

Susan described the first year of Matai School's intervention as "horrific," "difficult year," "turmoil" and "hell." She felt "threatened," "frightened," and "worthless" at various times throughout that year by the actions or words of the male statutory appointee. For example, during a community meeting about a proposed school camp, some parents were pushing for a particular place that was too expensive for some families. When the staff raised this issue, the appointee informed them, "You'll do as we say; I don't care what you think."

Susan felt she was in a situation with no clear nor easy way out. While she refused to "bow to the demands" and pressures of various parent groups, Susan felt helplessness and powerless doing so with the statutory appointee. In these instances, and to ensure things ran smoothly, Susan commented she often "had to suck it up and put on her big girl knickers [panties/underwear], suck it up" and just get on with things.

The people she relied upon most, were her parents, who were elderly, but she felt this "if I didn't have family and friends here, I definitely wouldn't be here. It was that critical." Above all, Susan felt conflicted in her role of being the "leader" and she struggled to navigate the boundary between this role and being friends with the teachers and parents of Matai School in a rural community. She voiced her frustration at being socially isolated

I feel very isolated; it's hard because you're not meant to be friends with people in the community, you're here in a professional role. Theoretically, you're meant to be professional toward them, and available, but not friendly.

You're always mindful of what you are saying and who is connected with whom in the community. It's really hard. Are we meant to be socially isolated because of our role and position within the community, or do you become involved with the community, but then you're too close. It's hard. ... You've got to live, you've got to have friends and socialize, but where's the line? I don't know. I don't have a husband/partner or children to help bridge that gap.

Grace, on the other hand, while having moved to a new region to lead Pohutukawa School, had her immediate family and she came from a family of educators, some of whom were also school leaders or educational advisors. She also maintained her connections with previous colleagues. However, taking on the leadership of a school in a new region was not easy. Grace recalls:

Had only been here a couple of weeks. One neighboring [male] school leader came to visit—this person assumed I was a first-time principal (FTP). They said "well, you'll be a FTP, so I'll be able to tell you what to do". That was their first strike; they kept talking over me when I told them I was an experienced leader. I didn't give them benefit of getting three strikes. I walked them out to their car. Never trusted that person again.

Following this incident and several others with other male school leaders at meetings, Grace was weary of discussing school issues. She felt protective toward the community and did not want any negative information to be used against her, the school and the community.

I am very guarded when talking about the school with neighboring leaders. They've taken students from Pohutukawa School before; I don't need to give them any more ammunition. I don't divulge a lot of what goes on in the school and community. You need a certain level of professional from people and if you do not see or hear that from them, then....

I guess, I don't know, when you come in [as an outsider] you uncover a whole lot of stuff. The reality verses what you are told about the school and its issues are usually poles apart because you're on the ground and people begin to trust you, so they starting sharing some horrific stories of past hurts. Other people don't need to know those stories; those stories can be more damning to a community than good.

Philosophically, Grace felt isolated. She shared it was hard introducing new ideas [such as play-based learning] into a school when no other local school was moving that way.

At times, it would be easier to just flag [stop] all that we're doing and return to the tradition ways. It would be easier, but not necessarily the right or best thing for the kids at this schools. That's my problem [laughing]—nah, I couldn't go back.

As the school was under section 78m(3) and therefore governed by a statutory appointee, Grace did not have a local contact person who could help and support her to settle into the school prior to the school opening for instruction. Unexpectedly she felt relationally isolated from the statutory appointee.

Having an appointee living three hours away is extremely challenging; it is extraordinarily difficult to maintain a working relationship over that distance and only seeing someone every three-four weeks. You do not have on-the-ground support, so effectively, you're also doing a lot of the daily governance work that the appointee should be doing. You do not have support on the spot and when things goes pear-shaped, you need that immediate, physical support.

With no school board of trustees, there was no-one else to deal with the local governance issues of managing a school, such as signing off bus routes, accounts, or numerous other weekly tasks which the board attend too, nor was there anyone to ensure the gardens were weeded and the grounds tidy, for instance. Grace questioned

When you do not have on-the-ground support, then who does this work?

I don't have that! You're it! You're being and doing all! ... adds to the stress when you don't have that support right on the spot. It's inherently wrong! But you do it for the kids, we are here for the kids.

Both Susan's and Grace's feelings of isolation were deepened by the lack of professional support and trust they had in others. The women draw attention to the "old-boys network" operating within their school districts. They felt a number of inter-school decisions were made prior to official meetings, either over drinks or on the sports field or golf course. They felt that even if they had received invitations to social events, the nature of the men's network positioned them as "outsiders" within their own profession. Grace noted the male leaders would go on golfing trips to wineries but female leaders were never included in these trips. Grace had also heard that a group of male leaders had an annual game of rugby against another region; again, females, including wives/partners were not included.

The principals' dual roles of being a professional within a small community, and being a community member, compounded their sense of professional and social isolation. Susan in particular, found it difficult to transverse this duality, whereas Grace, having shifted with her family a number of times prior to arriving at Pohutukawa community, had the support of her immediate family and a large supportive network outside the region.

Health and Well-Being

Both Susan and Grace voiced their concerns surrounding school leader's health and well-being. At the same time, they both acknowledged they seldom discussed their own health and well-being, particularly in relation to their work, with colleagues for fear of being found wanting, or being judged as not coping nor suitable for a school leader's role.

While Susan was an experienced school leader, Matai School was still her first school leadership position and only her second teaching position. It is likely Susan's struggles with the male statutory appointee and her continual fight to retain her position and protect her school, had exhausted her personal reserves and she experienced some serious health issues. She reported these concerns included weight gain, decreased mobility and insomnia. She also noted feeling anxious as soon as she approached Matai School each morning and this feeling lasted until she returned home in the evening. On top of these health issues, Susan experienced several episodes where she felt things were just too difficult.

I became depressed – I really fought that. But it wasn't like depressed and give up. I became a lot angrier last year, fighting. I think if I hadn't done that, I wouldn't have been here. There were two points last year where I would have committed suicide as I got to the stage where I thought that was the best option. Mentally, it's been huge. I need to get that confidence back. I need to pull that back in somehow.

Both times Susan considered ways to take her own life, but it was her thoughts about the effect this would have on her elderly parents, that stopped her. She said that with help of her GP and high dosages of vitamins D, she fought her depression and suicidal thoughts. She believed that without the anger over continually fighting for her job and for Matai School, she would not have survived.

Her final comments regarding her experiences of leading a school under statutory intervention were

I made it! But at times, life was unbearable! ... would've committed suicide. I was at the point where I thought that was the best option.

I loved this school; I have loved it with a passion. But I have fallen out of love. I am re-establishing my relationship with this school. Life is becoming brighter again.

In contrast to Susan, Grace's health was stable. She ensured she had systems in place to maintain her emotional safety, especially with any difficulties she faced at work, or the troubling stories students, parents and teachers at Pohutukawa School shared with her. Grace contributed this to having worked in challenging schools before as well as having the support of her husband and extended family "My husband is my greatest support. He is very good at listening [laughing]." She also ensure she spent her weekends with her family, often leaving the region during school breaks to visit family and friends. Grace shared that she was quite self-sufficient, saying

It's about mental health, it's about emotional safety. You have to be able to say, right, there is my emotional line and I can leave that [person's story] there, the crisis is theirs; do not get emotionally involved.

I've grown with this school. I've grown, changed and moved in my thinking, actions and philosophy. I've learnt at this school how to keep emotionally out of that space and be able to listen and maintain integrity and that relationship.

DISCUSSION

This study focused on the perceptions of two women primary school leaders and their experiences of leading schools through a statutory intervention. Their stories are located during a time when each leader was experiencing multiple complex and challenging "situations, incidents, issues and people" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 5). The findings highlight Susan and Grace's perceptions of isolation, despite having a Ministry of Education statutory appointee working with them. In such circumstances, it might be presumptuous to believe they felt a higher level of support and guidance. That they did not, suggests other issues were present.

Issues of experienced school leader's professional isolation largely appear to be absent in the educational leadership literature (Dussault and Thibodeau, 1996; Bauer and Brazer, 2013; Bauer and Silver, 2018; Bauer et al., 2019). This absence is especially profound in international school turnaround literature. The findings from this research highlight the complex relationship between human existence/the innate need for survival and the unrelenting pressures and expectations felt within their professional roles. For both school leaders, their sense of professional isolation was intertwined with other variables that "affect[ed] the quality of [their] work," and influenced how they "process[ed] and respon[ed]" (Bauer and Brazer, 2013, p. 154) to situations within their work environment. In particular, Bauer and Brazer (2013) suggest variables such as stress, "role

ambiguity, conflict and overload” (p. 156) can significantly affect school leader’s sense of isolation.

While it is acknowledged that school leaders generally work in isolation, Dussault and Thibodeau (1996) and Bauer et al. (2019) suggest professional isolation is deeper than this. Professional isolation has been defined as an “emotional response to one’s [work] experiences” (Bauer et al., 2019, p. 386). A school leader’s profound sense of isolation not only affects their job satisfaction and self-efficacy, but has serious health and well-being implications such as depression, burnout (physical, cognitive, and emotional) (Dussault and Thibodeau, 1996; Izgar, 2009; Stephenson and Bauer, 2010; Federici and Skaalvik, 2012). Both women experienced professional isolation while at work. This is partly due to their position as being *the* school leader and due to perceptions of gender bias from neighboring male school leaders. The women found the male network difficult to invade and struggled to have their voices heard at meetings. The lack of professional and social contact with other local school leaders limited the women’s voices at meetings and hindered their ability to engage in decision-making processes that affected their schools such as district professional development, inter-school exchanges and trips (Friedkin and Slater, 1994; Billett et al., 2007; Chapman, 2008; Dhillon, 2013). With improved access to information and knowledge, the women may be better positioned to meet the challenging, complex, and changing needs of their schools and its various stakeholders (Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Siciliano, 2015; Robinson et al., 2019).

However, they also had to contend with position and geographical isolation as well as philosophical and social isolation. While Grace admitted she was self-sufficient and well-supported by her family, Susan’s social isolation compounded her sense of loneliness and isolation, which in turn, affected her mental health. The findings suggest that when school leaders are working in complex, challenging schools such as turnarounds, they require access to various support structures, such as guidance and mentoring from other leaders who have experienced similar situations. The evidence from my findings also indicates the importance of leaders establishing their own network of “trusted” colleagues and advisors which may help toward reducing feelings of professional and social isolation (Dussault and Barnett, 1996; Gardiner et al., 2000; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Patuawa, 2007; Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011; Hadfield and Jopling, 2012; Robinson et al., 2019). I would advocate for government agencies charged with school intervention processes to consider how they might initiate and broker individualized support, guidance, and professional learning for school leaders leading turnaround schools.

School leadership is a relational practice (Price, 2015; Branson and Marra, 2019) and it is contextually and culturally specific (Bishop et al., 2014; Harris and Jones, 2016; Angelle, 2017; Notman et al., 2017). However, the findings from my research suggests that the relationship between the leader and appointee seldom receives enough care nor attention. Establishing and sustaining a trusting relationship between the school leader and those tasked with supporting the school to address the issues facing a high-needs school requires work and effort (Bryk and Schneider, 2003; Kutsyruba et al., 2010; Morris, 2014;

Lee, 2015; McNae and Cook, 2017). Part of this relationship is acknowledging and surfacing the tensions between working parties (Cardno, 2007; Clandinin et al., 2009). School leaders must be given the time and space to develop relationships if a school is to advance.

Without further research in the situation at Matai School and Susan’s relationship with the statutory appointee, it is difficult to determine whether aspects of the glass ceiling and cliff theory were present. It is possible to infer, based on Susan’s comments about the appointee, that the appointee possibly did initiate processes that ensured Susan’s leadership experience, competency, and skills were challenged (Eagly and Carli, 2003; Eagly, 2005; Thomson, 2009; Glass and Cook, 2016; Weiner and Burton, 2016; Wyland, 2016). It is not surprising then, that Susan was apprehensive about working with this appointee. Finnigan and Daly (2017) say change and even resistance to change can “create a sense of instability and disrupt routines” (p. 25). Susan’s resistance to change may have caused her to reassess her views, beliefs, and values, thus causing discomfort and adding to the difficulty she experienced in accepting and engaging with change (Garcia et al., 2014).

Additionally, it is possible that issues of gender and control were present (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). In the appointee’s role as commissioner of Matai School, he was required to work with Susan as an equal. Thus, it is feasible that the main issues Susan experienced with the appointee were pertaining to gender-bias, control, and power, rather than personality (Harris and Jones, 2018). It is also possible this appointee leads from a “heroic” leader stance where he is the “white knight” swooping in to single-handedly save the school (Starr, 2014). That Susan was fighting him on this and a number of other issues may have presented unexpected countervailing pressures for the appointee. Cardno (2007) advises people to “acknowledge and confront dilemmas and attempt their resolution” (p. 33) when conflict or resistance is present, otherwise it becomes difficult for people and organizations to move forward. The lack of a professional trusting relationship (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011; Qian and Walker, 2014; Augustine-Shaw et al., 2017) between Susan and the appointee significantly constrained Susan’s engagement with Matai School’s statutory intervention.

Likewise, it is difficult to identify whether Grace’s appointment to Pohutukawa School might be considered a glass cliff response to the school’s challenging situation (Haslam and Ryan, 2008; Ryan and Haslam, 2009; Bruckmüller and Branscombe, 2010; Ryan et al., 2011). The [women] appointee at Pohutukawa School was charged with the responsibility of appointing a school leader best suited to the school; as such, assumptions of gender-bias are unfounded. As Grace shared, she applied for the position having confidence in her skills, knowledge, and experience, to turn around the school. Further, she had historical whānau ties to the area. It is possible her connection with the people, land, and culture surrounding Pohutukawa School and community enabled her to feel welcomed in the community, thus enhancing her protectiveness of the community when engaging in conversations with other school leaders. Noddings (2013) argues that women in particular, will consider whether others demonstration of positive level of care toward them. They will

compare these levels with their own “attitude of caring” and their “memories and feelings” of care (Noddings, 2013, p. 29).

Consequently, might also be possible that Susan’s difficulties with the male appointee stem from the dichotomy between Susan’s relational care for Matai School’s stakeholders and the appointee’s seemingly lack of relational care. While the women acknowledged the importance of relational practices, they acknowledge the emotional labor required was very taxing (Cavanagh et al., 2012; Carpenter, 2015; Augustine-Shaw et al., 2017; Holmes, 2017; McNae and Cook, 2017).

Leading a school through an intervention negatively affected the participant school leaders’ psychological and physiological health. Susan’s experiences highlight how severely a leader’s psychological and physiological health can be compromised through the stress and worry brought on by their school’s situation. Susan’s predicament correlates to the findings of the 2016 NZEI survey on primary principal health. Riley (2017) report as well as the findings of the Australian surveys (Riley and Langan-Fox, 2013; Riley, 2014, 2015) and other small-scale New Zealand research, indicates primary school leaders experience high levels of stress-related illnesses (Hodgen and Wylie, 2005; Patuawa, 2007). This may offer insights why (Beatty, 2007) work acknowledges that most school leaders hide behind their professional identity and “bury” their personal selves under the demands and expectations of their work.

School leadership is a challenging and complex task. When a school is undergoing an intervention, complexity and challenges can increase, requiring leaders to draw upon deeper levels of personal “capacity, confidence, and [emotional] resilience” (Branson, 2011, p. 44). For Susan and Grace, the support they received from their whanau (family) provided a respite from the tensions of managing multiple and complex countervailing pressures. They acknowledged that without this support, they could not maintain their commitment to their schools. In Susan’s instance, the support of her family ensured she did take her own life.

Fullan (2016), Futernick and Urbanski (2014), Le Floch et al. (2016), and Scott (2008) state a number of programs and processes implemented to address high-need schools, are generic and predetermined by educational authorities and those charged to bring about positive change. However, given that schools are complex organizations located in diverse communities, I would advocate these predetermined programs are not always the best way to achieve positive, sustainable outcomes (Nicolaidou and Ainscow, 2002; Marsh et al., 2013; Meyers and Smylie, 2017). Individualized programs, developed with the support of the school’s stakeholders and community are vital for the longer-term sustainability and stability of the school. It is equally important that the cultural context of the school and community be identified (Bishop et al., 2014; Harris and Jones, 2016; Angelle, 2017; Notman et al., 2017) and carefully considered prior to, and during this process. Therefore, I would also advocate for these individualized programs to develop and embed contextually and culturally appropriate support structures at multiple stages of the turnaround process. Equally, it is important for government interventionists to acknowledge that the processes and actions

implemented in school may be inappropriate or ineffective for another.

Evidence from this research indicates that when a school leader perceives there is a lack of ethic of care from the appointee, they question their trust in that person. Therefore, for the women leaders of turnaround schools, the relational practices and expertise of the appointee play a significant role in their ability to trust the actions of the appointee (Timperley, 2014). Kutsyruba et al. (2010) state trust is both a learned behavior and an emotional skill. Over time, we learn to trust others through repeated interactions. Trust is an important element for the development of social relationships and underpins a moral and ethical community. Therefore, trust is an important element of school leadership, particularly in turnaround schools where there may be complex issues to address and “uncertainty has become the norm” (Sutherland, 2017, p. 2). A recommendation of this research is for those charged with supporting or leading school turnaround to provide reasonable levels of care and support to school leaders. It is vital appointees have knowledge and awareness of stress-related signs and symptoms and be prepared to facilitate appropriate support and help for school leaders. Perhaps it is also equally as important that school leaders are matched with appointees who reflect the “race, gender, and culture” (Shakeshaft et al., 2007, p. 112). Further, this appointee should also be capable of bridging the leader’s entry into local professional networks. As evidenced in the findings, both women leaders struggled to find local professional women’s networks, and in small rural communities, perhaps this network needs to extend outside of the education profession. Within New Zealand schools, board of trustees, as employers, are required to provide a safe and healthy environment for staff and students. This includes mental well-being (NZSTA, 2019). Therefore, when an appointee is fulfilling the duties of the board, this requirement lies with them. School leaders require support, guidance, and care. If people are prioritized above all other factors in any intervention, then our schools, and community and society will become stronger, safer places for all.

CONCLUSION

Susan and Grace have been professionally and personally shaped and changed from their experiences. They are not the same school leaders as they were at the beginning of their experiences of leading a New Zealand state primary school through a statutory intervention. The experiences of Susan and Grace highlight a need for the tensions surrounding school leadership to be surfaced. Both leaders have learnt about more themselves professionally and personally. For Susan, this was *how* to be a school leader and manager and how to delegate responsibilities and roles to others, to distribute leadership and to make time for herself. Self-learning and professional leadership development comes from the strangest of places. The opportunity to turn a school around, while demanding also provided opportunities for both women to reflect, grow and affirm their leadership. They are more aware of their personal abilities and limitations, particularly in relation to complex and challenging situations.

Grace shared she had learnt a lot from the Pohutukawa School, and she had learnt a lot about herself and the things she was not prepared to compromise on. She especially learnt the importance of taking time to listen to others, examine and sometimes disrupt underlying discourses that prevent change or undermine socially just leadership practices and value the relationships with the school and community.

Society's perceptions of heroic or savior leaders (Mann et al., 2017) turning around schools seldom allows for the complexity of such work to be acknowledged nor addressed. As Bush (2019) suggests, it is time to move past this view and consider the deeper implications of this work. The heroic or savior discourses do not provide the space for school leaders to acknowledge the work required to turn schools around. For turnaround school leaders to be viewed as anything other than heroic or savior, it is vital that leaders speak out about their experiences, to acknowledge and identify the countervailing pressures and demands they face while undertaking such work. It is also important they draw attention to the professional and personal cost of doing this work. It is equally important for educational authorities and researchers listen to and learn from these stories. Educationalist and researchers must disrupt the inherent silences of turnaround school leadership (Chase, 2003; Theoharis, 2007; Mazzei, 2008) by listening to the silences and interludes within school leaders narratives and seek the untold stories hidden beneath the surface. Perhaps with better understanding and acknowledgment of the hidden cost of turnaround school leadership, government intervention processes will stop focusing on swift turnaround timeframes and position people first. If prospective and current school leaders have a greater awareness of, and are more open about some of the darker aspects of school leadership (Thomson, 2009), school leaders may be better prepared to manage multiple countervailing pressures and difficult moments. It is time for the silences surrounding the darker aspects of school leadership be broken.

This research focused on two women principals leading their schools during a statutory intervention. A key criteria of my research included school size. As an ex-principal of a small, semi-rural school under statutory intervention, I was aware of the complexity of a teaching-principal's role and that the majority of these leaders lead without the support of a senior leadership team. I was also aware of the challenges schools experience while undergoing an intervention. It is for these reasons that I specifically focused on principals leading small schools. The challenges small-schools and the leaders experience are not the same as larger schools; these schools are not miniature versions

of large schools" (Dinham et al., 2011, p. 149). As evidenced by Susan and Grace, the pressures and challenges of leading a small school through an intervention are numerous.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takimano
My strength is not that of an individual but that of the collective
(Māori proverb)

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Written informed consent was obtained from the individuals for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Porokaiwhiri School, Susan and Matai School, and Grace and Pohutukawa School are all pseudonyms. The schools are named after New Zealand trees that are growing within the vicinity of the participants schools.

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The “7 Up” Intersectionality Life Grid: A Tool for Reflexive Practice

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Feminist epistemology ensures women’s ways of seeing are central to research purpose and process. In particular, feminist standpoint theory, including Black feminist standpoint theory, recognizes epistemic privilege. Situated knowledge, what is known and the ways it can be known, is shaped by the positionality of knowledge producers in studying upwards to expose oppressive social structures. A reflexive approach prompts feminist researchers to reflect deeply on the situation and perspective of their position in relation to the focus of research. The research process with women school leaders of diverse heritages led the author to re-examine her personal and professional story, as well as her scholarship, as a white woman of working class origins, raised, educated, and working in education as an educator, school leader, initial teacher educator, educational leadership and management programme leader, and scholar in the UK. The author developed a heuristic device for reflection as a “7 Up” intersectionality life grid to think about her life in education at 7 year intervals in relation to the experience of learning, educating, leading, and researching in the context of unequal gender, class, and race relations in wider society. The process revealed white supremacy, white privilege, and white fragility in her lived reality and scholarship. This re-examination enabled her to deepen understanding of her positionality and position-taking as it relates to work in the field of women, gender, and educational leadership. In this critically reflexive autoethnography, I report on reflections guided by the 7 year intervals of the “7 Up” framework at nine points (birth to 56 years old) as *reflexivities of complacency*, *reflexivities that discomfort* and *reflexivities that transform*. Following feminist theorists who think with and against Bourdieu’s social theory, I draw on the concepts of misrecognition and symbolic violence, and for the first time in work on intersectionality in educational leadership, hysteresis to theorize about complicity with white supremacy, the accrual of white privilege and examples of white fragility. The “7 Up” intersectionality life grid tool has capacity to prompt the critically reflective and transformative self-narrative work essential to feminist scholars. It is also a valuable tool for critical reflexivity among women and men students, educators, leaders, and learners of diverse heritages across national contexts. Engaging with *reflexivities that discomfort* has the potential to transform self-narratives, construct relationships, and carry out and interpret research differently.

Keywords: intersectionality, feminist research, reflexivity, life grid, gender, ‘race’

REFLEXIVE PRACTICE IN FEMINIST RESEARCH

Deliberations about representation, research goals and who has the "right," or is best placed, to conduct research with whom are problems for already privileged academics simultaneously "damned if you do and damned if you don't" include women of heritages not shared by the researcher herself (Patai, 1994, p. 66). Acknowledging positionality and its influence on the research process from design to dissemination is essential in ethical critical feminist qualitative research (Sikes, 2010). Doing research differently means establishing a degree of reciprocity between researcher and participant in resisting the temptation to speak *for* another. A reflexive approach prompts deep reflection on a scholar's position in relation to the research focus. It is a methodological tool used to "better represent, legitimize, or call into question [our] data" (Pillow, 2003, p. 176), useful as a component of a feminist epistemology ensuring women's ways of seeing are central to both research purpose and process. Feminist standpoint theory recognizes epistemic privilege (Harding, 1991; Collins, 2000). Situated knowledge, what is known and the ways it can be known, is shaped by the positionality and politics of knowledge producers. Analyses of hierarchical social structures is informed by distinctive standpoint insights from a group consciousness perspective; it requires "studying up" (Harding, 2004, p. 30).

Self-reflexivity (self-disclosure), and reflexivity as recognition of another validate knowledge claims to assert transcendence of our "own subjectivity and own cultural context in a way that releases [us] from the weight of (mis)representations" (Pillow, 2003, p. 186). Declarations of positionality by white scholars pre-empt accusations of re-colonizing research participants in voyeuristic ways. As such, reflexivities may lead to complacency. Ironically so, when critical reflexivity aims to disrupt the complacency associated with positivism (May and Perry, 2011).

Reflexivity, or reflexive practice, is also about transforming habitus i.e., embodied "systems of durable and transposable dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72), through the "awakening of consciousness and socioanalysis" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 116). Reflexivities and pedagogies of discomfort question the construction and representation of differences in relation to power and domination (Pillow, 2003; Blackmore, 2010). They serve as a researcher's rigorous, disruptive set of "critical self-disturbances" (Fuller, 2017a, p. 105) and ongoing self-critique enabling a re-narration of self that, in turn, informs a fresh understanding of diverse narratives. Questions asked here concern a scholar's reflexive practice and are about the process of re-narration. How are our ways of seeing ourselves in the world transformed by working with others to see ourselves as another sees us? What sort of tool might deepen reflection to deconstruct and reconstruct self-narratives developed over time that lead to more socially just practice?

The purposes of conducting a critical autoethnography were: to further develop scholarly reflexive practice; to try to see myself

as another sees me (Laible, 2003) by re-examining my self-narrative through a race lens in an attempt to achieve "double-consciousness" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 2); to establish reciprocity in self-disclosure; and to expose misrecognition i.e., the long-forgotten arbitrariness of social divisions relating to gender, class, and race (Bourdieu, 1977). The major contributions of this paper to the field of women and gender in educational leadership relate to method and the theorization of intersectionality in educational leadership.

Adopting a critical race perspective, I use the concepts of white supremacy, white privilege and white fragility. White supremacy is "the recognition that race inequity and racism are central features of the education system. These are not aberrant nor accidental phenomena that will be ironed out in time, they are fundamental characteristics of the system" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 498).

White privilege refers to "the expression of whiteness through the maintenance of power, resources, accolades, and systems of support through formal and informal structures and procedures" (Bhopal, 2018, p. 19). It is "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks" or "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 1). White fragility is "triggered by discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement. White fragility is not weakness *per se*. In fact it is a powerful means of white racial control and the protection of white advantage" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 2). The focus on race is designed to expose complicity with white supremacy in the English education system (Gillborn, 2005), reveal the benefits accrued by virtue of white privilege (Bhopal, 2018) and to recount discomforting race moments (Rollock, 2013) as examples of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018).

The paper comprises a brief review of selected critical autobiographical and auto-ethnographical accounts by feminist scholars of educational leadership and an outline of key Bourdieuan concepts: misrecognition, hysteresis, and symbolic violence. Reflexive research with women of diverse heritages led to developing a tool that transformed my self-narrative enabling me to see myself more clearly as another might see me. I describe the use of gender, class, and race lenses in the development of the "7 Up" intersectionality life grid. Next, I present findings from a critical autoethnographical study as they relate to three categories of reflexivity: *reflexivities of complacency* associated with the comfortable and familiar; *reflexivities that discomfort* as those familiar accounts that are nevertheless painful; and *reflexivities that transform* as new and uncomfortable self-critical disturbances. Using Bourdieu's concepts of hysteresis and misrecognition, there follows a discussion of the shifting self-narrative: from a discourse of upward social mobility (Reay, 2017) to one of accruing the benefits of white privilege (Bhopal, 2018). Finally, I suggest how the tool might be useful to learners, educators, leaders, and scholars undertaking similar self-work in their reflexive scholarship and professional practice across phases, sectors, and national contexts.

FEMINIST SCHOLARS' SELF-NARRATIVES

Feminist and gender theorists have long engaged in critically reflexive scholarship. *The personal is political* articulates the connection between individual experiences of gender inequalities and the political, social, and organizational structures perpetuating gendered oppressions (Weaver-Hightower and Skelton, 2013). The theorization of women's individual stories within feminist frameworks critiques and challenges inequalities in education and broader society (Shakeshaft, 2015). Self-narratives form the basis of feminist standpoint theory (see Smith, 1979; Harding, 1991; Collins, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2000) that values "insider" perspectives. Those standpoints uncover multilevel power relations perpetuated by patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism as they are played out in families, institutions (including education), society, and international relations. This remains relevant in the twenty-first century in the light of misogynist and racist political discourses [e.g., during the 2016 US presidential election campaign (England, 2017); leading up to and following the UK decision to leave the European Union in 2016 (Isaac and Hilsenrath, 2016)].

Scholars of educational leadership recount personal experiences as stories of "female firsts" (Mertz, 2009, p. 6), connecting them with research as intellectual histories (e.g., Blackmore, 2013; David, 2013), critical evocative portraiture (Lyman et al., 2012, 2014), and collaborative autoethnographies (Newcomb, 2014). So doing, they engage with epistemologies and methodologies that disrupt traditional ways of knowing about education and educational leadership (Young and Skrla, 2003). Many recount the "multiple marginality" (Mertz, 2009, p. ix) at the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender (see e.g., Rusch and Jackson, 2009; Grant, 2014; Jean-Marie, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Osanloo, 2014; Peters, 2014; Santamaria and Jaramillo, 2014; Welton, 2014). Critical reflexivity reveals the intercontinental perspectives of scholars committed to social justice leadership to demonstrate what informs and motivates their work (Lyman et al., 2012).

From a critical race perspective, UK scholars have contributed counter narratives about intersecting oppressions in higher education (e.g., Ahmed, 2009; Chakrabarty, 2012) but not necessarily as accounts by scholars of gender and educational leadership. One exception is Showunmi's (2018) account of a Black woman's socialisation as white and the multiple discriminations and oppressions faced from every quarter in not being sufficiently Black or white to meet colleagues' expectations in higher education.

Accounts by white scholars confronting the "other within" (Blackmore, 2010, p. 45) and their own "complicit[y] in the whiteness of educational leadership" remain rare (Blackmore, 2013, p. 26) (see also Rusch and Horsford, 2009; Mansfield, 2014; Fuller, 2017a). Their scarcity indicates the prevalence of "white fragility" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 2), i.e., the inability to engage in dialogue about race and desire to retain white privilege in the field (Bhopal, 2018). Accounts by white scholars of "seemingly peripheral race moments" (Rollock, 2013, p. 492) are needed in race and educational leadership research.

White researchers electing to carry out race research have a particular responsibility to critically reflect upon and demonstrate awareness of these issues. They must remain alert to and report on the dynamics of race and their responses to it. To do so not only ensures the development of critically reflexive practice but also remains crucial to making the processes of whiteness visible. To do otherwise, to remain silent about these processes even while researching race is to enact and endorse a paradigm interred in racial division and hierarchy. (Rollock, 2013, p. 506-7)

This "scholastic self-reflexivity" assists the theorisation of privilege and the reflexive process (Wilkinson, 2008, p. 111) that might facilitate the unlearning of privilege (Rusch and Horsford, 2009). Declaring white privilege is not enough; its abolition must be the goal (Ignatiev, 1997; Ahmed, 2004).

REFLEXIVITY, MISRECOGNITION, HYSTERESIS AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

There is no neat dovetail between gender and feminist theories and Bourdieu's social theory. Indeed, feminist scholars have fruitfully thought with and against Bourdieu by troubling his work with respect to gender (see e.g., Moi, 1991; Lovell, 2000; Adkins, 2004). I have struggled with the apparent permanence of masculine domination, a theorisation of gender binaries, limited recognition of contemporary post-structural gender theorisation (e.g., Butler, 1990) and feminist activism (e.g., the Women's Movement) (Bourdieu, 2001). But there is precedence in using key Bourdieuan concepts as thinking tools in education research (e.g., Reay, 2004), including from a critical race perspective (e.g., Rollock et al., 2015), and scholarship in educational leadership (e.g., Thomson, 2017) including with an intersectionality perspective (Fuller, 2013, 2018). Following Moi (1991, p. 1035), I see gender and race as social categories, like social class, that belong "to the 'whole social field' without specifying a fixed and unchangeable hierarchy between them." In this section, I outline some of Bourdieu's key concepts.

Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977) and account of masculine domination (2001) demonstrate the relationship between reflexivity, misrecognition, hysteresis and symbolic violence. For Bourdieu, reflexivity is a "sociology of sociology" requiring scholars to reflect on practice and position (in relation to the research field and its participants) to avoid "unconscious projection" of these relations to the research process, analyses, and interpretations (Deer, 2014, p. 197), rather than to value an "insider" perspective. However, there is also concern for ethnocentrism and the scholarly gaze (Bourdieu, 1977) that resonates with concerns related to reflexivity in feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1991; Pillow, 2003). Both Bourdieu's reflexive practice (1977) and feminist standpoint scholarship "study up" from individuals to theorise about unequal social structures (Harding, 2004 p. 182-31).

Challenges to the prevailing doxa, the "natural or social world [that] appears as self-evident," or "the naturalization of arbitrariness" in the established social order, needs mediation by the reflexive social scientist (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 163). In feminist standpoint scholarship, the political perspective positions women

as knowers and recognises knowledge production is for women (Harding, 2004); they are capital-accumulating subjects rather than capital-bearing objects (Lovell, 2000). Bourdieu acknowledges the arbitrariness on which divisions (sex, class, race) reproduce power relations and the associated symbolic violence, constitutes, and produces misrecognition “of the limits of cognition that they make possible, thereby founding immediate adherence, in the doxic mode, to the world of tradition experienced as a ‘natural world’ and taken for granted” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). Reflexivity enables “unveiling [of] the unknown mechanisms of the established order, of symbolic violence and by sharing this knowledge in a reflexive and political alliance with the dominated—the ‘downtrodden’—as a form of counter-power” (Deer, 2014, p. 203). In their critiques, feminist scholars unveil the symbolic violence of Bourdieu’s social theory with respect to his consideration of women (Lovell, 2000; Adkins, 2004).

Nevertheless, a number of key concepts enable us to consider how the social order is reproduced by, and reproduces habitus as embodied “systems of durable and transposable dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72) that conform to the dominant social order i.e., playing by the rules of the game from a particular position in any given field. The hysteresis effect results when there is a mismatch between habitus and the field so that “practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78). It is “one of the foundations of the structural lag between opportunities and dispositions to grasp them which is the cause of missed opportunities” (op. cit., p. 83). The hysteresis effect might be weakened when “enlightened self-interest” enables the adjustment of dispositions in crossing boundaries (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 37), for example, in women’s achievement of leadership roles or recognition of their scholarship.

Whilst Bourdieu (2001) recognises some changes to women’s conditions respecting educational, reproductive and employment rights brought about by feminism, he argues there is permanence in the masculine domination of women. Only if political action takes into account “all the effects of domination” (added emphasis), perhaps as they are also “raced” and “classed,” might it lead to the “progressive withering” of masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 117). The male/female, masculine/feminine dualisms must be further complicated by the intersections of a range of social inequalities. Oppression constitutes actual physical and symbolic violence experienced by women in families, communities, the education, and political systems, workplace, and wider society, as sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, the countless everyday slights by individuals and women’s continued underrepresentation in positions of power depending on women’s various positions (Moi, 1991). The reflexive social scientist and feminist activist might disrupt the violence of masculine domination by challenging the arbitrariness of misrecognised justifications for the established social order, many of which still largely go unchallenged. Focusing on such disruptions reveals the nature and extent of hysteresis and symbolic violence experienced in acquiring dispositions associated with, for example, a cleft habitus.

Despite the reservations I share with feminist scholars, I see in Bourdieu’s (2001) theorisation a glimpse of hope for a more socially just society in the possibility of political action, including in education, based on an understanding of intersecting oppressions; and the development of a cleft habitus described as “a very strong discrepancy between high academic consecration and low social origin, in other words a *cleft habitus*, inhabited by tensions and contradictions” (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 100). Bourdieu’s key concepts are useful thinking tools in theorising about gender, race, and class in educational leadership (Fuller, 2013, 2018).

METHOD—A CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Undertaking a critical autoethnography was prompted by two research projects about the intersection of race, gender, and class in headship (Moorosi et al., 2017, 2018; Torrance et al., 2017). Similarities between our stories resulted from a researcher’s desire to become closer to research participants (Pillow, 2003). There was complacency in identifying with participants’ experiences, recalling: dislike of food, solo international travel, racist television programmes in the 1970s. To go deeper, I needed to engage with discomforting reflexivities focused on differences. To impose order on a necessarily messy reflexive narrative I developed a chronological qualitative life grid to capture and analyse reflexivities as they surfaced. I use data from my life narrative situated in specific sociocultural contexts (Chang, 2008; Boylorn and Orbe, 2014).

The “7 Up” Intersectionality Life Grid

The “7 Up” intersectionality life grid is a heuristic device for reflection on a life in education as learner, educator, leader, and scholar from birth to 56 years (1962–2018). It focuses primarily on the intersections of gender, class, and race. However, an intersectional analysis is not limited to those social categories; arguably other intersecting social category factors such as age, religion, and sexual orientation may become apparent or be specifically highlighted in such an analysis. It is a qualitative life grid designed to enable analysis of education policy impact over time and “insight into the relationship between the macro, meso, and micro levels for case-based approaches” to research (Abbas et al., 2013, p. 320). It synthesises multilevel perspectives as societal (macro), systemic (meso), organisational and personal (micro). Such an approach produces dense narrative data (Abbas et al., 2013) requiring clear guidelines about what to include. Imposing a 7 yearly timescale is not wholly arbitrary. A UK television series charting the lives of 14 children from the age of seven in 1963, at 7 year intervals, recently reached 63 *Up* (see also Granada Television, 1999; ITV, 2019). Participants reflected on their lives and previous eight programmes. Some have withdrawn from the project. The inclusion of only four girls/women, all of whom were white, reveals the extent of intersecting biases inherent in social research in the 1960s (Fuller, 2014a), as do the questions asked, answered, or resisted on camera about gender relations.

The “7 Up” intersectionality life grid provided a framework in which to record reflections relating to learning from birth (birth–1962) through primary (7–1969), and secondary (14–1976) to tertiary (21–1983, 28–1990, 35–1997, 42–2004) education; educating and leading in secondary (35–1997, 42–2004, 49–2011) and higher education (49–2011, 56–2018) and researching (35–1997, 42–2004, 49–2011, 56–2018), in the context of unequal gender, class, and race relations in UK society. The focus on particular years led to thinking about those immediately preceding or following as the limitations became clear regarding what might be omitted. For example, the grid misses 2 years’ attendance at a progressive middle school during the 1970s (aged 11–13) and the experience of physical abuse i.e., I was hit round the head by a teacher. Where I have included a reflection from outside a particular age/year I use circa (c) to indicate the approximate and/or closest age (e.g., c14).

The “7 Up” intersectionality life grid evolved into nine grids (one per age—year: see **Figures 1, 2** as examples) each containing: four columns associated with identity labelled: education, gender, class, race; and two rows as “personal, family, community” (micro level factors) and “education policy context, socio-cultural, and geo-political factors” (macro level factors). Cells were populated with notes from memory and desk research. Questions that guided reflections about my positionality in the social field (family, community, education, workplace), the development of dispositions resulting in a scholarly (cleft) habitus and my position-taking with respect to gender and feminist scholarship in educational leadership are provided as **Appendix 1**. They are adapted from questions asked of headteachers in a range of research projects focused on gender, identity, and educational leadership (Fuller, 2013; Moorosi et al., 2017; Torrance et al., 2017).

Subsequent autobiographical writing revealed contrasting reflexivities. Reflexivities accounting for and confirming a pre-existing self-narrative identifying with feminism, upward social mobility, antiracism, and social activism are called *reflexivities of complacency*. Painful recollections of gender-related oppressions and achieving social mobility are identified as *reflexivities that discomfort*; and recognising complicity with white supremacy, accruing white privilege and my own white fragility, whilst these are reflexivities of discomfort (Pillow, 2003) they are also *reflexivities that transform*. They are mapped against education policy context, socio-cultural, and geo-political factors. Their appearance in the same time frame reveals the simultaneity of a commitment to antiracism alongside the limitations of its enactment.

In the sections that follow I recount *reflexivities of complacency*, *reflexivities that discomfort* and *reflexivities that transform* found in the “personal, family, community row” of the “7 Up” life grids relating to intersecting identities as learner in publicly funded education including at a Russell Group university (birth, 7, 14, 21); leader outside education about to enter teaching (28); and learner-educator-leader-researcher (c28 onward) having taught and led as English teacher, head of English, deputy headteacher, and school governor in five mixed comprehensive schools (35, 42, 49); initial teacher educator (49); associate professor of educational leadership (56) leading

postgraduate courses, including an educational leadership and management programme (56), and research projects at Russell Group universities.

This study has the ethical approval of my institution. There are inherent challenges and “risks” of such an autoethnography such as the potential re-identification of individuals as family members, teachers, classmates and colleagues and institutions (see Sikes, 2010 for further discussion of researchers’ concerns in life history and autobiographical work). The individuals I have identified by my relationship or name have given informed written consent for their participation. Indeed, conversations with my sister, Lynn, about this project enhance its trustworthiness. I believe our teachers thought we shared similar dispositions for higher education and we were each tutored by our comprehensive school teachers in extra-curricular classes for the Cambridge Entrance Examination. The women who participated in the research projects that inspired this autoethnography each gave informed consent to the use of their words in my writing. I refer to institutions in general terms though readers might be able to discover the schools and universities I have attended and worked in. I have withheld my age when the re-identification of an individual or institution might be undesirable. However, it remains the case that individuals might recognise themselves (Sikes, 2010). I am particularly mindful of becoming the story I write (Ellis, 2009). That has led to some omissions about my private life; though at times I have chosen to be open.

FINDINGS

The findings are reported as three categories of reflexivity: *reflexivities of complacency*; *reflexivities that discomfort*; and *reflexivities that transform*.

Reflexivities of Complacency

Reflexivities of complacency confirm a self-narrative and identity as feminist (e.g., experiencing, recovering from and confronting a range of gender related oppressions [see below (14 onward)], upwardly socially mobile [e.g., moving from manual working-class to educated middle-class (21), into a profession (c28, 35 onward)], anti-racist [e.g., calling out (c7), teaching (c28 onward), and researching about racism (49 onward)] and social activist [e.g., campaigning for human rights (c21 onward), supporting professional activism about women’s careers in education (c49 onward)]. They relate to learning [e.g., comparative religion (14), socialist/Marxist perspectives on history (c14), sociology (c14), feminist and post-colonial literature/feminist and postcolonial readings of literature (c14, 21), education studies that explored anti-racism and Islamophobia (c28, 35), critical leadership studies (c42)], and teaching [e.g., feminist and post-colonial curriculum content (c28 onward) and critical pedagogy (c28 onward)], leadership, management, and organisation with social justice in mind (35 onward), and educational leadership scholarship with a feminist (c42 onward) and intersectional lens (49 onward).

Having described my students’ open challenge to me about my white privilege as an example of enabling critical dialogue in

	education	gender	class	race
personal, family, community	Family had educational aspirations Extended family included 3 (head)teachers Parents left school without formal qualifications Father failed 11+; 2 aunts passed (1 college educated) 2 great-grandmothers illiterate	Women worked – domestic service, trades, factories, shops, teaching Women as property owners x 2 (maternal great-grandmother received a house as compensation when widowed by railway accident (c1900); paternal grandmother bought and kept house in her name to mitigate the risk of bankruptcy/ homelessness (1913)) Mother was an only child – grandfather learned about contraception during WWI	Home ownership (multiple generations) Factory work – manual working class Upward social mobility sought and achieved Previous downward social mobility resulted in precarity around housing: mother's house bombed during WW2, moved into rented accommodation; loss of paternal grandfather's business could have resulted in father's homelessness	White Family history – generations of fathers with same name (Robert Fuller) – ancestors buried locally (C of E) including locally renowned ancestor as coxswain of the lifeboat (saved hundreds of lives) Maternal grandfather served in India in WW1 – brought home Indian landscape paintings Migration in extended family in 1920s to Australia, Canada Shared family name with Jamaican plantation owners made reparation on abolition of slavery (UCL 2020) – Shared family name with passengers on the Mayflower to North America (1620)
education policy context, socio-cultural and geo-political factors	Education Act 1962 mandated LEAs to fund first full-time degree and provide maintenance	1961 - Introduction of contraceptive pill 1964 - Married Women's Property Act revision 2nd wave feminism - Betty Friedan (1963/2010) <i>The feminine mystique</i>	Traditional working class norms adapted in post war prosperity 'major on-going modification in manual-non manual differences were occurring at the level of values and aspirations' (Goldthorpe et al. 1969 p. 26). Unemployment 1.6% termed 'Golden Age' Rise in average standard of living - 40% increase in average real wages (1950 to 1965)	Race Discrimination Bill 1960 Petition against Racial Discrimination 1962 Race Relations Act 1965 Jamaica gained independence 1962 – The Windrush generation moved to the UK to support post-war reconstruction (1948-1970) British imperialism connected to British religion (Anglicanism) – (C of E apology for benefiting from the slave trade came in 2006 (Bates 2006))

FIGURE 1 | Example of '7 up' intersectionality life grid (birth–1962).

the classroom, Victoria Showunmi reminded me “we must not be complacent Kay” (56) (personal telephone conversation). Her comment led to this framing of *reflexivities of complacency*. In the section that follows I recount *reflexivities that discomfort* relating to gender and class.

Reflexivities That Discomfort

Recollecting gender and class related oppressions of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young, 2004) such as sexual grooming (c14), sexual assault (c14), acquaintance rape (21), and sexual harassment in the workplace (35, c42); gender barriers in the workplace such as underrepresentation in senior posts (28) and sex discrimination (c42) have been painful. Those relating to violation of the person are deeply misogynist, cause long-lasting damage and take decades to heal. Everyday sexism in the workplace such as comments on clothing and make-up (28, 35, c42), conversation colonisation, silencing in meetings (c49, 56) sex discrimination in the selection process (21, c42) along with the gender pay gap (49) are symptomatic of the symbolic violence of persistent patriarchal structures resulting in women's exploitation and marginalisation.

Behaviours leading to marginalisation based on social class at a Russell Group university included questions about schooling, comments about accent, disparaging misidentification as “northern,” and “self”-segregation in dining halls (c21). My confidence waned. I was silent in class and stopped attending altogether in my final year (21). By graduation, the thought of teaching, taking a further degree or working in higher education filled me with terror.

A career path of “snakes and ladders” respecting status and salary (Fuller, 2017b) meant moving from: temporary cleaning, care, and shop work as a teenager (c14), catering, factory, and pub work as a student (c21) to full-time managerial work including clerical, cashiering, and catering (21, 28) and hitting a glass ceiling in retail management (28). All are occupations in which women are concentrated (Trade Unions Congress, 2012) though men held senior management posts (see e.g., Brandwood et al., 2008). Teaching (c28) and school leadership (35, 42) simultaneously meant the social mobility of entering the professions and a symbolic return to the community (Reay, 2017) by teaching and leading in five mixed comprehensive schools dominated by white working-class children (c28, 35, 42, 49) albeit in a region with the greatest ethnic diversity outside London. Nearing the completion of a doctorate, I doubted I had the

	identity in education (secondary school pupil)	gender	class	race
personal, family, community	<i>Reflexivities of complacency</i> Complained about being set work completed in primary school Resisted taking lower qualification by complaining Teacher competence judged by my (dis)engagement ('seen' walking on desks in German lesson) Local history research with family member confirmed 'sense of belonging' in community National Union of School Students strike action on playground Timetable reconfigured to enable 3x sciences (marine biology an aspiration), 3 x humanities, French, English language and literature, maths (chemistry dropped later) <i>Reflexivities that discomfort</i> Dissatisfied with middle school (1973-5) – sought cultural capital of traditional subjects when free choices available daily – mother refused to move me from 'local school' when middle class children moved Physically abused (hit round head) and subjected to inappropriate behaviour in the girls' changing room at middle school (c14) Comprehensive school (1975-80) - no 11+ exam but would have passed (most able girl in class at primary school) but downplayed ability due to previous name calling 'teacher's pet' <i>Reflexivities that transform</i> A level English – internally questioned credentials of teacher to teach Victorian novel	<i>Reflexivities of complacency</i> O level English literature - saw <i>Macbeth</i> film – Lady Macbeth powerful and ambitious, nude witches showing diverse body shapes A levels (1978-80): English literature included writing by women: Jane Austen, Emily Bronte, George Eliot; or featured strong women characters such as <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> (Hardy 1892/1974)) (feminist perspectives) <i>Reflexivities that discomfort</i> Underage sexual 'assault' (c1975) (boy 'friend') Sexual grooming in school - inappropriate relationship reported in national media – propositioned (c16)	<i>Reflexivities of complacency</i> Sister inspired university aspiration as she prepared for success in A levels and Cambridge Entrance Exam Raised money to go to Girl Guide international camp in Canada (1977) by holding assortment of sponsored events – family/community support	<i>Reflexivities of complacency</i> Little ethnic diversity in school RE O level - Islamic festivals paper Race in <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> (Twain 1884/1968) – Jim treated as inferior to poor white child <i>Roots</i> (Haley 1976/1991) televised by BBC in 1977 International solo travel to attend Girl Guide camp in Canada (1977) – attendees from diverse countries (e.g. Belize, Japan, Kuwait) A levels (1978-80): English literature <i>The Tempest</i> (possibly with postcolonial and feminist perspective), <i>Macbeth</i> with gender perspective History (European colonialism with Marxist perspective); French (discussed French colonialism through work by Albert Camus (1948/1960, 1946/1961) with feminist teacher) <i>Reflexivities that discomfort and transform</i> Visit to stay with a family of mixed heritage in the north of England – I didn't tell anyone where I was staying – comments about smelling of curry on return Further determination to be committed to anti-racism
education policy context, socio- cultural and geo- political factors	Conference on 'The Secondary Curriculum' in Oxford 1976 - <i>Curriculum 11-16</i> stated eight 'areas of experience', as basis of curriculum: The aesthetic and creative, ethical, linguistic, mathematical, physical, scientific, social and political, spiritual (DES 1977, p. 6) Teachers received pay increases averaging 27%	Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to protect men and women from discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status	Economic recession (1973-5) Jobs lost – unemployment 5.5% Winter of Discontent (1978–79)	Race Relations Act 1976 to prevent discrimination on the grounds of race Union flag adopted by National Front and later British National Party (BNP)

FIGURE 2 | Example of '7 up' intersectionality life grid (14–1976) showing *reflexivities of complacency*, *reflexivities that discomfort* and *reflexivities that transform*.

intellectual capacity to become an academic (c42). The residues of being an interloper remained (Johansson and Jones, 2019). The eventual transition to higher education meant losing market value (c42) that took 14 years to restore (56) [in real terms there

remains a £10 K per annum deficit without assuming I might have secured further promotions in the meantime (c56)].

Though discomfiting, these reflexivities are ones I have long come to terms with. They fire the “passionate partiality”

(Reay, 2017, p. 2) associated with an interest in gender and class in educational leadership. It is the *reflexivities that discomfort* associated with recognising the place of whiteness in my trajectory that have the power to transform a self-narrative, to construct relationships and do research differently.

Reflexivities That Transform

Each account is framed by a quotation from a woman of Black and Global majority heritage interviewed about the intersection of race, gender, and class in headship (Moorosi et al., 2017, 2018; Torrance et al., 2017). This serves to illustrate moments when their voices disrupted my reflection and self-narrative. They also focus the narrative on differences in an attempt to do the impossible i.e., to de-centre whiteness whilst simultaneously acknowledging it. In addition to providing examples relating to learning and teaching (curriculum content and pedagogy), leadership, management and organization, and scholarship, I share reflexivities relating to socialisation, politicisation, and colonialism.

Learning and Teaching—Curriculum Content and Pedagogy

"I remember seeing something about Nelson Mandela on the TV and him being released. And then I'd learnt this word Apartheid and I thought that was a really amazing word and [...] Badgered [my teacher] to let me teach her year two class for just a section of the lesson [laughter]" (Nicola describing an experience of teaching age ten or eleven) (see Moorosi et al., 2017, 2018).

Despite my awareness of, and calling out racism among family members (c7, 21 onward), I briefly internally questioned the credentials of two teachers to teach English literature i.e., the Victorian novel and revenge tragedy, because of their ethnic identities (c14, c21) (Lander and Santoro, 2017).

Despite study of post-colonial literature and an anti-racist initial and continuing teacher education (c28, 35), I was ill-equipped, early in my career, to teach children about race when opportunities arose. Whilst teaching *The Tempest*, I asked pairs of children to depict roles of "master" and "slave" i.e., Prospero and Caliban. A white child enacted "master" and a child of Black African heritage enacted "slave." My racialized construction of their identities racialized the power dynamics of the play in what might become a postcolonial understanding. However, I failed to control my visceral response of panic to enable discussion about the power of the tableau. I was unable to facilitate race dialogue without explicitly racializing individual children. This paternalistic response, an indicator of white fragility, resulted in missing an opportunity to engage children in a critical race dialogue (Borsheim-Black, 2015).

Leadership, Management, and Organisation

"We do think it's an issue but it's an issue for you" [her emphasis]. [Laughs]. So they didn't recognise. I found that really upsetting [audibly emotional]" (Saeeda in Fuller, 2018, no page).

Despite an espoused commitment to anti-racism and my knowledge of the McPherson Report (McPherson, 1999) that outlined institutional racism (c35), I failed to see a Black African male colleague in a public space (age withheld) (Fuller, 2017a). I wholly underestimated the impact of invisibility on his mental and physical health (Chakrabarty, 2012). The inadequacy of my response to a colleague of African heritage explaining her experience of working in a predominantly white institution provides another example of white fragility (age withheld) (DiAngelo, 2018). I failed to negotiate and reconcile the stated grievances of white colleagues, the unsurprising emotionality of my Black colleague suffering the consequences of racism, and a selfish concern for my professional reputation in not wanting to be thought racist. I listened but my responses were derisory (age withheld).

Scholarship

'They're the worst! Absolutely. I can't stand academics' [laughs] (Annette).

Kay: *'I could be criticised for this work [researching the experiences of women headteachers of BGM heritages as a white scholar] [...], but I feel I have to take that risk.*

Nicola: *Yeah. Exactly.*

Kay: *And I have to include people in my work.*

Nicola: *Absolutely. Because otherwise that story would never be told.*

Kay: *No. That's right.*

Nicola: *And you can't risk that. That's a far more dangerous risk.'*

Although, my professional teaching and school leadership practice taught me to recognise girls and boys were not homogenous groups, I first approached gender scholarship as if women and men were (c42). I did not ask survey respondents about ethnicity or religion (Fuller, 2009). One woman forced open a space to comment on the barriers to her progression as a headteacher, newly arrived from Kenya, of an independent school for Muslim girls (previously unpublished survey data).

Subsequently, headteachers of colour participated in the qualitative research; both men, one led an Islamic faith school (Fuller, 2013). I have been challenged at academic conferences about not including women from diverse heritages (49). More recently, the challenge has been about whether and how white scholars should research race (Rollock and Gillborn, 2011; Rollock, 2013).

Socialisation

'My father came to this country in the fifties. My mum joined in 1971 at which point I was a little baby' (Hasna).

I was socialised into the dominant culture of whiteness never questioning my racial identity (DiAngelo, 2018). Generations of my father's family attended the established Church of England. My sense of belonging begins with a graveyard full of ancestors and being at the centre of a rich local history researched in primary and further valued at secondary school [c7, 14 (see Butcher, 1979)].

I learned to be silent about race and racism witnessed among family members describing a sari-wearing woman as "sunburnt" (c7) (DiAngelo, 2018). I corrected them saying she was Indian; I genuinely thought they did not know. I was confused by the dissonance between Christianity and church-goers engaging in racist talk (Fuller, 2017a). This critical awareness resulted in not revealing I was going to stay with a mixed heritage family (Pakistani-English) (14). On my return, comments were made about smelling of curry. More recent examples of racism in the family include name calling (c49) and comments about unfamiliar names and headwear (c56). In adulthood I always call such comments out.

Politicisation

'I call myself black, I mean politically black, but also just black' (Annette)

'I remember my secondary school being closed down one day because the BNP (British National Party) were going to march through' (Nicola).

Despite, awareness of the Rock against Racism movement (14, 21); disgust at the National Front's appropriation of the Union flag; and campaigning against apartheid (21) (Fuller, 2017a), I failed to call out persistent racist name-calling (age withheld) (Fuller, 2017a). I misinterpreted the response of laughter (Houshmand et al., 2019) constructing it as acceptance or indifference. This repeated in the workplace (age withheld) when one workmate called another her "sun-kissed friend;" once more I was silent (DiAngelo, 2018). Further examples of ignoring and/or perpetuating microaggressions of everyday racism included the Anglicisation of South Asian first names, blindness to the cultural diversity of the workforce in a multi-ethnic city and the dominance of whiteness among social groups (c28). I had become colour blind instead of recognising and valuing difference (DiAngelo, 2018).

Colonialism

'My dad had lived here obviously with other single men because our country was a British colony at the time' (Hasna).

At the London Schools and the Black Child Conference in 2014, a Black woman, sharing my family name, called me "sister." Her recognition of me prompted historical research revealing settlers, colonisers, and slave-owners among our namesakes. Family members settled in Canada and Australia in the 1920s (c14, c56). Our namesakes, born 20 miles from my birthplace, boarded the Mayflower bound for the "New World" in 1620.

The Legacies of British Slave-ownership archives (University College London, 2020) show our namesakes benefited from slave ownership including when reparations were paid on the emancipation of slaves (e.g., Mary Ann Fuller). One Jamaican plantation and slave owner (Henry Fuller) willed manumission for Princess, the "Negro" mother of Fanny a "free 'Negro' woman," leaving an annuity to each. The inheritance of emancipation by Princess and property by Fanny and Henry's two children, described in racialized terms as "mulatto," suggests

a sense of responsibility but not necessarily affection or sexual consent from Fanny. The brutality of enslavement largely goes unnamed, unrecorded and unrecognised. It must be read between the lines.

Historically, then, our family namesakes include powerful Cambridge educated [e.g., Charles Beckford Fuller (1739–1825)] wealthy men [e.g., Augustus Elliott Fuller (1777–1857)] in politics [e.g., Henry Fuller Attorney General of Trinidad; John "Mad Jack" Fuller MP (1757–1834) heir to the Jamaican fortune of Rose Fuller MP (1708–1777)], the military [e.g., Frederick Hervey Fuller (1786–1865)] and as Jamaican planters and merchants (e.g., John Fuller; Stephen Fuller) who lobbied to manipulate the price of sugar post abolition (1807–1815) (Ryden, 2012). They embodied the power structures of white supremacy at the height of British colonialism and slavery.

Below, I discuss a transformed self-narrative from a discourse of social mobility to one of complicity with white supremacy, accrual of white privilege and enactment of white fragility.

A TRANSFORMED SELF-NARRATIVE: SEEING MYSELF AS ANOTHER MIGHT SEE ME

Women of Black and Global Majority heritages held up mirrors to distort my reflection. Their words, and the subsequent critical autoethnographic work, resulted in the reconstruction of a self-narrative that refreshes my worldview and renews my critically reflexive stance (see Boylorn and Orbe, 2014). The process ensured the feminist standpoint beginning with accounts by marginalised groups "go[es] beyond experience to an understanding of meaning" (Shakeshaft, 2015, p. xvii) to consider the functioning of hierarchical social and organisational structures (Harding, 2004).

Complicity with white supremacy, the accrual of white privilege and enactment of white fragility have each been exposed by examining the misrecognised narrative of upward social mobility (Reay, 2017), and the experiences of hysteresis and symbolic violence associated with gender and class, but not, for me, with race. It is necessary to discuss these at multiple levels as historical, systemic, institutional and individual.

Complicity With White Supremacy: The Enduring Impact of Slavery and Colonialism

Powerful descriptions of individual and collective diaspora directly recount or imply the enduring impact of the historical structures of slavery and colonialism (Moorosi et al., 2017). Recognising the painful legacy of slavery does not necessarily result in apology [see e.g., apology by the Church of England (Bates, 2006) and refusal to apologise by David Cameron (Dunkley, 2015)] or reparation [see e.g., by the University of Glasgow (Carrell, 2019)].

Regardless of whether or not I am directly related to slave-traders, slave-owners, colonisers, and settlers, I benefit directly and disproportionately from the nation's creation of wealth based on the historical enslavement of human beings and the

exploitation of resources throughout the British Empire; its actual and symbolic capital. Wealth creation enabled a welfare state that afforded me free access to education, healthcare, unemployment, and other benefits (birth onward) (albeit these have been depleted in recent years Reay, 2017). Tomlinson (2019) argues there remains collective ignorance about this in the UK because it is not taught in schools.

Complicity With White Supremacy: Social and Education Policy

Social policy influenced by liberal feminism, enacted as sex equality legislation [Equal Pay (1970) (c7), Sex Discrimination (1975) (c14), and Equality Acts (2010) (c49)] worked in my favour alongside liberal education policy designed to provide access to higher education for the working-class [e.g., the Education Act (1962) mandated Local Education Authorities to fund a first full-time degree and provide a maintenance grant (birth) that almost quadrupled in 1980 when I went to university (c21)]. Other legislative measures supported my access to higher education including Circular 10/65 (1965) laying out plans for comprehensive (non-selective) education (c7); raising the school leaving age in 1972 (c7); and the articulation of a broad and balanced curriculum (DES, 1977) (c14).

This taken-for-granted entitlement to higher education, despite experience of the hysteresis effect and an unsafe sexual environment, belies the lack of access for people of minority ethnic heritages (Bhopal, 2018) (c21). It is a clear indicator of the accrual of benefits from my white privilege as symbolic capital.

The Accrual of Benefits From White Privilege

An unquestioned sense of belonging [to the dominant culture—a white working-class family committed to girls’ education, women’s independence and membership of the established church (birth onward)]—and entitlement to education [speaking back to teachers who: listened, enabled access to higher status qualifications (O levels), redesigned the timetable to accommodate science/humanities interests, supported access to a Russell Group university (14)] resulted in early accrual of the benefits of white privilege.

At the same time, Black children were isolated in communities and schools, confronting the hysteresis effect and the actual and symbolic violence of being systematically categorised as educationally sub-normal (Coard, 1971) (c7). Their linguistic resources were underestimated by teachers (Fuller, 2013, 2018). By contrast, encouraged to aim high, my sister, Lynn, and I applied to Cambridge (she succeeded, I failed). Access to and success in elite higher education institutions [e.g., attending and working in Russell group universities (c21 onward)], and access to continued professional development [e.g., the Aurora programme provided by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (c49)] continues to positively influence my trajectory [see Bhopal (2018) for a discussion of the disproportionate benefit of the Athena Swan programme for white women scholars]. I have largely overcome the hysteresis effect felt earlier (c21).

Enactment of White Fragility

At a personal level, I have recounted examples of white fragility. DiAngelo (2018) argues white people’s engagement with race dialogue is best seen on a continuum depending on context and circumstances. That may be so. What remains troubling is the dissonance between the espousal of social justice values of equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion (14 onward) (Fuller, 2017a, 2019) and the extent and persistence of ignorance, blindness, insensitivity, disengagement, and inadequacy in practice (c21 onward). Arguably, that can be explained as adherence to the dominant white social order, but there is evidence of attempting to understand and disrupt that from an early age (c7), resulting in being silenced (14), and the gradual restoration of an openly anti-racist stance (c28 onward). It is no surprise that the most powerful societal and institutional influences to conform were felt during childhood, during my experience of the hysteresis effect at university and during a career in a capitalist enterprise focused on features of women’s subordination (managing departments associated with the domestic world—baby-wear, haberdashery; and appearance—fashion and cosmetics) (21, c28). Resistance of those forces was enhanced by a progressive, critical education (c14 onward), a career transition into education (c28 onward) and scholarship in gender and educational leadership with an increasingly intersectional perspective (c42 onward).

As a result of this study, I am forced to recognize my trajectory has been influenced by the coincidence and conspiracy of white supremacy in the English education system (Gillborn, 2008), and the accrual of white privileges (Bhopal, 2018); not by my own merit nor as some sort of miracle (Reay, 2017). In the sense that historical structures, social, and education policy, organizational priorities and family dispositions coincided, they conspired to do me “good,” whilst simultaneously conspiring to disadvantage children, teachers, leaders, and scholars of colour who are likely to have experienced the hysteresis effect of their intersecting identities relating to race, gender, and class as they navigated the actual and symbolic violence of “whiteworld” (Gillborn, 2006).

SO WHAT?—THINKING ABOUT INTERSECTIONALITY

Pontso Moorosi’s response to an early presentation of this work was to ask “so what?” (Berry and Fuller, 2019). It was never the intention to indulge in a narcissistic process of confession (Pillow, 2003). Acknowledgment of white privilege might be welcomed, but in itself is insufficient (Ignatiev, 1997; Ahmed, 2004). Here, I argue for the usefulness and importance of the “7 Up” intersectionality life grid as a tool for critically reflexive teaching, leadership and scholarship across phases, sectors, and national contexts. I suggest critical reflexive intersectional work, with its potential for transforming self-narratives and therefore feminist standpoints, is an essential component in a feminist epistemology.

Critically Reflexive Teaching and Leadership

Immediately following the conference presentation, a private comment was made about never before considering the extent of white privilege. The “7 Up” intersectionality life grid can be used as a pedagogical tool for professional reflexivity, in the writing of cultural or critical autobiographies that help students, teachers, and leaders in the ongoing development of critical consciousness in preparation for culturally responsive learning, pedagogy, and leadership for social justice (Sleeter, 2001; Capper et al., 2006; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). It has potential to identify funds of knowledge and identity useful in the learning and teaching process (Wrigley et al., 2012; Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014).

That means charting and distinguishing between *reflexivities of complacency*, *reflexivities that discomfort* to reach *reflexivities that transform* with respect to a hitherto less or unconsidered aspect of identity for those who usually identify with the mainstream e.g., as white, heterosexual, able-bodied, and/or male. A specific focus on religion might be particularly helpful though my awareness of religious difference was linked to racial difference and developed in church and school [e.g., understanding my identity as a Gentile through the parable of the Good Samaritan (7); learning about Islamic festivals, female circumcision (c14)]. The accompanying intellectual work that focuses on the underlying arbitrariness of social practice in our upbringing, education, the workplace, and wider society, with a socio-historical and geopolitical perspective, might surface the context and circumstances of the hysteresis effect, if and when it was experienced, as well as the nature and extent of actual physical and/or symbolic violence. This paper acts as an example of such critical self-work.

Increased consciousness has the potential to facilitate the adjustment of dispositions in order to benefit from opportunities as positions change in a given field or there is movement into a new field, difficult though that might sometimes be. A nuanced understanding of the hysteresis effect that negatively influences an individual's trajectory might be gained through reflexivity. That might benefit learners, educators, and leaders to make sense of their own trajectories and lead to more inclusive practice for the benefit of others.

Critically Reflexive Scholarship

Epistemological and ontological perspectives influence the scholar's methodological choices as well as their critical engagement with research data. The “7 Up” intersectionality life grid provides a methodological tool for scholars to engage in critical reflexive practice to enhance their understanding and articulation of positionality and position-taking in their particular field. For white scholars, in particular, the focus on race could enhance an understanding of the power of white supremacy, white privilege and the ubiquity of white fragility in the education system. Such understandings might facilitate and enrich cross-cultural research in a number of contexts.

Benefits for research participants involved in research have been framed as opportunities to reflect on practice and thereby further develop a conscience for social justice (Torrance et al., 2017). This autoethnography made clear there are benefits for scholars having their identities reflected back to them, and distorted, by research participants. For example, the accrual of white privilege was highlighted through women's descriptions of diaspora and unbelonging (Maylor, 1995), white fragilities in accounts of white women leaders' denial of institutional racism (Fuller, 2018), and white supremacy in comparatively easy access to higher education. Pinpointing the hysteresis effect and ways individuals negotiate it is fertile ground for future research that might support learning and the achievement of leadership by diverse groups.

Transforming a Feminist Standpoint

It is the “7 Up” intersectionality life grid's potential for transforming a self-narrative that makes this contribution to feminist ways of seeing women's leadership important. Critically reflexive writing necessarily involves scholars writing themselves into their work. The declaration, “I am a single, White, middle-class woman working in higher education. I construct my family origins as manual working class” (Fuller, 2013, p. 16) rarely gets further explanation as a statement of positionality. It has been fixed by the act of writing. The reality is that identity constructions shift depending on context, circumstances and relationships. Whilst none of the statements above has changed, my understanding of what they mean has.

How feminist scholars articulate the fluidity of their standpoint has been addressed, at least in part, here. I have recognised and begun to articulate intellectual struggles with gender, feminist, and social theories and my position-taking in the field of women and gender in educational leadership (see also Fuller, 2013, 2014b). This research has re-affirmed my position that gender is simultaneously a relational, performed and conferred identity (Adkins, 2004) that necessarily intersects with identity factors such as “race,” social class, religion, sexual orientation, nationality as well as learner, educator, leader, and scholar identities. For me, the conferred identity of girl/woman has resulted in some experience of oppression (Moi, 1991); the performed identity that draws on privileges associated with whiteness has recovered from and resisted some of those oppressions. Feminist scholarship is political. It focuses on social justice. Starting with our own experiences and trajectories we can “study up” to discover the hierarchies and structures of patriarchy, capitalism and postcolonialism that need to be dismantled (Harding, 2004, p. 31).

Having reconstructed my self-narrative, refreshed my worldview and renewed my critically reflexive stance, I am much more likely to foreground white privilege than social mobility in future descriptions of my positionality. Acquiring a fuller understanding of, and declaring white privilege cannot be seen as making reparation for and abolishing it (Ignatiev, 1997; Ahmed, 2004). But collectively, through activism and education, we might turn such very small steps into a march toward that goal.

POSTSCRIPT

At the time of writing, in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic (2020), we are locked down globally. A reviewer of this paper wished me well-being in "these precarious times." It is impossible to say what the long-term effects of this crisis will be for individuals, groups, organisations, communities, and society. I cannot envisage what 63 *Up* will be for me in the way I might just a few months ago. We are already able to recognise inequalities in how it is being experienced based on 'race', age, underlying physical health conditions, mental health, housing, and access to green spaces, access to technology, employment in health and social care and other essential services, employment in non-essential services (being furloughed or made redundant), and location in developed and developing nations.

Whilst we might all be in this together, we are not in it together equally. Educating and leading for social justice persists as a global challenge.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study will not be made publicly available. The material is of a sensitive nature and is kept private. Two examples are provided in the text as **Figures 1, 2**.

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by School of Education, University of Nottingham. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

KF is the sole author and investigator in this research.

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APPENDIX 1

Guiding questions for reflexive practice (adapted from Fuller, 2013)

Think about

1. Your experiences of discrimination, those you have witnessed, those you have heard about in school, outside school, in the family, in wider society. How will you make sure you do not misrecognize the reasons for a colleague's thwarted ambitions or another colleague's success?
2. Your construction and performance of gender, those of your family, your colleagues as leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff. How are multiple femininities and masculinities enacted in the school and family?
3. Your personal values and their source, those of your colleagues, those of students and their families. How do you know whether your understandings match those of others? How will you open up dialogue to find out?
4. Your preconceptions about groups of people as new parents, Muslim women and men and working-class teachers. How will you ensure that you enable people to tell you about their particular desires, interests and needs?
5. Your understanding of equal opportunities. How might an equality discourse undermine the desires, interests, and needs of some groups and individuals in your school? Whose different desires, interests, and needs require a different approach?
6. Your teaching and leadership of teaching about gender, race, and class. How do you and others teach students to identify and deconstruct stereotypes?
7. Your relationships with families. How do you encourage parents to engage with school life? How do you welcome families into school? Do you visit students' homes and communities?
8. Your dialogue with students and families. How do you help students and families to understand the school and education systems? The curriculum choices they have? Their implication on students' future pathways?
9. Your understanding of racism. Is there an intercultural curriculum in place? How do you know? Do you know about students' cultural heritages? Do you know about students' linguistic resources? How do you monitor students' curriculum choices? Examination entries? Grouping arrangements? How do you record racist incidents? How do you teach about racism?



Life Course and Gender: Unpacking Women's Thoughts About Access to the Superintendency

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The current study utilizes feminist life course theory to examine the perspectives of women who have aspired or have entered into the superintendency in the United States. Life course theory suggests that our “role histories” often inform our choices about careers. The role histories reflect instantaneous responses to the social cues of our external world. Consequently, it offers opportunity to understand how patterns of socialization may impact real-life decisions over career possibilities (and impossibilities) and the historical conditions in which career decisions are made. Using survey responses from current and aspiring female superintendents ($n = 133$), we engaged in descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. We contextualized these findings further through the four principles of life course theory, historical time and place, timing in lives, linked lives, and human agency. Our findings indicate women's perspectives on the accessibility of the superintendency have shifted as narratives around women's executive leadership roles have also changed. Importantly, the women in this study view accessibility to the superintendency as a largely contingent decision – a strategic, individual-level assessment focusing on the favorability of district work conditions to their success as leaders. Simultaneously, we see where issues of social networking, leadership “tapping,” and district “fit” emerge as normative expectations for accessing leadership roles as well as the preferred conditions upon which such choices are made. This reflects an encouraging perspective shift in which women are focusing less on “feasibility” than on “fit.” We conclude by offering recommendations for practice.

Keywords: gender, superintendency, life course theory, leadership, career decision-making

INTRODUCTION

Over the last half century, women have surpassed men in educational achievement and postsecondary degree completion (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). Women now earn 60% of all undergraduate degrees along with 60% of all master's degrees and represent 49% of the college-educated workforce nationwide, including 52% of all professional-level jobs (Warner et al., 2018). These advancements in women's educational achievement should signify new opportunities and new potential entry points into more elite leadership roles. Yet, the reality is a far

different one with aggregated gains in educational achievement failing to translate into professional advantages for women – and particularly for those aspiring to positions of leadership. To this point, the Warner and Corley (2017) recently reported that among those currently employed at S&P 500, 44% are women, yet they make up only 35% of all mid-level managers, 25% of senior or executive-level leadership, and 6% of all CEO's. How and why these disparities exist is certainly up for debate. The “glass ceiling” (Loden and Rosener, 1991) of gender-based leadership disparities, particularly in high profile S&P 500 positions has been well documented (Warner et al., 2018). Yet, we see these same patterns hold remarkably true for other similar high prestige leadership positions in fields like medicine, law, and importantly education (Warner et al., 2018).

Within United States' K-12 educational system, the school superintendent represents the preeminent leadership position within a regional school district. As chief visionary, advocate, communicator, and negotiator, the school superintendent wields tremendous influence over the quality of teaching and learning that occurs under his/her stewardship (DuFour and Marzano, 2011). This alone justifies the need for greater gender diversity within these senior leadership positions. Yet, it remains the case that, the school superintendency represents one of the most male dominated executive positions among all the professions (Glass et al., 2000; Dowell and Larwin, 2013; Searby et al., 2015; Burton and Weiner, 2016; American Association of School Administrators [AASA], 2016) – and indeed the numbers appear to back this up. As of 2015, for example, 73% of all district superintendents were male (Robinson, 2015), yet 77% of all teachers identified as women (Taie and Goldring, 2017). While women have made impressive gains at all levels of school leadership within the US, representing 52% of all principals and 78% of all central office administrative positions, they still make up less than 25% of district superintendents nationwide (Glass and Franceschini, 2007). Prior research offers any number of differing rationales for why these barriers continue to exist, suggesting that they are: (1) a reflection of the structural inequalities that serve as intentional and unintentional gatekeeping within the superintendent pipeline (Grogan, 2000; Tallerico and Blount, 2004; Ward et al., 2015), (2) unofficially sanctioned gender discrimination intended to stave off women's encroachment in what has been a historically male-only senior leadership role (Brunner, 2000; Skrla et al., 2000; Garn and Brown, 2008), (3) a perceived incompatibility between the work expectations of the superintendency and women's dual commitments to career and family (Hill et al., 2017); and (4) the mismatching of women's managerial and leadership styles with the demands of a district's chief executive position (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011).

Whether it is the strain of family commitments, a predilection to certain leadership styles and dispositions, or the multiple derailments that characterize the leadership “labyrinth” (Eagly and Carli, 2007), there is a tendency to frame women's career trajectories, including that of the superintendency, as a juxtaposition and/or tension between women's private and professional worlds. Feminist scholars, however, have also pushed back on this overly reductionist characterization of women's

lives (Kanter, 1977; Lopata, 1993; Hoyt, 2010; Schultheiss, 2013), suggesting that it diminishes the range of work women engage in, fails to account for the various influences that inform women's career choices, and important to this study, fails to account for the historical shifts in social sentiment about a women's place in the world. Rather than point to a supposed contentiousness between women's public and private lives, feminist voices instead suggest that women's professional choices are in many ways deliberated, negotiated, and ultimately constructed in accordance with the prevailing gender norms around women's paid work over time (Strober and Tyack, 1980).

Along these very same lines, the current study seeks to further engage with this last point by exploring the relationship between historical sentiment on women's professional leadership and how those sentiments inform women's perspectives on the superintendency. We analyzed data collected from 133 established and aspiring superintendents affiliated with one statewide professional superintendent association in the state of Washington located in the northwest region of the United States. Survey questions asked women to reflect on perceived challenges they have faced in navigating the pathway to the superintendency. Consistent with our study aims, we analyzed data collected through life course theory (Elder, 1998). Life course theory suggests life pathways are historically, socially, and culturally situated. As such, decisions, choices, aspirations, and failures are a product of more than individual circumstance, disposition, or personal preference. Rather, these pivotal life moments are responses to external cues reflecting the social patterns, values, and norms of a particular historic moment. Our use of life course theory in the context of this specific study places gender at the center of these analyses, suggesting that women's decisions are aligned with gendered social patterns, values, and norms. By extension, it suggests that, in the context of life course theory, career choice is less a balance between private and professional spheres and more a negotiation of the social and cultural factors that inform women's decision-making.

In keeping with these ideas, we also sought to understand how a cross-section of aspiring and currently seated superintendents felt about barriers to entering this most senior leadership role. However, we did so by relying upon the explanatory power of life course theory to make sense of these barriers. As is customary, the remainder of this paper proceeds in five sections. The subsequent section offers an overview of existing research that has examined the macro-historical shifts in perspective on women and work as well as women in the superintendency and the identified barriers to such access. We then transition to a more in-depth discussion on life course theory, its origins and relevance to the present study. The fourth section describes the data and methodological approach utilized in analyzing the cohort data. The fifth and final section will reconsider women's perceptions in light of life course theory and the implications for leadership educators who seek to encourage more women to the superintendency.

The present study serves in many respects as a continuation of the original longitudinal work by Sharratt and Derrington (1993) and Derrington and Sharratt (2009a,b). Their groundbreaking

efforts to document how cohorts of aspiring and seated women superintendents within the state of Washington have perceived the barriers to their profession over time, sets the stage for our current work. In using a subsequent wave of 2016 cohort data via a slightly modified version of their original survey questionnaire, we take advantage of this prior work to further situate our understanding of the normative shifts that have taken place in how women come to view the superintendency. We will, of course, return to this point in the next section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An important goal of this study is to understand how sociohistorical forces may shape women's professional decision-making. The history of the superintendency is, in many ways, a reflection of these tensions. Indeed, the percentage of women in the superintendency has risen and fallen in surprising fashion over the course of history in the United States. Tallerico and Blount (2004) suggested that the evolution of women's entry into district-level leadership followed three distinct integration patterns. In the 20th century, the superintendency was a nearly exclusive male occupation. During this period, men occupied from 85–96% of all executive leadership positions in the nation. Starting, in 1910 through 1930, however, districts experienced a surprising uptick in women leadership within the ranks of the superintendency, jumping from the 9% of all superintendents in 1910 to 11% in 1930. Shakeshaft (1989) and Blount (1998), Shakeshaft (1999) reason that this surge was, in fact, a byproduct of the women's suffrage movement and the fact that some county and state superintendents were elected to posts as opposed to being appointed (Tallerico and Blount, 2004).

This period of growth was short lasting, however, as state legislative changes eliminated these elected superintendent positions and suffragists moved on to more pressing issues. A number of other factors contributed to overall decreases in women leadership from 1930 to 1970. After 1930, shifting expectations for the position required candidates to have specific training and certifications. This “credentialing” of the profession also coincided with a national push to educate a largely male population of veterans returning from World War II (Tallerico and Blount, 2004, p. 643). Lastly, school districts across the country went through a period of consolidation leading to a net loss in the total number of superintendent positions. Given that women represented only 3% of the nation's superintendents in 1970, this consolidation clearly benefited men (Tallerico and Blount, 2004, p. 644).

The third and final shift in the make-up of the superintendency began following the low of 1970 through to the current day. Racial integration followed the 1970 low, resulting in a second uptick in the total number of superintendents. This period marked only the second time in the 20th century where we begin to see increasing numbers of women entering the superintendency. Despite the surge in the gross number of district superintendencies, women remained largely under-represented in these leadership roles. This, of course, continues to the present day.

Shifting Perceptions Over Barriers to Entry

While the post-1970 expansion in the superintendency created more opportunities for women to take on these leadership roles, there remained substantive barriers to entry that have continued to constrain women's aspirations. Research focusing on women's ascendancy (and lack thereof) to senior district roles have pointed to such things as gender bias, the relative absence of role models and mentoring/support networks for women, familial obligations, and professional gatekeeping as key barriers to entry for aspiring women leaders. We summarize some of the key research that focuses on these barriers in the discussion that follows.

Gender Bias Against Women

Numerous studies have pointed to the inherent gender bias that aspiring women face along the path toward the superintendency (Kowalski and Stouder, 1999; Glass, 2000; Skrla, 2000; Banuelos, 2008; Hoff and Mitchell, 2008; Goffney and Edmonson, 2012). As is the case in other fields and other elite positions, gender bias has moved from explicit and rampant to nuanced and subtle (Brunner, 2000; Polnick et al., 2007; Banuelos, 2008). Banuelos (2008) and Goffney and Edmonson (2012) both reported on the impact that gender bias played in the professional pathways of aspiring women superintendents. In addition to experiencing emotional distress because of these perceived slights, gender bias tended to be more impactful than race or ethnic bias for women en route to the superintendency (Tallerico, 1999a,b). Recognition as to the presence of gender bias in such things as recruitment and hiring is not limited to women alone, of course, as men are also keenly aware of the challenges women routinely face (Tallerico, 1999a,b; Garn and Brown, 2008). “Old boys” networks, reward structures, and highly gendered notions of the “ideal” worker¹ are widely recognized by men and women alike as having an indelible effect on women's professional lives.

Mentors and Networks

Research has also pointed to the ways in which women's pathways are also constrained by the relative absence of strong mentoring and extensive network support (Campbell-Jones and Avelar-Lasalle, 2000; McNulty, 2002; Katz, 2006; Garn and Brown, 2008; Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones, 2010; McGee, 2010; Goffney and Edmonson, 2012). The reasons for why this may occur are simple: Effective mentorship includes the capacity by mentors to call upon their professional experiences, professional networks, and depth of understanding for the field in support of their mentee's growth and development (Alsburry and Hackmann, 2006; Copeland and Calhoun, 2014). If women are under-represented within the superintendency, the number of women mentors will be similarly under-represented. Similarly, networks of available support may also be constrained by the lack of available female resources (McNulty, 2002; Katz, 2006; Goffney and Edmonson, 2012). While networks are rarely gender exclusive, the lack of female role models within the field has an

¹Or what Acker (1990), in her analysis of gendered organizations, famously referred to as the highly gendered “disembodied” worker.

inevitable cooling effect – particularly for those women who find themselves aspiring to move into a district leadership role.

Women's Outsized Familial Obligations

Family obligations are yet another identified complication for women seeking the superintendency (Barrios, 2004; Sharpe et al., 2004; Dana and Bourisaw, 2006; Goffney and Edmonson, 2012). This can take form in any number of ways: tempering of career aspirations and potential advancement for the sake of the family, concerns over the impact of demanding professional obligations on quality time spent with family, and placing undue pressure on a spouse or partner in order for women to pursue career advancement (Sharpe et al., 2004; Goffney and Edmonson, 2012). The obligation to relocate for the sake of career advancement is yet another identified barrier for women aspiring to the superintendency. Sharpe et al. (2004) as well as Dana and Bourisaw (2006), Hoff and Mitchell (2008), and most recently Sperandio and Devdas (2015) point to mobility (or the lack thereof) as a factor in whether a woman pursued and/or accepted a superintendency position. McGee (2010) also found that women's perceived "boundedness" constrained the available sets of options available to a women aspiring to become a superintendent. Concerns over family wellbeing may therefore complicate women's aspirations and/or temper them as a result.

Professional Gatekeeping

Another frequently identified barrier for women seeking the superintendency comes in the form of professional gatekeeping (Shakeshaft, 1989; Shoemaker, 1991; Skrla, 1999; Tallerico, 1999a; Glass et al., 2001; Tallerico and Blount, 2004; Newton, 2006). The history of the superintendency is in many ways a history of legislative steps, board maneuverings, and credentialing challenges that all serve to undermine access and entry for women and people of color (Tallerico, 1999a; Young and McLeod, 2001; Dana and Bourisaw, 2006). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) speak to the role that school boards and male-dominated selection committees have played in recruitment/hiring process. They suggest that the impact of largely white male dominated selection processes have led to the perpetuation of white male leadership within school districts. Bernal (2019) in her small-scale study of search firms found that while consultants believed that they conducted searches in an unbiased fashion, there were indications that unconscious biases were often at play in how they went about the search process. Gender stereotypes, beliefs surrounding gendered leadership styles and other biases were often viewed as detrimental to the hiring chances of women.

As part of a sweeping study of superintendent pathways within the state of Texas over a 15-year period, Davis and Bowers (2019) found that women and educators of color were often required to prove themselves as compared to their white male counterparts in pursuit of the superintendent role. For example, white men were more likely to make the dramatic professional leap from the principalship into the superintendency, whereas women and people of color tended to transition from higher ranked assistant superintendent positions. Consequently, the pathways for women and people of color were more extensive and required higher level experience prior to transition. Interestingly, when

looking at the intersections between race, ethnicity, and gender, Bradley and Bowers determined that, controlling for all other variables, gender had the greatest impact upon whether or not someone went on to become a superintendent, suggesting once again that structural factors play a significant role in women's professional pathways.

A substantial body of literature has not only looked at composite trends and patterns that make up a successful pathway to the superintendency but also at the structural barriers that inhibit women's progress (Glass, 2000; Sharpe et al., 2004; Hoff and Mitchell, 2008). Research evidence, for example, appears to suggest differences as to when men and women decide to pursue administrative careers (Sharpe et al., 2004). Studies by Young and McLeod (2001), Hoff and Mitchell (2008), and Sampson et al. (2015) present evidence to suggest that men are much more apt to view themselves as leadership material much earlier in their careers than women. Shakeshaft's well cited 1989 study suggests that men, on average, decide on an administrative path nearly 10 years before women. These decisions have severe consequences, as early career decision-making leads to more intentional career choices for men that may result in substantially different, more strategic pathways to leadership roles. Unequal career qualifications/experiences inevitably place late-emerging women at a substantial disadvantage on the job market (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Sharpe et al. (2004) point to the *type* of administrative experience as also salient to successful advancement to the superintendency, with the principalship and district office positions being the most important steppingstones of all. Interestingly, not all leadership roles, particularly within the principalship, are equally valued despite representing a critical stop en route to the superintendency (Ellerson, 2015; Maranto et al., 2018; Davis and Bowers, 2019). We know, for instance, that the role of high school principal and central office roles represent particularly important proving grounds for future district leaders given the range of student, fiscal, personnel, and regulatory responsibilities that uniquely fall within these positional domains. And while women are increasingly finding themselves in district level positions, they are often cloistered in areas related to curriculum, while men are focused on human resources and fiscal responsibilities (Sharpe et al., 2004). Likewise, women are more apt to serve as principals in elementary and middle school settings as opposed to high school (Sharpe et al., 2004). Such experiential differences, while still valuable, place women at a distinct disadvantage when they wish to make the more difficult transition into district leadership.

Summary

In sum, the history of women's entry into the superintendency is a relatively long and complicated one. While women have certainly made significant advances in professionalization resulting in greater leadership opportunities, they still remain under-represented at the highest levels of district leadership. Answering the question as to why these intractable patterns exist has been the focus of a vast body of research. From this body of work, we know that there are a wide and varied number of factors that contribute to women's under-representation. These include

cultural factors (gender biases), social norms (women's role as family caretaker), and structural constraints (gatekeeping at all phases of the recruitment and selection process). The current study reconsiders these barriers within the context of the current sociohistorical context via the use of life course theory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For this study, we used life course theory as presented by Loder (2005) and originated by Elder (1992, 1998) to help frame our findings. Life course theory allows us, as feminist researchers to situate our participants' perspectives on their career pathways within the larger social world in which those choices are made. It does so by connecting macro level social-historical dynamics to the micro-level perspectives of our study participants.

Life course theory by name alone suggests an emphasis on temporality. Time is certainly a feature of life course, and in fact, it bears noting that Elder himself spoke to the emergence of life course research as product of important advances in longitudinal design (Elder et al., 2003). That said, life course does not operate exclusively within the longitudinal realm. Rather, it serves as a rejection of the "timeless realm of the abstract" (Nisbet quoted in Elder et al., 2003). In other words, it suggests that life trajectories are perpetually developmental in nature and that our social pathways, nay our life pathways, are persistently shaped by the "socio-historical conditions" of the external worlds in which we are embedded (Elder, 1998; Elder et al., 2003).

Elder et al. (2003) argue that the study of careers, and career choice, may be particularly well served by life course theory. Our choices about careers are often founded upon what may be best characterized as "role histories" made up of near instantaneous responses to the multiple roles and social cues of our external world. In other words, career research, as framed through life course, offers the opportunity to understand how espoused norms, values, and patterns of socialization may impact real life decisions and perceptions related to career possibilities and impossibilities.

In keeping with this idea of life course as a theoretical lens for examining human behavior in context, Elder (1998) offers a set of four empirical reference points or principles for operationalizing the theory into practice. These principles serve as guides for how we might better understand the interplay between the career perspectives of our study population and realities they face (or have faced) in navigating the superintendency pathway. These four principles are: (1) Historical Time and Place; (2) Timing in Lives; (3) Linked Lives; and (4) Human Agency. We will address each in turn.

Historical Time and Place

Stephen Covey once famously stated that (Covey et al., 1995), "priority is a function of context (pg. 154)" What he meant by that was that our behaviors, and ultimately our choices, are a product of the moment in which they are formed. This also extends to historical context. Life course theory suggests that our decisions are shaped and informed by history as history, at its essence, is the study of context (Elder et al., 2003).

Generational research serves as a perfect example of this intersection between choice and context. Countless studies have tried to bring meaning to the responses that different generations make in response to time honored life decisions. A recent example of this type of research is the ongoing debate around so-called "millennials" willingness to purchase cars². In effect, "historical time and place" acknowledges the value of time-stamping as a means for understanding collective sense-making, particularly when examining a population cohort's life experiences and choice inclinations. Similarly, insights can be drawn to the role of historical context in the framing of our study sample's perspectives on the superintendency – and how that might differ substantially depending upon their place along their career pathway.

Timing in Lives

Life transitions reflect pivotal moments in the life course when choices are made and ultimately acted upon. By consequence, they are rich in significance and imbued with meaning reflective of both the social and cultural freedoms as well as perceived constraints reflective of the moment. Life course theory suggests that in naming these moments of constraint or freedom, we bring insight to micro and macro-level decision-making as well as the choice sets upon which those decisions are made. For example, the ways in which we might interpret perceived barriers by aspiring and established superintendent within this existing cohort of respondents would, according to life course theory, need to be considered in relation to where they were located along the pathway to the superintendency.

Linked Lives

Relational interconnectedness serves as yet another central feature of life course theory. Elder et al. (2003) suggest that social context has particular bearing upon interpersonal relationships and that the quality and quantity of those relationships can often be influenced by larger social changes. Likewise, social change can have a rippling effect on each individual within a given network of people, moving and recalibrating the nature and terms of those relationships. Consequently, advantages or disadvantages rendered through those networks are inevitably mediated by larger social forces and therefore must be accounted for when examining and rationalizing social phenomena in empirical settings. If we consider, for instance, the role that relationships play in the formation of career aspirations or the reliance many men and women place on networks to navigate complicated career pathways, it follows that such relationships are critical feature of career progress. It also follows that these relationships may be, in part, conditioned by the realities and expectations of the historical moment.

Human Agency

While the social context cues, values, and norms have a conscious or unconscious effect over our potential choice-sets

²For more on this topic, readers can refer to CDK Global's special report entitled, "Millennial Car Shoppers" <https://www.cdkglobal.com/sites/default/files/cdk-millennial-car-shoppers-new.pdf>.

and ultimately our life paths, we are not passive actors in those pivotal moments. Human agency plays a particularly powerful role in the course we set for ourselves. Most anyone has engaged in some form of life planning, whether it be our educational pathways, parenthood, where to live, and so on. Life course theory doesn't discount the importance of agency in the life course process. However, it does suggest that planning can be shaped in accordance with expectations of that particular historical moment. A half century ago, it was unlikely that a woman might even aspire to becoming a superintendent, much less expect to serve in that capacity. Time, circumstances, shifting norms around women's role in the home and in the larger economy have changed the ways in which women (and men) view themselves and their career possibilities. Consequently, human agency and the historical moment are inextricably connected – particularly in the context of career-related perspectives.

The four principles of life course theory provide us with points of reference as we consider the perspectives of women, both established superintendents as well as those still seeking the superintendency. What they believe are the key drivers to success for women? How do they come to understand the roadblocks? And in what ways might these perspectives reflect on the social contexts, norms, values of the historical moment in which they are embedded? These serve as the basis for our discussion to follow.

DATA AND METHODS

This study focuses on women's viewpoints on the superintendency. Given our interest in understanding the navigational barriers women face as they ascend to executive level positions, we relied upon survey responses as a primary source of insight into their thinking about women's leadership pathways. Our intention in collecting this data emerged from an interest in assessing current and aspiring women superintendents' beliefs about the relative accessibility of this most senior leadership role for women.

All findings represented in this study came from survey responses provided by women-identified members of the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) located in the state of Washington. Some members of our research team have been members in and/or have maintained a long-standing relationship with WASA in their roles as district leaders and later as researchers and leaders of superintendent preparation programs. WASA has served the state as the premier advocate and professional resource for superintendents over the last sixty years.

Study Population

Our population of interest for the current study were women in the State of Washington who were either aspiring or seated school superintendents. In each case, we used purposeful sampling. With the support of association leadership, we were able to administer an online Qualtrics survey to WASA members in fall 2016. Respondents were subscribers to the professional job listing service offered to members through the association. A total

of 540 women subscribers received the solicitation with 133 subscribers completing the survey, resulting in a 25% response rate. Of the 133 women who responded to our survey solicitation, 42 (31.5%) were current superintendents and 91 (68.5%) were in administrative positions in a district (to include assistant superintendents, directors, coordinators, principals and others within the administrative structure).

Background on the WASA Superintendent Survey

As stated earlier, the data collected for the current study represents the latest administration of a survey originally developed by Sharratt and Derrington (1993) and Derrington and Sharratt (2009a,b). The intent of the original survey, first administered in spring of 1993, was to learn more about how women educators within the state of Washington understood the barriers before them, particularly as they attempted to advance their careers as educational leaders within the state.³ In February of 2007, the same researchers sent the questionnaire to approximately 140 WASA women subscribers.⁴ The survey questions were identical to the 1993 version as it continued to have participants rate the extent to which barriers negatively influenced their desire or ability to reach the superintendency. A third administration of this survey was administered to WASA membership in the Fall of 2016. We once again used Derrington and Sharratt's survey items with one additional question focusing on family and pipeline barriers. Analyses for the current study focus exclusively on responses collected as part of the 2016 administration of the survey.

The questionnaire reflects a combination of likert, rating, and ranking scale items in combination with basic demographic information such as their total years of experience in the field of education, educational attainment, current position, and career goals. The original construction of the survey instrument was designed to follow a discrepancy model format whereby respondents would be required to draw normative conclusions regarding the current state of "accessibility" for women seeking advancement into district leadership positions. Accordingly, respondents were asked to compare current conditions for women's advancement ("what is") compared to the most optimal conditions ("what ought to be") when reflecting upon self-reported barriers that they felt limited their advancement. This questionnaire was based upon the "actual-ideal discrepancy model" (AID) originated by James back in 1980 (James, 2007). This assessment approach was designed to illuminate differences between a respondent's self-perception of a given subject domain as compared to idealized standards for that domain. **Table 1** offers an illustration of a typical discrepant item in which we asked respondents to evaluate specified field conditions of the superintendency as follows:

³For a summary of findings from the 1993 administration, see Sharratt and Derrington (1993). *Female Superintendents: Attributes That Attract and Barriers That Discourage Their Successful Applications*.

⁴For a summary of findings from the 2007 administration, see Derrington and Sharratt (2009b). *Female superintendents: Breaking barriers and challenging life styles*. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 75(2), 8.

TABLE 1 | Sample questionnaire item and accompanying scale.

Please evaluate the following statements on What Is and What Ought To Be	Scale
Professional organizations are helpful in the recruitment and placement of candidates in the superintendency.	What IS: A Very Common Occurrence, Some Tendency to Occur, A tendency Not to Occur, Never occurs
Professional organizations are helpful in the recruitment and placement of candidates in the superintendency.	What Ought To Be: Definitely Should Occur, Probably Should Occur, Probably Should Not Occur, Definitely Should Not Occur

In this instance, respondents could discern current supports offered by professional organizations against what they would ideally wish to see. This afforded the research team opportunities to then determine how perceptions over the conditions for access to the field may have shifted with time. Likewise, we are able to assess differences in understanding between seated versus aspiring superintendents within a given cohort. Face validity and pilot testing of survey items occurred prior to the 1993 administration of the survey.

Survey items reflected previous research on the superintendency (Shakeshaft, 1985, 1987). In keeping with the discrepant model format, survey items captured four areas of specific inquiry: individual factors that led respondents to pursue the superintendency, factors that would determine whether a respondent would apply to a particular district, internalized barriers that they felt served as substantive roadblocks to them and/or other women accessing the superintendency, and conditions that would (or wouldn't) optimally serve women in their current or past pursuit of the superintendency. Importantly, we had respondents offer not only insights into the internal conditions that served to undermine their aspirations (or those of other women), but also the external, structural conditions that they represented formidable roadblocks en route to the superintendency.

Data Analysis

The research team conducted descriptive and inferential analyses on the 2016 survey data collected in order to identify trends and patterns in response within the more current cohort of WASA respondents. In order to compare meaningfully across the two within-cohort comparison groups, seated and aspiring superintendents, we completed two-tailed *t*-tests so that we might calculate a more robust comparison of group means. This also permitted us to determine patterns of difference between the two groups as well as to determine statistical significance among those differences. In doing so, the research team was able to draw general conclusions regarding points of agreement and disagreement within the 2016 cohort on a host of different topics related to conditions for access to the superintendency.

The research team was responsible for all data analysis work, the outcomes of which support the findings for this paper. Team members looked for relevant patterns within the collected data. Likewise, our team analyzed data results independently and

collectively. We drew upon the life course theory framework in the formulation of our study conclusions.

History as a Secondary Data Source

While the data collected and presented in this study certainly offers a compelling story as to how women have perceived and negotiated the pathway to the superintendency, our use of life course theory demanded that we also contextualize those analyses within the historical moment in which women are responding to the survey instrument. Consequently, we utilize social, cultural, and political history to bring further meaning to the findings generated from the participants' survey responses. Consequently, history serves as an inflection in each of the four life course domains: (1) Historical Time and Place; (2) Timing In Lives; (3) Linked Lives; and (4) Human Agency.

Study Limitations

Certainly, we must place the analytical reach of this study in context. First, respondents to our survey belonged to one professional association located in one region within the United States. It is, however, noteworthy that the percentage of women superintendents found in Washington state is very consistent with national AASA data. Women make up 26.7% of superintendents nationally (AASA, 2020), while women make up 26% of all superintendents in the state of Washington (H. Paroff, personal communication, February 10, 2020). We also acknowledge that the decisions and sense-making around professional choice is often an intersectional one informed by multiple and overlapping identities (i.e., race, social class, sexual identity, age, among others) (Crenshaw et al., 1994; Özbilgin et al., 2011). While our intention through this study was to look at the impact of socio-historical context on the gendering of life choices, we do not suggest that these choices occur outside of other salient identities (Crenshaw, 1990). Our point is instead to consider the potential contributions that an examination of this interplay between social history, gender, and professional choices offers, particularly in so intractable a career entry point as the superintendency is for women across dimensions of race, ethnicity, age, social class, and sexuality. As stated previously, generalizability was not a primary goal of this study – the major purpose was to offer insight into the perceived barriers to entry among both seated and aspiring women superintendents.

STUDY FINDINGS

The women who responded to the 2016 administration of the WASA survey had much to say about the challenges they believe stood as barriers for women entering the superintendency. In this section, we offer an overview of these findings as framed through the four principles of life course theory: (1) Historical Time and Place; (2) Timing in Lives; (3) Linked Lives; and (4) Human Agency.

Historical Time and Place

Elder (1998, 2005), Elder et al. (2003) principle of historical time and place focuses on the cognitive imprint of a historical moment

on the normative decision-making of a cohort of individuals. How do events of the present-day shape and inform collective sense-making? And how does that then impact our sample population's assessments over what is possible for women as it relates to the superintendency? Before we answer these questions, it's important to take stock of the normative conditions for such an assessment as depicted in the political and cultural events of 2016.

2016: A Year of Promise and Disappointment for Women

In their December 2016 retrospective entitled, "The 15 Best Moments for Women in 2016," *Harper's Bazaar*⁵ highlighted the momentous year that 2016 was for women. The most significant development for women that year was, of course, Hilary Clinton's nomination as the Democratic candidate for the US presidency on July 26, 2016. Clinton, a collector of many firsts in American politics, represented what many had hoped would be a final break in the omnipresent glass ceiling for American women. Even she acknowledged the historical moment as such by famously stating in her nomination speech that she was, "(s)tanding here as my mother's daughter, and my daughter's mother, I'm so happy this day has come."⁶

Hilary Clinton's success as the nominee and *de facto* leader of the Democratic party was only a partial depiction as to how far women had come. 2016 also marked the entry of a powerful cadre of diverse women to the halls of the US Senate. While Clinton's campaign for president was ultimately unsuccessful, electoral success came for the likes of Kamala Harris, Tammy Duckworth, and Catherine Cortez Masto. These women joined forces with powerful senatorial mainstays like Elizabeth Warren D-MA (first elected in 2012), Amy Klobuchar D-MN (elected in 2006), Barbara Mikulski D-MD (elected in 1986), and others following the 2016 election cycle. According to Rutgers University's Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP)⁷, a total of 105 women representing both political parties held seats in the United States Congress, reflecting 19.6% of the 535 members. Among the 105 congressional leaders; 21 women (21%) serve in the United States Senate, and 84 women (19.3%) serve in the United States House of Representatives. Not included in the count were the additional five women who served as delegates to officially unrepresented US territories and districts (American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) co-located in Congress' House of Representatives. While there remains mixed opinion about the overall success of the 2016 election cycle on women's political leadership, it is undisputed that the election outcomes galvanized women to run for elected office and/or support pro-women legislation. According to one 2017 Washington Post article, EMILY's List, the political action committee that recruits and trains progressive women political candidates reported at

one point that over 11,000 women representing all 50 states had expressed interest in running for political office⁸.

While Hilary Clinton's campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, the presidential campaign served as a catalyst for a new and powerful cultural transformation in the context of US gender relations. The ignominious moment when Clinton's then-opponent, Donald Trump was caught on camera bragging about his keen ability to "grab p***y" served as a powerful political and cultural inflection point for women as longstanding issues like sexual assault, women's self-determination and sexual autonomy coalesced into a new form of gendered consciousness within the United States that would eventually be captured in the soon-to-evolve "#MeToo" movement that followed. Powerful cultural and political moments like Beyoncé's visual album/short, "Lemonade" and First Lady Michelle Obama's speech on rape culture further captured the country's imagination by placing female strength and resistance at the forefront of the national conversation on gender and gender relations. Likewise, new feminist voices also emerged in 2016, changing, expanding, and redefining how we come to think about women in US society. The award-winning Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, for example, released her book entitled, "We Should All Be Feminists"; a treatise calling for a more pluralistic feminism that would be needed in order to reflect the diverse needs of modern women in today's society. Likewise, Roxanne Gay spoke equally as powerfully in 2014 and then later in 2017 about the importance of valuing the alterity of diverse women's lives. Whether it be trauma, body image, sexuality, or race, Gay brought new expression to difference – and importantly, to the dignity of such difference in the wake of prevailing and often oppressive societal norms.

In this same period, the Economist published its fifth annual "glass ceiling index" combining data on higher education, workforce participation, pay and representation in senior jobs into a measure of where women have the best and worst chances of equal treatment in the workplace (Data Team, 2017). The United States was listed well below the international average with 63% of women participating in the US workforce yet representing a little over one third of the well-paid, high-status jobs. Similarly, AASA reported in 2015 that women made up 76% of teachers, 52% of principals, and 78% of central-office administrators, but only accounted for less than one quarter of superintendents leading the nation's 14,000 districts (Finnan et al., 2015).

In sum, we can perhaps best describe the political and cultural moment of 2016 as a grappling process over women's place in public and private life. It also represented a harbinger for the normative shifts to come as later depicted in the #MeToo movement that was soon to follow. Importantly, these conversations were not limited to white, heteronormative, women, but was increasingly inclusive of a wider diversity of voices, experiences, and positionalities. It's against this backdrop

⁵See <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/news/g8279/feminist-moments-women-2016/>.

⁶Quote taken from Vanity Fair's article, "How Hilary Clinton Rejected Poetry for a Battle Cry": <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2016/07/how-hillary-clinton-turned-poetry-into-a-battle-cry>.

⁷CAWP figures and facts are available on their website at: <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts>.

⁸Ed O'Keefe and Mike DeBonis, "Democrats partner with political newcomers aiming to create anti-Trump wave in 2018 midterms," The Washington Post, April 21, 2017, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/democrats-partner-with-political-newcomers-hoping-to-create-anti-trump-wave-in-2018-midterms/2017/04/21/91514ec8-2502-11e7-bb9d-8cd6118e1409_story.html?tid=ss_tw&utm_term=.4266d100ac9c.

that we administered the WASA survey and 133 women reflected upon the state of the superintendency for women.

WASA Women's Perspectives on Barriers: Comparing 1993, 2007, and 2016 Cohort Responses

In order to understand the interplay between historical time and place and the perspectives as shared by our WASA respondents, we must place their understandings in the context of prior cohorts. **Table 2** offers a comparative snapshot of the top three barriers to the superintendency as named by the three responding cohorts (1993, 2007, and 2016). What's immediate obvious is that perceptions over what has served as barriers is consistently different across the three cohorts.

In 1993, the three top barriers identified ("sex role stereotyping," "sex discrimination," and "lack of role models/mentors") mirrors in many ways the sociohistorical context of the time. As we know, women maintained only a marginal presence in top district leadership. Moreover, our understanding both empirically and anecdotally of the forces that resulted in this gender imbalance was emergent and largely focused on the underlying biases that inhibited women's advancement into any number of senior leadership positions across any number of fields. Interestingly, when looking at the combined barriers identified by the 1993 group, the emphasis is on inadequate structures of support and gatekeeping.

By comparison, the 2007 cohort tells a somewhat different tale. This group named their top three barriers as being (1) self-imposed; (2) a product of women's outsider status; and (3) a product of a school board failure. Once again, we see a recognition of gatekeeping as a barrier to access. What's most interesting about the 2007 responses, however, is the selection of "self-imposed barriers" as a foremost constraint, indicating a sense of individual agency over whether women are able to access superintendent positions or not.

Finally, the cohort of greatest interest to this study, 2016's 133 respondents named (1) job stress; (2) job responsibilities; and (3) Good old boy's network as their top three barriers. These barriers reflect an emergent connection first alluded to by the 2007 group between professional access and agency. In this case, however, the 2016 cohort have taken it a step further by suggesting that the constraints on their entry into the superintendency aren't a

product of gender-based bias or an unlevel playing field. Rather, the named barriers are instead a reflection of the *normative conditions of the position*. In other words, women within the 2016 cohort found that the challenging aspects of advancement into the superintendency remained fundamentally structural. However, these structural constraints aligned with the actual conditions of the position rather than actual barriers to access. This suggests a far more intrinsic understanding of the barriers that exist for women as it suggests that women may no longer see themselves as "frozen out" of a district leadership role as much as the role may not, in their minds be a good fit (due to stress and/or duties as assigned). While this rationale certainly seems feasible given the barriers identified by this cohort, it's also notable that "good old boy's network" continues to appear as a top constraint across all three cohorts. Clearly, there is still a belief that women remain outsiders to this most senior leadership position. Whether this is a product of the significant and ongoing underrepresentation of women to the position is unclear. However, it's notable that, while attitudes may be shifting about a woman's potential as a district leader, questions remain over the fairness of the system and the potential gatekeeping that may result in kind.

Table 3 outlines the identified factors that contributed to whether an aspiring woman would pursue the superintendency. This question focused less on barriers or constraints to entry for women and more on the ideal conditions that would be required for entry into the profession. Comparative data from across the three cohorts finds that there is only one common condition identified, namely the need to ensure a good match between individual and the hiring district (noted in gray). This would seem reasonable given the high stakes nature of the position and the commitment, both in time and in energy, to such a demanding position. Comparing across cohorts, we also find that the 1993 and 2007 groups identify strikingly similar conditions for pursuing the superintendency. Besides the question of match, additional choice factors identified by

TABLE 2 | Top three barriers to superintendency.

1993	2007	2016
Sex role stereotyping	Barriers to securing the position as often self-imposed	Job Stress
Sex discrimination	"Good old boy's" network helps men, not women	Job Responsibilities
Lack of role models/mentors to guide women into the superintendency	School Board not well informed regarding the qualification of female candidates	"Good old boy's" network helps men, not women

TABLE 3 | Top five issues influencing decision to seek a superintendent position.

1993	2007	2016
A good match between the district needs, your skills, and abilities	A good match between the district needs, your skills, and abilities	Opportunity for spousal employment.
Stable, visionary, proactive board	Stable, visionary, proactive board	A good match between the district needs, your skills, and abilities.
Ability to implement new programs	History of support for levies, bonds	Professional growth opportunities available.
Stable financial outlook for the district	Potential for district success is good	Opportunity to follow successful leader.
Potential for district success is good	Stable financial outlook for the district	Board/community relations are good

Items in bold reflect the commonly ranked conditions for entry into the superintendency for both aspiring and seated superintendents across the three time points surveyed.

both groups include, “stable and visionary/proactive board,” “stable financial outlook for district,” and “potential for district success is good.” Through their selections, the 1993 and 2007 cohorts appear to emphasize the alignment of different district-level factors to decision-making. In a slight departure from this, the 2016 cohort focus, once again, on the alignment of individual choice factors, i.e., spousal employment opportunities, professional growth, the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of talented district leadership⁹.

Tables 2, 3 provide some interesting distinctions in terms of the 2016 cohort’s list of identified barriers to entering the superintendency. Both tables suggest that 2016 respondents are less afraid of gatekeeping constraints than they are of fit and match. As such, the idea of the superintendency (and their chances of assuming such a role) are more contingent upon their own assessments of the position as opposed to believing that such decisions are outside their control. In this way, we see a shift from barriers as extrinsic challenges to named barriers as fundamentally intrinsic determinations. Based upon the momentous shift reflected in the current historical moment for women (i.e., Clinton nomination, increases to female political leadership, #MeToo), it should come as no surprise that women were increasingly more optimistic, empowered, and open to the possibilities of career advancement – and particularly in historically male-dominated domains. The existing social norms, while always evolving and dynamic, offered in this case an expansion in what was possible for women in their private and public worlds. It follows then that the professional decision-making operates as a reflection of the historical time and place in which these decisions occur.

Timing in Lives

Elder (1998, 2005), Elder et al. (2003) speaks of the second principal, “timing in lives,” as a function of individual context and timing. When placed in the context of such things as career and career choice, timing becomes particularly salient to decision-making. When, how, and where we are in our lives inevitably drives individual level assessments over what career options are possible, the palatability of risk-taking, degrees of self-efficacy, and so on. Therefore, it is important to consider how timing may

⁹It should be noted that the unique appearance of “opportunity for spousal employment” in 2016 could, in part, be explained by the increasing numbers of married women entering into the superintendency as per the AASA decennial survey (Kowalski et al., 2011).

also drive women’s perceptions about the superintendency. To what extent does timing factor into feasibility for these women?

To answer these questions, we considered a number of survey items that took into account a host of timing considerations. We summarize these items in **Table 4** below:

Each of the items identified reflect key intersections between women’s private and professional lives. Importantly, however, they also reflect moments in which the private may impact and/or supersede the professional. The timing speaks to key moments in the lifespan where familial obligations may be greatest. This is commonly the case for women who are cast in the role of caretaker to immediate and/or extended family.

What are the timing factors of greatest concern to seated superintendents? One not so surprising result was the issue of geography. “Desirable geographical location” stood out as the biggest factor in their decision-making with a mean score of 3.92. This was, in fact, the only factor in which seated superintendents appeared to eclipse their aspiring counterparts. This may be suggestive of any number of things: location is more critical to seated superintendents assessments over what’s may be of greatest benefit spouse or offspring, quality of life concerns, or perhaps considerations related to the make-up or proximity of a particular community. The second greatest impact factor for seated superintendents was “raising children” followed by “timing in my career.” Given that women are so often called upon as caretakers, it should be no surprise that these factors are most concerning to women superintendents.

When we cross-reference the identified factors of seated superintendents with those of aspiring superintendents, we see some notable patterns. For one, aspiring superintendents are concerned with very similar things as their seated counterparts, particularly given that most mean differences between our two comparison groups were not statistically significant except in the case “proximity to higher education opportunities.” One could surmise that aspiring superintendents place more value on being closer to higher education institutions for any number of reasons, including the need for continued training/professional development. What we learn from these findings is that timing does indeed seem to matter to women when assessing barriers to advancing into a superintendent role. “Timing in Lives” gives recognition to the role that the life cycle plays in career determinations as it places emphasis on life context as a factor. Likewise, it is also a point at which internal tensions over private commitments may shape and inform professional

TABLE 4 | Perceived constraints of timing among seated versus aspiring superintendents.

Survey items	Seated superintendents		Aspiring superintendents		P-value (<0.05)	T-Stat	Survey items
	M	SD	M	SD			
Raising children	2.44	1.50	2.77	1.75	0.374		1.67
Caring for elderly parents	2.22	1.45	2.22	1.40	0.99		1.68
Timing in my career (too late)	2.24	1.62	2.60	1.47	0.29		1.67
Desirable geographical location	3.92	1.10	3.83	1.00	0.66		1.67
Proximity to higher education opportunities	2.14	1.15	2.72	1.08	0.009*		1.67

*Denotes statistical significance at $p \leq 0.05$ on a scale from 1 = no effect on decision-making to 5 = extensive effect on decision-making.

choices. In the case of seated and aspiring women, the timing of decision-making is an important consideration en route to the superintendency.

Linked Lives

Relational interconnectedness is a valuable feature of our social and intimate lives. How we draw connection from others often has direct bearing upon, not only personal well-being, but on our professional successes as well. To this point, research on the benefits of networks and interconnectivity to career pathways and advancement speak to the multiple ways our social ties render tremendous personal and group benefits (Seibert et al., 2001; Feeney and Bozeman, 2008) and especially so in the case of women (Ibarra, 1993; Perriton, 2006; Wang, 2009; Friebe et al., 2017). These benefits include such things as reassurance and trust in others, a sense of belonging, information sharing, reciprocity, and opportunities to create expanding ever more extensive networks and network ties (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Seibert et al., 2001; Friebe et al., 2017; Lin, 2017). In light of these known advantages, how women place value, sustain, and rationalize particular relationships speaks to the ways in which relationships inform how they may make sense of the superintendency.

Table 5 provides a summary of items that details how connection and connectivity factor into the decision-making of seated and aspiring superintendents. In the case of seated superintendents, relationships with key individuals and groups play a less of a role in terms of what they deem favorable conditions for success within a district. In the case of the three different relational connections assessed by respondents, special interest groups, female support groups, and/or other female superintendents, seated women believed special interest groups of greatest value to their professional success. By contrast, aspiring superintendents view support special interest groups as having an outsized role in a superintendent's success. This may be in recognition of the importance that such constituencies can have on overall district performance. Likewise, it may be that aspiring superintendents are less aware as to how female colleagues/supporters may be able to support their successes once they are installed in a superintendent role. Nevertheless, it remains interesting that, at least in the case of aspiring superintendents, there are dramatic differences over which linkages are of greatest value as compared to those of seated superintendents. Whether these differences are a product of abstract versus experience-based understandings of needed support is certainly a question for further consideration.

Also notable is the fact that the differences between the two groups were statistically significant across all items. Such an outcome is not surprising given that aspiring superintendents would naturally assume that diverse networks would be an asset to entering an otherwise competitive job market as well as to receiving the necessary supports for success once hired. **Table 6** summarizes the outcomes of the discrepancy model questioning embedded in our 2016 survey instrument. With these questions, we not only sought to have respondents name barriers, but to also offer their sensemaking around the current state of "accessibility" for women to the superintendency. To this end, we had them assess *what is* the state of accessibility on a number of different dimensions for women seeking the superintendency. In juxtaposition to what they perceive to be the current state of things, we also asked them to assess *what should be* in order for there to be a level playing field for women in navigating the precarious pathway to the superintendency. We discuss these sets of findings in turn.

When analyzing the current state of the superintendency for women, seated as well as aspiring superintendents are in general agreement as to what they view as relational resources considered to be most effective to supporting and/or curtailing women's district leadership success. Examined closely, one of the important patterns of note relates to women's rather dim view of men as supporters of women's advancement to the superintendency. Both very clearly view the "good old boy's" network as a constraint on women's access to district leadership roles. Likewise, there appears to be a consensus that women do not readily receive male support and encouragement. Taken together, it seems that women continue to see male dominance within the field as an ongoing barrier to entry for women. This finding is not surprising given the large-scale gender disparities among current superintendents and in school board membership. Interestingly, in contrast to the findings presented in **Table 5**, seated and aspiring superintendents seem to disagree as to the extent to which current women leaders identify ("tapping") and encourage emergent women leaders. While seated superintendents felt that women leaders were helping to advance other women in the field, aspiring superintendents did not feel similarly. We may be able to explain this in any number of ways. First, seated superintendents are perhaps more personally aware of this type of support given their own experiences in successfully advancing to the superintendency. They may also be more aware of their own efforts to support other aspiring women. While the current state of female-to-female leadership tapping may be in dispute, both groups appear

TABLE 5 | The importance of social connectivity among seated and aspiring superintendents.

Survey items	Seated superintendents		Aspiring superintendents		P-value (<0.05)	T-Stat
	M	SD	M	SD		
Supportive special interest groups	2.64	1.11	3.06	1.00	0.03*	1.67
Availability of female support groups	2.12	1.23	2.71	1.14	0.01*	1.67
Proximity to other female superintendents	1.88	1.21	2.38	1.14	0.02*	1.67

*Denotes statistical significance at $p \leq 0.05$ on a scale from 1 = no influence to 5 = extensive influence.

TABLE 6 | Mean survey responses for “Linked Lives” (“What is” and “What Ought To Be”).

Survey items	Seated superintendents		Aspiring superintendents		P-value (</0.05)	T-Stat
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
What is: Females are encouraged to pursue a superintendent opening by other female administrators	3.0	0.75	2.58	0.62	0.00*	1.67
What is: The “good old boy’s” network helps in the placement of males, but not females.	3.32	0.66	3.54	0.65	0.08	1.67
What is: Female role models are available to help guide other females into admin positions	2.74	0.60	2.70	0.59	0.76	1.67
What is: Females are encouraged to pursue a superintendent opening by their male colleagues	2.51	0.80	2.29	0.77	0.15	1.67
What Ought to Be: Females are encouraged to pursue a superintendent opening by other female administrators.	3.74	0.50	3.65	0.50	0.38	1.67
What Ought to Be: The “good old boy’s” network helps in the placement of both males and females	1.47	0.93	1.29	0.67	0.31	1.68
What Ought to Be: Female role models are available to guide other females into admin positions	3.76	0.43	3.69	0.49	0.41	1.66
What Ought to Be: Females are encouraged to pursue a superintendent opening by their male colleagues	3.65	0.54	3.62	0.54	0.80	1.67

*Denotes statistical significance at $p \leq 0.05$ on a scale from 1 = definitely should not occur 5 = definitely should occur.

to agree strongly that such support should exist. It should also be noted that, while not an overwhelming response, both seated and aspiring superintendent groups felt that women, regardless of role, generally supported one another’s aspirations and that such support should ideally continue.

In the case of “what ought to be” we again see some interesting patterns as to what women’s view as important relational resources for their success. While our findings seem to suggest that, for the women surveyed, the current state of the playing field may be one in which male support falls short of expectation, these women are not necessarily letting men “off the hook.” In fact, the evidence suggests the opposite. In looking at the results in their totality, what we see is an interest in male advocacy. For both seated as well as aspiring superintendents, it’s clear that male support is a necessary condition for women’s career advancement. Perhaps more interesting still, the women surveyed seem to suggest that women’s advocacy of other women is even more necessary to their success. Why this is the case may be explained in any number of ways. Perhaps those surveyed view women’s advocacy and encouragement as necessary to ensuring women’s advancement into senior leadership roles. In this sense, women believe that women leaders should maintain a sense of obligation to supporting other aspiring women. As such, it is perhaps even more imperative that they be outspoken in their support of others.

In sum, we see that connectivity is an important frame of reference for understanding how women come to view the barriers before them. Support, encouragement, and advocacy

are critical benefits that come from diverse sets of relationships. Based upon the evidence presented, how and in what way those benefits are rendered has bearing upon women’s perceptions over what is possible in terms of career advancement. It follows that the notion of linked lives plays an important role in how these women perceive the playing field and what they view as needed for their success.

Human Agency

The fourth and final principle of human agency suggests that individual determinations over “what is possible” is in many ways dictated by the historical moment we’re living in. Social norms, expectations, cultural values all shape and inform how we go about determining our existing sets of options. Rational decision-making is therefore an assessment over what is of greatest benefit to us individually or in service to others. In terms of career decision-making the principle of human agency is expressed as an individual assessment in which the individual makes determinations over what will enhance his/her chances for career success. As Elder (1998, 2005), Elder et al. (2003) suggests, these “agentic determinations” are profoundly influenced by the historical moment in which decisions are made. For example, determinations over the ideal organizational structures, personnel mix, district leadership legacies, politics, financial outlooks etc. are informed by shared, collective thinking over what makes for an ideal setting and working context.

TABLE 7 | Comparison of seated and aspiring superintendents determinations over district conditions for their success.

Categories	Survey items	Seated superintendents		Aspiring superintendents		P-value (</0.05)	T-Stat
		M	SD	M	SD		
Reputational and Legacy Context of District	Opportunity to follow successful leader	2.46	1.16	2.90	1.19	0.05*	1.66
	Good reputation of district	3.59	1.14	3.85	0.94	0.21	1.67
	District potential for success is good	4.27	0.74	4.08	0.86	0.21	1.66
	Stable financial outlook for district	3.49	1.03	4.09	0.79	0.00*	1.67
	History of support for levies and bonds	3.27	1.07	3.80	0.85	0.01*	1.67
	Lack of controversy in the district	2.83	1.05	3.53	0.94	0.00*	1.67
	Projected enrollment growth	2.56	0.87	3.15	0.93	0.00*	1.66
Quality of District Personnel	Stable, visionary, proactive board	3.83	1.05	4.26	0.83	0.02*	1.67
	Good reputation of teaching staff	3.54	0.95	3.80	0.86	0.13	1.67
	Good administrative team	3.90	0.94	3.94	0.89	0.82	1.67
Quality of Organizational Resources	Modernized facilities	2.44	0.98	3.05	0.96	0.00*	1.66
	Good curriculum and instructional program	3.40	1.13	3.62	0.98	0.29	1.67
Individual Vision and Growth	Professional growth opportunities available	3.34	1.13	3.70	0.98	0.08	1.67
	Good match between district and individual abilities	4.83	0.44	4.71	0.55	0.20	1.66
	Ability to implement new programs	3.73	0.95	3.91	0.78	0.31	1.67

*Denotes statistical significance at $p \leq 0.05$ on a scale from 1 = no influence to 5 = extensive influence.

What are the ideal work contexts as identified by our 133 respondents? **Table 7** provides a summary of key items that represent district-related conditions that weighed upon both seated and aspiring women. Items were categorized into four separate domains, (1) Reputational and Legacy Context of District; (2) Quality of District Personnel; (3) Quality of Organizational Resources; and (4) Individual Vision and Growth. Looking at each domain individually, we are able to identify key patterns related to how seated and aspiring superintendents engage in “agentic determinations” related to their assessment of optimal conditions for district leadership success.

Reputational and Legacy Context of District

The first domain focusing on district reputation and historical legacy has respondents weigh in on a number district reputational concerns they would consider if given an offer of employment. The two items most commonly selected among seated and aspiring superintendents are, unsurprisingly, “district potential for success is good,” good reputation of the district,” and “stable financial outlook” albeit in different ranking order. Certainly, this speaks to the common assumptions regarding the importance of smooth transition and optimal conditions once engaged in the on-boarding process. One finding of note was the extent to which the aspiring group found “stable financial outlook” to be an important feature of a district. Mean differences on this measure were significant compared to their seated counterparts. While there could be multiple reasons for this, the most obvious rationale would be to suggest that orderly district finances

are critical to an incoming superintendent’s short and long-term success.

Interestingly, the item reflecting the greatest difference of opinion between seated and aspiring superintendents is “projected enrollment growth.” While it’s unclear how or why this factors so differently for the two groups, one might suspect that aspiring women may be interested in seeking out districts that are able to demonstrate long-term growth and/or financial health. In addition to projected enrollment growth, we see additional differences related to the degree of prior “controversy in the district,” “history of levies and bonds,” and once again, “stable financial outlook.” Clearly, these items are of greatest concern to aspiring superintendents as these mean differences emerged as significant by comparison to the seated group.

Quality of District Personnel

Quality of District Personnel appears to be an important domain for both populations of women respondents. Here we see the role that the existing human capital of a district plays into the assessments over match and fit. The data seems to indicate that aspiring superintendents place a higher value on stable and visionary school boards above all other personnel groupings. This outcome may be either the result of perceived anxieties by aspiring women given the high stakes associated with the school board-superintendent relationship or perhaps as a harbinger of district growth and possibility. We see greater value given by seated superintendents to the quality of the district administrative team, suggesting a prioritization on the quality of available support to carry out short and long-term planning and vision.

Quality of Organizational Resources

The third domain of particular interest to the respondents focuses on the quality of organizational resources. This domain considers the importance of physical resources to our respondents' determinations over the necessary conditions for their success. We see that "modernized facilities" appears as the one significant difference between groups, with aspiring superintendents placing greater emphasis on the condition of districts facilities as compared to current superintendents. That said, both groups indicated a high degree of emphasis on good "curriculum and instructional programs." It may be that this is a product of what prior research has considered women's continued association with curriculum and curriculum-related issues (Brunner and Kim, 2010).

Individual Vision and Growth

The final domain focuses on individual vision and growth. This domain includes the most frequently cited conditions for success between the two populations of respondents. Certainly, the importance of individual growth opportunities speaks to the value placed on fit and match when entertaining district employment offers. Second to concerns around match is the "ability to implement new programs." This is an interesting finding in that it suggests once again that the potential for district growth, innovation, and success are important considerations when women weigh district employment offers. Fit and potential for district growth/success speaks to a notable shift from extrinsic to intrinsic control over what they need to ensure their success as district leaders.

In sum, agentic determinations over the conditions for career success are consistent across the two groups. What we see is that women, both seated and aspiring, have some minor differences in areas related to finances and prior/current governance. However, there is general agreement as to the link they make between a district's overall position and the likeliness of success for an incoming superintendent. What's clear from these results is that agency comes from their understanding over what they have intrinsic control over. Likewise, agency also comes from an awareness of the social and normative conditions of school districts and their awareness over the importance of fit and match. This is a marked distinction from the 1993 and 2007 cohorts before them.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

On the whole, our findings indicate shifts over time in the types of barriers that have limited women's entry into the superintendency. Findings from Sharratt and Derrington's original 1993 survey results, for example, identified sex role stereotyping, sex discrimination, and lack of role models/mentors as the three main barriers to access. By comparison, our analyses of the 2016 data suggests the main barriers to be factors related to job stress, the unappealing nature of the job responsibilities, and the "good old boy's" network. We argue that these shifts in attitudes around the superintendency are a direct reflection

of the historical contexts that drive individual level decision-making for these women. Put simply, the historical times matter and these now documented attitude shifts form the basis for our study's conclusions.

It should also be noted that comparisons between seated and aspiring superintendents suggest a good deal of agreement between the two groups on such things as the relative importance of timing to a woman's decision over when to enter into the superintendency, the importance of networks and social connections to successfully navigating paths to the superintendency, and what these women perceive to be the most favorable district-wide conditions for both their short and long-term success. While these two groups of women are in very different places in the career trajectory, the uniformity of response suggests that historical context has a place in the process by which women make their life choices. Where historical context may offer its greatest inflection, is in the shared perspectives and collective sensemaking Elder et al. (2003) spoke of in his articulation of life course theory.

Our findings also suggest that the principles of life course theory provide a robust way to analyze women's professional choices. In the case of our 2016 cohort responses, we were able to deconstruct the data according to each life course principle, and could more clearly see points of agreement and disagreement regarding the barriers and challenges as well as the misconceptions and myths of the superintendency as expressed by our women respondents. When using the life course theory principle of "timing in lives" as a lens, for instance, there is evidence to suggest that timing is salient to the professional life choices of these women, particularly when placed in the context of women as the historical caretaker. In this case, timing has the potential to constrain a woman's choice to enter into a superintendency position or not. These findings are also echoed in prior work by Hill et al. (2017) where women shared their concerns over moving school age children, having husbands unable to relocate because of their employment, worrying about their current age and whether it would be a good move financially.

In sum, life course theory and research alert us to this real world, a world in which lives are lived and where people work out paths of development as best they can. It tells us how lives are socially organized in biological and historical time, and how the resulting social pattern affects the way we think, feel, and act (Elder, 1998, 2005; Elder et al., 2003).

Study Implications

Given the inextricable link between the world of work and the socio-historical contexts that inform perceptions of that work, we need additional longitudinal studies on the superintendency in order to understand changes in aspiring females' perceptions over time. This study was able to explore to how a cohort of women perceived accessibility to the superintendency to key aspects of a woman's life cycle and life history. However, future studies could take this approach a step further by establishing more direct causal links between women's professional work choices and normative contexts for those choices. In addition, further studies might examine perceptions of aspiring male superintendent

candidates so that differences and similarities between males and females might be investigated.

The particular contributions of this study, however, lend to deepened understanding of the role that life history has in the formation (and execution) of superintendent pathways for women. As our findings seem to indicate, regardless of the historical contexts, women school leaders are still susceptible to the dichotomization of their life and professional choices. The demands of home often circumscribe aspirations. Pursuant “mythologies” around the superintendency role continue to constrain women’s option sets to an either/or Sophie’s choice between family and profession.

In conclusion, we posit the following recommendations for how the field might influence women’s life choices in such a way as to increase the overall number of women superintendents.

Highlight the Stories of Successful Women Superintendents and the Life Course Strategies That Have Enabled Them to Combine Work and Family

Just as our findings seemed to suggest, establishing connections between seated women superintendents and the next generation of aspiring district leaders is critical (Wallace, 2014). This may come through direct encouragement or by modeling life balance. Seated women superintendents who have chosen to be both superintendents and mothers have found creative ways to manage the conflicts resulting from combining parenting and superintending. While research tells us that the overwhelming responsibility for managing family falls largely on women¹⁰. Successful female superintendents have found ways around this. Some have worked with family to transfer responsibility to spouse and children. Others have relied on parents and grandparents to assist with family responsibilities. We expect that highlighting women superintendents’ life choices and life strategies, and giving public voice to their life journeys will provide successful models for aspiring female administrators. Opportunities for women superintendents to tell the stories can be offered through professional development programs, networking infrastructures, and publications.

Reframing the Negative Mythologies Associated With the Superintendency

The superintendency is so often talked about in negative terms. This negativity does a disservice to the many superintendents who love their work and revel in the opportunity to support children. Effective superintendents are visible and engaged school and community leaders. We argue for viewing the superintendent’s job as a composite of school and community tasks and responsibilities, and moving away from the notion that the job requires uninterrupted and unending seat time that precludes family time. These myths only serve to dissuade women from seeking the superintendency. Work autonomy and work-time flexibility can help to offset the substantive demands of the superintendency.

We posit that successful early and mid-pipeline administrators have demonstrated a skill set that uniquely qualifies them for the superintendency (Ward et al., 2015). Their female colleagues who serve in the role need to demystify the job and present it in ways that highlight the rewards—which often more than offset the investment required to pursue higher degrees and certification. They need to highlight the personal satisfaction and joy that comes from influencing an agenda for the benefit of all children.

Women Need to Form Networks to Mentor and Tap Other Women in Early and Mid-Career Stages to Influence Life Choices in a Positive, Timely Fashion

Mentoring and “tapping” are critical to recruiting talented women to enter superintendent preparation programs. However, mentorship from senior level professional peers is not always available. Or it often comes too late to allow women to make the prerequisite life choices necessary to pursue the superintendency. All too often, we see that male leadership mentoring fails to account for the different types of demands placed upon women. Likewise, male leadership “tapping” may or may not be inclusive of women who could be excellent candidates for the superintendency. The implication of these findings is that the focus on women’s career development needs to address the advancement of women through mentoring programs with specific emphasis on and awareness of gender related issues and the life choice decisions implicit with these issues. Women superintendents need to support and advocate for their female colleagues as they make critical life choice decisions that will either move them toward or away from the superintendency.

Design Superintendent Certification and Doctoral Programs in Such a Way That Early and Mid-Career Women Administrators Can Participate While Balancing the Demanding Roles of Family and Work

Doctoral and credential programs need to be coordinated in order to provide an opportunity for candidates to complete programs in an efficient and timely manner. Programs should schedule offerings in ways that minimize time away from family and work. This might include weekend seminar formats, on-line options, and summer session flexibility.

Design Superintendent Certification and Doctoral Programs to Provide Maximum Opportunity for Job Embedded Learning and Network Building

Cohort designed certification and doctoral programs provide participants with the opportunity to learn from their peers and develop professional networks that benefit them throughout their careers. These networks can provide immediate and long-term benefits that enhance and enrich job performance in ways that other professional development options cannot. The increasing emphasis in Ed.D. programs around action research improves their theoretical and conceptual understanding of their work and brings immediate value-added benefit to their workplace.

¹⁰In their 2015 report, the Pew Research Center (2015) made clear that within 54% of American households, women take on the majority of family and house related duties.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Washington State University

IRB department. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Constructions of Leadership Identities via Narratives of African Women School Leaders

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The paper explores African women school leaders' constructions of their leadership identity. Using self-perception theory which sees changes in self-perceived leadership skills and dispositions as being related to changes in perceived leader identity, constructions of African women's leadership identity are mapped over a life-long career. Leader identity is, in this sense, inextricably linked to gender and an attempt is therefore made to understand these leader identities as gendered. The paper presents an analysis of the interviews of three women selected from a bigger study of 89 school leaders from four countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The three narratives of women leader identity construction are drawn from three of the four case study countries. The narrative approach to data analysis reflecting women school leaders' experiences of leader identity construction involved reading transcripts and coding them with themes characterizing the processes of becoming a leader and being identified as one. Findings suggest that processes of becoming a leader are influenced by women leaders' experiences of early socialization that gave them ways of doing leadership as well as values and attributes that shape their approach to leadership. These women grew up with a strong perception of who they are, and this instilled a sense of agency that facilitates leaderful actions. These actions were then affirmed through their different stages of growth and career development, thus strengthening their leader identity. It is concluded that understanding women leaders' experiences of leader identity is an important ingredient of leadership development.

Keywords: leader identity, school leadership, narratives, self-perception, leadership development, women leaders

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the process by which female school leaders in African contexts experience the development of a leadership identity. Leadership identity is defined as the extent to which one sees oneself as a leader and leader identity development is defined as a process by which individuals learn to perceive and define themselves as leaders (Lord and Hall, 2005; Day et al., 2009; Day, 2011; Miscenko et al., 2017). Leader identity construction encompasses how leaders come to see themselves as leaders, how others see them as leaders, and how they act and behave as leaders. Leader identity construction is a relational and social process (Ely et al., 2011; Shollen, 2018), and, because gender is a significant social identity, it is often at the center of leader identity construction. Ely et al. (2011) have argued that the extent to which leaders view themselves as leaders (or not) influences their ability to lead change and improvement, and, as a group that is

not traditionally associated with leadership, it is even more important to understand the ways in which women construct their leadership identities.

The literature has established that men and women experience and enact leadership differently (Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Boatwright and Egidio, 2003), and because the concept of leader is typically cognitively associated with males, women are more likely to question their ability to identify as leaders and may be less likely to be viewed by others as leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Indeed, the literature from the African context portrays women as struggling to be accepted, for example, as leaders in schools (Moorosi, 2010), and, despite being successful in their job, some of these women do not have an internalized identity as a leader (Davids, 2018). Early socialization practices for African girls has been advanced as a key barrier to women's lack of career advancement particularly in areas that are traditionally masculine, as Mutekwe and Modiba (2012) have shown. Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) have also argued that gender stereotyping rooted in cultural and traditional norms on the role of women potentially influences the perception of African women as being incompetent and this affects, in turn, their being accepted as leaders and managers. These factors affect not only women's choice of career but also their progression in their chosen career paths. Ely et al. (2011) have suggested that leader identity construction is fraught with difficulties since it is more challenging for women to find the most powerful mentors and sponsors because of the lack of role models with whom women identify, gendered career paths that still favor men, and gendered organizations that reflect men's lives and men's situations. Ultimately, this makes pursuing leadership a gendered career path and leadership development a gendered process (Ely et al., 2011; Moorosi, 2014).

It was therefore deemed necessary to understand the gendered nature of women's leadership identity construction and to understand it from women's own perspectives. Boatwright and Egidio (2003) have argued that women tend to view their leadership efficacy differently from the way men do, and that this necessitates an understanding of their leadership identity development processes; this awareness lies behind this paper. Understanding women's experiences would help improve the ability to design effective leadership development programmes and provide appropriate support for women in developing their careers as leaders. Thus, the central question here has to do with how women school leaders construct a leadership identity and in what ways their experiences are gendered.

This paper is based on findings from a broader study that explored experiences of school leadership socialization in four sub-Saharan African countries. An earlier analysis from this work suggested that socialization experiences may have led to an emerging leader identity among school leaders (Moorosi and Grant, 2018), which appeared to have had roots in their backgrounds and in the earlier life experiences that preceded their school teaching and leadership careers. However, participants did not categorize their early experiences as leadership formation and were not proactive in seeking ways to enhance their leadership capabilities until they were appointed to school leadership positions. Moorosi and Grant

(2018) did not perform a detailed gendered analysis of either socialization or leader identity development, hence the focus of this paper. It also builds on previous work (Moorosi, 2014) that analyzed South African women's construction of leadership identity from a leadership development programme and that called for more work on leader identity construction that can inform leadership development for school leaders with meaningful evidence. McKenzie (2018) argued that gender-specific analyses are essential in order to effect ways of putting into place more effective leadership development initiatives and to provide suitable support for both men and women whose representation in leadership positions remains unbalanced to this day.

This introduction is followed by an exploration of some theoretical underpinnings that have been associated with leader identity construction and a brief overview of literature on leader identity development in the education field. A brief methodological discussion and a justification for a narrative approach is then presented followed by the analysis of the narratives and a discussion that attempts to make sense of the leader identity constructions. The paper ends with implications for further study and conclusions.

SELF-PERCEPTION THEORY

In order to explore leadership identity development among school leaders, Bem's (1972) self-perception theory that posits that changes in self-perceived leadership skills and dispositions are related to changes in perceived leader identity was utilized. Self-perception theory postulates that the extent to which one perceives oneself as a leader is the extent to which one will be perceived by others as a leader. Leader identity is in this sense inextricably linked to gender since women have traditionally not been identified as leaders (Moller, 2003). Bem (1972) based his self-perception theory on two assumptions: first, individuals learn their own attitudes, emotions and other internal states through observing their own actions or behaviors. These behaviors act as "external cues" (p. 4) that are also used by external observers to judge their inner state. Second, individuals can be just as confused as external observers by their own behaviors if their internal cues are not strong. This suggests that one's self-perception of oneself as a leader is judged by one's actions, which are, in turn, helpful in telling others who one is. Thus, the stronger the leader self-perceives, the stronger the leadership actions and behaviors that follow.

Self-perception has been identified as inextricably linked to, and extremely useful in, studying and understanding leader identity (Miscenko and Day, 2016; Miscenko et al., 2017). In writing about identity and work within the self-perception framework, Miscenko and Day (2016) suggested two different perspectives on engaging identity and work. These two perspectives are static approaches and dynamic approaches. Static approaches suggest that identity is linked to work and that it is thus stable and enduring (see Ibarra, 1999). In this sense, work identity change is linked to role transitions and may remain stable for as long as roles at work are not changed. One of the

work-related activities that contributes significantly to changing or shaping identity is role transition. Role transitions entail change in employment status which can be within or between organizations, and, as Brody et al. (2010) have established, role change facilitates professional identity. The literature suggests that occupiers of new roles negotiate an identity by modeling existing practice in formulating a professional identity (see, too, Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). These identities may not change on their own outside of role change even though they may interact with the individual's own social identity. As Mpungose (2010) argued, school leaders in South Africa construct these identities in their daily activities and cannot separate the professional from the personal.

The second approach to engaging identity and work is more dynamic and views identity as “constantly under construction” (Miscenko and Day, 2016, p. 224). In this iterative construction and deconstruction, leader identity change could be positive or negative as DeRue and Ashford (2010) and Miscenko et al. (2017) have noted, depending on how it is displayed and interpreted. Miscenko and Day (2016) further acknowledged that people spend a considerable amount of time at work and are bound to be shaped by their work experiences to the point where work and personal identity may influence each other reciprocally. Personal and work identity become so inextricably linked that they contribute to the development of one's self-concept as a leader (Ibarra et al., 2014). Ybema et al. (2009) argued that what may appear to be stable in this context is a “momentary achievement” (p. 301), but identity is itself fluid and constantly changing. These authors thus, conceive of identity formation as a complex and reflexive process that requires both meaning and strength of leader identity as among the most helpful dimensions along which a leader identity develops (Miscenko et al., 2017). These authors define meaning in terms of how an individual defines leadership, while strength is the extent to which one identifies as a leader. Leader identity development is, thus, viewed as important because it enables one to seek opportunities to develop leadership skills and practice behaviors that are resonant with one's role as leaders (Lord and Hall, 2005; Day et al., 2009; DeRue and Ashford, 2010; Miscenko et al., 2017). As Lord and Hall (2005) established, the extent to which one identifies as a leader and the extent of the strength of self-perception are pivotal to how one continues to develop as a leader. Arguably, this improves one's self-efficacy as a leader. Indeed, self-perception or one's ability to know oneself is essential to the process of becoming a leader.

BECOMING A LEADER

An essential step to leader identity development is how one becomes a leader. According to Ibarra et al. (2013), becoming a leader involves a great deal more than being put in a leadership position, acquiring the new and necessary skills for the post, and adapting one's style to the requirements of that role. These scholars assert that one becomes a leader by internalizing a leadership identity and developing a sense of purpose. Internalizing a sense of oneself as a leader is an iterative

process that entails reciprocation of one's view of oneself as a leader by external affirmations and confirmation by the views, reactions, and interactions of others. Zheng et al. (2018) stated that internalizing leadership identity means that one incorporates the notion of leader as part of one's self-definition. Typically, one would assert this by “taking purposeful action” which would be affirmed or resisted by others who belong to what Ibarra et al., have called a “person's social entourage” (2014, p. 294). Ibarra et al. (2013) suggested that affirmation or resistance to such initiatives become the ways in which others communicate their views about one's fitness for the leadership role and can encourage or discourage subsequent assertions that may affect one's sense of self as a leader. For example, resistance may diminish one's self confidence, thus discouraging further attempts to take leaderful actions. Ultimately, this affects how one is viewed as a potential leader.

A new leader with a new role would have to develop a new identity. Ely et al. (2011) asserted that becoming a leader necessitates a fundamental identity shift that is often undermined by organizations, however unintentionally. Thus, although it entails role transition, becoming a school principal requires more than an acquisition of a leadership position; it requires a more transformational shift that comes with some kind of discomfort and uncertainty as the role transitions from the familiarity of teaching to the unknown aspect of leading (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Educational organizations, particularly in Africa, are observed to be the worst culprits in deploying principals who are unqualified, because it is often assumed that the role of teaching is enough to prepare one for leadership (Bush, 2020). While leadership preparation and development programmes are thought to be ideal identity workspaces (Petriglieri, 2011) that provide potential and future school leaders with an essential platform on which to construct their leader identity (Sorenson et al., 2016), they are not adequate because they tend to focus on “surface structure skills” (Lord and Hall, 2005, p. 592). While this may affect both men and women who transition from teaching to leadership roles, what is known as the persistent subtle gender bias has continually affected women. This is because, traditionally, men have benefitted from the male dominated systems that have more male role models in leadership positions who then channel opportunities that are essential for developing a leadership mindset to other men, as Ibarra et al. (2013) have pointed out. School principalship is seen as a predictable career progression route for teachers in schools (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Crow, 2006), yet research has established that this career pattern has not always been predictable for many women in teaching roles (Moller, 2003; Moorosi, 2010).

It is clear that organizational processes of mentoring, networking, and making opportunities to enact leadership available are essential to the facilitation of a leader identity mind-shift (Ibarra et al., 2013). Indeed, Komiti and Moorosi (2020) have shown that these aspects are central to the career advancement of Lesotho women principals and have advocated for policy that would see these aspects institutionalized. Ibarra et al. (2013) observed that, in an attempt to facilitate the mind-shift and address the glaring gender gap in organizational leadership, organizations tend to advise women to seek

leadership roles proactively without their (the organizations) having addressed policies and without having instituted practices that actually give women an opportunity to experience this mind-shift. This, according to these authors, communicates a mismatch between how women are seen on the one hand and the qualities and experiences people tend to associate with leaders on the other. For women to become leaders, they have to see themselves and be seen by others as leaders (Shollen, 2018). However, Miscenko and Day (2016) have asserted that negotiating gender identity in workplaces has been observed to create tensions for women in traditionally masculine positions such as leadership. Studies on African women in school leadership (Moorosi, 2010; Davids, 2018; Komiti and Moorosi, 2020) have established that despite the feminization of the teaching profession, women have not been socialized into leadership and school principalship has been perceived as a male domain. However, as Moorosi (2014) has shown, a leadership development programme significantly shaped the leader identity construction of South African women; this calls for more research on this issue.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, an analysis of the narratives of three women principals from three of the four countries that participated in the bigger study is offered. The bigger study involved a total of 89 semi-structured interviews that were conducted with male and female principals and deputy principals of primary and secondary schools in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa between 2013 and 2015. Interviews were guided by a range of generic and specific questions and lasted between 1 and 2 h thus allowing the participants the freedom to delve into areas that were of importance to them. The main focus of the interview was on their socialization and identity development as leaders in their various countries. This included asking them about their childhood and educational experiences as well as about their career and experiences of outside work. These were seen to be contexts within which an identity of leadership was perceived to have emerged, developed, and been nurtured.

Here the focus is on three stories of female leader identity development drawn from three different countries. In drawing from different country contexts, the intention was not to use these stories as tokenistically representative, but, rather, to illustrate the different and similar experiences that shape and influence women's leader identity construction. It is important to avoid essentializing women's experiences of developing an identity to leadership in any investigation of the discrimination they experience as a group, collectively and individually, in their attempt to climb the educational ladder. Elliot and Stead (2008) have pointed out that each woman's story occurs in an individual, institutional, and socio-political context. The selection of the three stories was thus based on what was identified as strong leader identity of women leaders across the three different contexts. Given the member checking of the three women's transcripts it was ensured that the credibility has contributed to the trustworthiness of the findings.

The four countries involved in the original study were chosen for their similarities in socio-economic conditions and for their geographical proximity to each other that meant easy access for researchers. Botswana, Lesotho, and Namibia all have a population of approximately 2 million people while South Africa has a population of more than 50 million along with a different and more complex history. Lesotho is also different in the sense that it has invested, historically, in the education of women and boasts a higher female literacy than its sub-Saharan counterparts (see Komiti and Moorosi, 2020). However, all these countries are patriarchal with similar traditions and the black communities in these countries share similar life styles. The three women participants whose narratives are analyzed were all black and shared a commonality of having brought up in rural areas and working in black communities.

Why Narratives

A narrative approach to understanding leadership identity constructions was adopted. The analysis of each narrative is based on the evidence of identity work as defined by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) who have pointed out that identities of individuals in workplaces are constantly changing since they are shaped by discursive forces. These three stories were selected and analyzed in order to make sense of the holistic influence on the leader identity development of each participant. The intention was to delve deeply into each story rather than analyzing bits of a range of interviews. As will be seen, leader identity work is evident in the stories of the three participants and is inextricably linked to their developing personal and leader identity. Methodologies that are underpinned by stories make a nuanced analysis more accessible. Sims (2003) recognized that storytelling and experience are inseparable, hence the birth of the narrative tradition in research. These narratives offer insight into leadership identity as constructed within particular communities and contexts and lend themselves to a greater understanding of leadership identity construction.

Narrative Analysis

Following Braun and Clarke (2012), a narrative approach to data analysis that reflects the experiences of leader identity development in women leaders involved reading the interview transcripts and coding them with themes that characterize personal attributes of leadership and the processes of becoming a leader. This was coupled with the guidelines offered by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) on analyzing in-depth transcripts that suggest that these should be read and re-read many times, which was done to get familiarity with the data. Areas related to leader identity work that included behaviors and actions along with the perceptions of the participants about particular issues were highlighted. This meant that at times choices were made to go with what participants said rather than from what was observed from their behaviors or actions. Bryman (2012) noted that participants' perceptions of their own lives must not be neglected since this might lead to ignoring the fact that people "perceive their lives in terms of continuity and process" (p. 582). This aspect of narrative identity helps the participants to make sense of who they are as McCain and Matkin (2019) have argued.

An attempt was made to capture these narratives as stories of leader identity construction in order to preserve the participants' construction of self-concept. The three participants have been given pseudonyms, but the country in which they work has been identified. Each of these narratives facilitates an understanding of the trajectories of leader identity development and showcases where identity work was most at play.

THE WOMEN LEADERS' NARRATIVES OF LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Mara's Narrative

I started school at 10 and my leadership started there. I used to tick the register for the teacher, report noise makers... and because I was very big [and] older than everybody else, I got the responsibility right from the teacher who was also the principal of the school. I was regarded [as] the most intelligent pupil at school, but I wasn't intelligent; I was mature.

Mara was in her mid-50s and a principal of a junior secondary school in Botswana where she had been employed for more than 15 years. She acknowledges early leadership in her life which begins at school where she was given some responsibilities as a child. Mara's childhood was characterized by hardships: she started school at 10 instead of 6 because her father died when she was 6 and her mother had no money and she was brought up by her aunt who made a living out of subsistence farming. She fell pregnant at 19 and had to leave school to work in the fields. But it is these hardships that were to shape her resilience and strength as a leader. Perhaps age helped accelerate recognition of Mara's leadership, earning her respect from her much younger classmates and her teachers. African societies traditionally accord a great deal of respect to age and seniority and it is perhaps not surprising that, as the oldest in the class, Mara earned the respect that encouraged the development of her leadership potential.

Mara was fortunate enough to be able to go back to school after her baby was born, and she grabbed that opportunity with both hands, picking up where she had left off. Her leadership in formal education continued. She said,

Got there in Form 4, prefect, Form 5, deputy head girl. I don't know whether I was born with that or [if it] is something that I developed.

In Botswana, Form 4 and 5 denote senior years in high school. At this stage Mara stops attributing age and maturity to her leadership potential and starts pondering the possibility that she might be a born leader. This most likely signifies the beginning of her confidence in the recognition that she is good at this. At the end of her schooling, Mara gets to do *Tirelo Sechaba* (a 1-year compulsory community service) during which she discovers her passion for teaching in addition to earning love and respect from the school community to the point that the children were crying when she had to leave. Mara was asked what she thinks others see in her. She replied,

In me? I don't know? I was one person, I am one person who doesn't want to fail, whether it is at home given the responsibility... I will always do my best, even [did so] at the younger [age]. Even the ploughing [and] holding that [cart] I would make sure I would do it the right way... That's one thing that I think [is] inborn to me. You give me something I want to do it to the best. I think that's what made me in the end to be what I am. Actually, some of those things I took from my mother.... I am not as bold as she was, but I always love to advise.... And naturally in our traditional set up if you advise somebody, they feel you can do it better. ... and most of them you find that they put things to you.... I am a bit reserved, but I love to advise.

Mara's narrative shows strength of character, perseverance, and resilience but she does not like to take credit for things, and this perhaps suggests a measure of humility. The "ploughing and holding a cart" refers to the hard work she did in the fields when she was pregnant at 19, the period during which she had to drop out of school and suffer the "humiliation of disappointing her family." But Mara is not resentful of her past. Instead, she is grateful she had an opportunity to go back to school. Her quest to always do her best, though, may suggest her need for achievement, a leadership characteristic instilled in childhood according to McCain and Matkin (2019). And as she reflects more, Mara begins to attribute some of this to her mother, perhaps suggesting that her childhood has influenced the way she is.

Indeed, Mara's principalship is preceded by recognition from her superiors and supervisors during her initial teaching experience where she stands out for the inspiring influence she seems to have on the children; she gets promoted to senior teacher (the only woman at this level) in her fifth year of teaching. She asked her principal, "Why did you do this?" He says, "Because you have the capability." Up to the point where she was awarded the principalship, Mara's leadership career had developed in an unplanned way, like the typical career of a woman (Coleman, 2007; McKillop and Moorosi, 2017). She grabbed opportunities as they arose, but she hardly took the initiative herself, perhaps because she still did not believe that she was a good leader.

I don't see myself as a good leader. I see myself as somebody who can make things happen, if I want things to happen, they can happen... There are times that I feel, maybe I have pushed things too far. Maybe a leader needs to be lenient a bit... but one thing I know, I am good parent, even to the teachers. I can parent them, but when it comes to work there are gaps...

I have a big voice and sometimes when I talk in meetings when someone has [pressed the wrong button]... there would be no comment and then I realize I have done it too much. So as a leader you don't have to address your subordinates such that they even fear to comment. That's one thing that I need to work on...

At the beginning of this extract, Mara appears to be denying her leadership identity. It might be that she is inwardly negotiating her identity in the workplace by not claiming what she is being granted. Ely et al. (2011) have argued that patterns of social interaction in the workplace are more favorable to men and usually interfere with women leaders' identity work. Ibarra et al.

(2014) advanced this argument in claiming that where cultural norms dictate the meaning of leadership as masculine, women struggle to find their place. Toward the end of the extract, it is clear that Mara is not denying her leader identity *per se* but is perhaps questioning her effectiveness as a leader. It is interesting to note that Mara associates her leadership with parenting and it is particularly noteworthy that she uses the notion of parenting not mothering. This is where Mara identifies her need for further development because she wants to be a better leader. However, her self-concept involves constant development as a leader, so she responds to current challenges that come with younger generations. That reflection, that ability to identify areas of development, constitutes self-awareness and indicates a strength of leader identity. For her, leadership in a school setting should be about love. For her,

You need to be loving; you have to love people [and] you have to love kids. ... Looking at some of my teachers, I sit down and say I think teaching must be a calling, because if you get there because you want money, you can't, you won't manage. You will be having issues every day with parents, because if the child comes here and says 'Eeee eeehh look at my fingers' [you cannot say] 'Hei hei fingers is not my duty.' These kids, some of them come to school with issues, and they have gaps, they need love. At least they need to find that love from you as a leader, leader in the classroom as teacher, leader in the department as a senior teacher, as an HOD, as school head above all.

Mara's self-concept of leadership is characterized by love, without which she does not have a role. This is not the kind of attribute that can be taught, and this matches her parenting style of leadership. As Miscenko and Day (2016) have noted, this is a dynamic role that exemplifies the interaction of personal and work identities.

Lineo's Narrative

Unlike Mara, Lineo did not know any hardships in her childhood. She was in her late 40s and in her third headship of a primary school in Lesotho. Her father was an area chief and she grew up helping him manage community issues. As she puts it, that gave her an urge to always lead, even at play with her friends, and she says she was always aware of her influence over others from when she was little. She said,

Every time we played, I would end up taking a leadership role and I would influence the choice of games we played. That influence led to me getting things done the way I wanted. And even decision-making, things you would find that I would tell them when to stop playing and go home when it was getting late. But I think that had to do with the home where I knew when I would be needed at home. But I knew how to influence others to end the play for the day.

Lineo uses the words "leadership," "influence," and "decision-making" in her interview, thus signaling her acknowledgment of her leader identity. In the above extract alone, she uses "influence" three times. As a daughter of a chief, Lineo grew up doing what would have been traditionally a boy's responsibility as the natural successor to the chief. According to the Basotho customary law of

chieftaincy, female children cannot inherit their father's position. Lineo revealed in the interview that she had a brother who was not interested in inheriting his father's position. She was not her father's eldest daughter, but he clearly found an heir in her. Lineo knew she had no future in her father's chieftaincy, so she relied on education, choosing a career in teaching. Her emerging leader identity, seen in her early ability to influence, stayed with her and she continued to assert her influence as a schoolteacher paving her way to leadership very early in her career. She attained a principalship within a year of the beginning of her teaching career in a small rural school, which she outgrew within a few years, and moved to the town where she had to take up a teaching role again and re-establish herself.

I took the post but I found the school very depressed and spoke to other teachers and tried to cheer them up and get them do the right things and showing them it was wrong to just leave children in the middle of the day to go and do their own things. The woman who was chosen to be a principal was... reserved and not getting involved and not interacting with the people. She was always in the office, closed herself in, and only came out when she came to our classrooms to give us stationery. And I said to her [that] that is not what she should be doing. I found her to be operating more like a secretary and... not acting like the head of the school. I told her that and she said we would talk. We never talked but from that moment on I decided to assert my own influence.

Ibarra et al. (2013) have stated that as one asserts one's leadership by taking a purposeful action, its being accepted propels one into further action. As a leader, Lineo leads by example and she uses this as a powerful strategy to get people to do what she wants them to do. She knows it works. She explained,

At assembly these children just dispersed in a disorderly way and I thought that we were going to have injuries and lack of discipline. My approach was children in a school uniform should behave in a particular way. So, I instilled more order, more discipline and I introduced some other things. Other teachers were really unhappy and thought I was creating more work for them... I am the kind of person who leads by example and I like doing things first before I can ask other people to do them. So, I would do these things that I wanted them to do and automatically they became good followers who did what I asked and expected. And it works.

Lineo internalizes her leadership identity by identifying a course that needs changing. She makes it her personal project to put direction into the disorderly way in which children leave assembly. Evidence of reciprocation is evident here in that other teachers (followers) respond positively (albeit begrudgingly) to her purposeful actions thereby affirming her teacher leadership outside of a formal leadership role. By taking these actions assertively and confidently, Lineo is affirmed by her colleagues and that gives her the encouragement to take the next action. Her confidence sends the right unambiguous message about her intentions to take leadership and that is the message her followers receive. Self-perception theory posits that the stronger the internal cues of the leader, the less ambiguous her actions and behaviors. Thus, Lineo appears fit for the leadership role, and it is

perhaps not surprising that she soon seeks further opportunities for headship. Lineo does not wait for opportunities to happen; she takes the initiative to visit the district office searching for the principalship post. As she put it,

I told them... that what I really wanted was a principalship job and asked them to inform me when the posts arose. [The district officer] asked why I did not want to be [just] a teacher and I told [her] I want to influence the way things happen.

And that she does. She gets herself the next available headship. Asked where she got this ambition and ability to influence, Lineo said,

I think it's from within. I don't think I had been influenced externally, but I also know that at home we were always taught that when we carried out a task, we were to do it to our level best. I think that was it.

Tracing her leadership socialization to her childhood and upbringing, she confirms what McCain and Matkin (2019) have posited; leadership identity emerges in childhood or adolescence with the impact of family influence. They argued that personal traits that include the need for achievement, assertiveness, and confidence are instilled from home through experiences of childhood and the support of parents. Lineo shares this sense of achievement with Mara, yet their sources are different. Indeed, it is not difficult to assess how Lineo's upbringing instilled these qualities in her. These attributes auger well for the continued fulfillment of Lineo's leadership ambition.

When asked when she realized these leadership abilities in herself, Lineo replied, "I do not think I was aware they were leadership skills. It was just the way I did things. It just felt natural and the way things should be done." Evidently, by following her natural instinct and leading with example, she inspires commitment in others and helps them to gradually find some meaning in their work, arguably discernible from their (reluctant) followership.

Thobeka's Narrative

Thobeka is a deputy principal in a South African primary school where she has been for more than 15 years. Her childhood was difficult and full of challenges in a rural area in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Her parents were struggling financially but made enough money for her and her four sisters to go to school. Her father worked far away from home, and she and her sisters had to help their mother with farming responsibilities such as herding cattle and sending them to the dip. She explained,

We were five in the family and most of the time we used to go and look after cattle before we [could] go to school. I used to go to a dipping tank before I [went] to school. So, we managed that all the way, [but] maybe twice or thrice in a week I was not going to be at school because why? I have to go to herd cattle and sheep.

Traditionally, this would be boys' responsibilities but there were no boys in Thobeka's family.

We were taught to behave [well] at home. So, through those challenges then, that's when I said to myself, 'I must have education.'

Thobeka's leader identity emerged at the beginning of her teaching career. Although she described herself as an introvert, a change in how she perceives herself seems to have occurred during her career as she progressed into leadership roles. She worked in a small rural school where she was good at music, but she could not conduct a choir because she was shy. However, this shyness disappeared as she gained more experience and took more initiative in the work environment. In one school she helped the principal enlarge the school from Grade 6 to Grade 9, thus saving the children from walking long distances to a senior primary school.

Her self-belief grows as she introduces ideas that help the schools and the communities with HIV education and prevention programmes. There is mention of attributes that are clearly not associated with leadership. This is seen, for example, in her stating, "I am an introvert" with the implication that leaders are not introverts, and therefore she cannot possibly be a leader. However, the change of mindset and self-belief, the growth in self-confidence of her capability as a leader comes through as a result of her taking more initiatives that earn her recognition and she is promoted to deputy principal.

So, I became a Deputy Principal here.... In the absence of the Principal it's me who's going to take [charge], but the Principal just gives me the position even if he's around. That doesn't worry me because I learn a lot. I don't have stress, even if he's not at school, I know what to do. Even the teachers here, they do give me respect because they know I know what I'm supposed to do.

Clearly, the more affirmation she gets, the more she grows in confidence and the stronger her leadership identity becomes. She is aware of her strengths. She explained,

I am very good in managing and monitoring conflict. Teachers sometimes do things here, they come in here shouting, I manage to calm them down and get them going.... There are teachers sometimes that we find that even the Principal doesn't want to go to their classrooms... I manage to go and say, 'You can shout as much as you can shout... After you've done that, listen to me then.' [The] teacher [would] shout and shout and sit down [and ask] 'What was it, Deputy, what did you want to say?'... So that's the type of person I am. I manage to be a mediator when it needs be.

Asked how she always knows what to do, Thobeka said, "The background, where you come from, sometimes it tells you." That she manages to mediate difficult situations and is trusted by her principal to manage them suggests reciprocation from Thobeka's own followers and her leader as well. By her own admission, Thobeka is an introvert, yet somehow, she considers herself to be good at managing conflict. Perhaps it is her introvert personality, her calmness and intuitiveness that make her an effective mediator and conflict manager. Bem's (1972) self-perception theory suggests that one's knowledge of one's behavior is a strength required to change and/or improve behavior. Thobeka believes that a good leader has to be good listener and

perhaps it is the way she was brought up that makes her this way. She said,

You know, a leader needs to always think of other people.... You need to always listen... give advice. You need to listen... and sometimes you must hear people, sometimes they can advise you, you are a person [too] you've got your own mistakes, don't be [too] rigid.

As a deputy principal, Thobeka is in a unique position in which her leadership is affirmed by both her superior (the principal of the school) and by her subordinates (the other staff). This is a give and take situation that sometimes puts her in the position of follower so that she reciprocates the leadership of others. DeRue and Ashford (2010) have called this a “claiming” and “granting” process that acknowledges the shifting nature of leader identities. The “socially constructed and reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers” (p. 628) is not only confined to superiors and subordinates. This is particularly interesting since most of the literature on relational recognition of leadership is based on the dyadic interaction between leader and followers and hardly ever on the triad involving one’s senior, oneself as the leader, and one’s subordinates in which situation identities of leadership can shift among the three (groups of) people. Sims (2003) viewed middle leaders as particularly vulnerable since they have to be convincing to both superiors and subordinates. “Their accounts of themselves and their worlds may be scrutinized for signs of ambition, and they will be mocked for this ambition” (p. 1201). Indeed, this becomes an ongoing construction of identity that makes the leader a subject and an object of leadership identity construction. Akin to the co-construction of identity, Sinclair (2011) suggested that identity work involves leaders as both authors and objects of their own identity production since leaders and followers are both involved (albeit to varying degrees) in identity work. The triadic relationship is a useful observation that is discernible in middle leaders with strong leader identity and it is perhaps the middle leadership that gives Thobeka strength as a mediator that affirms her identity as a leader.

DISCUSSION

Constructing a leadership identity would suggest that leaders have to understand their self-concept so that they can define who they are and where they are going. These narratives offer a clear sense of who these women are as leaders, how they got where they are, and where they might be heading. What is strikingly common among the three of them is the similarity of their backgrounds, which help define who they are, and their intuition about leadership. They enact leadership intuitively because they did not have any leadership training that taught them how to become assertive or confident or how to lead by example. They enact leadership instinctively in ways that feel right, and this comes across as genuine and authentic because it comes from deep within. They relate their style of leadership to the way they were brought up and the values that were instilled in them. Perhaps this is what Lord and Hall (2005) meant when they claimed that effective leadership comes

from deep and principled aspects that constitute the long-term development of leadership. Leader identity construction among school leaders has been identified as an area needing attention particularly in developing contexts where resources for training and leadership development programmes are often scarce. Indeed, training hardly features in the leadership development of the three women leader participants, although Thobeka did attend a leadership development programme. By analyzing these narratives, my intention is to understand the different ways (besides formal training) in which leaders come to identify and develop as leaders. Lord and Hall (2005) suggested that traditional discussions of training and “self-directed” leadership learning are inadequate as a way of understanding how leadership is developed since they tend to focus on “surface structure skills” (p. 592). This analysis is therefore a helpful addition to the field in advancing our knowledge about how African women school leaders develop a leadership identity outside of leadership development programmes. There is a great deal of significance placed on participants’ backgrounds and how these informed their leader identity emergence and formations. Sinclair (2011) argued that backgrounds, histories, and childhood are a key part of identity development and that this should be used to help leaders begin to unpack and work “consciously with their beliefs, practices and assumptions about authority and leadership” (p. 512). Indeed, participants in this analysis were able to relate most of their current attributes to their background and particularly their childhood values in making sense of how they came to be the type of leaders they are. They recognize what their weaknesses are and understand what can be done about them.

The familial values instilled in childhood strongly influenced these women leaders’ sense of doing leadership right for the benefit of children and staff in schools. Mara sees love as integral to her leadership—love for the children and staff alike. Interestingly, as noted earlier, she does not use the word “mother” preferring “parent” but the love she talks about is akin to the love a parent would have for their children. Lumby and Azaola (2014) found that South African women principals attached their leadership to mothering and asserted that mothering is a “socially constructed phenomenon that is context contingent and emotionally powerful” (p. 31). It is the potency of the emotional attachment underpinning Mara’s leader identity that is particularly striking, and the use of “parent” rather than “mother” does not make it less gendered. To some extent there is also an emotional attachment to the ways in which these women leaders enact leadership that is informed by a strong sense of purpose that gives them agency to lead and change things. To illustrate, Lineo is a confident and assertive go-getter who always wants to influence change. Perhaps this indicates the influence of her first mentor, her father the chief. Although she initially protests that she could not have been externally influenced, her reflections direct her into acknowledging the influence from home. Sinclair (2011) viewed participants’ ability to reflect as an “insight-laden and freeing step” (p. 512) that helps them think about early experiences of leadership which then gives them an understanding of how or why they may have adopted certain approaches to, and views of, power and authority. She argues that leaders are better placed to make changes that improve

later approaches when they can make sense of what informs their current approaches. In this way women leaders can be more reflective on their weaknesses and seek ways to explore new approaches so as to improve. Perhaps this explains Mara's reflections that she sometimes comes across to her subordinates as too strong in a way that does not complement the softness of the parenting style of leadership.

While changes in leader identity are associated with a self-perception of newly gained leadership skills, processes of affirmation and recognition in schools and in society tend to be driven by socio-cultural norms and stereotypes that often put women at a disadvantage. However, despite the patriarchal nature of their cultural context that attaches masculine meaning to leadership (Ibarra et al., 2014), these women seem to have overcome the gendered bias to the point that they believe they always get what they want. Coleman (2007), in her research into gender and headship in England, found that women were more likely to "doubt their abilities to serve as headteachers" (p. 2) than men, while Davids (2018) found that South African women principals did not identify as leaders, arguably because of the way in which they have been socialized culturally and in the workplace. The socialization of African girls and young women often puts them at a disadvantage as they learn to conform to gendered socio-cultural norms that lock them into occupations stratified by gender (Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009; Mutekwe and Modiba, 2012). Given the intricacy of leader identity to socialization (Brody et al., 2010), it is striking that these narratives appear to suggest that these three women have been socialized by default in what can be regarded as stereotypically masculine ways. Mara, Lineo, and Thobeka were all brought up performing chores that would traditionally be performed by boys and given concomitant responsibilities. From these women's narratives, there is evidence of a stronger leader identity being displayed through self-confidence and a stronger self-concept that arguably stems from childhood. Indeed, Brody et al. (2010) asserted that leader identity is an outcome of socialization, and both Mara and Lineo's narratives support my claim about the possible effect of masculine socialization on their careers.

However, there is at least one reason why I am making this assertion with caution: Thobeka's narrative demonstrates a strong leadership identity, but in spite of this she is a deputy principal who does not desire the principalship position, because as she said, "I don't want to burn my fingers." This could suggest a possible tension in negotiating a leader identity in a previously masculine workspace, despite her experience as a successful middle leader. Ibarra et al. (2013) suggested that one of the mistakes made by organizations is to fail to create a context that is supportive of women's aspirations. They argue that it is counter-productive to encourage women to apply for promotion when the conditions within organizations have not become more supportive. Clearly, there is no scope here to tease out this issue in further detail, but it is certainly an interesting one to pursue further. Although it appears to open some questions, what this analysis has achieved is to suggest that socialization, both personal and professional, offers potentially useful insights into understanding leader identity construction.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CULTURAL CONTEXTS INVOLVED

While important aspects regarding leader identity construction within school leadership have been raised, it is noted here again that similarities between the countries in terms of practice, cultural background, and socio-economic conditions despite the per capita size of South Africa, made this analysis feasible. Although these countries may differ slightly in their gross domestic income, mainly because of their size and their sources of income (see OECD, 2019), the socio-economic conditions of the people on the ground are similar. At the time of study, South Africa had just completed its pilot study of a national leadership development programme, while there were no similar programmes in the other countries. Despite the sporadic presence of leadership development programmes in some universities in all countries, principals were appointed largely on the basis of their teaching experience as the literature has consistently shown (see Bush, 2020). However, the analysis of the three women's narratives suggests that some cross-cultural learning is possible.

First, this work offers some useful insights into African women's leader identity construction and it has also opened more questions and suggested more avenues for further research in this area. An understanding of how leader identity construction can benefit women or translate into a focus on leadership development for women needs to be advanced. It is recommended that women be encouraged to reflect more on their leadership practice and acknowledge their leadership identity. It is mainly by perceiving themselves as leaders that they will identify their weaknesses and embark on growth and development processes that will make them effective as leaders. As previous research has shown, a strong leader identity leads to leadership effectiveness.

Second, although African countries are known for their lack of formal leadership development programmes, this study suggests that individual countries need to invest in developing both existing and aspiring leaders, particularly women who have previously been excluded from leadership. Women are under-represented in all these countries and this is even more surprising for Lesotho that boasts a higher female literacy than the rest of them. While it may be desirable to suggest formal university programmes for leadership development, because of overburdened economies this may not be feasible. It is suggested that leadership development could be contextual and could be linked to an already existing repertoire of skills and dispositions within communities and schools. This can be realized by the development of policies that put provinces (in the case of South Africa) and districts into account.

Third, for future research purposes, it is part of my role as a feminist researcher to be reflexive about the extent of the claims made, while allowing the study to open up questions for further research. It is acknowledged that the narratives in this paper were constructed from women leaders' self-reports of identity construction. This analysis is based primarily on identity work which, by definition, involves self-perception

and thus is in line with self-perception theory (Bem, 1972), particularly since it involves stories and narratives of women. However, involving others such as those who follow leaders would give insight different from that gained by interviewing leaders themselves; this could lead to further research. If leader identity construction is a collective process of claiming and granting as DeRue and Ashford (2010) have claimed, it follows that perspectives of the followers might add useful insights to our understanding of leader identity construction as part of leadership development. Indeed, Day (2011) asserted that “leadership is typically measured through the reports of others who have had a history of interaction and shared experiences with the target leader” (p. 565).

CONCLUSION

This paper has provided an analysis of women’s narratives of leader-identity construction as a sub- area of broader leadership development. The analysis has built on work that acknowledges the absence or limited availability of knowledge on how and the extent to which women self-perceive as leaders, particularly against the backdrop of limited formal leadership development programmes in most African contexts. Different ways in which these women school leaders develop leadership identity have been explored and central to their construction, is the role of values and upbringing that inform their intuition and authenticity. These women draw from deep within. This paper contributes to existing research by looking specifically into leader identity construction of women leaders as a specific social group whose informal ways of learning leadership and constructing a leader identity are yet to make it into mainstream literature. The most important assertion made in this paper is that the processes of becoming a leader and identifying as a leader are influenced by women leaders’ values gained through early socialization that shape their approach to leadership. A strong self-perception instills a sense of agency that facilitates leaderful actions that get affirmed through women’s different stages of

growth, the contexts in which they work, and their experiences of career development, all of which strengthen their leader identity. Understanding how women self-perceive as leaders is a useful addition to leadership development and one that must not be left to chance. With focused attention on practice, policy, and research, it is likely that more women can be developed as leaders.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Warwick. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Professional and Personal Experiences as Leverage for Learning

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The current transnational climate (British Council, 2014) in Europe is likely to continue to generate institutional and classroom situations which dictate that difference and otherness be the norm rather than the exception. Unfortunately, in the 1960's, Black and minority ethnic (BME) migrants from the former British colonies had less-than-favorable educational experiences in Britain due to prejudice and stereotyping mainly arising from cultural differences. Since then there have been a plethora of studies, policies, and reports regarding the perpetuation of discrimination in educational institutions. Today, British higher educational institutions have finally begun to recognize the need to reduce progression and attainment gaps. However, their focus tends to only consider the student "Black and Minority Ethnic attainment gap" with almost no attention being given to educators', or more specifically there is a distinctive lack of thought given to the female BME educators' progression and attainment in British HEIs. As such, this paper draws theoretically and conceptually on critical cultural autoethnography, to illustrate the value of conducting research into a female's BME educators' personal and professional experiences, and "gives voice to previously silenced and marginalized experiences" (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014, p. 15). In doing so, I highlight how higher educational institutions underutilisation of such competencies and contributions have and continue to perpetuate BME underachievement. I conclude the paper by questioning the accountability of providing support for BME educators progression and attainment, challenge educational leaders to consider the value and utilization of cultural knowledge, and implore all educators to reflect on how their personal experiences influence their professional identity.

Keywords: cultural critical autoethnography, cultural knowledge, personal and professional identity, critical reflection, educational leadership

INTRODUCTION

Diversity and inclusion are increasingly becoming important topics in higher educational institutions (HEIs) in Britain and the current transnational climate (British Council, 2014) is likely to continue to generate institutional and classroom situations which dictate that difference and otherness be the norm rather than the exception. This paper stems from my doctoral thesis in which I explored the experiences of Black female educators in higher educational institutions (Kappert, 2018), eluding to the metaphor of being seen but not heard and demonstrating ways in which British HEIs have systematically failed the female BME student cum educator.

In this paper, I offer critical reflections of my own personal and professional experiences via the use of stories, to illustrate how cultural—critical autoethnography can be used to reflect on professional and personal experiences as leverage for learning. Narrated by the autoethnographic child and a matriarchal fish, these life-stories are to be viewed as data, scaffolded within a framework of Black feminist methodologies (Nixon and King, 2013) and Caribbean colonial and postcolonial histories and conditions (Tong, 1989; Collins, 1990; Hooks et al., 1994).

Notably, I have chosen not to explain any of the stories (Ellis, 2004), but as Clough (2002) suggests I have made contextual, analytical, and critical discussions fit around them. It is hoped that this will create verisimilitude (Oddie, 1986; Niiniluoto, 1987) and “to not only guide [your] life narratives up to the present but to direct them into the future” (Bruner, 1987, p. 31). Similarly, instead of presenting findings, I conclude the paper with critical insights gleaned from the research process (Chang, 2008). In doing this, I invite you the reader to switch roles and functions with me throughout my autoethnographic journey, as a means of understanding your own behavior derived from internalizing a perception of mine.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

According to the story told (Norman, 1968), Christopher Columbus first arrived in 1492 on one of the Jamaica's most beautiful beaches: Puerto Seco in St. Ann. Consequently, the area is also known as Discovery Bay. Upon arrival, he was met by the Tainos, more commonly known as the Arawak Indians. They were simple folk who fed on maize, fish, and root vegetables; many of these vegetables still make up the Jamaican staple diet. Columbus and his men turned these early inhabitants into slaves, and eventually all 60,000 are believed to have died out.

“The Innocent Simpleton!”

Fish: *Blub blub. Hey, you up there, what year are we in?*

Child: 1948

Fish: *Well I never, time has literally flown. You see, child, I have been down here a while saw some terrible things and decided to lie low. What did you say? Who am I? Blub!*

Well, I go by the name of Miss Arowana. I don't really belong here: I am originally from Africa. Well, let's just say I got caught up; as luck would have it, I escaped too and just decided to hang around here at the beach. I do miss home, though, but I don't really have the energy to go all the way back, plus they have probably killed off all my friends and family by now. I would feel like a fish out of water get it? Blub blub!

I have made a few friends over the years. Well, first came those fish-eating monsters called the Tainos. I had many narrow escapes with them, but, eventually, when they found out that I could help them to catch the pesky rat-bats that were eating their maize, we developed a sort of understanding. I even nicknamed them after myself:

Ara-wak get it? Blub blub!

As they say, every fish has its day, and one morning whilst I was going about my own business, I saw something that sent chills up my gills. I wondered to myself what those crazy Arawak Indians were up to by putting cloth on poles and sticking them on their canoes. Now, I am not one to poke my nose where it's not wanted, so I bunkered down in the sand to keep an eye on things.

Then I heard such a racket, so I peeped up to see, and, Lord have mercy, it was pure chaos! The sand was stained red and my friends were being chased by a gang of hooligans. Starfish, who is very bright, later informed me that the ringleader was called “the admiral” or something just as fool. Child, you can imagine my fear when she happened to mention that they were from Spain, which is near enough to Africa. I thought that they had come to take me home the African government had caught up with me and I would be deported!

Say, child, what do they call this place now?

Child: *Puerto Seco*

Fish: *Puerto Seco! Blub, still like it here, though: the water is so clear and the sand... well, the same color as me, I guess?*

“Jacmandora mi nuh choose none!”

In 1655, the British captured the island from the Spanish and Jamaica became profitable through its sugar plantations, leading to the development of the transatlantic slave trade; Jamaica was the final destination for 37% of all the slave ships to the region (Watts, 1987). The island experienced over 300 years of British control, however the slaves fought hard for their independence, resulting in the official ending of slavery in 1834, with Jamaica becoming a colony until the Union Jack was finally lowered, and the Jamaican flag unveiled in 1962.

Retribution

Child: *Miss Arowana, Miss Arowana?*

Fish: *What is it, child?*

Child: *Are you still there?*

Fish: *Well, where else would I be? Blub!*

Child: *What happened next?*

Fish: *Retribution.*

Child: *Retri- what?*

Fish: *What's wrong with you, child? All this patois affecting your English? Anyway, as I said, I decided to lie low, but, here in the underworld, you hear things. Parrotfish told me that he remembers his grandfather telling him that more ships came, and they got bigger and bigger.*

I am not sure his-story is true, though, as they didn't stop here. They sailed on past Ocho Rios and up the coast; I still think that's a silly name for a place that doesn't have eight

rivers, but then the Spanish were not the brightest.

Anyway, parrotfish said that there were 38 in total, carrying some 9,000 men. Let's see, it must have been around 1,655 that Pen and Vegetables were sent by Olive Crumb, well, to drive the Spanish out. Would have loved to have seen it what a massacre, blub!

Child: Miss Arowana, don't you mean, Lord Oliver Cromwell, Admiral Penn, and General Venables?

Fish: Well, child, if you know so much, why are you asking me? What do you want with all these stories anyway?

Child: I need to write them down.

Fish: Write them down? Blub, whatever for?

Child: So that they don't get lost or forgotten.

Fish: Lost, forgotten? Blub blub; well I never! What are you saying? I'll be here to tell your grandchildren about your shenanigans. I will bathe in the cool crystal waters of the Caribbean Sea and frolic in the warm sunshine watching, listening, and remembering. No, child, I will never leave Jamaica, and Jamaica will never leave me, blub blub blub!

"Jacmandora mi nuh choose none!"

THE COLONIAL LEGACY

In 1948 Britain passed a nationality act, which gave all colonists the right to live and work in Britain. This resulted in the renowned docking of the Empire Windrush in Tilbury with shiploads of migrants arriving in the "motherland" (Sewell, 1998). Many were led to believe that the streets of London were paved with gold (Williams, 1985; Levy, 2004; Chambers, 2017). Wambu (1998) echoes their expectations and aspirations: "We came in awe and in search of a missing part of ourselves, which we believed had been stolen. We came all this way only to find ourselves" (p. 71).

In 1951, the UK census showed that there were 17,000 Caribbean migrants living in Britain. The subsequent census showed an increase of 601,237 Jamaican adults alone (Davison, 1962, p. 8). By 1960, migrant children of all nationalities made up 2% of the English school population (Phillips and Phillips, 1998). What many of these children found in Britain was sharply at variance with what they were accustomed to; for they were not all, as historical photographs would have us believe, "country bumpkins" or, as Hall (1984, p. 4) eloquently puts it, "the innocent simpleton too slow for the fast ways of the advanced modern world." The reality is that many were from "a city, like Kingston, as big and swinging in its poverty and style as any small colonial capital" (Hall, 1984).

Furthermore, many saw themselves as British citizens and knew more about English culture than the English themselves (McMillan, 2009), yet, in Britain, they experienced a vastly different type of education than those who remained in the Caribbean. Whilst the region has produced several Nobel Prize winners and Musgrave medallists and continues to enrich the world's cultures through literature, music, and art (Chamberlain, 1998), many migrant children became scholars of educationally subnormal (ESN) schools designed for, "Pupils who, by reason

of limited ability or other conditions resulting in education retardation, required some specialized form of education wholly or partly in substitution for the education normally given in ordinary schools" (Gulliford, 1971, p. 68).

In the 1960's and 1970's, tests such as the Vineland Social Maturity Scale and the IQ tests of Jensen and Eysenck were used to determine migrant children's educational levels; by 1968, there were ~16,500 migrants between the ages of seven and 16 in ESN schools (Coard, 1971). Migrant students who made it into other types of schools often felt alienated, developed adjustment problems, and suffered psychologically due to institutional discrimination (Kiev, 1965; Bhatnagar, 1970; Lamur and Speckmann, 1975; Phillips and Phillips, 1998).

There is an old African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child." However, this was not what the UK demonstrated when opening its doors to its colonies. In contrast to assimilation theories, which suggest that when people move to another land they steadily learn, absorb, and adopt the language, culture, values, and behavioral patterns of the receiving society and reject those of the homeland (Farley and Alba, 2002; Kasinitz et al., 2004; Thomson and Crul, 2007), Jamaicans found themselves subjected to discrimination, mainly due to their skin color, and at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder.

To try to improve educational conditions for their children, Jamaicans set up Saturday and Sunday schools. They established markets to import and sell West Indian produce, and they sought solace in their own churches because "although Black people of all shades, cultural backgrounds, etc. have sought to participate in all aspects of the nation's life, they do so against a background of majority White hostility, sanctioned by the state and justified on the basis of apparent racial or color difference" (Goulbourne, 1990, p. 6).

For other Jamaicans, it was the dream of saving up enough money to return home, placing them in a constant mode of "fight or flight." They invested in land and businesses in Jamaica and made regular trips there to visit their families (Foner, 2001). Many had needed to leave their children behind in Jamaica, intending to send for them at a later date, creating "barrel pickney syndrome" (Brown, 2012), which in turn added extra pressure of the expectation to send barrels of goods back home. This was compounded by the knowledge that they could not return without being "a piece beta" (Bennett, 1966), hence many never did. Stein (2004), in "Crossing a Notion," describes this as the "(im)possibility of returning" syndrome.

All of this would have caused mental and physical hardships, placing the Jamaican migrant population in a perpetual state of flux, to paraphrase (Mitchell, 1997); being related to and yet not originating from Britain. It would have become difficult for the majority to form fixed identities, and, as a result, many young Jamaican migrants began to experiment with culture, which produced syncretic forms of expression and multi-vocal narratives: forms of "conceptual muddling" (Vertovec, 2007, p. 2).

This said, it is becoming increasingly difficult for researchers to ignore the experiences of the select few Jamaicans who did make it home, as statistics reveal the size of the British Caribbean-born population in Britain has begun to show a rapid decline,

attributed to mortality and return migration (Peach, 1991). Unfortunately, there is still very little known about other former colonists who migrated to further European lands after Britain, creating third-time migrants or a third diaspora. However, we do know that they include writers like George Lamming, E. R. Braithwaite, and Samuel Selvon, all who left Great Britain and began writing from elsewhere.

However, to date, research has indicated that the descendants of these former migrants still do not perform as well as other nationalities do, are more likely to underachieve, experience higher levels of unemployment, are overrepresented in the prison system, and have higher levels of poor mental and physical health (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Chamberlain, 1998; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Lindsay et al., 2006; Wright, 2013). Many explanations for this poor performance have been suggested: educators having lower expectations of their academic ability, the school curriculum lacking culturally relevant material, racist school practices (Sewell, 1997; Chamberlain, 1998; Blair, 2001; Wright, 2013), and a distinctive lack of Black role models. These issues are inevitably confounded with other factors known to have an impact on educational attainment, such as slavery, colonization, parental education, socio-economic status, and gender differences.

BME'S LIVING IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST AND IN THE SHADOWS OF AN IVORY TOWER

Having described the average Jamaican BME student's trajectory in the UK, in the rest of this paper I will discuss the personal and professional experiences of the female BME educator and include a summation of the reasons they themselves give for their marginalization from within the "Ivory Tower" (Shapin, 2012, p. 1). Pertinently,

"There never was an Ivory Tower. It was always a figure of speech. There are towers and there is ivory, both quite real; it is their combination in the idea of an Ivory Tower which is both imaginary and consequential" (Shapin, 2012, p. 1).

In 2011, there were 14,000 professors in HEIs in the UK. Fifty of them were classed as BME, with only 10 of them being women. There were no BME vice-chancellors (Shepherd, 2011). A year later, a study conducted by University College London, "The Position of Women and BME Staff in Professorial Roles in UK HEIs" (2012), highlighted the historical discrepancies regarding the representation of BME professional staff from 2001 to 2011 via a Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) staff report. The study further highlighted that BME professors earned 9.4% less than their White counterparts (p. 1) and that White applicants were three times more likely to be successful in securing a professorial role than their BME colleagues were (p. 12).

In the same year, the University and College Union confirmed that only 1.1% of academic staff were Black and only 0.4% were Black British-born professors. In 2013, the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) spoke out about the harmful racial/gender

Ethnicity	Professors		Non-professors	
	No.	%	No.	%
White	13270	92.7	105345	91.6
Black	70	0.5	1480	1.3
Asian	430	3.0	3955	3.4
Chinese	235	1.6	1440	1.3
Mixed	135	1.0	1610	1.4
Other	180	1.3	1155	1.0

FIGURE 1 | UK academic staff by professorial category and ethnic group (Source: Unit, 2015).

stereotypes that are held against isolated Black academics by mostly White senior colleagues and managers, expressed through implicit biases (ECU, 2013). In 2014, the HESA confirmed that out of a total of 17,880 professors, 950 were Asian, 85 were Black, 365 were "other" (including "mixed") and the rest (15,200) were White.

In 2015, an ECU statistical report was published, highlighting the statistics detailed in **Figure 1**:

If we sail forward to 2017, *The Guardian* newspaper led with the following headline: "British Universities Employ No Black Academics in Top Roles" (Adams, 2017). The article further revealed that British universities employed more Black staff as cleaners, receptionists, and porters than as lecturers or professors. In February of the same year, Iyiola Solanke from the University of Leeds compiled a review of BME female professors who were or had been employed on a full-time, permanent basis in a UK HEI. Her findings revealed that there were 54 (including four emeritus) BME female professors engaged across 17 disciplines in 34 of the 164 UK's HEIs, with only four in education departments (Solanke, 2017).

Tate and Gabriel (2017, p. 54–55) describe the statistics in UK HEIs as evidence of "racism without racists," and Leonardo (2004) defines HEIs as spaces where, "color-blind ideologies are normalized and where racism and racialization are developed, maintained, reinforced, and embedded in curricula, policies, and practices" (p. 6). We are further reminded that even after gaining a professorship it does not mean that the BME educators' struggles are over (Mirza, 2009); there are reports of fewer opportunities to develop and enhance their promotion prospects (Jones, 2006); experiences of invisibility, isolation, and marginalization (Carter et al., 1999; Deem et al., 2005; Mirza, 2006, 2009); and they are often given disproportionate workloads.

Unfortunately, far too little research has been conducted into why this is so, and the studies that do exist tend to take a statistical approach, as per those conducted by the HESA. Once again, very few have considered historical factors or daily experiences, and all of them group anybody who is not White, despite their experiences, in the same research cohort: BME. Bensimon

and Malcom-Piquex (2014) suggests that the inadequacies and distinct underrepresentation of BME educators have persisted because of the learning problem of institutions. In accordance, Dr. Nicola Rollock, lead author of the award-winning book *“The Color of Class: The Educational Strategies of the Black Middle Classes”* (Rollock et al., 2015), eludes that the situation exists because there is still no single initiative that specifically seeks to support BME academics in their career progression. A more recent study conducted by The European University Association (EUA) and the European Universities Continuing Education Network (EUCEN) with support from the European Students Union (ESU) also confirms this. They conducted a survey at 156 HEIs in the attempted to identify the strategies and approaches being employed in regard to equity, diversity, and inclusion (2018–2020) and concluded that giving priority to diversity, equity, and inclusion was a strategic choice, often driven by the central leadership of the institutions,

“Often the direct and explicit support of the rector or a vice rector has been a turning point in developing strategic aims. It is the support of institutional leadership that allow experiences and practices from bottom-up initiatives to become policies and lead to cultural and structural changes” (p. 3).

They also claimed that such policies were driven by societal developments, legal obligations, funding (Claeys-Kulik and Estermann, 2015), or linked to an internationalization agenda such as quotas for students and staff from diverse backgrounds (Sursock, 2015).

Unfortunately, as with previous reports there was a distinctive variance between measures addressing students vs. those addressing faculty and staff, and those that did tended only to focus on gender equality (p. 16). However, when asked about the top three success factors for their institutional strategies and activities, 76% of their respondents indicated leadership commitment as being essential, followed by direct involvement of the target group(s) and the involvement of the entire university community in developing and implementing strategies and activities (p. 24). In accordance Leonardo (2004) claims that the starting point for understanding such oppression should be a critical analysis of BME experiences, and Reynolds (2006) argues that a shift toward knowledge of cultural factors and structural constraints is vital to understanding the diverse ways in which different ethnic groups develop, sustain, and access social capital, yet the cause or culpability for many of these trajectories often remains unexplored.

In their book aptly titled, *“Inside the Ivory Tower: Narratives of Women of Color Surviving and Thriving in British Academia”* the authors (Tate and Gabriel, 2017) discuss how racism manifests itself in day-to-day experiences in HEIs, metaphorically dubbing this as being *“inside the ivory tower”* (Tate and Gabriel, 2017). Similarly, Dr. Kwhali, patron of the organization Black British Academics, discusses her difficulties associated with maintaining Black values in a White context. She clarifies that this is not necessarily related to race but rather to history and culture (Kwhali, 2017, p. 5). She recalls her early educational experiences of never having seen a Black teacher; in fact, she claims that she was never taught about a single Black historian, scientist,

inventor, or even writer. She implies that the only inclusion in her curriculum pertaining to Black people was in the context of either slavery or colonialism. She puts forth:

“Whilst individual liberal teachers were reassuring me that color doesn’t matter, the hidden curriculum was telling me that it mattered a great deal. It had its roots in slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, which had helped to inform attitudes toward Black people. When teachers asserted that they treated all children the same, I came to understand that this meant White” (p. 8).

Such sentiments have also been echoed by the Lisbon-born BME psychologist, writer, and university lecturer Grada Kilomba. In her book *“Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism”* (Kilomba, 2008, p. 31), she describes her experiences relating to voice and being silenced: *“Black writers often get told that their work is interesting but not scientific enough and the White majority label the Black minority as lacking in knowledge.”* She, as others have (Hernandez et al., 2015; Pillay et al., 2016), acknowledges that for postcolonial intellectuals, there is no place to speak. She writes about collective secrets: of slavery and the continued colonization of racism. She describes her daily experiences with racism, *“A shock or violent scene which places the Black subject back at the colonial scene where they are once again imprisoned as the subordinate, the exotic, the other,”* (p. 13).

Professor Cecile Wright, in an article published by Times Higher Education, *“Distinct Lack of Ebony in the Ivory Towers”* (2004), talks about her experiences as a professor in a British university and confesses that she has had to get used to overt racism from colleagues during her academic career. The article quotes her as saying:

“The situation in academia with regard to race is absolutely disgusting and shocking. This is the one area of British cultural life where institutions are able to discriminate with impunity. In the health service or in schools, it would not be allowed to happen because there is more scrutiny. Universities are able to hide away because they are seen as liberal institutions” (p. 4).

Whilst it may be easy for some to dismiss the experiences of UK BME educators in HEIs by contextualizing them and arguing that such experiences mirror the society in which we live, King (1988), in *“Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology,”* reminds us of the commonalities all Black women share,

“The experience of Black women is apparently assumed, though never explicitly stated, to be synonymous with that of either Black males or White females; and since the experiences of both are equivalent a discussion of Black women in particular is superfluous” (p. 45).

Bhopal (2018) also reminds us that such commonalities reach further than our own local communities and, indicatively, uses an intersectional lens to analyse the ways in which Black people experience education in both the UK and the USA. Similarly, in *“Problematizing Authentic Leadership: A Collaborative Autoethnography of Immigrant Women of Color Leaders in Higher Education”* (Ngunjiri and Hernandez, 2017)

the authors illustrate the underrepresented of Black women as leaders in American universities, by citing, “Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics indicated that as of 2013, Black women held 3.7% of tenure track positions and 2.2% of tenured positions within the U.S. academy” (p. 394).

Associate Professor, Adah Ward Randolph from Ohio University, College of Education, whilst acknowledging that “work in academia requires some disentanglement of knots—especially those that result from the permanence of racism and gender inequities” (cited in Cobb-Roberts and Agosto, 2011, p. 262), attempts to move the discussion on as she asks the question, “what does racism look like?” (Cobb-Roberts and Agosto, 2011). I take the liberty to rephrase the Professor’s question and ask, “what does it mean to experience racism and how does this affect one’s teaching and learning?” and as if in response she writes,

“Many of these women scholars are taxed professionally and emotionally so as to induce stress which can create health problems or exacerbate pre-existing conditions that can negatively impact performance. Although each scholar appears to have overcome many setbacks, which is to be applauded, they provoke us to ask whether we too often suffer in silence” (Cobb-Roberts and Agosto, 2011, p. 262).

In sum, whilst some educators blame their experiences on their inability to conform to the dominant or normative conception of an academic (Puwar, 2004; Wright et al., 2007; Tate and Gabriel, 2017) others cite hyper-surveillance, being “othered,” neutralized ethnicity, subjective bias (Bhopal and Jackson, 2013), and colonization as reasons for their marginalization.

Colonization in reverse

*“Wat a joyful news, Miss Mattie,
I feel like me heart gwine burs
Jamaica people colonisin
Englan in Reverse
By the hundred, be de tousan
From country and from town,
By de shipload, be the plane load
Jamaica is Englan boun...”*

Fish: Hey, what’s all that noise about?

Child: Sorry, Miss Arowana, I didn’t mean to wake you, but I am practicing for a festival.

Fish: FESTIVAL, FESTIVAL, “I feel like my heart gwine burs,” blub blub!

Child: Miss Arowana, whatever is the matter?

Fish: Don’t you know what dem do with FESTIVAL?

Child: Well yes, it is the national salute to all things Jamaican and aims to visualize our history and our culture. It also marks the day when we became independent from the British.

Fish: No, no, child, here on de beach dem eat FESTIVAL wid fish!

Child: Ah, Miss Arowana, it’s not that kind of festival. These celebrations have been around since 1963, and we have the National Song Competition and Miss Jamaica Festival Queen, and at school we get to compete with poetry, dance, and music. If we are really good, then we get to go to Kingston for the finals.

Fish: OK, OK, I better help you fix that poem then. Did you write it?

Child: Ha, no, no, it was written by Miss Lou.

Fish: Miss Lou?

Child: Yes, the Right Honorable Louise Bennett-Coverley.

Fish: Oh, yes, the one who wrote “Cuss Cuss,” “Noh Lickle Twang,” and that one poem that reminds me of you.

Child: Me? Which one?

Fish: “Mout-Amassi,” blub blub!

Child: Ok, Miss Arowana, I take your point and better get back to practice...

“Oonoo see how life is funny

Oonoo see de tunabout,

Jamaica live fi box bread...”

Fish: WAIT, WAIT, what did you say, child, BREAD...?

“Jacmandora mi nuh choose none!”

In sum, whilst the academic milieu may seem to have become saturated with the rehashing of history, memory, and guilt surrounding slavery and colonization, it has neglected to fully consider the effect that the legacy may have on today’s society. For example, in a written declaration to the European Parliament in 2013, a group of British Members of Parliament called for a European Remembrance Day to be dedicated to the victims of colonization and slavery. Such a move not only reopened the debate regarding truth and reconciliation but also repositioned the legacy of slavery from being a quintessential problem of individual former colonialist countries to become a part of a European past and consequently a part of the collective European memory. Despite this call, to date, there has been little more than a cursory nod given by the European Parliament to acknowledge or consider that the legacy of slavery may also hold some culpability regarding current educational attainment gaps in European countries.

Similarly, there are many Jamaicans and their descendants would like to forget the past and move on, others call for a truth and reconciliation committee to be set up to right the wrongs made against their ancestors, like those in Canada, Australia, and, more recently, South Africa. Unfortunately, neither of these can be achieved without due consideration being given to the way in which we [Jamaicans] experience our legacies: the memories, the daily reminders, new stereotypical and racist experiences, and the perpetuation of colonization which still stifles cultural syncretism needed as a creative defense against today’s economic circumstances and class positioning. Hence, in this paper, as per my thesis (Kappert, 2018) I suggest, that perhaps if we start to collect and analyse each other’s stories we will begin to see and understand the diasporic world much better; through the eyes and experiences of the other, we can find solutions for emergent problems by comparing the issues.

THE METHODOLOGY: CRITIQUES, CRITICISMS, AND THE DEFENSE OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

In the penultimate section of this paper, I critically discuss the methodology I used to explore my experiences as a female BME student cum educator in British HEIs. This will be followed by a brief introduction to the research design and some critical insights gleaned from my thesis.

Autoethnography is a qualitative method (Mizzi, 2010; Starr, 2010) that has emerged from a postmodern philosophy (Clifford, 1988; Behar and Gordon, 1995; Wall, 2008) and the need to resist colonialists' impulses and the guise of conducting research by entering a culture, exploiting its members and then writing about it for personal or professional gain (Conquergood, 1991; Riedmann, 1993; Ellis, 2007). The term itself is not new but only began gaining academic recognition when the cultural anthropologist David Hayano published his book *"Poker Faces"* (Hayano, 1982), wherein he detailed his experiences as a semi-professional player in public poker clubs in California. As such, autoethnographies tend to be highly personalized stories that draw upon the experience of the researcher to extend the understanding of the self: in social contexts (Reed-Danahay, 1997), in relation to the *"other"* (Pratt, 1992), to explain the self to others, to explain the *"othering"* of the self or rather how the self is *"othered"* (Sparkes, 2002) and *"to discover the culture of self, and of others through self-reflection"* (Ricci, 2003, p. 593).

Subsequently, autoethnographies are seen to *"provide a means to legitimize personal experience as a knowledge source"* (Struthers, 2012, p. 20) and various related intellectual traditions have emerged, including critical autoethnography (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014), analytical autoethnography (Murphy, 1987; Anderson, 2006, 2011), evocative autoethnography (Denzin, 1989; Pelias, 2004; Sparkes, 2007; Ellis, 2009a,b; Spry, 2009), and transpersonal autoethnography (Raab, 2013).

However, autoethnography has also been described as a philosophy rather than a well-defined method, *"enabling creative latitude in the production of an autoethnographic text"* (Wall, 2008, p. 39). According to Stivers (1993), despite them being entertaining and even edifying, they fail to qualify as useful knowledge because they are not logical or scientific. Other criticisms refer to their generalisability, reliability, validity, authenticity, exposure, indulgence, self as data, objectivity, data quality, legitimacy, ethics, memory, and use of fiction (Atkinson, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Holt, 2003). Such discourse, contributes to the complexity of their construction and acceptability, and throughout my thesis I felt compelled to defend the use of autoethnography from inside the field, as summated below.

In Defense of Autoethnography's Subjectivity

It has been put forth that all research has some element of subjectivity, and there are those who solidly contest the assumption that objectivity is at all possible in research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1999). Others argue that the methods and procedures employed in research are ultimately and inextricably tied to the values and subjectivities of the researcher, therefore finding it futile to debate whether autoethnography is a valid research process or product (Bochner, 2000; Ellis, 2009a). In concurrence, Sutton-Smith (1986) offers two emerging perspectives for analyzing subjective narratives, which also reflect Bruner's (1986) two modes of cognition: paradigmatic and narrative. The first follows a textual or structural form of analysis whereby stories are analyzed for criteria that would place them in one or the other category and thus reinforce a hypothesis.

The second perspective embraces (Ellis, 2009b) autoethnographic view to a certain extent: *"To understand the meaning of stories to those who use them, rather than some truth they tell us, we must study them in their contexts of use"* (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p. 68).

In Defense of Autoethnography's Accuracy

Rather than being preoccupied with accuracy, autoethnographers put forth that when applied to their craft, the context, meaning and utility of such terms are altered (Holman Jones, 2005). By example, through the term *"generalisability"*, autoethnography shifts the focus from the researcher to the reader; the reader determines if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know (Bochner, 2000; Ellis and Ellingson, 2000; Pillemer, 2001).

In Defense of Autoethnography's Vulnerability

When Behar (1996) discussed the idea of vulnerability in her writing, she indicated that it did not mean that any or all information may or should be shared with the reader; rather, to her it meant *"opening Pandora's box"* (p. 19) to expose a deeper self so that transformation and growth could take place. This she claims affords the researcher some emotional distance and provides a more helpful and healthy perspective for the reader and the researcher to learn from.

In Defense of Autoethnography's Reliability

Autoethnographers also maintain that reliability is intended to be tested by the reader, who is expected to ask questions pertaining to the credibility of the researcher: *"Could the researcher have had the experiences described, do they believe that this is actually what happened?"* (Bochner, 2002, p. 86).

In Defense of Autoethnography's Validity

In terms of validity, there is the assumption that the story being told is coherent and, *"enables the reader to enter the subjective world of the teller to see the world from her or his point of view"* (Plummer, 2001, p. 401). Ellis (2000) further defines validity as work that improves or broadens the life of the participant and reader by seeking verisimilitude. She describes autoethnographic stories as, *"lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true. The story is coherent. It connects readers to writers and provides continuity in their lives"* (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 282).

Most autoethnographers are aware of the critiques of their work, from those mentioned above to it being insufficiently rigorous, theoretical and analytical, or too aesthetic, emotional, and therapeutic (Hooks et al., 1994; Keller, 1995; Ellis, 2009b). They have also been criticized for doing too little fieldwork and for observing too few cultural members (Buzard, 2003; Fine, 2003; Delamont, 2009). In defense, (Richardson, 2000, p. 254) suggests that (auto)ethnography is both a science and an art and proposes five criteria against which it can be evaluated: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, the impact the narrative has on the reader and how much the narrative expresses a reality.

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

As mentioned at the onset, I chose to use cultural critical autoethnography for my thesis. Prior to discussing my research design, I will briefly outline links between critical autoethnography, critical theory, cultural analysis and critical reflection. By definition, critical autoethnography is a qualitative research tool concerned with connecting the interpersonal experiences of race, gender, sexuality and ability to larger systems of power, social privilege, and oppression (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014). Potter (2015) adds to this definition by alluding that there are relationships amongst critical autoethnographies, identity and power. He claims that they,

“offer an excellent opportunity for critical theorists to move beyond discussing the forces of power in the socio-political landscape—they give us the tools to dismantle the very system that has created the power structure” (p. 1,436).

Adams (2017, p. 79) ascertains that there are vital and often unforeseen connections between personal experiences and cultural experiences, and by consensus (Boylorn and Orbe, 2017), identify manifestations of power and privilege in everyday practices and discern social injustices and inequities.

Synonymous with the genre, there are variations in critical autoethnography's interpretation and usage. For example, in *“Re-telling Our Stories: Critical Autoethnographic Narratives,”* authors Tilley-Lubbs and Calva (2016) use critical autoethnography as a methodological approach to problematise individual experiences through the combined lenses of critical pedagogy and autoethnography. Whilst, in his article *“Critical Autoethnography, Education, and a Call for Forgiveness,”* Adams (2017) states,

“Critical autoethnographies should also describe how to live with others who have enacted or perpetuated personal/cultural offenses, as well as consider how people carry memories and scars of offenses across the lifespan” (p. 79).

Similarly, Critical theory attempts to reveal and deconstruct the power structures that become exposed during the research process and as a consequence of having conducted the research. Aptly, other critical autoethnographies in support of this include *“Re-assembly Required: Critical Autoethnography and Spiritual Discovery”* by Tilley-Lubbs (2017), *“Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life,”* edited by Boylorn and Orbe (2014). And *“Living Bodies of Thought: The ‘Critical’ in Critical Autoethnography”* by Holman Jones (2016). It is the latter who alerts us to the “critical” in “critical autoethnography” and reminds us that “theory is not a static or autonomous set of ideas, objects, or practices” (Holman Jones, 2016, p. 228).

Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal further discusses both the subject of cultural analysis (Bal et al., 1996) and the practice of cultural analysis (Bal, 2012) and reminds us that it is impossible to conduct the former without clarifying what extent and what conditions the writings are irremediably bound. Such writings

not only offer credence to the first section of this paper in which I describe the cultural context and the experience of the female BME student cum educator at length, but also serves to reminded us of how critical autoethnographies call attention to harmful cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, social class, and colonialism.

The Reflective Process and Data Generation

Throughout my thesis, I chose to engage in both critical reflection (Dewey, 1902, 1933; Freire, 1998, 2000; Mezirow, 2000) and structured reflection (Johns, 1994). White et al. (2006, p. 12) discuss the benefit of critical reflection in the deconstruction and reconstruction of power, privilege, personal beliefs, and practices. However, they also warn against partaking in any form of reflective process without being clear about the specific purpose and process of reflection in relation to the particular context (White et al., 2006). Hence, in keeping with the methodology, I utilized a cyclical structure of context, reflection, and story for my thesis as illustrated below.

Unlike some traditional research, the research design, and methodology of the thesis started with the inaugural chapter; as such, it immediately began to generate data for reflection, which I collected in a reflective journal. Initially, I found reflection difficult, and writing in my journal at regular intervals often fell secondary to my busy schedule. I was embarrassed about some of my entries and my “ramblings,” which ironically in hindsight turned out to be some of my more-poignant reflections. I was also reassured by the literature:

“There are no rules, no right or wrong ways of journaling; people just tell their stories the best they can.” (Cox et al., 1991, p. 379) and *“Do not disdain the idle nonsensical or shocking thoughts which the mind throws up. Hold them. Look at them. Play with them. See where they lead...”* (Okri, 1998, p. 22).

I kept a reflective journal for seven years, which included entries pertaining to the development of my research, insights that came whilst reading and attending multiple conferences, frustrations, and hopes, daily experiences, and journeys; in the autoethnographic literature, these are formally referred to as “mind notes” and are used as a precursor to the writing process (Chang, 2008; Emerson et al., 2011). In total, there were 433 entries. I used open coding to gain an understanding of my teaching and learning. The main aim here was to see if a pattern or trend emerged that suggested underlying beliefs and commitments about knowledge, learning, and my role as an educator.

Similarly, I kept a memory box which represented the tin cans and the little private boxes that slaves used to carry around with them; they held remnants of their ancestors: totems, charms, trinkets, and a swath of their mother's hair (Machiorlatti, 2005, p. 101). Mine also held remnants of past generations, for I do not have a solid lineage that can be traced. All I have, as many other Jamaican descendants have, are scraps of memories and the old and crumbling themes of the past (Du Bois, 1996). Consequently, my tin can held family memorabilia,

images, newspaper clippings, school reports, transcripts, letters of recommendation, and references. Although not included in this paper, I used them throughout the thesis to provide validation, to assist with memory generation and at times to engage with the reader. I chose pertinent images to complement the stories, mainly to help to illustrate how the stories came about and to embrace the assumption that there is a story to be told and that the narrator is a part of this story (Cavarero, 2000).

According to Davies and Harré (1990), such viewings enable narrators to position and locate themselves in the stories by bringing together subjective lived histories with symbolic interrelations of the self and the context. As such, they facilitated dissemination by being non-restrictive: independent of context and language. It is for this reason and to distance aesthetic and semantic expectations that I hereafter utilize the term “visual manifestations,” rather than “visual storytelling” or “visual narratives.”

The practice of visualization was also useful during the narrative process, as I used family images to transport me back to lived experiences. I also used images to explain innermost feelings when I could not find the words and to document and generate memories of my teaching and learning experiences. Pink (2006) confirms the value of using reflexive representations of knowledge and experience in combination with written theoretical, descriptive, pedagogical, and applied anthropological narratives. This is confirmed by O’Neill and Harindranath (2006) in their investigation of the representation of life history narratives in imagery, poetry, and creative writing, which produce alternative ways of representing, “*narratives of self-making, fostering ethical communication, producing counter-hegemonic discourses and critical texts that may mobilize change*” (p. 51).

In sum, my research question was the anchor for my literature review, whereby I utilized several secondary resources, namely university reading lists, journals, displays, conference notes, researcher networks, newspapers, websites, visuals, and literary recollections. As such, the literature review and theoretical framework provided a point of departure for the exploration of my own educational journey to probe contemporary issues such as bureaucratic failings, class tensions, and racial misunderstandings. This was also construed through other BME educators’ differing but relevant perspectives as they narrated their own educational journeys, which I used as a secondary source of data to support the philosophical underpinnings of my thesis (Andrei, 1945; Dewey, 1958, 1988; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1998, 2000). Their stories and narratives provide a structure to help us understand the world.

By adopting such a stance, I was able to draw from a framework of studies, namely Black feminist methodologies, Caribbean colonial and postcolonial histories and conditions (Tong, 1989; Collins, 1990; Hooks et al., 1994), Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2008; Bhopal, 2018) and critical race theory, as defined by Yosso (2005). The latter reminds us that although race is a significant factor in understanding some of the experiences of BME educators, “*focus should also be placed on the array of cultural knowledge, skills,*

abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged” (p. 69).

It is hoped that such a framework will enable you to reflect on and understand how I internalize my daily experiences, and thus gain insights into, “*the inside ideas that allow Black women to cope with and, in most cases, transcend the confines of race, class, and gender oppression*” (Collins, 1990, p. 93). This said, we are also reminded by Kwhali (2017) that, ultimately, we each have our own stories and cannot really know what it is to be another color or gender and cannot have the exact experiences that “*the other*” may have:

“Yet, I also know that my story will find resonance in the stories of sisters and brothers of different skin shades, ages, and genders. That is because my story is also their story in its context if not in its detail. I can tell my story because I stand on the shoulders of generations of Black people who have sacrificed their lives, freedoms and opportunities to secure the advancements I now enjoy” (pg 22).

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INSIGHTS

Rather than findings, Chang (2008) uses the term “insights” to describe the self-understanding articulated from an autoethnography and the autoethnographic process. The experiences detailed in the contextual section of this paper; the arrival of the former colonists to Britain and the female BME educators in “*the ivory tower*,” mirror my experiences both personally and professionally. By critically reflecting on these experiences, I have gained valuable insights into who I am as a female BME educator. In turn these insights form the crux of the recommendations on ways educators, educational leaders, and academic researchers can help improve conditions for the BME community as leverage for learning. Notably, by conducting your own autoethnography, you will gain a different set of insights as you give meaning to your own experiences.

Reflective Insight 1: Life Stories

Life stories are universal forms by which people interpret their experiences, verify their identities, justify their actions and myths, give meaning to memories and events, and make forecasts about how situations will evolve. There are many reasons to explore educator’s stories, firstly, such narratives offer a rich platform from which to reflect on and explore educational practices in relation to history and culture from several theoretical perspectives: as an embodied practice, as a performance of spectacle, and as an expression of identity. However, as per the Igbo proverb, “*Until the lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt will always end in favor of the hunters*” (Anon). Here we are reminded that a large percentage of storytellers and storymakers have been silenced and that the stories passed down through the generations maybe biased, one-sided, and even lack validity. Essentially, according to the Igbo feminist author (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2009), all stories are defined by the principle of “*nkali*,” which is the power in how they are told, who gets to tell

them, when they are told, and how many are told. She reminds us that there is danger in a single story: it creates stereotypes and makes the story become the only story. As such, there should never be a single story about any place or anyone.

Yet it is the American mythologist Joseph Campbell who adds that regardless of their origin or time of creation, a common pattern exists beneath all narratives. He is credited with having coined the concept of the “*monomyth*,” which refers to the theory that all mythic narratives are variations of a single great story, and perhaps one of his most widely cited pieces of work demonstrating this is “*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*” (Campbell, 1949). Here, he uses myths, stories, and metaphors to illustrate how the heroic self can overcome struggles to gain invaluable knowledge.

Practitioners of Caribbean literature will further testify that such literary devices have always been used within the region as a forum to engage wide and non-literary audiences with social and political issues; they are a source of historical and cultural remembering (Machiorlatti, 2005) and are often an expression of regional peculiarities. An example of the latter is the popular Jamaican myth of “*Jackmandora*,” who is the keeper of stories, and the phrase “*Jackmandora mi nu choose nun*” is always used by the narrator to signify the end of the story. Literally translated, the phrase means: “*I have told you this story the way I received it; as such, I am but the messenger and not responsible for its content*”.

For me as a female BME educator the creation and reflection on my personal and professional lived stories has provided continuity and integration of my past, present, and foreseeable future experiences. However, by critically analyzing the experiences and achievement of other female BME educators, I have also come to realize that personal and professional stories have the ability to create change or entrench positive or negative perceptions of the self within educational institutions. Both scenarios raise questions as to who should give value and meaning to narratives in our HEIs? Ultimately, educational leaders need to create spaces for all educator’s life stories to be used as a source of data and to be told by the people who have experienced them, for as we are reminded by Mirza (2017), “*we must tell our stories, or others will tell them for us... our stories must be told*” (p. 41).

Reflective Insight 2: Ways of Knowing

Based on the previous insight, we see that experiences are carried forward and influence future experiences, and as such both positive and negative traits, and ideologies maybe passed down from one generation to the next. Hence, as a female BME student cum educator many of my understandings have been built on the remnants of slavery and colonization. This ultimately has an impact on my judgements and the perceptions upon which these judgements are made. As a consequence, negative practices, and experiences may require a process of historical transformation and some recognition of injustice and repair.

Admittedly, this cannot only be addressed from an educational perspective, since such a climate was created from political and social injustices and the majority of the Black community is still waiting for at least the acknowledgment that

such oppression was wrong. However, the effects of slavery and colonization are proliferated with the perpetuation of privileging certain ways of knowing or undervaluing and underutilising Black cultural capital (Vincent, 1996; Crozier, 2001) in educational settings. As such, HEIs must endorse that the BME populace possesses great amounts of cultural capital, contrary to the dominant view of what is considered knowledge (Tate and Gabriel, 2017, p. 28). Further, they must make usage of cultural markers and dominant and non-dominant cultural capital to advantage BME groups (Carter, 2005).

By conducting my autoethnography, I have come to embrace other forms of knowledge, been encouraged to develop new ways of thinking (Walby, 2007), and have come to understand how broader social forces influence schooling and the curriculum. Consequentially, I have come to make the needs and interests of migrant and oppressed people central to my teaching practice. In doing so, I continuously reflect on the notion that a “one-size-fits-all” education system is no longer applicable, and embrace the value to be gained by exploring alterity or, as Hall suggests, the “*recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity: by a conception of identity that lives with and through as process, the idea of difference; by hybridity*” (Hall, 1993, p. 395).

Reflective Insight 3: It Takes a Village

Educational experience is not confined to a classroom but extends to include personal and professional contexts, backgrounds, and histories. It is reliant on perceptions and conceptions which affect everyday thoughts and actions. As such, social well-being must be the guiding principal in educational institutions and values, beliefs, feelings, interests, and desires should be studied in close relation with objects, events, and persons or rather in their genetic and causal sequences. More specifically, consideration needs to be given to the cohesion between BME educators’ home/work environments and the work itself and BME identity constructs need to be reflected in the HEI’s core value system.

This insight also builds on the previous, in that it calls on all educators to gain knowledge of the communities in which they work, the school setting, specific students, and of students’ backgrounds, families, particular strengths, weaknesses, and interests, and to design their curricular accordingly. By analyzing my lessons as part of my research process, I have come to realize the importance of knowing who my students are and have a heightened awareness of the multiple ethical paradigms of justice, critique, care, and the profession’ (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2011) in their preparation and delivery.

Reflective Insight 4: Epistemic Messages

Our value process is the result of ongoing transactions between the self and the environment; it starts with knowing and understanding ourselves and only then can we begin to understand “others,” which in turn leads to the formation of a sense of identity, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence, as well as a genuine respect for others. Once again, this insight builds on the previous insight to remind educators that every statement they make in the classroom is value-laden and somehow connected to their own ideas about the purpose of

education. As such epistemic messages are embedded in their teaching methods, interpretation of subject content and their choice of pedagogical tools: textbooks, stories, visuals, and even in metaphors they use to explain specific concepts. Perhaps even more important is that students interpret these messages based on their own values, beliefs, and experiences, which can either act as positive reinforcement or deterrent to their educational attainment.

Hence, by applying culture to my critical autoethnography, I have come to understand how it can be used to illuminate other cultures (Ellis and Bochner, 1996), uncovered critical issues relating to fellow female BME educators and have come to realize that, because HEIs have not kept pace with shifts in educators' daily realities, they have made it difficult for many of their BME educators to succeed in their profession.

As I conclude this section, I am reminded that, for centuries, Jamaicans have expressed themselves through narratives not simply for the sake of telling them but with a social function in mind. As a female BME student, educator, and migrant, by offering insight into my personal and professional experiences, I hope to have once again highlighted the plight of the female BME educator, and if only by its design, it will reach a wider and more culturally diverse audience than traditional research may have, and someone will listen. However, despite the positive and optimistic personal and professional insights offered, I am also aware that Britain, like the rest of the world, still lives with the consequences of its greed with multiple legacies of race, class, slavery (Rediker, 2007), colonization and diaspora, and whilst *"the slaver remains a ghost ship sailing on the edges of modern consciousness"* (Sayer, 1987, p. 434), I bellow the words of Chief Tacky: *"I'm tired of being a slave!"* (Norman, 1967).

Traveling Shoes

Child: Miss Arowana, Miss Arowana?

Fish: What is it, child?

Child: Are you still there?

Fish: Not if you are going to ask the same fool questions! Blub!

Child: I've learned something.

Fish: Well, go on, child, spit it out!

Child: I reopened my reflective journal to make a final entry. I had been accepted to present my autoethnography at a teachers' conference in Lisbon. Initially, I was thrilled, but as the day drew closer, doubts began to creep in: would it be good enough, would anyone come to listen to me for a whole hour, would I be able to do it, and, most of all, would anyone get it? I recalled Carolyn Ellis writing about her discomfort when presenting a paper at a communication conference:

"My voice cracks. A wave of emotion courses through my body. I stumble in my speech... although the audience's response is warm and generous... I feel pummel. My body, eyes, head, and heart, all ache" (Ellis, 2004, p. 143).

My paper was on the second day of the conference. As I sat through other papers and workshops, I began to consciously assess mine against them. I changed, readjusted, added, subtracted, and

remained concerned. On the day, I walked into an empty room, set up my presentation, and waited. Finally, two women who I had previously met came in, followed by two others, then the latter realized they were at the wrong presentation but stayed anyway. Then a former work colleague came in. With my heart in my shoes, I decided to start, then the door opened and about 20 people walked in!

At one stage during the presentation, I glanced up to see some members of the audience with glazed looks on their faces. Having been given the after-lunch slot, I put it down to boredom or an afternoon dip, but I soldiered on. As I reached the section about my dad, I felt my voice quiver, but then it was almost as if he were there pushing me on, encouraging me, and giving me the confidence to go on. Close to the end, feeling like a teacher who had lost her class, I stopped reading and decided to just explain my motivation for the presentation and my hopes as an educator, apologizing for the weight and length of the paper. I looked up and, to my dismay, several people were crying.

I asked if there were any questions or feedback. In a stunned voice, my former colleague commented that my presentation was a clear indication that, as educators, we really need to spend more time on reflection. Later, he, being a historian, questioned me about the difficulty I must have in forming a family tree. One woman came up and put her arm around me: she had just adopted a small African boy and was now concerned for his future. One of the women who had been crying told me that she was from Liverpool and had recently lost her dad; another had been battling with race in her classroom. Others commented on the style of presentation and the relevance of the methodology to their own work.

*Later that evening, one lady, as she commended me on my presentation, mentioned how much she liked my shoes; at the time, I felt slightly bemused, but today as I look down at my shiny blue shoes, I think of how far I have come and recall Maya Angelo's book *"All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes"* (2010). Only now do I realize and truly value the work of (Denzin, 1989, p. 124), who uses autoethnography to "elicit emotional identification and understanding," and Ellis (1998, p. 4), who aims through her work to "bring life to research and research to life."*

Child: Miss Arowana, Miss Arowana?

Fish: What is it now, child?

Child: Are you still there?

Fish: Yes, child.

Child: Well, what do you think?

Fish: Blub blub. What did your father say before you left Jamaica?

Child: "If dis a foot nuh find it, dis one will!"

Fish: Spoken like a true Jamaican! Yes, child, you have learned. Say child, what year is it?

Child: 2020.

"Jackmandora mi nuh choose none!"

CONCLUSION AND BROADER IMPLICATIONS

This paper has highlighted the power of autoethnography by examining the personal and professional experiences of female BME educators' in HEI, wherein they are underrepresented, and account for a small minority of those in receipt of professorship or leadership roles. Through this cultural- critical

autoethnography, I have illustrated the complexity of issues, explored relational personal experiences, and in this section will attempt to present a way forward to resolving them. Regrettably, there are no quick fix solutions and whilst there are some who are resigned to accept “*the near impossibility of reconciling the personal with the HEI sector due to the epistemology of Whiteness, maleness and class divisions*” (Kwhali, 2017, p. 5), in this concluding section I attempt to offer potential ways forward; supported by the reflection of personal and professional stories and narratives to create an understanding of everyday experiences, and thus a harbinger for change.

As illustrated throughout this paper, there are many reasons to explore educators’ stories, firstly, such narratives offer a rich platform from which to reflect on and explore educational practices in relation to history and culture from several theoretical perspectives: as an embodied practice, as a performance of spectacle, and as an expression of identity. For educational leaders, the ability to manage any form of knowledge is essential to improving professional development and teaching practices. More specifically, when that knowledge is informed by culture, perception, historical and daily experiences, and our relationship with others it can lead to a better understanding of our own personal and professional identities.

However, whilst acknowledging that people growing up in a similar social environment, positioned in a similar way within a social space, and following similar life trajectories will ultimately share similar experiences, I do not suggest that the experiences or the impacts of these experiences are entirely exclusive to any one ethnic group. Neither do I suggest that all Black people have the same personal or professional experiences. I acknowledge that the ways in which people’s experiences intersect may vary based on the individual choices they make, the opportunities they seize, and their perceptions of these experiences.

This said, educators themselves must be held accountable for; practicing effective elements of caring and concern, reflecting on the role of their institution’s climate and on society’s role in education, and for critically examining the underlying curriculum in order to identify stereotypes and biases often demonstrated through educator’s narratives and storytelling (Taggart et al., 2005). Unfortunately, in the community of academia, there are too few Black authors or educators to address the everyday life experiences or perceptions of racism on academic educational attainment. Davies and Harré (1990) address the historical absenteeism and “voicelessness” of critical and creative texts written by Caribbean female writers, which she attributes to sexism, Eurocentricity, and colonialism. I surmise that there is also the dilemma of not being heard, and rather than shouting and getting angry, resulting in “racial battle fatigue” (Smith, 2004) perhaps BME educators must consider that maybe we are speaking to the wrong people, and therefore since women in general are at a disadvantage in the HEI system, these conversations need to be had with the dominant group; White males.

Furthermore, the few female BME educators who have gained the coveted positions in HEI’s may unwittingly be contributing to the own demise, by continuing to explore stereotypical diaspora subject positions in their writing and in the stories, they tell themselves, about themselves. Hence, there needs to be more research by BME communities, focusing on other markers than just race, we must encourage new ways of thinking (Walby, 2007), and expand the ways that we analyse our oppression (Brown and William-White, 2010). Furthermore, it is of very little use, to conduct research, if the people it was meant to help, they themselves have no access to it. As such, Gordon and Anderson in *The African Diaspora: Toward an Ethnography of Diasporic Identification* (1999) call for “an ethnography of diaspora” that includes new forms of diasporic politics and identification; “*to express individual and collective identity through patterns of consumption, style and everyday cultural exchange*” (p. 1).

To reiterate, although the legacy of slavery is historically entrenched in education, society, and family lives, and thus holds some accountability for the negative educational achievement of BME educators and students in HEIs, there needs to be a global collaboration of BME educators, scholars, and practitioners working toward educational equity. Big questions need to be asked and more research needs to be conducted into why the BME populace do not excel as well as their White counterparts in general. Autoethnographic research into these domains may well be productive in not only producing theoretical and empirical findings but also in presenting possibilities for understanding the impact of these historical and cultural experiences, the impact of governmental and educational policies, and the persistent negative images and experiences of BME individuals in education.

Now that I have raised a number of wider issues and implications regarding the experience of BME educators and their students, in order to invoke change it is important to build and sustain a community of practice (Wenger, 2000) around the change process. By identifying and involving key participants from within the field it is hoped that it will help to drive the process forward. Hence, in **Figure 2**, and based on the insights gleaned through the research process (Kappert, 2018), I suggest some activities and procedures needed to implement and sustain new practice whilst making recommendations as to where the onus may be placed; *What can be done?* (Arday and Mirza, 2018).

In sum, throughout this paper I have sought to demonstrate why personal identity and social identity constructs must be a central part of educators’ professional development; in turn, their identity constructs must somehow be reflected in the institution’s in which they work, core value system (Korthagen, 2004; Lopes et al., 2004; Sachs, 2005; Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). In doing so, I hope to have reinforced the need for all educators to understand how broader social forces influence schooling and the curriculum and to make the needs and interests of migrant and oppressed people central to their teaching practice (McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2001).

What can be done?	Educational Leaders	Educators	Academic Researchers
Use multiple sources of evidence to support personal opinion, and of hard evidence to support soft impressions.			✓
Wider use of and provision for practice-based inquiries and reflection in the professional development of all educators	✓		
Large-scale research conducted at universities and institutes of higher learning to gain a better understanding of issues that cause; or are perceived as, discrimination.	✓		✓
Consideration of individual epistemic beliefs when planning lessons, in order to help to close the alleged educational attainment gap in educational institutions in Britain.	✓		
Move beyond discussing representation, interpretation, and dissemination of narratives, which only determine what can and cannot be said, heard or publicly asked (Hackett and Rolston, 2009: 357).			✓
Wider use and provision of practice-based inquiries and reflection in the professional development of educators and educator education programmes.	✓		
Development of an agreed autoethnographic analytic structure in order to fulfil academic and Doctoral criteria.			✓
Reflection on the impact of personal experiences on career progression and reconsideration of methods, stories, and images used in class.	✓		
Conduct more research into the historical factors, which bear relation to the low educational attainment of Black professionals in academia.			✓
Investment in areas such as curriculum development and the writing of new syllabi aimed at increasing migrant students' educational attainment.	✓		
Conduct more research into tracing ancestral roots and the creation of spaces in which trans medial narratives can be viewed, experienced and shared.			✓
Provision of professional development initiatives that target the enhancement of transnational's effectiveness through the utilization of personal beliefs, values, attitudes and intercultural behaviour in education.	✓		
Conduct more research into the value of interdisciplinary practice: what may be lost and what is to be gained from such borrowings?			✓
Conduct more research into to understanding why BME students and educators underachieve in education, by using personal experiences and narratives			✓

FIGURE 2 | Learning from the story (Source: Kappert, 2018).

As such, it is hoped that this paper has contributed both in terms of its methodology and in terms of its content to a wider more inclusive form of knowledge. Autoethnography has historically been underutilized in the field of education and there has been very little documented as to its potential in gaining insights into the teaching and learning process. By example, most of the research regarding personal epistemology relates to university and college students and more could be done to acknowledge that a link may exist between students' intellectual development and their educators' knowledge, which according to Siping (2010) eventually decides on how effectively educators teach and how well students learn. In contrast, the narrative is at the core of pedagogy, with educators divulging knowledge by the means of the known to the unknown and as such through personal stories. Both provide rich sources of data, requiring further interdisciplinary research into their usage and dissemination.

My own personal and professional insights from conducting this autoethnography are two-fold; as a BME learner and as a BME educator. From both sets, I am able to conclude that more research needs to be conducted into how negative educational trajectories have been created and experienced across generations in order to develop understanding and to offer a definitive attempt to prevent their future continuum. And, although I had no eureka moment of radical transformation whilst conducting this autoethnography: the cycle of writing, reflecting and interpreting data, has taught me new things about myself as an educator, and even more so as a learner. I have become better able to confirm things I already knew about myself and of the context in which I have written my stories. I find myself no longer jumping to conclusions but rather applying a more rational approach as to how I perceive new experiences and eventually am able to link them to broader social implications and contexts. This sense of connectedness according to (Chang, 2008) minimizes cultural misunderstandings, heightens an awareness

of cultural sensitivity and thus leads to self-reflection, self-discovery, and self-transformation.

I hope to use the knowledge gathered to help other educators reflect on the consequences of passing on their norms values and epistemic beliefs to their students, for parents to consider the criteria by which they select their children's schools, for students to use their personal experiences as leverage for learning and for school leaders to consider the various institutional forms by which culture is passed on particularly in school practices; to advance understanding of the factors that shape the educational life course of migrants and highlight links between everyday experiences and teaching, in order to improve academic success.

Finally, I urge all educational leaders and their faculty to work together to evaluate practice; influence curriculum (re)design, systems, and processes, encourage experimentation, and create nodes for knowledge diffusion. Lasley (1992) puts forward that educators are accountable for; practicing effective elements of caring and concern, reflecting on the role of the school climate and on society's role in education, and for critically examining the underlying curriculum in order to identify stereotypes and biases often demonstrated through educator's narratives and storytelling.

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- "Autoethnography opened my eyes to see who I am. Autoethnography opened my mind to realize who I am. Autoethnography opened my soul to understand what I am doing and what I need to do" (Belbase et al., 2008, p. 9).
- ## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
- The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.
- ## ETHICS STATEMENT
- Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.
- ## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS
- The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.
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Black Women Leading Education for Social Justice in the Region of Baixada Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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This paper explores the interface between the fields of Education and Communication with respect to developing narratives that can identify leadership among women who live daily with social inequalities and violence. These studies, debates, and research took place at the AFRODIÁSPORAS Research Center on Black Women, Audiovisual Culture, and Educommunication in Urban Peripheries at the Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ) School of Education from Baixada Fluminense (FEBF), Duque de Caxias city, RJ, Brazil. Two studies were chosen as examples of the specific leadership developed by black women using concepts from Education, Communication, Intersectionality, and a daily struggle against prejudice and racism. The first study reports the experiences of a black deaf woman who teaches sign language alongside the history and culture of black deaf people. The second introduces a young black filmmaker who produces new portrayals of the Baixada Fluminense (BF) region.

Findings: Both studies show the authorship of the interviewees, demonstrating that education and black consciousness empower people to become leaders who respond to social exclusion. Non-formal education has been employed as a method to propagate narratives refuting stereotypes and colonial beliefs that still appear on the curriculum of formal education and in hegemonic media. These two young black women are protagonists, educommunicators, social activists, and leaders.

Keywords: black women, leaders, communication-education interface, black women, leaders, communication-education interface, deafness, filmmaker

INTRODUCTION—WHO WE ARE

As a member of the social justice-focused international network Women Leading Education Across Continents (WLE), which launched in 2007, Rosangela Malachias, the first author, made contact with the leadership concept as a main issue in the education field. In 2015, she became a professor in the Department of Sciences and Education Fundamentals and coordinator of the AFRODIÁSPORAS Research Center at the School of Education from Baixada Fluminense (FEBF) at Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ), hereafter referred to as UERJ-FEBF. This provided her with the opportunity to start local

investigations from the perspective of leadership conceptualization across the continents.

It is essential to explain that, in Brazil, the concept of “leadership” (“Liderança,” in Portuguese) is not regularly employed in Education courses but often appears in Business, Administration, and Economics, such as in research about “Women and leadership: obstacles and gender expectations in managerial positions” (Hryniewicz and Vianna, 2018, p. 332–334), and in Public Health, emphasizing “education, leadership, and development of partnerships in the field of nursing” (Mendes et al., 2016, p. 4) and identifying the “relevance of leadership and its context of development, in which Nursing students can be leaders” (Neves and Sanna, 2016, p. 734; 736–739). Religion courses also consider leadership as an important concept. Silva and Holanda (2008, p. 378–379) presented the experiences of “pleasure and suffering” of religious leaders; Silva (2009, p. 276) studied the relationship between “religion, sexuality, and power” in religious and political leadership in the Pentecostal Church. However, we did find scientific articles written in Portuguese about “leadership in Education” related to schools, teachers, and administrators from Portugal (Costa and Bento, 2015; Neves and Coimbra, 2019). Further conceptualization of educational leadership in the Brazilian context is needed.

Social justice, human rights, and intersectionality became the theoretical framework and basis of this new line of research on Women Educators in Baixada Fluminense (BF). Most are leaders, albeit they are not conscious of their protagonist role. Because of this, our studies identify the process of *educomunicação* (educommunication) and advocacy praxis (Malachias, 2017), facilitating themes such as inclusion, legislation, deafness, cinema, and social media.

Duque de Caxias, where UERJ-FEBF is located, is one of twelve dormitory cities that belong to Rio de Janeiro metropolitan region called Baixada Fluminense (BF). These cities are Belford Roxo, Duque de Caxias, Guapimirim, Itaguaí, Japeri, Magé, Mesquita, Nilópolis, Nova Iguaçu, Paracambi, Queimados, São João de Meriti, and Seropédica. BF is known by high levels of violence. Since 2016, Duque de Caxias has led on incidents of domestic violence and femicide in the region.

The concept of social justice generates tensions because it is multiple (Gewirtz and Cribb, 2011). According to Rawls (2002), social justice can be understood as “the way in which the main institutions [...] distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the distribution of advantages of social cooperation” (Rawls, 2002, p. 6). The absence of public policies and political commitment can partially explain the reality of exclusion in the BF region.

During four and a half centuries of slavery, black bodies were legally treated as moving objects and targets of violence (torture, beatings, and death). In the nineteenth century, Duque de Caxias had a seaport where millions of slaves were brought to Brazil. This continued after the ban on the slave trade (1850), and, still today, the region has the largest population of African descent in Rio de Janeiro state.

In the twenty-first century, the bodies of black men, women, and children remain dehumanized. Daily racist manifestations take place on the streets, in football stadiums, in classrooms, on

the internet—with prolific name-calling such as “monkey, black, rubbish!” (Malachias, 2019, p. 153).

Brazilian studies on black people in education have contributed to the gradual recognition, still ongoing, of the legitimacy of the claims made by the black population against social and economic inequalities, barriers to accessing education, and low student retention regardless of whether there is affirmative action or not. A huge emphasis has been on reforming the curriculum in basic education by including the history and culture of excluded populations, such as the indigenous peoples and African descendants.

According to Malachias (2019, p. 149), the studies by black scholars about black people’s portrayal in the media center on the absence of good representation and the abundant use of stereotypes. Gonzalez (1988) denounced theoretically the delimitation of black women’s bodies as spaces aimed at servitude and sexuality. Therefore, steeped in this symbolism, soap operas, advertising, and publicity still exclude black people, who would not fit as a positive referential model. Class exploitation and racial oppression are articulated and work as an effective mechanism that denies blacks access to material and symbolic goods (Hasenbalg, 1979). Of course, this has been changing slowly, and this can be understood to have occurred due to an enhancement of economic power on the part of black customers. But despite the changing nature of racism, it totally or partially denies black humanity (Gonzalez and Hasenbalg, 1982).

With respect to education, Pinto (1993), one of the pioneers in researching black people’s schooling in the twentieth century, highlighted actions of the Black Movement in the 1930s—*Frente Negra Brasileira* (FNB)/Brazilian Black Front and other institutions such as the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (MNU)/United Black Movement. For her:

(...) if before the black simply wanted to educate himself (*sic*), gradually he also starts to demand from the formal educational system and Brazilian society, the recognition of his culture, his way of being, and his history. It is an effort that aimed not only at changing the minds of white people but mainly at strengthening the ethnic identity of black people (Pinto, 1993, p. 28).

Considering centuries of slavery and the action of European colonialism as a civilizing paradigm supported by multiple forms of knowledge erasure of those of indigenous and African origin, resistance still happens. Women’s struggle for access to social justice is an intercontinental demand, but it is also a Brazilian need for the poor and black populations. Both resistance and leadership movements face silencing about human rights and the normalization of stereotypes.

If we already know that the print, fictional, and audio texts about BF are intersected by stereotypes reinforcing inequalities, how can (black) women develop strategies in the fields of education and communication to confront prejudice, sexism, and racism?

Working at UERJ-FEBF we could observe that local and social movements have been working in order to develop practices and speeches against the violence and stereotypes persistently directed to this region. These actions occur mainly in the spheres

of culture, such as music and cinema, education, and community-building for the defense of rights (Malachias et al., 2018).

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The AFRODIÁSPORAS Research Center was launched in 2016 as a space created to bring together researchers, students, members of social movements or collectives, and other interested people from the Rio de Janeiro community who are committed to dismantling racism. The research addresses black feminism; black women; cultural production, audiovisual culture with black agents as protagonists; black and African photography and cinema; schooling processes and access to higher education for the black population; studies on the trajectories of black subjects; the thought of black intellectuals made invisible by the academy. All of these topics can be deepened by the interfacing of Communication and Education in ethnic-racial and gender relations, intersectionality, media studies, educommunication methodology, and advocacy practices.

The condition of being black women researchers makes us assume a leadership identity expressed in the first person—I/We (Malachias, 2018). This option sets our thoughts on self-definition and self-assessment (Collins, 2016). Other black scholars did the same in studies about teachers (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997) or women of color artists because “their lives and contributions provide a readily accessible induction process into professional pathways where women of color are perpetually ‘othered’” (Santamaria and Jaramillo, 2014, p. 318).

Students from UERJ-FEBF and educators who work in public schools at Baixada Fluminense, RJ, Brazil, are the target audience of AFRODIÁSPORAS. They are also leaders in the learning process about “the role of teachers” (Guilherme and Morgan, 2018, p. 783). Together, we are looking for stories, images, metaphors, methods, and theories that can build a local conception of leadership in education, focusing on women who live and/or work in BF.

The organization’s work on the 6th WLE Conference—From the Margins to Centers, in Duque de Caxias, RJ, Brazil (2017) contributed to the development of a new line of research in the AFRODIÁSPORAS Research Center aimed toward an understanding of a local concept of educational leadership related to women (some of them young) who are educators and leaders acting in formal spaces of education, e.g., schools and universities, but also working in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and cultural forums, that is, non-formal education.

At AFRODIÁSPORAS, non-formal education is framed by Gohn’s (2014) work, which considers it to be an educational process of a sociopolitical, cultural, and pedagogical character that develops learning and affects citizenship formation and the emancipation of subjects.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND EDUCOMMUNICATION

Talking about gender theory, Lumby (2015, p. 158) emphasized that “the advent of intersectionality theory challenged the methodological limitations of the field.”

For her, “intersectionality demands more sophisticated methods for researching the complexity of individual lives” (Lumby, 2015, p. 158).

In the 1980s, Lélia Gonzalez, the black anthropologist and activist founder of MNU denounced the incapacity of the Feminist Movement—mostly composed by white women (housewives)—to understand the needs of black women (maids) (Gonzalez, 2008). Gonzalez introduced race/ethnicity and gender as intertwined categories in the class struggle for social and economic mobility (Gonzalez and Hasenbalg, 1982). Audre Lorde had already questioned white feminists whether they know “how do you deal with the fact that the women who clean your houses and tend your children while you attend conferences on feminist theory are, for the most part, poor women and women of Color? What is the theory behind racist feminism?” (Lorde, 1984).

This was the beginning of intersectional theorization. Some years later, Kemberlé Crenshaw gives us a name for the concept.

Intersectionality is a conceptualization of the problem that seeks to capture the structural and dynamic consequences of interaction between two or more axes of subordination. It deals specifically with the way in which racism, patriarchalism, class oppression, and other discriminatory systems create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes, and others (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 177).

Another Brazilian black activist and medical doctor, Jurema Werneck, stresses that intersectionality shows differences including those among people who are victimized by racism. The concept enables the elaboration of tools, methods, and understanding (Werneck, 2016, p. 543). That is what happened in 2016 during the Black Awareness Week program organized by members of the AFRODIÁSPORAS Research Center. Three researchers (one man and two women) were invited to talk about their living conditions—they are deaf black people who speak by using LIBRAS (Brazilian Language of Signals). They silenced the audience, including me, Malachias, a black woman, activist, and researcher. How and why had I never thought about those differences?

Collins (2016) classifies the sociological steps taken by black women when they write about themselves. As an advisor, self-evaluation was my first step before accepting, 2 months later, the supervision of a student, Laudino, who had attended the three lectures and defined her theme: Black Deaf People and Double Difference.

Two Pillars of Education (Delors, 2000)—learning to know and learning to learn—were elected to guide our steps in the direction of blackness and deafness as categories of difference. Our key references were Furtado (2012) from Brazil and Hairston and Smith (1983) from the United States. Both authors have black deaf people as subjects from their work. In addition, this new approach would be crossed with intersectional considerations—race, ethnicity, deafness, audition, class, gender, age, schooling, etc.

One year later, we registered at the National Conference of Social Inclusion of the Deaf Black in Florianópolis city, Santa Catarina state, our presentation entitled “Learning to Know: Deaf Black People” (Laudino, 2019), and it was accepted in the “listeners” category. It is important to

explain that the content, at that moment, was until Project of Research.

The first day of the conference was dedicated to the initial procedures of methodology. As listeners, we needed help to complete interviews. We explained the proposal to a deaf interpreter who was attending the conference and working in the organization helping listeners. She was a white student, literate in LIBRAS and Portuguese and an expert in reading lips. The color identification of this interpreter was mentioned, obeying the necessary intersectionality due to the theme of this work. Racism and racial prejudice, although present in Brazilian society, are not always understood by people, including in academic spaces. Logically, before starting the five interviews with black deaf people and filming them, the topic “learning to learn” was explained, and consent was given by them after a detailed explanation of the research objectives. Three broad questions were asked: (1) “How do you see the process of raising awareness among Deaf Black people?” (2) “How do you observe the inclusion process in society?” (3) “How do you participate in society?”

For this article, we chose to present only one interview of the four conducted during the conference. The fifth interview was with a young high school student and was conducted at a public library in Rio de Janeiro. Ethical procedures had been followed, including providing an explanation of the research and securing informed consent, in the case of the school student from her mother. Soon, we aim to publish a specific text about the five black deaf people interviewed. The research was finalized and formally presented in May 2019.

Here, we hope to demonstrate how this black deaf woman can be classified as a leader in education, as can the young filmmaker protagonist of the second research described later. As educommunication praxis demands, different ecosystems were considered in a democratic process.

During the seventies and eighties, when a dictatorship context pertained in Latin American countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, two authors, the Brazilian Paulo Freire and the Uruguayan Mario Kaplun, were considered pioneers in the praxis of education as communication. The first introduced liberating education as a real possibility (Freire, 1987), and the second one considered that educating yourself is getting involved in a process of multiple communicative flows (Kaplun, 1999). It was a way of linking the fields of education with communication or shedding light on their interface, showing relevance to the critical development of media literacy, and defending the right of individuals to produce information and communication.

For Silva and Viana (2019, p. 8) “educommunication is concept and praxis” and it also occurs in artistic production. Indeed, not only schools but social spaces as a whole (institutions, companies) present communicative ecosystems (Soares, 2000) that promote the development of an awareness of the necessary management of communication processes. However, educational spaces need to develop democratic communication management.

Empowerment is a better word to define this young tenured professor, P. L. A. Ferreira, who is a black woman and an educator linked to the Federal University of Western Bahia located in the north of Brazil. Ferreira is the vice coordinator of the National

Federation of Education and Integration of the Deaf (Feneis). Her academic resume (*) presents her life experience, and, in it, social activism walks together with formal education but also with cultural practices, in which the communication and education interface appears. Ferreira was chosen as a lecturer of the National Conference of Black Deaf People (2017) and, years ago, in 2012, worked as an actress in a short film called “Jovem Força Surda 3” [Young Deaf Force 3] exhibited at the III Meeting of Young Deaf People in the Northeast (3rd EJSNE) in Ceará state.

*“several experiences in national movements: leader of the Deaf Movement in favor of Deaf Education and Culture in Bahia; Leader of the Black Deaf Movement in Brazil, and Leader of the Young Deaf Movement in João Pessoa and Salvador.”

Ferreira shared perceptions and subjectivities of her own constitution as a black deaf woman:

“First comes the discussion about being black and then about being deaf, due to the fact that visually speaking, it is the aspect that first draws attention and secondly the issue of being a deaf person. (...) I am proud of my black identity and culture. Before, I had no identity, but I assumed it, and I am proud to be a deaf black woman and not feel myself inferior. It is important to say [teach] about my ancestors, as it says a lot about my own history (...)” (Ferreira, 2017, interview; Ferreira, 2018, p. 16).

The first perception being about color (race/ethnicity) was also stressed by all the coordinators of the Conference. In the Portuguese language black deaf (“negro surdo”) or deaf black (“surdo negro”) have the same meaning but, in the intersectionality approach, the first noun illustrates its relevance. For this reason, the Portuguese word “Negros” (Blacks) is in the first position in the conference name. As stated before, our role as researchers and “listeners” obliged us to ask for help from a translator. In that space, we were like non-Portuguese speakers who were communicating in Portuguese, the second language for that audience who were fluent in LIBRAS.

According to Skliar and Quadros, “the deaf social group treats as different from them, those (listeners) who are unaware of their visual experiences” (Skliar and Quadros, 2000, p. 15).

Deafness cannot be reduced to a pathology, which considers the deaf person as disabled and therefore focuses, all attitudes, educational and social, on hearing. To achieve this, medical interventions are carried out, speech therapy to increase listening capacity, to correct any “anomaly” (Calixto, 2018, p. 104). The other conception does not consider deafness as a disability but rather as a cultural difference mediated by symbolic communication, the sign language.

Blackness linked to deafness is a new theoretical issue in Brazil. Furtado (2012) brought this theme to the fore by focusing on the “double difference.” For her, there is a prejudice against the cultural diversity of the deaf person in Brazilian society that refuses LIBRAS as a first language to the deaf and avoids talking about racism. These two behaviors show prejudice against sign language and maintenance of the belief in Portuguese language orality as the best conduct for deaf literacy. In the case of racism, the Brazilian myth of racial democracy is still propagated, in contradiction to the historical struggle of black movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Talking about LIBRAS literacy, Ferreira stressed that black consciousness is very important and can be enhanced when people learn the LIBRAS language. However, she criticized non-compliance with federal laws [10.436/2002—decree number 5626/2005], which makes the teaching of LIBRAS compulsory and the laws [10639/2003-11645/2008] that also make the teaching of the history and culture of Afro-Brazilian, African, and Indigenous people compulsory. The legislation also mandates the presence of an interpreter in schools and universities, but there is not complete compliance because most school administrators do not know about the federal legislation and how they can ask for support in implementing public policies. This demand has long been debated by black deaf people in annual conferences, as Ferreira states:

“Deaf people do not access the same curricular content as listening students because there is a lack of adaptation and improvement of teaching materials and resources. This lack of methodology and materials adapted for the deaf in the academic and school environment occurs regarding the contents already enshrined in the official curriculum and those about ethnic-racial relations because we are a linguistic minority” (Ferreira, 2017, interview).

Focusing on this situation through an intersectionality lens, this “lack of access to content about ethnic-racial relations has implications for the way these subjects construct representations about being deaf black” (Ferreira, 2017, interview).

The response about what her social role is reveals criticism and hope. Ferreira said that “LIBRAS literacy is a right still accessible for few people, and prejudice against the black population is huge, but an awareness about equity is growing in the society and this can help the struggle for rights” (Ferreira, 2017, interview).

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

Poverty, disparities, and violence are some words employed in mainstream media about the BF region; however, the interfaces between female activism, popular cinema, and education have valued the local history and culture, creating new realities and subjectivities. With little or no financial support, the films made at BF enable a process of leadership, activism, and the authorship of filmmakers.

One of these creators is Lu Brasil (LB). Her work was chosen as a focus at the AFRODIÁSPORAS Research Center. The theoretical knowledge about education, together with her choices of places and cinematic frames, became a vehicle for counter-hegemonic narratives, a way to display images and develop metaphors about the BF region. We identified her movies and graffiti art as practices of educommunication inside a non-formal education process.

So, how might we interview a filmmaker? By filming her. This method was also suggested by LB herself. She wanted to be interviewed together with a group of young women filmmakers having the FEBF's building as the scenario. After a few attempts to schedule this appointment, without success, this meeting was canceled because of calendar incompatibility. Because of this, LB

went alone to FEBF. Before filming her, she gave consent for her testimony to be published and answered a previous questionnaire sent to her by email. LB defined herself as being “a young black woman, graffiti artist, filmmaker, actress, and pedagogical specialist with a master's degree in Education.”

Her interest in movies started when LB became a student on a short course about film production. It was offered by “Mate com Angú” movie club in Duque de Caxias City. This name celebrates the “Proletarian School of Meriti” built in February 13, 1921, and later named “Doutor Álvaro Alberto,” father of a teacher called Armanda Álvaro Alberto. In the 1920s, Armanda was a teacher and a pioneer because she had an idea: serving tea and milk with cornmeal to poor children who did not learn to read because of famine. The school has received a nickname since its creation in 1921. Mate (Tea) com (with) Angu (Milk plus Cornmeal). It became the first school in Brazil to offer school snacks.

In 2002, the movie club “Mate com Angu” was founded to offer audiovisual culture as another kind of food to nourish the population of BF. It also became possible for local residents to make films without stereotypes, in opposition to regular images and speeches made by hegemonic media.

LB remembers: “And then I got to know this world when I started taking classes there in the Mate Movie Club. I learned with Igor and HB, my teachers. They presented me with a world of possibilities. Understood? That's what Mate is, Mate is the world of possibilities within the audiovisual” (Lu Brasil, 2018, interview).

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) was the first to classify the types of education developed outside the school in his book entitled “The world educational crisis” (1968), defining, without distinction, as non-formal and informal all non-school educational processes. Coombs gave them an intentional character during learning. For Coombs, non-formal education comprises systematic, educational, and organized activities carried out as part of the framework of the official system to facilitate specific types of learning for specific subgroups of the population, both adults and children. According to Gohn (2014), non-formal education aims at learning through new methodological possibilities, resulting from creativity and imagination, and also as collective representations, which lead the subject to understand his socio-political and cultural role. It is pertinent to conceive the space of the movie club “Mate com Angu” as a place that provides cultural activities to its visitors and an educational and non-formal environment that favors social, political, and cultural learning.

The short film entitled “N is my home” made by Lu Brasil received the 2nd place award at the Popular Film Festival run by the movie club “Mate com Angu” in 2017. Using a smartphone, LB portrayed the struggle in favor of the public school Doutor Álvaro Alberto, also called by the nickname Mate com Angu, which runs the risk of being demolished, despite its historical importance, for the construction of a shopping mall.

Questioned about the awarded film, LB said:

Man! A company wants to destroy a school to build a mall, you know? I tried to do something too, because the mall doesn't satisfy me. The cultural circles of poetry and graffiti include me as a person. So I decided to make the film as a protest (Lu Brasil, 2018, interview).

The meaning of film narratives is not exclusively individual but is constructed by the speeches of others who share their ideas, demands, questions, and opinions (Duarte, 2002). LB shared the personal protest but also heard the voices of several families, parents, and children from the local and school community as the agents of education, who are part of the struggle to maintain public education in the Duque de Caxias region. It is necessary for black women to construct their discourses to affirm that they are protagonists and knowledge-making subjects and not objects. Videomaker educator Lu Brasil reports this when she says:

“They say that we are the “Mimimi” [Victimisation] generation. But we really have to talk, we really have to complain, because otherwise, we will always stay in the slave quarters. When we graduate, when we achieve notoriety, visibility, the big house goes crazy... It goes crazy, understand? So if we don’t do that, we never go ahead. [...] Brazil is still a very racist country” (Lu Brasil, 2018, interview).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The absence of rights and services (access to jobs, health, schools, and recreation) is directed to the poor, mainly blacks and non-white people, who depend on social programs and have minimal income. The neoliberal policies, financial market, and local governments concentrate money and power among the hegemonic class, which, simultaneously, fears, excludes, imprisons, and kills the inhabitants of the periphery.

The representation of black women in Brazilian film narratives prioritizes stereotypes. They are marginalized, subordinated characters and are seen as sexual objects due to racial and gender prejudice. “Black women are excluded from directing and script activities and are the least represented group in the casts”; such productions are mostly made by white men, who hold the funding, expressing their narrative power in cinema (Candido and Feres Júnior, 2019, p. 10).

For all these reasons, art, music, and dance recreated by young, peripheral people are components of the Pedagogy of Survival (Oliveira, 2018).

Ferreira and LB have master’s degrees in schooling. Both are social activists because they act for change. LB refutes the stereotypes against the Baixada Fluminense region by producing graffiti and films. Ferreira simultaneously teaches LIBRAS and the history and culture of deaf black people as responses to a kind of hypocrisy that shows that deafness can be accepted and blackness not. Her teaching as in advocacy praxis follows National Guidelines for LIBRAS Teaching (BRAZIL, 2002–2005) and Education of Racial and Ethnic Education (BRAZIL, 2004). These contents are included in formal education in the university

where she works, but Ferreira is also a member of a grassroots national movement—a non-formal education project—for the rights of deaf people. LB promotes workshops for children, teaching them her art and exercising new points of view about “their place,” where they live, study, and play. This praxis of non-formal education aims to reduce violence. Both are black women who are aware of their condition as educators who act as educommunicators, creating visual and teaching materials, and this authorship can strengthen the identities of young women and children. Their lives are crossed by intersectionality.

The recognition of transformative potency inherent to subordinate classes has been one step to a decolonized education. It is not a mere exchange of words minimizing the realities such as femicide, drug traffic, and other crimes that happen in the BF region and other world cities. It is a creative way to learn about and how to access human rights and social justice.

Other black women are also being heard as African Brazilian religious leaders by students under an umbrella project called “Women Leading Education From Baixada Fluminense to the World.” This work includes white women, indigenous women, and refugees... We are learning to learn (Delors, 2000) with them in order to include their experiences of life as cultural, political, and decolonized knowledge from BF. Each one has the potential for leadership and could expand their educational role to other people and places.

The standpoints of researchers and interviewees outlined “the questions we asked and the methods we used” (Shakeshaft, 2015, p. 18) respecting both sides without hierarchy. Happily, we observed the understanding of both interviewees of our limitation as learners. Ironically, this article maintains the limitation resulting from the double translation of the thoughts expressed in LIBRAS into Portuguese and from Portuguese into English. This exercise can be considered a challenge, but without our participation in the WLE Conferences, maybe this effort would not have occurred because, in Brazil, the concept of leadership is not regularly employed in Education courses, as already mentioned above. These two young black women are protagonists, educommunicators, and social activists who defend education and black consciousness. Undeniably, both can and deserve to be classified as Women Leading in Education.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RM: coordinator of Afrodiásporas Research Center advising. LL: research about Black Deaf Women. TB: research about Lu Brasil a young black filmmaker. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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An Exploration of the Metaphors and Images Used to Describe Leadership in Two Different Cultural Contexts

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This paper is developed from qualitative data exploring the metaphors used to describe women's leadership in differing cultural contexts. Metaphors are a useful communication tool, allowing us to understand an idea or concept through some other phenomenon. Understandably, studies of metaphor tend to focus on metaphors deriving from the English language and from Western cultures. Our everyday language literature abounds with metaphors that evoke images of the masculine – including of machines, war and fighting, competition, games and sport. Leadership is generally thought of as “a good thing,” as something important, carried out by people with desirable attributes, such as courage and insight, or with attractive personalities and good communication skills. Metaphors used in discussing women's leadership in many countries may support this approach, but they do so by highlighting the obstacles women face, for example, the glass ceiling, glass cliff, sticky floors, and the labyrinth. This study attempts to break the mold, investigating the understanding of women's leadership as expressed in metaphors that is contextualized differently across the continents. Taking an interpretive approach, this study seeks to present leadership through the understanding of female leaders involved in the field of education broadly defined, from Rwanda and Bangladesh, who gave accounts of their metaphorical conceptualisation of leadership. Using narrative analysis, these accounts were analyzed to identify and interpret the metaphors emerging from descriptions of leadership experiences. The analysis shows that these leaders used metaphors determined by a dynamic interplay of personal, situational, and cultural factors. Somewhat surprisingly, the metaphors used to present leadership are not always based on a local cultural context, with some explicitly including references to European plants, which could be considered exotic. However, they are not metaphors that fit neatly into the taxonomies recognized in the literature. This study makes an important contribution to the literature on leadership, especially leadership in education. It is one of the few studies focussing on the stories of women from a non-Western background. The pool of case studies presented here is limited, but these metaphors represent thinking tools enabling a scholarly and imaginative understanding of women's leadership in education.

Keywords: metaphors, leadership, women, Rwanda, Bangladesh, cultural context

INTRODUCTION

As the literature on women as leaders grows, and discussions of their leadership styles expand, the emphasis continues to be on Western approaches to management and decision-making, often indicating that leadership is a concrete phenomenon, with clear indicators that are innate or that can be developed through deliberate interventions. However, Alvesson and Spicer argue that leadership is not a concrete phenomenon, but rather “something that requires human interpretation and understanding” (2011, 4). This study adopts this approach; it accepts leadership as a concept that exists and is practiced in a given context; to fully grasp how this concept can be understood, a level of interpretation and often of imagination is required.

Understanding something as multi-faceted and intangible as leadership is no easy task, given the complexities of its cultural basis. A positivist approach reducing the concept to measurable variables ensures that the nuances of human interactions, with their inherent cultural understandings are lost. Metaphors have long been acknowledged as a mode of communication which enables some complex, perhaps inexpressible, idea or concept to be expressed in terms of some other phenomenon. In their ground-breaking work, *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) showed how metaphors are so much part of our everyday interactions, that we may not even notice them, but nonetheless, they may influence how we think. Studies of metaphor tend to focus on metaphors deriving from Western cultures, especially in the English language. This study attempts to break that mold, investigating the understanding of leadership as expressed in metaphors by women from two different, non-Western cultures. The power of these metaphors emerges against a background of well-worn metaphors, which may have become shorthand expressions of both what it means to be a leader and also what prevents women in particular from being recognized as leaders.

The reality is that there is greater awareness in the literature and in the workplace of the barriers that women face in reaching not only the highest levels of management but in fulfilling their potential at other levels of organizations. The architectural metaphor of the glass ceiling, where structural elements may impede a woman's progress, came into the vernacular in the 1980s. That its origins are unclear (McGregor, 2016), speaks to the power of the metaphor, which is not only well known but has led to a proliferation of other metaphors to express the impediments to advancement. Some continue with the notion of glass, whereas others focus on the structural element of the ceiling. Whereas the glass ceiling suggests a barrier between levels which is transparent but impermeable, so that those on the floor above can see those below and vice versa without the possibility of passing in either direction, the bamboo ceiling refers to impediments to Asians reaching to the upper levels of the professional world, drawing on a typically Asian building material (Xiao and Handley, 2019). In November 2019 at the African Development Bank Global Gender Summit in Rwanda, Akinwumi Adesina the President of AfDB also referred to impediments, describing the glass ceiling African women leaders experience as a “concrete” ceiling that has to be broken through

by a bulldozer (Adesina, 2019). The glass cliff, a term first coined by researchers Ryan and Alexander, 2005 as the result of an empirical study, carries with it the idea of precarious positions, risk and the likelihood of a fall. A metaphor more commonly found in contemporary times in the gender pay equity debate is that of the sticky floor, which is more likely to refer to women in the middle or lower echelons of an organization, and refers to factors which prevent them getting their career off the ground (Laabs, 1993), such as childcare responsibilities or the demands of a partner's employment. A more recent addition to these metaphors of impediment has been the labyrinth. Eagly and Carli (2007) have argued that the glass ceiling is an outdated metaphor and that it is now apparent that there are many barriers and hindrances to career advancement for women. The labyrinth as a metaphor contains within it the notion of success, the possibility of reaching the center and attaining one's goals. It also suggests complexity, a puzzle to be solved and perhaps the need for strategy. This is not the labyrinth of ancient Greece, which acted to contain the Minotaur, and was the site of the triumph of Theseus, but the maze of modern times, and the various connotations attached to it. The use of the labyrinth of video-gaming, for example, highlights these factors of success, attaining one's goals and the need for a strategy to reach the center.

These metaphors so frequently used in the context of women employees are not metaphors of leadership, but of barriers and threats to advancement and success, explaining discrimination toward women aspiring to leadership positions (Smith et al., 2012). This is at odds with the way metaphors are used to reflect what seems to be presented as a gender-neutral construct of leadership. According to Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, metaphors present a discursive understanding of leadership. They are not merely wordplay but present an experiential approach to leadership. Taking such an approach, it becomes clear that metaphors are inherently gendered (Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, 2003, 165). At the same time, if one accepts that they are experiential, then this is necessarily the case, because the vast majority of those in leadership positions have been and remain men. It is a much-repeated claim that there are more men CEOs with a particular given name, such as John or Andrew, than there are women CEOs in Australia, or indeed in many other countries (Priestley, 2018). Thus, it will be no surprise that commonly used metaphors related to leadership are male oriented.

LEADERSHIP AND ITS COMMON METAPHORS

There is a vast literature identifying or classifying metaphors of leadership, much of it reiterating previous analyses. Here, a decision has been made to present two classifications of metaphors, that developed by Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger (2003), and that presented by Alvesson and Spicer (2011). Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger's work has had global influence, having been cited by scholars writing in languages other than English, including Chinese, Finnish, German, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish. The book edited

by Alvesson and Spicer has been more widely cited, and in a broader range of languages, including Danish, Finnish, French, German, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish. This listing of countries demonstrates the reach of these metaphors, and thus the potential for them to influence the development of local metaphors of leadership. Neither source has been cited in studies related to leadership in Rwanda or Bangladesh, the countries which are the focus of this study.

Long-standing metaphors of leadership relate to war and to sports, according to Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger. The language of war and fighting has been frequently used in discussions of strategy, where threats are perceived, and “survival” in the face of “danger” is a key objective; a plan, often a battle plan, needs to be developed, so that winning is a more likely outcome than losing. In this metaphor, others – the enemy – may not actually be specified, existing only in the stance taken in the expressions of leadership. However, in metaphors which draw on sport, others are clearly involved. Competitiveness will involve one’s own “team” and another team, and both teams will be expected to “play the game.” Sports metaphors often include ideas of “fair play,” usually including disdain for those who “break the rules”; occasionally, “breaking the rules” is seen as a heroic act, where this act opens up new possibilities for action. Leadership in the context of sports metaphors has a focus on the creation of an environment where cooperation is possible and where a shared objective, “playing the game,” is acknowledged. An important function of the leader is the generation of “team spirit,” a sense of belonging together which facilitates the development of something amorphous which goes beyond the individual or even the social nature of the collective.

Perhaps in an attempt to soften the somewhat aggressive metaphors deriving from war and fighting and the competitive edge of some sporting metaphors, metaphors related to acting and performing have arisen, although they are not as common. A common metaphor here, according to Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, is the conductor of the orchestra; this metaphor emphasizes the coordinating role of a leader, creating order and harmony from the various tasks and capacities that make up an organization and its staff. Another metaphor, or cluster of metaphors, which is to some extent less common is the cluster related to spirituality, or occasionally religion. This metaphor presents the leader as being a source and disseminator of hope, with an emphasis on values and beliefs. Charismatic individuals are often at the center of the use of this metaphor. It is also found in times of significant change in organizational culture, especially after misfortune, when the intangibles of hope and inspiration may be necessary to overcome the lack of material substance.

The final metaphor presented by Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger is of the organization as a machine and the leader as the mechanic or engineer responsible for its smooth and safe operation. The machine-organization constantly requires maintenance; one of the leader’s responsibilities is to ensure that staff at all levels have access to an appropriately equipped toolbox; that is to say, that they have the knowledge and skills, infrastructure including policies and equipment as well as any other forms of material and non-material support related to the

performance of their tasks. The leader controls the operation through its workflows and processes, with systems that keep everything “ticking over.”

Alvesson and Spicer’s edited collection (2011) introduce six metaphors in a book which seeks to review leadership theory as it is presented in academic publications, media reports, business magazines as well as personal narratives and to clarify contemporary approaches to understanding the concept. Each metaphor presents the notion of leadership through a role recognized in contemporary Western society. The saint as leader, a metaphor which emerges from the conceptual approaches of authentic leadership and servant leadership, is someone with the desirable traits of high moral and ethical standards, who is recognized as the epitome of integrity and who inspires trust in others. The saint-leader seeks to mentor and support others, and to empower them to make decisions which will benefit the collective as much as the individual. This metaphor indicates someone whom others will be keen to follow and to emulate. The gardener is a leader who nurtures others within the context of the organization. The gardener chooses plants suited to the environment and provides the water and nutrients for them to flourish, at the same time modifying the environment, if necessary, by providing shade or sun or pruning to maintain their vigor. In the organizational context, this is a leader who starts at the point of recruitment, and then provides opportunities for professional development and to the employee to meet their own goals and the goals of the organization. This metaphor is often recognized in its negative form, where the gardener-leader must re-invigorate the garden, by removing the “dead wood,” “pruning back” expenditure and “weeding out” the dysfunctional or incompetent. A third metaphor which is concerned with positive, supportive relationships that foster individual growth is that of the leader as buddy. The chapter on leaders as buddies is subtitled “leadership by making people feel good.” This leader may seek to be “one of the guys,” working toward social acceptance as well as holding a hierarchical position; in this way, employees are likely to feel a stronger sense of belonging to the organization, because of these stronger social bonds. The focus on ensuring that people feel good enables them to deal better with the stresses and strains of the modern workplace and, consequently, improve their performance. The buddy-leader frequently uses the pronoun “we,” in talking about the work group.

The leader as commander suggests a military environment, with a strong authoritarian approach. This leader “leads from the front,” giving clear direction and expecting to be followed. He or she is likely to be driven to succeed and unwilling to tolerate failure in others in themselves, often leading to a close surveillance of the tasks, actions and performance of subordinates. The commander-leader will ensure that people are well-trained and aware of the part they are expected to play in the overall plan; they are likely to be valued for their ability to develop strategic plans and to make effective decisions quickly. The fifth metaphor is of the leader as cyborg. Somewhat akin to the leader as commander, the leader as cyborg is driven to succeed, usually putting the organization and its objectives before family and friends, and promoting the view that failure is not an option. This metaphor is an appropriate one for an organization

concerned with technology and technological development as it casts the leader as not fully human. This is a leader who does not show emotion or seek social bonds, but rather prefers to work with like-minded employees who are already or who can train to become high achievers. Being more than human, the leader as cyborg presents an image of being superior, expecting to win in any competition, and is usually considered to be extra-ordinary. This is a characteristic which enables the cyborg-leader to break the rules in order to achieve a goal. This form of charismatic leadership is not dependent on masculine stereotyping. To some extent, organizations help in the creation of this kind of metaphor by recruiting senior managers with unrelenting energy to make rapid radical change, with an eye to achievement of perfection. The final metaphor is of the leader as bully, although employees in many organizations might claim that this is not a metaphor for leadership, but a reality. The bully is often seen as disruptive in social settings, and such behavior is not to be tolerated. However, this leader exercises control and can maintain a significant level of stability in an organization, marginalizing those who oppose its values or direction. The leader-bully intimidates opponents and creates outsiders, often through ridicule and shame.

There are relatively few studies focusing on metaphors relating to women as leaders, although there are studies in the field of education of the metaphors used to represent the leadership of school principals, where some of the principals would have been women. One study of women principals conducted in the United States (Colflesh, 2000) identified four metaphors from the ways they identified themselves and their work. These included: the cultural connecting leader, the trusted family focused leader, the servant leader and the leader of the school family of learners. Perhaps more interesting though than the categorization are the ways that participants in this study described themselves. The metaphors of the hub of a wheel and the nucleus of an atom, surrounded by protons and neutrons, were strikingly similar in their representation of a center and periphery. The participant drawing the nucleus with protons and neutrons “[did not] want to be here in the center by myself.” The notion of leadership being involved with the center of activities was reinforced by another metaphor, this time of a web, with the particular individual in the center aware that there are other webs over which the individual has no control. Two participants used musical metaphors, one of being a performer in a symphony orchestra, aware of the other musicians and their roles as well as the challenges of the particular score to be performed; the other took a position as conductor of a symphony orchestra, rehearsing for a major concert, experiencing highs and lows, being able to sight-read the score and willing to dedicate time to practice (although the role of conductor is not specifically mentioned). An interesting aspect of this study is that these women mixed the metaphors as they sought to express different aspects of their role.

A similar approach, analyzing the ways that women spoke about themselves as leaders, was used in a study conducted in South Africa. Like the study conducted by Colflesh (2000), this study of school principals by Phendla (2004) used the naturalistic language of the women themselves to identify metaphors. She notes that metaphors are “so ordinary” (2004, 166) that they can reveal the powerful, colorful thinking of people in their

everyday understandings of leadership, but she also assumed that the women, through their roles, were engaged in service to others. Three women took part in this study, and each presented more than one metaphorical expression of leadership. These included being a magnet, which attracts others; being a star, shining in the darkness; being the driver of a car, where others are the engine that actually makes the car work; being a mountain climber; being like the sunshine, which “brings a sense of a happy environment”; being like water in the desert; supporting fragile things. These metaphors are not part of the ritual of referring to leadership in a hackneyed, learned way, but rather they give a strong sense of individual, personal engagement with what it means to be a leader.

METHODOLOGY

In the context of this literature, which presents an overwhelmingly gendered approach to the metaphorical expression of leadership, this study sought to continue with the trend which takes the perspectives of a small number of individual women and explores the multiplicity of metaphors they use to describe their own perspectives on leadership. Leaders are influential not only through what they achieve in the physical world but also through the communication of their ontological perspectives. An analysis of the studies of metaphors used by leaders indicates two common approaches. The first is the analysis of language used in publications, whether speeches or discussions of leadership and its functions. The second, less common, is the interpretation of the metaphors of individual leaders. The first approach tends to reinforce existing metaphors, using and re-using similar ideas. The second conceptualizes respondents as key informants, acknowledging their particular expertise. The use of key informants, a recognized data collection technique in qualitative research methods (Bernard, 2018), gives the researcher access to specialist knowledge embedded within its cultural context. Used in the context of this study, it is an approach that draws on the creativity of the individual, seeking to identify views of leadership which are not constrained by the clichéd language of management-speak.

Leaders in business and industry are commonly used as key informants, as are those acknowledged as being outstanding in their cultural context (O’Leary, 2014, p. 192). Researchers acknowledged as leaders in a field are generally deemed to be in a strong position to identify other leaders in that field. For this study, the position of one of the researchers and her extensive experience of working internationally facilitated the identification of women leaders. The idea of a project to uncover the ways women from the Global South conceptualize leadership was suggested and a number of women were invited by email to participate. These women included school principals, government officials, politicians and members of civil society. They were asked to think of a metaphor that represented their perception of themselves as leaders and to explain how the metaphor worked and why they had used it. Although the women were promised anonymity in any resulting scholarly work, they acknowledged their position in their own society and were even

eager to be associated with the metaphor they presented; here they are represented by names they chose. The need to write in English was a deterrent and lack of confidence in this prevented some of the women from taking part. Even some of the women who did take part found writing their metaphors and stories very difficult, so that their contributions were relatively brief. Their accounts were then analyzed to draw out the metaphors used and situate them in a broader context. The process of analysis used Barthian narrative analysis, drawing particularly on his cultural code, which uncovers the background knowledge on which a text relies (Barthes, 1972). This analysis required consideration of the individual and the ways they may be used to conveying their thoughts, knowledge and understanding. It demonstrated that these metaphors are determined by a dynamic interplay of personal, situational, and cultural factors.

Seven women, four Rwandans and three Bangladeshi, sent usable contributions. The ages of the women range from 35 to 70, with five being in their 40–50s. All are gender experts and human rights advocates. Three have Ph.D.s and four have master's degrees from universities in Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, and Rwanda. Six of the women have visited and studied outside of their country and five have worked and lived outside. Three women are senior academics, two of them in the United States. They are all involved in international development projects, using their professional and academic expertise, as well as in community associations. Two are senior officers with international development agencies based in their country, and both are also involved in gender issues at the national level in their countries. One acts as a national consultant in gender and poverty policy and practice to several government ministries and international development partners and one is a very senior official in a government department. They each recognize and are recognized for other aspects of their identities, including singer, poet, writer, artist, mother, grandmother, mentor, and advocate.

FINDINGS

Women and Their Metaphors of Leadership

The women took varying approaches to presenting their metaphors. Some were extended and elaborated whereas others were very brief. The more elaborated presentations give wider scope for narrative analysis, but even the brief presentations are imbued with significant cultural connotations.

Rosette began her presentation of the metaphor with a much-quoted aphorism from an American newspaper columnist, Doug Larson: "A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows." She chose as her metaphor "a dandelion – a weed to most and a flower to some. No matter what side you fall on the weed/flower dichotomy, we all reckon with the persistence of the dandelion. The dandelion is known for its persistence and adaptability. In the United States and Canada, season after season, lawn after lawn, the dandelion shows up again and again, setting down deep roots and reproducing itself in neighboring lawns by turning its pretty little flower into puffballs, whose seeds are blown by the

wind (or children) into the next place, where new dandelions set down roots and bloom and the cycle continues. Dandelions are also known to repel destructive worms while attracting honey bees and to support plants with weaker roots. This may be why some "naturalist" gardeners do not seem to mind them so much." The persistence of the dandelion is echoed in her descriptions of the leadership challenges she has faced.

Justine wrote that she was familiar with the metaphors for leadership used in her Christian faith, but that she did not find those appropriate. Eventually she "settled on a camel's life: an animal which mirrors my resilience, patience and life experience. Camels are survivors against all odds: through bad weather, famine, and drought, they humbly serve to the last minute. Camels have fat in their humps that help them endure hunger longer than other animals." Camels also kick, and these "kicks turn out to become my strength to overcome the next challenge." She goes on to report that, "Like camels – which drink a lot of water in one go and can survive on it for quite some time – when I am given an opportunity for learning (or imparting knowledge), I drink it in and as fast as I can!" Camels have stamina and are well regarded for their persistence and grace.

Colette's description of the metaphor she would use for herself as a leader was short and to the point, when she wrote: "I like the picture of a cat looking in a mirror, with a tiger reflecting back. What you think of yourself is more important than what you think others think of you." Then, quoting Eleanor Roosevelt, she asserted: "No one can make you feel inferior without your permission."

Dimitrie, like Justine, found it difficult to choose a single metaphor, but eventually decided: "I think I am more like a 'Hedera Helix,' as a flowering plant. It is also called English Ivy and you can find it in almost all areas of the world. English ivy is evergreen, very tolerant of shade and will grow in full sun. In the adult or reproductive phase, English ivy produces a woody erect stem either from the ground or growing off existing climbing vines. Its tolerance to changes makes it very resilient. It can take multiple forms, can be used for different purposes including ornamental and medicine, it can be planted indoor or outdoor, and lives long because it resists weather and all sorts of turbulences. I found myself adjusting and adapting to many situations, bad or good, but I can't give up on my dreams and goals."

Jebunnessa wished that she could be a boa constrictor. In writing about challenges she faced, she said "During that time I felt that I have to win. I thought that I am a boa, but I don't know how to swim. Slowly I learnt to float in water and tried. I won."

Baby presents herself as a tree, modeled on her grandmother's love of trees. "My roots are my confidence that I have developed by learning and experiencing and sharing and being bold in my work. My branches are the shades of trust that people can . . . rely on. I never give up, like big trees, and that is my resilience."

Tajkera is the only one of the seven who did not follow the request to present a single metaphor. She began by writing that those around her say that she is like a rhino, because of her thick skin which has enabled her "to absorb every discouraging words I had to face in the past . . . and move forward . . . to develop our women in need." She concluded that "without being

a Rhino I would not be able to work in the women development sector in Bangladesh.” Her second metaphor is the turtle, which she presents as an analogy for her patience, using an example to show the length of time it took to achieve a change. Her third metaphor is somewhat more difficult to grasp for these researchers. She writes: “I think I have a brain like flamingos in terms of leadership” and goes on to write: “I trained my team – my flock – how to walk even in between the salty lake of life and overcome all the obstacles.”

DISCUSSION

Interpreting These Metaphors

Metaphors provide a stimulating way to understand leadership and what women really mean when discussing leadership. These women presented interesting images of themselves as leaders. They all acknowledged that metaphorical thinking was difficult for them and technically, they have presented analogies, rather than metaphors, likening themselves to another phenomenon, and through this process identifying the characteristics which they believe have enabled them to be successful.

The question of why the process of identifying a metaphor to present their view of leadership was difficult was not asked. In retrospect, three possible answers come to mind. The first is that these women are used to dealing in a world of strategic reality, so that metaphorical thinking does not come easily to them, and they have not previously considered themselves from this perspective. Tajkera and Baby, two of the women from Bangladesh, chose analogies that have arisen from their social interactions with others, Tajkera referring to conversations with her husband and Baby to her grandmother; Rosette, from Rwanda, identified herself as having a hobby as a gardener, and using that as the basis for her choice. Justine, however, deliberately set aside metaphors used in her Christian faith. Thus, to some extent, the metaphors these women presented are not “ordinary” or “invisible” as Colflesh (2000) or Phendla (2004) claimed the metaphors expressed by the subjects in their study to be. Instead, they have been selected for the purpose of responding to a question from a researcher. This does not negate their value but adds to the complexity of interpreting their meanings.

A second answer to why metaphorical thinking does not come easily is that their backgrounds have largely been in the sciences and in policy development, where observations of the natural world have influenced their ways of thinking, and in academe, which values particular ways of presenting ideas. Dimitrie’s description of English ivy, along with its Latin name, could be an entry from an encyclopedia; it describes the habitat of the plant and its way of growing; Rosette’s description of the dandelion similarly could have come from a gardener’s handbook, setting out the characteristics which make it a plant that is at the same time a weed and a valued part of the ecosystem. Justine’s description of the camel could have come from a textbook or encyclopedia intended for children. Each of these analogies is presented in a structured, analytical way, so that its appropriateness could be justified. Rosette and Colette each use an additional way to situate their metaphorical thinking, the

reference to the thoughts and beliefs of others, through quotation. Rosette uses a quote from a popular commentator, Doug Larson, as a kind of epigraph in the presentation of her metaphor; it appears as a heading to her work, suggesting the theme to her metaphor, in this case, the significant strengths of the weed. Colette’s presentation of her metaphor is extremely brief, but her inclusion of a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt positions it in a context of a strong woman, making opportunities to argue for social justice and to achieve significant change.

A third answer to why metaphorical thinking did not come easily to these women is that they were aware of the need to create a bridge between themselves and the researchers, who did not share their cultural background. In other words, the very setting of the request precluded the assumption of the “ordinary” and the “invisible” which underpins much of the analysis of the use of metaphorical language. The two gardening metaphors are situated in a setting from the global North, with the references to English ivy and the dandelion; although the mapping of the characteristics of these plants is clearly to the Rwandan experiences, the metaphors are not drawn from the Rwandan experience of these women. Nonetheless, they are very easy to interpret, bringing together elements of both cultures. Similarly, Baby’s use of the tree is something which is clearly of her culture, coming from her grandmother, but at the same time, it is a metaphor which is easily understood, regardless of cultural heritage. Colette’s use of the cat in the mirror suggests a first world setting where cats are pets, living inside a human dwelling, with mirrors that feed back to the observer a sense of their own identity, at the same time incorporating the idea that external perceptions may be at odds with the individual’s sense of identity. Jebunnessa’s boa constrictor is both something familiar and at the same time something beyond the experiences of the researchers. It is known as a very strong creature capable of overwhelming others, slow on the land but in the water a powerful swimmer; but also a snake which is reclusive, preferring to keep a low profile, using its tremendous strength only in a purposeful way.

Thus, we come to Tajkera’s metaphors. The protection offered by the tough skin is well recognized in the English-speaking world by those with no personal experience with the rhinoceros. Interpreting the metaphor of the turtle and its relationship to patience may be more difficult. It is not clear whether, in naming the turtle, Tajkera is referring to the tortoise, the land-based creature of Aesop’s fable or the water-dwelling turtle more commonly found in North America. Regardless, this creature is well represented in folk stories, whether from Africa or from Native Americans or from South Asia, where it is recognized for its tenacity and patience, as well as for its cunning (Garfield, 1986; Werner, 1993). However, the relationship between the flamingo, Tajkera’s brains and leadership may not be readily apparent. Flamingos are exotic birds to Australians, found in zoos, where they are the epitome of grace with their long legs and beauty with their pink feathers, and in storybooks such as *Alice in Wonderland* where they have a surreal existence as the mallets for a game of croquet. To try to make sense of this metaphor, the researchers sought to know more about the flamingo from a Bangladeshi perspective, and the information found proved enlightening. Flamingos were reported to have been endemic to

Bangladesh, although none had been reported for a number of years, until 2017, when news was made after a group of hunters shot and killed a bird with which they were unfamiliar, later identified as a greater flamingo (Ahmed and Mahmud, 2018). To interpret the metaphor, we considered it useful to consider the next utterance, training the flock to walk in the salty lake of life. The wetlands where flamingos live are likely to be salty and relative shallow sheltered waters; a feature of them is that the bottoms are usually muddy and uneven, requiring the flamingos to use their broad webbed feet to maintain balance, but also skill in navigating areas prone to flooding and therefore potentially with submerged obstacles. Thus, the flamingo in Bangladesh is a noteworthy bird, rarely seen; it lives in flocks and is potentially well adapted for its environment, although the flock relies on the skills and expertise of some of its members to survive and thrive in its environment. Whether this is what Tajkera had in mind when she wrote of “brains like flamingos” is not known, but from our Australian perspective, this seems a reasonable way to create meaning about leadership from this figure of speech, using Barthian narrative analysis (Barthes, 1972).

Identifying the Ethics of Leadership

Leadership metaphors carry messages about the ethics of leadership, suggesting what is good, what should be done, and how. The metaphors presented by these seven women carry very strong messages about their perceptions of what it means to be a leader and to act as a leader, messages which are largely invisible until the metaphors used have been interpreted. Common threads run through these presentations, with some displaying ideas that are common to discussions of leadership and others being novel. Among those that are common to discussions in the literature are persistence, resilience and belief in oneself, as well as an emphasis on support for others, whether through the shade of Baby's tree, the roots of Rosette's dandelion or the guidance of Tajkera's flamingo. To the extent that these women recognized themselves as transformational leaders, persistence may be sometimes presented as patience, the quiet and firm waiting for an opportunity, and tolerance may need to encompass the acceptance of opposing points of view, or to acknowledge that different approaches may lead to a similar end.

Confidence also may have two sides to it. Colette's cat that sees a tiger in the mirror, along with the quote from Eleanor Roosevelt emphasizes the importance of having confidence in oneself. That confidence in oneself is also evident in the roots of Baby's tree. It is also important for others to have confidence in a leader. Rosette describes how the dandelion makes itself attractive to insects and to gardeners, so that others are persuaded of the importance of its contribution. Justine's camel engenders confidence in others because of its reputation as a survivor which is always there to help and support people.

The metaphors also show that leaders are able to go beyond the ordinary. The dandelion spreads easily from field to field, the ivy has many uses, the tree becomes a landmark in the landscape, the cat becomes a tiger and the camel's great thirst enables the uptake of new information very quickly, with the processing of those ideas going on over a considerable period of time, even well after the ideas generated by others have dried up.

A key factor in identifying the ethics of leadership is that sometimes it is important to recognize that actions must provoke opposition, if changes are to be made. Justine writes of how the camel can be a humble servant, but at the same time, it can kick out and be destructive; these kicks are a way of signaling points that are valuable and must be fought for. Jebunnessa's boa can easily overpower other creatures, including ones many times its size, but it prefers not to be aggressive. Rosette identifies the dandelion as being both a problematic plant and a positive contribution to a garden; in particular, the ease with which the dandelion spreads is seen as problematic. Dimitrie's ivy is presented by her only as being useful for a range of purposes, although it would seem that she is also aware that its resilience and ability to grow in a variety of conditions can lead to it becoming an annoyance. Tajkera's need for the rhino's thick skin to manage the forces of opposition is another example.

Tajkera's flamingo is an instructive metaphor on the ethics of leadership by women. Sightings of this bird are uncommon, and yet the bird can be expected to live in these areas, according to the expertise of ornithologists; once established, it works to support the collectivity of the flock, potentially able to achieve what other birds cannot, in the relatively hostile environment of the mud beneath the salty water. It does not seem too much of a stretch to consider that female leaders may also be uncommon, although their existence is acknowledged; and these female leaders support others to survive and thrive in what can be perceived as difficult circumstances.

Being aware of these messages is an important basis for ethical leadership. The principles and values embedded in the metaphors are not explicit but are evident to anyone willing to make some minimal effort in interpreting them. Seeing these principles and values only as a checklist of aspirational features weakens them and undercuts the ethical foundation from which they arise. Ethical practices arise in a system of human interactions and the metaphors establish the frames of reference within which the principles and values should be understood. It is this understanding which enable Rosette, Justine and Dimitrie to be clear that the metaphor they have chosen portrays a leader having the capacity for harm or damage at the same time as having the capacity for positive change. However, this approach is far removed from the oppositional metaphors found in the literature, where the focus is on war and fighting, with notions of battles and winners and losers (cf Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, 2003). Instead, the metaphors presented by these women indicate that struggles will be inevitable and that sometimes strong action will be called for so that the end goal of transformation is achieved.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to present metaphors that women leaders in non-Western contexts use to communicate their concepts of leadership and it has presented an analysis of metaphors presented by seven women from Rwanda and Bangladesh. The study has shown that the metaphors used by the women in this study are not influenced by the metaphors commonly

found in the organizationally based literature on metaphors and leadership. The metaphors they have presented provide a stimulating way to understand leadership and what women really mean when discussing it. The analysis of these leadership stories shows that the metaphors they use are determined by a dynamic interplay of personal, situational, and cultural factors. It has also shown that there has to be a shared cultural understanding for a metaphor to provide insight into the concept of leadership.

This need for shared cultural understanding in easily understanding what someone means when they use a metaphor in turn raises questions about the choices open to participants in cross-cultural research of the kind envisaged here. We had hoped to bring to light metaphors used by women acknowledged as leaders in their communities which are far removed geographically from Australia and the global north from which our scholarly traditions derive, and in so doing to give them a voice in this globalized scholarship. Yet the very process we used meant that they were likely to think about how to communicate their thoughts and practices across this cultural distance and thus to choose metaphors that we in the global north could relate to.

The study has supported Alvesson and Spicer's contention that leadership exists both as a concept and as a practice, and that imagination is important both for its expression and its understanding. The women clearly used a process of imaginative thinking to come up with the metaphors. These were not examples of the ordinary and invisible use of language found in other studies. Further, understanding some of these metaphors required imagination on the part of the researchers. In other words, these metaphors were deliberately developed to convey both the abstract and the practical, rather than being a part of the everyday discourse of leadership.

Leadership is portrayed here, by at least some of the women, both as a series of attributes and as a range of practices to be understood within their context. This context may necessarily involve generating opposition because without that opposition there can be no significant change; however, the opposition is not cast in terms of winners and losers. The significance of context also means that the attributes cannot be separated from the women and the context in which they found themselves and turned into a checklist of desirable characteristics.

Finally, this study cannot make claims about whether the use of the metaphors presented here is gendered. It can only state that these metaphors were presented by women in response to a request from a researcher. It may be that the language of

management and leadership is already so gendered that it will be difficult to maintain everyday discussion of the concept and practice without using language with those invisible metaphors.

This exploratory study, with its strengths and limitations, is a starting point for research on a topic of importance in a globalizing world. There is certainly scope for further research by women on women's use of metaphors in expressing notions of leadership in a range of different contexts and cultural settings.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study will not be made publicly available. We would need agreement from each individual participant to release their "stories".

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SR and HY contributed conception and design of the study, and analyzed the statements. SR obtained the written statements of leadership experiences and metaphor from respondents. HY wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to manuscript revision, read and approved the submitted version.

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Corrigendum: An Exploration of the Metaphors and Images Used to Describe Leadership in Two Different Cultural Contexts

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In the original article, there was an error. Justine Mbabazi was named instead of Justine Uvuza in the Acknowledgments.

The corrected paragraph appears below.

“Without the interest from a number of women leaders in Rwanda and Bangladesh, this work would not have been possible. We express our thanks to the seven women who provided the written statements on which this study is based: Baby Rani Karmakar, Colette Nyinawumuntu, Dimitrie Sissi Mukanyiligira, Jebunnessa, Justine Uvuza, Rosette Adera, and Tajkera Khair.”

The authors apologize for this error and state that this does not change the scientific conclusions of the article in any way. The original article has been updated.

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Wisdom Passed Down Through the Ages

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Women have always played influential leadership roles in education but cultural notions have frequently limited their roles to behind-the-scenes contributions. The result is that their voices and wisdom have not been fully appreciated by subsequent generations. We propose to tell the stories of two women – one Greek, the other American – who lived in the 19th century as a way to more fully understand who women educators are, where we have come from, and where we are going. We selected these two women – Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley – because their legacies continue to have a powerful influence on education even today, over a century after their deaths. The authors seek in the article (1) to provide deeper understandings of their lives and accomplishments and (2) to relate the understandings gained from their stories to current understandings of how women educators have influenced contemporary societies. The relevance of our endeavor is summed up by Elias Xirotiris (1961) who recently wrote about one of our subjects “since Laskaridou’s death, there [has been] no one to take the baton and to continue her work with the same enthusiasm and dedication.” We hope that our article will contribute to a better appreciation of the considerable legacies left by the subjects of our investigation.

Keywords: women, gender, Feminism, educational leadership, historical analysis

INTRODUCTION

Don’t let anyone tell you there weren’t notable and effective women throughout history. They were always there, but because historians failed to note women’s accomplishments in HIsTory, the women of each generation have to reinvent themselves. Spread the word of women’s accomplishments. It is time to UNDELETE our past.

Irene Stuber

Women have always played influential leadership roles in society in general and education specifically, but cultural notions have frequently limited women’s roles to behind-the-scenes contributions. The result is that the female voice and wisdom have not been fully appreciated by subsequent generations. Writing about another unrecognized woman school leader, Hauser (2006) states,

The importance of using a feminist lens to understand Caroline Pratt (American educator, 1867–1954, who made significant contributions to progressive and early childhood education) lies in the argument that without women’s history and a feminist consciousness, the achievements of women in public and professional life can easily be erased. (p. 10)

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This project emanated from a call for papers on women school leaders. We met one another through Women Leading Education (WLE) and in person when Angelikki was in the American Midwest during her Fulbright Scholar experience at Illinois State University. Dr. Linda Lyman mentored both of us at different points in our careers. As will be evident later on in this chapter, mentoring is a recurring theme in women's leadership.

The stories of two women – one Greek, the other American – who lived in the 19th century will be told as a way to more fully understand their influence on education. Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley were selected because the legacies left behind continue to have a powerful influence on education even today, over a century after their deaths. With this chapter, we sought to provide deeper understandings of Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley's lives and accomplishments, and relate the understandings gained from their stories to current understandings of how women educators influence contemporary societies. The relevance of this endeavor is summed up by Elias Xyrotiris (1961), who recently wrote about Laskaridou; "Since Laskaridou's death, there [has been] no one to take the baton and to continue her work with the same enthusiasm and dedication" (p. 13). The hope is that this essay will contribute to a better appreciation of the considerable legacies left by the subjects of our investigation.

In the words of Ella Baker, American civil rights leader and activist, "In order to see where we are going, we not only must *remember* where we have been, but we must *understand* where we have been" (Preskill, 2005). Taking Ella Baker's words to heart then, to remember and understand the lives of Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley requires more than a summary of the details of their lives, but also a deeper understanding of ways they dealt with societal expectations for women to create their legacies that endure today.

The chapter is organized into the Introduction, Methods section, an Authors' reflection that reveals not only our reasoning as we constructed the means by which to study these two women, but also our reactions to the process, the stories of Aikaterini and Lydia, a Comparative Analysis employing Lambert and Gardner's *Framework for the Development of Women Leaders*, Summary, and final Authors' Reflection.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter employed historical research, which is the systematic collection and evaluation of data to describe, explain, and understand past actions or events. The purpose of historical research is to provide insights into particular events so that others can benefit from past experiences (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). The research questions we sought to answer involved how do the lives of two women who lived over a century ago on two continents continue to exert leadership in education today and how do their life stories, which have been relatively unacknowledged in leadership literature provide models for women leaders today" (Lambert and Gardner, 2009). Limitations of the research method include a paucity of pertinent information on the life story of Lydia Moss Bradley. While there is more data

related to the life of Aikaterini Laskaridou, even documents on her life story are separated by over a century. All documents are secondary (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003).

We used feminist research lens to tell and analyze the life stories of the two women who lived for the most part in the 19th century. Taking into considerations the limitations of historical research cited above, we sought to study these "women from the perspective of their own experiences to develop versions of reality that more accurately reflect their own experience" (Young, 2012, p. 37). "The possibilities of leadership values, perspectives, goals, and behaviors from women's experience" (Marshall, 2003, p. 215) of Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley are at the center of this research. We sought to understand to the extent possible the cultures in which they lived recognizing limitations in our understandings of differences in culture related to time, location, and lived experiences. Another limitation emerged given the considerable diversities in the women's backgrounds. While both women came from relatively privileged backgrounds, Aikaterini was highly educated while Lydia had no formal education, which was not that uncommon in her time in the United States. This difference is reflected in greater availability of written documents on Aikaterini and given not only Lydia's lack of formal education, but also her private nature.

Leadership

Leadership is a concept that is heavily defined by cultural traditions and roles most often defined by military or business models. Women school leaders in the 21st century, in spite of movement toward greater acceptance, continue to struggle against prevailing cultural priorities to constrict talents and energies toward hearth and home (Lambert and Gardner, 2009). Acquiring and succeeding into leadership roles requires women of our day to negotiate cultural "command and control" leadership notions.

Leadership mental models continue to include bigger than life myths regarding strong, take charge leaders who solve problems that stymie the rest of us. Neither Aikaterini nor Lydia fit a traditionally strong heroic leader mold. We contend, however, that Aikaterini and Lydia embody Howard Gardner's (2011) definition of leaders because 100 years after their deaths each continues to be a "person who, by word and/or personal example, markedly influence the behaviors, thoughts, and/or feelings of a significant number of their fellow human beings" (p. 5–6). Through their lives and legacies, Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley demonstrated leadership as they "articulated a vision, set standards for performance, and created a focus and direction" (Bolman and Deal, 2017, p. 338). The life story of each fits the Level 5 leaders identified by Collins (2005) as leaders who "build an enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" (p. 12).

Aikaterini Laskaridou was distinct from current day visions of heroic leadership, described as highly educated, multitalented, enthusiastic, visionary, dedicated, and tireless. Lydia Moss Bradley exercised powerful leadership from her stately home in Peoria, Illinois even as she tended to her chickens and other domestic details of living, while also serving on a local bank board and engaging in her many business pursuits.

In telling the stories of these two women leaders, our purpose is not to distinguish male from female leadership, but to extract benefit from their stories wisdom that is not well known. We seek to demonstrate that visions of leadership that are held by societies in general and educators in particular are incomplete when voices of powerful, influential women are not well known. Thus, we seek to broaden the conceptions of leadership needed to contribute in some way toward resolution of contemporary societal challenges due.

To reveal the significance of the contributions of Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley requires not only knowledge of the details of their lives, but also understanding of the cultures in which they lived and how they dealt with those conditions. Both lived during similar time periods (Aikaterini 1842–1916, Lydia 1816–1908). One lived in Greece, the birthplace of democracy and the other in a new democracy that was growing into an influential democracy. Aikaterini was highly educated, Lydia learned to read and compute in a neighbor's kitchen. Both used their substantial wealth to benefit their communities.

The final methods decision used in this study relates to analysis of the data collected. Lambert and Gardner's (2009) Framework of Women's Leadership Development (p. 31) grounded the collected information on the lives of these two women school leaders. The literal recounting of their lives revealed few similarities beyond the obvious that they were both female, relatively well-to-do, and their stories were recorded to some extent. Analyses based upon Lambert and Gardner's themes of commitment to values, evolving self, courage, imagination, community and mentoring (p. 31) revealed astonishing similarities. Lambert and Gardner's themes of commitment will be explained in greater detail in the analysis section of the chapter.

AUTHOR REFLECTIONS

While each of us have written extensively about women school leaders, neither of us identify as “experts” in feminist ideology. However, the stories of Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley resonated deeply with us. Their stories touched our souls to an extent that surprised us. We identify with their life struggles and are inspired by their lives. At the same time, we recognize some obvious limitations in our telling of the stories of these women because they are separated from us by over a century and they lived two continents, as do we. We acknowledge the “different conditions of life define what constitutes being a woman” (Young, 2012, p. 35) and take full responsibility to create credible contexts of the culture of the times in which these women lived.

Through the feminist lens we sought to contribute in small ways to work against all forms of oppression such as racism and classism, by appealing to liberated conceptions of leadership released from sexist notions of leadership (hooks, 2000). We sought to record the competence of two women school leaders recognizing that “It is not just any female leaders that need to be heard. It is someone who has been able to subvert the organization to create equality” (Shakeshaft, 2015, p. xviii).

We hold ourselves accountable and responsible by stating clearly the influences that we self-identify as researchers in order to demonstrate self-awareness of our social positionality, values, perspectives, and self-critique (Young, 2012). We acknowledge how, as female educators ourselves, we are shaped by the strong influence of the thoughts and ideas of western civilization, one of us from Greece, the other from the United States. Despite our cultural differences, each of us has been deeply affected by the mainstream ideology of our times that have dictated, in open and subtle ways, the boundaries of our lives and dreams.

Each of us has been fortunate to co-author books with Dr. Linda Lyman. Angeliki co-authored with Linda in *Shaping social justice leadership: Insights of women educators worldwide* (2012). Jenny worked with Linda early in her (Jenny's) scholarly career to co-author with Linda and Dr. Dianne Ashby *Leaders Who Dare* (2005), the stories of Illinois women school leaders who came of age professionally in a time when few women were school leaders.

We extend deep gratitude to Linda for another reason. Linda was a Fulbright Scholar in Greece (2005). While in Greece, she collaborated with Angeliki and carried out a cross-cultural research on women leaders as democratic change agents. This research project signified the beginning of a long-lasting collaboration, friendship, and mentorship since Linda was an established scholar in her field and Angeliki a young scholar and academic. Influenced by Linda Lyman, each of us pursued and were awarded Fulbright Scholar grants. Jenny was awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to Ukraine during spring 2012 and again to Latvia in 2018. Angeliki came to central Illinois in fall of 2013 on a Fulbright Scholar grant.

Our experiences as Fulbright scholars were life-changing and when we considered the personal impact for each of us, we realized that our values and identification as a Greek and American scholar were tested and deepened. Our conceptions of educational leaders were broadened through relationships with Ukrainian, Latvian, and American women whose life experiences differ greatly from our own. Each of us returned home with a deepened recognition that similarities between global women school leaders are much stronger than cultural differences.

Leaders' narratives are a way of understanding experience and must be understood in terms of both individual and social contexts (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The cultural contexts that Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley lived in held rigid roles for women and, in different ways, both Laskaridou and Moss Bradley contributed outside the prescriptions of their culture. Understanding the constraints experienced is not as important as understanding, more than a century after they lived, to the extent possible, how each self-identified, aspirations they held for work, and the impacts of contributions each made.

In telling the stories of these two women leaders, our purpose is not to distinguish male from female leadership, but to extract benefit from their stories wisdom that is not well known. We seek to demonstrate that visions of leadership that are held by societies in general and educators in particular are incomplete when voices of powerful, influential women are not well known. Thus we seek to broaden the conceptions of leadership needed to resolve contemporary societal challenges due to globalization.

To reveal the significance of the contributions of Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley requires not only knowledge of the details of their lives, but also understanding of the cultures in which they lived and how they dealt with those conditions. Both lived during similar time periods (Aikaterini 1842–1916, Lydia 1816–1908). One lived in Greece, the birthplace of democracy and the other in the United States, a new democracy that was growing into global influence. Aikaterini was highly educated, Lydia learned to read and compute in a neighbor's kitchen. Both used their substantial wealth to benefit their communities. Descriptions of their lives and contributions follow.

THE GREEK EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND AIKATERINI LASKARIDOU'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Greece in the 19th century is marked by its independence from the Ottoman Empire after more than 400 years of occupation. The end of Greece's Independence War in 1830 marked the beginning of a new era for Greece as a kingdom ruled by the German king Otto. That time also marked the beginning of the country's economic, political, societal and educational restructuring. The first schools in Greece were private and were founded by the American missionaries King, Robinson, and Hill in 1831 to educate the boys of wealthy families. Later a school for girls began operating at the Hill's residence in Athens. By 1840, the first public elementary schools opened in Athens for boys and girls, separately.

Attempts to institute preschool education in Greece began around the same time, mainly through the efforts of a few individuals and foreign missionaries following similar attempts that took place all around Europe. The international environment proved to be very important in the formation of pre-school education in Greece. Developments in European countries were a constant point of reference for Greek politicians and educators. As a result of this influence, the educational institutions that provided pre-school education in Greece, were infiltrated by the European ideas at the time. Their establishment and operation, the organization and content of teaching, the training of their executives, are all influenced by the French and German schools. Yet, progress in this domain was slow and fraught with difficulties. In large part this was due to the political and ethnic instabilities associated with frequent wars as well as cultural norms (Doliopoulou, 2000).

During this time, Greek pedagogic thought shifted away from the ideas of Rousseau toward those of Pestalozzi, aided particularly by advocates like Froebel (Ziogou et al., n.d.). However, despite the efforts of some highly motivated individuals, there was no State recognition of the need for preschool education until 1895 when a law that recognized nursery education for three to six-year-olds was enacted [Kitsaras, as cited in Doliopoulou (2006)]. In the years leading up to this turning point, a number of individuals had painstakingly laid a solid foundation for formal preschool education in Greece. Among them, Aikaterini Laskaridou stands out as a leading figure

in the struggle to have women recognized as qualified individuals who could contribute to the improvement of the ethical and social life of Greek children and, ultimately, the advancement of women's role in society.

Aikaterini Xristomanou-Laskaridou was born in Vienna on September 28, 1842 to an affluent family that originated in Macedonia-Greece. Her father was a businessman who was born in Serres (Macedonia) but raised in Vienna. He and his wife Maria had six children, with Aikaterini second in line. Aikaterini spent her childhood in Vienna, where great teachers educated her in two languages: French and German. Her father's influence was instrumental in developing her love of nature. In 1856, when she was 13, her family returned to Greece and established themselves in Athens. According to Aikaterini, her father was such a patriot that, as soon as they disembarked at the port of Piraeus, he asked his children to get on their knees and kiss the soil of Greece.

Four years after the family's relocation to Greece, in 1859, Aikaterini married the wealthy businessman Laskari Laskaridi and subsequently had three daughters. As a mother Aikaterini was deeply devoted to her children, but at the same time she continued her education, studying classical literature and pedagogy, history, physics, philosophy, psychology, geography, mythology, art, and religion. Due to her frequent travels abroad, Aikaterini was able to keep informed about the latest developments in pedagogy, in which she had an exceptional interest. Aikaterini envisioned a revitalization of the Greek educational system, and the elevation of the status of women in Greek society through education – a purpose she set her mind to accomplish using her vast knowledge acquired in her studies and her experience abroad.

Aikaterini began her professional work as a teacher at an all-girl school in Athens. There she taught for two years before she became a principal. When the owner of the school retired in 1875, Aikaterini took over, renamed the school, and gave it an all-new identity, which was focused entirely on promoting the education of young Greek women. A year later, after she had studied the Froebelian system in Dresden, Germany, she began her systematic efforts to infuse the Froebelian system into the Greek educational context, starting at her own school. Subsequently Aikaterini promoted the new system in more schools including preschools, primary, and secondary schools. At the same time, she personally trained the first 36 teachers who subsequently spread the knowledge like “good missionaries” to yet other schools. Before we proceed, we present a brief account of the Froebelian approach to kindergarten education.

Froebel's Approach to Education

Froebel was greatly influenced by the work of German Romantic philosophers Rousseau and Fichte, as well as ancient Greek thinkers, and had been exposed to Taoist and Buddhist teachings. Froebel was the first to recognize that significant brain development occurs between birth and age 3. His method combined an awareness of human physiology and the recognition that humans are, in essence, creative beings. Because he recognized that education begins in infancy, Froebel saw mothers as the ideal first teachers of humanity. Women, he believed, were best-suited to nurture children and become

teachers in his schools. As such, the Froebel Kindergarten offered the first significant careers for women outside the home. At that time, women were not expected (or often allowed) to work professionally. The Kindergarten attracted ambitious, intelligent women, who received advanced education and developed businesses of their own. Fröbel's great insight was to recognize the importance of the activity of the child in learning. He introduced the concept of "free work" into pedagogy and established the educational worth of toys. Froebel's method inspired and informed the work of Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and others, who adopted his ideas and adapted his materials according to their own work. Prior to Friedrich Froebel very young children were not educated.

Aikaterini's Contribution

At the policy level Aikaterini injected Froebelian principles into preschool education in Greece and contributed to the establishment of a College of Education wherein nursery teachers were officially trained for the first time in post war Greece (Greece's independence war from the Turkish occupation). She was personally involved in the training of those teachers and in the dissemination of the Froebelian method by lecturing, publishing articles, books, and magazines, and by sending graduates of the College of Education to teach in all areas of Greece as well as places abroad where Greek civilization still thrived, like Cyprus, Egypt, and Odessa in Romania.

At a pragmatic level, she worked relentlessly to found and operate nursery schools in Athens and staff in the surrounding areas schools with graduates of the College of Education. In order to improve women's lives, she also contributed to the Union of Greek Women, in which she presided for a number of years. During that time she assisted women refugees from the 30-day Greco-Turkish war of 1897. At the same time, she established shelters for poor women in Athens and Pireaus, placing them in jobs that ensured their sustenance while providing safety and education for their young children in shelters that used Froebel's methods (Dimitriadi, 2012).

Aikaterini's success in embedding the Froebelian approach in Greek education was not only due to her passion and persistent efforts, but also to various other activities in which she engaged. The first was to promote Froebel's system of education among Greeks. She accomplished that by translating and publishing Froebel's work, by giving lectures, and by contacting research on the applicability of Froebel's ideas in the Greek educational system. In addition to those, Aikaterini published many children's books, various educational books, and a great number of scientific articles (e.g., on Froebelian nurseries, 1880; How to entertain kids, 1883; The Froebelian system in Greece, 1885). Those activities succeeded in awakening interest in preschool education and allowed for more nursery schools to operate in various areas around the country. Aikaterini became so well known to the Greek world, that Greek schools inside and outside the country (i.e., Egypt, Turkey, and Romania) sent her requests to train kindergarten teachers in the Froebelian system.

Although Aikaterini's love and passion was for children and their education, she was equally passionate about the vision of women's education. She never stopped talking about the

need to reform the education of women. She believed strongly that women's education should be based on scientific grounds and that it should be carried out in universities like men. To understand her efforts to support women's education we need to bring into perspective the status of women in Greece during Aikaterini's time.

In the 19th century Greek women were subjected to the power of the man – a father or a husband. As agricultural work, in rural Greece, required cooperation and the distribution of tasks among family members, women were considered almost equals to men. The increasing urbanization of the population at the end of the 19th century brought about radical changes in family life. The established balance between its members was shaken and the position of women was further degraded. The house was considered "women's kingdom" at the same time that the public life was a man's domain. Upper class women were not deemed appropriate to leave the house unaccompanied by a male relative, whereas lower class women were allowed to go out to work (Dimitriadi, 2012). Marriage was considered a means of social ascension, as the dowry that accompanied the bride was an opportunity for the groom to accumulate capital, but at the same time it turned marriage into an economic transaction and commercialized human relations. Married women were completely dependent on their spouses, financially and legally.

Aikaterini fought for women to become equals to men because, as she argued, "this is how women become complete" (Dimitriadi, 2012, p. 219). Her work was recognized by the Greek state on various occasions during her lifetime, and she was awarded many medals. On one such occasion Queen Sofia visited her at her home to give her the Silver Cross of Christ. Forty years after her death, at the Conference of the Global Organization for Preschool Education in 1956, Aikaterini was recognized as a leading figure of preschool education worldwide, and that year was named the Year of Aikaterini Laskaridou.

Aikaterini Laskaridou taught to all those who were fortunate enough to meet her that one should strive to fulfill a purpose one heartedly believes in. Aikaterini died in 1916, but her legacy continues to capture people's hearts because it was founded in her unequivocal love for people – especially children, and her visionary ideas for the advancement of women's education.

LYDIA MOSS BRADLEY (1816–1908)

This eloquent description of Mrs. Bradley sums up her life and legacy.

If you turned an estate worth half a million dollars into a fortune of over two million dollars, you would be prosperous. If you were the director of the board of a national bank for 25 years, you would be a leader. If you donated a city park and endowed a private college, and if you gave money and land to many community projects, you would be a great philanthropist. If you accomplished all of this as a woman, you would be astonishing, and if you achieved all of this as a woman between the years of 1816 and 1908, you would be Lydia Moss Bradley (Illinois Early Women).

Lydia Moss was born in Vevay, Indiana on July 30, 1816, the youngest of six surviving children of Zealy Moss and Jenny

Glasscock. Zealy was 61 years of age and Jenny was 50 when their last child was born. Her father, whose influence would remain with her all her life, was an industrious entrepreneur who possessed an extraordinary ability to accomplish what he set out to do. Zealy's compassion for the dispossessed was evident in his deeply held opposition to slavery. Zealy was generous to all six of his children, giving each of them a parcel of land in the Vevay area. In spite of the family's relative prosperity, everyone worked on the farm, a habit that Lydia continued throughout her life. Eventually all of the Moss children with the exception of one, resettled in Peoria, Illinois (Upton, 1994).

Similar to other pioneer girls of her time, Lydia Moss received no formal education. She learned to read, write, and work with numbers in the kitchen of an Indiana neighbor, Mrs. Campbell (Upton, 1994). Lydia married Tobias Bradley on May 11, 1837. They resettled in Peoria, Illinois a few years after their marriage. But while still in Vivay, they suffered their first tragedy when their first child, Rebecca passed away at age five. Lydia gave birth to six children, none of whom survived childhood. The last surviving child, Laura, died in 1864. The Daily Transcript (Peoria newspaper of the day) on Saturday, February 7, 1864 recorded:

The funeral of Miss Laura Bradley, daughter of Tobias S. Bradley, was largely attended yesterday afternoon, the pupils of the High School being present in a body. The deceased was but 15 years of age, a member of the High School, and a young lady of much promise. The remains were interred at Springdale Cemetery (Upton, p. 25).

Note, that consistent with the custom of the time, Lydia's name was not included in the obituary.

Three years after the death of their only surviving child, Laura, Lydia suffered another tragedy when Tobias was killed in a freak carriage accident (Upton, 1994; Lyons, 2003). He died without a will, leaving Lydia to put their significant financial affairs in order (Upton). She would live forty years after Tobias died. Prior to his death, only close friends and relatives in terms of women's roles of her time likely would have remembered her. Many women in her situation might have retreated to her large stately home to live out their lives in relative comfort and obscurity.

But Lydia's story does not end with Tobias's death. Indeed, the legacy presented on these pages, began after his death. Prior to his untimely death, she and Tobias had talked about an orphanage as a memorial for their children. Lydia decided against the orphanage because she saw an "orphanage as a 'stand pat' institution – a way-station for homeless children where they were fed and clothed until such time as they were old enough to be sent out into society" (Upton, 1994, p. 33). Lydia dreamed of a memorial to her children that would benefit not only students, but also the local community.

As she researched possibilities for the memorial that eventually became Bradley University, Mrs. Bradley demonstrated her values described here by Upton; "Where others saw a problem and either yielded to its insolubility or sought solutions based on the past, Lydia sought solutions in new and untried ways when her intuition and good sense indicated a chance for success" (p. 33).

When she didn't have knowledge in a particular area, Lydia sought out those who did know. Hammond, her business manager of many years, said of Lydia Moss Bradley, "What she knew, she knew, and would not be cheated out of it by sophistry or persuasion. What she did not know, she never pretended to know, and was willing to have settled by those who did know" (Wycoff, The First Decade 126 as cited in Illinois Early Women, 2008). She worked carefully with William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago who encouraged her to create the Institute while she was still alive rather than bequeath it upon her death. The Institute was framed to some degree to be similar to the University of Chicago, but Mrs. Bradley was clear that Bradley Polytechnic Institute would maintain its independence in order to fulfill her original purpose, which always included service to the greater Peoria community.

Zealy Moss passed on to his youngest child a rich legacy of industry, passion for social justice and generosity that Lydia Moss Bradley fully embraced through her life. Her unique business acumen and life habits provided her with the wealth and wisdom to create Bradley University. Her passion for social justice, certainly not a term that would have been used during her time, created the vision for an institution of higher learning available to many who might not otherwise have benefited from an education. Finally, Lydia's generosity always benefited the recipient and the community. Each quality informs the other to create a unique, meaningful, and enduring legacy.

There is no record that Mrs. Bradley ever expressed how she dealt with the ways in which her self-image might contrast with dominant cultural models for women of her time. Chase (1995) distinguishes between "narratives of the achievements of accomplished women and talk about subjection to gender and racial inequities" (p. 11). We have no way to determine how Lydia Moss Bradley felt about existing inequities of her time for women. What we do know is that during a period when women were given scant power through legal or social means, Mrs. Bradley's life enriched others not only those who lived in her time but also in generations to come. The intention here is not so much to impress the reader with Mrs. Bradley's accomplishments, as to provide new understandings into her leadership.

In a time when women could not vote (in the United States), Lydia Moss Bradley's power had to be acquired and utilized carefully. She was a strong, independent woman in a time when women were expected to be tractable. If she had acquired so much wealth and influence for her own glorification she might have been viewed differently, but she established the respect of those close to her through her character and her generosity (Early Illinois Women, 2008).

Over 100 years after her death, the wisdom and spirit of Lydia Moss Bradley continue. Through her life she embodied the values handed down by her parents. She worked hard and when life dealt enormous difficulties through the deaths of her entire immediate family, Lydia prevailed to create wealth that she used to benefit others. The voice of Lydia Moss Bradley, which is available to us solely through the writings of others and her accomplishments, remains as powerful today as it was over a hundred years ago.

Comparative Analysis of Lives and Legacies

After researching the life stories of Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley, we adapted the framework employed by Linda Lambert and Mary Gardner in *Women's Ways of Leading* (2009). We chose Lambert and Gardner's framework because we regarded their work as the most appropriate means to compare and analyze the lives and work of these two women. Prior to the comparative analysis, we were most aware of the remarkable accomplishments of our subjects. We also identified similarities between their work and the tenants of WLE. When the call for papers to the 2019 WLE convention was posted, we immediately recognized strong congruence to our project and the conference theme – *Ways of seeing women's leadership in education: stories, images, metaphors, methods and theories*. Upon receiving the call for papers, we quickly reconnected and set out to respond to the call for papers to the 2019 WLE Conference in Nottingham, England.

The framework is summarized this way. “We propose that women who lead **commit to values, are conscious of their evolving selves, invoke passion and courage, arouse the imagination, create community, and mentor the next generation**” (Lambert and Gardner, 2009 p. 5). The life stories of Aikaterini Laskaridou and Lydia Moss Bradley are not only fascinating, but also important to inform current discourse about the roles and contributions of women to contemporary global education.

Lambert and Gardner's (2009) first theme is values. Values guide our behavior by telling us what to do and what not to do. Begley (1999) defines values as “those conceptions of the desirable, which motivate individuals and collective groups to act in particular ways to achieve particular ends” (p. 237). Leaders whose actions align with clearly articulated values both to themselves and others, create confidence and inspire trust (Kouzes and Posner, 2012; Combs et al., 2015). Leaders who are able to integrate universal values such as equity, care, social justice into their inner and outer lives are much more likely to achieve a strong sense of purpose (Lambert and Gardner, 2009).

The similarities in Aikaterini and Lydia's values are more striking than the differences. Both women greatly respected learning, one as an academic, the other as a businesswoman. Each was an expert in their field who sought additional information to accomplish their goals – Aikaterini studied with Froebel to learn about integrating kindergarten into Greek education and Lydia consulted extensively with William Rainey Harper from the University of Chicago in the creation of Bradley University. Each woman possessed the habits of mind of tenacity and persistence in spite of the strict roles society placed upon women during their lives. In different ways, each valued nature and the natural order of life greatly. Finally, each woman in different ways used her considerable wealth toward the common good of their communities.

This passion also explains, in part, Aikaterini's love for Classical Greece. For Aikaterini, Froebel's work was a modern version of Plato's main ideas, and she therefore saw it as a way to rekindle the Greek spirit of ancient times. Indeed, Aikaterini firmly believed that the adoption of this system of education

would help to bring about a “renaissance of the underdeveloped and lagging Greek education system” (Dimitriadi, 2012).

Lydia's values related to beliefs about principles upon which the United States was founded – that all men are created equal – are reflected in her openly expressed stance on slavery and later in the creation of Bradley University as a co-educational organization. Neither position was mainstream at the time Lydia used them as a basis for her actions. Others may have agreed with her, but few expressed or acted upon their beliefs as she did.

Consciousness of evolving self is the second theme in Lambert and Gardner's (2009) framework. The highly developed woman leader in this category bases her identity on continuous self-reflection on the needs of others and brings informal authority to accomplish change. Lambert and Gardner posit that “Consciousness springs from the meanings derived from lives led and values attended to” (p. 56).

Because we were not able to interview either woman, we can only speculate on how they found their voice to express their deepest values. According to Dimitriadi (2012) Aikaterini was intensely self-aware and applied herself assiduously to her roles as a wife and a mother of three, as well as her need to keep on progressing as a person and a leader. This awareness produced knowledge of both [her] strengths and limitations, enabling [her] to add value to other women's lives through [her] compassion, work and roles in the world (Dimitriadi, p. 119). Aikaterini was fully conscious of her own limits. At the end of her life, she acknowledged that her desire to spread the Froebelian system of education across Greece did not fully materialize as she had envisioned. From her deathbed she echoed her fears about the future state of her schools and preschool education in Greece: “I am not worried about orphans or kindergartens. I am convinced that they will one day spread throughout Greece. But I'm worried about my teachings and the schools. What will happen? It has hardly been secured financially. Its high purpose has not yet been fully understood. How to educate women, women capable of contributing to the rebirth of our Greece? How will kindergartens be educated ethically without kindergarten teachers?” (Kiriazopoulou-Valinaki, 1957, p.360).

Lydia's accomplishments in the 40 years after her husband died are in distinct contrast to her earlier life. While we have very few direct quotes to shed light on her thoughts, her actions and the results of her actions during the last half of her life appear to reveal a woman who shed all societal expectations to achieve what she set out to do.

Lydia's private world was as she wanted it. How strangers reacted, whispered, envied meant little to her. Her goals in life were of paramount importance and they were achieved to the betterment of life for the people in the Central Illinois are, in particular, and to the nation at large in a general sense” (Upton, 1994, p. 79).

The third theme from Lambert and Gardner (2009) involves inspiring passion and courage to live their lives through universal values. Inspiration and the act of leadership requires the ability to see situations differently from commonly held perceptions. Once again, we realized that these two women were more alike than different in the passionate ways they worked to accomplish their goals.

The Froebelian system of education was Aikaterini's religion, the dream of all her happiness, the ideal of all her desires. . . . Nothing discouraged her. Nothing could reduce her enthusiasm. Like an apostle, above all her happiness as a person, a wife, a mother, was the joy of realizing her reforming work (Parren, 1916). Aikaterini displayed courage as she confronted conflict or difficulty, pain, danger, or uncertainty (Lambert and Gardner, 2009). Her passion transcended the moment, bypassing problems and personal or other struggles, while her strongly held values provided a clear path to the realization of her dreams.

Lydia promoted and defended universal values, many which were not accepted in her time, such as her position against slavery and in the inclusion of women in the creation of Bradley University. Her quiet steadfast passion has sustained creative action in the university since its inception. We don't know how she felt about her opinions, if she saw herself as courageous or not.

Aikaterini and Lydia's creations are direct results of their abilities to invoke passion and courage in others. Their abilities to think differently from those around them, seek out additional knowledge prior to the creation of their dreams, and pay close attention to details to implementation details characterize each of them as they embarked upon their projects. Neither would have accomplished as much as they did had they not engaged others in their radical at the time ideas.

Aikaterini was a woman of exceptional courage and passion. Colleagues at her teaching college described her as having "a fire in her heart" (Parren, 1916). Her dedication and devotion to disseminating the Froebelian system of education in Greece was legendary. The German historian Charles Krombahr, who visited her school in Athens, was impressed by "the sharp and incredibly educated headmistress of the school who tries with her words and deeds to transmit this [Froebelian] system of education in Greece" (Dimitriadi, 2012). Whatever is known in Greece about Froebel is based on Aikaterini's writings. Her enthusiasm for Froebel's method was contagious and spread like fire in the hearts of the young women who were aspiring to become teachers. Aikaterini instilled in them a love of education and she managed to assuage their fears. Inspired by her courage, for the first time in Greece's education history, young female teachers were willing to take risks and undertake teaching positions in the most remote and dangerous parts of the country.

Lydia's quiet steadfast passion has sustained creative action in the university since its inception. Clearly Lydia changed the culture and dynamics of the Peoria community in the creation of Bradley University. She did so through her daily life aligned to her values, a strong work ethic, steadfast attention to details, a willingness to innovate (after thorough research of a problem and possible solutions), and impressive generosity.

The fifth theme is arousing the imagination. Lambert and Gardner (2009) note that imagination is evidenced in ideas, creation, agendas, and results (p. 104). Sir Ken Robinson (2011) defines imagination as "the power to see beyond the present moment and our immediate environment" (p. 17). Both Aikaterini and Lydia defied societal female roles in male-dominated societies to dream and create.

In addition to being extremely knowledgeable, Aikaterini was a creative spirit, a visionary woman for whom "imagination

is the fire that ignites the slow fuse of the possible" (Lambert and Gardner, 2009, p. 98). Aikaterini conceived an educational system that would contribute to the overall improvement of education in Greece, a system that would embrace the child from pre-school to the end of their high school years. Aikaterini set her mind and heart to make that dream a reality (Kiriazopoulou-Valinaki, 1957).

Lydia sought a way to memorialize her six children and husband and decided against a home for orphans (Upton, 1994). True to her values, she sought an institution that would touch the lives of more individuals. She did her homework (another characteristic of successful entrepreneurs) and was not swayed by the opinions of naysayers.

The fifth theme is building community as not only an act of imbuing the members of a society with a common purpose, it is also "meaning making and knowledge development" as well as creating a "locale for growing values, identity, courage, and imagination" (Lambert and Gardner, 2009, p. 127). It is the transformation of a society. The women of our stories didn't accomplish their dreams alone. They brought along like-minded people in whom they cultivated their ideas and succeeded in transforming them into actions.

Building community was second nature for Aikaterini. A school principal who knew her well wrote that, "She was seeking new ways to act, and to offer to Greek youth. She constantly wanted to give. It was in her nature. Even in childhood she had felt a compelling need to give to others" (Parren, 1916). That Aikaterini strived all her life to give to others is indisputable: schools to teach young children, a school to train teachers, and a new community that united and enabled 830 refugee women. Aikaterini's community work contributed to the transformation of a stifled Greek culture into a more modern system.

Lydia's commitment to community is evidenced in many ways. The establishment of Bradley University Board of Directors is a particularly relevant example of ways that her vision looked far into the future. She insisted that half of that body must come from local community. That charter continues today, maintaining Bradley's connection to the local community.

Much of Lydia's generosity was designed to the betterment of the Peoria community. Examples include Laura Bradley Park, which still exists today, Peoria's Home for Aged Women, and support in the creation of what is now St. Francis Hospital. Many of Lydia Moss Bradley's contributions to others will never be known because she was a private person and would have kept to herself gifts and donations.

The local newspaper Peoria in February 1908 after her death paid tribute to her skill:

To her genius and economy is due the remainder of the endowment, which has become public property. Her prosperity has been both a consequence and one of the causes of Peoria's splendid growth. Wherever she invested, she encouraged improvement, mutually beneficial to the community and to herself (Upton, 1994, p. 39).

The final theme is mentoring. Lambert and Gardner (2009) contend that mentoring requires a continuing

relationship, guidance, support, and encouragement. In Greek mythology, Mentor was the advisor and guardian assigned by Odysseus to his son Telemachus. His role was to activate the full potential of Telemachus and to help him mature to wisdom.

Aikaterini, a passionate follower of the classical ideals, exemplified that role wholeheartedly and tirelessly with her young protégées. For her, mentoring was an undeniable imperative. There are collections of her letters to her graduates wherein it is apparent that she was in constant communication with them, especially at the beginning of their careers. In keeping with the role of mentor, Aikaterini always closed her letters to mentees with “Your spiritual mother, Aikaterini” (Dimitriadi, 2012).

Bradley University is a mentoring project on a huge scale if one considers that past, present and future students, faculty and staff reside in an institution that perpetuates Lydia’s values. As noted earlier, knowledge of many of her mentoring efforts have not survived over a century so that we can recognize them today. Unlike Aikaterini, Lydia was not a scholar who would have written down her ideas. Lydia was a doer and while the influence of those she mentored likely continues today, we don’t have those stories.

One of the few direct quotes from Lydia available today illustrates her commitment to community and mentoring. As she attended to every organizational detail in the creation of Bradley University, Lydia established that Bradley Polytechnic Institute would have the largest endowment of any Illinois university (at the time) with the exception of the University of Chicago (Upton, 1994). The board of trustees were selected on the basis of recognized scholars and Peoria influential leaders (all male). But Lydia, typical of her lifelong practice of following what she considered the best course of action, appointed her nephew who was a local farmer. When he asked her reasons for appointing him to sit on the board with such a distinguished group, she replied, “I have been watching you with your procedure...closer than you have known....(I chose you) because I have a great deal of farm property and I believe that you, with your experiences, would be a valuable man on my board” (Upton, p. 55). Her language is succinct and reveals her actions to be based upon considerable thought.

CONCLUSION

As we analyzed the life story of each of these women against the themes identified by Lambert and Gardner (2009), we realized that the similarities between them were unexpectedly strong. Over and over we said, “They are more alike than different!” The differences came from cultural, educational, and life circumstances. That two women living on two continents, who chose to use their strong intellects, laser like focus, impressive work ethics, and we must also acknowledge, considerable wealth to the betterment of their communities (whether local or national) is a testimony to what can be achieved.

The differences between Aikaterini and Lydia are in the details. Aikaterini was born into a wealthy family. She was afforded every educational opportunity available at the time. She used her education and financial resources to study the Froeblian method that she instituted in Greece. Lydia was born into a family that was certainly financially comfortable, but could not have been considered wealthy. The fact that her parents saw the necessity to send her to a neighbor to learn to read and write is a testament to the value they saw in education at a time when education for girls was not considered important in the United States. Lydia’s formal education would go no further than that what she learned from her neighbor. Lydia was an exceptional businessperson who quadrupled her husband’s considerable estate of \$500,000 at the time of his death to over \$2,000,000 at her death. Lydia turned to education then in the formation of Bradley University to use her wealth to memorialize her deceased children and husband as well as to benefit the Peoria community.

So it is that in analyzing their differences, we returned to another similarity. Both Aikaterini and Lydia regarded education as the vehicle to express their values, their consciousness of evolving self, invoke passion and courage, arouse imagination, create community and mentor future generations into the present and onto futures beyond. We agree with Lambert and Gardner “that there is no evidence that these qualities are the sole possession of the select few...each woman possesses the capacity to learn and to lead; the inner gems of values, capacity for self-understanding; courage and imagination, a deep yearning for community and the desire to mentor others” (2009, p. 15).

AUTHORS’ FINAL REFLECTIONS

We have been powerfully affected by the life stories of Aikaterini and Lydia. Not only did the analysis of these women reveal much deeper understandings of how they exercised leadership in education, in engaging in the analysis ourselves, we came to new awakenings of our own leadership journeys. In a very real sense, our own values and the ways we have engaged with them in our leadership as educators. Analyzing their life stories opened up for us ways our values have provided meaning to our lives. We came to deeper understandings of our evolving selves through the stories of Aikaterini and Lydia. We were humbled by the courage, passion, and imagination their life stories reveal, bolstering, we hope, our own sense of who we can become. Having ourselves come together through two powerfully influential communities, WLE and Fulbright, the stories of Aikaterini and Lydia urge us to venture forth for into new frontiers. Finally, we share the powerful mentoring of our dear friend Dr. Linda Lyman and understand fully our need and responsibility to mentor others.

But the message goes much further than what we as two researchers gained from the analysis of two women school leaders who lived so many years ago. Their legacy to each of us is to consciously understand their stories to more fully understand

our own. We invite each of you to start out as we did, looking for the not-so-well-known stories of women school leaders from the past in your community, however you describe community. We encourage you then to go deeper than simply recounting their story to better understand who they were, how they lived their values, and positively affected others. Use the framework we used from Lambert and Gardner or another.

Our hope is that each reader will come to know more fully seldom told stories of women school leaders in order to inform your own leadership. It is indeed *“time to UNDELETE our past”* (Stuber, n.d.).

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Reactivity and Adaptability: Applying Gender and Age Assessment to the Leader Resilience Profile®

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Turbulent events in leadership and in life can challenge even those most stoic in the face of adversity and loss. Prefacing with a combined definition of resilience, this paper illustrates the complete lifecycle of resilience in the face of adversity and its resultant rewards when and if appropriately applied. Phases included in this lifecycle are: normalcy, deterioration, adaptation, recovery, and growth. The paper then discusses the application of the revised Leader Resilience Profile® (LRP) data, comparing leader resilience according to gender and age. Results from this ongoing study on resilience clearly show as people age, their resilience increases. The 60+ age group, in particular, had significantly higher resilience scores than participants in other age groups. Men between the ages of 20–29 had significantly higher resilience scores than women of the same age group. Other age groups provided no notable differences or substantial correlations when it came to gender and age. A framework is presented for how to become more resilient throughout the life course. This framework includes positive well-being, assessing and strengthening meaningful intrinsic and extrinsic resources, self-efficacy, future-focus, and important strategic avenues for resilient aging. The paper then raises the questions: who ages resiliently, and how, and what differences are there between young, old, retired, and elderly individuals when it comes to living and working resiliently? The paper concludes that support and proactivity are the means for achieving positive growth orientation, quality of life, self-identity, purpose, inhibiting stress-related debilitation, and resilient aging.

Keywords: resilience, age, adaptability, perseverance, wellbeing, efficacy

RESILIENT EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN TURBULENT TIMES: APPLYING THE LEADER RESILIENCE PROFILE® TO ASSESS DIFFERENCES IN RELATIONSHIP TO GENDER AND AGE

People of all ages face adversity. How they adapt characterizes the resilience of any particular individual. Constituents, media, funding, peers, and shifting standards in education can disrupt the paths leaders pave in their professional careers, not to mention the personal, mental, and even physical impacts these carry when consistently under scrutiny. Surviving and thriving through these challenges is the essence of resilience, although resilience is more than merely enduring and surviving adversity. Rather, resilience is not only surviving but ultimately thriving in the face of

adversity. Growth is engendered through challenges and experience along with the availing of supportive networks and resources. How leaders adjust to challenging situations in general, and in particular, how these adjustments correlate with the changes and challenges of physical and cognitive aging, is dependent on the characteristics of resilience discussed in this paper.

This paper contributes to the literature on resilience, offering salient findings on aging and resilience among educational leaders. The original dataset from LRP-R surveys on differences in resilience is reanalyzed to for correlation between gender and age. In particular, this paper furthers the conceptual understanding of resilience in the literature, as informed by the original findings of LRP-R on resiliency differences (Reed, 2018).

Commencing with a combined definition of resilience in leadership and aging, this paper highlights results from LRP-R data comparing leader resilience by gender and age, providing conceptual frameworks on resilience for younger and older leaders, prior to reaching retirement and elderly ages. The literature review on resilient aging elaborates on the patterns between age groups and their strategies for contented and resilient living over time. The paper presents a new framework: the Resilience Conceptual Framework for Aging and discusses primary and most notable differences between professional adults and the elderly, and how the implementation of resilience differs between these two groups. After describing a few limitations of the study, the paper concludes with insights for achieving resilience against aging. This study was undertaken to understand how older educational leaders employ resilience in the beginning stages of old age, and how these strategies may inform younger leaders, and others, in their professional and personal life trajectories.

PRIOR RESEARCH

Patterson et al. (2009) surveyed the experiences and developmental consequences of adversity in educational leadership to determine the characteristics and features of resilience in this population. In short, a resilient leader is one who is able to survive and then thrive in the wake of chronic adversity by reframing their losses into opportunities for adaptation and growth. In this context, the research shows that resilience is not malleable within short timeframes, but is rather an ongoing learning and developmental experience for the individual, enabling them to achieve and perform new skills with greater confidence while gradually preparing them for future hurdles. This reframing is shown to improve adaptability and overall outlook on life.

Patterson et al. (2009) research identifies five phases of the resilience cycle (Figure 1).

The cycle begins with Phase 1, considered “normal conditions,” where life is continuing along normally for the individual. Resources are plentiful, performance is high, and there is ample community support. Then adversity strikes. The individual abruptly falls into Phase 2, the deteriorating phase of the resilience cycle, where they think and act in ways that

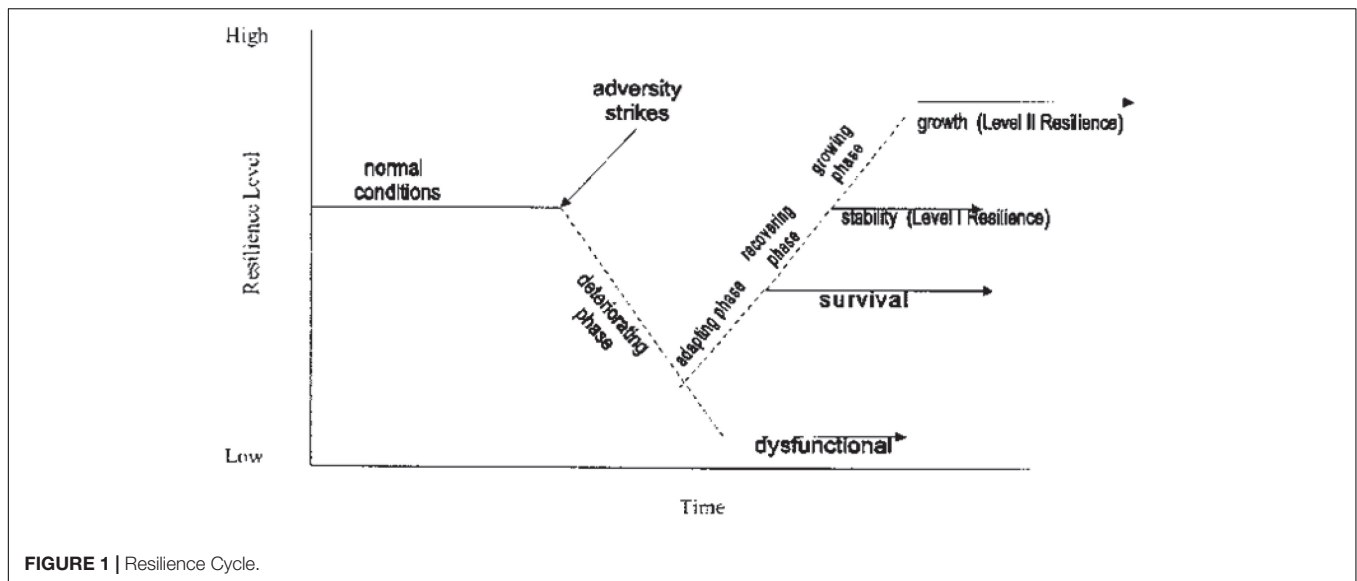
increases stress reactions, such as anger, aggression, and fear, and they may blame others. The emotions of denial, grief, and anger thrust them into a reactive position, wallowing in “victim” status. A notable distinction between resilient and non-resilient people is the time spent in Phase 2. Resilient people tend not to languish in the role of victim. They quickly move to Phase 3, the adapting phase, which begins when they assume some responsibility for their situation and take action to avoid staying mired in the dysfunctional deteriorating phase of the resilience cycle. Continuing an upward trajectory, the adapting phase gives way to Phase 4, the recovering phase, following a path back to the level of stability experienced before the onset of adversity. The regaining of the *status quo*, in terms of stability and attitude, is referred to as Level 1 resilience. Concrete strategies, outlined below, may help them recover from adversity to this point. However, if they plateau at the *status quo* level, while they may continue to function adequately, they do not experience growth, and are rather merely coping with the stressor. Resilient individuals move beyond regaining a semblance of the *status quo*. They enter Phase 5, the growing phase, on their way to Level II resilience, in which they have not only rebalanced their situation, but have been strengthened. It is critical to note that individuals choose to move beyond Level 1 resilience, as it requires conscious effort. Below we outline three skill sets that successful leaders engage to achieve resilience (Figure 2). A resilient leader is one who demonstrates the capacity to recover and learn from, as well as grow stronger, in the face of adversity (Patterson et al., 2009).

In sum, Figure 1 demonstrates an individual’s means to achieving resilience in the face of adversity. At the point when normalcy is challenged, the individual is presented with a forked path with choices along with route: where the challenge is accepted or resisted, where one can settle or continue to grow. In choosing to resist the adversity through denial or flight, recovery and even growth are never achieved, leaving the individual in a state of developmental stasis. By choosing the path of accepting the challenge posed by adversity, recovery is gained first through adaptation, with the ultimate intent to not only survive but thrive beyond the comfortable plateau of stability, with the possibility of further developmental and personal growth that could not have been realized without the opportunity posed by the adversity in question.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience is understood in many ways, though these understandings are undergirded with a shared notion of coping, adapting, and thriving in the face of adversity. Resilience is not the same as being stalwart but refers to the capacity to be tenacious, proactive, resourceful, and future-oriented. It is to desire to grow into a more adaptive and less reactive self, beyond the original *status quo*. As there is little literature on the relationship between leadership, resilience, and aging, which this study seeks to remedy, the review below discusses resilience in aging as a whole, particularly among senior citizens.

Resilience requires a greater understanding of one’s identity and therefore, to be resilient means maintaining



Leader Resilience Skills
Thinking Skills Understanding Reality Optimistic About the Future
Capacity Skills Values Efficacy Support Base Well-Being
Action Skills Courageous Decision Making Perseverance Responsibility Adaptability

FIGURE 2 | Leader resilience skills.

and utilizing meaningful social connections. These connections play a pivotal role in establishing life-strengths. Adaptation is arguably critical for personal growth and success. In terms of aging, these factors are particularly salient, as a lifetime of experience has enabled the development of many social connections and support, which in turn, bolsters understanding of oneself in context with these relationships and their histories.

Resilience as Positive Thinking

Positive emotions have been shown to promote increased mental flexibility and lowered reactivity, improving and broadening coping skills and counteracting physiological effects of negative emotions (Reivich and Shatté, 2003). They focus on resilience as a matter of self-correction in the wake of adversity. In their view, resilience has to do with electing constructive and forward-thinking reactions in the face of adversity. Such thinking also demands a pathological remission of negative thoughts, meaning that the individual suppresses negative thinking in order to face and navigate adversity with mental and emotional “freeness and flexibility” that comes with positive thinking. In a similar vein, Lavretsky’s (2014) multidimensional study on resilience in aging focuses strongly on the health benefits (i.e., emotional, cognitive, and physical) of resilience to the elderly. Reactivity to loss can be managed by using strategies for self-preparedness, such as regular exposure to new situations, removing societal factors that burden quality of life, education from early age, updating obsolete, and positive, compensative thinking (Reivich and Shatté, 2003; Milstein, 2010; Fry and Keyes, 2013; Agronin, 2018).

Well-being, along with other resilience practices described in this review, is also measured by one’s spirituality or practice of religion as it provides a working avenue toward acceptance of change and reestablishing purpose in life. Spirituality, as a goal, resource, and strategy also fills emotional gaps that personal reflection may not in the wake of loss as it offers an avenue to faith and acceptance for unexpected losses. Regular practice of positive emotions in times of adversity strengthens resilience by reducing stress, a primary contributor to decrepitation and/or illness. Similarly, Lavretsky (2014) states that positive emotions (such as hope, laughter, social connectedness and gratitude) at a moment of loss or adversity, or “happiness intervention,” has been demonstrated to boost well-being, longevity, and quality of life. Lavretsky (2014) also poses the “broaden-to-build” theory, which hypothesizes that happiness intervention (particularly when coupled with openness to experience) expands an

individual's thought-action repertoires, building hardiness via growth through adversity and coping responses.

Resilience Through Struggle

Greitens (2016), through a personal narrative posed in a series of letters to a friend, provides several frames of resilience for PTSD sufferers in the military. He frames resilience in terms of freedom, death, and leadership, and focuses on achieving resilience through self-realization via rote exposure to struggle and a consistent, conscious practice of patience. In his view, resilience can only be cultivated through struggle. He also explains that learning to flow with the forces of adversity by evaluating one's own perspective of self and others can manifest in resiliency, and that a greater and more complete sense of freedom and identity comes through persistence of action in hardship, not by procrastination or blame.

While Greitens's (2016) contemplation on the nature of resilience is in the context of trauma and survival, Agronin's (2018) review, from a psychiatric perspective, of aging among seniors illustrates that quality of life can be inferred and even measured by the health of relationships, self-esteem, sense of humor, gratitude, forgiveness, and, above all, conscientiousness. In this view, like those of Reivich and Shatté (2003) and Greitens (2016), resilience is cultivated through adversity. A consistent argument through the literature reviewed here is that adversity is a prerequisite for the cultivation of resilience. With proper engagement with a particular challenge, there are opportunities to gain insight and wisdom, which in turn yields personal growth, self-esteem, and sense of purpose, strengthening a sense of usefulness and meaning within the community. In Agronin's frame of resilience in aging, resilience is the way of overcoming the "stagnant quo," or sense of obsolescence as younger communities mature by reclaiming their sense of self in a dignified way and thriving in the wake of life course changes and accepting the difficulties that accompany them. In leaving one's sense of purpose unpursued and resilience unpracticed, arguably aging will be that much harder on the individual.

Resilience Through Learning

Following the notion of pursuing one's purpose and growth throughout the life course, Milstein's (2010) argument regarding aging for retiring professionals is the value age brings when one becomes a student again. After a lifetime of experience, both personal and professional, mature adults may find it difficult to leave their sense of being the "expert" behind to become a learner again. Yet, by doing so, Milstein (2010) argues, the feeling of "oldness" will wane while the accumulation of new skills will help a senior to feel "like new." To Milstein, this is the resilient response to aging. He advises that seniors learn new skills before dropping old ones so as to maintain one's sense of self without worry about personal or intellectual loss following retirement. This view of adjusting to aging also incorporates a social emphasis, focusing on how the establishment of new boundaries, one's connectedness to others, outlook, and life-renewing actions in the face of lifestyle changes can create a ripple effect, inspiring peers in similar stages of life to handle said changes with the dignity of self-defined autonomy. In this way,

an individual takes charge of challenging situations as they move from one life stage to the next, incorporating self-authorization and personal leadership to their resilience skills.

One elderly woman offered a personal contribution to the literature as a woman in her nineties, including lessons on managing the losses that come with aging while resolving to be happy in old age (Allen and Starbuck, 2011). Her salient insights on resilience and aging, specifically coping with and adapting to permanent loss, brings a new scope to this study presented here. Resilient moments are itemized against specific losses, from hearing and vision to muscle degeneration and arthritis, acknowledging the necessity of adapting by maintaining a positive outlook, realizing limits (e.g., taking responsibility for personal safety and risks), meeting losses as challenges that keep the brain active, and minding reactions to limitations (e.g., patience, frustration), and adjusting accordingly.

Resilience Through Internal and External Resources

In Fry and Keyes (2013) examination of what it means to age successfully, they find that the healthy utilization of internal and external resources, self-efficacy, social connectedness, spirituality, and cognitive strength directly impact overall health. Growth orientation (self-identity through experience and reflection of desires) and growth motivation (preparedness inspired by anxiety over potential loss or adversity) also impact overall well-being, though they cannot be realized without meaningful intrinsic and extrinsic resources. Decline cannot be halted, Fry and Keyes argue, but it can be mitigated by positive emotions, positive relationships, and proactivity. Regular implementation of dynamic cognitive challenges, reflection on previous experience and new purposes in life (that is, "personal restructuring"), and weeding out relationships that lack positive meaning are strategies for enhancing not only resilience in old age, but also one's self-identity, which in turn provides a working avenue toward contented living in the face of loss.

Milstein (2010), Fry and Keyes (2013), and Greitens (2016), support the idea that reflection and action on less prominent resources for resilience leads to a more contented, supported, confident, prepared, and whole self. By integrating the Resilience Conceptual Framework for Aging, the Leader Resilience Skills, and the Resilience Cycle, it is possible to strategize on what might be done to reclaim these missing links and better prepare for adversity, challenges, and potential future loss. Cognitive loss, as described by Fry and Keyes (2013), for example, can be inhibited by routine, dynamic exercises. Openness to experiences that challenge one's self diversifies problem-solving, decision making, coping, and self-acceptance skills.

Resilience and Happiness

While not measured in our instrument, the literature review demonstrates that it is imperative to include in the findings of this study on resilience and aging that the key to successful aging is happiness, as happiness indicates the ability to maintain positive relationships and adaptability to challenges makes a more resilient self (Lavretsky, 2014). One must

consider the state of their well-being and make improvements where necessary in the present and in preparation for the future (Patterson et al., 2009; Greitens, 2016). This may require the elimination of connections that lack positive purpose, reconnecting or strengthening relationships that have lasting meaning, strengthening cognizance, financial security, or spiritual understanding (Fry and Keyes, 2013). The realization of what is missing cognitively (Fry and Keyes, 2013) is the route to a more resilient self as one struggles to not just survive but thrive in the wake of adversity (Patterson et al., 2009). Indeed, this analysis corroborates the arguments that internal and external resources (Fry and Keyes, 2013), spiritual awareness (Lavretsky, 2014), autonomy (Milstein, 2010), self-efficacy (Fry and Keyes, 2013), personal growth (Patterson et al., 2009), and self-acceptance (Allen and Starbuck, 2011; Greitens, 2016; Agronin, 2018), are the pillars of resilience, and self-identity.

Resilience and Proactivity

Whether one is resilient, however, is largely dependent on one's proactivity (Fry and Keyes, 2013). To be proactive is to be future-focused and claim control confidently, even if some degree of loss is anticipated (textcolorgrayFry and Keyes, 2009). In older individuals, psychological and cognitive impediments are viewed as challenges to be overcome (Lavretsky, 2014). This is accomplished by finding ways to compensate or adapt to loss or adversity by finding new routes to the same pleasures, such as listening to audiobooks when eyes no longer see Allen and Starbuck (2011). In the wake of loss, individuals look for ways to reclaim continuity through adaptive thinking, reflection, meaningful connection, and purpose in life (Reivich and Shatté, 2003; Milstein, 2010; Allen and Starbuck, 2011; Fry and Keyes, 2013). These actions highlight the benefits of proactivity over reactivity, as proactivity means not only personal control of a situation but mental and physical readiness for new situations (Lavretsky, 2014).

Summary

This study's literature review therefore highlights that to strategize, therefore, is to defend and expand one or multiple abilities as, indeed, many areas of growth overlap, ultimately making their eventual loss with age easier to endure. The literature review also highlights that resilience can then build upon itself as years pass, strengthened by the utilization of internal and external resources such as perseverance, support, and self-realization, which provide not only growth from loss, but also reduces one's need for intrinsic and extrinsic "replenishment," either socially, emotionally, economically and so on. This then allows a greater sense of autonomy over one's life, and confidence in one's choices for their future, encouraging a positive outlook on challenges to come, as well as one's skills as a leader in education as well as in life (Reivich and Shatté, 2003).

STUDY PURPOSE

Further analysis of the findings Reed (2018) study on educational leaders, resilience, gender, and age has led to the proposal of a new conceptual framework on aging and resilience.

Participants

Data collected for the original study were provided through the senior author's consulting work, and participating respondents of the Leader Resilience Profile® (LRP-R) website: <http://theresilientleader.com/quiz/index.php> (Reed, 2018). This is a link to a survey where people self-select to complete the LRP-R and as such, is a self-reporting inventory. As stated before, this was self-selection. It is not a sample of any true population and the demographics were not monitored carefully enough to make any generalizations about the representativeness. Gender and age were reported but no other demographics were asked for.

Subjects were drawn from the governing boards of the American Association of School Administrators, Learning Forward, and the National Association of Elementary Principals, with the survey administered to 277 school administrators under the age of 70. The study received IRB approval from St. John Fisher University, and informed consent was granted from participants and their anonymity guaranteed.

Instrument

The original LRP contained 73 items. Over 1,000 respondents completed the LRP from 2009 to 2012. In 2012, the LRP was revised with a shortened data instrument and improved psychometric properties. The revised instrument (LRP-R) (Appendix), consists of 11 4-item subscales measuring the resilience dimensions described and has been validated in prior research (Reed and Blaine, 2015). Reed (2018) presents further findings and analysis for the Leader Resilience Profile®, which was derived from an original study (Patterson et al., 2009), to assess resiliency in relationship to gender and age.

For this study, we selected items for the LRP-R from the original database of findings. Two items from each subscale was selected with the lowest factor loadings dropped. We created 12 4-item subscales, increasing the current LRP-R to 44 items. Separated by 8 weeks, two tests were performed with subjects. For validity, we used the Brief Resilience Scale and Ego Resilience Scale.

Analysis

Overall resilience scores were calculated by averaging the 11 subscale scores for each participant. Overall scores ranged from 5 (lowest resilience) to 20 (highest resilience). The overall scale demonstrated adequate internal consistency in this sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$). LRP-R subscale scores were not utilized for the purpose of this study. A 1-way ANOVA of resilience scores by age was conducted to determine the correlation between resilience and age. A Wilcoxon rank-sum tests was used to test the difference between male and female median resilience in each age group, with Bonferroni method employed to correct *p*-values for the set of tests.

Results

As cited in Reed (2018), LRP-R responses from 277 participants (female: $n = 181$, 65%; male: $n = 96$, 35%) were analyzed for gender differences in resilience and in the relationships between gender, resilience, and age. Female ($M = 16.4$, $SD = 1.7$) and male ($M = 16.9$, $SD = 1.8$) participants did not significantly

differ in overall resilience, with one exception, described below. The 1-way ANOVA found that resilience increases reliably with age, although the magnitude of the relationship is small, $F(4, 270) = 3.11$, $p = 0.016$, $\eta^2 = 0.04$. The descriptive statistics appear in **Table 1**.

A planned contrast showed that participants in the 60 + age group, compared with all other age groups combined, demonstrated significantly higher resilience scores, $F(1, 270) = 6.82$, $p = 0.009$. Further analysis parsed the influence of gender in this relationship, with the boxplots in **Figure 3** presenting resilience scores separately by age group and gender. **Figure 3** demonstrates an increasing trend of resilience among females compared to males, suggesting that there is a difference between genders in the relationship between age and resilience. Further analysis of this finding, using Wilcoxon rank-sum tests to test the difference between male and female median resilience in each age group and correcting the p -values by the Bonferroni method for the set of tests show that in the 20–29 age group, men ($n = 22$, median = 17.3) demonstrate significantly higher resilience than women ($n = 47$, median = 15.6), Wilcoxon $W = 215.5$, $p = 0.0001$. There are no reliable gender differences in resilience in the other age groups (Reed, 2018). In summary, the results of this study show that the participants did not significantly differ in overall resilience and that resilience increases reliably with age. The participants in the 60 + age group demonstrated significantly higher resilience scores. The study showed there is an increasing trend of resilience among females compared to males suggesting there is difference between genders in the relationship between age and resilience but further study is needed in regard to this.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON AGING AND RESILIENCE

A reanalysis of the original dataset from the administration of the LRP-R has led to a proposed framework on the correlations between aging and resilience. Below is a chart that outlines resources and strategies older adults might utilize to strengthen their resilience as they age.

The chart above shows the predictors of resilience—positive well-being, optimism, awareness and utilization of learned and/or innate skill sets, the awareness and availing of external resources, and the routine practice of self-strengthening strategies. The

implementation of these strategies improves anticipation and resolution of problems, as supported by Reivich and Shatté (2003) and Lavretsky (2014). Similarly, coping, which is considered a form of resilience (Lavretsky, 2014), may be defined as a mechanism that when applied in a healthy and productive way, may prevent or mitigate the impact of unhealthy stress.

Aging leads to numerous challenges physically, cognitively, and emotionally (Fry and Keyes, 2013). The proposed conceptual framework for aging calls attention to avenues that could be utilized to enhance one's scope of support and build a more resilient self. The learned set of tools gained by personal experience enables older adults to disassemble problem cases and reconstruct solutions in a more mature manner (Patterson et al., 2009). This is demonstrated in the data used for this study, in which older generations show higher resilience levels than younger individuals. The inner resources (e.g., habits, outlooks, skills, values, strengths) gained through experiences of adversity then become usable, practical tools which younger adults have yet to develop in their personal and professional lives. External skills, meanwhile, are those that have personal, positive connections and meaning, which have shown to inhibit physical and/or emotional decline and reactivity (Milstein, 2010; Fry and Keyes, 2013). Resilience, therefore, is in part the mobilization of support, as is supported by the research of Milstein (2010); Fry and Keyes (2013), Agronin (2018), and Lavretsky (2014) on the subject.

RESILIENCE AND AGING: COPING WITH PERMANENCE

In some ways, aging is facing the fact of impermanence, with physical and cognitive losses indicating a release on the vigor of life. However, there is one striking difference that is unique to the elderly: adapting to permanence. This is shown most particularly in the Allen and Starbuck (2011) contribution on resilient aging, and which brings a new, unique scope to this study on resilience and aging. There is little difference between younger and older adults in terms of resilience other than the increase in resilience with age. However, the perception of resilience differs between younger and older adults. Younger adults tend to view resilience as problem-focused active coping, while older adults commonly consider it to be tolerance and acceptance of negative outcomes. Compared to younger adults who commonly struggle with new losses, a large proportion of older adults are able to feel positive emotion despite overwhelming loss (Lavretsky, 2014).

In younger and most middle-aged adults, resilience comes with an opportunity for preparedness for, and, most importantly, prevention of similar challenges; for growth over loss; the return to and surpassing of normalcy to an even better position than before. For the elderly, resilience is most frequently used to cope with a change that cannot be reversed, but instead can be adapted to for the purpose of compensating for loss and achieving an alternative vision of normalcy. Resilience in old age is minimizing the impact of cumulative losses through spiritual and social connectedness, as well as creative compensation for once loved, but now challenging hobbies. This is achieved

TABLE 1 | Sample characteristics by age group.

Age	N	Female N (%)	LRP-R resilience	
			Mean	SD
20–29	69	47 (68%)	16.1	2.1
30–39	69	40 (58%)	16.4	1.3
40–49	64	41 (64%)	16.7	1.8
50–59	46	33 (72%)	16.8	1.3
≥60	27	18 (67%)	17.4	1.8

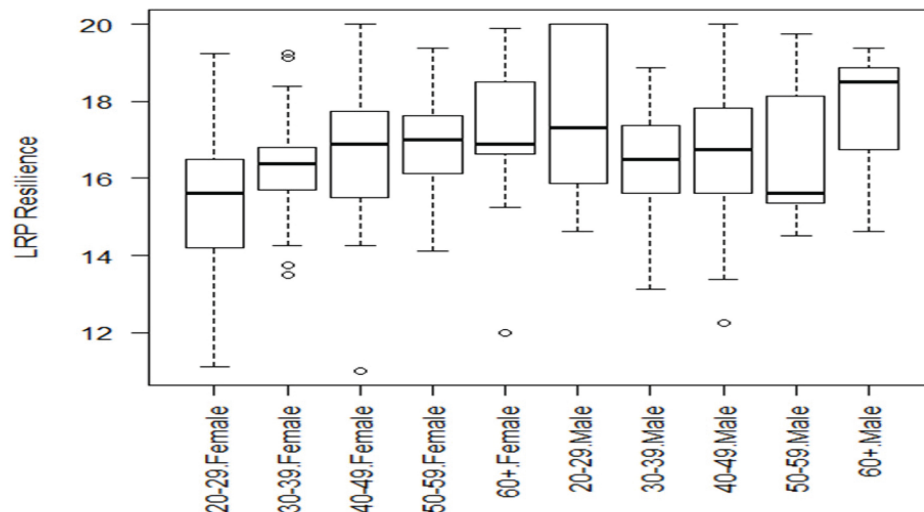


FIGURE 3 | LRP-R resilience by gender and age.

through the openness and adaptation to new ways of living, and thereby increasing strength and resilience in the face of new realities.

The largest difference between the resilience cycle, the conceptual framework of aging, and aging itself is not the emphasis of value added, but adaptability to loss and adjusting to pivotal life changes by creatively and positively dealing with the shrinking domains of one's world. The resilience concepts therefore are no longer applied so as to prevent, but to create a new normal by dealing with losses associated with aging through acceptance and re-invention of long-practiced routines. One is then able to reflect on ways to minimize the losses and their subsequent impacts by adapting to different ways of doing old things, thereby avoiding discontentedness in life and reaching satisfactory, or even enhanced, quality of life.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are threats to the validity of this study because it was self-selection and not a sample of any true population and the demographics were not monitored carefully enough to make any generalizations about representativeness. The study focused on school administrators during their time of practice, which excludes the elderly (over the age of 70) as a subject group. One limitation was the lack of literature on educational leadership and resilience in relation to aging. Considerations for future study include the transfer of concepts of resilience research in leadership to aging, conducting qualitative research such as interviews and focus forums of elderly people in regard to the "resilient strengths." Further research should also be conducted on larger samples in each age range for more refined data on resilience in relation to the given demographics socioeconomic status, ethnicity,

and nationality, especially in places that have experienced longevity explosions.

CONCLUSION

This continuation of our research using the Leadership Resilience Profile® demonstrates that resilience increases as individuals age. Men, particularly between the ages of 20–29, show significantly higher resilience than women of the same age group. Subjects over 60 demonstrate higher resilience rates than all other age groups. For the other age groups, no significant differences emerged.

Younger individuals perceive adversity as an inhibitor to achieve goals while older adults view adversity as challenging opportunities. As older adults deal with adversity at an ever-increasing rate (Lavretsky, 2014), they are able to adapt more readily and to seek aid from other available sources of support. Life experiences also allow the opportunity to perceive what must be adjusted and changed to improve quality of life. Positivity, connectedness with family and friends, sense of purpose, and proactivity facilitate a more resilient self, particularly in the face of permanent losses frequently experienced by older people (Lavretsky, 2014). The utilization of these strategies has proven to inhibit health issues caused by stress.

Resilient aging, therefore, is directly impacted by one's focus on the future: where one wants to see oneself physically, emotionally, and cognitively in the future, deducing what must be done to actualize this goal, and actively pursuing it. It is proactivity toward not just surviving but thriving in the face of adversity and making future challenges easier to overcome, termed growth motivation (Fry and Keyes, 2013). Support and proactivity are the means for achieving positive growth orientation, quality of life, self-identity, purpose, inhibiting stress-related debilitation, and resilient aging.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All datasets presented in this study are included in the article/supplementary material.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

DR conducted the research. AR did the literature review. Both authors contributed to numerous revisions.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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APPENDIX

Leadership Resilience Profile (Revised) Scale

LRP-R

Instructions: Respond to the statements below regarding your leadership behavior using the following 5-point scale.

1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

1. I have a positive influence in making things happen.
2. I expect that good things can come out of an adverse situation.
3. I focus my energy on the opportunities to be found in a bad situation, without downplaying the importance of obstacles.
4. I demonstrate an overall strength of optimism in my leadership style.
5. I gather the necessary information from reliable sources about what is really happening relative to the adversity.
6. I seem to look for the positive aspects of adversity to balance the negative aspects.
7. I seem to accept the reality that adversity is both inevitable and many times occurs unexpectedly.
8. I possess the overall strength of understanding current reality in my leadership role.
9. I make value-driven decisions even in the face of strong opposing forces.
10. I am able to privately clarify or publicly articulate my core values.
11. I rely on strongly held moral or ethical principles to guide me through adversity.
12. I demonstrate an overall strength of being value-driven in my leadership role.
13. I have an overall sense of competence and confidence in my leadership role.
14. I take a deliberate, step-by-step approach to overcome adversity.
15. I demonstrate the essential knowledge and skills to lead in tough times.
16. I maintain a confident presence as leader in the midst of adversity.
17. I reach out to build trusting relationships with those who can provide support in tough times.
18. When adversity strikes, I try to learn from the experiences of others who faced similar circumstances.
19. I have a strong support base to help me through tough times in my leadership role.
20. I try to learn from role models who have a strong track record of demonstrating resilience.
21. I can emotionally accept those aspects of adversity that I can't influence in a positive way.
22. I demonstrate an understanding of my emotions during adversity and how these emotions affect my leadership performance.
23. I create time for replenishing my emotional energy.
24. I have the overall strength of emotional well-being in my leadership role.
25. I demonstrate an overall strength of physical well-being in order to effectively carry out my leadership role.
26. I never let adverse circumstances that inevitably happen disrupt my long-term focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
27. I monitor my personal health factors and then adjust my behavior accordingly.
28. I find healthy ways for channeling my physical energy to relieve stress.
29. I take prompt, principled action on unexpected threats before they escalate out of control.
30. I take prompt, decisive action in emergency situations that demand an immediate response.
31. I am able to make needed decisions if they run counter to respected advice by others.
32. I demonstrate an overall strength of making courageous decisions in my leadership role.
33. When I choose to take not leadership action in the face of adversity, I accept personal accountability for this choice.
34. I accept accountability for the long-term organizational impact of any tough leadership decisions I make.
35. I have an overall strength of accepting personal responsibility for my leadership actions.
36. In my leadership role, I acknowledge mistakes in my judgment by accepting responsibility to avoid these mistakes in the future.
37. I adjust my expectations about what is possible based on the current situation.
38. I put my mistakes in perspective and move beyond them.
39. I change course, as needed, to adapt to changing circumstances.
40. I search for creative strategies to achieve positive results in a difficult situation.
41. I refuse to give up in overcoming adversity, even when all realistic strategies have been exhausted.
42. I sustain a steady focus on the most important priorities until I achieve successful results.
43. I demonstrate perseverance in my leadership role.
44. I never let distractions interfere with my focus on important goals and tasks.

SCORING: To compute subscale scores, average the items associated with each LRP-R subscale.

Subscale Items

Optimism—Future 1–4

Optimism—Reality 5–8

Personal Values 9–12

Personal Efficacy 13–16
Support Base 17–20
Emotional Well-being 21–24
Physical Well-being 25–28
Decision-making 29–32
Personal Responsibility 33–36
Adaptability 37–40
Perseverance 41–44.



Threadbare BUT Bonded—Weaving Stories and Experiences Into a Collective Quilt of Black Women's Leadership

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As black women leaders within the 21st century sharing our stories, reflections and contributions remain an area of high anxiety, reluctance and resistance. The fear of these contentions can elicit feelings of invisibility, voicelessness, rejection and reprisal. Black women's experiences of leadership are, at times, visualized metaphorically as a single bare thread. A thread that maneuvers and meanders aimlessly, not through choice, but by navigating their way through institutional systems. Their journeys are fueled with micro aggressions, convoluted racial barriers and systemic obstacles placed within their paths while attempting to reach and sustain their leadership positions. In her research (Curtis, 2014, 2017), has sought to connect these threadbare yet bonded experiences by weaving the participants counter-narratives into a collective quilt. A quilt designed and developed to show their stories of leadership. This methodology displays their strengths and commands visibility while displaying vibrant, passionate social justice leadership within these symbolic colorful, tired and tangled yarns. Black women's survival in leadership positions is often not one of centrality within mainstream literature. These experiences are not commonly championed or celebrated by those who hold dominance within society. However, within this research, black women's survival is one in which their resilience hangs solitary at times by a threadbare yarn. Using these threads to authenticate connectedness and weaving their journeys of leadership has utilized a bond and created an opportunity to share with other black women leaders their often isolated experiences. The research expands their expressive, creative liberation using the lens of Critical Race Theory and black feminism to explore the women's cultural identities as educational leaders.

Keywords: social justice leadership, Critical Race Theory, black feminism, collective identity, sense of self, black feminism, intersectionality

INTRODUCTION – BLACK WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Despite the lack of representation of black women as leaders, history shows that they have managed to become successful leaders in many disciplines and have been able to maintain their positions (Alston, 2005; Bass, 2009). Black women have historically diverse strategies for survival and for maintaining their emotional wellbeing (Maddox, 2013). These leadership experiences have created

a collective identity for the women, one that seeks to work beyond the traditional expectations of leaders, and which seeks to provide a sense of community, support and development.

This journal article is an opportunity to present the strengths demonstrated in black women leaders' collective presence while sharing their collective voice. The dominant discourse contained in the wider body of management and educational research presents a patriarchal view of leadership, and this partial view is recognized by the silence of women's voices in research, as well as those who are marginalized and excluded as the 'other' (Lorde, 1984). Those who work toward eradicating oppression and inequality have developed a shared understanding of marginalization and have been seen to adopt a race-centered approach to their leadership (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Santamaria, 2013). CRT sets the context within an ahistoricism that has dominated empirical research by minimizing the academic space in which alternative histories could be told (Gillborn, 2008; Roberts, 2013).

Black women's identities are described as multifaceted, and are presented in the literature from a dominant viewpoint which Maya Angelou (cited in Bush, 2000) has termed the 'fabulous fiction of black women's identities.' This description highlights the stereotypes of black women which are highly gendered or depicted as contradictory representations, and presents a view from a very different lens. Bush (2000) describes how this conflicting representation of black women shows inconsistencies and racist stereotypes of black women. However, within this research, by relating a shared understanding of the women's experiences; the researcher shares the sentiments as expressed by Bell-Scott who states:

"When you share our stories and seek to unshroud the lives of women who have come before us, the telling empowers us all" (Bell-Scott and Johnson-Bailey, 1999, p. xiv).

Non-traditional writing genres have been used by black feminists, as well as by critical race theorists (Alexander-Floyd, 2010), to give voice to those who are marginalized and excluded. By exploring the intersections of race and gender, this method provides the freedom of collectivity in the safety of a created black women-centered space. Curtis (2014, 2017) reveals how black women, normally isolated from each other, share their experiences, which include the daily barriers, struggles and adversities that have helped to shape collective identities (Shelby, 2002; Bass, 2009). Within educational research, Witherspoon and Mitchell (2009) examined the neglected notion of black women in educational leadership, and revealed that black women's experiences had been silenced by other, more dominant leadership narratives. According to Johnson (2012) and others, black women often adopt a tenacious, resilient model of leadership which has remained absent in mainstream research (Alston, 2005; Patterson and Kelleher, 2005; Johnson, 2012). This method presents their voices by sharing counter-narratives that examine their cultural wealth and knowledge by acknowledging different practices and analyzing histories (Delgado and Stefancic, 1995; Solórzano and Yosso, 2001; Villapando, 2003).

Traditionally, quilting is embedded in women's everyday lives, and has been used to document a rich history (Wilson, 1999). This method helped to complement feminist values that include a historical context for social and political redress (Johns, 2011). The history of quilts has been traced back as far as ancient Egypt and China. Quilt-making traditions have given women the space to be together, to find their voice and to share their feminine knowledge (Alexander-Floyd, 2010). Black women leaders need to be empowered to tell their own stories. This also supports the notion that:

"Stories give the opportunity to re-theorize Eurocentric and patriarchal frameworks, with a focus on the liberation of people of color from the historical legacy of colonization and the hegemony of white society" (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1071).

Stories are powerful tools used to readdress these imbalances and the inequalities faced by those whose voices have been stifled into silent submission. The research process includes five phases (discussed within this article). The third phase of the research was the development of the quilt. An emergent stage influenced through the impact of their shared counter-narratives and the powerful transference of their stories that influenced the fluidity of this critical phase.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical Race Theory (CRT) sets the context in this research (Curtis, 2014) to incorporate the history of black feminism and the understanding of the various forms of oppression experienced by black women. Further exploration examines some of the commonalities black women share as women; however, the overlapping intersections of race and gender have affected black women's leadership experiences, as highlighted in this journal article. The concept of CRT and its application provide a standpoint that effectively establishes a critical framework for this research (Hooks, 1990): a framework that demonstrates a culturally sensitive approach that explores the influence of race and gender.

Critical Race Theorists have challenged educational institutions in regard to issues of inequality, privilege, and color blindness (Solórzano and Delgado, 2001). The ideas of fair play, equality and democracy devoid of the significance of 'race' support the notion of a color-blind approach. Color blindness as challenged by CRT theorists is the idea that race and the effects of racialization are not considered in education. This absence renders policy and practice void, because of the belief that we all have an equal chance starting from the same point in life, including equal access to employment and education, disregarding any systems of inequality and discrimination (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000).

The main reason for choosing to use a black feminist research methodology was to ensure that the method enables the black women leaders to be visible narrators of their own counter-narratives of their own lived realities, as expressed in their own voices (Delgado, 1989; Matsuda, 1989; Solórzano and Yosso, 2001).

Bell-Scott and Johnson-Bailey (1999) looks at the use of narratives, journals, poetry and quilting, as well as a number of other useful media resources that are instrumental to the black women she believes are struggling to find their voices. This positive approach to CRT as used within this research includes the promotion of storytelling. Adams-Wiggin's (2010) study supported the value of counter-stories. Her work has focused on black professional women and their experiences of biculturalism. She studied the effects on these women emotionally, professionally and personally. Through counter-story telling, she allowed the participants to voice their own realities, sharing sensitive data on the impact on their daily lives caused by living with this internal and external conflict. Delgado (1989, p. 2439) asserted that only through listening can the conviction of seeing the world in one way be challenged: "one can only acquire the ability to see the world through others' eyes."

Curtis (2014, 2017) aimed to capture the women's thoughts, their thinking and some of the essence of their identity through their eyes, by the production of a visible, collective leadership quilt.

Who Are These Leaders in This Research?

The sample consisted of eight black women: Amara, Aaliyah, Esther, Eleanor, Tallah, Michaela, Estella and Carmen. Individually (stage 1 analysis) and collectively (stage 2) they explored their experiences with regard to their leadership journeys and developments. When designing the research, it was intended that the women would be self-identified black women working as Children Centre leaders, or curriculum

leaders providing services for children up to the age of five. As the research progressed, other types of leaders emerged, this also seemed relevant and consideration was given for their inclusion in the research sample. As part of the recruitment and selection a number of organizations were contacted, including professional black women's establishments, such as the Black Women's Leaders Network and the NPQICL (National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership), and also including newly qualified black women leaders as well as the Black Women Voices network based in London at that time.

Introducing the Research Participants

The eight participants have different backgrounds, including their ethnicities, ages and experiences; however, some of the commonalities are shown as follows (see **Table 1**):

The women in the study's average experience in leadership is between 15 – 20 years.

The participants came from diverse backgrounds but all identified themselves as black the majority came from various Caribbean islands. The Women have also completed a degree and six leaders have completed their Master's degrees in education. These women are well established leaders with many years of educational leadership. The following section will show how the research methods have been used and will provide the opportunity to examine the data. This article will present the 2nd stage of the data analysis.

Data Collection and Methodological Approach

The research design for this study incorporated qualitative research techniques that enabled the researcher to extract

TABLE 1 | The eight participants and their leadership experience, heritage, locations and level of leadership.

Participant ethnicity	Leadership position location	Age (Approx.)	Experience	Qualifications
(1) Carmen(Irish and Caribbean)	Head of a Children's Centre (attached to a school) North of England	45 – 55 years	25 years	Diploma. Degrees. Master's in HE NPQICL. About to begin a Ph.D.
(2) Estella(Larger Caribbean Island)	Children's Centre Head (school site) North of England	40 – 50 years	11 years	Diploma. Degrees. Master's in HE NPQICL.
(3) Aaliyah(Yemen)	Head of Children's Centre (Community Nursery) North of England	30 – 40 years	14 years	Diploma Degree. Master's.
(4) Amara(African)	Children's Centre Head (Private Sector) North of England	55 – 65 years	20 years	Degree and Masters in Early Years and Education.
(5) Esther(Caribbean)	Children's Centre Head (Maintained Sector) LEA East Midlands	45 – 55 years	20 years	Degree and Master's NPQICL.
(6) Elenor(Caribbean Island)	Children's Centre Co-ordinator (Surestart) LEA North of England	45 – 55 years	22 years	Degree. Master's. NPQICL.
7) Tallah(Britain and Africa)	Children's Centre Leader (National Charity) North West of England	35 – 45 years	20 years	Diploma in Higher Education

aspects of the participants' leadership experiences that have not been well-documented in the current literature (McCall, 2005; Campbell-Stephens, 2009; Johnson, 2012; Santamaria and Santamaria, 2012). There are clear underlying principles that have guided the methodology in support of a Black Feminist epistemology that steers away from generalizations and is, therefore, set within the context of a historical ontology (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001).

The traditional feminist approach in which black women did not have a voice has attracted some contention with regard to the use of methods and the arguments for having a feminist methodology. Hammersley (1992) concluded that this methodology was not distinct from non-feminist research, and had drawn on many of the ideas already in existence within non-feminist literature.

"Much feminist theory emerges from privileged women who live at the center whose perspectives on reality rarely include knowledge or awareness of the lives of women who live in the margin" (Hooks, 1984, p. 1).

As a theoretical framework, black feminist thought supports the use of qualitative methods of inquiry (Hooks, 1984; Collins, 1990). Adjustments taken from the pilot have been made to the semi-structured interview (divided into two interview schedules). The interview at the pilot stage had numerous questions, causing the interview to exceed the 2-h time limit. Adaptations have also been added to the methods by interpretative critical analysis using triangulated methods to ensure the representation of a rich tapestry of findings that exemplify the experiences of a cross-section of black women leaders nationally (Johnson-Bailey, 1991; Gibson and Abrams, 2003). Research shows that a triangulated approach to the study (Denzin, 1989) helps the researcher to compare the findings through the use of various approaches. This approach used throughout the five phases has given a more comprehensive insight into the main issues that affect black women leaders. The research design focused on three research questions; however, in this article I will present the data collected and related specifically to question one:

- (1) What experiences are black women leaders encountering in achieving leadership roles in early years education?

The five phases are as follows:

- **Initial one-to-one interview** – this is an introductory interview to find out their individual timelines and journeys, their backgrounds and their personal developments.
- **Walk-and-talk interview** – this was an introduction to their work settings presented in their early years' centers, as well as an opportunity for an introduction to their team.
- **Final one-to-one interview** – the opportunity to revisit their transcripts, to share their experiences of the research in the design of the quilt and their reflections as leaders.
- **Presentation of the quilt** – a two-way process in which the researcher presented the women with the completed quilt and for the group to express their final thoughts as a collective and as individuals.

- **Final interview** – a last opportunity for individual participants to collate their final thoughts and to share advice for new black women leaders.

As race and gender were central in this research, it was important to look critically at the impact on the data analysis presented through the lens of a black woman researcher engaged in a participatory relationship researching the experiences of other black women.

Using Reflexivity With the Researcher as an Insider or an Outsider

By demonstrating the richness of reflexivity in this research further opportunities are provided to engage in the understanding of these women's lives as leaders. Reflexivity is seen as an increasingly popular methodological self-consciousness that gives qualitative researchers a new paradigm (Seale, 1999, p. 160). This process offers the opportunity for the researcher to be willing to learn about his- or herself and to explore the purpose of the research and his or her positionality within the social world (Brown, 2012). As the researcher listening to these stories, their words touched upon my internal reflections while encouraging me to examine my own journey through the process of analyzing the women's stories. Bell (2003, p. 16) believes that 'Stories are one of the most powerful and personal ways that we learn about the world passed down from generation to generation.' I should share that, when I was first asked to explain my research, I placed the emphasis of my work collectively on "all women" in leadership. My awareness at that time was that this seemed to receive a more receptive, response within the sector. A degree of safety was created by the generic use of the word "women" in leadership. However, I am now consciously aware that burying issues of race is about not creating waves and being "othered" by dominance (Collins, 1990) or labeled as "one of those people" who raise difficult conversations.

Choices not to speak are often well-intentioned and psychologically protective, motivated by concerns for people's feelings and by an awareness of the realities of one's own and others feelings' (Gilligan, 1993). CRT and black feminism empowered me to place race firmly on the agenda. Bell (2010, p. 4) clearly expresses that race matters, 'it provides a roadmap for tracing how people make sense of social reality, helping us to see where we connect with and where we differ from others in our reading of the world.' Collins (1990) highlighted that black women need to relate their lived experiences through their own culture and set within their own contexts that moves away from the deficit models of research that included stereotypes. Gibson and Abrams (2003) had shared views as one black and one white researcher whose study engaged black women in qualitative research, and revealed that:

"We consider it our responsibility to examine our own perspectives and experiences as insiders and outsiders who collect and relay stories about black women's lives" (Gibson and Abrams, 2003, p. 491).

Being open and self-aware of the impact of this work has been just as important in my role as a researcher, guided by using my intuitive self-reflection (Rogers, 1986). Particularly, as the researcher, delving into each of their individual stories and by critically moving throughout the five phases of research and analysis.

THE THEMATIC FINDINGS

A total of 16 one-to-one interviews took place and all have been transcribed and coded. In addition to the use of eight walk-and-talk interviews in which a tape recording and notes were taken on the day. Supported by the transcription taken from the two focus lasting approximately 4 h with an hour's break for lunch. The five phases was completed after a period of 18 months. The 14 identified themes highlighted below (see **Figure 1**) have been refined by further thematic analysis (in stage 2) of the collated data. This article combines these refined overarching themes and presents these three concise themes to represent the participants' experiential knowledge as follows:

- (1) *Echoes of their silent presence* – have been described by the Women in their journeys as one of representing a silent presence in which these women represented as tokenism or completely invisible, silent, lone voices, isolated in the educational field.
- (2) *The drivers – and their narrative journeys* – the women describe their personal drivers as their aspirations to stay in the field overcoming barriers, attending meetings and working on panels, and higher leadership positions and how they have striven to create their own supportive networks.
- (3) *Communal kinship and collective identity* – The ability to work as social justice advocate and commitments given to the community using their cultural insights and cultural competence to provide services that deal with issues of race, and the importance of their strong sense of self.

Focus Group One – (Quilt Development: Phase 3)

At this stage in the research, the participants had completed the first two phases of the data collection, which included the initial interview and their walk-and-talk interview. Focus groups have a collective nature, providing collective power to marginalized people, as well as for feminist activists. They are used successfully in social science and in cross cultural research (Liamputtong, 2011). Madriz (2003) used focus groups as a methodology, as a means to advance her cause, creating data from women's voices and providing safety in order to give the group the opportunity to share, and for the researcher to obtain richer information. It felt important to give something back to the participants for their commitment and involvement in the research. Each participant was given the opportunity to design a small quilt patch that identified their own values in leadership. The process used to produce the quilt has varied slightly in the production, in that the women designed their quilt patch, but did not physically

sew the quilt together. The researcher, through her own family values and traditions, engaged the help and support of her aunt in Nova Scotia, an experienced quilt-maker, who agreed to support their ideas and designs and complete their work. The process was time limited and involved a community of committed quilters in Canada. On its completion, 7 months later, the researcher traveled to Canada to collect their collective narratives and stories of leadership. These women built a bond through participation and involvement in this research, and it evoked a shared, empathetic understanding.

The Artifact: Introducing the Facets of Their Leadership

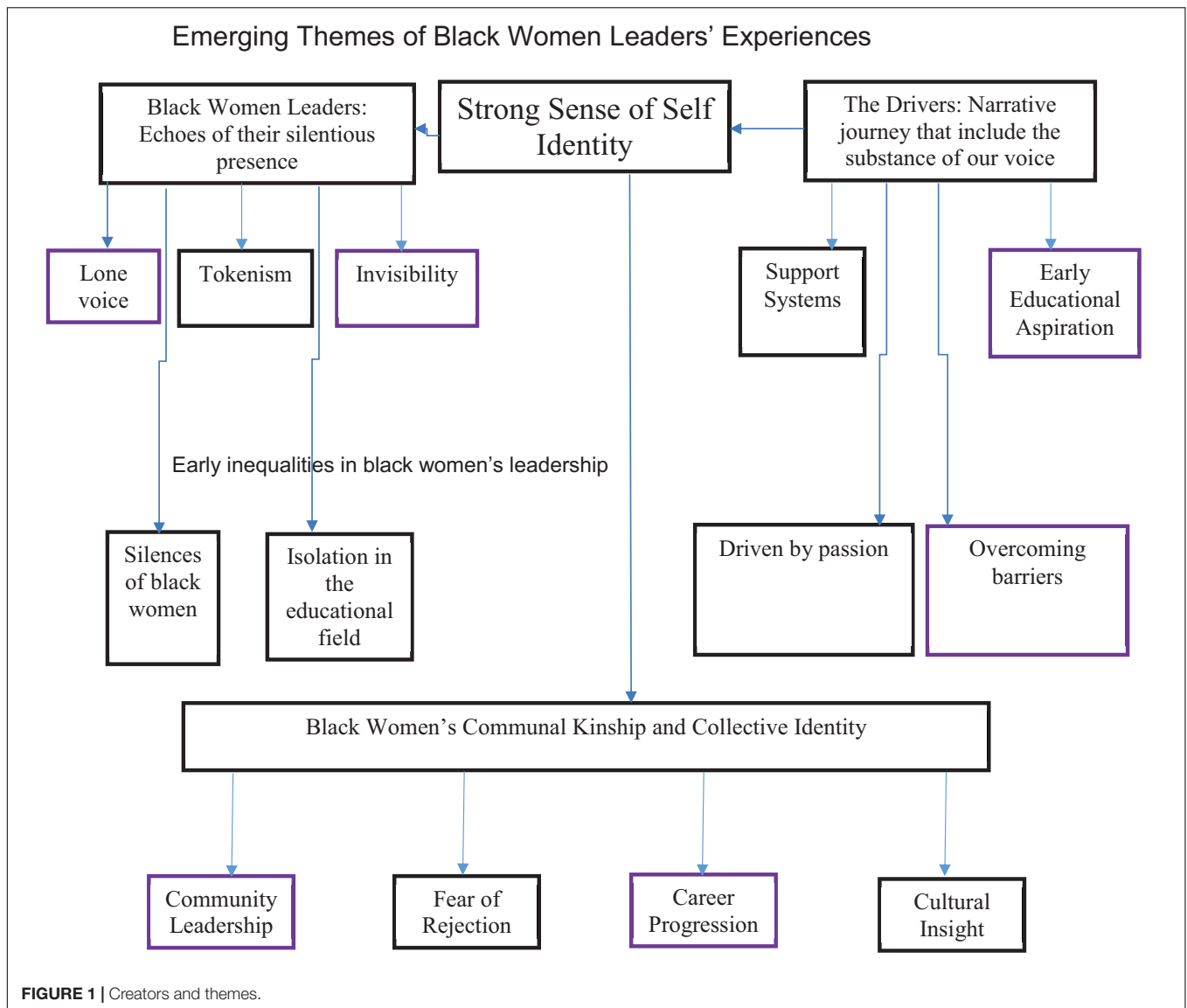
As an ice-breaker, the women were invited to a central location for the first focus group and asked to bring with them an object of their choice, an object that they felt would symbolize their leadership, and that represented facets of who they are as leaders. Potential risks were possible as the result of taking them from their own safe spaces and having them meet each other face to face in a new unfamiliar space. I demonstrated the use of an artifact as a means of introduction as I shared my own artifact, which represented my own distinct traits in my leadership role within the group.

“The making of meaning is an inherently therapeutic activity as well as a qualitative research activity. This caring concept, therefore, bridges the line that some authors attempt to draw between the researcher and participant” (Kahn and Eide, 2008, p. 202).

Each participant was given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, and only two of the women hesitated before proceeding. This article shares Carmen's object, who brought with her a pyramid-shaped paperweight. This was a transparent object containing blue liquid with a variety of differently colored bubbles floating inside. She explained:

I brought this as my artifact because I was thinking... that it was more than just a pyramid. You have got the base, but you have to reach up to the top! If I'm at the top, how have I got there?

Stable foundations are important in leadership; thus, Carmen describes the importance of being able to *reach up to the top*. She did not choose a solid object, but chose one that was clear and transparent. In her leadership role, there are tensions in regard to her position; she used the metaphor of the perilous *glass lift* or *escalator* in the ascendancy to her leadership position. More importantly, she shared her journey, and was able to trace systematically how she reached her position of leadership. In the focus group Aaliyah also shared her understanding by using the glass metaphor when she said that the ‘*glass ceiling represents the fact that you still have got to break through a glass ceiling in your difficult journey.*’ Similarly, the view adopted by Crenshaw (1991) shares this metaphor as one of social disadvantage. The question she asks is: if you manage to reach the glass ceiling which woman makes it through the trapdoor? These visual metaphors illustrate how some groups can see other people's routes to success at the top, but are unable to join them on the glass escalator. Bagilhole (2006) suggests that the glass escalator means that some



women see others going up, but are not sure how to get on. Black women leaders, therefore, need to elevate themselves by ensuring that they become careful, skilled communicators, creating strong, strategic networks to enhance their skills, and by not being afraid to promote their own work. Carmen is comfortable sharing her journey using the pyramid and feels she has had some success. The other women share this commitment through similar stories that emphasize the significance of managing “race” and ethnicity in their daily work:

I’m a head teacher, who just happens to be black, and I’m very aware, but sometimes you have to make that clear, and also our multiple identities. (Estella)

It is a unique question about which camp do I sit in because of the color of my skin. (Aaliyah)

Historically, racial and gender discrimination have been described separately within social research. More recently, race

and gender issues have been interconnected; however, a more critical understanding of black women leaders’ experiences for this research has to include the various intersections of identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1998). Esther clearly struggles with the rejection as a black female leader and states:

Within the education system which doesn’t allow for anybody else who is not personally invited to join “our gang”: so where do the black women fit within this structure? (Esther)

The women shared their various stories of difference that included their race, their class, their understanding and valuing of their religion, and their complex identities. Such shared and common values define the group by constituting its ‘distinctive character and self-conception’ (Shelby, 2002, p. 237). Earlier discussions during their initial introductions were referred to and Carmen made a connection with the group when she stated that, as black leaders, they do not actually fit into the “traditional

boxes,” Carmen feels that she remains an outsider. The group supported Carmen’s feelings of exclusion: *‘For me, it’s proving who I am and what my purpose is and my purpose is and always will be maintaining my principles throughout and my integrity’ (Estella). ‘And it’s the constant thing of proving yourself... like all throughout life I’ve shown myself to be different and it’s good to be different!’ (Aaliyah).*

Collins (2000) is clear that these tensions shared in their narratives can represent a common standpoint. Community cultural wealth viewed through the lens of CRT, as described by Yosso (2005), highlights the positive contribution that leaders develop from ‘the array of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged’ (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Estella’s description of her working environment attributed her thoughts to her own culture and the incongruence she felt when working in an environment that she described as incompatible, unaccepting and causing her to feel oppressed. Kvasny et al. (2005) echoed these feelings when stating:

“You experience the subtle and not so subtle forms of gender, class, racial inequalities that can’t but make you perceptive. You see and feel things that others can’t recognize, yet you are constantly reminded of your otherness” (Kvasny et al., 2005).

The focus group created the opportunity to connect their feelings of otherness and to gain validations in relation to their intersectional complexities and the impact this had on their psyches. Each participant took their turn and shared their object before meeting again to unveil the quilt.

Unveiling the Quilt

This was the fourth phase of the research (an emergent phase), Esther shared that she had never had the opportunity to sit with black women leaders as she had experienced during the first focus group, and was “blown away” by the stories shared. She wanted the others in the group to know that *‘bwoy that first group encounter had touched me in so many ways.’* Amara’s heartfelt reflection shared openly was very different to the rest of the group, as she is the owner of a private daycare:

I am fortunate that I don’t have to be harassed, bullied and accountable to anybody, and so I feel for these women (sigh) who give a lot of time. I mean, one of them was even saying that she got ill, and went into work so no one would know... and I didn’t think things like that existed. (Amara)

The morning session of the second focus group had given them the opportunity to re-group. Their feelings in the room were of high spirits, rekindled experiences and a shared understanding of each other’s stories.

“It is often within groups that persons who would normally not feel comfortable voicing their views or concerns come together in strength and with new possibility for action” (Meyerson, 2003, p. 121).

The afternoon session began with the women in jocular spirits, lively and upbeat. I took this opportunity to go and collect their individual photos of their quilt patch. As I began to leave

the room to collect the photographs, the women spontaneously decided to sing. One of the women began to play the piano that was situated in the room. As I walked along the corridor, I heard the melodic sounds of “reach out and touch.” When I re-entered the room, the women were shaking each other’s hands almost as a gesture of camaraderie. Shelby (2002) explores the notion of group solidarity and sees this as a tendency of the group members to identify with each other, or with the group as a whole.

A small discussion took place regarding their eagerness to see the quilt. As Estella expressed, *‘I’m looking forward to seeing it... how it looks.’* The emotional time and space within this particular moment was important and acknowledged by the depth of the emotions that mingled in the room. Earlier that day, one of the women had tearfully shared a personal loss of a close loved one, but explained that *‘I just felt I had to come.’* Another personal thought and reflection verbalized by Esther was *‘can I carry the load much longer in my work?’* Even those who had pressing concerns in the real world outside this space made the decision to remain and to share in the unveiling. As the researcher, I had certain expectations, but I was not prepared for the immediacy of the silence that fell as all eyes turned toward the quilt as it was unveiled. Although I had asked for a moment of reflection (this was first to gather my own thoughts), I turned to see many tear-filled eyes, and expressions of amazement as well as bewilderment. At this time, the participants echoed that they found it difficult to speak, something that had not been hard for this group of individuals before now. The room was hushed and reticent and the participants’ voices had become shaky and incoherent. Slowly, after a period of time, the women were able to move from their chairs to go over and to touch the quilt in its entirety.

The group then began making the connections around their own individual stories and journeys. Carmen turned to me and said *‘Do you know what you have done?’* I felt that this was a rhetorical question and I thought it was important for the space to continue so that the women could gather their feelings. As a result of the work, the women felt a much stronger connection than the first time they met, describing each other as friends, exchanging lots of hugs and reassuring touches, in addition to sharing a box of tissues by the end of the day. This experience Shelby (2002) describes as having a special bond, in which each of the women could identify with a fellow group member seen as an extension of themselves. In support of this extension and unspoken sense of relief, Patricia Bell-Scott in *Flat Footed Truths* shares the depth of their emotions as she says:

“There was so much longing and relief, grief and joy, in our silent tears: Relief that the silence was being breached, longing for all the life stories forever silenced. We were grieving with and for our foremothers for the creativity so many were unable to express” (Bell-Scott and Johnson-Bailey, 1999, p. xv).

This powerful “collective consciousness,” derived from an ancestral feel presented a real sense of their foremothers past and present, was tinged with joy by the release of their tears that are so often hidden. This collective consciousness described by Collins (2000) refers to black women coming to terms with their lived experiences, a shared understanding of group dynamics

and recurring situations. This can be seen as issues passed down through generations by creating new counter-stories through, art, music and religion (Few et al., 2004). The collective group identity gave the women the safety to exhale and support each other as part of their communal kinship.

A New Era – Collective Voices and the Quilt Analysis

The quilt developed in this research created the opportunity to view a wider vision and a shared collection of voices surrounding the experiences of black women leaders in early years' education. In hearing these women's stories, primary methods of data analysis were applied after the transcripts had been manually coded (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This coding was applied by linking key concepts and related experiences of leadership from black women through the literature review. The research process also involved returning transcripts and discussing the narratives presented with the participants for their approval, as well as to seek further clarification. The use of selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to analyze the data was applied. The 14 themes identified by the women express their lone voices and their isolated experiences in groups and in education. In the stage 2 data analysis, the women revealed their spirituality, sharing strong aspirational messages received in their childhood and their own identified support systems that have maintained their resilience through their strong sense of self-identity in order to survive.

However, after candidate six, it was clear that in being insightful and knowledgeable about their communities, and that their drivers to continue were their passion for the work, two more emergent themes were added to the key, namely **cultural insight** and **driven by passion**.

The final panels reveal the women's own journeys, which combine their flavors of the Caribbean, Asia, the Yemen, India, Europe and Africa. The quilt-maker's own stamp has been added in completing this collective identity, which includes a cross-cultural understanding of Jamaica and a national dimension representing Canada, using Scottish tartan to highlight Nova Scotia (see **Figure 2**). The creation of a quilt gave the women the essence of a tradition which was, at that time, symbolic of care. Estella and the other women have described their leadership and the importance of this as carers and nurturers: *'I really do care about the job that I do and as a leader I hoped that that would come through.'* The women shared their understanding of the quilt, and Carmen, Estella and Aaliyah felt:

There is vibrancy to the quilt: it feels full of life, [it] shows energy, the colors are bright and engaging. (Carmen)
I feel a representation of earthiness, something wholesome and warm. (Estella)
I see the tree, the rainbow and puzzle: they are all representations of growth and new life. (Michaela)

The completion of this quilt helped to give more depth and understanding to their world. Some quilts can give clues to the past, some quilts provide a sense of heritage, whilst others give enjoyment, color and a sense of completion (Frye, 1983; Higgs and Radosh, 2012; Koelsch, 2012). This quilt demonstrates

the weaving and constructing of the leaders' common values, expressed within this article. It seems that stories encourage creativity, assist in dealing with emotions and help to make sense of puzzling situations (Allan et al., 2002, p. 10). An important analytical thread of identity and self has run throughout the research, drawing together each sub-theme. Quilts represent warmth as well as comfort, but, more importantly for this research, they are a visual expression of the women's leadership. Collective experiences represent the historical, political and cultural positionality of black women; the women in this group have shared their experiences of race, gender, isolation and segregation in the educational field (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). However, one of the benefits of this research has been the freedom of expression. This freedom of expression is a means:

"to connect with other women, to celebrate and appreciate connections with women who have produced quilts in the past, and to experience tension relief and self-renewal; the quilting process is central to resistance to the identity-stripping elements of contemporary life" (Stalp, 2001, p. 20).

The collation of this quilt was an intergenerational achievement, with strong family connections personally for the researcher, and the final touches interwoven with the wisdom and experience of an experienced quilt-maker. Smith (1997) is clear that, through diligent efforts, the quilt in all its forms is gaining acceptance as a serious medium (Smith, 1997, p.5).

Throughout history, quilts have been enjoyed for various reasons. Estella stated:

Really for me there is no doubt that the representation was from black women. OK... Collectively, I see black women's strength. I see lots of different journeys; people have come through very different journeys. I see hope and I see common threads as well... someone who sees potential in other people going through there... Courageous black women and... really... resilient women. (Estella: 8th square)

Their connectedness in the group when completing this quilt, and the power of their stories, alongside their shared experiences as black women leaders, presented a wider collective voice to the research, as they co-operated in interweaving and connecting their own strands of the story.

"Through the quilt the voices of the past survive, the stories trace a path of connections between oral traditions, storytelling, the invention of meaning, and the preservation of cultural memory" (Barrett-Ferrier, 2007, p. 27).

Aaliyah's quilt patch is a large colorful flower (**12th square**); she was careful and concise when she explained:

I have done two different stems. They don't join in the middle. There is not a choice, so you start off in the direction of a difficult path, but the end premise is you can go to the top. Of course it is a difficult journey, but you will get there, albeit by having to take slightly longer steps. The thing in the middle is the glass ceiling: it can be broken and you can continue above. (Aaliyah: 12th square)

Aaliyah is clear that her path has lacked the privileges of access and opportunity and she understands why her journey will be longer, harder and tougher, but she has the stamina and resilience



FIGURE 2 | The quilt. Square creators and themes: (1) Esther, Home of strength. (2) Amara, We are unique. (3) Eleanor, Rainbow of hope. (4) Tallah, Jigsaw of love. (5) Michaela, Butterfly of growth. (6) The Researcher, Fierce angels. (7) Carmen, Colorful and descriptive. (8) Estella, The big sun. (9) Non-participant. (10) No theme. (11) Non-participant, no theme. (12) Aaliyah, Two journeys.

to get there. Gabriel's description of storytelling is that it is seen as 'an art of weaving, of constructing the product of intimate knowledge' (Gabriel, 2000, p. 1). This knowledge presents their hopes, spirituality and drivers and the strength of their resilience in their leadership journeys. These celebratory threads have linked these women's past journeys, as Amara explained:

I think I see a collective response really. That's what I see. I don't know what to say at the moment and in relation to what I have written here... it's amazing... (very softly) it's amazing. (Amara)

Do you want me to talk about what it means to me now at this stage or what I just think of what I did? I think, looking at all of that energy that is there and what we are doing here, this has given me so much hope... I'm sorry, I can't talk coherently about this at the moment. (Eleanor)

Amara and Eleanor were touched by what they saw. Esther tried to share her thoughts:

Looking broadly at some of them, it is the journey, and I think a lot of the people's squares represent a journey. The one in the middle feels like it is similar to mine as it represents going through life and

growing, and again the one with the snaky pattern on it, and I think, just looking across the board at the different people, [they] are all about our work and going on. (Esther)

This collective identity reveals thread by thread the combined, mutual and co-operative stories of their experiences of leadership. Carmen (7th square) asks in her quilt patch 'You ask do you know who I am? (She replies) yes I do, but who am I to you?' (Quilt patch number 7). Carmen is clear that she knows herself well, but do others see her as she sees herself?

The quilt was used for the purpose of extracting quality data through building and maintaining a trusting alliance between the two parties (Hayman et al., 2012). Tallah made her own connections to the collectivity of the group:

Just that it all fits together and that the different aspects of our characters are all there... To be a good leader, we need to be fierce at times, and gentle (laughter). You need to be just like the jigsaw thing because things do fit together when they are done, and the cricket bat thing: I didn't see it until you pointed it out (laughs). I

*saw the tree not the cricket bat; I saw the growth and the beauty.
Thank you. (Tallah)*

This quilt is less traditional and is not developed through symmetrical balancing or using materials which have had to follow already predetermined patterns. The colors are chosen by the women themselves and the patches are individually designed. Analysis of their quilt is taken from the analysis of the discourse shared when they discussed the completion of the quilt. The analysis provides a process of socialization in which these women were able to share their sense of self. Collins (1991) supports the theme of self-definition for black women who need to speak for themselves, to express their lived realities, which Collins feels is essential for their empowerment. Amara at this point expressed the need for flexible leadership which is eclectic in nature and does not follow Eurocentric models. Estella, similarly, shared the values of her light:

The reason I did a sun shining out is because. . . Well, I've just made a few notes on mine. Regardless of the circumstance I am in, the circle of circumstances I am standing in. . . I will always let my light shine. Those qualities to me would always shine regardless of the circumstances. So it's almost a kind of act of defiance: almost "you don't dictate to me what I do and who I am." (Estella: 8th square)

The women are looking at their roles as leaders. Estella is clear that the illumination of her sun has to shine brightly; there are elements of hope that are shared in the collective vision of light, and the women begin to make the connections for themselves. There are pictures of suns, candles and rainbows that all illuminate their hopes for brighter futures with rewards at the end of the rainbow within the quilt. This opportunity to present themselves without barriers and to reveal genuinely who they are as leaders is seldom offered to a group of black women leaders. Esther says: *'If barriers are presented we will go round them, under them or over them in order to achieve: we won't stop at the barriers.'* Esther (1st square) in her quilt is using the cricket bat as a symbol of strength. She explains that the bat is able to maneuver individuals toward achievements so that they finally reach their goal. Esther's leaves on the tree represent only half of the work that can be done. She has shared the feeling that *good teamwork is gaining strength from one another*. She depicts a house much smaller than the tree, in which she shares her thoughts *'this is a home of strength: please come in.'* Her home life is important and she has recently inherited the family home where she grew up with her siblings; she feels that within her home there is a *real fount of knowledge*.

These women are faced with enormous responsibility. I share the sentiments of Parks (2010), who regards black women as shooting stars, fierce angels, unafraid to share their difficult moments or to articulate them, absorbed within their spiritual wisdom. Dillard (2012, p. 93) explains 'that such spiritual wisdom and strength must be seen in our formation of community as arising from those who have experienced subordination and subjugation.' In the midst of this is the turmoil represented by the whirlwind in my quilt, significant for me as it represents the continued struggles to rise. I acknowledge in the quilt patch black women's history and the strength of our ancestry, enriched

with the enormous energy of courageous women connected by the drive to develop new ideas and systems and creative ways of working.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are key socioeconomic factors which have affected black women's experiences of leadership (Moosa, 2009). These women's intersectional identities are crucial in understanding the effects of these overlaps on their experiences and outcomes. Messages engraved on their psyche serve as a negative reminder of dual oppression throughout their history (Beal, 1969; King, 1988). By promoting individual and collective marginalized voices to share these stories it is possible to understand black professionals' experiences and approaches to leadership, to improve service delivery, and to influence changes in policy direction. This different experience takes into account the women's strong cohesive partnerships and connections to the community, as they lead by their inspiring vision and the need to influence and implement change (Kim and Kunreuther, 2009). Social justice leadership has to face the challenges presented to families, and to demand that the organizational culture and policy implementation have to be consciously challenged. The women shared their early aspirations, obtained during childhood through their traditions in their homes and close links with extended families. This article includes a descriptive analysis of the data and ways in which conclusions were reached on completion of the analysis as part of this critical qualitative study. There is a need for more research to provide reliable statistical data which outline the workforce profile, both nationally and in local education authorities (Nut-brown, 2012). The lack of such information has made it impossible to identify the number of black women who lead within the early years field nationally. There is a need to implement policies and practices that respect the need for communal support within and beyond the workplace. Challenges to dominant discourses need to include diverse voices and experiences that instill the values of a race-conscious model of leadership (Alston, 2005; Santamaria and Santamaria, 2012). Further recommendations include the use of support networks to provide early leadership coaching to help black women successfully confront challenges of inequality and negative stereotypes in their work settings (Alston, 2005; Johnson and Campbell-Stephens, 2010).

This thematic analysis has been used to identify some of the real issues faced by black women leaders in the 21st century. This article touches upon some of the important outcomes taken from the second stage of data analysis supporting their collective identity as black women leaders. It shares their spirituality, laughter and resilient selves, including their strong sense of identity demonstrated in the two focus groups. I share the view of DeVault (1996) in that the researcher should have a strong understanding of the social group and its experience of disadvantage. Mirza and Joseph (2010) strongly advocated for research and researchers that represent a multiplicity and polyvocality of black women's lives, particularly when investigating race, class and gendered boundaries. Those who

take on the role of researchers should have an informed understanding with regard to the variations that exist amongst cultural groups. An interpretive approach was chosen for this research, as it gives more insight into and promotes the value of these stories. These theories clearly acknowledge that race is central to this research. The findings and the voices expressed through the women's stories will add to the increasing body of literature. This will transparently convey these leaders' experiences, helping the educational field to understand key issues in the lives of black women leaders whilst dispersing traditional assumptions. For me as a black women researcher this study has been an engaging and up-lifting and during each phase of the research I have reflected on the impact on my own practice. In particular I take with me the women's warmth openness and care. These positive interactions as well as the women's ability to share their own painful experiences as well as successful achievements have given value to the research. Their exchange of information and sharing their fountain of knowledge has moved the group forward as skillful educators. The researcher has shared in their sensitive, personal stories of being racialised as leaders and how they have overcome barriers to become successful in children's and family services. In addition to these adversities, the women also shared how their laughter has helped to start a process in which they are beginning to heal from daily micro-aggressions and micro assaults.

The theme identified as the women's silent presence, highlights leaders that are present but not seen or heard. The acceptance of remaining a silent presence begs the question as Hooks (1989) asks *are we ever really alone*, or are we connected through the

kinship and spirituality of others, namely our foremothers. My understanding from this research is our "aloneness" is guided by the kinship, sense of self and histories of our ancestors, which add support and protection in these spaces. One in which the sharing of these collective stories and their 'strong sense of self' confidently connected their own threads so that they are no longer threadbare BUT bonded.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation, to any qualified researcher.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Leeds Beckett University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Generation, Gender, and Leadership: Metaphors and Images

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This article explores the metaphors and images used by different generations of women to describe women's leadership in higher education (HE) and the impact these perceptions have on their careers and career ambitions. It also explores how such metaphors and images can position them as "other," silence their voices in the dominant masculinist discourse, and marginalize them. The emphasis in the gender and higher education literature has been on identifying the barriers that impede women's progress in academic organizations, including images of continuing hegemonic masculine leadership, and their promotion to leadership positions. These models position women leaders who are assertive as troublemakers, and women as "the problem" either because of their attitudes or perceived domestic and family responsibilities. And while women leaders are often not gender conscious, they are frequently doing gender in their senior roles. The metaphors and images that portray women's leadership are often of hidden work, supporting more senior males, or "ivory basement" leadership. Combined, they suggest a deficit model that positions women as lacking for top jobs, and institutions therefore needing to "fix the women" generally through leadership development programmes, sponsorship and mentoring. The article examines the metaphors and images used to describe women's leadership across two generations. Older women often saw their leadership as conforming to male leadership models, as fitting in, and not challenging or unsettling their male colleagues. However, a younger generation of leaders or prospective leaders had a very different set of metaphors for their leadership. They saw themselves as unsupported by what they described as the current mediocre, institutional leaders, weighed down by inexorable organizational restructure, and merely in survival mode. Hence, they refused to accept the masculinist leadership model which they perceived as ineffectual, outdated and not meeting their needs. The article suggests that the prevailing culture in higher education leadership and the metaphors and images used to describe successful leadership narrows the options for women leaders. While older women were prepared to accept current masculinist leadership, younger women had contempt for the way it marginalized them while at the same time encouraging them to lift their game and had a different set of metaphors and images to portray what successful leadership should look like.

Keywords: leadership, women, higher education—women in academia, generations, metaphors, images

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the metaphors and images used by different generations of women to describe women's leadership in higher education and the impact on their careers and career ambitions. It also explores how such metaphors and images can position them as "other," silence their voices in the dominant masculinist discourse, and marginalize them. Metaphors enable us to redefine how we view university leadership, "give abstract concepts a reality," recreate and extend past experiences and hence "provide alternative ways of seeing things that go beyond the reach of literal language" (Clouse et al., 2013, p. 89–90). Images can either be negative and engage our focus and energy and prevent us moving forward, or they can be a tool for transformation (Greenberg, 2015).

The article focuses on two generations of women leaders using two different studies—the first, women in top positions in the UK and the second, a younger generation of women at an Australian university who were either in middle management or aspiring to management jobs. This is a mixed methods study, with qualitative interviews with VCs and a quantitative survey with younger women that enabled respondents to make additional comments. The data therefore was from women at different stages of their careers and in different countries and this helped us to explore if the metaphors and images used to describe leadership differed across two generations and/or if there were similarities. As none of the women identified as women of color in either of the studies which generated the data for this paper, the intersectional lens for our focus is inevitably generation and gender. More recent studies in the corporate sector have explored other intersections, race and gender for example (Holder et al., 2015). This paper follows an article published in 2017 in which we argued that gendered power relations in universities stubbornly maintain entrenched inequalities (Burkinshaw and White, 2017).

We were interested in investigating if women representing distinct generations might be performing leadership differently and therefore have different ways of describing their leadership through the use of particular metaphors and images. One could assume that women who had already made it to the top either learnt to adapt to the prevailing leadership culture or could influence it once they were running universities. However, O'Connor (2014) questions whether women in top leadership can in fact change the gendered organizational culture. Meanwhile, the next generation may view leadership differently; Morley (2014), e.g., argues that younger women are examining and then dismissing leadership careers in HE.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The emphasis in the gender and HE literature has been on identifying the barriers that impede women's progress in academic organizations, including continuing hegemonic masculine leadership, and their promotion to leadership positions. Masculinist leadership uses particular metaphors and images to position women leaders who are assertive as troublemakers, and women as "the problem" either because of their attitudes or perceived domestic and family responsibilities.

And while women leaders are often not gender conscious, they are frequently doing gender in their senior roles (Bilimoria and Piderit, 2007). Women's leadership is often hidden work, supporting more senior males, or "ivory basement" leadership (Eveline, 2004; Bevan and Gatrell, 2017). Thus, the metaphors and images often position women as lacking for top jobs, and institutions therefore needing to "fix the women" generally through leadership development programmes, sponsorship, and mentoring.

It is useful to consider the broad framework for gendered leadership in HE and the metaphors and images used to describe them. Organizational culture is important. Rees (2011) points out that historically women have been excluded from the academy; the discourse, the dress and the culture remain androcentric and thus universities are characterized by horizontal, vertical, and contractual gender segregation. Moreover, O'Connor (2017) emphasizes that the power structures, culture, and values of universities reflect those of the wider environment where public power and resources are mostly in male hands. Thus, women in university leadership have historically—and continue to be—positioned as outsiders.

The transition from collegial to managerial governance since the 1990s (Bolden et al., 2012) was initially considered an opportunity for women moving into leadership positions. However, managerialism has produced its own images of women's leadership and merely entrenched the *status quo* with its emphasis on research activities and bringing external funding to the organization (Acker et al., 2010) at which men outperform women. Importantly, managerialism does not necessarily alter homosocial structures and cultures. While Carvalho and Machado-Taylor (2009) point to a variety of ways in which managerialism has influenced gendered leadership patterns in HE, O'Connor (2014) and O'Connor et al. (2015) argues it has had little impact on the gendering of universities in relation to the underrepresentation of women in top jobs. And even when women reached top positions, they are often labeled as not the right type of leader; the soft skills characterizing their leadership style may not be not appreciated or rewarded (White et al., 2011); and consequently, they become stressed and conflicted (Lynch et al., 2012).

The metaphors and images used to describe gendered career paths in HE can be crucial to women's leadership ambitions. As women move from the junior ranks of academia to the professoriate their representation decreases (see, e.g., Etzkowitz and Kemelger, 2001). Moreover, women in universities are less likely than their male colleagues to work full time and have uninterrupted careers (Bagilhole and White, 2011), and women in university leadership tend to be in administrative areas rather than in academic leadership roles (Burkinshaw, 2015). O'Connor et al. (2017) argue that the construct of excellence impacts on academic careers and is used to obscure masculinist, relational, and "local fit" micro-political practices that can affect academic recruitment/progression and maintain organizational legitimacy. Thus, metaphors of women not conforming to a monastic male model of successful academic careers abound (White, 2014), even though the career model in science, for example, is now changing [Association for Women in Science (AWIS), 2012]. In addition,

women academics in their early thirties are at times described as making individual choice to be on a different career trajectory as they try to manage careers and other responsibilities (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2012), rather than investigating the underlying masculinist culture which make it difficult for these women.

These complex factors—and the metaphors and images used to describe them—impact on how women are perceived as performing leadership. The focus is on women not measuring up for higher education leadership rather than on addressing the difficult organizational culture (De Vries and Webb, 2005) which assumes workers are care-less (Lynch et al., 2012). Most explanations of women's deficits in university leadership, O'Connor (2011) remarks, use the image of women as “the problem” rather than analyzing the organizational culture and procedures that produce these patterns. However, women have quite a different view of why they do not succeed in university leadership, using metaphors such as being side-lined (Morley, 2014; Bevan and Gatrell, 2017). And while managerialism has offered the promise of better careers for women, the result has often been little change in the gendered organizational culture (O'Connor, 2014). The cost to the academy is that some women can become uncertain about their commitment to the institution and disengage (Blackmore and Sachs, 2007), while others consider and then reject HE leadership, deciding in the present organizational environment not to apply for leadership roles (Morley, 2014).

This article will use two different pieces of research across two different generations to explore metaphors and images of leadership. It will examine:

- The metaphors and images masculinist organizational cultures in universities use to legitimize the low percentage of women in top leadership ranks, often depicting women leaders as not matching male standards of performance;
- The intersection of generation and gender to raise awareness of viewing women through an intersectional lens;
- How the language of managerialism influences the gendered performance of leadership and gendered career paths in HE and impacts on leadership; and
- If the deficit model and the images used to describe women's leadership performance mask much broader structural impediments that need to be addressed if more women are to become, and thrive as, leaders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The two pieces of research reported in this article can provide fresh insights into the organizational and/or societal contexts which facilitate female and/or feminist leadership. They can also demonstrate the benefits of an intergenerational mixed methods study.

The first study was semi-structured interviews conducted in 2012 with 18 senior (white) women professors at the top of UK higher education institutions (vice-chancellor /principal / president). The second study was an on-line survey to assess a leadership program for women conducted at a newer Australian university in 2013. All 85 participants in the

program were invited to complete the on-line survey. A healthy response rate of 53% of the participants was achieved which is average in the field (Baruch and Holton, 2008). While most questions entailed responses on a five-point Likert scale, some also enabled respondents to make qualitative comments. So, this research analyses both qualitative interviews and a predominantly quantitative survey—thereby using different methods to examine the research problem (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2008). Although data interpreted in this way is not normally generalizable, the literature argues that such a mixed methods approach does allow the results to be generalized to distinctive groups such as women leaders in higher education (Morse, 2003). We recognize the comparable background of higher education in Australia and the UK, given that Australian universities were established on the British standard and that universities in both countries adhere to national legislation in relation to equal opportunities in the workplace.

The theoretical framework used to explore the data from these studies is communities of practice (COP) of masculinities (and femininities). It follows Paechter's (2003) research which employed the notion of communities of practice to determine how we learn gender (through communities of practice of masculinities). The extension of her work by Burkinshaw (2015) argued that exploring women in leadership through this lens can elucidate HE leadership cultures and how we acquire leadership. We argue that this theoretical framework underpinning our data analysis helps us to recognize gendered performance of leadership in HE through the images and metaphors it portrays. Communities of practice produce networks of full members, apprentices or those practicing “legitimate peripheral participation,” meaning that membership at any level entails “fitting in” to a degree. Membership helps establish “individual and group identity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) and “learning full participation in a community of masculinity or femininity practice is about learning one's own identity and how to enact it” (Paechter, 2006). By using COP of masculinities to understand how leadership is learned in a higher education context we can explain the fluidity of masculinities and femininities and also local and negotiated ways of doing gender. Our theoretical framework illustrates how these communities resist change and how leadership (and leaders) can be constrained by membership of COP of masculinities which historically have influenced leadership practices and shaped the (masculine model) status quo.

The interviews from the UK research were transcribed by the interviewer. Themes emerged both inductively from the interview data as well as having been framed by the questions which were also informed by the literature. The data analysis software Atlas Ti helped to code these themes during the analysis process. Before the interviews were conducted the whole study was approved by the university's Ethics Committee which required all participants to consent to being interviewed beforehand, and to consent for any verbatim comments from their interviews to be included in publications so long as maintaining their anonymity was paramount. The Australian research used thematic analysis in the light of the dominant themes emerging from the data, in conjunction with those from

the literature. Here the Ethics Committee approved the research which was an anonymous online survey administered by the Equity Office. The aggregated data was then forwarded to the Principal Investigator for analysis. Participants were invited to complete the anonymous online survey to share their experience of the program and to assess any impact it has had on their working lives and career planning. They were also invited to provide comments on how any future programs could be improved to better meet the needs on women at the university. By completing the survey all the participants consented to their anonymous contributions being quoted verbatim.

RESULTS

We examine the metaphors and images used by different generations of women to describe current managerialist leadership in higher education and the impact on their careers and career ambitions firstly by analyzing data from each research project separately. The data of the older women was rich in metaphors about how they navigated a masculinist leadership culture, while the data of the younger women presented strong images of leadership at their university. We were then interested in exploring if the alternative metaphors and images these women proposed could help to redefine how they viewed leadership (Clouse et al., 2013).

The Metaphors and Images Used to Describe Women's Leadership: UK Research

The senior women in the UK research had become adept at negotiating and navigating HE gendered leadership cultures thus completely reinforcing the doing of leadership as gendered performance through the images and metaphors with which they described their work. Bearing in mind these women were in their mid to late fifties, their generational perspective is key. Many benefitted from grammar school education, several of which were all- girls' schools. They saw this background as influential in propelling them into leadership but not in preparing them for the masculinist culture.

The literature provides many examples of how certain leadership performances practiced by those at the top of institutions, and the images they use to talk about it, are acceptable (Saunderson, 2002; Wicks and Bradshaw, 2002; Coleman, 2006). By inference, and rather more importantly through metaphors such as "othering," there must be alternative leadership performances that are unacceptable or at least less acceptable. Othering produces alternatives to "mainstream" (malestream) performances; however, these are invariably interpreted as inferior (using the image of lacking the right characteristics) and second-best alternatives. According to this vice chancellor:

... for me it's about the culture that gets created and the willingness [of] types of characteristics of those people who are in senior roles in leadership positions, and some men have those characteristics and some women don't have those characteristics.

Another described the way we talk about leadership by using male, masculine, words and constructs which in itself helps to define acceptable (and conversely less acceptable) leadership:

I think leadership is defined by powerful leadership: it's if you look at the words you use to describe leaders, they tend to be male words and sometimes they put in the odd thing about nurturing and engaging people—that's a girly one. Things like that. They tend to be male in that sense. Actually, the way that the leadership club works tends to be like that, a club. Let's have a beer. Let's meet for breakfast. That's all the constructs about meetings. You go to meetings and you have to stand from the floor and orate. That's a very male thing, rather than sitting down and having a discussion.

This VC saw leadership as "a club" that used male metaphors to describe leadership and being a member was about attending breakfast meetings, catching up for a beer, and standing up to speak. Instead she was trying in her own institution to engage in other ways of collaborating with staff and had quite different images to describe it. For example, there were open gatherings in shared social spaces such as refectories or coffee lounges where she interacted with small groups who congregated to chat and easily joined in their conversations.

HE leadership COPs of masculinities prosper because the metaphors and images they use are so convincing that they cannot be contested. This resistance is difficult to explain except for the image of a "not how we do things around here" culture which permeates practice fundamental to COP (of masculinities), and so one VC asserts:

We also need to start to review again the leadership constructs and attributes and start to raise the values level of some of those attributes which have taken on, male vs. female, about great leaders and about attributes for our leadership. We have found lots of different people, maybe around women and raising them up the value scale. It's about re-engineering around the value messages and re-engineering about some of the things we do around leadership and make sure it is embedded.

This VC was arguing that the gendered metaphors used to describe effective leadership needed to change.

Gendered leadership culture and the metaphors and images that describe it are the glue that holds HE together and it is images of masculinities' emotionality and irrationality, such things as game playing, back stabbing and ingratiation, that are acceptable. The double-bind of emulating these metaphors of masculinities leadership will not necessarily gain women full membership of HE leadership COP of masculinities anyway, as this leadership practice too often becomes unacceptable when performed by many women (Mackenzie Davey, 2008). Nonetheless, women in HE leadership invariably negotiate and navigate gendered cultures by adopting masculine images of acceptable behavior and talking about sport, engaging in other forms of male banter and, as explained here, definitely never crying:

You can never ever become emotional in a work situation. That would be the worst thing you can do if you were trying to position yourself for a senior position. You could not afford to become

emotional. You might just be able to do it once. You couldn't make a habit of it. You certainly wouldn't cry in any situations.

The strong image here of women being emotional, and therefore less effective, leaders is clear.

Women VCs had learnt that conforming to COP of masculinities was the only acceptable and successful image of leadership in HE. Inevitably we all survive and prosper by fitting in to COP because they operate as boundaries in our lives, providing security and identity (Wenger, 1998); in other words we have to do something to prolong the membership that sustains these communities (Paechter, 2006) as the following UK women explain: "because perhaps that was part of the fitting in bit and not wanting to be labeled as one of those awkward women"; "I've moved from a mimic and behaving in a way that was going to be acceptable in a mainly male world"; "in the early days it was power suit dressing time and there was a lot of emulating of what men would have done"; and "probably I find myself occasionally doing it and recognizing it's not my natural way of behaving and I see it occasionally in other women. It's about survival partly."

This suggested a negative image of women VCs not wanting to be labeled "as one of those awkward women" and using the metaphor of being a "mimic" of the prevailing culture. An undercurrent of the conversations and the fear of being labeled, played out for these women throughout their career. So, these metaphors and images suggest that women's role in leadership COP is about making the incumbents feel at ease with their presence as "others" by fitting in with the codes of practice, which reinforces the boundaries and deepens the masculinities culture:

One of things I do now, which I never used to have time for or wanted to be associated with, women's groups, because perhaps that was part of the fitting in bit and not wanting to be labeled as one of those awkward women ... Those of us who are older now should be trying to encourage people.

Consequently, there was a huge learning process going on for many HE senior women. They were faced with the double-bind of conforming—as these metaphors and images attest—often by performing their gender in a way that was acceptable in a mainly male world and even then, of having their leadership interpreted as not appropriate. For example, the same leadership could be defined using metaphors such as aggressive or forthright depending upon which gender is doing it and who is interpreting it, as these VCs explain:

I can be very forthright and a couple of times I have been forthright. I've often worked with a load of women; you can be forthright with some women and they will be in tears. I will be bullying but a man can be saying the same thing and not. So, you can be forthright as a woman and be obstructive or bullying which probably as a man would be perceived differently. If you've been brought up in that environment and if you've had to fit in to survive, which you probably have as a woman in a very male dominated environment, then actually some of those behaviors you learn them.

The overriding conclusion from the UK research is that this generation of women learned throughout their careers to adopt masculinist metaphors and images of leadership in order to navigate and negotiate gendered and gendering cultures which in part was responsible for their success. This concurs with other evidence that women in HE work hard at "fitting in"; the metaphor so often used to describe conforming to an uncongenial leadership culture (Brooks and Mackinnon, 2001; Cotterill et al., 2007). Hence, there is a strong image of them performing emotional labor on their leadership identity and being sanguine about having to do so. They expend energy on "fitting in" to gendered leadership cultures which has implications for other women (and other under-represented groups) coming through.

In summary, this generation of women had to work intensely and continuously at meriting membership of COP of masculinities by embracing its metaphors and images of leadership and "fitting in", as all memberships are temporally determined. Predictably they found that the metaphors and images of masculinist leadership had to be repeatedly performed to maintain the status quo and to keep the HE leadership community "intact", neatly encapsulated in the metaphor of difference from this woman VC:

So, I think there's a group going through where there is a range of masculinity. It's not just what you wear, that you have to wear a suit. It's not that. Its, the way I see it, it's by being female and entering the room I am different. I can extenuate or reduce the differences. And that puts them at their ease.

We have an image here of a woman seeking to influence the perceptions of her leadership by conforming to masculine leadership in order to put "them at their ease."

The Metaphors and Images Used by the Next Generation to Describe Women's Leadership: Australian Research

We will now explore the various images, more than metaphors, used by the next generation to describe women's leadership through examining their evaluation of a women's leadership development program and reflections on the leadership of their institution.

The effectiveness of such programs in HE has been noted by several authors (Tessiens, 2007; Morley and Crossouard, 2015). The participants identified the opportunity to explore leadership and network with other participants as key strengths of the program.

Such programs recognize that women have different career experiences to men and allow them to explore different styles of leadership. Most participants used positive images to describe how such programs provided an opportunity to reflect and to meet other people "who want to be the best they can," "raise the aspirations of women and help close the gender gap at senior management level," and allow women to compete on an equal footing. Their views of the potential of such programs reflected Tessiens's (2011) findings.

Participants used positive images to portray women's approach to leadership "as very different as a female" because "women manage and lead differently to their male colleagues" and "the issues for women can be very different to those of men and as such require a forum that invites open discussion." Therefore, the program provided a secure space "where the issues that are exclusive to women can be aired," as also noted by Debebe et al. (2016) and Vinnicombe et al. (2013).

The images used to describe the networking in the program were also positive. One noted that it provided "skills and information on who is in what area and people to contact and have since developed relationships with these people and utilized them in my work to essentially help the students have better outcomes." Other benefits included: increased confidence "in approaching new people at work and social circles"; (see also Clarke, 2011); being valuable: "beneficial to my own work area"; and a learning opportunity: "I thought it would be a great learning and networking opportunity and it was!." Their experience resonated with other studies on the value of women-to-women networking (Sagebiel and White, 2013) and women only leadership development programs (Tessiens, 2007). Building broader networks helped participants to understand how they operated in the workplace and how men used networks, often to consolidate their own power, and how networking could be used more effectively for career progression. It also enabled them to imagine other possibilities of HE communities of practice.

However, the contrast between these positive images of the program and the metaphors and especially images used to describe the masculinist leadership they observed in their institution was stark. Participants were critical of the institution's masculinist leadership, the poor leadership provided and organizational restructure that led to disinterest in leadership roles. Moreover, they criticized the program as an approach to fixing the women rather than fixing the institution which, they asserted, was the problem, reflecting their frustration with HE leadership COP of masculinities (Burkinshaw and White, 2017). Once again this article raises awareness of viewing women through the intersectional lens of generation and gender given the rich data generated by both studies. While the older women tended to be more accepting of the status quo, the next generation used strong metaphors and images to express anger about what they saw as the injustice of the power of the dominant leadership model and its negative impact on their careers.

Participants used negative images such as: "glaring gender inequalities in the workplace" and the failure of this culture to adapt: "without real buy in from the university's leadership and our male colleagues nothing will change." This alienated women, leading one participant to conclude: "having time to think about my career and to learn and reflect on the workings of our university has had an impact ... this has acted to convince me that I am a poor fit with this university."

COP of masculinities produced poor leadership and images of women who were trapped. One said that the "light bulb moment" for her was "realizing that women at this institution are so poorly represented in leadership." Inviting senior male leaders to the program to discuss their leadership simply confirmed that

they were ineffectual: "sadly, it just reinforced the impression I already had that the university leadership team lacks strength and determination." Moreover, some argued the program was in danger of perpetuating this mediocre leadership: "I do not want more 'leaders' trained in ways that emulate the poor leadership I see throughout our university." Unlike the women VCs described above who strongly invested in negotiating and navigating COP of masculinities, these women were not prepared to play the game of fitting in with this code of practice and accepting current leadership in order to get on, reflecting the observation of Sluis (2012).

These negative images extended beyond a focus on the program to the wider organizational culture, refocusing the emphasis from trying to fix the women to fixing a system constructed and perpetuated by powerful male leaders. One participant was clear that this needed to change rather than women changing themselves:

not just expecting women to change themselves to better fit the existing system. And there needs to be follow through—what comes next? What is the university leadership doing to fix the problem? What is the university community doing?

Another criticized the program because "much of the 'advice' was focused on us changing rather than us working together to fix the system that is the problem." For them the reality was that "in isolation, such a program changes nothing—I do not see any evidence of the leadership of the university doing anything to improve things for their women employees." Their views concur with Tessiens (2007) assertion that the underlying assumptions, values and approaches of women's only leadership programs need to be examined: "Without a clear strategy that includes a focus on organizational culture, programs will continue to help individual women fit into organizational cultures while leaving those cultures untouched."

This leadership development program mostly failed to encourage women to aspire to leadership roles because the pervasive image of "the problem" is women, articulated by O'Connor (2011), moves the accountability for blatant discrimination from universities to women themselves and to a range of remedial initiatives for "fixing" them such as mentoring and women in leadership programs. By focusing on what women lack in terms of skills and experience, university management can neatly explain why women's career trajectories do not match those of their male colleagues (Ely and Meyerson, 2000).

As mentioned earlier, Morley (2014) has identified that many younger women are dismissing careers in HE leadership. The impact of managerialism is a factor here, evident in negative images of work intensification, continuous restructuring and undermining the confidence of women in their ability to perform their jobs and have job satisfaction. The effect of managerialism on the performance of leadership was evident in the responses of participants. Blackmore (2014) argues that work intensification for academics and lack of diversity in leadership discourage women from aspiring to or achieving leadership. Given their assessment that the program was flawed in focusing on fixing the women, participants mostly were not attracted to

senior leadership. Instead, some seemed preoccupied with an institutional wide restructure that consumed them and might explain the following observation: “disappointing that women didn’t feel more empowered!” One noted that the light bulb moment in the program was “that there are some very unhappy women working here! I wonder why they stay if they are so unhappy—lack of options?” or it could be more personal, another realizing that she “was not coping with work life at the university.” Others felt trapped: “at the moment because of my position I feel there is nowhere else for me to go within the organization,” and wondered if they were in the right career:

It made me question whether academia was the career path I want to pursue. I love what I do, but I see so many obstacles, and so many poor decisions that impact on staff satisfaction and staff development.

Strong negative images of disempowered, unhappy women who were not coping in the workplace and having nowhere to go explain why these participants were not putting up their hands to move into leadership roles. Reflecting Carvalho et al.’s (2013) research, the complex gender relations at work here in the university, including poor decision making by male leaders, alienated women and confirmed their status as outsiders. Acker (2014) observes that it is not sufficient to urge women to seek university leadership, particularly when they are often stressed and discouraged, and it will not lead to reform of the gender relations in institutions.

Images of ineffectual institutional leadership reflecting a hostile COP of masculinities, had left some women merely in survival mode. Despite identifying the value of women’s only leadership development programs and networking opportunities, the transformational potential of the program was outweighed by the overwhelmingly negative images of the current masculinist leadership at the university. Not surprisingly, like the women in Morley’s (2014) and Acker’s (2014) studies, they either did not aspire to leadership or wish to take on further leadership roles.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our discussion focusses on the key synergies and dissonance in the metaphors and images of leadership between the generations and hence the intersection of generation and gender in higher education leadership.

The narrative for older women provides us with images about conforming to masculinist leadership, of fitting in, and not challenging or unsettling their male colleagues. Time and again the women VCs talked about their experiences of fitting in to dominant masculine leadership styles both in order to get on and to survive once promoted. The ongoing energy required to achieve some membership status of belonging to COP of masculinities suggested that alternative (other) leadership was not necessarily supported or encouraged. At the same time their pervading tone in the images and metaphors used was that they rarely openly challenged the masculinist culture. Several rejected any responsibility for women coming through by adamantly denying their role as “gender politicians”. The

precarious nature of their success is reflected in the metaphors they used such as needing to stay under the radar regarding such controversial issues, that they were merely practicing legitimate peripheral participation, in other words. One or two women used the metaphor of being much more comfortable “in their own skin” once they had made it to the top and even changed how they dressed to reflect their femininity, gaining confidence to abandon the dark suited uniform expected by COP of masculinities.

Most worrying is our observation about the images these women used to describe how they needed to work hard at navigating and negotiating gendered leadership cultures in order to perform acceptable leadership, because men in these positions defended their entitlement and privilege (Fox, 2017). This image of conformity as the price of success was stark. Moreover, they were not resentful about this extra emotional labor required, which their male peers (generally) avoided. Almost without exception these women’s images were about discrimination as a woman in a man’s world. Interestingly these stories often emerged following them saying something like “I’ve never really had a problem but...” as though they had normalized misogynist cultures and that the metaphor they often used of needing to fit in was part and parcel of getting on. Some even adopted a “maggie thatcher” leadership image, being more masculinist than many of their male peers. They wanted to be seen not just as good as the men at their own (leadership) game but better, whatever the personal cost, which included (more often than not) broken relationships and childless lives.

Feminists worry about how the metaphors and images used in this approach to leadership influence women coming through about the agency of ambitious women. It infiltrates both overtly and covertly: covertly, without challenge the strong imagery perpetuating masculinist culture survives intact; and overtly, off the record we have the image of some of these older women actually admitting to a complete lack of sisterhood with their younger more junior colleagues, believing that because they had had it tough and made it through, then why shouldn’t their successors. Clearly improving the lot of women in leadership COP of masculinities is complex and nuanced. Simply achieving a critical mass of women at the top will not necessarily change the entrenched metaphors used to describe masculinist leadership and the images that sustain it. Rather, more feminist women (and men) are needed for this to happen. Otherwise younger generations of women will continue to focus on images of ineffective, hostile leadership which perpetuates glaring gender inequalities in the workplace, and dismiss any leadership ambitions as more of the same struggle.

Hence this is why subsequent generations are seemingly more reluctant to fit in to get on or to become leaders and the metaphors and images they used to describe the current masculinist leadership were overwhelmingly negative. While participants in the women’s leadership program saw networking opportunities as its key strength, unlike Wojtas (2008) findings, there was no indication that networking increased their confidence in tackling their image of the institution’s mediocre and/or ineffectual leadership. Many of these women experienced

high levels of stress and frustration resulting from how the university treated them and their colleagues during the current restructure. This thirty and forty-year-old generation of women were unimpressed by their older, more senior female and male colleagues and the prevailing COP of masculinities they observed, using mostly negative images to describe them, and as such demonstrated a complete resistance to fitting in altogether, often at the expense of furthering their careers. Indeed, many reported that participation in the women in leadership program generally did not inspire them to focus on career progression. If this means women in the younger generation decide against taking on senior leadership roles it illustrates yet again how leadership COP of masculinities operate to quash diversity. To reiterate, we argue that the older generation of women worked hard at fitting into masculinist leadership cultures which goes some way to explain their illuminating metaphors whilst the younger generation of women were unimpressed with those cultures hence their resistance through negative imagery.

On a more hopeful note, the metaphors and images used by women across the generations about their positive experience of COP of femininities, often through women only networking/forums and a critical mass of women in leadership teams, suggested the possibility for transformation. While they might have difficulty articulating the leadership culture of masculinities, they readily discussed how femininities leadership was valuable and led to more relaxed leadership settings. The status quo, perpetuated by “the calculus of interest”, can mean people do not recognize the prevailing gendered and gendering driven culture, as though it is gender neutral (Connell, 1987). Whereas, it is easier to recognize “the other” because it is extraordinary and unusual, not the usual image and feels different, as one VC explained:

It's much, our meetings, there's only eight of us around the table. Very evenly balanced. Very collegial. A lot of laughter. Very straight with each other. No manipulation. No stabbing in the back once you go out the door. Everybody feels very supported. And it's absolutely in good times and bad, most especially in bad, that you have that kind of trust in each other. Now if that's a feminine style, so be it.

Similarly, the next generation used positive images to describe what they saw as the alternative model of leadership offered in the women's leadership development program—such as providing a space for “open discussion,” a “safe forum” that enabled them to raise issues “exclusive to women,” and brought together women who were “committed and passionate” about their work.

Often both the older and younger women provided images of higher education leadership COP of femininities which offered a different model of leadership and therefore represented more effective leadership communities. They described femininities leadership culture as “feels very different,” “leadership is very different as a female,” “it was a lot different,” “very noticeably different,” “women manage and lead differently,” and “so totally different.” Their conversations about the relative merits of both femininities and masculinities leadership strongly favored the former as more productive. These women were

praising the incisiveness of femininities leadership which may not previously have been in the metaphoric “calculus of interests” of the hegemonic masculinities culture of HE. Until very recently HE has been a “default man” society, a term coined by the artist and social commentator Perry about wider society (2014). By default, the images and metaphors defining HE masculinities and masculinist leadership cultures have remained powerful, rejecting alternatives which could compromise their vested interests. These vested interests cultivate modern “microaggressions” which mask sexism (and racism) and which are “more likely to be expressed as covert, indirect and more ambiguous thus creating challenges in identifying and acknowledging its occurrence (Holder et al., 2015). That both generations of women experienced and enjoyed the leadership alternatives (described by more comfortable metaphors and images) as more inclusive, effective and transformational is encouraging. While feminists are accused of threatening this status quo, both the older and younger women in this study demonstrate that alternative and more fluid metaphors and images of feminine leadership are evident across the generations.

To conclude, the metaphors and images used to describe the experience of the older generation of women who were compelled to negotiate and navigate gendered leadership cultures seems to be influencing the younger generation to resist this style of leadership. The prevailing culture in higher education leadership and the metaphors used to describe successful leadership narrows the options for women leaders or aspiring leaders. While older women were prepared to accept current images of (male) leadership, younger women had contempt for the way such images marginalized them while at the same time encouraging them to lift their game. Their crushing images of disappointment, unhappy women, not coping, nowhere else to go, being trapped, encountering obstacles, and poor decisions of managers reinforce the sense of women who on the one hand were blocked in their careers and on the other were not interested in emulating what they saw as poor decision making and ineffective leadership of their current managers. Instead middle and aspiring women leaders are performing leadership differently, suggesting COP of femininities and feminism can work toward reinforcing more positive metaphors and images of doing leadership which in turn may transform the leadership diversity landscape.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because: in the case of the Australian data surveys were conducted by the equity office and deidentified data was provided confidentially to the author; and in the case of the UK data the participants' consent to being interviewed was based on total anonymity and confidentiality of the data generated. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to Dr. Paula Burkinshaw.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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A Journey of Difference: The Voices of Women Leaders

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This paper offers a view on narrative inquiries based upon leadership, in order to shed light on women's of color and multicultural groups experience and nuance understanding of their leadership career path. Since black and other ethnic group women are 'theoretically erased' (Crenshaw, 1989: 139), this empirical study offers an insight into how gender, class and race influence on women's leadership practices in three countries, while it adds to theorizing identity and leadership at schools in different international contexts. This paper intends to give voice to women leaders who are making a difference in their organization. During the past decade, interest in gender and leadership has grown to the extent that it is slowly becoming part of the leadership norm. Narrative inquiries are treated as a means of a systematic data gathering and analysis which challenges the traditional views of gender discussions (thus gender is predominantly about white women) and incorporating ethnic minority around leadership. Unfolding the stories of women—from multi-ethnic groups and mixed social class-higher education leadership positions in England, and Pakistan, may expose differences of interpretations offered by researchers from a racially and ethnically diverse background (black and white Europeans). Hence, an issue that arises is whether researchers' cultural background affects data interpretation of studies with a highly qualitative stance.

Keywords: gender, leadership, difference, leaders, race

I might not have much but at least I am an authentic leader. ... (Female Education Leader United Kingdom).

Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal theorist, wrote two ground-breaking articles that sought to provide a place to theorize about the law's inability to make Black women's experiences of discrimination visible, which are intersectional (1989, 1991).

Black women's intersectional experiences of racism and sexism have been a central but forgotten dynamic in the unfolding of feminist and antiracist agendas (Crenshaw, 1989).

This paper sheds light on the experiences of Black women and women of color in the context of leadership. The intention is to gain a nuanced understanding of their leadership career paths, particularly within the field of education. Since Black and other minority ethnic groups of women are 'theoretically erased' (Crenshaw, 1989: 139), this paper offers an insight into how gender and race influence women's leadership practices in three countries: Pakistan, United Kingdom and Brazil.

The paper also adds to theories on identity and leadership in three international contexts. The aim is to give voice to women leaders who are making a difference in their organisations, such as schools,

higher education establishments, local communities and some private sector organisations. During the past decade, interest in gender has grown to the extent that it is becoming part of the language of leadership. Gender, race and class intersect to play a pivotal part in the leadership practices of Black and minority ethnic women in educational leadership. (Alston, 1997; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Fuller, 2013; Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018).

The initial section of the paper puts forward a contextual understanding of leadership, ethnicity and diversity. The first issue examined is the growth in female activism, specifically based on experiences in Brazil. This is followed by an examination of gender difference in leaders and the necessity to invest in diversity. Gender difference is exacerbated by the differing uses of terminology to describe color and ethnicity, which is examined in some detail. Despite the differences in terminology a number of major themes emerged as over 1,000 BME personnel involved in the Black-led program 'Investing in Diversity' graduated and moved into leadership careers. The second section presents a critical discussion of ethnic minority women's experience in educational leadership.

The section starts by looking at the shared experiences of Minority Ethnic women and the complexities they face in the workplace. This is followed by an examination of three research projects and the views expressed by those involved. The second section concludes with an explanation and review of Intersectionality in order to elucidate the findings.

CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP AND DIFFERENCE

In workplaces around the world, organizations are characterized by 'inequality regimes' (Acker, 2006), with '... loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities within particular organisations' (ibid: 443). Diversity as a science recognizes that individual attitudes and behaviors surrounding difference occur in the context of historically, culturally and socially embedded realities/beliefs and frameworks. Tackling these inequalities, scholars worldwide are likely to start with the North American literature. This is because US literature is recognized as the primary source of organisational research on ethnicity and diversity (Jonsen et al., 2011). In the US, there are differential social and economic experiences between Hispanic, African-American, Asian and White ethnicities. Typically, African Americans are disadvantaged with regard to employment, health, housing and education (Plaut, 2010). However, the ethnic group distribution differs between the US and the United Kingdom. In the US, one of the largest racial minority groups is Black (African-Caribbean, African or African American (12.6%). In contrast, the largest minority ethnic group in the United Kingdom is the South Asian population (5.9%).

Context-sensitivity is necessary for all locations in which diversity management and research is conducted (Özbilgin, 2009). In a Muslim society, cultural and belief systems emerge as a defining factor underpinning those deep structures or

cultural forms that determine female role and positioning (Shah, 2015: 2). Women have to face several formal and informal pressures from family and society, the political framework, social set up and 'professional pressure groups' where male dominance is a powerful image (Shah, 2015). Moazzam and Jabeen (2011), 3 stated that, "Despite the increased workforce participation, women continue to suffer discrimination in the job market and are more often represented at lower and middle management level or in so called women suited professions." Women have to fight this pre-conceived gender discrimination. Even though women are in the same workplace as men, women are not perceived as equally useful to organizations in comparison to men (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). In Brazil, there is a long history of Black inferiority in Brazilian society. Race and gender is an active conversation that dominates every aspect of life. Black Brazilian women's leadership is characterized by their status and life experiences at the complex intersections of class, gender and race inequality. They have to overcome obstacles of economic access and education.

The first issue to be considered is the intense and steady growth in female activism. This paper interprets activism as engagement with a struggle to engender change. In the case of Brazil, indicators show that the number of females who make up the Economically Active Population jumped from 28 to 41.7 million, their activity rate increased from 47 to 53% in 1997 and the percentage of women in the whole workforce rose from 39.6 to 43.5% in 2002. In 2005 more than half of the female population in the active age group searched for a job, or had a job, and more than 40 in 100 workers were females. In spite of this leap, women are far from reaching the same rate as men which in 2005 was above 70%, both in the number of men at work and the number seeking employment.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEADERS

The gender and ethnic profiles of leaders in schools and higher education demonstrates that career progression reflects ethnic and gender penalties. This is replicated in Parliament and FTSE 100 Companies. In the United Kingdom, Black Minority Ethnic (BME) members of parliament currently number only 27 out of 649 (4.2%). Of these, only eight are BME women—under a third of all BME Members of Parliament (MPs). In contrast to education and politics, there is cause for guarded optimism in the business sector in regards to women in the most senior positions in the largest companies. In 2012, 15% of directorships of FTSE¹ 100 companies were held by women (Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2012), representing a 2.5% increase from a three-year plateau. However, when taking into account gender, nationality and ethnicity of FTSE 100 company directors, only 9.9% of female directors were from minority ethnic groups, and only one of these was a

¹Definition of FTSE 100. The Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 share index; an average of share prices in the 100 largest, most actively traded companies on the London Stock Exchange.

United Kingdom national. The pattern evident in business and Parliament thus replicates the gender and ethnic profiles of leadership in schools and higher education.

Organisations are microcosms of the societies within which they are embedded, and “work cannot be understood outside the context of the socio-cultural arena in which it is enacted” (Dombeck et al., 2003: 352). Organisational dynamics often mirror societies’ structures, beliefs and tensions, including less favourable outcomes for minority ethnic individuals and women in many Western societies. As such, ethnic minority scholars are continuously urged to acknowledge the socially-constructed and contextual nature of ethnicity in organisations e.g., Roberson and Block (2001). Acker (2006) has noted that hierarchies are gendered, racialized and classed, especially when it comes to leadership in Europe and the United States.

Leadership theory, however, has traditionally suppressed and neutralized ‘difference’, including the gender and race/ethnic dimensions (Parker and Reynaga-Abiko, 2005). Much of the data collected on early leadership research was gathered in business, the military and government settings, from White, Anglo-Saxon men in leadership positions (Middlehurst, 2008). Leadership is saturated with studies which draw on constructs developed in Western contexts. This generalization also applies to studies of work values including (Hisrich et al., 2003) and leadership (Smith, 1997; Fikret Pasa, 2000). Many leadership publications have reflected this bias. Osler (2006) points out that textbooks aimed at aspiring school leaders published in the 1980s and 1990s in Britain rarely referred to equality, even though by then minority ethnic communities were well-established in this country. This was mirrored in academic journals and educational management courses, where race equality was rarely a topic of interest even though ethnicity was known to be a factor in student attainment.

More recently, research on social identity and group leadership suggests that the social identity group to which a leader belongs is considered to be a significant factor in leader effectiveness and the extent to which a leader may feel able to enact that identity (Van Knippenberg, 2011). From a sociological perspective, this is explained by the extent to which the leader and the group see themselves as part of a collective, or share the same social identity. Many leaders become enculturated into the social identity of the group which they lead or aspire to lead as a way to be accepted as the group leader. In other words, an aspiring leader may find it difficult to be themselves if their original and natural identity is at odds with the identity of the group they hope to lead. They have to assume what is ultimately an alien identity so they can be accepted and fit in. Showunmi et al. (2013) states that Black and Asian leaders felt they ‘needed to bleach their identity’ in order to succeed. Racial issues in educational leadership is an area on the fringes of receiving significant recognition.

INVESTING IN DIVERSITY

The theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory, Whiteness Studies and intersectionality (Maylor, 2014) are drawn on to explore and better understand the experiences of Black and

minority ethnic women leaders. *Critical race theory* is a theoretical framework in the social sciences, developed out of epistemic philosophy that uses critical theory to examine society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, law, and power. *Whiteness theory* is understood as a specific approach in Whiteness Studies, examining how white identity affects a non-exhaustive list of identities in an adult’s life. This list includes, but is not limited to social, political, racial, economic, and cultural identity. *Intersectionality* is a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of a person’s social and political identities might combine to create unique modes of discrimination. Intersectionality identifies injustices that are felt by people due to a combination of factors.

There is a growing body of evidence examining diversity and leadership (Lumby and Coleman, 2007) but very little on gender, race and leadership. Work that is of note in this area was conducted by Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010) who designed and developed a program entitled ‘Investing in Diversity,’ which focused on BME educational leadership. The Black-led program was developed in 2004 to address the under-representation of Black leaders in London schools. In the design and conception of the program a lot of time was spent on defining and redefining the words Black, Black Minority and Ethnic (BME) to ascertain who should be included in the program. Having a clear understanding from the outset provided transparency and clarity which then dismissed the opportunity for challenges further on in the program. Global majority (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010) was the terminology settled on to illustrate the fact that Black people were actually in the majority and not the minority.

However, the terminology is used to describe people of Color, it has and continues to evolve over time. More recently the phrase Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) has dominated the vocabulary, however it has raised a number of interconnecting issues. One of these is the ‘invisibility of Blackness’ following the inclusion of Asian in the BAME terminology (Sopanrao and Deshmukh, 2018). Such ‘invisibility’ is problematic as BAME ignores differences inherent within the notion of ‘Blackness’. Notably, some Black leaders, whether consciously or unconsciously, aspire to the realms of Whiteness as a way of succeeding or progressing in their careers (Showunmi and Gooden, 2020). Second, BAME is used pejoratively as a label for different groups of people who are not white, but BAME is not inclusive of all groups (Sopanrao and Deshmukh, 2018). Third, over the years, ‘ethnicity’ has become a label used to define diverse identity groups. Importantly, the concept of ‘ethnicity’ is fluid. Its defining characteristics are not fixed. Research in places like Rwanda (Kubai and Ahlberg, 2013) has shown that ‘ethnicity’ is not static, it changes with time. At the same time, self-definition has gained currency thus making the assignment of ethnic labels problematic.

For the above reasons, this paper will use the terms ‘Black’, ‘BME’ (Black and Minority Ethnic) or ‘Minority Ethnic’ interchangeably to chart the experiences of Black women leaders.

Despite these various differences in terminology a number of major themes emerged from interviews with Black and South Asian women and male graduates. Recommendations on leadership development strategies were put forward to help

Black and global majority head teachers and aspiring head teachers to enable them to “bring who they are” to their leadership. During the span of the program over 1,000 BME leaders graduated and moved on to careers that reflected their skills and experiences.

As we continue the exploration, it is important to include the work of Judy Alston (1997). Alston’s work brings the challenges and pressures of Black superintendents in USA schools, into the discussion on educational leadership. Until Alston’s work there was very little mention of Black women’s experiences in educational leadership. There was, however, research conducted on White women and leadership by Shakeshaft (1989) who placed women’s experiences firmly onto the leadership agenda. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) breaking book, highlighted how difficult it was ‘when documenting women’s representation in formal leadership positions in schools, due to an absence of reliable and comparable data, either nationally or across states’. (p. 85–90).

SO WHAT IS ‘INTERSECTIONALITY’?

Intersectionality is the lens through which the data will be analyzed. The term was coined in the 1980s to address criticism that feminism was overwhelmingly White and Western in its outlook and philosophy. It was defined as:

“The view that women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity.” (Crenshaw, 1989).

Intersectionality, (depending on context) can be viewed through a broader lens still while taking into account the variety of identities and backgrounds of women, men and non-binary people so they can all benefit from feminism. Rather, it seeks, as a principle, to take all elements of diversity and identity into account in policy-making, management and leadership so a more ‘holistic’ approach is achieved. This is important as school leaders consider when staff and students are encouraged to bring the ‘whole person’ to work and study they are much more likely to have the best possible experience and, moreover, the leaders can benefit from this diversity, rather than implicitly encourage social conformism and the concealing of hidden identities.

One element of diversity is demonstrated by the fact that bullying and harassment exists across school and higher education communities and beyond, for instance in the City, the business quarter of London. There is evidence from Oplatka (2002) that women and in particular Black women are more likely to report being harassed or bullied. Thus, Black women, who are from both these groups, may be especially vulnerable. Bullying and harassment rely on the abuse of power and because women, and Black women and disabled people are underrepresented in

school management and leadership grades, they are statistically more at risk.

Actively preventing bullying and harassment is imperative in order to support equality generally, but it is also of particular benefit to those who are doubly or triply (or more) marginalized. The differences in representation, when considered with the issue that marginalized people may also be keenly aware that they do not ‘fit in’ and have internalized a sense of being ‘other’, means that tackling bullying and harassment is crucial to the retention of staff with intersecting identities. If you are the only person from your group in a school or business setting, you may often have a heightened awareness of any hostility in interpersonal interactions, even if it is not intentional or specific to you.

THE RESEARCH PROJECTS

This paper draws on three research projects focusing on gender and leadership that were completed in different contexts. All three research projects were designed to explore how gender and identity impacted on leadership.

The research design fuses together narrative and portraiture to portray the stories of my participants. The methods used in each of these projects consisted of either semi-structured interviews, focus groups and workshops as a way to collect data. Further detail on research design and data gathering (interviewers, identification of participants), and data analysis, etc. is supplied below for each separate project.

This next section will provide a discussion on the three research projects which underpin this paper. There were common features of shared research design for all three research projects. All applied Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to develop the methodological and conceptual framework for the study. Grounded theory is a systematic methodology in the social sciences involving the construction of theories through methodical gathering and analysis of data. This research methodology uses inductive reasoning, in contrast to the hypothetico-deductive model of the scientific method. Grounded Theory provides the basis for the development of narrative to elucidate and elaborate the theory which has emerged.

The research design emerged through a series of conversations, discussions and ideas which took place with a range of different people and organizations.

The research design interconnects with the blurring of a definition for autobiography and auto-ethnography. (Ellis and Bochner 2000) define auto-ethnography as “autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation” (p. 742). Similar to ethnography, auto-ethnography pursues the ultimate goal of cultural understanding underlying autobiographical experiences.

PAKISTAN

This was a capacity building project which spanned across two different countries the United Kingdom and Pakistan. The

project had two aims: to engage the Pakistani academics in research as a learning opportunity, and to use that research to explore and capture the experience of women academics in Pakistan. We investigated the number of women academics in Pakistan and their status and focused on their gendered experience, career progression and overall development. The PIs were located in two British universities and two universities in Pakistan. The research was co-designed with the participants, early career researchers and senior academics, through a series of workshops. The participants conducted the research in the four universities. The four universities in Pakistan selected the participants. The data was analyzed by the PIs and participants. A range of papers have emerged from this research. The overall aim of the research project was to promote collaboration among international and regional partners in the two countries, for research capacity building with specific focus on development of junior researchers, women researchers, early career scholars, staff and postgraduate students.

The project established sustainable collaboration between two United Kingdom and four Pakistani Higher Education Institutions. A study was conducted to contextualize the research, “Mapping Women Academics’ Careers in Pakistan”, which formed an integral part of the research training program. This project had two core elements:

1. The development of the research skills of both early career and established researchers from four partner universities. The aim was to enable them to become researchers of international standing.
2. The investigation of the experiences of women academic leaders in four universities based in Pakistan concerned thus making an original contribution to this field of knowledge.

I will focus on the second element of the project which explores gender and leadership in four universities in Pakistan.

The research project spanned over a three year period (2012–2015), the project initially brought together three female academics from the United Kingdom (United Kingdom) and 30 female academics from Pakistan, both early career and senior academics, with the intention of providing opportunities for their mutual professional development, research training, and international exposure. The research training took the form of active participation in a research project. The research was designed by the whole group of women with the guidance and mentoring of the United Kingdom team. This empowered the Pakistani participants who had no experience of qualitative research methods such as interviews. Their confidence grew visibly during the project as we built close relationships with them. We opened new aspects of gender and ethnic identities which engaged them in profound questioning and introduced them to the concept of intersectionality.

The methodological approach for this aspect of the research was the use of feminist and leadership theory. The method was interviews and questionnaire which was designed by the Pakistan and British team. There was a total of 400 women participants who took part across the four universities. A thematic approach to the analysis of the data following Braun and Clarke (2014) was

adopted. The ethical approval and consent had been achieved in line with British Education Research Association (BERA) and University of Leicester guidelines.

UNITED KINGDOM

This research project developed from an initial idea presented to the Leadership Foundation in 2011. I was interested in whether one’s identity impacted on leadership style. My ideas were well received at the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) Conference (2012) which led to the award of BELMAS research project funding. ‘Race in the Community’ also provided initial funding.

I chose to explore how far identity impacted on leadership style. This research used semi-structured interviews, expert conversations, focus group and documentary evidence. This particular method was chosen as it provides flexibility. Interviews also have a better response rate than mailed questionnaires. I conducted the interviews myself as my personal interaction with interviewees was significant in enabling me to gain deeper insights into their utterances. I was also able to interpret the non-verbal communication of respondents which helps to provide more insights. The participants for this project were BME women leaders working across private, public and voluntary sectors. They were selected through Race in the Community and word of mouth (snowballing or chain referral). The data was analyzed using a thematic approach. The data informed two other publications ADD Refs (Showunmi 2016; Showunmi 2018).

A total of 130 Black, Asian, and white women leaders in public and private sector organisations in the United Kingdom took part in the study. The aim was to gather their reflections on; 1) how they defined leadership, 2) how their identities as leaders had developed and 3) their experiences of enacting leadership. Both focus groups and interviews were recorded for ease of transcription and data analysis. I used a thematic approach to the analysis of the data. The ethical approval and consent had been achieved in line with British Education Research Association (BERA) and University College London (UCL) guidelines.

While white women academics have written extensively on women’s position in the labor market and within the gender division of labor, this has been primarily from the position of disadvantage in relation to patriarchal power (see for example Rees 1992, Walby 1990, Cockburn 1991). Ethnic minority women are rarely included within these analyses and when they are, the analysis tends to focus on the ‘double disadvantage’ of sexism and racism, such as the ‘concrete ceiling’ facing black female managers. White women (researchers or organisational leaders) have seldom reflected on their own ethnic privilege including how this has impacted on their work (McIntosh, 1992 being a notable exception).

BRAZIL

The third project was based in Brazil.

The main aim of the study was to explore women's leadership in a community context. The research design and data gathering were community-based. A collaborative approach was adopted, involving the director of a women's center and the women who assisted in the center. The design was grounded in the needs, issues, concerns and strategies of the community and the community-based organization I worked with. These informed the topics (such as domestic violence, childcare and group activities for young people) to be explored through the research into leadership.

We had eight weeks to plan and deliver the project. I used the community-based idea as a framework to design this project. Data was gathered through workshops, interactive conversations, a conference and focus groups. A total of 300 women participated in the project. In the first instance the project lasted for two weeks in November 2018 and then another ten days in 2019. This longitudinal study was to continue in 2020, but the Covid-19 pandemic prevented further research from taking place.

Audio-visual techniques were used to capture the data. Audio-visual data (e.g., video recordings, YouTube clips, etc.) has become a popular research method, but it can raise ethical issues. Audio-visual data collected under certain conditions can be used to understand behavior, and can thus enhance understanding of societal issues. Ethical approval was secured in accordance with British Sociological Association guidelines. I used a thematic approach to analyze the data through the audio-visual lens.

More detailed information on this project is provided below (See Community based Leadership, p. 17).

CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS

The next section of the paper will focus on presenting a critical discussion of ethnic minority women's experience in leadership. The themes which have emerged from all three projects will be explored. The aim is to analyze the co-construction of ethnic minority women leaders using their own narrative. As mentioned, this research adheres to the BSA and UCL ethical guidelines. All participants have given their consent for the data to be used in this paper. A general overview of the experience of Black women leaders is presented to underpin quotations from interviews/focus groups with female leaders.

A JOURNEY OF DIFFERENCE

Three research projects are examined to provide an insight into women leaders' shared experiences. Interestingly, some of the initial findings stemming from each of the projects were similar. For example discussions on the lack of support with responsibilities such as caring for children and or family members, no recognition or value given, for the work completed as a women leader. The conception of a women leader was different from that of a male leader. A women in leadership was perceived to relate to a pastoral role, nurturing staff. Ultimately, the dominant place of women in society is

regarded as 'Mother.' As much as the previous list is of interest, the following themes will be explored in this paper. They are unconscious and conscious bias, stereotypes, stereotype threat, community based leadership and recognition of pain.

SHARED EXPERIENCES FROM MINORITY ETHNIC WOMEN

"I think that minority women's experiences as leaders challenges them physically and emotionally. They experience stereotypical perceptions which is an emotional challenge. I believe there is another point, which is that people feel threatened if you appear too intelligent or you know, they feel threatened, especially if for whatever reasons they haven't got the same qualifications." (Minority leader in education, London).

This quote summarizes the complexities that minority ethnic leaders face in the workplace. Initially, they are selected and recruited for their experience, knowledge and qualifications and then are subjected to conscious and or un-conscious bias. Research suggests that women tend to adopt leadership styles that are particularly well suited to the complexity of contemporary organizations. This translates well and they are able to demonstrate enhanced institutional effectiveness (Eagly and Carli, 2003; Eagly et al., 2014). Additionally, women can bring unique and important perspectives and priorities that serve to promote positive social outcomes and greater ethical accountability (Eagly et al., 2014). Disappointingly, these potential advantages are hampered by the disadvantage female leaders experience as the target of negative stereotype-based expectations. Over time, there have been a myriad of differing explanations as to why women have difficulty reaching top leadership positions; the main school of thought centers around the stereotypical view that there is a lack of fit between women's characteristics, skills and aspirations and those deemed necessary for effective leadership.

The perception of threat is real and it has serious consequences in terms of a negative impact on performance. The work of Steele and Aronson (1995) showed that when the stereotype of African American intellectual inferiority was "in the air" and students were asked to take part in a diagnostic test of their abilities, Black students underperformed compared to their White counterparts on a standardized test. Interestingly, when the relevant stereotype was removed by framing the same task as an exercise of problem solving, rather than an assessment of their intellect, there was no difference in the performance of Black and White students. The effects of stereotype-threat on academic underperformance has been widely documented across various groups (Steele and Aronson, 1995; Nguyen and Ryan, 2008; Spencer et al., 1999). Stereotype-threat can appear across different domains including academic tests, where it is known that a particular stereotype of an ethnic group is made salient (Aronson et al., 1998). There are further studies that highlight stereotype-threat in mathematics where the researchers examined two intersectional identities. The

studies show the prevalence of conflicting stereotype-based expectations in relation to race and gender performance. For example, Asian women mathematicians who were confronted with their stereotypical representations of their gender underperformed, compared to situations where they were assessed based upon their Asian identity, where they were found to perform better (Shih et al., 1999).

Stereotype and Stereotype-Threat

The consequence of stereotype-threat is the decrease in motivation and engagement and overall performance. Understanding the impact of stereotype-threat is fundamental to ensuring that women leaders and particularly minority women leaders achieve success.

“You have to work twice as hard to prove yourself. You face barriers from Asian men, you face barriers from colleagues [Black] and you face barriers from White colleagues as well. I have experienced it all.” (Black Leader in the Midlands).

Black women and women of color are expected to conform to cultural norms such as social prejudices, racial and gender stereotypes, and androcentric notions of leadership that help to restrict the movement of minorities and women in educational leadership. (Osler and Webb, 2014). This is a reification of the very barriers associated with oppressing women of color. “Voice is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community . . . the struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else” (p. 20). Oplatka (2002) suggests that “the denial of emotions has been premised upon the gendered divide between emotions, as being irrational and subjective (Blackmore, 1999) and school cultures which supported the idea that good ‘professional’ behavior is rational and carefully emotionally controlled (Beatty, 2000).

Over the last few years there has however, been a shift toward the view that there is a need to incorporate emotional voices into the research on educational leaders (Hargreaves, 1998; Blackmore, 1999; Beatty, 2000; Tooms et al., 2010). Including the emotions of educational leaders enables us to gain a better understanding of the behavior and thoughts of the leaders.

The following quote taken from research conducted by Showunmi and Kaporou (2017) and it makes reference to cultural stereotyping in leadership:

“I mean I think being an Asian woman, plus I wear a headscarf, I think people do find it difficult to relate to that. It is their problem not mine, but they do make you feel uncomfortable and I think once you know what you are talking about, and you have to try hard to gain their respect, but once you have got it, then people will come to you and say, ‘well she knows what she is doing’. But it is breaking through that barrier and the challenges.” (Public Sector, Senior Asian Woman leader United Kingdom).

A more recent area which has been given more thought is the way in which inclusive leaders are being valued when recruited into an organization. In the same study carried out by Showunmi and Kaporou (2017) women expressed the following:

“Being valued, I think it is about respect really, and acknowledgment”. (Pakistani Women Leader in the private sector)

Another women leader made the following comment;

“... I hope to think that everyone in the organization values each other. If you ask me, if it is important to me as a leader, then yes. . . I don’t want to be devalued I don’t want to be not valued.” (Pakistani Women Leader Pakistan)

Diversity is regarded by many senior leaders to be a strategic priority that provides important contributions, including increased levels of creativity and innovation. Unfortunately, much of the evidence suggests that the efforts given to recruit, develop and promote individuals from under-represented groups do not guarantee that these individuals’ abilities are fully utilized or that their voices and perspectives are fully heard and taken account of in organisational decision-making in order to benefit institutions.

Being different and needing to adopt whiteness is something that the women felt was not taken seriously by their employers. Women from the study stated that in order to be accepted they needed to ‘bleach their identity’ to progress in the organisation.

Undermined and Not Valued

My research reveals another area which women leaders openly speak about. This is the constant feeling of being undermined and used, for the purposes of the ‘wider good’ of the organization in the context of diversity. Many employers know that they need to change so they select and recruit women leaders with a difference, however there is often a hidden agenda. These agendas create confusion among staff and the leaders. This is often as a result of inherent contextual issues and power relations that frame existing contributions in the work of diversifying the workforce (Ahonen et al., 2014).

“They think you are not intelligent; they think you are just there to advise them on culture and tell them what to do so that they can get on with it and say bye bye to you. They think they are doing you a favor by giving you a platform to speak to them on issues for nothing”. (Black female Leader in the United Kingdom).

Community Based Leadership

The final voices that contribute to this paper are Brazilian women leaders. This stems from recent visits to Rio de Janeiro and Recife between 2017 and 2019. During the most recent visit I received funding to develop an educational workshop—‘Strengthening Leaderships and Empowering Community Women for Local Action’.

The workshop took place in May 2019, in conjunction with the Associação de Mulheres de Bairro. I conducted a workshop with 20 women from the community of Córrego do Euclides on the importance of strengthening local leadership and empowering Black women for local action. The methodology was a group discussion in a circle, where the women were asked questions about leadership. The following discussion took place through the use of a translator:

Focus Group Leader: please write down on a piece of paper your thoughts on this question - “Do you see yourself as a leader?”

Women: “what do you mean? Write what down . . .?”

Focus Group Leader: “your thoughts to the question asked. . .”

Women: “we are not leaders; we work in the community”

Women: “We are here to help and make sure things happen.”

Focus Group Leader: Can you say more about this? Do you see yourself as a leader in the community?

I realized there was a need to change the style of what I was doing. The responses took me by surprise. I had not factored in the stark difference between me and the women. I understood that their physical environment was totally different due to their social-economic backgrounds. However, for some reason I had not made the connection with the way in which this could have contributed to their emotional growth. The women all identified as Black and innocently, I thought my Blackness would give me an automatic pass into their world. In many ways it did, and my genuine humbleness helped. However, I forgot that I was steeped in privilege which would and could have been a problem if I had continued with this delivery. In addition to this there was a language barrier, they spoke Portuguese and I English, everything required translation. I knew if I was to engage these women in the workshop, I needed to use a different method. So, I scrapped my plan and quickly scanned the room to see what resources I could use for the session. I asked the project director if she had some large sheets of paper and some pens. She invited me into the training/resource room, and it was there that I saw what I needed—a large roll of paper and some pens. I asked if this was something I could use, and I was told ‘everything is yours’. I took the paper and proceeded back to the group.

This time I asked the women to sit in groups of three and I gave them a sheet of paper. (I know that I was up against the clock as the session was being recorded as part of the project). I asked the women to draw their community and then I asked them to draw the different leaders of the Favela community. It was fascinating, the pictures included everything—community shops, homes, association’s police, nurseries, schools, doctors etc. I then asked the women the following question:

Focus Group Leader: “who are the leaders in the community?”

Women: “So Many People Including Us. . .”

Focus Group Leader: “so tell me more, what are you leaders in? “

Women: “we are the leaders in our homes, we also are the ones which lead change in the community. For example, this Center where we are today, came about because of us women. It is a very famous Center which was put in place as a refuge for women and their children who had or were in violent situations. We lead this

across the community. We also provide basic education for the children along with a hot meal”.

Focus Group Leader: this is leadership, you are leaders in the community.

One of the women began to cry and I asked the translator had I been responsible for her tears. She gave the following response:

“no, it was the first time she had been asked and she had never considered herself as a leader. She was so happy to see someone like me as no-one comes to this area and we need more people like you. Thank you”.

The focus group continued as the women sketched out their concerns and issues raised in their community, and ideas for reaching more women to grow a network of solidarity and local action. For many of the women this workshop had been the first time that they had received any form of development which took me by surprise.

Importantly, this was the first time the leadership role of these women had been recognized. They initiated activities to enhance life in their community but failed to appreciate that they were leaders in their own right. This process was affirming for them, and it was also emotional for them to be empowered in this way.

RECOGNITION OF THE PAIN

These three interwoven research projects reveal that there are many challenges that Black women leaders face in educational institutions. Some of these will be outlined in this section. The list is endless; therefore this section will focus on the following; stereotype, lack of visibility, micro-aggression (which includes sexual and racial incidents), isolation, the notion of color blindness and unequal pay and career progression. Starting with stereotypes, Black women leaders may be recruited in the first instance to fulfill diversity targets and/or to ensure that the school has the perception of being a diverse workplace. If one takes a look through a critical lens it could be described as window dressing which is problematic for both the school and the Black women leaders. The lack of visibility for Black women leaders creates an environment of stress and racial anxiety which in the long-term can have a profound effect on the Black women leader’s mental health and well-being. Black women leaders suffering in silence will compensate for the ongoing barriers by working harder and internalizing the pain.

Many Black women leaders will experience fatigue and or burnout during their teaching career. Having daily accounts of micro-aggression is something that can contribute to the breakdown of their mental health and well-being. Following their recruitment, they often experience isolation in the workplace. It is a very difficult challenge to accept that their recruitment has resulted in professional jealousy. The lack of attention to supporting Black women leaders contributes to the revolving door scenario. In many cases the appointment of Black women leaders could be the first time that the school has risked recruiting somebody that does

not look like most in the school community. Once the honeymoon period is over, the Black women leaders are expected to achieve and fit into the school environment which has quickly become hostile, with Black women leaders facing treatment which reflects perceptions of their racial inferiority among White colleagues. Racial inferiority is a term used to justify the unequal treatment of the Black women leaders in the workplace. Experiencing any or all of the above is a barrier for Black women leaders, and will erode their confidence and ability to succeed in their careers. Something which attracts very little discussion is ‘color blindness,’ Maylor (2014). In her book ‘Teacher Training and the Education of Black Children’ Mayor examines notions of colour-blindness and colour-consciousness. Colour-blindness is considered to be an instrument of Whiteness.

Whiteness is a slippery ideology that operates and tolerates its own contradiction in order to maintain its dominance (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Gallagher, 2003). In her book Duster (2001), suggests that like race, colour-blindness is multifaceted. While producing a dominant social and at times political hierarchy, depending on how it is operated, race is visible in its solid and interchangeable (fluid) state or it takes on the form of ‘non-existence’ (colour-blindness). This invisibility or perceived non-existence results in color blind racism forming ‘an impregnable yet elastic wall that barricades whites . . . from racial reality, a racial reality whereby minority ethnic groups ‘lag behind whites on almost every measure of quality of life’ (Gallagher, 2003: 17) The biggest barrier facing black women leaders in recent years is unequal pay and lack of career progression. Unequal pay and career progression have been the focus of discussion for many years; however, in recent years it has been viewed in terms of the impact on the lives of Black women leaders. Despite many initiatives such as positive recruitment drives, BME leadership development programmes, conscious bias training for line managers and senior leaders, and coaching, the lives of many Black women leaders have become a constant battle for survival.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to present a perspective on the way Black and other minority ethnic women experience leadership, as leaders in education, business, and the community. It is intended to enable the reader to better understand the challenges BME women have to grapple with in order to survive their working lives. Because racism is complex, endemic in society, and shielded by White

privilege, ethnic minority leaders often suffer in silence and face invisibility. Franklin et al. (2006) assert that the invisible syndrome of emotional abuse and psychological trauma caused by racial stress is common for non-white people. There must be a concerted effort to support the mental and emotional health of Black women leaders in order to retain them in education.

The paper presented contextual knowledge relating to the literature on gender inequalities. It is noticeable that the data shown across each of the three research projects indicated a similar story of difference. The journey of difference it portrayed demonstrated some movement for some women but very little for women from ethnic minority backgrounds. It is clear that there is a strong perception that leaders are stereotypically older middle-class white males who then tend to recruit in their own image. Where diversity becomes an issue, white women are often then recruited to fill the gap. An interesting aspect of this paper is the use of narrative inquiry as a way to illustrate how women leaders make sense of their roles as leaders. Capturing and sharing the women’s stories through an intersectional and sociological lens helps to make sense of the complexity concerning difference. Researchers gathering data through field work need to be critically reflective about their own hidden assumptions. I experienced this in Brazil. The final section collectively brings together the suffering and pain that some minority ethnic women face, as they embark on their leadership journeys. It does leave us with the question—What has been the cost paid by members of the Black and ethnic minority community in pursuing leadership roles?

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/Supplementary Material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by UCL IOE. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Paut Neteru: Dreams of Leadership and Liberation—An Autoethnography of a Black Female Charter School Leader Using An Africentric Approach

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This article seeks to document and critique concepts of social and material inequalities embedded in institutional policies and practices in neoliberal education, utilizing autoethnography to explore the obstacles and experiences of a Black female charter school leader using an Africentric approach to educating Black children. A conceptual framework that blends African-centered pedagogy, African womanism, and transformational leadership was used to guide the qualitative autoethnographic study that anchors this article. Use of the autoethnographic method provides an opportunity to examine the relational dynamics of the experiences of this Black female charter school leader in the cultural context of the Black community and neoliberal education. Data analysis was captured from autobiographical storytelling within three key time periods or epochs of the researcher's 17-year experience starting, operating, and closing a charter school. The article highlights findings that indicate how attempts to implement an African-centered approach to educating Black children, in a DC charter school, in the U.S. Eurocentric education model, in the neoliberal era, was compromised by neoliberal policies; and illustrates how reported findings support the need to continue to examine how children of color can be educated, not just schooled, in a manner that places them at the center of their learning, builds agency, and develops them into creative and critical thinkers and future builders.

Keywords: women, educational leadership, Afrocentric education, charter schools, women leaders, anti-racist, neoliberal education

INTRODUCTION

The inability of the United States of America (U.S.) educational system to properly address the cultural and educational needs of Black students continues to be one of the most perplexing problems in U.S. society (Hopkins, 1997; Hilliard, 1998; Shockley, 2007). As the population of Blacks and other groups increase, scholars note that the culture of schools has remained ethnocentrically White, the teaching force remains overwhelmingly White and female, and the academic achievement gap between Whites and other groups persist (Shockley, 2007).

This article seeks to document and critique concepts of social and material inequalities embedded in institutional policies and practices in neoliberal education, through the lens of a Black charter school leader. I, as the researcher and subject, utilized autoethnography, as a research method, to explore the obstacles and experiences I experienced as a Black female charter school leader using an Africentric approach to educating Black children. The purpose of the study was to analyze and

interpret challenges and experiences during my journey as a Black female charter school leader, in order to expose issues that may be determinant for the limited representation of people of color in school leadership serving children of color and/or availability of African-centered schools to serve students of color. A secondary purpose of the study was to empower women, particularly, of color, to aspire to social justice leadership and demand social justice for women and disadvantaged children of color.

Two questions informed the focus and direction of this autoethnographic study, in an effort to critically reflect upon the social and material inequalities and obstacles often experienced by female leaders of color. This intimate process of examining a journey in my life, as a female charter school leader of color, offers increased understanding of the social phenomenon of leaders of color aiming to serve children of color in the midst of the current neoliberal education era. These questions included:

- In what ways have social and material inequalities shaped my journey as a Black female charter school leader?
- What lessons can be learned from the obstacles and experiences encountered during my journey as a Black female charter school leader?

A conceptual framework that blended African-centered pedagogy, African womanism, and transformational leadership was used to guide the qualitative autoethnographic study that anchors this article. My experiences as a Black female leader illuminated the social and material inequalities and obstacles that a Black female leader of color can experience. I recounted my experience as a charter school leader in evocative detail and connected my experience with the theories of African-centered pedagogy and practice, African womanism, and transformational leadership, through a critical analysis and discussion of the knowledge and meaning that emerge from the autoethnographic material.

The central element driving and orienting the data collection process was my recollection of events, epiphanies, and experiences as a Black female charter school leader. My experiences were compiled and presented using hindsight because of their relevance to the overall theme of leadership for women of color and the connection of these experiences to the questions that informed the study. The autoethnography was structured mostly as a chronological evocative narrative of my experiences during three key epochs of a 17-year experience, from 1999 to 2016. The three key epochs included School Start-Up & Opening, School Operations – Me as Leader, and School Closing.

Various techniques, outlined by Chang (2007), were used to facilitate recall, organization of memories, and events as data, including, but not limited to: (a) collecting other field texts such as personal epochs, letters, official and pop culture documents, photographs, personal-family-social artifacts, and life experiences; (b) visual tools; (c) school artifacts, familial and societal values and proverbs, and cross-cultural experiences; and (d) chronicling the autoethnographer's educational history.

The critical interpretation of the data was grounded in the following strategies (Bogdon and Biklen, 2007): (a) review of

published studies related to this research for comparisons of concepts, ideas, theories, findings, and analysis; (b) examination of implications of my findings for practice, current events, and theoretical orientation; (c) speculations of assumptions my audience may have; (d) strategizing of how to interpret to audience what I have come to understand; (e) telling the story, if there is an incident from the research that captures a major insight or understand derived from my work; (f) creative thought about where and how to tell the story and how it related to theory, my findings, and so forth; and (g) writing of a clear paragraph summarizing what I wanted to tell readers. Other critical data interpretation strategies included: (a) review of the data to identify themes; (b) written analytic memos for each theme while identifying its spatiotemporal characteristics; (c) study of documents for interpretation of the themes; and (d) summarized findings (Hatch, 2002).

Definitions and Terms

Definitions and terms are provided in prose to familiarize the reader with article content and grounding literature.

African-Centered Pedagogy and Ways of Knowing

Africentricity/Afrocentricity: seeking to examine every aspect of the subject place of Africans in historical, literary, ethical, philosophical, economic, and political life (Asante, 2000).

African-centered education: designed to center learning, for Black students, in their own cultural information (Asante, 1991b).

African worldview: Afrocentric worldview emphasizes the relevance of traditional African culture in contemporary life (Dixon, 1976; James-Myers, 1987).

Africanist Womanism: an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of African women (Hudson-Weems, 1988).

Schooling: process designed to provide an ample supply of people who are loyal to the nation-state and who have learned the skills needed to perform the work that is necessary to maintain the dominance of the European American elite in its social order (Shujaa, 1994).

Womanism: the term “womanism” is centrally located in the sociohistorical and linguistic worldview of Black women (Troutman, 2002), was coined by Alice Walker in 1983, and has been later used and refined by other African American women writers such as Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1993).

Neoliberalism and Racialization

Charter Schools: created through a formal agreement between a group of individuals and a sponsor (e.g., a local school board, state department, or an independent governing board). Charter Schools either receive blanket exemptions from most state codes and district rules regarding curriculum, instruction, budget, and personnel, or they may apply to waive requirements. Most charter schools are expected to meet certain accountability requirements, such as demonstrating

student achievement and participating in state testing programs. (Yamashiro and Carlos, 1995).

Neoliberalism: a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005).

Racialization: Omi and Winant (1986) and Winant (1994) used the term to indicate the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group. Fanon (2004) contrasted social conditions that were racializing against those that were humanizing, demonstrating how racial oppression organizes and constrains a universal recognition of human capabilities. Fanon's usage of racialization is posed as a necessary precondition for colonial domination and a hindrance to the process of internal self-making among Black subjects.

Leadership

Transformational Leadership: in a democratic context means that leaders must lead for social justice while promoting dialogue rather than using their authority (Weiner, 2003).

Grounding Literature

Literature designed to ground my story includes: 1) an assessment of African-centered education; 2) neoliberal education; 3) history and presence of Black women school founders in America; 4) African womanism, as a lens to describe my experiences as a Black female leader; and 5) Black women and transformational leadership and Black woman's leadership to ground my commitment to social justice leadership and an Afrocentric way of leading.

African-Centered Education

Molefi Asante is seen as the pioneer of Afrocentricity (Asante, 1991a). African-centered education is designed to center learning for Black students in their own cultural information. Hilliard (1998) argued that problems for Blacks in education are inseparable from problems for Blacks as people. Because educational systems often are mirror-images of the societies in which they exist (Asante, 1991a; Hilliard, 1998), Black children educated in a society that does not support their African culture are only seen and see themselves as being acted upon. Eurocentric education teaches Black students to despise their own culture (Adams, 1997). Woodson (1933) describes the U.S. educational process as one which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that the oppressor is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, yet at the same time depresses and crushes the spark of genius in the African-American by making the African-American feel that the African-American race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples.

Hilliard (1976) and Hilliard (1983) is critical of the whole educational (i.e., tracking, special education placement) and judicial systems that reinforce and justify the racist social order. Asante (1991b) called for a transformation of the Eurocentric curriculum content of public schools. Asante's

position is that education can provide cultural models of what is possible; therefore, in the absence of Afrocentric content, African American youth are deprived of self-affirmation, while racist attitudes are reinforced among other children.

Ladson-Billings (2006) described further how the U.S. education system looks at students as individually responsible for their success in school vs. understanding the complexity of how individual, family, community, school, and societal factors interact to create school failure for some students. Shujaa (1994) echoed how some of the most intelligent advocates of public school education continue to blame the victim as if children have the capacity to educate themselves. He shared how these same advocates overlook the ever present political, racial, and economic reality of the major consumers of public education, Black and Latino children. He spoke to the way in which White supremacy (racism) manifests itself freely in the structure and systematic destruction of millions of unsuspecting children and their parents.

The Value of African-Centered Education – Writing the Wrongs

Shujaa's (1994) work provides a historical context for the perspective of the African American on education, including evidence of early writings that demonstrate that African Americans, as far back as the 1860s viewed education as a birth right in the same light as freedom. He reported that since the age of integration, a fight has persisted to educate African Americans, and that Black schools and the Black church led the modern fight for full educational and political equality. He described the fight as a battle for an equal and level playing field in all areas of human endeavor, not to sit next to White children in a classroom.

The independent Black school movement grew out of the Black empowerment struggles and initiatives of the sixties resulting in the development of African-centered schools around the country (Shujaa, 1994). The Council of Independent Black Institutes (CIBI) is the professional organization established by the African-centered independent schools. These African-centered leaders were influenced by Black struggle and the work of W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, Marcus Garvey, Harold Cruse, Chancellor Williams, E. Franklin Frazier, Mary McLeod Bethune, and others (Shujaa, 1994).

The first National "Infusion of African and African American Content in the Curriculum" conference (Hilliard, 1998) exhibited the collective expressions of John Henrik Clarke, Asa Hilliard, Wade Nobles, and Ivan Van Sertima that there are qualitative and quantitative benefits for African American youths who are exposed to their heritage in school. Asante (1988) argued that African consciousness may be fostered by embracing traditional African cultural values and one way to this conscious orientation is through Afrocentric curriculum reform. Asante (1990) maintained that children who are centered in their own cultural information are better students, more disciplined, and have more motivation for school work.

Africentric education is viewed to purport to offer a holistic approach for bringing about a sense of agency for Blacks by using education as one vehicle for change in the Black community (Shockley, 2007). Some Africentric educationists believe that Africentric education attempts to equip Black children with self-knowledge for the purpose of instilling in them a sense of agency for the purpose of nation-building (Shockley, 2007).

Educating Versus Schooling

Shujaa's (1994) research supports the author's commitment to the cultural responsibility to educate vs. school African-American students, as an African-American school leader. Shujaa differentiated between education and schooling. He defined schooling as a process designed to perpetuate and maintain the society's existing power relations and the institutional structure that support those arrangements. He further explained how schooling exerts an influence on members' achievement expectations through policies e.g., tracking and testing, reward systems (grading, and awarding credential), and patterns of human interaction (e.g., social inclusion and exclusion) that reinforce and are reinforced by the society's structural conditions.

Shujaa (1994) viewed the role of public schools in the United States to include: (a) foster the development of adequate skills in literacy, numeracy, the humanities and technology; (b) instill citizenship skills based upon realistic and thorough understanding of the political system, and support such skills by promoting questioning and critical thinking skills and teaching democratic values; and (c) provide historical overviews of the nation, the continent, and the world which accurately represent the contributions of all ethnic groups to the body of human knowledge. He maintained that public schools, upon achieving the three goals above, would constitute a significant step toward empowering all citizens with the kind of skills needed for full and equal participation in the society. He argued that it is an inappropriate interpretation of public schooling's societal role to expect it to provide for the achievement of ethnic pride, self-sufficiency, equity, wealth, and power for Africans in the United States, goals that require a collective cultural and political world view.

Shujaa (1994) further put forth that a world view can only be transmitted through a process of education strategically guided by an African American cultural orientation and an understanding of how societal power relations are maintained. He, in advocating the importance of Black students receiving an education (vs. schooling), expressed the importance of Black students having a deep understanding of the political, racial, economic, scientific, and technological realities that confront the very survival of African American people locally, nationally, and internationally.

Shujaa (1994) advanced the following as keys to achievement for Black children: (a) possess a deep understanding of the world in which they will have to function, with such knowledge anchored in positive self-concept and an environment that encourages growth; (b) realize that all education is foundational, introducing and reinforcing values in school and non-school settings; and (c) understand that successful development is difficult with a quality education, but almost

impossible without one. He believed it to be the responsibility of each adult generation of African Americans to ensure the existence of an educational infrastructure for transmitting knowledge to their progeny. He offered the following as steps in fulfilling such responsibilities: (a) develop collective practices for determining what cultural knowledge is to be transmitted; (b) assess the extent to which cultural knowledge is being transmitted in schools, churches, early childhood programs, and other settings where organized learning takes place; and (c) create new resources to satisfy any aspects of the cultural knowledge base not addressed by existing facilities. He argued that the meeting of cultural responsibilities by African Americans can be facilitated by understanding the linkages that exist between the process of school and the oppression of people of African descent.

The District of Columbia's History of Separate and/or Unequal Education

The provision of education for Black students and school leadership in the District of Columbia are grounded in racial and political inequities. A paper on the history of school superintendents in the District of Columbia from 1865 to spring 2000 reveals major issues of race (Anderson, 2000). In 1805, when the City of Washington organized its public schools, including establishing a board of trustees for which the first president was President Thomas Jefferson, the public schools were available only for White students, primarily boys (Anderson, 2000). The initial private schools for free colored students were founded by slaves, who had been recently freed, and a private donor (Hine, 1960).

The District of Columbia Education System is unique in that the Congress approves its budget and it once was controlled by the U.S. Congress. The District of Columbia could be identified as a colony as it continues to be denied full representation in the Senate or House of Representatives and Congress has, periodically, intervened in its affairs. In 1900, two separate school divisions were established: one White, one Black. In 1954, *Bolling v. Sharpe*, a companion decision to *Brown v. Board of Education*, created one integrated system. Congress consistently underfunded the District schools, and particularly underfunded programs for Black students. In 1864, Congress ordered DC Schools to set aside the proportion of school funds to match the proportion of Black children in the school population.

DC's school system has a history of not supporting African-centered education. Dr. Andrew E. Jenkins, III served as superintendent in 1988. Dr. Andrew Jenkins believed that he lost his job because of his desire to introduce an Afrocentric curriculum (Anderson, 2000). Dr. Jenkins showed his support for Afrocentric education in one way by creating an assistant superintendent for Afrocentric education. Dr. Jenkins was terminated from his position before he could make the appointment.

Neoliberal Policies

Darder (2016) provided a historical context for neoliberal policy to be in the midst of the antiwar movement and civil rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, as the United States university

was challenged to break with its lily-White, male, and class-privileged tradition. Darder located the seeds of neoliberalism in the long-term authoritarian strategies put in place by conservatives who sought to win an ideological war against liberal intellectuals. Neoliberalism in education has been found to increase measures of accountability through high-stakes standardized testing, a practice with impacts that range from access to federal funding to classroom instruction focused on teaching to the test (Hursh, 2008).

Public education policy on a national level, as represented by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), sought to address continuing savage inequalities (Kozol, 1991) in the U.S. education system. Kozol (2005) argued that NCLB manifested itself as a part of a larger structural framework that fixates on Black bodies as problems. Leonardo (2013) described people of color as objects of the knowledge industry called schooling, as they are either victims of its imposition or targets of its improvement such that school reform's success is dependent on the alleviation of their plight. Leonardo (2013) suggests that NCLB could be No "Colored" Left Behind, as the Black figure arguably became the litmus test for the initiative's ability to decrease the achievement gap. Gillborn (2005) described the formation of the racialized subject and its society through education policy as a violent act. While neoliberal policies provide opportunities for community individuals and organizations to participate in public education, only organizations capable of accumulating large amounts of capital can effectively enter that space (Nygren, 2017).

Charter Schools – a Neoliberal Policy

Charters are a part of neoliberal reform, designed to promote equal opportunity to people of color and to the disadvantaged. Because many people of color are concentrated in disadvantaged urban communities, race is embedded in charter school policies (Duncan, 2014). Through processes of racialization, race manifests in government policies in overt and covert ways (Small, 1994; Winant, 1994; Miles and Small, 1999; Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In the 1990s, individuals, communities, and organizations viewed charters as an opportunity for educational self-determination and community autonomy. Multiple pitfalls and barriers that can complicate the development of charter schools and often influence their success or failure include the lack of start-up funds and building sites, lack of organizational and financial skills needed for the sustained operation of the school, and policy and regulatory issues such as special education requirements, acquisition of Title funds, and the hiring of highly quality teachers (Brett, 1998). As a personal reflection, I viewed charters as an opportunity to fill a need for meaningful educating of disadvantaged Black students and the school community to be self-determined.

Black Women School Founders

Literature on the history and presence of Black women school founders in America is presented to provide a context for my experience as a Black female charter school founder and leader. The African American community established schools for their

children from the beginning of their experiences in America (Anderson, 1988). During the enslavement of Africans in America, great risks were taken by many enslaved to learn to read and write (Douglass and Stepto, 2009). Piert (2013) described how newly emancipated African Americans intensely desired an education that they hoped would pave a path for participation within U.S. society with all the rights and privileges of first-class citizenry. Such desires were not realized, as the capitalist elite of both the North and South offered a dual or separate system of public education, legitimated by law, whereby schools that educated Black children were poorly funded and housed in dilapidated buildings. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declared this dual system separate and unequal. The African American community was hopeful, again, that Black children would receive a quality education and receive the opportunity to fully participate in the American dream. The price of integration for African American communities, however, was the forfeit of many of their own schools, curriculum, teachers, administrators, and culture (Piert, 2013).

Black women school founders in the early twentieth century, such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown, founded schools for Black girls and young women (Bair, 2009). These women, building on the legacy of late 19th-century education advocates such as Fanny Jackson Coppin and Lucy Laney, used education as a tool for racial uplift. These women were on a mission that combined educational, social, and economic goals and shared the belief that Black women had to assume the initiative in educating themselves and their people (McCluskey, 1997). Black feminist scholars, exploring the struggle for consciousness and self-definition experienced by Black women, describe how these women navigated multilayered and interlocking oppressive structures based on gender, class, and race (Higginbotham, 1992; Hill Collins, 1999; Johnson, 2000) and chose courses of action that advanced their aims (McCluskey, 1994).

A historical tradition within the African American experience of educating its own children, along with inequities and underachievement in the public schools, became the impetus for the development of independent Black schools in African American communities in the early 1960s (Piert, 2013). Black parents, frustrated and disillusioned with the public-school system, sought alternative educational options for their children, including African-centered schools (Piert, 2013).

Africanist Womanism

Africanist womanism and Black feminism serve as the lens for my voice to describe my experiences as a Black female charter school leader. Africanist womanism is the identity that I choose over Black feminism as a woman of African descent that exists as part of the African diaspora, vs. just America. I embrace the Africanist womanism framework as it takes into consideration the merging together of experience, awareness, and action (Banks-Wallace, 2000). Sexism and racism, as experienced by Black women in America, will be outlined, starting with the slave experience, then within the feminist and Black liberation movements.

Sexism and the Black Female Slave Experience

Sexism has impacted Black women throughout U.S. history in all aspects of daily living: employment, health, civil rights, law, and education (hooks, 2015). hooks provided a historical context for sexism and the Black female by examining the Black female slave experience, where the overlapping of the race and sex discourse began. She referenced how Black women's bodies were where racism and sexuality converged, and reported that sexism looms as large as racism as an oppressive force in the lives of Black women. She traced sexism back to the European homelands of White colonizers, where sexism was an integral part of the social and political order of White colonizers, and enslaved Black women were gravely impacted. She reported that enslaved Black people accepted patriarchal definitions of male-female sex roles, aligned with their White owners, including the notion that the woman's role entailed remaining in the domestic household, rearing children, and obeying the will of husbands.

While not invalidating feminism as a political ideology, hooks (2015) provided a historical reflection of racism and feminism in the United States as she exposed the racist foundation of every women's movement in the United States. She described the women's rights movement as having mirrored the racial apartheid social structure that characterized 19th- and early 20th-century American life. She outlined how the racism White females felt toward Black women manifested in the women's rights movement, the women's club movement, and in the work arena. Nineteenth-century White woman's rights advocates attempted to make their lot synonymous with that of the Black slave as a means of drawing attention away from the slave toward themselves.

While White women in the women's movement may have needed to make use of the Black experience to emphasize women's oppression, they did not focus on the Black female experience. They chose, instead, to deny the existence of Black women and to exclude them from the women's movement (hooks, 2015). Some Black women, interested in women's liberation, formed separate Black feminist groups (hooks, 2015). Hooks (2015) expressed that, by creating segregated feminist groups, these groups both endorsed and perpetuated the very racism they were supposedly attacking, failed to provide a critical evaluation of the women's movement, and offered to all women a feminist ideology uncorrupted by racism or the opportunistic desires of individual groups. hooks (2015) further reported that, as colonized people have done for centuries, the Black women accepted the terms imposed upon them by the dominant group, White women liberationists, and structured their groups on a racist platform identical to that of the White-dominated groups they were reacting against. White women were actively excluded from Black groups. In fact, the distinguishing characteristic of the Black feminist group was its focus on issues relating specifically to Black women. Black female activists ceased to struggle over women's rights issues and concentrated their energies on resisting racism, when Jim

Crow apartheid threatened to strip Black people of the rights and achievements they had acquired during Reconstruction (hooks, 2015).

Black Feminist Thought

African American women face systemic oppression based upon both race and gender. Generally speaking, Black feminist thought (BFT) is a framework that focuses on the experiences of African American women (Collins, 2008; hooks, 1989). Orbe et al., (2002) wrote, "Black feminist thought constitutes a conceptual approach that reflects the special standpoints that African American women use to negotiate their positioning of self, family, and society" (p. 123). BFT encourages Black women to speak on matters that may be difficult, rare to hear about, and/or controversial (Lorde, 2007; Collins, 2008). McClaurin (2001) concept of Black feminism is defined as an embodied, positioned, ideological standpoint perspective that bears Black women's experiences of simultaneous and multiple oppressions as the epistemological and theoretical basis of a pragmatic activism directed at combating social and personal, individual and structural, and local and global forces that pose harm to Black women's well-being.

BFT highlights the oppression that Black women face at the intersections of race and gender, while creating a space for their voices as Black women (hooks, 1989). Black feminist Kimberle Crenshaw uses the multidimensional experiences of Black women to demonstrate that a single-axis (e.g., race or gender) analysis is ineffective in capturing the experiences of Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw (1989) recommended an intersectional analysis that analyzes experiences at the intersection of multiple categories (e.g., race, class, and gender), because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism when addressing the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. Collins (2008) asserted that intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and oppressions work together in producing injustice. Collins (1986) discussed the "outsider within" (p. 14) as a position from which Black women can speak. Collins (1986) viewed the intersectional identities such as race, gender, and class, to be of benefit, and the Black feminist scholars as one of many distinct groups of marginal intellectuals whose standpoints may enrich contemporary sociological discourse.

By focusing on intersectionality, BFT emphasizes interlocking oppressions (Collins, 1986), which have also been understood as "multiple consciousness" (King, 1990, p. 69). When interviewed about multiple consciousness, Black women offered their insight on what it means to be oppressed at the intersections and how they deal with this oppression (Orbe et al., 2002). Some women described past experiences that "left them wondering if the problems were caused by racism, sexism, both, another issue, or simply a personality conflict" (Orbe et al., 2002, pp. 128–129). This autoethnographic research explored ways in which social and material inequalities shaped my journey at the intersection of my race, gender, and class, as a Black female charter school leader.

Black Feminism and Black Liberation

hooks (2015) discussed how sexism in the 1960s diminished and undermined the power of all Black liberation struggles. Based upon patriarchal values, Black liberation was equated with Black men gaining access to male privilege that would enable them to assert power over Black women. She further discussed how the Black liberation struggles in the 1960s included a sexist emphasis on Black female submission and silence in the name of liberation. She shared how Black females clung to the hope that liberation from racial oppression would be all that was necessary for Blacks to be free.

Africanist Womanism

African womanist thought (AFT) served as a framework or lens for me to use my voice to describe my experiences as a Black female charter school leader. While some African American women choose Black feminist to define themselves, the Black feminist label fails to satisfy other African American women who use the term womanist. The term womanism is viewed to be centrally located in the sociohistorical and linguistic worldview of Black women (Troutman, 2002)—was coined by Alice Walker in 1983 and has been used and refined by other African American women writers such as Ogunyemi (1993). A womanist believes in the goal that all should work for the benefit of the whole community, and all African American females and males should contribute to that effort (Walker, 1983). Womanists, Walker (1983) believes, should share a worldview of social philosophy, which emphasizes the primacy of a supportive social network of women, family, and community. Womanism is more attractive to many African American women to endorse, as it implies the idea of African American unity and African American Nationalism.

Hudson-Weems (1988) argued that Africanist womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent, grounded in African culture, and necessarily focused on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of African women. Hudson-Weems believes that African American women should create their own paradigm and name and define themselves. According to Hudson-Weems, relations between African American women and African American men are different than those between White women and White men. For African American women, the men in their community are not seen as oppressors; rather they are seen as partners in the fight for the great cause of racial equality. Hudson-Weems contended that racism, classism, and economic injustice supersede sexism (Maparyan, 2011). Ogunyemi (1985) renamed her perspective African womanism in 1996, to further show the importance of the concept of both genders working together for a better humanity. Maparyan (2011) explained that a central theme in African womanism justifies Black women as leaders in organizing, mediating, reconciling, and healing a world overrun with conflict, violence, and dehumanization. Womanism concerns global reorganization and healing vs. women's issues, and encompasses all oppressed people, men included, as a human problem. Dove (1998) advanced an imperative of African Womanism struggle as the herstorical (vs. historical) attempt by African women, particularly mothers, to regain, reconstruct, and recreate a cultural integrity that espouses the ancient Maatic

principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, and order.

The womanist concepts of empowerment, independence, interdependence, struggle, and activism have naturally found their way into the field of education. Womanist educators were exhorted to use their sense of collective responsibility to help the masses of African Americans understand and act on their rights as citizens in a democracy (Perkins, 1983; Higginbotham, 1992). African American female educators find themselves fighting for a voice and for those who are underserved (Bloom and Erlandson, 2003; Berry, 2005; Loder, 2005; Karpinski, 2006). For many of these women, being an educator is more than a job; it is a vocation, a calling, and a responsibility (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2004; Loder, 2005). hooks (1994) described the calling for womanist educators to use education as a movement that does away with boundaries and makes education the practice of freedom. Just as the foremothers Bethune, Burroughs, and Brown, contemporary African American women, particularly in the field of education, felt compelled to work for the disenfranchised (Case, 1997; Collins, 2008; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Maparyan, 2011). American female educators incessantly reflect on the suffering people endure, and many prefer to work with the oppressed. They challenge social injustice and extend their united support to oppressed individuals all over the world (DeLaney and Rogers, 2004; Williams, 2005; Comas-Diaz, 2008).

hooks (1994) suggested that the survival and future of the urban community could and can still be found in the schoolhouse. African American female educators face not only the task of providing a solid academic experience, but also the task to prepare students for life beyond the safety of the classroom (Case, 1997; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2005; King and Ferguson, 2011; Patterson et al., 2011). The African American female educator, moreover, produces a pedagogy that blends teaching what is mandatory with nurturing an understanding and pride in African American culture and history (King and Ferguson, 2011; Patterson et al., 2011). Like her foremothers, the African American female educator is committed to providing racial uplifting for the betterment of those disenfranchised (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2005; Patterson et al., 2011).

Black Women and Transformational Leadership

My study explored my experiences and obstacles during my journey aspiring to serve as a transformational leader in a neoliberal era of education. Transformational leadership, originated by James MacGregor Burns in 1978, recognizes the following characteristics: practices are distributed collaboratively among staff members; and relationships are interdependent and involve parents, community members, and professional staff (Lambert et al., 2016).

Darder (2016) spoke of the notion of critical leadership as a pedagogical practice beyond the traditional hierarchical and individualistic banking model of leadership. She described critical leadership as a practice that draws practitioners toward an understanding of leadership as a social phenomenon that must

exist communally and evolves pedagogically, through open structures of participation. She wrote about critical leadership, encouraging the vision to be learning together as a way of life where the world is transformed as community through humanizing inquiry and decision making, where the common good stretches across our differences and our institutional priorities.

Darder (2016) described the purposefulness of critical leadership as reflecting commitment to conditions of labor and life that create opportunities for collective empowerment and self-determination—with a particular focus on those who most experience disempowerment, alienation, or isolation. Wilson (2016) highlighted the benefits of transformational educational leadership that enacts critical care as a viable means of serving students of color impacted by poverty. She questioned the extent to which disadvantaged African Americans are educationally cared for in the United States given the inequities and educational struggles they systemically face. She suggested that the care for marginalized youth in a critical way, as a social complex and politically conscientious process, is a need that not all educators undertake. She, in her profile of a Black female transformational educational leader, advocated for the use of critical care that encompasses empathy, compassion, advocacy, systemic critique, perseverance, and risk-taking to advance student learning and social justice with disadvantaged children and children of color, as well as the infusion of critical care theories into transformational leadership frameworks and practice.

In this neoliberal era, Bogotch (2017) described school leadership as cultural and contextual or local, influenced by global forces. He argued: against neoliberal policies and that education should be constructed locally by community communications and dialogue based on the interest and needs of people; and that the challenge for educational leadership is pedagogical and curricular; that is, to reconstruct a more inclusive notion of the other locally, as a socially just response on behalf of public education. He further affirmed the challenge for educational leadership to shift our intellectual and dispositional activities taking into account the diverse values and needs of ourselves and the other.

Black Woman's Leadership

Hall and Gray (1998) provided a working definition of Black women's vision of leadership and that the leadership of Black women (LBW) is comparable to Black feminism. Hall and Gray further suggested that LBW is about the empowerment of human beings to claim ultimate fulfillment. Within LBW, leadership acts as a process of both individual empowerment and is collective and nonpositional. King (1998) suggested that the vision of Black women's leadership is interwoven with the vision of the members of a Black community, because Black women's leadership aims at affecting change for all people. Collins (2008) viewed Black women's visionary leadership as an Afrocentric feminist sensibility to political activism. Collins (2008) viewed this as an empowering activist mode of leadership that initiates resistance, and believed that Black women's leadership is transformative and makes leaders out of followers. Collins

(2008) posited that Black women's leadership keeps the community and home together as a united group, uses an Afrocentric way of leading, is centered on a humanist vision, influences people through everyday experiences, and works for institutional transformation.

My Identity Journey to African Woman Leadership

I am the granddaughter of deferred dreams, of freedom, fulfilled purpose, and peace. My maternal grandfather, Percy James Taylor, a sharecropper, fled Lineville, Alabama from the Ku Klux Klan, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the early 1920s. He was forced to temporarily abandon his wife and children with her parents and family. He was very musically talented with a personality larger than life itself. My maternal grandmother, Flossie Mae Craig Taylor, also artistically talented, wrote poetry and was a visual and musical artist. Her brother, while in the navy, sent money for her to attend Tuskegee Institute; however, her father did not believe girls should attend school, thus she did not attend. She became, instead, a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and selfless servant for Christ. One of her deferred dreams was to visit the Holy Land, which she achieved using dollars received from a settlement from the steel mill after my grandfather died of prostate cancer. My mother's dreams of the pursuit of higher education were deferred until her children were grown, at which time she completed a master's in social work in her fifties. My father never expressed his dreams, seemingly content with his role as provider, husband, father, and grandfather.

My first models of Black woman leadership were my grandmother, mother, aunts, teachers and other Black women leaders in my community. Growing up, having been raised with a strong sense of community and service, I knew I wanted to be a teacher and have my own daycare center. As a teen, I taught Sunday school and worked with children in summer programs. Upon completion of my undergraduate degree in elementary education, my aunt, a college professor in education, coached me to pursue a master's degree in special education. Since completion of my master's degree in specialized professional education, I have committed most of my professional career to serving disadvantaged and/or special needs populations, as both a teacher and school leader.

Since 1990, I have been committed to African-centered education pedagogy and curriculum for children of African descent. I believe that such pedagogy, curriculum, and practice take into account, and are designed to teach, African children in a manner that takes their history, culture, identity, and politics into account for the ultimate purpose of solving their problems (Asante, 1988; Asante, 1991a; Asante, 1991b; Wilson, 1993; Hopkins, 1997; Hilliard, 1998; Giddings, 2001). I engaged in intensive study and travel, including classes in and conferences on African-centered education. Travel to Egypt with Dr. Asa Hilliard, to study classical African civilization, and the African diaspora (Senegal, Ghana, Brazil, South Africa, and Mexico), blended with prior study, were tools toward my actualization of an African-centered education pedagogy and practice.

While working as a public administrator for a nonprofit human services firm in Washington, DC, I was led to respond to a call for community members to open charter schools in the District of Columbia. In 1999, I wrote the application to open Paut Neteru Community Public Charter School as a family-friendly, African-centered community school. The name Paut Neteru is a pseudonym (and used for confidentiality purposes). In 1999, conditional, then full approval of the charter application was granted. In 2000, the school was opened with 75 students and eventually grew to over 300 students. The school's population was over 95% African American and disadvantaged in each of the 15 years of operations. My dream of creating an institution to serve children stood on the shoulders of countless deferred dreams (never to be realized) of my family and community ancestors. My dream, to start and operate a school, while I believe somewhat realized, continues the seemingly endless thread of dreams and aspirations thwarted by social and political factors, including institutional and systemic racism.

As executive director, I operated the school until 2015 when the DC Charter School Board did not renew the charter. Obstacles and challenges faced over the 17 years of starting, operating, and closing the school were numerous and rooted, I believe, in the racialization of the neoliberal education system in the United States. The vision was to provide a family-friendly culturally competent holistic community school for at-risk African American students. My uphill quest to serve as a charter school leader included obstacles such as: (a) securing and retaining a facility; (b) recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and leaders; (c) inspiring and incentivizing positive parental involvement; and (d) creating a school culture of academic excellence, holistic well-being, and cultural pride for children and adult stakeholders.

These life experiences brought me, as a Black female leader, to the point of my research to conduct an autoethnographic study on the obstacles and experiences sometimes encountered by leaders of color in the field of education.

Autoethnography as Method

Autoethnography is described as a qualitative research method, and rationale for using autoethnography as methodology, for this study, is provided. Autoethnography as a method: promotes investigating personal experience and how the personal interacts with culture; and provides an opportunity to examine the relational dynamics of my experiences in the cultural context of the Black community and neoliberal education. Ellis and Bochner (2000) suggested that autoethnography is a form or representation that allows the researcher to focus “outward on social and cultural aspects of their experiences” (p. 739). As such, self-analysis and self-reflection were used within the context of social and cultural experience. Reed-Danahay (1997) defined autoethnography as a “self-narrative” that can be done by anthropologists, non-anthropologists, and autobiographers who lace their life story within the social context of the research. Foster (2005), in her exploration of issues of race and prejudice in research, argued that new alternative research paradigms help free researchers from the racist, sexist, and class baggage from the traditional positivist approach.

Critical autoethnography, when viewed as a genre of research and writing that takes into account personal experience and becomes a “anthropology, as cultural critique” (Marcus and Fischer, 1986), can contribute to our knowledge of power and social inequality (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Alexander (2013) described critical autoethnography to be like capturing a picture of oneself in a glass borderless frame as one stories the meaningfulness of personal experience in a cultural context. I used the qualitative method of autoethnography to: present a critical narrative of my quest for transformative leadership, within an African-centered construct, as a female educator of color; and utilize such personal experience to contribute to our knowledge of social and material inequalities. Foster (2005) reported that academics rarely connect their theory with their own practice. Use of this research method facilitated the connection of African-centered education pedagogy, African womanism, and transformational leadership pedagogy with my own practice. I embraced the understanding among autoethnographers that the personal is cultural and the cultural personal, because the individual and culture are mutually influential and inextricably linked (Chang, 2007). Cultural frameworks, through which education is imparted to students, in this study is further at the center of the examination of how African-centered education and practice can better serve Black students vs. an Eurocentric approach to education.

Findings – Social and Material Inequalities

An analysis of the shared experiences from the three epochs of my study are presented below, via overarching categories and comprehensive classes (Merriam, 2009), revealed from a thematic analysis of narrative and documents (with over twenty themes that were coded for pattern categories). The key overarching categories and comprehensive classes include: (a) Black Female Leader/Multiple Consciousness – Skills and Expertise; (b) Cultural Context of Black DC Community and Education of Black Children in DC; (c) Understanding My Place; (d) Identity Politics; (e) Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Class and Black Oppression; (f) Racialization of Neoliberal Policies; and (g) Access to Facilities and Equitable Access to Capital for Facilities. The study, again, explored: 1) Ways in which social and material inequalities shaped my journey as a Black female charter school leader; and 2) Lessons learned from the obstacles and experiences encountered during my journey as a Black female school leader.

Black Female Leader/Multiple Consciousness

As a personal reflection, my mother is the first Black woman leader that I encountered. She was a leader in her home, church, and community. She was loved and highly respected in and outside of her community. As one of her three children, I accompanied her to most meetings, that she attended, as she kept her children close to her. I am so grateful that I was able to observe the dynamics of organizations at a young age, while I did

not enjoy it then. My expectation bar is extremely high for my service and how organizations and systems should function, given my mother's exemplary example.

I stand on the backs of mighty African woman education leaders such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, and Marva Collins, committed to using education as a tool of racial and social liberation and empowerment for Black children (Bair, 2009). As a Black woman leader, I faced the challenge to serve my community through the lens of multiple consciousness, considering race, culture, national, economic, and political factors. My leadership style reflected African-centered principles of leadership. I struggled to liberate the hearts and minds of Black children using an African-centered holistic approach. I was committed to leave an imprint on students to become academically competent, culturally knowledgeable, and socially attentive to the community.

Within the African diaspora, the African woman serves the role as healer, creates her own paradigm, and defines herself within an African-centered context (Hudson-Weems, 2004). Chapman (2013) described African-centered schools as serving a healing and restorative function for the numerous injuries sustained by the Black body and psyche as a result of centuries of oppression and marginalization. African-centered schools, Chapman (2013) explained, operate as agents of empowerment and identity construction for the Black families and youth they serve. I chose to define myself as an African-centered educator using the paradigm of an African-centered approach to fight for a better humanity for all by serving the under- and un-served students of DC.

In the era of neoliberal education, women of color, grapple daily with dilemmas of leadership and authority. Reflection of my leadership performance and positionality as a Black female leader revealed numerous examples of ways in which racialization and oppression created unwelcomed and unfavorable dilemmas of authority/leadership that compromised my African-centered/humanist beliefs, including: (a) expelling students who violated the code of conduct in reaction to their victimization as racialized and/or oppressed subjects; (b) terminating teachers who failed students/performed inferiorly as a result of their own self-hatred; (c) upholding principal decisions against students that perpetuate racist attitudes toward children of color; and (d) valuing, evaluating, and making decisions about students and teachers based upon neoliberal policies such as high-stakes testing.

I aimed to blend my experiences, awareness, and action to empower Black students to reach their highest good and subsequently serve humanity as functioning adults in society. I experienced enormous challenge, within and outside of my own identity, to serve in such an exemplary fashion. The history of my experiences grounds my social activism as a Black woman leader. These experiences are grounded in strong spiritual and family values and sense of community, African-centered pedagogy and practice, academic scholarship, commitment to service, hope for a better future for our children, and unconditional love for children. Like my mother, I am a nurturer. Throughout this

lived experience as a Black woman leader, I nurtured and inspired deferred dreams, children, parents, professional staff, and an entire professional learning community. My strong ethics positioned me to lead with integrity, providing an exemplary example for others.

Black women, I believe, intuitively know how to meet the needs of the Black community in concert with Black men. Notwithstanding my difference in class with the community that I served, I possess the historical experience of what poverty looks like and the issues that pervade disadvantaged families, thus successfully reached parents and children across class. Even when at odds with parents or when seen as representing the "man," I was perceived as authentically concerned about the wellbeing of children and their families. Parents also respected that fact that my son was educated right alongside their children, even though he could have attended a private school.

My struggles as a Black female leader within an Africanist womanist framework (Hudson-Weems, 1988) were grounded in African culture, as I worked for the benefit of the whole community. I took seriously my responsibility to celebrate Black roots and the ideals of Black life, while giving a balanced presentation of Black womandom, exuding nurturing, compassion, and strength. I view my struggles as part of a broader struggle for human dignity, empowerment, and social justice for the Black community (Collins, 2008).

Cultural Context of Black DC Community and Educating Black Children in DC

Having grown up outside of DC and never worked in the DC educational community, I only learned of the cultural context of the Black community in DC ten years prior to opening the school. As a mother of a Black student attending DCPS and charter schools, I received a glimpse of the disadvantaged state of public education in DC in the early to mid-1990s. Conducting research in 1999, as part of developing the charter application, revealed current demographics about the DC community and the educating of Black children in DC. I understood the gross and systemic poverty levels of the District. I underestimated, however, the lingering effects of the crack drug epidemic on the Black community, as some of my first students were the grandchildren of crack-addicted adults. Other social ills plagued our families. Many of my students' parents that were incarcerated had drug or violent related charges.

I understood DC had not been successful in attaining statehood. I underestimated how the lack of statehood would perpetuate an oppressor/oppressed existence, stall efforts for education reform, and impact me as a leader of a charter school whose funding allocations and the timely issuance of such allocations were under control of the Congress. I learned, as part of this research and literature review, of the full extent to which Black children in DC have received a separate and unequal or no education since its first free colored students attended private schools. DC's 200-year history of public and private schools where local schools organizations and governance were controlled by the Congress and structured around issues of race

included a lack of faith on the part of Congress on Black leadership in DC schools (Anderson, 2000). I underestimated the depth of underachievement of Black students, rooted in two hundred years of racist and/or failed policy (Anderson, 2000).

Understanding My Place

As I review the history of educating Black children in DC or the lack thereof, and the timing and placement of my entrance into the charter school world, my lens was rose-colored. While I dreamt of accomplishing so much more, I believe that our school made a positive and powerful difference in the community. Past students, parents, and staff affirm the school's positive contributions with conviction. A number of former students, including my son, returned to work as summer youth workers, teachers, and teacher assistants. Sankofa is an Akan principle that reflects the importance of learning from the past. I believe that while the result of school closure might have been the same, had I better understood the history of education for Blacks in DC, I might have been more realistic about and less indicting of my efforts to serve the DC community.

Being an educator and Black female school leader is far more than a job or career; it is a calling and responsibility (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2004; Loder, 2005). hooks (1994) described the calling for womanist educators to be to use education as a movement that does away with boundaries and makes education the practice of freedom. I remain committed to my calling to serve my community, using all tools received, from my lived experiences.

Identity Politics

The benefits associated with the school's African-centered identity included: (a) cultural identity for students and staff; (b) students received an accurate history of the world; (c) leaders, teachers, and staff could instill in students racial uplift and pride; (d) the approach inspired creative and critical thinking; (e) African-centered principles, practices, and routines inspired development of self-knowledge and individual gifts for the betterment of community and spirit; and (f) the approach encourages love for all humans, other creatures and honoring of nature and spirit in daily life (Byrd and Jangu, 2009).

The challenges that accompanied adopting an African-centered pedagogy and identity were numerous. DCPS had a superintendent, Dr. Andrew Jenkins, who embraced Afrocentric education to the level of creating an assistant superintendent for an Afrocentric education position. I interviewed for the position. He was fired before he could fill the position. Dr. Jenkins believed he was voted out in 1990 due to his desire to introduce an Afrocentric curriculum. The succeeding superintendents did not share the same enthusiasm for Afrocentric education as Dr. Jenkins. Upon assuming her duties in 1997, Superintendent Ackerman would soon battle the chartering authority executive director against the conversion of one her junior high schools to a charter school.

While we were not discouraged from adopting an Afrocentric approach to educating our students, during the charter application process, the charter community never encouraged

the use of the approach. The chartering authority would, for the school's performance review visits, secure a so-called "Afrocentric expert" to serve on the review panel. Such inclusion is the extent of support for the African-centered approach on the part of the chartering authority. Staff of the chartering authority was reported to have made comments about the school being an undesirable place to work because we were Afrocentric. From time to time, I spoke to other of the few Afrocentric charter leaders about collaborating for professional development and other activities. The grind that accompanied the task of keeping the doors opened challenged my ability to carve time for initiatives not related to student academic performance and high-stakes testing. Both lack of support and insufficient time to collaborate with other Afrocentric leaders are examples of social inequalities that I experienced.

The greatest challenge we faced implementing an Afrocentric approach was the task of recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers who embraced the pedagogy and were willing to infuse the practices in daily instructional and non-instructional activities. The school's first teachers provided rigorous instruction and implemented the African-centered curriculum and approach to education. Most teachers hired after the first four years of operation did not embrace the African-centered approach to education at the level of authenticity desired.

Chapman (2013) research examined issues of Black identity among our school's educators and youth. As part of her study, a minority of the school's teachers and staff deemed the issue of African identity as fundamental to producing educational and long-term success. She found, in her qualitative study of our school, that the majority of the school's teachers reflected one or more of the following sentiments: (a) African-centered education was not a priority for African American children; (b) African-centered education will limit Black children's ability to appreciate difference and excel in diverse environments; (c) our school promotes a false reality for students and does not prepare them to function well in the world; and (d) they questioned the contemporary relevance of African-centered education. Prior to having to place high-stakes testing over all existing aspects of the school's emphasis, time was devoted daily to infuse the African-centered approach into academic and nonacademic activities. Consistent and authentic implementation of African-centered pedagogy and identity were compromised when the NCLB legislation, a neoliberal policy, was enacted, placing a much greater emphasis on student success on high-stakes testing vs. academic achievement and growth in concert with holistic development.

Intersectionality of Race, Gender, Class, and Black Oppression

This comprehensive class reveals, from thematic analysis, examples of systemic social and material inequalities, through the intersectional lens of race, gender, class, and Black oppression. Leonardo (2013) described ways in which schools maintain race at the expense of students with color. Schools are part of how race is maintained through race's educative function. Educators teach young people the naturalized status of race and its foreverness on

a daily basis (Leonardo, 2013). Segregation studies explain that in a racialized social system, most Blacks attend school with other Black children, tracked with respect to one another rather than with Whites (Massey and Denton, 1993). My students, in addition to attending school with all Black students, descended from generations of Black students who received no or inadequate access to high-status knowledge and, for the most part, attended segregated schools (Anderson, 2000). DC's history of racialized, segregated and unequal education for Black students and underfunded facilities, as controlled by Congress, positioned DC Black students to suffer greater as victims of neoliberal education, given no state control of education.

Material inequalities were experienced, as other schools secured significantly greater support. I was never able to attract philanthropists that donated millions of dollars to charter schools in DC. As I encountered experiences that did not positively serve myself or my school community, I wondered if the problems were caused by racism, sexism, both, another issue, or simply a personality conflict (Orbe et al., 2002), as the oppressions interlock to be experienced as a "multiple consciousness" (King, 1990). As a school described as Afrocentric, we were caste as outside of the mainstream and thus not considered by some as candidates for some of the programs, sponsorship, or philanthropy that might have benefitted our students. My pro African-centered approach did not impede my ability to engage professionals from all fields and ideologies in any way.

Most of our parents, after the first few years of the school's operation, did not live an African-centered lifestyle. Some Black parents, unfortunately, projected negative attitudes and behaviors they likely experienced as people of African descent, as Byrd and Jangu (2009) described, onto others, particularly school leadership and security. Unfortunately, racialization can be experienced when members of the oppressed group assume the behaviors of the oppressor. I, along with other leaders and teachers, experienced numerous violent encounters from parents over the years.

Research shows the high correlation between poverty and school performance (Kozol, 1991). Chapman (2013) conducted research at our school and described poverty and lack of resources as vividly real, for many our families. African American women face systemic oppression based upon both race and gender. Our Black mothers faced the daily struggles that accompanied being Black, female, and often singly responsible for providing for their children. Most of my parents were Black mothers and grandmothers. The experiences of these Black women intersected race, gender, and status. I believe that the weight of oppression proved unbearable, even with the hosts of services we provided to thwart these villainous outcomes of oppression.

Underestimating the Racialization of Neoliberal Policies

Our school was just opening in 2000, as an outcome of neoliberal policies included increased measures of accountability through high-stakes standardized testing. My experience with this practice at our school aligns with research that describes the impact of

high-stakes testing ranging from access to federal funding to classroom instruction focused on teaching to the test (Hursh, 2008). Schools receiving federal funds under NCLB were required to subject students to high-stakes testing and succeed in closing the achievement gap. As a school leader, I embraced this goal of realizing higher levels of student achievement and growth at our school.

Chapman (2013) observed educators, parents, and students at our school negotiating contestations that produced a tension in the school environment of which all community members were acutely aware. In her research findings on our school, she discussed how the discourse of NCLB and neoliberal education dominated the school environment in such a powerful way that nearly all of the conversations she had with teachers, parents, and staff, invariably came back to the themes of competition and selectivity.

Over the years, I pondered if it was political suicide to continue the aim to serve those with the greatest need in the neoliberal era of increased accountability as measured by high-stakes testing. While I may have privately shared the desire for a student body more balanced in terms of academic performance and growth, and thus enjoy an easier road to high levels of school performance, I knew that I could not and would not abandon those students who other schools screened out of their enrollment process. We were spiritually and culturally called to serve these children, as Black educators focused on and committed to the critical care and effective schooling and educating of Black children. It would have helped to have received additional resources and support for special needs and low achieving students from the chartering authority and the state.

Both ongoing school violence and the lack of qualified teachers at our school impacted our capacity to ensure positive achievement and growth for students. Our children were impacted from violence in their homes and community, while such violence easily carried over into the school environments, including while on field trips and being transported to and from school. As a leader, I insisted that we always had a full-time school psychologist, unlike most small charter schools in DC, and quality business and community partnerships to provide clinical support to students and their families. Even with constant investment in positive behavior intervention supports, violence in the school seemed perpetual and rooted in a systemic history.

In the early years, our African-centered family-friendly school succeeded in attracting high-quality teachers committed to uplifting Black students. With the facility shifts, increased enrollment, leadership changes, and high-stakes testing, our school climate shifted. Our second location, Hamer (a pseudonym), was far less intimate and challenged our capacity to recreate our "village" and safe space for students. Teachers, at our second location, faced poor facility conditions and reduced support from parents, in addition to year-round high-stakes testing preparation.

As the chartering authority responded to NCLB and its need to better measure school performance with assigning tiers to schools, our school rating floated between a Tier 2 and Tier 3, with more Tier 3 ratings (ratings ranged from Tier 1-Tier 3). Our

efforts to recruit quality teachers were impacted adversely by our school rating as a “failing” school, notwithstanding having over 95% disadvantaged students. Few charter schools had comparable poverty levels to our school. Teachers who joined us realized and hopefully appreciated the way in which we valued teachers and provided competitive salaries and benefits, and ongoing substantive and exemplary professional training and travel.

In line with the mandate to subject students to high-stakes testing, I developed a value-added or high-stakes evaluation system, for teachers and leaders where teachers were held accountable for the performance of their students. In hindsight, this value-added system may have unfairly judged teachers with low performing students who would, even with the highest percentage of growth possible, not test on grade level.

I bought into the system with all my heart, fighting to keep the school open for the children I so loved, and perpetuated the use of Black children as objects. As an educator, I did not believe that high-stakes testing would prove friendly to children of color. High-stakes testing was required as part of accepting federal/title funds. I needed these funds to serve the children and, at the time, charter renewal was determined mostly by student performance on state tests. I believed teachers would welcome the increased accountability and feel incentivized to work harder for our students. I did not know another way to motivate and inspire teachers to help the school jump the complex and ever moving targets of a neoliberal education system.

The requirement of charter schools to secure their own facilities added to the pressure of assuring enrollment targets were met. School enrollment determined the amount of a school’s facility allotment. Our need to secure facility financing required the school to abandon its initial vision of serving 150 students and secure approval to grow to 540.

Access to Facilities and Equitable Access to Capital for Facilities

In 2000, there were far fewer facilities available for schools to occupy than the demand. Concurrently, a heated battle between the superintendent of DCPS and the executive director of the chartering authority resulted in two distinct interpretations of the DC School Reform Act as it pertained to the availability of surplus school buildings for public school use (DCPS and charter). I chose not to make a politically ill-advised decision as the first major decision for the school. As I reflect back at the decision I made in 2000, I really did not have an option but to pass on the offer for DCPS space without committing political suicide with a leader already ensued in heated battle. These circumstances may have made our school collateral damage and subjected to a social and material inequality, as the politics of the circumstances rendered economic implications.

Our founding aim was to operate a school of 150 students, providing intensive family-friendly community-based educational and holistic support to high-poverty, high-need families. The securing of an existing DCPS facility might have provided us the opportunity to: remain a school of 150 students; retain students; stabilize and increase student academic achievement and growth; and secure financing to purchase a

facility. While one might argue that we survived three major facilities hiccups, our aim was to thrive and serve our community in an exemplary manner. These hiccups included: (a) a 30-day notice to relocate a school in 2004; (b) emergency occupancy of a facility with infestations, poor health and safety conditions for students in 2004; and (c) a 6-month delay in occupying our newly purchased facility in 2007.

Our facility woes seriously impacted our ongoing plight to provide services and dominated considerable amounts of my attention that could have been devoted to effective school leadership, effective teacher and leader development, sustaining a professional learning community, sustaining business/community partnerships, world travel for students, and other initiatives integral to the school’s mission and vision. As my inability to remain focused on key schoolwide goals persisted, overall academic school performance fluctuated and/or faltered.

The Price of a Dream

Pursuit of a dream to serve Black children and families in a quality and meaningful manner did not come without a price. My love and devotion for the children and commitment to excellence were often recognized by stakeholders, while my posture and actions were often unpopular. With the responsibility of keeping the doors of the school open, I did not have the luxury to forge high-quality relationships with staff, students, and parents. Little time remained to forge relationships, with constant pressure to navigate business-altering scenarios like: securing accreditation; relocating the school; overseeing the buildout of a new facility; and ensuring compliance with state and chartering authority mandates (such as changing standards, state assessments, and numerous audits and reviews). Such a posture compromised my aspirations for transformational leadership utilizing a constructivist approach.

I believed that I had to always put the children first. Fighting for the liberation of the minds and hearts of the children was my activism for social justice. My lens was rose-colored in the early years, in that I did not expect the mission to increase in difficulty with each year. By the time we purchased our own facility, and no longer had to fret eviction, the years of vicious cycles of ensuring fiscal viability, primarily through student enrollment and effective instruction and instructional leadership within a school community of enormous need, had taken its toll.

CONCLUSION

I dissected, analyzed, and shared the social and political inequalities that shaped my journey as a Black female charter school leader. The autoethnographic method allowed me to mesh my personal with the cultural aspects of my experience, to shed light to the issues that face Black children, Black educators, and the Black community. As part of my life’s experience, I learned that the actualization of collective dreams is an incremental and ongoing process.

Asante (1990) maintained that children who are centered in their own cultural information are better students, more

disciplined, and have more motivation for school work. I believe that this premise still holds true for children from all cultures. Future research could explore how to enhance the fight against neoliberalism and develop successful policies and practices that ensure non-European children are educated, not just schooled, in a manner that places them at the center of their learning, builds agency, and develops them into creative and critical thinkers and future builders. Enhancing the fight against neoliberalism must include strategies that facilitate access to private and/or public funding for non-Eurocentric centered education that does not ascribe to the capitalistic tenets of neoliberalism.

Shujaa (1994) reminded us that the fight to educate African Americans and achieve full educational and political equality has persisted since at least the age of integration and is a battle for an equal and level playing field in all areas of human endeavor. Given the manner in which racialized educational practices are interwoven in educational pedagogy, instructional approaches, and practices, it is critical for leaders aspiring to offer students a non-Eurocentric practice, to consider the following lessons that one can learn from the obstacles and experiences that I encountered during my journey as a Black female charter school leader: (a) ensure a strong system of community and/or private support for your pedagogy and practice; (b) ensure that you have the holistic resiliency and fortitude to withstand fierce opposition from varying stakeholders and those in power; (c) ensure your personal beliefs are aligned with the developed institutional vision and values; (d) forge positive and effective

relationships with those in power and those to be empowered; (e) use a constructivist approach to build and maintain a professional learning community; (f) possess a willingness to assume no ownership to the entity that manifests from your initial vision; (g) possess the ability to love and appreciate Black children or children of color, with high expectations for students based on international standards, not the Euromerican norm (Byrd and Jangu, 2009); and (h) ensure the provision of teacher training that supports teaching in a non-Eurocentric learning environment. In addition to providing tools for social justice leadership and culturally responsive schooling for disadvantaged students of color, this article offers opportunities for Black women leaders, researchers, and reformers, with the positionality, commitment, and passion to devise and implement systemic, equity-oriented educational solutions for Black students.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Crossing the Bridge to Leadership: Exposing Ambition Among Challenges

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Teaching is a profession dominated by women. Principalship, on the other hand, is an arena populated by men. This study, which reports from the Republic of Ireland, reveals the challenges and opportunities encountered by ten women, from a cross-section of school type and contexts, as they pursued a path to principalship. The nature of their personal contexts in addition to career ambitions formed in some cases earlier, in others later, in their teaching lives, acted as informants along their professional trajectories. Leadership is identified as a male prerogative, thereby providing additional hurdles for women as they cross the bridge to an arena that operates cultural climates conducive to male working practices. The women, in this study, articulated how national culture, organizational practices, and personal obligations all acted in tandem to assist or hinder in configuring their labyrinthine career aspirations.

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INTRODUCTION

Postprimary teaching in the Republic of Ireland is a profession dominated by women. Yet despite their numerical advantage, they are proportionally unrepresented at the principalship level. This phenomenon reflects international trends to promote men to the most senior positions within schools despite their lack of proliferation within the teaching ranks (Coleman, 2003; Fuller, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2014). This study, which reports from a life story perspective, seeks to examine the career paths of female teachers who aspire to the position of postprimary principal in the Republic of Ireland. It is concerned with exploring the enabling and constraining influences which inform and direct the route to senior leadership. The aim of the research therefore was to bring a light to shine on how women's experiences are "socially, culturally and politically constructed in specific contexts" (Aspland, 1999, p.110). Thus, an interpretivist framework which sought to explore the central research question "What is the perspective of the aspirant principal cohort on becoming a postprimary principal in the Republic of Ireland?" was employed as the research paradigm. The women in this cohort interpreted the contextual variables informing their career decisions as playing a role in raising their awareness of the experiences they had encountered in the course of their professional and personal lives and the significance of such experiences for their career trajectories.

CULTURAL CONTEXT: LEADERSHIP AND CAREER

The dearth of female school leaders across many countries persists despite their numerical advantage within teaching ranks and their successful leadership of teachers at the middle management level (MacRuairc and Harford, 2011). Teachers' careers are subject to both internal and external forces that act as informing agents in the career decision-making process—accommodating idiosyncratic

circumstances that dictate paths chosen or rejected at different junctures throughout the teacher's professional life. The diverse subjective experiences through which women teachers live act to emphasize different career informing agents at various career junctures which alter as perspectives change to accommodate new realities. Gronn (1999) suggested that those who seek and attain school leadership roles do so as a consequence of their own understanding of what school leadership means—a culturally determined viewpoint—and an appreciation of their own self-efficacy. His genderless hypothesis assumes that males and females experience career similarly, an argument strongly refuted by those scholars who consider that the career paths of men and women tend to be divergent (e.g., Hall, 1996; Coleman, 2005; Coleman, 2011; Eagly and Carli, 2007; McLay, 2008). Coleman (2005) noted the differing influences on male and female principalship aspirants; more females include their families in their decision-making. Women are also more likely to experience a greater variety of middle management positions. Men tend to consider principalship earlier in their careers, consolidating findings that contend that women teachers are less likely to plan their careers (Ibid).

Cultural, structural, institutional, and personal influences all exert pressure to fulfill societal expectations of career and career choice. Ball and Goodson (1985, p.11) noted that “the concept of career must take into account both the objective and subjective aspects of the incumbent's experience. By definition individual careers are socially constructed and individually experienced over time”. Career routes chosen are affected by, among others, cultural attitudes affecting socialization processes which ensure that women remain subjected to male-dominated workplace practices (Norris and Inglehart, 2000). A true understanding of women's career trajectories can only be gleaned if the multitudinous layers of influence are recognized and scrutinized (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). In navigating a pathway through all the extenuating circumstances which inhabit the lives of female teachers' career labyrinths, interpretations remain a constant feature; experiences previously faced can affect how a current situation is perceived or what strategies need to be employed to traverse the current terrain; actions alter as a consequence of previous social engagements and how the individual experienced the encounter; and attitudes too provide useful indicators when attempting to predict outcomes. National culture is a potent force in determining how leadership is understood and who embodies the attributes and talents to execute senior roles within organizations. As Moorosi (2017, p.5) observed “it is perhaps worth acknowledging that the concept of culture in educational leadership has received some attention, albeit not enough”. In examining female career trajectories in educational domains in the Republic of Ireland, Lynch et al. (2012, p.33) concluded that “men have held and continue to hold a disproportionate number of senior posts across all sectors of education”. Following the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the established values and ethos of the Catholic Church were placed at the center of a nascent political system. Historical legacies of the church-state relationship, which acted synonymously in determining how schools were governed,

who was employed therein, and the focus of curriculum content, assured maintenance of the status quo for many years. “The Catholic Church was well satisfied from the early years of Independence that its educational interests were safeguarded by the administrative and curricular structures of the State” (O'Donoghue and Harford, 2011, p.19). Members of the Catholic clergy-priests, brothers, and nuns occupied many positions within primary and secondary schools especially as teachers and principals; lay people in the same roles did not enjoy the same status; the merging of a Catholic identity with a national identity had a deep and lasting impact on Irish society and was especially restrictive of the role and freedom of women. This extension of the Catholic Church's jurisdiction consolidated leadership as a male dominion and further relegated women to more subordinate roles. National culture shapes and sways societal expectations of how men and women execute their roles (Gallos, 1989), placing men in more dominant positions such as leadership while relegating women to more submissive positions, thus depicting organizational practices in need of change. At the national level, modes of practice, within and across organizations, are now concentrated on measurable outcomes, and effective schools are ones which attain high standards in these goals. The bureaucratic demands of such policies, along with many facets of principalship, have operated to exponentially increase the workload of school principals thus deterring many women from applying for the position. Eagly and Carli (2007) argued that the microclimates that exist within organizations formulate cultural and social structures that act, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to impede women's career progress; the long family unfriendly hours do not appeal to many women who take up the mantle of the second shift at home, a place noted by Kellerman and Rhode (2007, p.11) as “being no more an equal opportunity employer than the workplace”. Leadership, in still being seen as a male prerogative (Fitzgerald, 2003; Lumby, 2009), inhibits females at the application stage. It is not that women are seen as being “wrong” for the role, it is just that being a headteacher and a man are synonymous in the eyes of some who make the appointments. Coleman (2005) noted that barriers to principalship accession are prevalent during the selection process; interview panels tend to be male dominated, a consequence of “bringing in attitudes from business and the wider world that impact negatively on women”. National culture, too, acts as a dictate of personal influences which exert pressure to fulfill societal expectations of career and career choice. In observing that the primary observation of a person is in relation to sex, Eagly and Carli (2007, p.85) concluded “classifying a person as male or female evokes mental associations or expectations about masculine and feminine qualities”. The personal element of people's lives plays an unrecognized part in influencing and determining career paths selected or rejected. In particular, the following act as compelling indicators when considering application for postprimary principalship (Lahtinen and Wilson, 1994; Coleman, 1996; Young and McLeod, 2001; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Keohane, 2010; Smith, 2011b).

- Gender socialization—

Understanding how socialization affects young males and females, their perceptions of the world they inhabit and the opportunities available to them are relevant to the understanding of who takes up the mantle of leadership and why. Leadership is a position “invested with power” (Eagly and Carli, 2007, p.146), a location not familiar to too many women. Women consciously or unconsciously adapt to societal expectations of their behavior which advocates an occupational status that complies with society’s norms and values, occupying positions which generally do not rival men for power or position (Keohane, 2011).

- Confidence

“Confidence is very important for successful promotion and lack of confidence has been particularly linked to women” (Coleman, 2002, p. 15). Those who lack self-confidence to make the initial steps in application for principalship are defined by Smith (2011b) as protégées who depend on colleagues to highlight their strengths. They exhibit a reluctance to put themselves forward for promotion unless encouraged to do so by more senior members of staff, on whose advice and support they depend for career guidance. In this way, more senior colleagues can be a determining force for the protégée, informing the decision-making process and the ultimate attainment of occupational advancement. Such colleagues can act as informal mentors and offer solace and counsel when applications for principalship have not been successful, thus supplying the impetus for pursuing the desired career objectives even when success seems elusive (Smith, 2011b). At the same time, Smith (2011b) cautions that “by soliciting direction from senior colleagues the protégée to an extent abdicates responsibility for her career development” (p.20), thus not extending her personal agency to its capacity.

- A paucity of mentors and role models

Currently, the roles of mentors and role models are considered to be of great importance to potential school leaders. On this, Coleman (2002) advocated the importance of mentoring and considered the lack of role models for aspiring headteachers to be a critical issue. The proliferation of men in principalship posts at the postprimary level suggests that women need to draw on other sources of inspiration and motivation to encourage career development. Addressing this, Keohane (2011, p. 9) noted that “men are more likely to be mentored in organizations than women and that if senior women are unwilling to assist their younger female colleagues and the men are not sympathetic, you don’t get mentored”. Coleman (2011, p. 63) sums up the imperativeness of this argument for mentors and role models for women when she notes that “mentoring, coaching and the existence of role models are vital tools for the support and development of women who are attempting to access senior positions”.

- Kinship duties to both immediate and extended families

A significant component of any discussion which explores the career opportunities pursued or side-lined by women is that of domestic responsibility (Coleman, 2002; Lumby, 2016; Smith, 2016). Responsibility to those who fall under the remit of “care-dependent” means that many women approach career progression with conflicting emotions; there is, on the one hand, the elation associated with possible newer demands and challenges, in addition to the affirmation evoked on realizing that one is capable of carrying out the associated duties of the new position. However, the flipside of the coin is a reminder of the logistical challenges many women face on their domestic fronts if they are to aspire to or accept leadership opportunities (Kellerman and Rhode, 2007; Keohane, 2010).

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research study is concerned with Irish female postprimary teachers who aspire to the post of principal. It is part of a larger study of Irish women and principalship, in addition to the aspirant cohort, those who have acceded to the post of principal including those who have no interest in pursuing principalship as a career objective. The research methodology employed endeavored to explore and examine the career informing agents which support or counteract the career paths of female teachers as they pursue a path to principalship. As a starting point, a statistical audit of the ratio of males to females at principalship in the postprimary sector revealed that the main pattern emerging from the analysis is that, in every rubric, the majority of the principals are male (Department of Education and Skills, 2019). Female representation is 42.7%, accounting for 309 out of 723 principalships across the state.

Selection of the Research Methodology

A qualitative approach was selected, using a life story perspective, as it enabled the researcher to more fully interrogate the multifaceted lives of the study cohort. Its aim was to construct a life story angle on the perspectives the women identify. A qualitative research, as Ballantine and Roberts (2014, p. 40) noted, “allows the researcher to respond to new ideas that come up during the research”, while Charon (2004, p.3) concludes that perspective “is an absolute basic part of everyone’s existence and it acts as a filter through which everything around is perceived and interpreted”. It was vital that the research questions were formulated to permit the interviewees to develop their responses in an open-ended manner, providing them with the opportunity to interpret and make sense of the events and interactions which shaped their viewpoints. The conversations, which focused on the perceived obstacles and perceived enablers which shaped the women’s career paths, were guided initially by the following questions:

- a. Their intentions with regard to the principalship and what reasons they gave for holding them
- b. What strategies they used with regard to their intentions
- c. The significance they attached to their intentions

NAME	AGE	No. of YEARS TEACHING	SUBJECT SPECIALISM	POSTS OF RESPONSIBILITY OCCUPIED	POST-GRADUATE QUALIFICATION(S)	SECTOR	URBAN RURAL	MARITAL STATUS	No. of CHILDREN
Orla	35	13	Home Economics Biology	B Post	Higher Diploma in Religious Education, Master's in Educational Leadership	ETB	Rural	Single	N/A
Gabrielle	38	17	Religion History	B Post	Master's in Education	ETB	Rural	Married	1
Fiona	30-40	8	French German	B Post A Post Deputy-Principal	N/A	ETB	Rural	Married	1
Darina	40-50	30	Irish Geography	B Post A Post	Post-Graduate Diploma in School Development Planning	Voluntary Secondary Single Sex	Urban	Married	3
Eithne	40-50	20	Irish	B Post	Higher Diploma in Guidance Counselling, Masters in Counselling and Psychotherapy	Voluntary Secondary Single Sex	Urban	Single	N/A
Ruth	25-35	9	Religion History	B Post	N/A	Community/Comprehensive	Urban	Single	N/A
Laura	40-45	21	English Music	Deputy Principal	Diploma in Psycho Therapy	Voluntary Secondary Single Sex	Urban	Single	N/A
Eileen	40-45	24	Business	B Post A Post Deputy Principal	N/A	Community/Comprehensive	Rural	Married	2
Kate	50-55	29	French English	B Post A Post	Diploma in Guidance Counselling	Voluntary Secondary Single Sex	Urban	Married	1
Leah	34	13	Home Economics	N/A	Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning	Voluntary Secondary Single Sex	Urban	Single	N/A

FIGURE 1 | Aspiring principal cohort. The women in the aspiring cohort had a broad range of teaching experience in an array of subjects but had yet to attain a principalship.

d. Their intended outcomes following pursuance of their strategies and intentions

Participants

The ten interviewees, whose perspectives are articulated in this study (Figure 1), were difficult to secure; the cohort generally felt uneasy about declaring their interest in applying for principalship and emphasized the need for total anonymity. All respondents, except one, were accessed via advertisements placed in relevant teacher media. Some, on completion of the interview, offered to contact friends or colleagues in professional organizations whom they knew were also seeking principal posts. All interviews took place away from the women's place of work in an effort to safeguard the promise of anonymity. The women were drawn from the four provinces of the Republic of Ireland (Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught) and represented all postprimary educational sectors (voluntary secondary, community/comprehensive, and educational and training boards (ETB)). Diversity of school context was also a target to ensure equal representation of all socioeconomic spheres. The respondents desire to become principal was not an initial goal, one that was premeditated and carefully planned, but rather having established themselves in their schools as credible teachers and bedded down as professionals; their attention had turned to using management structures to enhance pupil opportunities. Their motivations for seeking principalship emanated from a range of different perspectives; many of

them expressed the centrality of the well-being of their pupils to their lives and their desire to do their best for them. A frustration with the management structure in their schools was also identified by some in this particular cohort as a motivating factor that convinced them to pursue a senior management track and thus be in a position where they could lead effectively and in the best interests of the pupils in their school. Their average age was 41 tallying with the study by Huberman (1989) which noted that some women carve out a career path during the diversification or reassessment phase. This phase, occurring between ages thirty to forty, is, as noted by Sikes (1985), characterized by elevated levels of ambition and self-confidence; "many teachers are at their peak" (p.48). Fifty percent of the women in this cohort of the study are single and have no children. Five are married, three have just one child, one has two children, and one has three children. Of the ten, four had already applied for principalship unsuccessfully. These women qualified as teachers in the years that witnessed a "particularly rapid period of change and transformation in Irish society" (Flood, 2011, p.44). Those women who were at a later stage in their professional careers were a mixture of single and married; those who were married noted that their children were now of an age that more easily facilitated the advancement of their careers, while those who were single noted that any roles undertaken to date or postgraduate courses followed had been taken to enhance their ability to become more effective teachers and/or mentors to their pupils.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The data were gathered over a period of six months in order to reflect proportionally the cumulative nature of the many tensions shaping the lives of female teachers both in the public and private spheres. The researcher, aware of the many demands that characterize the daily lives of her interviewees, facilitated their schedules—each participant was interviewed in a place of her choosing and at a time convenient for her. All willingly gave of their time in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere as it was important to allow the women scope to express what was important and significant for them. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and then transcribed. Open coding on three separate occasions followed so as to ensure consistent and accurate reflection of the women's voices. The researcher was, at all times, conscious of being true to her participants telling of their life stories and the need for trustworthiness of the data collected. Coding the data assisted in the identification of particular emerging themes and permitted focused attention on the relevant aspects of the study, reading, rereading, and listening many times to the recorded interviews familiarized the researcher with the responses and ultimately shaped the analysis.

IMPEDIMENTS AND FACILITATORS

This section presents the findings from the study, evidencing women who demonstrated “a high level of personal agency...able to exert influence and effect change...and they are not discouraged from continuing to seek promotion after making unsuccessful applications” (Smith, 2011a, p.4). However, a significant feature of teachers' engagement with the study was a concern with privacy. The group members were, by and large, conscious of their self-imposed, although not revealed, disassociation from their colleagues by positioning themselves in what Gronn and Lacey (2004) determined is a “vulnerable space”. Not wanting others to know of their career ambitions was caught up in the idea of failure—should they be unsuccessful in their applications for principal, how then would their colleagues and management perceive them, and how would their career prospects win their schools be altered or reevaluated. The challenges and supports which formed their career decision-making intentions and strategies were identified as perceived obstacles, most notably

- Poor career planning or lack of opportunities for progression
- Poor leadership practices that limit opportunities for colleagues to experience leadership or exercise teacher leadership
- Perspectives that juggling principalship with a family was problematic

And perceived enablers which focused on

- Perspectives on mentors and role models
- Perspectives on supportive partners or families
- Holding posts of responsibility and having further qualifications forming the basis of the data analysis

PERCEIVED OBSTACLES

Poor Career Planning or Lack of Opportunities for Progression

A career pathway is an established, hierarchical sequence of commonly held positions that leads to increased visibility and scope of responsibility (Ortiz, 1982). Men typically follow a career pathway that moves vertically and directly through the various stages of educational management (Shakeshaft 1989).

Sperandio and Polinchock (2016) noted that the nature of career pathways is a factor contributing to women's inequitable representation in educational leadership.

Fiona set out to formulate a career path almost from the very beginning of her teaching career.

“My aim always was to, once I got started, work up towards special duties and I suppose eventually assistant principal was in the back of my head. I never had a time frame on it or anything like that but I knew that I would want to look for opportunities to progress within my career... felt that I would like to work towards deputy principalship and I would have been open with my principal and deputy at the time and talk to them about it”. Fiona was keenly aware of what she termed “the quiet encouragement” of the colleagues she worked with along the way who helped her compensate for what she deemed to be the lack of opportunities for progression.

Her evidence contrasts with that of Darina, Eileen, and Kate whose career paths were of a more labyrinthine nature, putting family responsibilities ahead of any professional aspirations. Darina now feels in a position where she can pursue the post of principal without any inconvenience to her family. Her children are now young adults and a lot more adept at tending to their own needs. Her husband, a deputy principal, a post he applied for at Darina's instigation, has no interest in principalship and is quite happy to support Darina in her ambition.

Women often find themselves clustered into “caring” roles and pastoral roles which can have impact on their perceived suitability for leadership positions (Cubillo and Brown, 2003).

Ruth recalled commencing her career in the area of special educational needs, an area she was quite comfortable in because of her own family background:

How I got involved with special needs was from an early age, from childhood I've always been surrounded by special needs, my own sister has spina bifida...I've been surrounded with family members with Down's syndrome, my own cousins have a very rare genetic disease.

Having been unexpectedly given a special needs class while in college in the United States, Ruth found no difficulty in teaching a special needs group. However, her love of special needs and ability to make a difference as a SEN and resource teacher diminished her standing among the rest of the student population. She reflected,

It's taken a lot of hard work and you know, patience, everything, to establish myself here in the school. Because when I started off here in the school...I was

just here for one month doing teaching practice. And so again you were just coming in, the students would have known straight away that you were a student teacher, so they would have changed their names...then when I started out actually teaching here in the school I worked mainly in the resource department so it's quite hard when you were going into classes maybe to supervise yourself or to discipline on the corridor. I always remember one student passing comment at me one day, he said, but you're not a teacher here in the school you only work in the SEN department.

Fiona and Ruth's testimony consolidates the concepts of benevolence and power and how both are distributed within organizations often impeding career strategies for women. Promotional opportunities, on the other hand, are a feature of the male teacher's professional occupation; when one goal has been attained, the next will be kept firmly in sight. As Sikes (1985, p.48) noted "those, men in particular, who are following the career path, will be working towards major goals, deputy principalship, principalship...the amount of time and energy they devote to their pursuit maybe detrimental to other aspects of their life".

Poor Leadership Practices That Limit Opportunities for Colleagues to Experience Leadership or Exercise Teacher Leadership

As countries work towards the reform of education systems, the focus has increasingly turned towards the multiple forms of leadership activity in schools (MacRuairc and Harford, 2011). A number of women in this cohort commented on what they viewed as poor leadership practices that limited their opportunities to experience leadership or exercise teacher leadership. Ruth, Orla, and Eileen spoke extensively about their experiences of working with principals who did not evidence good practice. Their desire to accede to principalship was born out of desire to make a difference, to make schools as positive working environments for those who came to school every day. On this, Eithne noted,

I'm not so much interested in the role of principal just to be a principal, that doesn't really interest me as much as the type of school it is, the philosophy, the ethos of the school and could I work there, could I fit in there kind of thing. It's really about the children, making a difference to their lives. That's why I want to be involved at this level.

Many of the women in this cohort, however, felt overlooked and marginalized, aware of opportunities where they could demonstrate leadership but felt they were not being recognized by the leadership in their school, which made them less open to contributing to the larger leadership agenda. Ruth recounted "I had suggested a way of improving communications in the school between management and staff was to get a white board and to put it in the staffroom. And I had mentioned it to one or two staff

members, who said it was an excellent idea, you should go and suggest it. So, when I went and suggested it, I was told, oh no, that wouldn't be possible and I said but why not, it's something very simple, it's straightforward, and if it improves communication in the school, then that's money well spent. That September we came back and lo and behold, the white board was there in the staffroom. But the Deputy Principal told everyone it had been her idea. . . there was no mention of me".

Orla too commented on the lack of collegiality and distributed leadership she had encountered and its impact on her feelings about pursuing a leadership route:

I wouldn't like it if I was myself to pull rank on staff members and make them feel "Well I'm deputy principal I can make this decision over you", I don't think that's fair. You are working with adults, they are all very good, most of them, in their jobs. They are leaders in their own classroom and they are trying to get the best out of students' management has to get the best out of their team, I do think management should see their staff as a team.

Observing leadership to be an overly administrative, bureaucratic role and not one which stemmed from a teaching and learning nucleus, some interviewees felt the role would take them away from colleagues and from the heartbeat of the school, towards more administrative and largely bureaucratic exercises.

They also alluded to the isolation they perceived and indicated a lack of alignment with how many of their respective principals played out the office of principal. It was clear from the interviews that these women's perceptions of what constituted leadership and what constituted good leadership practices impacted on their desire to remain invested in pursuing a leadership path.

Perspectives That Juggling Principalship with a Family Was Problematic

Although significant advances have been made in the last decade in the area of legal and policy reform, it is still the expectation that women take responsibility for childrearing (Coleman, 2011; Smith, 2016). As Smith (2016, p.85) noted "powerful social discourses of motherhood continue to find expression in the restrictive parameters within which many women make their life and career decisions". This is not to suggest that women can and do exert agency (Smith, 2011a), but this agency is typically exercised in challenging contexts, working within particular constraints. As previously noted, fifty percent of the cohort of women in this study do not have children and are not in relationships. Those who have children have relied on childminders, crèche, or family support to accommodate their career ambitions. Fiona, her husband, and her daughter currently live with Fiona's parents during the week and return to their own family home at weekends. This arrangement permits both Fiona and her husband to pursue their career paths with equal vigor; Fiona's husband has the same commute time from her parents as

from their family home; Fiona is near to school and her parents mind her young son. She noted that when they are back in their own home at weekends, the household chores and child-minding are equally divided among both partners. Gabrielle has availed of a childminder to look after her children since her first child was born. She has three relatively small children and as her school is over an hour's commute from her home, having someone reliable and consistent has meant that she is able to leave for work in the mornings free from worry about how well her children will be cared for. Comparably, Darina employed a variety of strategies to help cope with the demands of a career and children. She took time off to be with her first child for as she noted,

...my first child was really unwell, very sick, you know in danger of dying initially, so school for me wasn't very important at the end of my first maternity leave. I said I'd sell my house and live in a caravan. Luckily all that cleared, and I went back. And when I had baby minder number one...she was amazing...then I had a temporary person for two years who was also very good. It was a filler-in and then I had a third person, which was the real reason I stayed at work. I had her for the last fifteen years.

Ruth commented on the sacrifices she made in her personal life in order to pursue her career:

Even when I was in a long-term relationship for five and a half years, knowing the person ten years, I was extremely career focused, even when I went out with that person. Much to their annoyance at times, to the point that, they would turn to me and say, well when we get married, I'll stay at home and mind the kids and you can continue to work. And I said no, it's not going to work like that; you're going to work as well. If you're in a relationship, you have to think about it carefully in terms of if you have children and family needs. I think sometimes with males, if they are in relationships with families, I think they can sometimes leave that work to the wife.

One of the most over-riding issues to emerge from this cohort, and indeed the other two cohorts, was the acceptance that principalship was not congruent with family responsibilities and that choosing to pursue a principal path would impact on one's capacity to invest in family life, resulting in compromises and role juggling.

PERCEIVED ENABLERS

Perspectives on Mentors and Role Models, Including the Significance of Family Members Who Had Worked in Teaching

Commenting on the significance of role models to women, Coleman (2011, p.39) notes that "a lack of female role models

is not helpful to women who aspire to leadership". She also advocates the importance of women-only networks that benefit women in providing informal mentoring and coaching, as well as role models for junior women. Sperandio and Polinchock (2016: 187) noted that having role models whom women could emulate "helped the women assume their leadership roles and develop their aspirations to advance in educational administration". The women in this study spoke at length about the role models, both professional and personal, who had inspired them along the way. A number commented on their mothers or grandmothers and this key influence in their professional journey. As Smith (2016) noted, motherhood has been and continues to be identified as a major factor influencing women teachers' and headteachers' life and career choices.

Orla commented,

My mother was big into education. She believed it was the tool. She always encouraged me to, you know, get on well at my books and in college and she still does to this day. She is delighted if something goes well for me and my father likewise. I came from a background where the money was there to send me to college; I was one of the lucky ones.

Ruth identified her desire to become a teacher as having originated from the influence of her grandmother who instilled in her a long-term intent to make a difference to the lives of young people:

My grandmother was a teacher and I guess that shaped my understanding of the role significantly. I went into teaching because I remember my grandmother recalling stories of when she was a teacher and I was really struck by the way in which she made a huge difference to the lives of pupils particularly around their life changes. Over time, I have grown to just love working with students and kind of getting them to reach their goals. I wanted to teach originally, it started off with PE, then eventually I picked religion and history. I wasn't one of these people who went and did an arts degree course, I always knew that teaching was always something that I wanted to do, and I had felt very strongly about this from a young age. In particular I wanted to make a difference to the lives of teenagers, just as my grandmother had.

The enduring significance of role models and in particular, female role models for this cohort of women was indisputable.

Perspectives on Supportive Partners or Families

The ties to family obligations, particularly to childrearing, have been cited extensively as an obstacle to women in the pursuit of leadership positions (Coleman, 2002, Coleman, 2011; Kellerman and Rhode, 2007; Smith, 2007; Keohane, 2010; Lynch et al., 2012). As Coleman (2011, p.4) reminds

us “family responsibilities are thus identified as one of the main reasons for women’s subordinate positions in the labor force. The other remains the continued stereotyping of women as supportive and subordinate rather than being in charge”.

A number of women in this cohort commented on the importance of supportive partners in allowing them the space to engage with their professional objectives. Gabrielle and Fiona’s husbands both supported their career decisions.

He would just be saying “Go for everything”. He just supports me like he just couldn’t believe I wouldn’t get the job! Gabrielle.

Support from family and partners make it all possible. . . twenty four seven they’re there for, childcare or anything else and I think even if it wasn’t a case of having the two and a half year old at home, in whatever way they could support us and encourage any of us to further our careers. They would always support us if we were saying we were going for a certain job or thinking about this or that. They’d very much be involved in what we are all doing Fiona.

Both Fiona and Gabrielle employed modification strategies to accommodate their career developments at different junctures:

My husband would have a very good understanding of what I do, of why I have wanted to push myself on over the last few years and he would, you know, the minute I would talk about the special duties role, “Well you’re going to go for that aren’t you”. He’d be very, very supportive in that sense. To the point where, the last couple of years he’s been talking about maybe going back to do some training. He said, “we’ll get you settled and sorted first and then I’ll take my turn when the time comes and when our little boy’s a little bit older”. Fiona

The personal component of people’s lives plays an unrecognized part in influencing and determining career paths selected or rejected. Those for whom the barriers prove problematic do not simply remain impassive, but rather employ strategies to manage their dilemmas.

Holding Posts of Responsibility and Having Further Qualifications

All respondents had sought and attained official posts of responsibility, i.e., management roles within the school for which they received monetary recompense. These roles were perceived by the respondents as necessary constituents of a CV when applying for the position of principal. This had been performed as a desire to “skill-up” in their chosen specialist area or as a means of making themselves more eligible candidates for principalship. There was no single preferred option. Eithne realized very early in her teaching career that her true vocation lay in the area of guidance and counseling. To that end she pursued a Higher Diploma in Guidance

Counseling and a B.Sc. in Counseling and Psychotherapy. Darina had completed a Diploma in School Development Planning. She had taken on the direction of a very large-scale project in school and felt that “it would give me some guidance”. It was through guiding and directing the project, for which she had volunteered, that Darina realized that the tasks of principalship were within her capabilities. Fiona, who had attained the most senior management position of all the aspirants, did not as yet hold a postgraduate qualification. Her career path to date had not been impeded by the lack of a postgraduate qualification. This begs the question, is it a box ticking exercise and/or a means of deterring potential candidates from principalship application? Gabrielle commented on the financial difficulties she had experienced due in particular to her husband having been made redundant. She pursued a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Management in order to make herself more attractive to the gatekeepers. Orla commented on the “hidden qualifications”, through networking that she saw as advantageous to her pursuit of a principalship. She became heavily involved in the local branch of her trade union. Despite the demands it places on her time, she believed the benefits were significant, not least the insights it provided into the working of other school sectors and the sense of confidence it gave her in her own ability to undertake the role of principal:

I am constantly on the phone dealing with people’s problems. I have a lot of communication with schools and with various people working in schools and with HR in the ETB and with area reps to try and sort out problems from that perspective. I have learned an awful lot by being in the union especially about other sectors. In the ETB, there is a lot of people who are principals and deputy principals that have come from adult ed and further education systems. All of this to me is really important, builds my credibility, and shows I know the landscape.

The women in this cohort emphasized that professional development was a priority for them and that they saw the intrinsic value in holding a postgraduate qualification over and beyond their initial degree. They also identified the significance of such professional development opportunities in affording them a greater understanding of the roles they occupied, especially those who were working as guidance counselors. Equally they recognized the necessity of holding such postgraduate qualifications to enhance their eligibility and currency in their ambition to become principal.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Aspiring to principalship necessitates resocializing oneself into a space few other people in the staff occupy, placing oneself as Gronn and Lacey (2004) note in a “vulnerable space”. They further note that aspirant principals are likely to be

preoccupied with factors to do with ambition, career goals, motivation, what they may want to do and why, and whether or not they believe they “have what it takes” to do what they want to do”. This research evidenced women who demonstrated “a high level of personal agency...able to exert influence and effect change...and they are not discouraged from continuing to seek promotion after making unsuccessful applications” (Smith, 2011a, p.14).

Key results from this research include the challenges these women experienced integrating into their respective schools, dealing with current management structures and juggling both work and domestic responsibilities. Many of them expressed the centrality of the wellbeing of their pupils and their desire to do their best for them. Five of the ten women in this cohort did not have children and those who did had parents and spouses who were willing accomplices to their career aspirations. The support that the women received from their families enabled them to declare their interest in advancing their careers and to strive to attain their goals, many of which included active pursuance of posts of responsibility and/or engagement in enhancing their resumes via further professional qualifications. Evetts (1994) and Gronn (1999) considered the adoption of coping strategies to assist in the navigation of the career labyrinth. While barriers exist to impede the progress of women in the workplace, many of which have their origins in institutional practices and socially defined cultures; how they are negotiated and/or overcome is not solely dependent on their initiators. In keeping with Smith’ (2011b) results, aligned with the aspiring head teachers she identified as “planners”, this cohort exhibited high levels of self-motivation and a strong awareness of their professional identities. Smith (2011b) further observes that “aspiring women principals are, in their own estimation, self-driven and self-motivated...are motivated by a desire to effect change at a whole school level, are willing to continue applying for promotions after unsuccessful job applications...see career as a very important part of their lives and take strategic approach to career progression” (p.12). The women’s voices evidenced a passion for their profession regardless of circumstance—for many, their decision had been a culmination of numerous experiences that had led eventually to a conscious decision to seek a more senior position, building on their roles and opportunities to date within the schools in which they taught. One of the aspirants, who had worked in the private sector prior to commencing teaching, commented on how “natural” it felt to her to seek additional responsibility, as this would have been the climate in the private sector where she had initially cut her teeth. Another aspirant reflected that her relatively targeted approach to becoming principal was based on a “stepping-stone” framework, developed incrementally and underpinned by a commitment to postgraduate qualification and professional development opportunities. All the women sought or were offered experiences that enhanced their desire to occupy the post of principal. Some of the narratives profiled struggle with integrating into their respective schools and others with

current management systems of organization, such as Ruth and Kate whose frustration with senior management practices in their own schools prompted them to plan a career path with principalship as their end goal.

Having children or duties of care to family of origin has been cited by many scholars as a hindrance to full participation in positions of leadership. As Kellerman and Rhode (2007, p.11) insist “women are, and are expected to be, the primary caregivers, especially of the very young and the very old”. Five of the ten women interviewed did not have children; those who did had parents and spouses who were willing accomplices to their career aspirations. The support that the women received from their families enabled them to declare their interest in advancing their careers and to strive to attain their goals, many of which included active pursuance of posts of responsibility and/or engagement in enhancing their resumes via further professional qualifications.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

- Context is crucial to the development of women principals. There is a leadership shortage at the principal level, and to lack the will to support female candidates navigating their career labyrinths is to lack a fundamental sense of pragmatism. Some counties in Ireland have a very uneven ratio of male to female principals. Context in these cases clearly makes a difference—the issue becomes one of what cultural values are being espoused that discourage female teachers from applying for principal positions. Women’s choices take place in a context, not a vacuum. The gendered nature of teaching as a potential extension of the domestic sphere and leadership as a separate locale differentiated by sex, a place where women are numerically disadvantaged, prompted Kate to comment “any male principals I know through any work that I have done have families, like they have a wife and kids, but female principals don’t seem to”.
- Women teachers need mentors and role models. Mentors make a difference to women. Women need support to apply for more senior positions. They need to be intentionally mentored. Mentoring should not be left to chance. While some of the principals in this study who worked in the ETB sector noted the advantage of having access to a variety of principals when they needed advice, others noted their isolation. Principalship can be a lonely position. No other member of staff inhabits that space; therefore, no one truly understands the difficulties and dilemmas of the role within the school. Every school has its own microclimate; so principals, while having similar experiences, work in unique contexts. In the Republic of Ireland, there is currently no mechanism that offers potential candidates for leadership the scope to engage with it prior to applying for a position. This has far-reaching consequences for women teachers; the lack of opportunity to spend time getting to know what principalship is about from within or to engage with programmes with no financial imperative may deter potential candidates from applying. Echoing

Fuller (2017, p. 60) who noted the challenges to women's leadership in England "with respect to policy-making, investment is needed in women's leadership development in some geographical areas more than in others".

- Balanced relationships are critical to the career success of partners. If one partner feels that he or she is taking more responsibility for private sphere activities than the other, discontent both at home and in the workplace will replace harmony and order. Societal understandings of sex roles have not altered enough to permit both men and women equal opportunities both at home and in the workplace. Those who toil in the private sphere—mostly women—are often punished for attempting to inhabit both arenas. Two of the women in the study noted the difficulties job-sharing posed when timetables offered facilitated neither work nor home.
- Acknowledging that gender is a fundamental component of human identity—since it informs actions and social practices and leads to internal self-monitoring—is to understand the origins of bias and the implications of it for women who wish to occupy principal positions especially in male-dominated school settings.
- The Department of Education and Skills (DES) needs to be instrumental in modeling equality of access to senior management positions. While the current Minister for Education, Norma Foley, is a woman, six of her ten most senior advisers are men. Schools, as organizations, act as role models for young men and women. Research on gender equity at all levels within Irish education needs support and assistance from the DES so as to garner a diversity of perspectives and grow a talent pool of school leaders which are representative of both genders in society.

Crossing the bridge to leadership is more problematic for women than for men as the hurdles are more numerous and often present with greater frequency.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the School of Education, University College Dublin. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable data included in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between gender and educational leadership with a specific focus on examining the informing agents which act as determinants of the career paths of female teachers. As this is a relatively under-researched area in the Republic of Ireland and a growing international phenomenon, it is imperative that the career paths of those who aspire to principalship are explored and scrutinized so as to identify the enablers and obstacles that support or hinder their career ambitions. It is only in doing so, in addition to identifying the contextual constructs encountered by the women, that their road map can take on a less labyrinthine configuration and become more conducive to supporting their professional goals.

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A Scarlet A-Line Skirt, Independent and Critical Visual Practice, and the Brit(ish)line: Representing Women's Leadership in Education Through Values-Based Cartooning

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Cartooning and graphic facilitation (the latter of which includes developing visuals in real time with groups) offer increasingly popular yet highly subjective approaches to public engagement, organizational development, communication, research, and research dissemination. Values-based cartooning can provide an ethical framework for those undertaking and commissioning these kinds of practices, and it has been employed by the author as a method for accessing and representing diverse perspectives and experiences for more than two decades. This article is situated within the author's experience as a practitioner undertaking a range of commissions and partnerships relating to education in the United Kingdom. What follows is a critical examination of three contexts where values-based cartooning has been used to represent women's leadership within education: within research into women's experiences of working and studying in a higher education institution, within grassroots movements led by teachers and school leaders, and within broader campaigns that have educational value. This involves negotiation of complex social issues while developing visuals, including how to treat gender, race, and intersectional identities within word/image combinations. Questions are raised about the purposes of visual practice, the roles and responsibilities of practitioners, and the conditions of production, audience, and social media. What are the benefits, limitations, and risks of values-based cartooning in relation to the visual representation of women's leadership in education? What is the value of portraying the kinds of leadership that exist at different levels, including outside of formal, professional roles and beyond classroom practice and systems leadership? And finally, how should visual practitioners respond to conflicting values, risk, failure, and nuance in relation to women's leadership, where there is strong desire and need for positive, strengths-based depictions? The author considers her positionality in relation to the type of work undertaken and asks whether this kind of visual practice may in fact represent a particular form of leadership that warrants further inquiry. This article will be of interest to educators, researchers, facilitators, artists, cartoonists, campaigners, graphic and visual facilitators, practice-based researchers, and those who commission and evaluate visual methods.

Keywords: visual methods, graphic facilitation, cartooning, ethics, leadership, women

PROLOGUE: A SCARLET A-LINE SKIRT

I remember sitting up straight with my back to the conference, facing a large pinboard covered in glaring white paper, my right arm raised as I held a well-worn paint brush soaked in cadmium. I was balanced on the edge of a maroon velvet chair, not at all ladylike with my feet and knees wide apart, comfortable trousers, sensible flat shoes solid on a recently vacuumed carpet. As a graphic recorder, my role was to visually capture key themes from the Learning Together alumni event, an inclusive educational program led by two women, Drs. Amy Ludlow and Ruth Armstrong. This bold collaboration brought together universities and prisons, students inside and outside of the criminal justice system, a network of committed organisations and individuals.

I was listening to the speakers intently. I had drawn Learning Together's logo (a giant fingerprint) and quoted author, actor, and prison activist Bryonn Bain, his caricature with burnt umber skin tone, black t-shirt, and flat cap centered on the page. He held a giant rose by the stem, its thorns challenging the participant's poetic words, which were handwritten around it. Underneath him, I had begun drawing a woman wearing a scarlet A-line skirt. I was just about to blend the red folds of fabric when the terrorist attack took place. I do not want to describe the horror of what happened next, except to say that someone told us to stay in the room, then someone told us to run. I could think only of what might happen to my daughter if something happened to me. This was not my first experience of violence.

I will not name the educational leader I was representing at that moment, because, unlike with Bryonn Bain, I do not have her permission. The act of identifying and making people visible through research and/or visual practice is complex, risky, and ethically loaded.

Over the next twenty-four hours, the picture of what actually happened became both clearer and increasingly blurred, the pixels in my mind contaminated. I learnt that conference participant Usman Khan had attacked people, had killed educators Saskia Jones and Jack Merritt. Mothers, fathers, a girlfriend, siblings, friends, and colleagues had lost people they loved. I was sickened by the media's hunger for sensationalism, astonished by the stories of the men who saved our lives, stressed by conflicting accounts of what happened. I read Islamophobic tweets, opportunistic, knee-jerk political responses, a tabloid newspaper article attacking a leading academic for her work with ex-offenders.

I saw that the enthusiastic tweets I had posted about the event prior to the attack had been published in the Daily Mail, alongside a photograph of Usman Khan surrounded by police (Webber, 2019). I was identified and trolled. My words and my doctorate were ridiculed through the editor's intentional juxtaposition of word and image. I felt isolated, painfully aware of the lack of entitlements and protections afforded to those who work for themselves. I felt single.

Over time, a blanket of bitter smog crept across my brain, the once vibrant images and connections in my head now grayscale, full of noise, dust, and scratches. A once gentle, sensory wave of watercolor now has the look of a virus spreading. A heavy, aching paralysis crept across the hand I draw and write with. My treasured camera, I am told, is lost, my artwork destroyed. I

know that the sharp, chisel-tip pens and corrupted paint pallet recovered from the "scene" can be used to represent grief, violence, and hate, just as graphically as they can capture and spread love, hope, and humanity. I can no longer seem to finish my drawings or mark my students' essays.

INTRODUCTION

I begin this interdisciplinary, practice-based discussion with a personal perspective on an experience I had while undertaking formally commissioned work at an alumni celebration for Learning Together, University of Cambridge, at Fishmongers Hall, London Bridge, on 29 November, 2019 (Armstrong and Ludlow, 2020). Tragically, a terrorist attack at this event resulted in the deaths of two beautiful, young, and talented educators, along with the death of the conference participant who carried out the attack and the injury and suffering of many others.

When the Metropolitan Police eventually return some my belongings, each item is separately bagged and carefully labeled. My dented, disorganized paint pallet had been with me for years, and I use it once again as I listen to other people's stories and perspectives, noticing shared values, common themes, connections, and contrasts across communities, organizations, movements, disciplines, and sectors. I record "Community Conversations: Tackling Youth Violence in Lambeth," a conference lead by Ros Griffiths and Margaret Pierre. We begin with a two-minute silence for all the young people who have been lost through violence, followed by a powerful presentation from Tracey Ford, who founded the JAGS Foundation in response to the murder of her son James at the age of seventeen. Hundreds of young people fill the town hall, engaging in intergenerational conversations calling for action to address the root causes of violence: poverty, discrimination, exclusion, domestic violence, unprocessed trauma, toxic masculinity, a lack of opportunity, a lack of support. The role of teachers, youth workers, and community leaders who understand the realities of these young people's everyday lives is described as "pivotal." As a middle-aged woman, I reflect on the way young people engage, learn, play, create, connect, and collaborate in 2020, and I consider the importance of teaching, learning, and practicing critical-thinking skills in relation to visual communications.

The terrorist attack had a direct impact on my visual practice and ability to write this article. Clouded with PTSD, I struggled to develop my original abstract and tried to bully this piece into an objective shape, but it slipped out of my grasp every time I deleted references to that day. This article, the unfinished artwork from the Learning Together event, and a subsequent article in *The Guardian* (Mendonça, 2019a) are now a part of my portfolio. The experience is included here because it now informs not only what I do as a researcher, cartoonist, and teacher but also influences how I read and reflect on previous work and scholarship. Through the writing of this article I take stock. I am grateful for my life, for the diversity of my family, friends, and colleagues. I consider the roles, responsibilities, and biases of a leader in the fields of graphic facilitation and cartooning. I simultaneously

appreciate the opportunity to write such an article and wince at the foolishness of undertaking another unpaid commitment, as a self-employed single mother during a global pandemic.

Until recently, contemporary scholarship on visual and arts-based methods (Pink, 2013; Kara, 2015; Leavy, 2015; Mannay, 2015; Rose, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2017) has tended not to include detailed discussion of graphic or visual facilitation, graphic recording, or associated practices. These methods have been used within academic research for decades, but are often not adequately acknowledged, contextualized, or even credited; only now are they beginning to be taken more seriously within the academy. Comics scholarship, which can include cartooning in its widest sense, is now thriving across many parts of the world. Through my research I have brought this type of visual practice, which unlike many approaches to illustration involves writing and facilitation skills as much as drawing skills, into the realm of cartooning and comics studies (Mendonça, 2016). My PhD research into values-based cartooning included a case study that involved drawing and writing with and about single pregnant women aged between 16 and 52 years of age (Mendonça, 2019b). It sought to develop a critical visual practice that recognizes and critically examines “the particular and special knowledge of the practitioner” (Gray and Malins, 2004: 22). My interest here relates particularly to the role of the *independent* visual practitioner. In recent years, graphic facilitation and associated visual practices have enjoyed a sharp rise in popularity. Individuals and partnerships bring their own beliefs, knowledge, skills, and “hands” to diverse contexts, including situations where views may be polarized or even extreme. As such, serious consideration of ethical concerns in practices that include cartooning is now vital.

The aim of this article is to consider how values-based cartooning might contribute to, and/or raise questions about, ways of seeing women's leadership in education. What are the insights, challenges, and gaps? And what does it mean to depict the kinds of leadership that exist at different levels, including outside of formal, professional roles and beyond classroom practice, school, and systems leadership? I consider the extent to which seeking to understand and visually represent leadership may also involve *demonstrating* a form of leadership. This kind of leadership—which may be the result of collaboration and which may be present in the work of students, teachers, researchers, community groups, self-advocates, and others as well as that of independent visual practitioners—is less easy to define, yet potentially impactful.

Understanding visual practice as a form of leadership calls into question the way the arts, visual analysis, and practice may be undervalued, oversimplified, or ignored within the discourse around leadership in education. Building on David Sibbet's (2012) work on visual leadership, which offers theory and tools for organizational change, I propose leadership *through* visual practice, where values are actively explored, negotiated, and communicated through facilitation, dialogue, writing, and imagery, and where ethical concerns are reflected within the visual and textual content and tone of artwork as well as the behavior of the practitioner. Here, an individual's contribution across multiple contexts, communities, organizations, movements, disciplines, and sectors is considered as a singular, unique, intertextual body of work, a new narrative reflecting a

process of ongoing learning, offering a privileged strategic overview, representing more than simply an endless series of minor, one-off supporting roles. If we are to consider leadership *through* visual practice, whether that be via values-based cartooning or another creative method, it requires critical attention not only through art education, comics scholarship, books on literature, or visual facilitation but through our exploration of what leadership constitutes, and how it is to be taught, commissioned, evaluated, and developed.

In order to examine the questions above, I begin with a brief overview of my journey to independent and critical visual practice and introduce the concept of values-based cartooning. Following this, I offer examples of three different kinds of spaces where I have employed values-based cartooning to create visual and textual representations of women's leadership in education. For the purposes of analysis, the focus here is on my own practice, which I frame as values-based cartooning, an approach that existed long before I coined the term.

The three examples demonstrate values-based cartooning as a research method for examining the experiences and perspectives of women working and studying in higher education; as a visual approach in support of grassroots movements (mainly within English primary and secondary education); and finally, within campaigns with educational aims that exist outside of the formal education system. Following on from this, I reflect on what it means to practice values-based cartooning at a time when many women's stories continue to lack visibility. It is a moment when Covid-19 is profoundly impacting lives, when the rights of women around the world are being eroded, and when eugenics, extremism, nationalism, sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and ageism find their way into our visual and wider culture in both ever more subtle and more aggressive ways. The title of this article references Afua Hirsch's 2018 book, *Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging*, a text celebrated within many of the networks included in this article. The word “line” of my title refers to a line of reasoning, to our ancestral lineage, but also to the line of the hand as it draws, paints, and writes, whether that line partitions or connects, conceals, censors, simplifies, or uncovers, whether it offends, inspires, or delights, whether it disrupts, decolonizes, or preserves. Firstly, I situate myself as a researcher and independent visual practitioner and seek to clarify the approach taken within this article.

Becoming an Independent and Critical Visual Practitioner

Historian Olivette Otele, born in Cameroon and raised in Paris, has spoken of the knowledge she had as a child being dismissed by a classroom teacher and cites the values and confidence instilled in her by her grandmother as key for maintaining the legitimacy of such knowledge and inspiring further research (Channel 4, 2020). Growing up in a loving, mixed-heritage family (Pakeha and Anglo-Indian) in Otautahi Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand, gave me a unique lens through which to view life; we had whanau “overseas,” we knew about kofta and kulfi long before any South Asian restaurants appeared in town. Like

so many others we were raised by parents who themselves had grown up with contrasting cultural vocabularies and understandings of the world, parents who learnt from each other, and fought to have their relationship accepted. Our family tree produced mysterious, uncomfortable stories of poverty and privilege, spice trades, empires and religious conversion; an earthquake in Quetta, an ambush at Gandamak, a great grandfather who disappeared to Portugal with the family fortune, leaving his wife and children in Karachi.

My way into the arts was initially autodidactic, building skills and confidence as I experimented with visual practice within roles that did not require drawing, namely social care, advocacy, and disability rights. A lack of formal art education was due in part to receiving misjudged, soul-destroying advice from teachers in 1970s/80s Aotearoa New Zealand, which went exactly as the late Sir Ken Robinson (2006) described in his talk “Do schools kill creativity?”: they said, “Don’t do art, it won’t help you to get a good job.” Those of us who do not get what we need from school education often actively seek knowledge and learning opportunities from less formal settings, activities, and relationships, which may be viewed as positive or problematic. The kind of teaching and learning in these spaces involves innovation and improvisation within less restrictive contexts, along with a different approach to risk. As such, I take a broad view of education and of ways of seeing and depicting women’s leadership in education. For me, leaders in education include the writers, the photographers, the comedians, musicians, actors, film makers and cartoonists, the freelancers, the lecturers on zero-hour contracts, the youth workers, nurses, support workers and activists, the interfaith forums, the survivors who campaign to stop violence against women and girls, the bereaved children, mothers, grandmothers, siblings, partners, and friends working with local communities for a better world. I think of those students, artists, and leaders who may have found the formal education system difficult, inflexible, discriminatory, and stifling, yet continue to find ways to learn, inspire, and educate, whether or not they have been employed or funded to do so.

As an adult living in London, I worked on mental health, learning disabilities, and equalities and human rights. It was not until my late thirties, when I had already worked as a visual practitioner for a decade, that I undertook my first degree, a BA (Hons) in Fine Art. This was at a time when graphic facilitation was rarely understood or taught within art schools; the advice given to me by the course leader prior to our degree show was to “keep your cartoons out of it.” It was a theory tutor, Dr. Dan Smith-Byrne, and a short course tutor, Dr. Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, who encouraged me to write about cartooning and the representation of women, despite the dismissal of my visual practice. When I found myself pregnant, self-employed, and single, it was my Masters in Citizenship Studies tutor, Dr. Ursula Murray, who convinced me that I still belonged at Birkbeck, and that research that involved single pregnancy and cartooning could be considered legitimate, interdisciplinary, and of value to the world. In order to earn a living, I soon mastered the art of breastfeeding while drawing against the wall at conferences and meetings. Single mothering has informed my visual practice, research, teaching, and learning ever since, and has helped me to further understand and question the ways in which systemic discrimination and micro-

aggression can exclude and undermine people, their experiences, and knowledge.

Long before Covid-19 lockdowns, single mothers have been required to juggle the presence of children with creative and working practices, with teaching and learning (Ajandi, 2011). Many face financial challenges and, as Ella Davis (2020) points out, discrimination at work and judgment for “not meeting the standards of a family with twice the resources.” Throughout the last ten years, my daughter has (without my permission) drawn onto the walls of tiny rented flats, the inside of a Honda Jazz, my clothes, her skin, onto commissioned artwork, other people’s research at conferences, and university library books. Together we have read children’s books and watched animations (repetitively, relentlessly), at times despairing at stereotypical, predictable representations. We have sought out more interesting work, drawn our own characters, constructed our own stories. My daughter was physically present—active, chatting, writing, drawing, and critiquing my work—during the development of all of the graphics included within this article. Motherhood and childhood were ever-present.

As an independent graphic facilitator and cartoonist, my practice involves research with communities, staff and students, organizational development, training on public engagement, university lecturing, facilitating person-centered planning, and workshops with primary and secondary schools, arguably free of the constraints of the curriculum (Galton, 2010). As such, the examples presented here traverse what may be defined as formal and informal educational settings. Over more than twenty years, I have generated a visual and textual portfolio from more than one thousand commissions and partnerships, connecting across different parts of Britain’s voluntary and public sectors and contributing to the work of European and global organizations. Completed or half-drawn, cropped, annotated, photographed, and amplified, these representations sit alongside each other, and alongside other people’s work, whether that be on social media threads, profiles, and websites, in faded, dog-eared policy documents, within online academic conferences, strategy consultations, or teaching materials, rolled up in the corner of offices, or pinned to the walls of care homes and prison visiting rooms. This article is written through the lens of a visual practitioner, one who has represented multiple examples of human rights abuses and systemic failures. Echoes of ever-present inequalities haunt my work (Mendonça, 2020), just as they haunt our lives; and as Covid-19 has highlighted, the impacts of these inequalities are all too often experienced by our elders and young people, by disabled people of all ages, by women and LGBTQ+ people, and particularly by those from Black, Asian, and other racially minoritized communities (Cooper, 2020).

Throughout this article I have used “artist” and “visual practitioner” interchangeably, but there are some differences. Artists, particularly independent artists, are often associated with initiating creative responses that invite us to question the world as it is, or as we see it. As an artist and researcher, I seek out topics of interest, collaborations, and campaigns that resonate with my values, hopes, and fears for the world. My PhD research, for example, provided creative space in which to develop graphics

and graphic narratives that explored the values around single pregnancy; this work, at times controversial, was unlikely to be commissioned through traditional routes. However, I also accept more straightforward contracts as a visual practitioner, in which I am agreeing to deliver the aims of a research project or organization. In some instances, for better or for worse, the boundary between these two ways of working becomes blurred; values-based cartooning, introduced below, includes all of these approaches.

Values-Based Cartooning

Within arts scholarship women and LGBTQ+ artists have been marginalized, feminist interventions and social and political factors undermined. Griselda Pollock writes that art historical discourse “accords itself the right to choose who and what is to be considered as worthy of being studied, conserved, exhibited. It uses the highly selective criteria of value, imagined as self-evident and neutral, to create for itself an image of creativity and culture as a narcissistic mirror of those who do and preserve this selecting” (Pollock, 2013: xxv). More recently, within her stand-up show *Nanette* (which includes a brief review of the work of Pablo Picasso), the comedian, writer, and actor Hannah Gadsby (2018) makes an impassioned demand for an end to the dominance of white, straight, male perspective and power: “I believe we could paint a better world if we learn how to see it from all perspectives, as many perspectives as we possibly could. Because diversity is strength. Difference is a teacher. Fear difference and you learn nothing.”

Despite being historically, culturally, and theoretically significant, cartoons and comics have until recently had their relevance and value undermined in an art world that positions art practice within a hierarchy (Sabin, 1996; Beaty, 2012). Knowledge of cartooning is necessary in order to contextualize contemporary visual practices and their reception as well as to invite and commission work in an informed way. Cartooning was employed to undermine women's agency and leadership during the fight for suffrage, via portrayals of “hysteria,” “unnatural” behavior, and “bad” motherhood. In Nazi Germany cartoons were used to dehumanize Jews and disabled people. In Britain cartoons justified policies promoting the institutionalization of learning-disabled people, while in the United States they promoted their sterilization. Offensive, sexist, racist, homophobic, ableist, and gender-violent cartoons and comics continue to be published by both alternative and mainstream news outlets. This is not without serious risk, as can be seen with the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons in Denmark in 2005, the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting in Paris in 2015, and more recently with the killing of history teacher Samuel Paty in Paris.

But cartooning also has a history of subverting dominant mainstream narratives, of using caricature, humor, fantasy, and drama to undermine, educate, question, campaign, and provoke, at times providing a direct challenge to stereotypical representations of women's lives and bodies at the hands of women cartoonists. Due to its combination of word and image, cartooning can engage with intersectional identities (including less visible identities); describe structural discrimination, complex

narratives, and processes; and highlight attitudes at an individual, community, and societal level. Research into the female cartoonists of the past has been undertaken by the likes of Robbins and Yronwode (1985), Lisa Tickner (1987), Diane Atkinson (1997), and Macfarlane and Young (2003), among others. The last decade has seen a welcome rise in the publication of research highlighting previously hidden histories relating to girl, women, and LGBTQ+ comics creators, educators, commissioners, and readers (Chaney, 2011; El Refaie, 2012; Gibson, 2015; Aldama, 2020; Streeten, 2020). This includes the pioneering and prolific nineteenth-century cartoonist Marie Duval (Grennan et al., 2018 and 2020). Likewise, a growing body of work is examining race (Howard and Jackson, 2013; Ayaka and Hague, 2014; Diamond, 2018); race, gender, and sexuality (Earle, 2019); and disability and illness (Czerwicz et al., 2015; Foss et al., 2016; Oliver, 2020) within comics.

Graphic (or visual) facilitation, David Sibbet explains, “uses imagery and metaphor as a way to draw out and portray profound group thinking about patterns of organization and group process – helping people literally ‘see what they mean’” (Sibbet, 1997: 3). Graphic facilitation involves visualizing concepts and discussions for groups, often in real time, through combinations of words and images; it is an iterative process requiring dialogue, cartooning, and collaboration (Mendonça, 2021). It is used within teaching and learning, public engagement, organizational development and co-production, as well as in research design, analysis, and dissemination (Mendonça, 2016). It can result in powerful insights, innovation, and “explicit group memory” (Ball, 1998) and raises significant ethical issues (Mendonça, 2019b). While drawing and writing are important here, enabling, structuring, and responding to challenging conversations also requires contextual knowledge and skillful facilitation. Many choose to separate the role of visual facilitator, who facilitates and interacts directly with people while developing visuals, from that of visual recorder, sketch-noter, infodoodler, or scribe, who may listen and record without interaction (Sibbet, 2002; Brown, 2014; Agerbeck et al., 2016). Within longer-term projects that connect and cross-pollinate, and within work that involves representing complex systems, relationships, subjects, and concepts with significant levels of engagement, these distinctions can become less obvious.

Values-based cartooning may include graphic facilitation or recording at an event (virtually or in person), but also involves more traditional ways of working outside of meetings. It is a collaborative, social practice that requires interaction, including with those who have multiple perspectives and lived experience of the topics, systems, communities, and organizations being represented. It involves a process of checking back and developing visuals that aim to stimulate further discussion. Values, both shared and conflicting, influence the visual practitioner's decisions about subject, purpose, role, process, and participation, along with who and what is represented. How, when, where, and indeed whether the work is shared are also taken into consideration. It is a mode of working that requires the

negotiation of ethical concerns and conflicting agendas, and engaging with powerful emotions.

Values-based cartooning is underpinned by six principles: openness and clarity of purpose; self-awareness; listening, observing, and emotional engagement; contextual knowledge; representing diverse experiences; and critical thinking. It requires an engagement with the nuances of power and privilege, along with a commitment to asset-based approaches and strengths-based representations. This means asking questions about whose voices and images are included or excluded; whether, when, and where to represent negative perspectives and experiences; and whether what was observed and heard is in fact “true,” “accurate,” or “good.” Importantly, there is also a question about the practitioner’s (and the commissioner’s) own values and knowledge, and how these influence what is likely to be heard, understood, valued, or ignored. For example, what might it mean for a visual facilitator to record keynote presentations while missing a challenge made by a participant who holds very little power within a particular context? And what is an individual practitioner prepared to “say” in their own hand? What is the significance of choosing to include comments made during the tea break, posted on social media, or hastily added to the “chat” during a Zoom or Teams meeting? Or choosing to omit a perspective considered offensive or inaccurate? Is it acceptable for the visual practitioner to ask questions, invite comments from someone who hasn’t yet contributed, to challenge the process or dominant line of argument? Values-based cartooning can be a powerful and engaging tool for teaching and learning as it requires critical thinking skills, listening and observing, analyzing, selecting, deconstructing, and reconstructing, conceptually as well as visually. The extent to which it may connect with or differ from approaches to values-based education (Hawkes, 2006; Biesta, 2010) and values-based leadership (Busch and Murdoch, 2014) may be worthy of further investigation. Before discussing selected examples of visual practice, a note about the representation of women’s leadership in education.

Representing Women’s Leadership in Education

The lack of representation of women, particularly women of color, in formal leadership roles across education is an ongoing concern (Mirza, 2008; Fuller, 2017; Miller and Callender, 2018; Manfredi et al., 2019). Improving the visibility of women’s leadership, in education and beyond, is one way that visual practitioners can highlight the contributions made by, and the barriers facing, women and seek to counter depictions that exclude, undermine, objectify, and misrepresent. However, being a leader with increased visibility comes at a cost for many women, including the risk of high levels of abuse (Gorrell et al., 2018; Rheault et al., 2019; Spring and Webster, 2019). This can be seen in the experience of the 2019 Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, who spoke out about the increase in and extremity of abuse and threat over recent years (Scott, 2019); MP Diane Abbott, who received “almost half of all the abusive tweets sent to female MPs in the run-up to the general

election,” including hundreds of racist letters a day (Elgot, 2017); and also in the case of Jo Cox, MP for Batley and Spen and a campaigner for education equality and improving support for children with autism, who was killed in 2016 by a White supremacist (Jones, 2019).

Those in the business of developing and commissioning visual approaches may have conflicting views about what kinds of images and stories of women’s leadership are needed right now. Overly negative portrayals can undermine achievement and progression and discourage aspiration and ambition in others. And rarely do images of women’s leadership include the sleep-deprived, menopausal headteacher trying to juggle an unexpected childcare crisis with an unannounced OFSTED inspection. Understandably, there is significant demand for positive representations and quotations that celebrate women overcoming barriers, bravely leaning in or leaning out, speaking out, and achieving success. Social media feeds off photographs of glamorous, youthful, slim, sporty, and exceptionally happy-looking women reaching the summits of mountains, along with beautifully stylized illustrations of contemporary women, occasionally using very old-fashioned looking wheelchairs. These images may be aesthetically pleasing and representative of some marginalized communities and cultures, yet they still require critical attention and raise questions about purpose, message, and audience. In the field of comics scholarship, Martin Barker (1989) has argued that, while drawing conveys identity, when people read a story, they relate to the way a character behaves not simply how they are drawn. This is a useful challenge to those attempting to create and commission visual work that seeks to disrupt dominant narratives, engage with nuance and complexity, address gaps, highlight inequalities, and inspire change. An illustration recently commissioned by the United Kingdom government for a Covid-19 lockdown social media advertisement drew widespread criticism for stereotyping women during the pandemic by depicting women (including at least one drawn with brown skin) cleaning, ironing, home-schooling, and looking after children, while a man sat on the sofa. The illustration also includes a girl holding a broom. It could be argued that the image accurately reflects the situation facing many women who have lost their jobs during the pandemic and/or continue to undertake the majority of work associated with raising children. However, given the lack of any visual or textual critique of the scenes depicted, the illustration simply reinforces a sexist, unimaginative, and unhelpful narrative about gender roles. In response to the image, Mandu Reid, leader of the Women’s Equality Party, said, “The government needs home-schooling on the impossible realities of Covid parenting, otherwise it will be more than their artwork that is stuck in the 1950s” (Topping, 2021).

Illustrations that include anonymous characters with different skin tones, clothing, and hairstyles may go some way to addressing under- and misrepresentation, but how useful are these images if women’s leadership, creativity, views, and agency are absent, and the challenges women continue to face remain hidden? Here I include, for example, the experience of negotiating motherhood, caring responsibilities, and career progression (O’Reilly, 2010; Castaneda and Isgro, 2013; Marsh, 2019);

issues around disclosing disabilities and chronic illnesses (Brown and Leigh, 2020); and the stress and mental-health needs associated with leadership roles, as described by Viv Grant (2015) and Alison Kriel (2018), both of whom promote staff and student well-being within their consultancy work. It is crucial we find ways to fund and develop more nuanced visual and textual strengths-based representations that demonstrate not only women's agency and accomplishments but also the diversity of their opinions, contexts, backgrounds, and experiences, and their perceptions of risk, failure, loss, and learning.

Leaders in education whom I have represented over the years include pioneering teacher and writer Beryl Gilroy (1924–2001), HM Chief Inspector of Education Amanda Spielman, and learning-disabled actor, director, and poet Ellen Goodey. However, the educators currently being discussed in our home include Mrs Rees from Class 10 and three fictional characters: Roshni Singh, the Gobleian librarian and skillful giant-bug fighter in *Hollowpox: The Hunt for Morrigan Crow* (Townsend, 2020); Miss Hardbroom, the fierce deputy head and potions teacher in the recent television adaptation of *The Worst Witch*, played by Raquel Cassidy; and Tala (voiced by Rachel House) in *Moana*, the protagonist's indigenous grandmother who teaches her people's history and transforms into a whaitere (enchanted stingray) upon her death. Such examples of women's leadership may be less well known to adults but of

great significance to children. Jessica Townsend's work, for example, enables conversations with children about contemporary issues such as immigration, racism, discrimination, exclusion, and leadership during a pandemic. Fictional characters and narratives are of particular interest here due to the cultural referencing, intertextuality, anonymizing, and fictionalizing present within values-based cartooning, enabling innovative approaches to participant engagement and visual storytelling within research, education, and campaigning. The following describes three approaches where values-based cartooning has resulted in representations of women's leadership in education.

Values-Based Cartooning as a Research Method

In 2018, alongside Professor Jo Duberley and Equality and Diversity Advisor Sheena Griffiths, I undertook research into the experiences of women working and studying at the University of Birmingham. We began with a conversation about the values and knowledge underpinning the project (see Ledwith and Manfredi, 2000; Manfredi et al., 2019).

Figure 1 was included within festival promotions, posted on social media, and displayed across the university in order to build interest in the project. It was then used to stimulate discussion within nine graphically facilitated sessions.



FIGURE 1 | Careering Through Your Day 2018: Exploring the Experiences of Women in Academia. Pen Mendonça. 2018.

Participants were invited to critique and deconstruct the image, and then to create their own, which in turn informed the research. Here my identity, approach, and independent status influenced the nature and level of participant engagement. One participant, Lorraine Mighty, English for Academic Purposes Program Manager, described how values-based cartooning “created a safe and equitable space where all voices were valued and graphically represented with care” (although all methods have limitations, and some people simply choose not to engage). An Athena SWAN meeting and an International Women's Day event featuring Professor Kalwant Bhopal and Dr. Sarah Aiston were also graphically recorded. The one hundred participants, mostly women, included the university's BAME Women's Network, students, post-docs, professional services staff, lecturers, researchers, professors, and managers.

Experiences were initially framed within conversations about games: snakes and ladders, mazes, and kaleidoscopes. Questions were raised about the ladder as a metaphor for careers; some spoke of the rules changing as your career progressed, of not being able or not being able to afford to play the game, of being dealt the wrong cards, or being on an uneven playing field. Narratives included micro-aggression, pregnancy discrimination, motherhood, delayed motherhood and non-motherhood, the impact of being less mobile or of going part-time on academic career progression, and leadership across multiple institutions and countries. This led to deeper discussion about agency and structures, intersectionality, mentoring, networking, and flexible working.

Jo, Sheena, and I used the graphics to undertake analysis, identifying themes and solutions relating to recruitment, retention, targeted support, resource allocation, and individual behavior. A visual summary and joint presentations then stimulated further conversation at a subsequent event for all participants and interested parties. Graphics were then included and contextualized on the university's website (birmingham.ac.uk) and displayed in large scale at the *Careering Through Your Day* exhibition. This work was then used to build a successful bid for an AdvanceHE grant for the project “Drawing it out: Using values-based cartooning to explore and address racial micro-aggression in HE.”

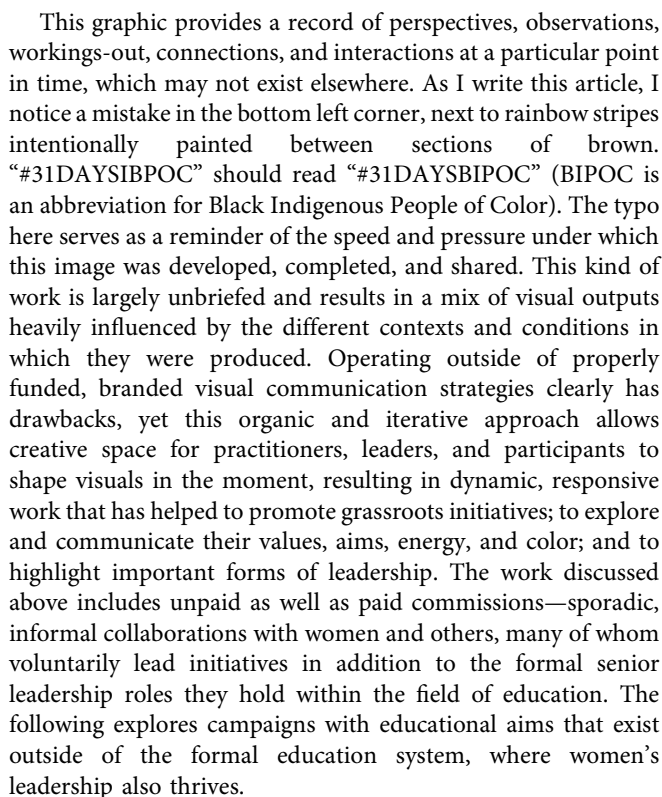
This formally commissioned work with the University of Birmingham recognized values-based cartooning as a research method worthy of investment and critical examination. I, the visual practitioner, was involved from the outset as the project was conceived and as its values, purpose, and design were agreed. I facilitated and recorded each session and exhibited and co-presented the research. The visual process and outputs were interrogated rather than simply accepted; the graphics had value well beyond providing illustration for a conference, an article, a tweet, or a website. To this day they are still displayed on office walls, in classrooms, on websites, as screen savers, and curated within articles like this. In a sense they have taken on a life of their own as they continue to stimulate discussion about gender equality in higher education and to invite critique within new contexts.

VALUES-BASED CARTOONING AND GRASSROOTS EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENTS

Between 2016 and 2018, Dame Alison Peacock and Julie Lilly commissioned me to graphically record a series of regional and national @BeyondLevels #LearningFirst events (Mendonça, 2016). While women leaders such as Professor Sam Twisleton and Mary Myatt were drawn and named, the main focus of my role was to depict concepts and concerns. Arguably Peacock and Lilly's leadership was represented within all of the graphics I developed, even where their names and images were absent; within visual practice a title, hashtag, logo, symbol, color, or image may be all that is needed to link content to a leader, team, organization, or community.

#WomenEd began in England in 2015, connecting, supporting, and empowering women in education. Now led by a team of seven strategic leaders—Jules Daulby, Keziah Featherstone, Liz Free, Lisa Hannay, Natasha Hilton, Parmjeet Plummer, and Vivienne Porritt—#WomenEd has a community of nearly thirty thousand people in twenty-eight networks and across eighteen countries. Since 2016, #WomenEd has informally embraced and formally commissioned graphic recording within its work, including a graphic in 2017 that summarized the eight values underpinning this work, which has since been widely shared on social media, within presentations, and on websites. This includes elements separated out from large-scale graphics. It is worth reiterating here that my work is regularly published in fragmented or unfinished form.

Since #WomenEd began, a number of new, connected movements have emerged, including LGBTed, MaternityCPD, DisabilityEd, DiverseEd, and the BAMEed (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Educators) Network. The latter was founded by Allana Gay, Amjad Ali, and Penny Rabiger and is described as “a movement initiated in response to the continual call for intersectionality and diversity in the education sector” (BAMEed Network, 2020). At an early BAMEed conference in Bolton in 2017, I recorded a keynote by pioneering health expert and educator Professor Dame Elizabeth Anionwu. Following this, my BAMEed graphics increasingly included caricatures of conference participants alongside speakers, acknowledging multiple perspectives and leadership across all levels of the formal education system. Intentionally expanding the focus beyond those who delivered keynote presentations reflects the inclusive nature of the events and invites interaction and collaboration with participants. **Figure 2**, from a 2019 conference, includes three named speakers, three named participants, a well-known academic who was referenced during a presentation (Kimberlé Crenshaw), and two individuals who featured on videos shown at the event. In addition, fifteen fictional characters illustrate and express ideas that were discussed during the event. Participants at BAMEed events in particular tend to take photographs and selfies in front of the graphics, sharing them with friends and colleagues across multiple platforms. All too often participants, speakers, and readers claim, “you never get to see that.”



Griselda Pollock (2013: xxvii) asks, “If a child is taken into a museum to learn about either its heritage or what is deemed the cultural heritage of the country in which the child is living and sees only valued representations of work by straight, white men, and only encounters representations of women and ethnic or sexual others in roles of servitude, domestic, rural or sexual, what sense of its own self does it internalize?” All too often institutions, including governments, schools, colleges, universities, and museums, fail to acknowledge diverse histories, leading us to a narrow, romanticized, and inaccurate reflection of the rich, colorful, complicated, at times punishing world we live in. The damage mis- and underrepresentation causes affects all of us. This was highlighted by pioneering Black British publisher Verna Wilkins at the University of Newcastle conference “Diverse voices? Curating a national history of children’s books,” held in 2017 (Pearson et al., 2019). More recently, Baroness Lola Young (2020) has reminded us that “Bringing into the open those uncomfortable stories that don’t fit neatly into the dominant historical narrative is still a struggle; ‘invisible’ histories are frequently banished to the margins, their heroes and pioneers relegated to footnotes.” Values-based cartooning offers one approach that practitioners, artists, researchers, and commissioners can use to try and address this.

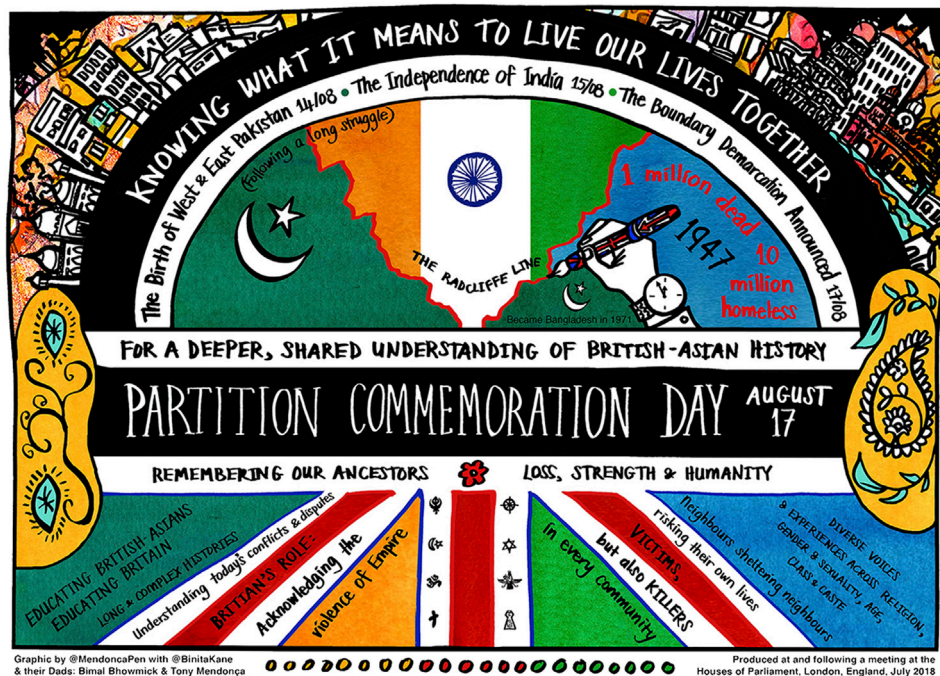


FIGURE 3 | Partition Commemoration Day, 22 August. Developed by Pen Mendonça and Binita Kane, with their dads, Tony Mendonça and Bimal Bhowmick. 2018.

Resistance, campaigns, and activism have always existed, but their history is rarely taught. The extraordinary work that has been undertaken within and outside of the education system to try to address the narrow focus of the curriculum is too extensive and diverse to cover within this piece. Olivette Otele (2020) provides powerful arguments for the teaching of resistance: “Integrating stories [of Black resistance] in primary and secondary curriculums would allow most young Britons and their parents to understand that people of African descent were instrumental in achieving their own liberation. It would also demonstrate how collaborations between these communities and activists from different backgrounds worked, evolved and brought about positive change.” The following campaigns sought to educate as well as influence policy (including educational policy), and to celebrate and highlight the contributions that women and others from racially minoritized groups have made to British society, in spite of racist and patriarchal structures and attitudes.

Activism often requires a quick response as political landscapes change; as language, approaches, and priorities evolve; as partners join or leave. Where those involved are working together informally and under pressure, there is rarely time for meeting face-to-face; for shaping a long-term, well-paced, properly funded visual communication strategy; or for briefing, checking, redrafting, or reflecting on artwork. Some of the work that follows was developed on scraps of recycled paper with children’s art materials while on the phone; it was shared in-between heating up spaghetti hoops, writing a PhD, and making enough money to pay the rent. The next three examples, South Asian Heritage Month UK, Banknotes of

Colour, and 100 Great Black Britons, are connected through shared values and leadership. They exist within a long and dynamic narrative of challenge, which includes the work of organizations such as the Black Cultural Archives, the Runnymede Trust, and the Mary Seacole Trust, but also that of individual teachers, teaching assistants, leaders, networks, independent consultants, and campaigners. Within the work that follows, I am making connections between different contexts and campaigns, noticing opportunities and synergies, as well as gaps, absences, differences in approaches, and priorities. Here, I had a different relationship with my colleagues: I was part of a team of people, contributing what we could within our limited time and with limited resources. Values-based cartooning here was undertaken as an artist seeking to make a personal contribution, rather than as a visual practitioner working to a commission.

The Partition Commemoration Project and Britain’s South Asian Heritage Month (co-founded by Dr. Binita Kane and Jasvir Singh OBE in 2019) consider the 1947 partition of British India and the birth of Pakistan (and later Bangladesh) to be one of the most important historical events of the twentieth century, shaping much of modern-day multicultural Britain (Asian Today, 2019). The graphic in **Figure 3** seeks to acknowledge the extent of the accompanying displacement, violence, loss, and trauma—and Britain’s role within this, including the hastily drawn Radcliffe Line (represented here with a white hand wearing a watch and holding a Union Jack pen). Here, in the words of the graphic itself, we acknowledge the experience of “neighbors sheltering neighbors, risking their own lives. Victims, but also killers, in every community.” This kind of challenging,



FIGURE 4 | South Asian History Month: The Lives of British Children Are All Connected. Words by Sumayyah Muhammed. Pen Mendonça. 2019.

contemporary, interfaith work—which brings together diverse voices, experiences, family histories, and values across religion, gender, sexuality, age, class, and caste boundaries—is crucial in that it celebrates the lives of British Asians while also confronting over-simplistic, inaccurate, politically convenient views of the past and the way these views shape our understanding of the present and our relationships, attitudes, and actions.

At the parliamentary launch of South Asian Heritage Month, speakers from a spectrum of communities made contributions, including educator Dr. Priya Atwal, who raised concerns about young people's knowledge of and interest in studying this history. Student Sumayyah Muhammed, age twelve, reminded us of the leadership that exists in the next generation. Despite the diversity and achievement of the leaders speaking at this event, I chose to only depict Sumayyah. In **Figure 4**, she is surrounded by statements from her extraordinary presentation along with flowers from each of the countries of her mixed heritage and colors borrowed from the visual identity of the campaign, designed by Rooful Ali. She has been playfully dressed like Kamala Khan (a sixteen-year-old, middle-class, Muslim, Pakistani-American comic-book character who is/becomes a superhero called Ms. Marvel) because of her love of the Ms. Marvel comics (created by G Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona). Sumayyah's critique of colonialism and structural racism is arguably more complex than some of Ms. Marvel's early storylines, which may at times have reinforced stereotypes while attempting to subvert them (Berlatsky, 2015).

Sumayyah identifies as a proud, mixed-race British girl of Pakistani, Somali, and Yemeni descent, a fan of comics with a critical eye on the presentation of global and British histories. She does not allow me to fix her within a convenient stereotype of a young British Asian. Yet values-based cartooning, by its nature, often requires slipping into the messy and dangerous world of stereotyping, as the artist attempts to make characters and concepts recognizable, while also seeking to communicate strengths, agency, context, and inequalities. As Pitcher (2014: 41) suggests, "The acceptance of the necessity of stereotyping is a useful way of thinking about the terms of encounter with cultural difference. . . . While the stereotype never really 'belonged' to the other group, the process of engagement can help to make this apparent to us." It could be argued that aspects of the work shared here risk reinforcing negative stereotypes and/or oversimplifying complex identities and ideas about gender, race, and leadership. Celebrated cartoonist Will Eisner (1996: 17), whose approach to the representation of women can be highly problematic, frames the stereotype as "an accursed necessity." Engaging with rather than simply avoiding a stereotype can be useful for cartoonists, who are required to know about stereotypes if they wish to represent or subvert them. In his discussion of the assessment of racial caricature within South African comic and satirical art, Andy Mason (2015: 53) points out that acceptability will depend on intention, context, and the attitudes of readers: "Whether [racial caricature] can function as a locale of positive representation, is a question that evades generalisation, to be reconsidered in each instance it is encountered." Through the

graphic of Sumayyah, values-based cartooning enabled me as an artist to celebrate the glorious complexity of mixed-heritage identities and global family stories, with their inevitable mysteries, shared and conflicting perspectives, heroes and antiheroes. Whether, and how, others will read this graphic, will largely depend on their reading and/or esthetic preferences, along with their own understanding of British, Asian, and world histories.

The second example involves a campaign to address the lack of representation of racially minoritized leaders on British banknotes. In 2018, the Bank of England invited the public to nominate historical figures to be included on the new £50 note. Of the 989 “eligible” nominations, only one percent were from racially minoritized groups (Zaidi, 2019), which raised questions about the nature and accessibility of the nomination process as well as of public understanding of British and world history. By mid-2019, 130,000 people had signed a petition to have Mary Seacole featured on the new £50 banknote, and 15,000 had signed a petition for British Muslim war heroine Noor Inayat Khan, who was posthumously awarded the George Cross in 1949, to be on the banknote.

As the pressure mounted on the Bank of England from multiple lobby groups, Zehra Zaidi (lawyer, activist, and founder of We Too Built Britain) and Dr. Patrick Vernon OBE (social commentator, campaigner, and cultural historian) joined forces to lead the Banknotes of Colour campaign, which aimed to highlight the positive contribution that different racially minoritized individuals have made to Britain. This partnership represented a coming together of British Asian and Black British campaigns from different parts of the political spectrum. Over the course of the campaign, potential candidates were discussed and debated on Twitter, on television, in dining rooms, and in classrooms; 220 leaders and celebrities signed a letter in *The Times*, 100 cross-party politicians wrote to the Governor of the Bank of England, and MP Helen Grant presented a Private Member's Bill in Parliament. My Banknotes of Colour graphics, including one produced for International Women's Day 2019 (Figure 5), were shared on social media, included within blogs, published as part of petitions running in the *Metro*, and appeared in *The Guardian* alongside an article by Afua Hirsch (2019). In June 2019, it was announced that the extraordinary mathematician Alan Turing, prosecuted for his homosexuality in the 1950s, was to feature on the new £50 note. In response to the campaigns above, the Royal Mint released a new 50p coin engraved with “Diversity Built Britain” during Black History Month UK (Gov.uk., 2020). The Art Newspaper recognized the role of both women's leadership and cartooning within the Banknotes of Colour campaign (Harris, 2020a), however, in 2021 there remains no representation of any leading historical figure from a non-White background on British legal tender, and a significant lack of women.

The killing of George Floyd by a White policeman in the United States in May 2020 led to more than 200,000 people protesting across Britain in the name of Black Lives Matter, and to a renewed interest in anti-racist work. The final example included here is the 100 Great Black Britons campaign. In 2002, the British public voted for their top one hundred Great Britons. Out of a total of one hundred nominations only thirteen women were put



FIGURE 5 | Which Amazing Woman Would You Like to See on a British Banknote? Graphic developed for the Banknotes of Colour campaign. Drawn with a child's pencil on the back of a booking form for an after-school club. Pen Mendonça. 2019.

forward, and these included the Queen and the late Queen Mother (Wells, 2002). In response to the predominantly White list, and particularly to the absence of Black women, Drs. Angelina Osborne and Patrick Vernon launched 100 Great Black Britons, with British-Jamaican nurse and businesswoman Mary Seacole (1805–1881) being voted number one in 2004. Seventeen years later, against the backdrop of the rise of far-right ideologies, extremism, the “hostile environment” policy, and Brexit, Osborne and Vernon relaunched the campaign and schools' competition. As part of this I developed and shared dozens of images for the campaign, graphically recorded the selection panel meeting, and eventually

drew each of the one hundred leaders selected into a single image (**Figure 6**), which has been shared widely on social media and reproduced as a poster. The articles, television interviews, school lessons, assemblies, conversations, and imagery generated as part of this campaign prompted celebration and passionate debate, highlighting less well-known names and histories. The book *100 Great Black Britons* (Vernon and Osborne, 2020) was launched during Black History Month. At the time of writing, well over a thousand schools have participated in the schools' competition.

Osborne is an independent researcher and heritage consultant with an interest in enslavement and proslavery discourses, and in the history of community and education activism. She is, of course, a leader in education, as is Yvonne Davis, the retired headteacher leading the campaign to get the *100 Great Black Britons* book and poster (**Figure 6**) into every secondary school in England (Boyce, 2020). I have yet to draw either of these women, yet through values-based cartooning, and writing about practice, I am able to credit and represent their extraordinary leadership.

Campaigns, initiatives, and movements such as these exist outside of the national curriculum, yet inevitably find their way into classrooms, staffrooms, offices, board rooms, and policy discussions. Leading and supporting them involves enormous dedication and unpaid work over years, decades, even lifetimes, often building on and benefiting from what previous generations

have done. Examples of this are evident within intertextual visual practices, for example, my work with the Windrush Generation (Harris, 2020b) and the Majonzi Fund (majonzi-fund.com) sometimes makes visual reference to the pioneering graphic design of the late British Caribbean creative Jon Daniels. Leaders may find support from our institutions and communities, or may be undermined, ignored, and discriminated against by those with privilege and power. They may be forgotten, denied credit for their achievements, exposed to bullying, or subject to abuse from those who oppose their campaigns. At an event for the Leo Academies Trust (online due to the pandemic), I took a long time completing my drawing of the late Jo Cox and her sister Kim Leadbeater, whose inspirational leadership since Jo's death has led to fragmented communities coming together across the country. In their home town of Batley, I captured the diverse voices of young women as they call for all children to be taught about misogyny, and for everyone to stop underestimating girls (see the #RealPeopleHonestTalk event led by Near Neighbors Co-ordinator at Wellsprings Together, Kaneez Khan). Time and time again I listen as talented, deeply committed women leaders warn about the failures of the criminal justice system, the impact of disparity, discrimination, austerity, school exclusions, and social isolation, and I observe the way they



FIGURE 6 | 100 Great Black Britons. Pen Mendonça. Drawn with help from Tony, Gill, and Autumn Mendonça. 2020.

generously offer solutions, innovating both within and outside of formal educational settings. But as I reflect on the representation of women's leadership in education, I am also aware of the need to depict the sexism, racism, ableism, and ageism that continue to stifle and control it. I consider the impact of risk, threat, and abuse on women's agency and leadership. I think about the serious harm and pain patriarchal structures and violence continue to cause women and girls, LGBTQ+ young people and adults, men and boys. As I write this article, an exhibition celebrating 100 Great Black Britons has been vandalized (Thorburn, 2020). Images, including of Mary Seacole, have been sprayed with black paint. Their faces are no longer visible; a kind of visual violence has occurred, a hate crime. The photographs that document this vandalism tell us a different story of Britain, one that those leading these campaigns today and throughout history have been acutely aware of.

REFLECTIONS

Our bodies, lives, and leadership have always been subject to problematic depictions, undermined within objectified and sexualized imagery, or limited to the maternal or socially approved. While we now see more diverse positive representations of gender and race (particularly following the death of George Floyd), many gaps remain. This includes portrayals of the leadership by women impacted by Britain's hostile environment policy (Gentleman, 2019), such as members of the Windrush Generation and their families, refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants, many of whom have not been able to exercise their human rights or access healthcare, information, support, or safe spaces during the pandemic. In England, images and stories of older people as care home residents have dominated the news; all too often we see limiting representations that undermine their experiences as pioneers, leaders, artists, and thinkers who helped to shape the world we live in today. There remains a distinct lack of visual stories about women and non-binary leaders of all backgrounds, who may be aging, unwell, may have visibly disabled bodies, invisible disabilities, learning disabilities, illnesses and health conditions, fat bodies, muscular bodies, mothering bodies, mental-health needs, learning disabilities, or even just "bad hair." These gaps are noticeable within mainstream cartooning and illustration, where child-like, conventionally attractive, and stretch-mark free representations of adult women remain overwhelmingly popular with both publishers and readers. At times the perceived need to promote "progressive" or "appealing" images of women has the unintended consequence of reducing the visibility of the everyday, whether joyful, hopeful, healthy, humorous, mundane, frustrating, isolating, traumatic, or exhausting—the very aspects of women's experience that bring into focus both the true nature of our lives, relationships, and jobs and the structural inequalities that impact on our agency and well-being. However, the field of comics and graphic novels offers alternative stories and approaches, many developed by women and LGBTQ+ creators, some of whom have self-published.

Comics scholarship and interdisciplinary research provide conceptual frameworks for understanding this kind of work.

As we have seen, there is at times a tension between an organization's desire to increase positive representations of marginalized groups and the need to reflect the current situation in order for it to be understood and addressed. Visual practitioners, and those commissioning or collaborating with them, can find themselves caught in this dilemma. Our attempts at increasing visibility may unintentionally serve to reinforce existing structures and behaviors. The current desire for organizations to celebrate and promote diversity (which is regularly assumed to be an inherently positive act) can result in misleading visual representations of participation and leadership. I call this the "diversity gloss," a layer of engaging visual/textual material that enhances image and reputation in relation to diversity, inclusion, and equality, perhaps exaggerating the real picture, masking enduring gaps and problems, and potentially further marginalizing those who experience discrimination, who struggle to be heard, seen, respected, supported, included, employed, or promoted.

There can be a temptation to make statements about the kind of drawing style or approach to representation that apparently works, or doesn't, that is acceptable, recognizable, or not. Such assumptions can lack evidence and reflect our own histories and preferences as readers and audiences. The report *Reflecting Realities* (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), 2020) rejected the style of illustration where characters' faces are featureless in its vital and informative study of ethnic representation within children's books. The suggestion was that "The nature of such an illustration style creates a homogeneity that eliminates the ability to categorise ethnicity. Such a choice undermines the validity of the submitted title in terms of it being recognised as an example of representative and inclusive literature, particularly if such a portrayal is the only indicator of ethnic minority presence in the book" (21). This view relates to the complex nature of evaluating ethnic representation within children's books. The work included in this article is not designed for a children's book; it offers a different kind of narrative and often integrates figures with other imagery and text that adds context, narrative, and voice. However, the CLPE report is of interest here as much of my practice, which includes collaborations with children and educators, contains characters with featureless faces. I note that my own ethnicity, and that of many of my family members, friends, and colleagues, can be difficult to categorize, attracting that curious, unsettling stare, the disbelieving tilt of the head, and direct verbal challenge as people try desperately to marry the identity you claim with the ethnicity they "read" within your face, your skin, your hair, clothing, language or accent, your name, taste, or way of life. Here they draw on their own cultural vocabulary and values, their experiences and understandings of world and family histories.

Developing criteria for the purposes of research is always challenging, requiring a process of selection and rejection, and at times masking important contextual considerations, changing meanings, and trends. Where such criteria are interpreted as recommendations, they may have the unintended consequence of limiting experimentation and creative expression. I would

question the assertion that stories that involve characters with featureless faces as a tool for ethnic representation should not be recognized as a possible example of representative and inclusive literature, particularly as readers draw on their own rich cultural and visual vocabularies, which today are very likely to include cartoons, comics, and animation. Within my work with communities, schools, and clubs, children and young people regularly contribute to visuals by drawing and writing alongside me, often adding characters and narratives from popular animations, symbols and designs from their cultural vocabulary, mimicking and adapting my drawing style in order to add their own meaning, story, and voice to the graphic.

Google “visual or graphic facilitation or recording” and you will find examples of stunning artwork, however, you will also see repetition after repetition of commonly used icons and page layouts, generic cartooning styles, and marks made onto white canvases with the same pens and software programs. While having a number of commonly used visuals is helpful to both visual practitioners and audiences, it is worth questioning the value of replicating standardized imagery and designs across very different contexts and content. Drawing only on existing approaches and recommended icons comes with risk. Much like the process of selecting words for a dictionary, as beautifully described in *The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Williams (2020), such recommendations are subjective rather than neutral or necessarily transferrable. Visual practice must constantly adapt and evolve if it is to be relevant. Leadership *through* visual practice requires looking beyond the recommended icons and approaches; even when such work may appear successful, fashionable, and profitable, it requires adaptation, taking risks, making mistakes, being open to new learning, research, and collaboration—developing and connecting ideas, initiatives, words, and imagery in new ways that reflect our diverse and changing world.

My independent visual practice has been used and celebrated across multiple communities and organizations; however, it has also attracted sharp criticism over the years from some design educators and leaders in the field of illustration. This work, which is about writing and facilitation as much as it is about drawing, is made first and foremost for the leaders, participants, and communities I collaborate with. It is them to whom I am accountable; whether the graphics meet the criteria for an illustration prize or win the praise of design critics is of less importance. The drawing and writing style, tone, content, and symbolism developed over my career represent intentional attempts at realigning the concept of leadership with less masculine, less White, and less corporate-looking imagery, color, language, and line. I connect word, lettering, color, and image, seeking to provide new meaning within a wider portfolio. I replace straight lines with thrilling curves, neat boxes with waves of overlapping—at times contradictory—statements. I enhance white canvases with gorgeous shades of brown, and wallow in the pure joy that comes with scribbling dark letters, allowing grey-blue shadows to merge into flowering vines. These visuals include Persian paisley, Arraiolos rugs, Maasai shuka, Ghanaian Kente, Heer Bharat embroidery, fedora hats, and second-hand Swandri shirts. Inspiration comes from many places—a dress worn by a participant, a story, a call to action, a debate, poem, or song. For

some this mix of styles and ideas is liberating, inclusive, accessible, nuanced, and scholarly, for others my work seems chaotic, confusing, text-heavy, ugly, and distracting—an unnecessary assault on the fundamental, traditionally accepted Western “rules” of graphic design.

Like so many of my colleagues across the globe, I deconstruct and reconstruct, experiment, find my own way to understand, analyze, question, and communicate through visual practice. This is an incredibly exciting field to be part of as visual practitioners and artists work in new contexts and new talents from increasingly diverse backgrounds challenge, deepen, and develop visual practice, drawing on contemporary and traditional influences. Visual practitioners around the globe are speaking about their work, writing critically about practice, teaching and mentoring others, sharing insights (see ifvp.org for example). Many women and LGBTQ+ practitioners have significant experience of working within and alongside marginalized communities (see Bradd, 2019, on cultural safety) and a great deal to offer the world at this moment. Linda Tuhiwai Smith warns of “a dominant perspective that has assumed the right to tell the stories of the colonised and the oppressed [that they have] re-interpreted, re-presented, and re-told through their own lens” (Smith, 2019). Asking questions about who it is that gets to facilitate or record stories, when, and why, is an essential element of a values-based approach. In our enthusiasm to hear and amplify voices and to support change, it is important to consider both leadership *and* allyship through visual practice, and to find out what this means to those we connect with, so we can learn from and contribute to reciprocal relationships. As we have discussed, there are always ethical issues to consider, and as such it is necessary to develop a collaborative, inclusive, respectful approach, where practitioners and commissioners ask questions of themselves, reflect on purpose and impact, the limits of their knowledge, their visual, verbal, and handwritten language. The range of perspectives and experiences within any community or organization may complicate such processes, and can leave practitioners and commissioners with uncomfortable dilemmas. Collaboration and coproduction can help address this, particularly where independent artists and visual practitioners are afforded creative spaces in which they feel they can breathe, stretch, question, and innovate, so that new learning, partnerships, approaches, and opportunities can emerge.

Today, the pandemic is having a dramatic impact on migration and travel, on citizenship, our sense of belonging and identity, and our tendency toward othering, particularly in Covid-19-hit Brexit Britain, but also in less obvious, relatively Covid-safe places like Aotearoa New Zealand, where the “other” includes citizens who have tested positive for Covid-19 as well as citizens returning from countries significantly impacted by the pandemic. The lines I draw are riddled with influences and life experiences, some obvious, some not. These influences mean that there are certain lines that my mind will edit, that my hand simply will not draw or write. No matter how objective we seek to be, all visual practitioners’, artists’, researchers’, and writers’ work is both tainted and enhanced by the roads we have traveled, whether paved in Hokitika gold or obstructed by trolls. We select and highlight based on our values, motivations, experiences, levels of skill, contractual agreements, and need to survive financially, but

selecting one idea or response also involves discarding others. We make mistakes, learn, change our minds, and develop our practice. Our lines may be visionary, promotional, critical, or crooked; they reflect the kind of collaborations we seek and/or are offered, the stories we research, choose, or are prepared to hear, see, read, or engage with emotionally. They expose the lenses we try to focus through and reveal the limits and wealth of our knowledge, relationships, and experiences. Being a researcher, a cartoonist, and a graphic facilitator requires a heightened awareness of one's own subjectivities, whether in relation to accessing and representing stories, facilitating dialogue, negotiating verbal and visual communication, handwriting text, or making seemingly minute creative choices on the spur of the moment. High levels of creative decision-making bring into focus the responsibilities of the role. As historian David Olusoga (2020) has explained, "If your job is to tell stories, especially if your job is to tell other people's stories, then examining your own thinking is absolutely critical." Through values-based cartooning and other visual methods, we can explore these ideas further.

Leaders in education can increase opportunities, support, teaching, and funding for research and storytelling, including for those from under-represented groups. But we must go beyond our current privileging of the written and spoken word.

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- Visuals, whether produced by a leading design agency, a local gang member, or right-wing activist, can be shared locally and globally within seconds; they have the power to inspire, influence, and teach, to oversimplify, increase or undermine the visibility of communities and concepts, to amplify or silence voices, to incite hatred. The sophisticated use of visuals online within fake-news narratives, as part of strategies for grooming and recruiting for extremist groups, for child sexual exploitation and modern-day forms of slavery mean it is no longer adequate to select or evaluate visual practice solely based on how we feel about its esthetic, or whether it was fun to do. It is time to take the practice, commissioning, examining, and teaching of visual practice seriously. It is for each of us to consider the degree to which we want to take on more challenging subjects; however, making space for values-based approaches where individuals and partnerships can attempt to address gaps and misrepresentations is as important as critiquing problematic examples.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Rwandan Women in Higher Education: Progress, Successes, and Challenges

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In nearly three decades since Rwanda's genocide and civil war, its education sector has undergone reconstruction to an unprecedented degree within higher education. While greater numbers of girls are attending university, and more women are becoming university faculty members, their status in educational leadership roles remains unclear. This qualitative investigation sought to present insight into four women who serve as professors and executive leaders within the higher education system by examining their progress, successes, and challenges. Four of the many insights that have emerged include women's smaller acceptance rate into higher education as undergraduates; the country's lack of Ph.D. programs, thereby requiring women to leave the country in order to obtain the terminal degree; disproportionate service expectations placed on women academics as compared to men that affect scholarly output; and society's expectation for women's responsibilities as wives and mothers regardless of career responsibilities or status. To remedy these findings, further investigation can shed light on the reasons for low acceptance of women into the university; may lead to development of a strategic plan to address the lack of opportunities for students to enter graduate level education leading to the Ph.D.; and may address broader national policies that support women academics such as attention to child care and mentoring for promotion.

Keywords: African feminism, educational leadership and administration, gender equity, higher education – women in leadership, Rwanda, social justice and equity, women's rights

INTRODUCTION

Rwanda has the strengthened human capital, robust private sector and accountable institutions required to advance self-reliance.

Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–2025

She is Rwandan by birth. When she was a small child, Anne Clarisse's family lived just across the very porous border between Rwanda and Burundi, and movement back and forth did not even require a formal border crossing. Her father died when she was very young, so her mother had responsibility to raise her siblings and her. She had many brothers and sisters before the genocide—seven—but only two were left after the massacre. On the capriciousness of life and the inevitability of death, Anne Clarisse is sanguine even with tragedies she has endured. She says, "My mother was 82 yr old when she died in 2015. I had been away for 6 yr [pursuing my doctorate]. In my prayers I had always wanted to be close to her and I did not want her to suffer. Thank God, I was able to be with her during her last days. And the day she died, all three of us remaining children were lucky to be with her. You know, in this country, many people lost their

parents, their loved ones, but they didn't have the opportunity to bury them. So, to be with her, we appreciate this."

This is how the story of Rwandan women in leadership begins—with remembrance of those loved and those lost, and of hope in spite of incalculable and unfathomable privations.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

In 1994, Rwandans suffered genocide and civil war that left the nation in shambles. Numerous scholars and historians have documented the circumstances within the country that culminated in the state-orchestrated genocide (Taylor, 1999; Eltringham, 2004; Melvern, 2004; Prunier, 2009). Following the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, in a suspicious 1994 plane crash, Rwanda's interim government directed the Hutu-dominated national army, militia groups, and citizenry to kill Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Melvern, 2004). Over an approximately 100-day period, Rwandans killed up to a million of their fellow citizens, including approximately three-fourths of the Tutsi population (Taylor, 1999). The genocide ended later the same year when the predominantly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front, operating out of Uganda and northern Rwanda, defeated the national army and Hutu militias, and established an RPF-led multi-ethnic government whose goal was to establish national unity (Prunier, 2009).

Since 1994, the government has called for national reconciliation and abolished policies that had previously established and deepened ethnic divides. All references to ethnicity in written and unwritten official discourse, along with ethnic quotas for education, training, and government employment, ended. Today, the Constitution of Rwanda explicitly outlines policies for the eradication of ethnic, regional, and other divisions in society and promotes national unity (Thompson, 2014).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With growing socio-political stability in Rwanda for the past two decades, a body of empirical research has emerged in a variety of disciplines within the social sciences and natural sciences. A comprehensive review of the literature, however, reveals that no studies have been published that address the role of women in educational leadership in Rwanda. Numerous reports from many organizations such as the United Nations (2006), USAID (2020), UNESCO (2007), UNICEF (2008), and the World Bank (2019) discuss either initiatives that were begun in the country or describe recommendations for the future related to security, governance, rule of law, human rights, and economic and social development.

A variety of reports do describe educational reform efforts—some of which include initiatives to train teachers and professors, to rebuild schools, to increase enrollment of children in school, and to identify problems with security in the nation's

schools (Newbury and Baldwin, 2000; Obura, 2003; Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2018, 2019; Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2020). Some reports describe some efforts to train women in leadership skills, such as models of leadership, conflict resolution, and communication (Burnet, 2008).

Even so, little data exists to describe educational leadership in Rwanda, however Ministry of Education policies do describe management roles of headmasters (2018). No published empirical study to date until this one specifically addressed the status of women in educational leadership in either the Kindergarten through 12th grade sector or in higher education. This first study focused on the higher education sector and sought to provide insight into the status of women in educational leadership by examining their progress, successes, and challenges.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this investigation was to begin to remedy the lack of empirical data related to Rwandan women in higher education leadership by providing insight into their status. By interviewing both men who are qualified to provide observations into women's status and women who are higher education leaders, a portrait has begun to emerge from their past and present experiences, as well as from their hopes for the future.

1. Research Question.

This investigation sought to gain insight into the following question: What is the status of women in higher educational leadership in Rwanda—their progress, successes, and challenges?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

This section explicates the theoretical framework that guided the investigation, as well as relevant background literature. I first present thinking about indigenous African feminist theory (IAF) and then examine these two themes in the literature related to African women in educational leadership: gendered leadership in the African context and African women in higher education leadership. As IAF is an entire field of theory with many perspectives and precepts, I present here some fundamentals and encourage more expansive and deeper examination of its application to Rwandan women in the future.

African Women in Community: Indigenous African Feminist Theory

Fundamental to the IAF project is decolonization (Wane, 2011). This perspective permits us to problematize and then address the concerns of whose knowledge is valid and whose voices shall be heard. African women acknowledge that their voices have and continue to be shrouded by thinking that came with their colonization over the centuries, and it therefore is essential to acknowledge when talking about IAF. Underlying this

investigation is IAF theory as articulated by numerous scholars including Badejo, (1998), Elabor-Idemudia (2000), Goduke (2000), Mekgwe (2006), Dillard (2009), Fennell and Arnot (2009), Chilisa (2009, 2011), Chilisa and Ntseane (2010), Collins (2000 and 2009), and Wane (2011). I further apply the concept of indigeneity to IAF theory as elucidated by Bhola (2002), who makes the case for reclaiming culture and traditions that preceded colonial rule. He emphasized the necessity of embracing “African imagination, intellect, and existing material endowments” (Bhola, p. 1).

Overall, the scholars’ work affirms girls’ and women’s “agency and resistance to often contradictory forms of patriarchal oppressions” (Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010, p. 618). The IAF model does not discount the role that motherhood, sisterhood, and friendship play in their understanding of who they are and the nature of their work in the world (Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010). Indeed, the recurring themes of IAF theory include Black women’s gendered oppression, the role of family, their work and profession, and their activism (Wane, 2011).

Unquestionably, IAF theory challenges previous coloniality, interrogating the perspectives that are still woven through the tapestry of African civil society (Mekgwe, 2006). It does not, however focus solely on what the concept is not. For example, unlike Western conceptions of community, IAF theory invites us to be mindful of the interrelatedness of a woman to her community and that in the ideal, women thrive because of the relationship to the community (Badejo, 1998). In her work and that which precedes hers, Badejo recognizes the multiple roles women play in civil society today and found historically in its storytelling traditions and festivals “that place women at the center of the social order as custodians of the earth, fire, and water, and uphold men as the guardians of women’s custodial rights” (Badejo, 1998, p. 94). One of the results of this work should be the transformation of civil society through the explorations of women’s stories. It is their voices that led to the findings and discussion of ways to address the challenges and successes in Rwandan civil society.

Africa, Women, and Educational Leadership

In examining the literature about women in educational leadership, there is a propensity among Western scholars to frame the experiences of women globally through a homogenized lens, privileging those perspectives and theories since the preponderance of literature is Western in its origin and orientation. In an effort to decolonize my theoretical and methodological approaches to my work, I sought literature that was derived from or indigenous to Africa and applies indigenous African feminist perspectives. While literature on gendered leadership in sub-Saharan Africa is growing, it is slower on women in educational leadership, but I provide a review of some literature that may be relevant to African ways of knowing and being in two thematic areas: gendered leadership in the African context and African women in educational leadership.

With growing socio-political stability in Rwanda for the past two decades following the state-orchestrated genocide, a body of empirical research has emerged in numerous disciplines within

the social sciences and natural sciences. The University of Rwanda reports that publication of peer-reviewed papers increased from 308 in 2014 to 2,096 total published in 2020 (University of Rwanda, 2020). While some of the in-country scholarship addresses some topics in the K-12 education system, none addresses higher education or higher education leadership specifically. A comprehensive review of the literature revealed that no studies have been published that address the role and status of women in higher education leadership in Rwanda. In approving this investigation, the Ministry of Education cited it as a landmark study, providing the beginnings of an empirical assessment of women’s roles, which is a principal goal of the government and of the world community: to see expanded inclusion of women in all aspects of Rwandan society (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Gendered Leadership in the African Context

A number of scholars have provided a growing body of theoretical perspectives on and practical considerations for gendered leadership in Africa. Fourie et al. (2017), provide a review of scholarly research on African leadership from 1950 through 2009, summarizing 60 yr of investigations. Their subsection on leadership and gender provides a broad review of work for many decades, with the limitation that the review ceases in 2009, leaving a gap in the literature to the present day. The work of Gouws and Kotze (2007), Gouws (2008), and Nkomo and Ngambi (2009), for example, examine gender issues related to empowerment of women leaders; their approaches to creativity; their values; their leadership styles related to leader-member exchange theory (Gerstner and Day, 1997); the obstacles they face (Ntseane, 2009); Western bias of gender and gender relations; and their experiences of gender-based conflict.

The increased interest in research about leadership in Africa in general has increased overall each decade, with the largest number of studies from 2000 to 2009 approaching 60. Even so, between 1950 and 2009, only approximately 12 studies examined leadership and gender (Fourie, 2017). In general, literature since 2009 suggests all sectors of civil society throughout sub-Saharan Africa continue to suffer from a lack of gender equity (Cheeseman et al., 2017). While there is some progress, it continues to be uneven in terms of numbers, although some scholars suggest quality should outweigh quantity (Cheeseman et al., 2017). Fourie’s 2017 investigation would benefit from updating, and perhaps should include published books on African leadership. A meta-analysis up to the present day would also enable a comparison of the gender themes from 1950 to 2009 to see if they have changed in any way. I describe in the next section the great increase in published scholarly work on women in educational leadership in sub-Saharan Africa since 2009 and it is not reflected in Fourie’s investigation.

Scholarly sociological work from Rwanda may help to garner important insights into gendered leadership. I present here one example. Williamson Sinalo’s work (2018), while not directly addressing women in leadership, does explore gender identity post-genocide and the experiences of women, along with the intersections of individualism, post-colonialism, and trauma in Rwanda. These several themes make evident the complexities of

adding the intersection of women in leadership. So many conditions and considerations affect women in civil society, and glean insights *via* participants' personal narratives may provide entrée to the addition of women in leadership. Because the narratives, which are called testimonies, are publicly available in Kinyarwanda, the country's official language, through the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, they serve as a rich resource for considerations of women and their experiences or views of their role in leadership (Kigali Genocide Memorial, 2016).

African Women in Educational Leadership

Overall, much room remains for expansion of scholarly work in education on women in leadership in sub-Saharan Africa. There is a body of literature investigating women leaders in the K-12 space and it warrants mention since this is where the most research has taken place. The largest compendium of work appears in publications from the international collaboration of scholars and practitioners, *Women Leading Education* (2021), who document studies on women in educational leadership globally and who have hosted the special collection in which this article appears. These books and special collections in journals highlight many studies on women in educational leadership in sub-Saharan Africa. They include Sobehart, 2009; Grogan, 2015; Reilly and Bauer, 2015; Malachias et al., 2018; and McNae and Reilly, 2018.

For this review, I examined over thirty studies on women in educational leadership conducted in sub-Saharan Africa since 2006 (with one conducted in 2001) in K-12 education. The K-12 studies principally examine the role of the head teacher (frequently called the principal in Western settings). Overall, the preponderance of studies occurred in South Africa. (See, for example, Lumby, 2015; Lumby and Azaola, 2011, 2014; Lumby et al., 2010; Mathipa and Tsoka, 2001; Moorosi, 2010, 2015, 2020; Moorosi and Grant, 2016; Moorosi et al., 2016, 2018; Mpungose, 2010; Phendla, 2008.) Other studies occurred in Ghana (Tagoe-Wilson, 2015), Nigeria (Deji and Makinde, 2006), Uganda (DeJaeghere et al., 2009; Kagoda, 2015; Kagoda and Sperandio, 2008; Sperandio, 2000; Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010; Raryera, 2015), and Zimbabwe (Chabaya et al., 2009).

From the studies I examined, I discerned the following general thematic strands: becoming and being a leader (motivations, career trajectory); leadership challenges such as stereotypes, discrimination, intersection of gender and class, race, and/or ethnicity; home life (spouse, motherhood, domestic responsibilities); leadership styles; and professional support such as mentoring and professional advancement. Some of the themes that have emerged from those studies may be considered relevant to women leaders in higher education in future studies. The investigations use principally qualitative methodologies, but do include mixed-methods approaches, as quantitative data can help to document demographic trends as well as overall perceptions of the women's experiences.

Here, I review some highlights of the findings. Overall, leadership challenges remain mixed from country to country in terms of experiences of discrimination from race, gender, tribe, or class. Each of these attributes warrants greater discussion, but that is beyond the scope of this paper, which is focused on women

in higher education leadership. The intersectionality work colleagues and I have conducted (Moorosi et al., 2016, 2018), for example, examine issues of race and gender, and do call out the dual impact of these on every aspect of women's leading in education, while Chabaya et al. (2009) discuss persistent gender inequality in Zimbabwe. Lumby et al. (2010) provide a detailed discussion of the impact of gender on K-12 women principals.

Regarding home life, a number of studies touch on societal expectations for K-12 women leaders and family, and the impact this can have on motivation and career trajectory (Moorosi, 2015). Another topic some of the studies cover is the leadership style of women. Lumby and Azaola (2014) speak of a mothering style of leadership in South Africa, which they assert raises the hackles of Western feminists. This style may comport with some features of Western models of leadership, however, such as servant leadership, but would require further investigation and analysis (Nnameka, 1997; Steady, 2011). Finally, DeJaeghere et al. (2009) and others discuss professional support, such as professional training, that can help women achieve their goals.

There are fewer higher education leadership studies, but they examine a variety of aspects of women in leadership. Similar themes from these studies align with my work in Rwanda and with the findings of this study. The themes include enacting gender mainstreaming policies so as to address gender disparities in higher education in Botswana (Losike-Sedimo, 2017) and in Kenya (Odhiambo, 2011); mentoring higher education students in achieving leadership roles in Rwanda (Randell, 2009; 2018); mentoring women academics in leadership in Ghana (Wilson-Tagoe, 2015) and South Africa (Moody, 2015; Moody and Toni, 2017); and intersections of Rwandan women educational leaders with women leaders in Costa Rica and Afghanistan (Reilly, 2021).

The studies in higher education share two common features. First, all studies express the common theme of a lack of gender parity of women academics overall in higher education when compared to men, with the women also having limited representation in some disciplines, generally the natural sciences. The fewer number of women academics, then provides a smaller pool of women eligible for promotion into executive leadership roles. In some instances, as with Rwanda, holding the terminal degree remains an obstacle. Second, each emphasized the importance of policies, practices, and strategies that provide career development support for women academics (Moody, 2015). Features vary, but many provide mentorship from senior academics principally focused on scholarship. In addition, the scholars emphasize that policies must mirror practices to support women leaders.

Overall, the scholarship on women in educational leadership in sub-Saharan Africa is still in its nascent stages. The K-12 education space does have a slightly larger body of literature, but most of it comes from South Africa. In addition, with the exception of the head teacher (principal), other leadership roles have not been investigated. In the higher education space, there is limited literature on women in educational leadership. There is much room for expansion in terms of the types of institutions investigated, the many topics that could be

examined, and the numbers of countries engaged in understanding the progress, successes, and challenges of women in higher education leadership.

METHODS

Research Design

Through this qualitative ethnographic study, participants offered insights into their experiences as leaders and their perspectives on the progress, successes, and challenges of women in higher education leadership (Bernard, 2006). As described earlier, indigenous African feminism precepts drove the framing of the inquiry. Narrative inquiry as described by Clandinin and Connelly in several of their works served to frame my methodological approach. (See Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin and Huber, 2010; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; and Connelly and Clandinin, 2006.) I present here greater detail into the methodology of the study.

Sample

In this paper I highlight four women who are professors and educational leaders in Rwanda and were part of a larger study. The larger study included nearly 20 men and women in positions of higher education leadership or in positions of leadership in which they are qualified to comment on women in educational leadership. I typically include men who serve in executive leadership roles that include policy setting, hiring, supervision, and evaluation of women in leadership. One of the principal reasons for this is that in developing countries, men hold the vast majority of the most influential leadership positions.

This is the case with Rwanda beyond the large representation of women in the National Parliament; that governing body has been and remains an anomaly in terms of gender parity (Katengwa, 2010). The participants in this investigation included leaders from the University of Rwanda—the only public university—vice chancellors, provosts, deans, department chairs, directors, and professors in higher education and members of the Rwandan National government such as ministers and vice-ministers. All leaders lived within Kigali or traveled frequently to Kigali, the capitol of Rwanda, although this may not have been the city or country of their birth. Following the genocide, it became commonplace for Rwanda to hire men from other countries to serve in executive leadership positions among all professions.

Assumptions

I conducted this study with two, principal assumptions. First, I assumed that individuals who participated in this study were qualified to discuss and knowledgeable of the status of women in educational leadership in Rwanda. This was, in fact, the case. As men hold a disproportionate number of the executive leadership positions, their voices provided background context for the investigation and their views of women in leadership, coupled with their views on advocating for women's greater inclusion. Additionally, the women I interviewed either hold or have held executive leadership roles in a variety of contexts and

thus provided extensive data on themselves and on their perspectives.

Second, I further assumed that individuals would provide an honest appraisal of their perspectives related to women in educational leadership in Rwanda. This assumption was based on my decades of training in and experience with conducting qualitative investigations where I can discern deception, were it to seem evident. I also understand how to seek a saturation level in interviewing, where a preponderance of recurring themes suggest little to no new data will emerge and any outlier views would perhaps be suspect. Finally, my experiences in conducting international research commenced in 1990 in the Moscow region during the collapse of the Soviet Union. Having first lived abroad during college and since then, traveled to over 50 countries, I have a high level of skillfulness in navigating cultures not my own and in gaining people's acceptance of the authenticity of my motives in speaking to them and in securing their trust. Because the focus of this paper is the Rwandan women who are educational leaders, I present more detailed background on my positionality in **Supplementary Appendix C**.

By triangulating the data with multiple interviews, document reviews, and my field notes, I am confident that participants were candid in their explanations and recollections. It was apparent to me that in a few cases participants were hesitant to speak truth to power, as there is an undercurrent of a level of concern among some that individuals might face possible retaliation if what they report might be viewed as critical of the status quo or of the federal government. This belief is not wholly without merit, based on the ongoing human rights issues I have documented in this paper. In the case of higher education, though, criticism framed as evidence-based critique, appears to be accepted by those in leadership.

Limitations

This study was limited to the geographical area of the capitol of Rwanda, Kigali. As a result, some findings may not be relevant to other areas of Rwanda, as socio-economic conditions vary greatly among them. The university has many campuses, and while faculty and leaders move between and among campuses, future investigations ought to explore the same issues on those campuses in other parts of the country. Finally, this study was limited to interviews with those individuals to whom I could gain access. Although many of the interviews were organized in the United States in anticipation of arrival in Rwanda, some of the individuals were not available once I arrived. My limited time in country also precluded meetings with some individuals, so return visits can address this limitation.

Delimitations

The study pertained to women in educational leadership in Rwanda and therefore the results may not apply to women in educational leadership in other nations; may not pertain to women in other leadership positions in the country; and/or may not pertain to men in educational leadership. Also, the findings may not apply to other universities in the country or campuses of the University of Rwanda that appear in other parts of the country. This delimitation can be addressed in future

studies by broadening my interviews to other campuses, although policies of one apply to the other, which lessens the impact of this delimitation. In addition, as a targeted study, I invited participants with experience as a woman leader or qualified to comment, to recommend other individuals whom they felt were qualified to comment on women in higher education. Thus, snowball sampling led to additional participants.

Types of Data

Data included my field notes, recordings and transcriptions of each interview, and any documents available through public websites and that individuals provided to supplement basic information or to provide context for their organizations or programs. The interviews, though, were central to the investigation and they drove the analyses, with my field notes and other documents providing context.

Means of Data Gathering

I used several strategies to create field notes, to organize the interviews, and to review the documents I obtained. Overall, I applied the first two of Connelly and Clandinin's principles for narrative inquiry (1990), the "beginning the story" phase and the "living the story" phase (1990, p. 3–4.) The phase of beginning the story involved conducting background research broadly on Rwanda and on Rwandan education, along with research on prospective participants, including reading publicly-available documents such as biographies, profiles, and any published academic or other articles that they had authored. These notes became the basis for fieldnotes on each participant. The phase of living the story included conducting and recording the interviews, taking contemporaneous notes, and either writing or recording my impressions (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

Protocol for Interviews

I describe the protocol for the semi-structured interviews in greater detail in **Supplementary Appendix A**. I used three means of gathering data. First, I took or recorded detailed field notes that described the context for the interviews, as well as other pertinent information. Second, I conducted semi-structured interviews individually in a place of convenience to the participants. All interviews took place either at their place of work or at the hotel where I was staying. These interviews were digitally recorded and then sent to participants for member checks. Third, I used other artifacts that participants provided that gave context for or amplification of their programs, initiatives, or organizations.

The interview questions that correlate with the research question are also included in **Supplementary Appendix A**. While the interviews followed the pattern of the questions as they were originally conceived, in nearly all cases, my interview was less a classic question and answer session and more of a conversation, covering topics of interest to them and expertise they wished to share. In many cases, I asked questions to deepen my understanding of my participants' experiences.

I was impressed with the level of candor that participants expressed with very sensitive topics. Every conversation was punctuated with statements around this broad construct:

Before the genocide and after the genocide. The genocide of 1994 remains the defining benchmark in the timeline of Rwandan higher education professionals and leaders.

Data Analysis and Interpretation: Narrative Inquiry

I first framed the analysis through the lens of a theoretical framework that embodies indigenous, African feminist precepts of the role of women in society. I applied it to their experiences in educational leadership. The precepts that served to underlie the analysis were women's experiences that explicated gendered oppression, their view of the role of family, work generally, and their profession overall, and their activism (Wane, 2011). An example of part of the coding process appears in **Supplementary Appendix B**. Broadly speaking, the categories I derived apply to any culture or civil society internationally, they do not imply a bias toward a particular perspective, and they reflect attributes of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals for gender parity internationally and the World Bank's goals through its Education for All initiative (UNESCO, 2007; World Bank, 2020, 2019).

With the feminist precepts in mind, I then used narrative inquiry as the methodological approach for the analysis of the data and for generating the synthesis of the progress made, successes achieved, and challenges faced among women in higher education leadership in Rwanda (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). My intention was to memorialize and understand the experiences of the women through "a recursive, reflexive process of moving from field (with starting points in telling or living of stories) to field texts (data) to interim and final research texts [that] highlight ethical matters as well as new theoretical understandings of people's experiences (Clandinin and Huber, 2010, p. 20)." This method marries effectively with indigenous African feminist precepts.

Engaging in the third aspect of narrative inquiry, writing the story (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), I first constructed the women's stories through the use of 1) field notes; 2) transcriptions of interviews; and/or 3) additional documents that the participants provided or I obtained through public websites. I wrote the first version of the narratives exactly as the women told their stories and later edited them slightly so as to tell the story in a coherent fashion. The rationale for this is that the interview protocol focused broadly on progresses, successes, and challenges, but the narratives generally made more sense unfolding in chronological order of life events. One example of a narrative appears in the findings, demonstrating how the narrative leads to the coding scheme.

Second, I identified topics and themes that emerged from the narratives by using an inductive analysis schema as follows: 1) scan the texts; 2) identify possible themes; 3) compare the data among the many texts; 4) consider the various ways the themes may be interrelated; 5) build concepts that the themes and data support; 6) consider the role that negative cases play in comparison to the themes and data; 7) present the summaries of each theme using the data—both paraphrased and in direct quotes. A summary of key aspects of the coding schema appear in **Supplementary Appendix B**.

Protection of Human Rights

The Office for Human Research Protections of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2012 which describes laws, regulations, and guidelines regarding the protection of human subjects in those countries that presently have them. Rwanda is included in that document; therefore, additional approvals were necessary before commencing this study.

Rwanda's National Ethics Committee has guidelines for Human Subjects research related to bioethical considerations for the field of medicine, genetics, or biology (Ministry of Health, 2014). Additionally, for research related to education, the Ministry of Education has approval processes through, first, the Ministry of Health Ethics Committee, and second, through its review of the proposal, which I completed prior to seeking my university's final approval (Ministry of Education, 2014). This included garnering a supervisor at the University of Rwanda and completing that institution's approval process—a third aspect.

Following approval from Rwanda's Ministry of Education, which took nearly 7 mo, Loyola Marymount University's Institutional Review Board provided final approval to ensure that this study adhered to the guidelines for the protection of human subjects. Rwandans generally speak English, as well as Kinyarwanda and French. The Ministry of Education approved the study to be conducted in English and I was not required to provide the Letter of Informed Consent and other documents in languages other than English.

In summary, I completed five approval processes in order to conduct this investigation: requesting and obtaining a university sponsor, requesting and obtaining university research approval, requesting and obtaining Ministry of Health National Ethics Committee approval, requesting and obtaining Ministry of Education approval, and requesting and obtaining my university's Institutional Review Board approval. I complied with the laws, regulations, and guidelines for protection of human subjects in Rwanda, and with the guidelines that govern the protection of human subjects in the United States of America.

Risk to Human Subjects

I present a fairly detailed explanation of risk to human subjects because Rwanda is a post-conflict, post-genocide country which, while stable politically overall, has had external agencies identify as a nation with ongoing human rights challenges. One of the critical issues to discern with any human subjects research is whether the study could pose more than minimal risk to participants. When assessing this issue for research in Rwanda, I did take into consideration the current socio-political environment. At present, this nation is in reconstruction and has been for nearly three decades since its genocide and civil war. The reconstruction of education occurs through broad national plans from the Ministry of Education and in alignment with international projects such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. At present, the country is not engaged in internal military conflicts that affect the daily lives of Rwandans, but incursions from Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo remain an ongoing, frequent challenge.

Nevertheless, individuals who are engaged in the rebuilding of education in Rwanda—ministers of education, professors, school leaders, teachers, and even students—may endure high levels of stress. Therefore, given the level of risk participants in this study face on a daily basis by having chosen to rebuild education in the nation, I did not anticipate that they would face greater than minimal risk by consenting to an interview and answering the questions that will be posed. This proved to be the case overall.

I built a protocol into the Letter of Informed Consent that required each individual to decide whether or not his/her name would be used in publications or presentations. In the many years I have been conducting interviews in international settings, all but one individual has consented to my use of their names in presentations and publications so that they may receive attribution for their work as leaders. In Afghanistan, where I have previously investigated women in K-12 and higher education leadership, leaders insisted that I make their names public because of their significant roles in building civil society and their desire for recognition, regardless of the risk to their lives.

In the case of Rwanda, however, a few, but not the majority of individuals wished to remain anonymous. Even with political stability, reports emerge periodically about Rwanda regarding the status of human rights, suggesting challenges to freedom of expression, political pluralism, disproportionate use of force with Congolese refugees, and cases of unlawful detention, for example (Amnesty International, 2018, 2021; Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2020). Although nearly all participants explicitly stated that I could use their names, out of an abundance of caution, I elected to assign pseudonyms and, in some cases, disguise certain identifying features of their backgrounds.

FINDINGS

Through extensive document analysis and interviews with nearly twenty men and women qualified to provide observations into women's status, a portrait has begun to emerge. In this paper, I present analysis of the narratives of four of the women participants in the context of four, principal findings. These findings integrate salient quotes and summaries from the women. Each woman serves in an executive leadership role in the Rwandan government or at the University of Rwanda, and holds a faculty appointment at the university. I first present a story of one of the women leaders in higher education to demonstrate how I craft narratives of each participant prior to conducting the analysis. I then present and analyze findings that elucidate four aspects of the portrait.

Marie Liliane: A Passion for Gender Inclusion

Marie Liliane's early life provides an example of several benchmark events that led to the broader theme of gender inclusion. I provide here that portrait, which illustrates the life circumstances. These formative years led to her passion for girls

and women in science, to her commitment to girls' primary education and women's access to higher education, and to her advocacy for women in educational leadership. Here is her story.

Born in a family of 10, Marie Liliane is the seventh child. She declares, "If I look at the way we were brought up, in our family, we did not have a distinction about gender" among the siblings, and her parents supported both boys and girls attending school. Each of the children, she recalls, were favorites of her grandfather, who had the means to help finance their education. During the genocide, which Marie Liliane refers to as "the terrible madness of our past," her grandfather lost two of his sons, one of whom was her father. Her grandfather "took the helm" in the aftermath to support the children's education, declaring there was no difference between the support either gender should receive.

While the genocide of 1992 continues to take center stage for its recent history, Marie Liliane explains that the 1960s were the time of the Rwandan Revolution where many Rwandans fled their homeland that created grave instability. At varying points, her family and she were refugees in Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda—wherever French was spoken. Even with the continual and profound instability that refugee status engenders, Marie Liliane was a successful student. Entering a Swedish-funded program that provided her the opportunity to seek teacher training, Marie Liliane earned her first degree in Kenya. Then, she qualified for admission to university, and attended University of Nairobi—Kenya's top institution—achieving her first degree in biochemistry and zoology. More degrees followed with a Fulbright award to study for her master's degree in the United States and later the opportunity to earn her doctoral degree in Belgium. While her studies were in French, the dissertation was published in English. Beyond her success as a scientist is her command of and fluency in multiple languages.

In 2009, she returned to Rwanda and had a teaching load at both the faculties of science and medicine at the University of Rwanda. She was likewise appointed to a newly-developed position in the Ministry of Education for Science, Technology, and Research, which she has developed from the ground up. Marie Liliane says, "I've got a passion for teaching—anything to do with education, I get carried away." In her work she is particularly focused on the inclusion of girls in science. She asserts, "There are so many of the stereotypes that science is not for girls."

Just as with her own childhood, she sees the link to the mindset of how children are raised. If the home environment and the parents encourage girls to engage with science, this can counteract the stereotypes of girls and women as incapable of professional positions in the science field. "Once they feel empowered, their performance is high, and I am happy about this," she asserts. Marie Liliane seeks to influence national educational policy to engage girls and women in science and, as a living example of a woman who has been successful in science, she frequently speaks to groups so as to shatter old belief systems.

The Portraits' Four Aspects

Four aspects form the findings of the overall portrait of the four women and are presented here. Findings suggest women's smaller

acceptance rate into higher education as undergraduates results in fewer educated women prepared to serve in high-level roles in civil society. Furthermore, the country's lack of Ph.D. programs compels women to leave Rwanda to obtain a terminal degree, causing women to defy cultural norms and societal expectations as a wife and mother over commitment to self and professional aspirations. Third, if women do manage to garner a role in higher education, the institution places disproportionate service expectations on female academics as compared to men, affecting scholarly output. Finally, society's expectations for women's responsibilities as wives and mothers regardless of career responsibilities or status have shifted little post-genocide. I next consider each of these findings.

University Acceptance Rate

According to the University of Rwanda Statistics Office (2021), approximately 34% of its undergraduate and graduate students are female. In conversations with various higher education leaders, they cite varying reasons for the lack of gender parity in admissions. One leader stated that the problem begins in elementary school and becomes more pronounced by middle school, where girls carry disproportionate responsibilities for household duties when compared to boys.

As subjects such as mathematics become more challenging to children and they require more time to study and receive tutoring if necessary, girls' achievement gap widens because of the responsibilities they bear at home. By the time the girls take national entrance examinations for the University of Rwanda, their scores are less competitive with the boys and thus, fewer are admitted to the public university. Choices that remain for them for a higher degree are then limited to expensive private institutions, which are, in most cases, cost-prohibitive, and of varying quality.

Thus, the challenge women face in gaining educational leadership roles has its origins in elementary school. Fewer girls attain college degrees, leading to fewer women becoming university instructors, resulting in even fewer candidates who can attain tenure and the status necessary to achieve leadership roles in higher education.

Terminal Degree Opportunities

Approximately 19% of all university instructors possess a Ph.D. degree in their field. Fewer women instructors than this possess the terminal degree. To obtain a terminal degree, Rwandan men and women must leave the country. While partnerships with universities in countries such as Sweden are on the rise, a patriarchal culture such as Rwanda presents challenges for women seeking a doctoral degree. Women leaders such as Jeannette Francine cite the challenge in gaining the "approval" of their husbands to either leave their families behind, which creates great challenges for the sustainability of the family unit, or to take the entire family abroad for a number of years. Even so, Jacqueline Rose points out, "Whether the husband has to approve or not would depend on the woman's family and the structure of the patriarchy. I'm sure no husband would be opposed to that opportunity to take their children to nice schools and have all expenses paid." The short-

term and long-term benefits are substantial and significant for all members of the family.

An additional result of the lack of Ph.D. holders among women is that women possess less training and experience in producing the scholarly work expected in their fields. Women cite little or inconsistent mentoring and professional development to remedy what is a broader problem for the entirety of higher education, but a particularly glaring one for women academics. Anne Clarisse mentioned that the university has committed to supporting women in specific. She remarks, “The result of a recent conference [the university hosted for all women academics] was a commitment to mentor rising scholars, develop research teams, and so on, but follow-up is necessary to see what progress will be made over time.” Marie Rose adds, “Some women don’t feel confident sometimes being involved in leadership, which is part of Rwandan culture. The person may not even know they are not confident.” Mentoring opportunities could address this, she suggests. Finally, an ancillary issue is that English is the second language of Rwanda. As long as preeminence is still afforded Western journals and publishing houses that principally publish in English, women will require support not only for their research skillfulness but for academic endeavors executed in English.

Successes and Challenges of Disproportionate Service Expectations

The disproportionate expectation of girls’ duties over boys’ duties in support of the family and the priority placed on their fulfillment of these responsibilities is deeply embedded in Rwandan culture and long precedes a woman’s professional life, if she has achieved one. This context helps provide a deeper understanding of the challenges that academic women in leadership face. Anne Clarisse, a senior lecturer and head of a center at the University of Rwanda, describes family life by pointing out that,

During our time, boys did not have the same status as girls—boys were highly considered and have the priority to go to school. I didn’t see it in my family but I saw it among our neighbors. If they didn’t have enough money, boys would go first and girls would remain at home. But I think in the minds of the parents, they didn’t really think that much that “we send the boy and the girls stay home.” It was more a case of who was more helpful. A girl would stay home, fetch water, clean the house, but when the boy stays at home, what would he do? This is because the domestic chores were different. They would look after the cows, but the girls cook, wash the dishes, etc., but the boy, no. So then sending the boy to school might then benefit the whole family.

7.2.3 Although education is considered free in Rwanda, there are ancillary fees associated with schooling that parents are required to pay. If a family, then, has limited monetary resources, Anne Clarisse makes it clear that a boy will be chosen to pursue education over a girl in the family. Moving many years forward, assuming a girl did receive an education, a college degree, and then did receive an appointment as a faculty member at the university, the expectation for a woman’s role in and responsibilities for the family remain the same, and her

professional responsibilities are often twice that of male professors.

One example is in the area of service to the profession. In Rwanda, as in most higher education settings globally, faculty are expected to engage in service to the profession, which is not traditionally or typically compensated work. Service to the profession is comprised of many roles, but for the purposes of this study, I focus solely on service in the department and university setting. Female faculty members at the University of Rwanda face vastly more responsibility for service requirements than do males. This is both a success and a challenge to their professional trajectories. The stated policy to promote gender equity for committee work is that 50% of each working group should be women (University of Rwanda, 2016).

On its face, equal representation of women in many aspects of governance is good news for women’s voices and impact in the work of the university. The university has engaged in many changes since it became the one, public institution, including consolidation of programs, a new strategic plan, ongoing hopes to 1 day provide the Ph.D. in a variety of fields beyond a research-only option, and more. Women’s influence in forming the future of the university is important to achieving goals of gender equity and inclusion. Jacqueline Rose does point out, however, that to make the tasks even more palatable, even modest remuneration would go a long way. She advises that “additional incentives in the form of stipends would be of benefit to the family” and thus women would be willing to give up direct family time for indirect impact on their needs.

The level of engagement for women is not without a price, though. Since only 25% of the faculty are women (University of Rwanda, 2020), they are required to serve on twice the number of committees than men. Similar to the impact women faced on their academic achievement as girls because of the expectations of completing household duties, they now face double the service obligations in their university roles. Overall, the women cite the impact as untenable—that they have less time to produce scholarly products which result in promotion. Anne Clarisse remarks, “I think we all know the process we go through for promotions. Mostly it depends on qualifications and publications,” but the time involved in service is substantial and without compensation. The lack of promotion opportunities, then, directly affects their ability to achieve leadership roles in higher education.

A second factor is that all employees of the University of Rwanda are public servants—employees of the government. They serve at the will of the Ministry of Education. Jeannette Francine described how she was clearly on a path for promotion in faculty rank, but with the departure of a center leader, she was unilaterally moved into that leadership role. While we might argue that the result was a leadership position for a woman, her superior moved her off the tenure line, and ultimately delayed her progress temporarily or permanently into higher level leadership roles in the university that require achieving the full professorship first. She states, “We can’t expect to have more women in positions of leadership when we don’t have them in schools or universities in the first place, because they are recruited from the faculty ranks.” So, her assertion affirms the double impact of

lower university admission of women in the first place, and then of the policies that affect their promotion if they ever manage to achieve an appointment as an academic.

Even though the women who are profiled in this paper have been unable to achieve promotion at the university beyond senior lecturer to associate- or full professor status, they have been able to achieve significant roles of influence in the federal government where substantive changes in gender perspectives have happened and continue to occur. Both Jeanette Francine and Marie Liliane have the potential for compelling impact nationally through their leadership roles in the federal government, which are not ceremonial, but instead highly influential positions of significance.

Patriarchal and Societal Traditions

Women educators and leaders each face traditional patriarchal and societal expectations of the role of women in civil society despite Constitutional guarantees and public policy that support gender equity. Women who remain unmarried for a variety of reasons face some benefits, but these come with societal liabilities. Several women in this study never married or had children and from my conversations with them, it was not a subject I could easily pursue. While they have greater flexibility to leave the country to pursue the Ph.D., and thereby possibly advance professionally, they face the stigma of remaining unmarried in a culture that expects traditional gender roles in the family—fulfilling the duties of a housewife and mother.

These duties require, as several women stated, that dinner is on the table at the appointed time, regardless of the responsibilities of their academic positions. Jacqueline Rose explains, “The other challenges such as promotion, require publications and research, and women face different challenges compared to men. For research, sometimes they cannot deliver like men because they have other family responsibilities and problems that require their attention. According to Rwandan culture, women are more involved in family issues.” Additionally, care of the children is within the purview of women. All aspects of child-rearing, along with perpetuation of cultural norms requiring girls’ substantially-disproportionate attention to household chores, are enforced by men and by society.

Women do affirm that education is valued now more than ever—even among villagers, where there may be more responsibilities for agrarian activities. Anne Clarisse provides context by explaining, “In Rwanda, we feel that educating a child is the only investment you can make in the child. During our parents’ time, they had cows. They had land. But as they grew up they noticed that they didn’t have much to give to their children. Through education their children would get a bright future.” She remarks that before education was compulsory, more girls would drop out at a young age and become housekeepers, providing much needed income for the families. More and more, though, parents recognize the short-term monetary gain provides less income if a girl does not stay in school. So, the paradoxical consequence of girls staying in school longer is less in-home help for working mothers, increasing their burden. Even so, Anne Clarisse concludes, “This is the only property we have—knowledge. The only investment we can

make in our children is studying so they can be responsible for their own lives.” The benefits outweigh the liabilities.

Helping Rwandans to embrace more education for girls continues to be a challenge, but women leaders who are also scientists believe that challenging the gendered norms for subject focuses in school and in higher education, as well as in career choices for girls and women remain critical, as well. Anne Clarisse says that at the University of Rwanda, “There is no balance yet, but we are making progress. In the 1990s, I remember in my class, we were 16 students and only three females. I was in languages, and normally it is believed that girls go to languages, so if we were only three, in science, it was even more limited. I had a roommate who was doing physics, and in the 4-yr program, she was the only female.” Marie Liliane summarizes emphatically that “innovation deserves to be a part of our culture. Yesterday’s knowledge does not necessarily lead to tomorrow’s solutions.” As a scientist and leader in the federal government, her norm-challenging extends from macro-policy shifts to ongoing seminars on the importance of girls and women in science.

DISCUSSION

Fully one-fourth of every year in Rwanda focuses on the Commemoration Period—the time between May and July when the genocide took place over a quarter of a century ago. Public events, marches, and ceremonies take place countrywide for 3 mo. This amount of public recollection over its dark past affects how Rwandans view the world and the future. Every conversation with higher education academics and leaders, as well as government officials, includes depictions of events before and after the genocide. Euphemisms such as Marie-Christine’s characterization of “the terrible madness of our past,” punctuate conversations. The genocide seems inescapable and yet, “Rwanda First,” is preeminent in people’s discussions.

By government mandate, they are no longer Hutu or Tutsi; they are Rwandans first. Of course, in reality, this is not the case, and a visitor can easily infer from conversations and context what an individual’s tribal affiliation was pre-genocide. If a Rwandan says, for example, that they have no living family members, it is entirely safe to assume that the individual is/was Tutsi and that their family was massacred. Critically significant, however, is that at present, the former tribal affiliations are less pressing societal issues than those of class and gender. This State-enforced remembrance each year does not necessarily include reflection on current events that may lead to greater gender equity, respect, and opportunities for girls and women. Furthermore, numerous international organizations produce yearly reports that indicate Rwanda must pay increased attention to human rights such as freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and expression; to violations such as enforced disappearances, deaths in custody, arbitrary arrests and detention; and to the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers (Amnesty International, 2021).

A 2017 United Nations report from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addressed successes, but highlighted numerous concerns regarding Rwanda’s need to work on the UN convention on the

elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (2017). The Committee recommended, for example, that “the State party repeal all remaining legal provisions that are discriminatory towards women and that it adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that prohibits discrimination on all grounds and encompasses direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination against women” (United Nations, 2017, p. 3). Thus, even in policy and law, much work is to be done and therefore much work remains with implementation of practices that mirror the laws. Indeed, while this investigation instantiates the need for broader university and national policies that support the success of women academics, much fundamental work remains to be completed regarding gender equality more broadly.

Moving the Needle on University Acceptance Rate

The fundamental issue with the chronic, disproportionate representation of women as compared to men at the University of Rwanda is that the institution admits and then produces fewer highly-qualified women who are then competitive for professional positions throughout the nation generally and for academic appointments at the institution specifically. The university’s admission of women for the first degree, the Baccalaureate, remain effectively unchanged at around 34%. There is also still a propensity for women to be found in greater numbers in certain disciplines, such as in languages, and in far fewer numbers in others, such as in the sciences. In future studies I intend to examine the reasons for lower acceptance of women for the first degree as well as what leads to choices of certain disciplines over others. Based on some preliminary data from this original study, the problem begins when girls are in middle school, but more research is necessary. More detailed findings may lead to the development of a strategic plan or policy changes at the university or at the federal level.

Expanding Terminal Degree Opportunities

In the mid-2000s, the university had a partnership where women were able to pursue their doctoral degrees at a host of foreign universities to address the lack of opportunities for women to enter graduate level education leading to the Ph.D. At present this opportunity no longer exists. There are two ways Rwanda can address this. First, they can seek sponsors to revive the original model which provided women with the opportunity to be wife, mother, and scholar at the same time. Pursuing the degree at a foreign institution is considered a prestigious accomplishment and the degree establishes great credibility for woman and benefits to her family. I also spoke with the Vice Chancellor and Provost about pursuing Fulbright as an avenue for increasing the number of Ph.D.-holders in the country. Second, the institution must continue to seek its own Ph.D. degree offerings. They are working towards this, but I have been unable to ascertain their progress at this point. One consideration, however, is the liability of educating and then placing one’s own degree-holders in one’s home institution. The university must take this into account when considering this

option. International, joint degree offerings, may help mitigate the liabilities of this avenue.

Cultural Taxation: Disproportionate Service Expectations

Women make it clear in the findings that unless scaffolded support is available to them in a variety of ways, they will continue to face challenges with promotion into higher level university leadership roles that require attaining the title of full professor. Stalling out at lecturer and senior lecturer is the rule, not the exception, and is exacerbated by the institution’s unilateral imposition of leadership responsibilities, such as naming a woman as a center director, or the federal government appointing her to a new role. This is clearly good news and bad news. The positive effect is that the woman can have significant and substantive influence in the leadership role she undertakes. The far-reaching impacts of this are yet to be ascertained, but anecdotally, women in this study report this is a strength of these types of promotions. The negative effect is that it puts a halt to her research agenda, which affects promotion to associate or full professor, and thus to greater influence within the university. It also has an impact on the production of new knowledge in her field, which benefits not only her promotion efforts, but her discipline and also the university and its reputation in important ways. The women report that enhanced accommodations for their children in daycare and/or preschool, as well as even modest financial incentives for their service and scholarship, allow them to achieve the dual goals of supporting themselves and their advancement as well as meeting their families’ needs.

Balancing Activism with Leaning into Patriarchal and Societal Traditions

One of the striking differences between many Western feminist traditions and indigenous African feminism is that the women with whom I have spent time are decidedly not attempting to dismantle the cultural norms of the role of women in Rwandan society. They do not view their roles as wives and mothers to conflict with their professional aspirations or achievements. Rather, the women leaders ask for more scaffolded support to achieve the terminal degree, along with opportunities for mentoring and coaching in both leadership development and in scholarly productivity. Forming research groups and receiving small stipends for grant-seeking would also incentivize the women, as they see investing the additional effort would have direct benefits to their families. After just one, formal meeting that the university hosted for its women academics a few years ago, the women seized the opportunity to form an informal support network. The result was a flurry of inspiration to press on with their academic achievements and seek partnerships and support from one another.

While the women academics in this study do lean into many of the traditional Rwandan views of society and their roles, each of these participants expresses activism in a variety of ways. First, by nature of embracing their leadership roles, they engage daily in

enacting substantive changes in policy and practice regarding girls and women in their field specifically and women in a variety of professions and in leadership more broadly. The women are not silent on issues of access to girls and women in education or the needs they individually have to advance the project of gender equity in Rwanda. Second, the women are not blind to the balancing act the Rwandan political landscape enacts on human rights. A country that spends one-fourth of each year in remembrance of its decimation of nearly a million of its fellow citizens serves as a continual reflection on the fragility of peace and the ongoing need for reconciling stability with greater freedoms for individuals. So-called “stability” can lead to institutional abuses if human rights become the target and extant humanitarian reports remind Rwanda to be mindful and address current challenges.

Another important finding was that the women leaders clearly reflect their values, beliefs, and praxis in accord with principles of indigenous African feminism. Although I did not explicitly pursue this line of inquiry with the women, their experiences and observations did address gendered oppression, the role of family, their work and profession, and their activism as evidenced in their stories. This suggests alignment with IAF, but I intend to establish a more cohesive conceptual model of IAF and then to re-examine the data sets through that lens. I also believe there would be great benefit to conducting meta-analyses of the literature of IAF, of gendered leadership in the African context, and of African women in educational leadership. This would permit a deeper understanding of the body of work in sub-Saharan Africa and help to situate future research from Rwanda and other countries in that context. It would also invite more systematic consideration of ways to enact indigenous African feminist principles and challenge colonialist values that are still deeply embedded in the entirety of sub-Saharan Africa.

Broad Recommendations

I conclude with some practical steps the university and government can take to address the four, principal findings.

1. Provide professional development and mentoring for women academics that support rigorous scholarship and a roadmap for promotion.
2. Examine the policy of unilaterally moving women academics from the academic track to positions that eliminate their progress on the tenure line.
3. Consider a different approach to service obligations that does not require women academics to engage in twice the amount of university service as men, but still invite their voices and impact.
4. Explore options for child care and children's education in close proximity to a women's job so as to support her familial obligations.
5. Continue to examine public higher education in relation to the challenges the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals* raise that encourage or inhibit gender equity in Rwanda.

In addition, I invite these considerations for future investigation.

1. Continue inquiring into women in higher education leadership by expanding the study to other University of Rwanda campuses and to other institutions of higher education.
2. Explicitly examine the relationship between broad themes of indigenous African feminism and Rwandan women in higher education leadership.
3. Examine the relationship between the impact of the genocide on indigenous African feminism and Rwandan women in higher education leadership.
4. Expand the investigation and include any of the previous recommendations in a study of women in K-12 educational leadership and compare the findings between K-12 and higher education.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In assessing benefits this research offers to Rwandan society and to the international field of women educational leadership, I present several implications. First, scholarly research within the field of education is much needed in Rwanda. One hallmark of a nation's rebuilding efforts is the degree to which scholars beyond its borders are interested in examining issues and establishing research agendas. This investigation may serve as example to other scholars worldwide of the benefits of engaging directly with the nation.

That said, the Ministry of Education's processes for foreign scholars seeking access should undergo a thorough review and steps made clear, streamlined, and uniform so as to encourage greater access and partnerships internationally. The 7 mo it took for me to receive approval required countless emails and, ultimately, in-country support from an individual contact to determine the processes required to gain approval and to help shepherd each step. Second, it was difficult to fulfill the requirement of having a university sponsor, and then, once I did obtain one, great confusion over the individual's role and responsibilities. My sponsor initially expected compensation until I explained I was not being funded by anyone to conduct the study. Once in country, I never met the individual and they provided no support of any kind beyond lending their name on paper as sponsor. Finally, there was inconsistency between the process I experienced and that of my doctoral student, who was conducting a different study during the same time period. She faced additional obstacles and challenges to approval that I as a senior scholar did not face, including a mandatory, in-country appearance to make the case for her study before Rwanda's National Ethics Committee. Even with the numerous obstacles, though, once I met all requirements, Rwandans' warm welcome and gracious hospitality, their candor, and their level of engagement with the research made the many challenges worth the effort.

Second, few studies examine K-12 schooling in Rwanda and none have examined educational leadership broadly and higher education leadership specifically. While women have made positive strides in public service positions, where they

represent over 60% of elected members of Parliament—and this achievement has attained international recognition—until this study, nothing has been documented about women’s impact on leadership in the education sector. This study serves as a basis for future deeper and broader examinations of the issue of women in educational leadership in the nation. It also opens the door to consider other sectors of civil society to ascertain the progress, successes, and challenges of women in leadership (Turamwishimiye, 2017).

Third, this investigation has provided the opportunity for a Western scholar to build relationships with scholars and leaders of Rwanda. In my experience, these studies serve to establish goodwill, serve as a basis for future initiatives and research, and provide much-needed understanding of the progress of women in leadership globally. This benefit is also aligned with the Ministry of Education’s Higher Education Policy (2008), whose goal is to “support research, innovation, and knowledge transfer for sustainable development” (p. 19). The deeper and broader our understanding globally of challenges women leaders face, the greater the opportunity to remedy these.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, an investigation of this nature has invited participants to share in their voices their stories of the successes and challenges of nation building. The publication and presentation of this work provide the larger global community with the opportunity to understand in more substantive ways the issues Rwanda faces and the solutions they offer, and to invite Rwandans to claim a voice on the world stage. While Rwandan women recognize clearly that there is no way to change the past and to erase the horror of the genocide, they remain committed

to a future that will make a positive difference for their children.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are not available due to protection of human subjects agreements with participants.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study involving human participants was reviewed and approved by Loyola Marymount University Institutional Review Board, Rwanda National Ethics Committee, Ministry of Education of Rwanda, and University of Rwanda. The participants provided their written informed consent in order to participate.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

ECR is solely responsible for the research investigation and for the production of this manuscript.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2021.561508/full#supplementary-material>

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