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## A Black Woman's Road to Principalsip: An Autoethnography

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A Black Woman's Road to Principalship:

An Autoethnography

By

Daria Caldwell

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate in Education.

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

August 2022

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## Dedication

The dissertation is dedicated to all of the Black women who have come before me, walk alongside me and all of the Black girls that will come behind me and grow to be the new changemakers. May the barriers lessen as Black women collectively remove their capes and take the rest our bodies need and deserve. With rest we shall summon the energy necessary to make change.

“Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy.” - Tricia Hersey

In memoriam

Andrea Kathleen Busch

September 13, 1977-October 8, 2019

“There are some who bring a  
light so great to the world that  
even after they have gone  
the light remains.”

-Unknown

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank everyone I crossed paths with that encouraged me to keep going through the dissertation process. To my mother Cymonne, thank you for all of your support through laughter and listening. April, the Toad to my Frog, thank you for supporting my dreams through patience and understanding. The headaches and tears; anxiety and missed events due to my tiredness or need to complete a task is finally paying off. Thank you for understanding and always doing anything to take the stress away. I could not have completed this project without the support I received from my friends and colleagues. So, many thanks for all of the laughs and tears. Andrea, the Randy to my Dan, the Blanche to my Sophia; always by my side. Thank you for being a friend.

To my cohort, literally the best group! I could not have asked for a better group of lifelong friends. Great minds, great visions, great food, great fashions and a great sense of humor.

Thank you Myla Pope and Sharon Freeman for being there for me whenever I felt defeated and helping me navigate the whiteness that I once feared. My committee chaired by Dr. Joyce Bell, Dr. Javier Gutierrez, and Dr. Leslie Hitchens, thank you for your patience, wise words and willingness to pay it forward.

Lastly, thank you to the strong, confident Black women administrators that allowed me into their hearts to paint their picture by taking part in this study. I am sharing your story, may it display your struggle and highlight your triumph.

*You may shoot me with your words, you may cut me with your eyes, you may kill me with your hatefulness, but still like air, I'll rise. -Maya Angelou*

## Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative autoethnographic study was to add to the research of Black women in educational leadership. This study investigates the perceived barriers of Black women in educational leadership. Majority of the research in the educational field pertaining to women is generalized in various ways and are not specific to Black women. With Black women in educational leadership on the rise, more research is needed for and by Black women to help successfully navigate educational leadership. During the last decade, African American women have pioneered and forged new frontiers as educational leaders (Rusher, 1996).

This study included four Black women in educational leadership in different school districts in Minnesota. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews as well as the researchers first hand experiences. Participants volunteered to take part in the study through a LinkedIn post. From the individual interviews and data analysis this study describes the experiences and perceived barriers as shared by four Black women in K-12 educational leadership. In reviewing and analyzing the stories shared, their experiences and perceptions were undeniably similar. All four leaders revealed being viewed as a motherly figure to Black students in their buildings, but struggled to be heard amongst their staff.

Research revealed, being a woman as a barrier to principalship, coupled with historical and societal norms upheld and perpetuated in education today. Although Black women are still a scarcity in educational leadership, research shows we are now believed to possess the qualities deemed necessary to be a successful school leader. This scarcity is caused largely in part by sexism, hiring practices and lack of support/mentorship.

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## **Chapter I: INTRODUCTION**

“Even if it makes others uncomfortable, I will love who I am”  
- Janelle Monáe

### **Introduction to the Research Questions**

As a Black woman in Minnesota, it is rare to cross paths with many other Black women in the field of education. Throughout my educational career in the state of Minnesota I have personally only had two Black professors. I experienced my entire K-12 education without seeing a Black male or female leader in education. It was not until I reached college where I experienced learning from a Black male in a semester-long English course. It would be another ten years before I sat in a classroom with another Black instructor. This time I was nearing the end of a doctoral program, when for the first time I was in a course co-led by a Black woman.

Between the times I experienced my first Black professors I myself became a teacher at the elementary level. I chose the elementary level in hopes of providing students the opportunity to have a Black female teacher at a younger age than I had. During my first year of teaching I had my first experience of seeing and working with a Black female principal. For over twenty years of my educational career I had not seen myself. Because of this it is important that I share a reflection from my past experiences with you to fully understand the road I traveled to principalship and through this ethnographic study examine my lived experiences as a Black woman in educational leadership as driven by the research questions below.

### **Research Questions**

This autoethnographic study examines my lived experiences as a Black woman in

educational leadership as driven by the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed administrative licenses?
2. What are the perceived barriers and challenges for Black women in educational leadership?

### **The Beginning of the Journey**

As a Black female I recognized the subtle differences at an early age. I would have never suspected those same differences would be present throughout the remainder of my life. These differences have shaped and continue to shape my life as a whole, as well as my why. It is my intent to share my personal journey to principalship through autoethnography. I grew up in a single parent home with one older sibling. My mother was a full-time parent all while managing a full-time career as a city employee and a part-time third shift job. Education was never said to be a requirement, just a known responsibility in our home. Mom works, kids go to school. Although my mother was very busy with work, I was afforded the ability to participate in sports every season. My favorite sport to participate in was always hockey. I played hockey every season for eight years when I was a child. I believe this is where my interest in the plight of a Black female began. I was almost always the only Black girl on my hockey team. Since there were rarely girls that looked like me or came from where I came from, I stayed to myself. I was able to analyze various situations and create opportunities where I was able to “fit in”. This brought me to the realization that regardless if you can “fit in”, you are still alone.

Since my hockey days and those vivid experiences of being the only Black female my awareness of being one of one in various arenas increased. I graduated from a predominantly

Black high school and attended a predominantly White, Catholic university. It was not my intent to put myself in such a large arena with very few others that looked or related to me. Nonetheless, I gained a lot of experience as the only Black voice in the room or the only Black person in the program. I graduated from the University of St. Thomas and obtained my initial K-12 teaching license in physical education. After graduating from the University of St. Thomas, I went on to pursue my master's degree at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities. A much larger university, that boasts itself for higher levels of diversity than its neighboring schools. I eventually earned my M.Ed. in Applied Kinesiology from the University of Minnesota. Through all of my institutional learning experiences I was challenged in various ways. The University of St. Thomas challenged me mentally as I navigated being one of one in a large setting as an adult for the first time. Thereafter, the University of Minnesota challenged me ethically, when I realized the educational rigor was subpar and often wondered if the University's diversity claim correlated to the level of education being offered. Throughout my time as a student things often looked different to me, things sounded different to me and almost always felt different for me as opposed to my peers.

Eventually I began my own teaching career. Through my teaching I was able to apply what I learned from all of my personal experiences and help my students recognize and navigate the subtle differences. I often questioned if I was doing more harm than good to the children by pointing out the lack of melanin in a space and what that means or how it changes some things. For example, I would often find myself encouraging young Black students to be aware of how they feel when none of their peers look or sound like them. I would provide tools to navigate the burden of being used as the voice for everyone that looks

like them. In reality, these were my first steps in trying to analyze why no one told me I would be the only one at certain tables for the rest of my life. At this time, things were still not clear to me, but I had more than enough experience; so I thought.

My success in teaching and community leadership led me to serving on various community council boards. I held these community leadership positions for over three years; throughout this time my awareness had risen to analytical research awareness. Why was I the only Black woman at the table? Why was I being looked to to speak for all Black people in the neighborhood? I began to ask more and more questions about the history of these associations. Many questions had no valid answers but the one answer I will never forget is “you’re the only one that cares”. I received that answer in response to why I was the only Black community board member in a predominantly Black neighborhood. That response replays in my head when I walk into spaces and search for faces that resemble my own, oftentimes failing to find one. Even though I am convinced my experiences are isolated and my heightened sense of awareness does more harm than good I cannot believe that I am the only Black woman that cares. This work is me, my identity. Based on Maxwell’s (2013) researcher identity model, identity is important to the purpose of a researcher. For example, my identity as a woman and person of color directly informs my approach to research. From the creation of my research questions to the analysis of the data. It is important to understand my personal identity, to better understand this work and the importance of works of this nature.

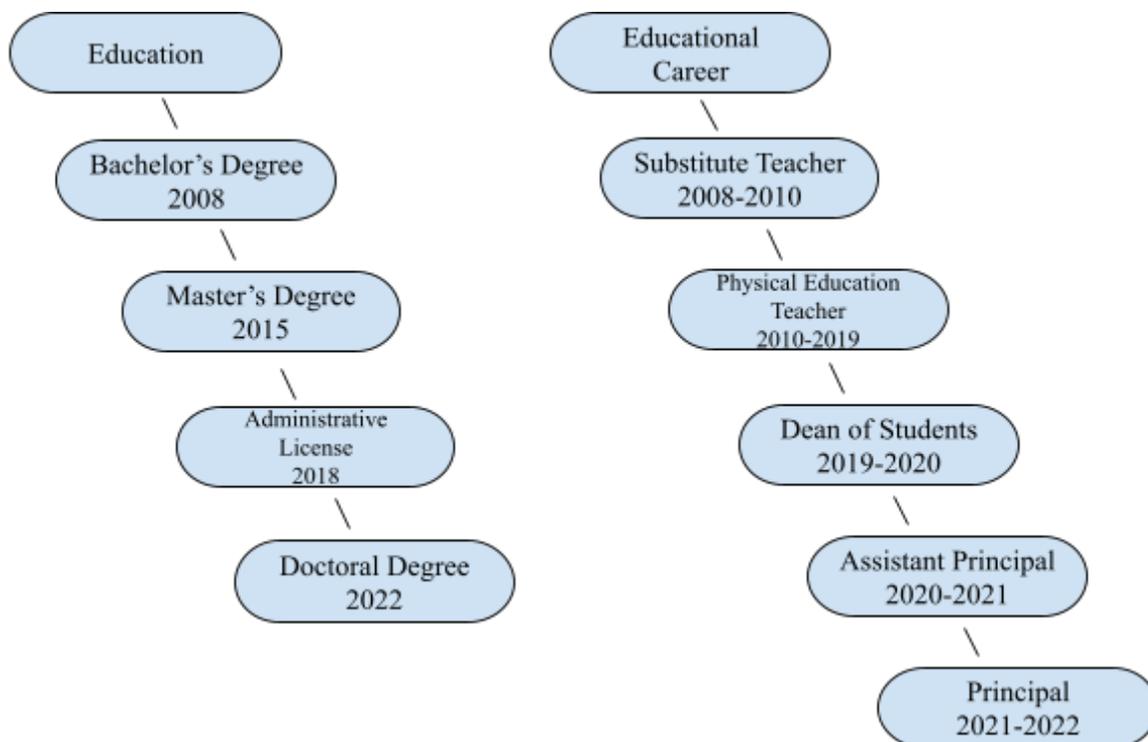
### **Context and Importance of the Research Topic to the field Significance of the Study**

Black women are underrepresented among the population of principals in the United States. Along with being underrepresented, there is limited research examining the

experiences of Black women principals- their education journey's, barriers, or their supports. Less research regarding Black women in educational leadership has been conducted by Black women. The significance of this study highlights the issues and barriers Black women face in educational leadership through the experiences of Black women. This study focuses specifically on the experiences of Black women as they navigate their way to and through principalship, while exemplifying the larger societal issue of lack of support for Black women. By understanding the impact of the shared experiences educational institutions can begin to implement specific inclusion programs and strategies designed around the needs of Black women. The study will also add to the limited research that exists relating to Black women in educational administration, from Black women in educational administration.

### My Story

*Figure 1. Concept Map Career Progression*



**Bachelor's Degree, 2008**

I attended The University of St. Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Doug Hennes, University of St. Thomas, spokesman and journalist, noted in a 2002 publication that African American students made up 2 percent of the undergraduate population. By the time I arrived in 2004 there were still very few Black students in attendance. I knew little to nothing about the campus or education prior to my acceptance. I entered college with a 3.98 GPA from what many would call a subpar Minneapolis public high school. Nonetheless, I ventured over the river to what I had been told was one of the best schools in the state of Minnesota. I would soon find out that said sentiment was not applicable to all.

Prior to beginning my freshman year at the University of St. Thomas I applied for a program offered by the University's Student Diversity and Inclusion Services office. The program, entitled "REAL (Reaching Excellence in Academics and Leadership)" was a 5-weeks summer program designed to help acclimate "students who are members of groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education" (University of St. Thomas, Minnesota Student Diversity & Inclusion Services 2022). I was excited to receive the opportunity to experience college life and earn a few credits prior to the school year so I accepted the offer to attend. Upon my arrival, I was introduced to fifteen other incoming freshmen, all members of various marginalized groups.

As a group we attended our college orientation, received campus housing, applied for campus employment and attended college courses. We were living the real college life, so we thought. During this time, we were the only students on campus other than those taking summer courses, working summer jobs on campus and/or living on campus throughout the summer; it was very quiet around campus. It is important to note that my first college

experience was with a group of fifteen other individuals with similar life experiences as my own. Many of which were not expected to attend college or were first generation college students. I thought this experience was indeed the real college experience. As the program came to an end and the fall semester began we were all off to begin our own journeys at the University of St. Thomas. My experiences throughout my journey are broken into various accounts of trauma, meaning “deeply distressing or disturbing experience” below.

### **The Trauma Begins**

My memories of the years I spent at St. Thomas are nothing less than traumatic. Freshman year I joined the University’s volleyball team, the number one Division III volleyball team in the conference. There were over 30 female’s all identifying as caucasian except for four, including myself. Initially I was taken aback. The University of St. Thomas is nestled in the Twin Cities, so I expected a little more diversity. Nevertheless, I had three friends on the team so I stuck it out. The head coach was an Asian man who received high praise from the University for the title’s he had won over the years. If this team could provide me with an ounce of safety and security I was afforded during the REAL program, I was confident I could survive college life.

Being a Division III athlete required more discipline, skill and time than I imagined as a naive freshman. We ate meals as a team, worked out as a team, practiced as a team and partied as a team. I recall doing drills in practice, different teammates' names getting called to position themselves properly or receive play instructions and in an instant they adjusted themselves. It was my turn. My name would be yelled, pronounced incorrectly, I would lose my form, stand up and correct the coaches on how to pronounce my name and quickly get back into proper stance. This action seemed to create tension, to me, balls began to come to

me harder and faster than when I did not speak. My name began getting called less frequently and my opportunity to play quickly dwindled. Much like many college sports teams we were divided into two teams, I was announced as a member of the Junior Varsity team and did not mind as I had a friend right there with me.

It was with that divide that I endured what I call my first sign that I do not belong here. Writer Tracy Clayton states “naming and names are important because they are entwined in our ownership of ourselves and our bodies”. For this reason, I consciously made an effort to correct those who mispronounced my name. The coach of the Junior Varsity team was a retired Caucasian male, who I work hard to forget. As a team we made three lines to practice passing and hitting. The coach stood in front of the three lines facing the players and threw the ball on the court. It was up to the first three players in line to track the ball and successfully return it to the coach. It’s my turn, the ball comes to me and I successfully pass it to my teammate. The coach yells a name in my direction, in my head I say “who is that?” as I move quickly to the end of the line. I return to the front of the line, the coach slaps the ball signaling us all to get in ready position. The ball does not come to me, I watch my teammate prepare to set the ball to me and I make contact with it. Again, I hustle to the end of the line. As practice begins to wrap up we huddle as a team, discuss upcoming meal times, workout times and practices, nothing unusual. The coach looks at me and says “Dar Dar” great practice. I stop walking and turn around, I say thanks and correct my name. He responds “I’m going to call you Dar Dar”.

Dar Dar, who the hell is that? I say to two of the other non caucasian players on the volleyball team. All I could think of was this man picturing me as the fictional Star Wars character Jar Jar Binks. Jar Jar Binks who at the time had appeared for one line in a recent

film and was created solely to provide comedic relief. Oftentimes recognized as one of the most hated characters in Star Wars. At the time I could not identify the harm being caused and believed I did all that I could do to rectify the situation. At 18 years of age I had repeatedly coached both of my volleyball coaches on how to properly pronounce my name, ignored mispronunciations of my name and declined proposed nicknames. I know things will get better, volleyball does not last forever.

All bad things come to an end, or so I thought. Volleyball season ends and I fully immerse myself into the true college life. I eat without a large group, navigate the campus solo and attend classes without several teammates. My schedule is fully loaded, I attend three classes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and two classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I learned of this scheduling setup during the REAL program. My schedule was designed so I could attend classes in the morning's and leave campus in the afternoon to work at my off campus job. Of my five courses I had one Black instructor and in that course there was one other Black student. I was excited to say the least, freshman english, last class of my day, Black instructor, another Black student, what could go wrong?

At 18 I was not the best at introducing myself and I was a commuter student, meaning I did not live on campus. Being a commuter made it hard to truly feel a part of the University community as well as meet people. I recall sitting in what would become my favorite college course two seats away from the only other Black student in the class. This was my last class of the day and my energy was running low. I looked up and over from my desk and made eye contact with my Black classmate. Upon eye contact I knew I could approach them. I walk over to the stranger and say "you got any snacks?". They laugh, say no and introduce themselves. I respond with a joke and introduce myself as well, then return to my seat. Every

class thereafter we sat together and each brought different snacks. We dubbed ourselves “The Snack Crew”.

Like any good professor, our professor takes notice of our connection and leans into us throughout the course. Checking in on us regarding our campus experience, workloads and life. It felt as though each piece of work I submitted was thoroughly reviewed and when the work was completed quickly, it was often noticed and questioned indirectly. I would walk in and hear “did you have to work late this week? or how is your mother doing?”. The only two reasons at the age of 18 that prevented me from engaging in college properly. At the time I did not know that was the professor's way of letting me know my work was less than, but as the semester winded down it became clearer. I thought the professor was simply making small talk because we were both Black. Ignoring the fact that every assignment I turned in related to the biggest pieces of my life, work and my mother. As the semester winded down and I enrolled in new courses I began to recognize that I was more than a name to that professor. Ben Kissam shares the importance of professor and student connections, stating that students are more likely to perform well in class when they share a connection with the instructor. That is exactly what the three of us had, a connection. In that space, the bad had been absolved, I was safe, we were safe, we had each other.

Not all of my time at St. Thomas was spent in classrooms or lecture halls. I had remained close with my REAL program crew. There was a space across from the University’s office of Diversity where you could always find a group of non-Caucasian students laughing, playing music and using the computers. This space was connected to the University’s campus life office and simply referred to as “there”. Whenever you passed a student of color on campus, or were planning to meet you would often hear, “you going

there” “what time are you going there” or “let’s meet there”. No conversation was needed to know what “there” was. It was our safe space where we could show up in a manner that was not seen as the typical St. Thomas norm- quietly studying. At any given moment passerbys could hear a variety of things coming from that space from dancing to singing, rapping to snoring, even slap boxing from time to time. I am unsure why or how that space became the space for students of marginalized backgrounds but I credit that space for keeping me afloat at St. Thomas.

There were several traumatizing racial events that occurred at St. Thomas during my college career. Like clockwork every Black History Month (February), the University would boast their diversity and appreciation for Black contributions through posters and signage. Every year I spent at St. Thomas, posters depicting Black historians, professors and/or students were defaced. Often spray painted or ripped down and never replaced after the defiling. Year after year I noticed members of the University community spread hate on campus postings writing “Nigger” “Hate” “Die” or simply crossing out the image of a Black person. Again, St. Thomas is a private Catholic University, full of affluent students and a large campus security staff. Incident after incident non-caucasian students would voice their concerns regarding the hate and their safety on campus only to receive the same message, “we do not have cameras in that area”. While I know I did not believe that message, I also know I did not have the knowledge at that time to combat that, so I did what I had to do, focused on my studies and limited my time on campus.

As a commuter student I had the luxury to come and go as I pleased. Many of my REAL crew friends and new friends from campus did not have the same luxury. I used to feel as though I was missing out when I would leave campus to go to work or home until one of

my peers living on campus shared a message she found on her dorm room door when she woke up. The note read “go home nigger”, full disclosure the recipient of the note was a quarter Black, quarter Dominican and half caucasian. She often passed as White and was a Biology major. To our small group of non-caucasian peers this incident was odd. If she is viewed that way, how are we viewed as we are multiple shades darker than her. Collectively we were uneasy for a week. The University rectified the situation by moving her to a dorm on the other side of campus. Again, at the time we did not know how to stand up in this situation, now I think to myself “why would you move? You’re the victim”.

A semester had gone by and another incident occurred during finals week. This time the note was found on a first generation Somali student's door, it read “Die nigger”. Unfortunately we had become used to hate crimes early during our St. Thomas college career and knew how to proceed. Take a picture, call campus security, if you feel safe stay there if not meet in a safe space, same instructions different phone call. As always campus security did not have footage of the area and could not identify who was in the building or when the note was left. Looking back, I probably could have figured it out given the fact that you had to swipe into the building to gain entry, more than likely rode the elevator up to the room, and it was finals week so very few students were still on campus. As expected, the student was moved to a new room, this time in the same dormitory and college life went on as usual.

The remainder of my time at St. Thomas was spent in classes led by old Caucasian men and women with the exception of an Arabic Theology course I took my junior year. I will never forget that course, for several reasons. Primarily because the professor was not white, but also because I witnessed first hand the privilege my classmates and their parents had. This professor was a non-native English speaker and our textbook was The Holy Qur’an

(with English translations). I was not interested in the course and only took it because of the class day and time. As a Catholic college four years of Theology was required. During this course the professor would read aloud the entire class and our assignments would relate to what was read in class. If you completed the work at all you would get a grade of a B and if you completed the work correctly you would receive a letter grade of an A. Let me tell you, now at the age of 20 and ready to be done, I was content with receiving multiple letter B grades in this course.

Nearing semester's end, I began to hear rumblings of the Arabic teacher being investigated and potentially released from his position. Again, not really interested in the course I did not pay much attention to my classmates on a regular basis. I do recall the class being full of Caucasian students outside of me. One class session, during a small group the females I was paired with were talking about a petition they signed to get the professor fired. I was confused. I was not aware that this was an option, because I can name a few staff members that I would have gladly petitioned to be removed from the University. My group continued to discuss the concerns with the instructor, noting that they are not receiving a letter grade of A on all of their assignments and that they do not understand the professor because he "doesn't speak English". I could not relate to any of their concerns. I understood enough of what the professor was saying to receive a letter grade of B in that course and the instructor owed me nothing more.

I wish that was the case with my classmates. The Arabic professor was investigated by the University at the hands of my classmates and their parents. At the time, I had no feelings towards the situation, but I now recognize what was going on in this situation. St. Thomas is full of Caucasian, financially well off, privileged individuals. Those who do not fit

this description do not belong. How did I not see this incident after incident? While I do not know the true outcome of said professor's time at St. Thomas, I do hope he finds a safe space as St. Thomas is not one.

### **A New Trauma**

The University of St. Thomas introduced me to a level of trauma that I had never experienced in my life. St. Thomas was my first adult experience of the "real world", where I was outnumbered, overlooked and did not matter. With this baggage I began my career in K-12 education. I obtained my first teaching job because I graduated from the University of St. Thomas. The director of the school was a St. Thomas alum and played on the football team. Much of my interview was spent discussing how great St. Thomas was. I smiled and engaged in conversation. I wanted a full time job with benefits. Like magic, I was hired, no mention of my experience, qualifications or expectations. The name on my diploma proved to be more than enough. I am now a K-6 physical education teacher. Looking back, that experience is disheartening. I struggle knowing that I let myself be reduced to the name of a college after I struggled for so long to be called by my own name at that same college. That was my day one of letting the system win. In this space the system wins anytime I lessen myself to advance professionally.

Teaching as a whole was a traumatic experience for me. There were good times, but for every good time the bad times increased tenfold. I do not deny entering the teaching field young and naive. I was loud, enthusiastic, energetic and hard working, all of the characteristics needed to be a successful physical education teacher. It was my third year teaching when the Black female principal at my school approached me on various occasions regarding my clothing and hair. As a physical education teacher I prided myself on wearing a

variety of comfortable workout outfits with matching shoes and a ponytail in my hair. I valued being able to model appropriate gym attire as well as have the ability to perform any activity I ask my students to perform.

I was casually pulled into the main office to speak with the principal. I was excited, I imagined it would be an empowering experience as we were both Black women in education working together which is rare. I was wrong. The principal had invited me in for casual conversation and during the conversation mentioned my clothing. She suggested that I wear khaki pants and a cardigan to work in an effort to look more professional. She held this conversation with me under the pretense of “looking out for me” “so I would be successful in the field”. I recall calling my mom and crying because my boss said I should dress differently and if I don’t comply I could possibly be fired. Per usual, I let the system win.

I began wearing khaki pants and cardigans daily to teach elementary children physical education. I was sweating through my light colored pants and burning up in long sleeve cardigans, but my superior who looked like me said this would get me far professionally. Soon thereafter I was part of another casual conversation. This time the subject was my hair. It was suggested that I wear my hair straight and not in a ponytail “because parents don’t take you seriously because you look young”. Again, this comment was sandwiched between compliments and relayed under the notion of being helpful. I refrained from calling my mom this time, instead I spent hours straightening my hair to look older and professional.

I showed up to work the next week with straight hair, khaki pants and a cardigan. I was ready to please my superior. I wish I knew then what I know now. I now know that my Black female principal had experienced the educational system that I had entered. Like me she aspired to develop and be promoted within the system. Looking back, I see that the

expectations she put in the space for me were expectations that had been relayed to her by the system. The idea that one must present in a certain way in order to be seen or advance professionally. The same ideas that are perpetuated currently in educational leadership. The unspoken norm that to be professional one must wear a specific style of clothing and wear their hair straight. Clothing and hairstyles often presented by White people are still silently deemed professional in educational leadership.

I lost myself early in my teaching career when I let my Black female principal encourage me to not be myself in the guise of a mentor and I made a commitment to myself to never cause the same harm I experienced in that moment. Unfortunately the trauma continued. While teaching I worked under a variety of principals, male, female, Black, White, and Asian. In all my years, my name was only properly pronounced by one principal. A caucasian woman. I had gone so many years correcting superiors and colleagues that I began to retreat during work hours. I stayed in my space, a safe space. I was still energetic and full of enthusiasm with my students but rarely in large group settings with my colleagues.

A Black female colleague of mine noticed my energy and passion for education and invited me to a casual conversation with her and our Teacher's Union President. In this conversation I was invited to be the building Union Steward because I was a "firecracker". Being the young naive teacher that I was, I willingly accepted the offer. I never asked why me? And not one of the many more senior staff. As time went on I began working closely with the Teachers Union and seemingly losing the respect of the various administrators that had come and gone from my school. I had changed my clothing, my hair, and my instruction and classroom management received high marks in all of my evaluations. It came time for

my final evaluation before receiving tenure (marking permanency in my teaching career). I sat down with the now Black male principal and reviewed my scores. I received consistent high marks in many categories until we reached an area with unexpectedly low marks.

I had received poor marks in professional domains. The principal noted that “several of my White colleagues report that I am cold and do not speak to them”. I was shocked. I worked closely with all of the classroom teachers to ensure that my lessons were aligned with their classroom curriculum and often did favors for many of the teachers. No teacher had ever relayed any ill feelings towards me or spoken to me about any issues with me. I let the principal know that given that information I will be searching for a new building. I finally beat the system, so I thought.

Looking back, I should not have resigned. I was the victim, much like my peers at St. Thomas when they received hate notes. I should have encouraged the administrator to help fix the harm that was caused by these false accusations. I should have encouraged the administrator to support me in this situation that reminds me of how the privileged students attempted to get rid of the Arabic teacher at St. Thomas. Why were the comments of my White colleagues holding more weight than my own? Why was my effectiveness as a teacher in question because my White colleagues are uncomfortable?

### **Trauma Overload**

With every notable experience I have had in my adult life I make a commitment to do better than what was done to me. One of many commitments I made during the trauma was to continue my education and pursue educational leadership. I set out to obtain my K-12 Administrative license at Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Upon completion I began searching for administrative positions. I applied to a district in which I was familiar

and did not land an interview to get into the Principal candidate pool. I chalked that up to not having any experience in education outside of the classroom. So I left the classroom. I needed more experience so I would be a viable candidate. I landed a job in a suburban school district as a Dean of Students. After a year as a Dean of Students I continued my journey to principalship.

I applied to a district I was familiar with. This time I made it into the Principal candidate pool. Unfortunately, I did not make it past the second round of interviews. I remember being in the group interview, engaging in a fishbowl conversation with two White males and an Asian male. I was the only female and the only Black person. The interview was held by an Asian male and three of his White colleagues. I was well prepared for this interview, spent the entire weekend being coached and questioned by current principals in the district. As it was a group interview I heard the answers the other candidates were sharing and noticed their answers were not aligned with the district's values and needs as I was coached to do. We left the group interview and moved onto a written portion. The prompt was on coaching and discipline data. One I was more versed in than the other but I watched the Asian male struggle to type a paragraph in length for the two questions. I was not selected for principalship that year, the Asian man was selected. The system wins again.

I was still eligible for the Assistant Principal candidate pool so I was hopeful. I received a call inviting me to an interview in mid June. It was an interview for a middle school Assistant Principal position. I had no middle school experience, but possessed the desire to learn and knew people. I was offered the position. I would begin the school year as a middle school Assistant Principal. In this position I was a part of a three person team. The principal a White woman, my Assistant Principal colleague a White male, and myself made

up the administrative team. This position unexpectedly became available when the school's Black male assistant principal suddenly gained principalship. I was doubly excited during this time! I had gained an assistant principal position and a Black man had gained principalship, it felt great to be Black in education that day- we both beat the system.

The joy did not last long, reality began to set in. I stepped into my new role as an assistant principal ready to lean into my relationship building skills and become as successful in administration as I was in the classroom. However, the first five months as an assistant principal challenged my ability to build meaningful relationships. The first five months of my administrative career were during distance learning- no in person interactions, all virtual. All training I received prior to leading my new team of staff was held virtually, often with cameras off. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to connect with the two other members of my administrative team in person where I was able to get a sense of direction. For perspective, I was the youngest, darkest, and least experienced person at the table in every space I entered- both virtually and physically. Because of this, I found myself journaling my journey in effort to combat my rising stress levels. As noted by James Pennebaker professor and author, “there is now strong scientific evidence to suggest that writing about emotional upheavals or conflicts in your life can improve your health and your outlook on life”. The following journal entries allowed me to release the harmful experiences from my mind.

I entered the school building for the first time since being hired. I was nervous but ready. I arrived early to make a good first impression. This plan quickly backfired, upon arrival I was unable to gain entrance into the building. I flashed my badge in front of the badge access reader forwards, backwards, upside down, quickly, and held it on the reader to no avail. My first experience onsite made me feel as though I did not belong. Confused as to

why I was given a badge with no access, I rang the doorbell and requested to be let in. I introduced myself through the video doorbell and was granted access. I was met in the main office by my direct supervisor and the main clerk. Both older white women, both warm and welcoming. I was given keys and shown my new office. I spent some time in my new space, appropriately named “The Penthouse”, I was housed at the highest point of the building all alone. If only I would have known this would soon become the theme of my administrative career.

The first large task I was assigned was to contact one third of the incoming 6th graders and welcome them and their family to the new year and answer any questions they may have. I had very few answers for these families as I myself was new to this school this year as well but I was excited to begin building relationships with families. I worked my way through my list of over sixty students and families, leaving voicemails for many introducing myself and providing them with the necessary information for the first day of virtual learning for the school year. This task was in my wheelhouse, I needed no coaching on how to connect with students and families.

August, 12, 2020 I attended my first Administrator Academy. I was excited, nervous, and ready to learn. This training was held from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM virtually. In that time my camera was on for approximately five minutes as new leaders were introduced. This practice confused me. As a newcomer I wanted to see faces so I could put a face with a name and the different schools. I was made aware that cameras are off during the meetings due to bandwidth limitations- if all cameras were on the virtual meeting would lag, freeze or possibly crash. I was grateful to be given that information so I could make sure when I entered the virtual meetings my camera was off so I did not draw attention to myself for not

knowing the expectations. I attended this meeting in my direct supervisors office with both her and my colleague- also an assistant principal. It was at this moment that I received the first indirect message letting me know that the administrative meetings are not important. During this day-long meeting my team and I all logged in separately and turned our cameras off while we prepared for the school year. We divided tasks for the year, staff, scheduled various things for opening week and more. I was shocked, but I followed along so as not to make waves. I regret not inquiring as to why we were not engaging with the training, but I stayed in my place and followed the veterans lead. After all, my direct supervisor had already printed the meeting slides to reference if needed.

As August came to an end I received an email notifying me that I had been assigned a coach. This coach would meet with me for two hours a month beginning in September, through the end of the school year and was a retired Black female administrator. Thinking of the years I spent teaching- having a coach seemed normal and made sense. I immediately reached out to the coach to schedule my first two hours. I was advised to connect with my coach after the first two weeks of school as the workload would be overwhelming the first few weeks of school. I agreed and scheduled my first session for late September.

My first week as an administrator with staff began August 31st and ran through September 4th. I was introduced to the staff for the first time, roughly seventy names appeared on the call. While having your camera off was not a stated expectation all cameras were off except for the administrative team. I was not tasked with much for opening week. As we were virtual my role was primarily handling technology and delivering bits and pieces of information as needed- both of which are in my wheelhouse. As the week progressed I was able to connect with my new team of staff and do what I do best- build relationships.

My team consisted of eight 6th grade teachers. Of the eight all but two had been at this school for less than three years. Many had joined this community the same year and bonded over that connection. Initially I was excited to lead a team of staff that were also new to the building, I saw this as an opportunity to learn and grow together as a team. As we moved through initial icebreakers and introductions I quickly realized the dynamic of the team was negative. There was a clear divide. Half of the team followed one of the more seasoned team members while the other half went with the flow. Our first team meeting did not go as expected. I had planned to deliver expectations, schedules, create sub committees within the group and templates for our team website. In our allotted one hour meeting time we did not get past ice breakers and assigning roles. I ended up sending the remainder of the necessary information via email and notifying my team that I would be available during the last three hours of the work day if they would like to pop into a Google Meet to discuss the information in the email or further the community building we began earlier in the day.

Opening-week comes to an end and distance learning begins. The school day is condensed, with very little live instruction. Teachers are expected to host live instruction three or four times a day depending on the day of the week. Contractually teachers were to post all lessons on Schoology (a learning management system used by schools) for students to access at all times. Teachers were instructed not to deliver new content during live class as all students may not be able to attend live class. As a result, the majority of my 6th grade teachers accessed their Schoology pages during their live class and pressed play on their embedded lesson and sent the students off to work independently. As we mulled through the first few weeks of school I began hearing comments regarding my presence and ability to fill the shoes of my predecessor.

As we were virtual, many remarks would come via email or in the comments. To my surprise during a team meeting my team began to argue. I had recognized the divide, but was unaware of the severity. One of the newer teachers was challenging a comment made by a senior teacher who had a following on the team. I was not trained on how to handle this situation. Two men, both my senior, arguing in a Google Meet over a comment made regarding classroom expectations. As I interjected to reclaim the meeting, one team member felt this moment was the perfect opportunity to let me and everyone else on the team know how racist the practices and community is in this building. I took note of the comment and pushed forward. My voice shook as I continued the meeting following the agenda.

I was confused and unsure if I handled the situation properly. I emailed both participants in the argument to check in and reached out to my direct supervisor for historical context and feedback on how to handle this group effectively. I received little feedback and told how my predecessor led the team. My predecessor was a Black man, something I will never be. I began to question if the argument would have happened had I been a male? Would I have received direction or feedback from my direct supervisor if I was a male? Why am I trying to figure everything out on my own?

Three weeks into the school year and I already felt all alone. I called the coach assigned to me, I was nervous. Would this be beneficial or would this be a waste of my time? My coach asked me what my strengths were, so I rattled them off. My responses were met with “where are you with building relationships three weeks into distance learning, and what roadblocks are you experiencing?” Building relationships is one of my strengths but I am struggling immensely at the moment.

I continued to struggle. It was no secret that I was experiencing various bouts of

racism within the school building and various district offices. I reached out to a Black woman in the district for help. I had watched her navigate the White system for many years when I was a teacher. I trusted her, and knew she would provide me with tools and a realistic perspective. I did not have to fear that her actions were dictated by the system as many prior mentors had demonstrated. She scheduled bi-weekly check-ins with me, gave me tools to navigate situations and provided me with scenarios to complete. It was no match for the mounting trauma.

Throughout the year, colleagues continued to mispronounce my name regardless of how many times I corrected them. Small instances like mispronouncing my name began to build up. I vividly recall two separate incidents that left me feeling unsupported and less than as an administrator in a space that promotes inclusion. One incident occurred at my own office, the Penthouse. I walked out of my office to meet with my colleagues on the first floor. After returning to my office I noticed that my keys were sitting on my desk and the door was locked. Instead of returning to the first floor I found the lead custodian, a white male one level down from my office. I asked if he could let me into my office because I left my keys on my desk and the door locked behind me. He looked at me and kept walking. I continued to follow him, stepped in front of him as he pushed a trash can and repeated myself. This time calling him by his name, I told him I was the assistant principal and needed assistance getting into my office. He reluctantly walked up to my office and as he opened the door he saw images of me on the wall and said “Oh, I thought you were a student”.

During this time we were in distance learning and there had been no students in the building. I had met the lead custodian numerous times as he helped me move into my new space. I was visibly frustrated. I packed my belongings and went to my supervisor. I shared

with her what I just experienced and her response was “he’s old”. Not the response I expected or deserved. In my mind, as a school employee you do not ignore a student. So even if he had mistaken me for a student, why would you ignore a lone kid in an empty school? I had so many questions. My concerns mounted as my supervisor failed to properly support me during this time. I leaned into my peers, a group of Black assistant principals that began their journey to principalship alongside me. They affirmed my belief that the incident was harmful and needs repairing. Feeling unseen by the custodian and unheard by my supervisor, I began documenting similar experiences as they occurred.

The next situation arose via email. As the assistant principal I was tasked with sending various communications to all building staff regarding the constant changes brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. I crafted a thorough email regarding the end of distance learning and the beginning of students having the option to attend school on site for four hours a day once a week. I also relayed information regarding how days would be selected for students with and without siblings, daily schedules and rooms being used for this model, and transportation lists. Shortly after I pressed send I received a reply from a vocal White female teacher. I opened the email and quickly realized that the message was typed in all caps. In the email the White teacher told me how in her ten years of teaching she had never had to be responsible for communicating student transportation to students or families. The email went on to explain to me that I am an administrator and what my job duties entail.

I forwarded the email to my supervisor and walked down to her office to discuss the situation. My supervisor struggled to see the issue on both ends. She did not see where the teacher was coming from and did not understand why I needed support. As a Black woman, I take offense to being emailed in all caps and being told what I should be doing. I shared with

my supervisor that as a Black woman I would never have the gull to email my superior in all caps, let alone telling them what their duties are. My supervisor could not relate. I was told the email would go into the teacher's file and she would be called in for a conversation. Again, not the support I needed. I reached out to the trusted Black woman I had connected with. She provided me with tools to examine what was causing my frustration and how to move forward. Knowing I had to continue to engage with the teacher and continue to work under my supervisor I utilized various tools to help me exist in an unsafe space. I eventually replied to the email letting the teacher know that I am available to meet and discuss my communication further if needed. I felt like I had won because I wanted to go back and forth with the teacher regarding responsibilities, but I did not. However, I also lessened myself by not standing up for myself regarding appropriate communication. The system won.

While there was no shortage in traumatizing experiences during my first year of educational administration, the above situations remain at the forefront of my journey. Throughout my experiences and research I searched for similar accounts from Black women in educational administration and found few documented sources. This further demonstrates the need for this study, my experiences are not isolated events and deserve to be examined. After all I have experienced, I continued my journey to principalship.

### **The Illustrious Trauma**

I began my first year as Principal at a small elementary school. Covid-19 continued to evolve, but I was leading in-person full-time. By this time I had found my leadership style, my voice and my people. On opening day I was visible, energetic, and proud. I knew my purpose, how I wanted to develop others, and that I was the right person for this position. As a new leader, I wanted to exude confidence and humanity into my staff. I had set many goals,

most unattainable for senior administrators let alone a year two administrator. I wanted to connect and engage with every member of my staff. I wanted to make sure every staff member knew I valued them as individuals and that I view them as professionals, masters of their work. As easy as this sounded in my head, I quickly realized that everyone responds to being seen differently. I wanted everyone to know that I see them, something I never felt in my ten years of teaching. I was confident that if my staff knew that I see them as individuals, they would accept me to lead them. It would become an ongoing ping pong match. Every coaching conversation, engaging and relevant presentation I delivered, communication I pushed out, time I spent listening and more would give me more points to be seen as an acceptable leader.

I entered opening day in my “admin clothes” as many members of my staff would tell me throughout the year. I was noticeably still triggered by comments on my clothing, for me, it was just a pair of Gap pants and a matching knit blazer. Not far off from my authentic style, but surely not my preferred choice in clothing. I listened to those before me in regard to my appearance for this position. I look young, dress trendy and was often mistaken for a student during my first year so I had committed to presenting myself differently for year two. I learned early in both teaching and administration that it is easier to loosen the reins than it is to tighten them. I had learned to naturally hold the reins tight as a teacher, and now as an administrator. So I thought.

I sent out numerous emails, communications via the web and text, message boards, paper, and face to face. I committed myself to arriving at the building two hours before my staff’s contracted start time. This would allow me to prepare for the day and catch up on any tasks uninterrupted, but also be available for any staff member needing to connect prior to the

start of the day. To my surprise, if you invite them they will come. It was early the morning of the first day of school, I sat at my desk feverishly reviewing documents regarding student arrival, duties and schedules for the day. A teacher walks in to speak with me, I take this as an opportunity for me to gain another point toward being seen as a leader. As I sip my coffee the older white female appears in my doorway, “good morning, I have a question”. I greet the staff member and let her know I have an answer. “You said that all classroom teachers should greet students at their classroom doors, how can I monitor the students that enter if I am standing at the door?” I hold my imaginary reins tight and respond quickly with there will be additional staff in your room and throughout the building to support arrival and dismissal today. I smiled. She returned my smile and let me know she was unaware of that information. I held my smile and with a shaky voice I said, “I understand, I will not ask you to do anything you cannot do.”

First day, first interaction, 90 minutes before the day is slated to begin and I am already being questioned. Frustration began to rise as I began to question myself. If this teacher had a question, does everyone else have the same question? Was my communication unclear? How can I be seen as a leader if I cannot communicate clearly? I shook my concerns of unclear communication and continued to lead to the best of my ability. This visceral reaction would later be categorized as imposter syndrome. As noted by psychologists Pauline R. Clance and Suzanne A. Imes, I was internally experiencing intellectual phoniness while being fully capable based on my achievements. I was faced with sudden changes due to the Covid-19 virus, this time affecting staffing. Many days I was left to operate a building with minimal staff. Both licensed and unlicensed. While the district implemented a plan to cover licensed teachers in their absence, the bulk of my staff were non-classroom teachers so I

rarely received the necessary support to safely operate the school.

Three months into the school year it was announced that my school would be closing at the end of the year. The school had been up for closure many times, but this was the year. The announcement of the school closure brought mixed feelings amongst the school community. Both staff and families had questions that there simply were no answers to. There was no concrete information. My hands were tied in this situation. Frustrations grew and staff and families took their frustrations out on me. Many staff stopped showing up to work, meeting deadlines, replying to communications and meeting simple day to day expectations. Families began to make comments referencing “the district” and directing them at me. I fully accepted the responsibility of representing the district in this role. I worked to help families reach an understanding in this situation to no avail at no fault of my own. Ultimately the lack of support and understanding drove me to resign from my position and school district.

### **Summary**

The goal of this autoethnographic study is to provide readers with my personal account of the road to principalship as a Black woman. Structured interviews, with four participants (including myself), will be utilized. I am seeking to obtain descriptive supporting information from Black women holding administrative licenses in the state of Minnesota, surrounding their experiences on their journey to principalship to support my research through common themes.

Chapter two will give a literature review, pertinent to this study which include societal race and gender stereotypes that hinder authentic leadership. Women in leadership and Black women in leadership, and various perspectives of the barriers Black women face

in the advancement of education and educational leadership.

Chapter three outlines the methodology to be used, the instruments, the data collection process and analysis of data.

## **Chapter II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Review of the Research Literature**

#### **Overview of the Literature Review**

Chapter one provided a rationale for studying the topic of Black women in educational leadership. In effort to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed administrative licenses?
2. What are the perceived barriers and challenges for Black women in educational leadership?

There is limited research in this area as this chapter will demonstrate. The aims of the literature review include to describe, analyze, and synthesize both theories and empirical findings relevant to the topic of Black women in administrative positions at the K-12 level. According to Marshall & Rossman (1999), “the literature review has four broad functions which include: (a) underlying assumptions behind general questions, (b) demonstrates the researcher is knowledgeable of related research that supports the study, (c) demonstrates ability to identify gaps in previous research, and (d) further definition of the research question” (p. 43). Recurring themes became apparent during the search of relevant literature on Black women in educational leadership. The recurring themes found and included in this literature review include the history of Black females in education and educational leadership, barriers of Black women in educational leadership, gender stereotypes in leadership, implicit bias and the tenets of Critical Race Theory. These topics are the framework around the above listed research questions. The topics and themes selected influenced the interview questions in this study (see Appendix ). Beginning the literature

review is the topic of the history of Black women in educational leadership.

### **Historical Perspective: Black Women in Education**

The history of education for Blacks in America began during antebellum slavery, as Black slaves attempted to learn to read and write on their own. Rarely did free Blacks receive education in the South. In the North, free blacks were permitted to attend integrated Sabbath and public schools (Collier-Thomas, 1982). It was not until the nineteenth century that Black women gained recognition or status in the teaching field. During these times, both teaching and learning were deemed dangerous for Black women as they were not yet afforded education. Against the barriers before them; Black, women, slaves, many were not deterred. Multiple findings show both the tenacity of black women pursuing education, and the dangerous nature of the pursuit.

While most of the schools post-Reconstruction South were founded by northern Whites (McCluskey, 1997), there are less documented schools started by African American women specifically for African American girls and women. Black women school founders of the late 19th and early 20th century include Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Fanny Jackson Coppin (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). While all three women held different educational philosophies, all were united in the belief of African American women assuming the initiative in educating themselves and their people (Jackson and Thomas, 2007).

#### **Nannie Helen Burroughs**

Nannie Helen Burroughs was born in Orange, Virginia in 1879 and graduated from high school in Washington, DC. Burroughs entered national leadership at the age of 21 when she delivered her speech to the annual conference of the National Baptist Convention in

Richmond, Virginia. The speech entitled “How the Sisters are Hindered from Helping”, served as a force to form one of the largest Black women’s organizations in the United States, the Woman’s Convention (Jackson & Thomas, 2007).

It was through the National Baptist Convention and the Woman’s Convention that Nannie Helen Burroughs received the endorsement after years of persistent effort to open the National Training School for Women and Girls in 1909 in Lincoln Heights, Washington, DC. The school began with merely 31 students, but nearly twenty five years later over 2000 students had attended the high school (Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

### **Mary McLeod Bethune**

Mary McLeod Bethune has been credited “in the entire history of blacks, [to have] set a record of influence that no one has yet approached” (Berry, 1982). Bethune is one of a number of Black women who serve as an exemplary model of school leadership. Under her leadership thousands of Black students went to high school and college (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Bethune built her own educational institution despite her lack of educational experience and resources. She started her own school in Daytona, Florida, (1904) which later became Bethune-Cookman College. The dedication of Bethune allowed her school to be known as a rallying point for Black people. Her institution served as a meeting place for the community where forums and conferences were held in regard to important issues pertaining to the improvement of Black lives in the community.

Bethune’s reputation in education led her to being appointed to the advisory board of the National Youth Administration (NYA) by President Franklin Roosevelt. Bethune held the position of Director of NYA’s Office of Minority Affairs, a position created especially for her.

Historically, women never dominated in positions of school leadership. An understanding of the history of Black women's experiences in and with education is necessary to understanding the current state of experiences of Black women in educational administration.

### **Fanny Jackson Coppin**

The first African American woman who served as principal of a school in the United States was Fanny Jackson Coppin, a former slave who became principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia in 1865 (Perkins, 1982). Coppin was not only the first African American female principal, but also the first African American female to serve as superintendent of a school district (Perkins, 1982). While Coppin pioneered in both positions, most of her career as an educational leader was spent as a principal, as mentioned by Perkins.

Coppin's pioneering role was not immediately met with a rise in African American female principals. The United States did not see another African American female principal until 33 years later in 1898. At that time New York City had its first African American female principal, Gertrude Elise Ayer (Johnson, 2006). New York continued to lead the way in the appointment of African American female principals. After Ayer, there was a gap of over half a century until the appointment of New York City's next African American female principal, Margaret Douglas (Pollak, 2009). Records indicate that, as late as 1966, there were only six African American principals in New York, of whom Douglas was the only woman (Pollak, 2009). However, by 1969, there were 35 African American principals in New York City (Pollak, 2009).

Years after the aforementioned Black women founded and led Black educational institutions, America entered the Civil Rights Era in the late 1960's, at that time the

opportunity for Black female principals seemingly expanded. The National Center for Education Statistics conducted a survey (McFarland et. al, 2018) in 2017 that disclosed that 10.5% of all principals in the United States, or 9,570 principals, reported being African American. Women comprise approximately 84% of the teaching workforce in public schools in the United States, while female leaders only comprise approximately 29% of principalships in public schools and within the 29% African American women only hold 10% of said principalships (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007-2008). Women are “overrepresented in teaching” but “underrepresented in administration” (Shakeshaft, 1994, p.100). The irony is women are the majority of students enrolled in educational administration programs (Shakeshaft, 1990).

As stated earlier, there are few Black women in educational leadership positions however, many state that their desire to move into administration was fueled largely by their belief that children, teachers, parents, and school districts would all benefit from increased numbers of Black women administrators. The opportunity to make an important contribution was their most highly valued reward, although they were not unconcerned about the monetary advantages of administration relative to teaching (Allen et al., 1995). Blacks have been underrepresented in school administration (Brown, 2005). The presence of African American professionals in the school system is crucial to the development of and success of African American students (Brown, 2000). African American principals use similarities in cultural experiences with urban students, particularly African American students, both sources of caring and communication and as the basis for demanding high standards of achievement (Pollard, 1997). These similarities and common attributes shared by African American educational leaders and African American students allow a connection to be

formed, and a bond to be made with the overall objective centered around student success and achievement (Lomotey, 1993).

### **Barriers of Black Women in Educational Leadership**

African American women have been discriminated against in all aspects of society throughout history including the field of education (Marshall & Kasten, 1994). Because they (Black women) have been so few in number, there is precious little research about African American women in educational administration, their professional aspirations, the obstacles they confront as they pursue their goals, and the roles of mentors and sponsors in advancing their careers (Allen et al., 1995). Researchers identify the existence of barriers as a contributing factor to the under-representation of women in educational leadership positions. As noted by Rossman (2000) barriers are variables that impede the advancement of women into administrative positions. According to Harris et al., (2002), identifying the problems that women in educational leadership face is an important component in the process of increasing opportunity for women who seek advancement. Most of the literature acknowledges women in educational administration have had barriers that have made it difficult for them to obtain administrative positions in educational leadership (Tallerico, 2000) Jones and Montenegro (1983) suggested the barriers against minorities in school administration exist and can be more overwhelming than the barriers faced by women in general. Valverde (2003) declared that women and minorities are excluded from positions not because they lack competence, but rather because they are a deviation from the status-quo.

Historically the glass ceiling effect has been an identified barrier for women, this is particularly true for women of color. As found by researcher Tulshyan (2015), the glass ceiling doesn't work for us (p. 1). The interviewee went on to describe it as a "concrete

ceiling”. Not only is the concrete ceiling reported to be more difficult to penetrate, but women of color say they cannot see through it to glimpse the corner office (Tulshyan, 2015). Numerous researchers have both experienced and studied the barriers that many women face when seeking educational leadership positions. Female researchers, Arriaga et al., (2020), categorize the institutional barriers women face as follows:

- Being unaware of the school or district’s need to adapt to having women leaders at all levels
- Denying the existence of sexism and gender inequities as systemic oppression
- Denying the existence of systemic privilege and entitlement that favors male leaders
- Resisting change that aids in attracting, recruiting, and mentoring women in leadership positions

(Lambert & Gardner, 2009) found numerous barriers that got in the way of women as educational leaders. Over a decade later, many of the same barriers still exist:

- Isolation: Breaking the mold is lonely work.
- Multiple roles: Competing demands of family and work; long hours; perceived tension.
- Absence of role models: Being quiet; fearing the show of emotions; wondering about unwritten ambiguous dress codes.
- Master narrative: Pleasing others and caring for others.
- Male-dominated culture: Being harassed; being joked about; being quiet; being fired for no cause.
- Continued absence of health and family care: Fearing women’s health issues; fearing gender identity and sexual harassment.

## **Mentoring**

The absence of role models has been cited as a barrier Black women face in educational leadership. Mentoring and sponsoring are said to be two of the most important strategies utilized by women for career advancement. According to Allen et al., (1995) there is no denying the importance of mentors and sponsors in the socialization and success of aspiring educational administrators. Arriaga et al., (2020), define mentor as an experienced, well-seasoned veteran educational leader who imparts knowledge and personal experiences to women leaders who have been identified as candidates for future executive level positions.

Young & McLeod (2001) state that women, more so than men, require encouragement to pursue careers in administration (p. 484). Grove and Montgomery maintained similarly to Young and McLeod that “in order for women to succeed in acquiring administrative positions in education mentoring must occur.”

## **Gender Stereotypes**

Logan (1998) stated “today’s schools open a window of opportunity for women to move into educational administration” (p. 1). Women are steadily more prepared, and are obtaining the necessary credentials to apply for educational administration positions, and often make it to the final round of interviews as one of three top candidates. However, societal perceptions and myths regarding gender continue to prevent qualified and motivated female aspirants from obtaining principalships (Shakeshaft, 1990).

The literature on gender and administration suggests gender influences access and entry into positions of school leadership as a result of discrimination and role expectations (Smulyan, 2000). Men were thought to possess leadership traits more suitable for leadership while women possessed traits more suitable for teaching (Harris et al., 2002). Gender is a

deterrent to the advancement of women in educational leadership as gender roles identify women with the home and the care of children and men with the working environment (Young & McLeod, 2001).

### **Selection Processes**

The selection and appointment process exacerbates the progression of women and minorities in educational leadership because they overwhelmingly favor men (Gupton & Slick, 1996). Grogan (1999) states that the ways in which leadership positions are filled in educational leadership demonstrates a “gendered” process (p. 529). Grogan adds that these processes have been designed to maintain the predominance of white, middle class men in school administration. In 1994 Shakeshaft noted administrators hire candidates who are like them. While this does not mean that white males are hired exclusively, it does mean that they do not usually hire those who do not share the same leadership style or those whose philosophies differ from the status quo. Shea (1983) acknowledged conservative hiring practices, community sentiments and fit as ways in which the selection process eliminated people who were different because of background, gender, and race. These “filtering methods” are subtle discriminatory methods embedded within recruitment, application, interview and selection criteria and decisions. They reinforce the “unspoken brotherhood of white male barriers” (Long, 2005, p. 24). Many barriers Black women face in educational leadership are explicitly linked to Critical Race Theory.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Critical Race Theory is a theory used to explain and understand the phenomenon known as systemic racism. This framework is important in this study as it invites us to examine policies, practices, traditions and more. Critical Race Theory is an important

framework for this study because it places issues associated with race at the center of US society (Crenshaw 1988). Adopting and adapting Critical Race Theory as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose solutions for addressing it (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Often mentioned alongside Critical Race Theory is implicit bias. According to the Oxford dictionary, bias is the prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another. When bias is unconscious, uncontrollable, or as result of an irrational process, the bias is implicit.

### **Implicit Bias**

Implicit (or unconscious) bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner (Staats et al., 2017), and it emerges from a combination of the way our brains seem to work, and the way we are socialized—some approximation of a synergy of nature and nurture. Reynolds-Dobbs (2007) found that discrimination was a systemic social construct that plagued the lives of women and ethnic minorities. In the corporate world, discrimination took on many forms, from blatant to subtle, thereby creating an environment of stereotyping, questioning authority, exclusion, and lack of cultural fit. According to Gompers & Kovvali (2018), “social science research suggests that people tend to react with anger and irritation when confronted about their biases-particularly when those biases are accurately labeled as such” (p. 3). The researchers stated that behavioral change was possible even though initial awareness of biases was unpleasant. The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (Staats et al., 2017) defines five key characteristics of the attitudes and stereotypes that make up implicit bias. These mind-sets have the following characteristics:

1. Are unconscious and automatic: They are activated without an individuals' intention or control.
2. Are pervasive: Everyone possesses them, even those avowing commitments to impartiality.
3. Do not always align with explicit beliefs: Implicit and explicit biases are generally regarded as related but distinct mental constructs.
4. Have real-world effects on behavior: Significant research has documented real-world effects of implicit bias across domains such as employment, education, and criminal justice, among others.
5. Are malleable: The biases and associations we have formed can be "unlearned" and replaced with new mental associations (p. 10).

### **Critical Race Theory**

Developed by legal scholars in the 1970's (Delgado et al., 2012), critical race theory (CRT) is a framework for analyzing and addressing the connections among race, racism, and power.

Critical theory, critical race theory, and critical pedagogy all sought to challenge the dominant hegemonic practices that oppress marginalized groups in society. Critical theory, critical race theory, and feminist theory, all assume that knowledge is subjective but that society is oppressive (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Critical race theory developed out of a need to confront specific racial issues not addressed by critical theory and critical pedagogy.

Lynn (1999) demonstrated the difference between critical pedagogy and critical race pedagogy as: the daily encounter of racist practices experienced by African American educators which made their positions unique, and a sense of maintaining cultural identity by teaching children about African American cultural experiences. Lynn argued further for a

liberating pedagogy, which challenged the dominant European epistemology.

Ladson-Billings (1999) stated, “there are well developed systems of knowledge, or epistemologies that stand in contrast to the dominant Euro-American epistemology” (p.258).

In order to better understand and confront the problems associated with race and racism, a form of emancipatory dialogue was needed.

### **Critical Race Theory Tenets**

#### **Racism is Ordinary**

Raskin et al., (2021) state “rather than an atypical or unusual phenomenon, racism is business as usual, the way things are, a fact of life that oppresses people of color everyday.” “Because white experience/perspective permeates and dominates society as the “norm” and white Americans do not face disadvantages based on their race, racism is largely unacknowledged” (p.58).

#### **Interest Convergence**

As presented by Raskin et al., many examples can be found in history demonstrating “that civil rights victories for Blacks are achieved only when the interests of Blacks and whites converge.” (p. 57). This theory argues “that white people will *only* promote racial justice for Blacks and other nonwhite people when they see some benefit in it for themselves” (p. 58). A famous historical example of this tenet includes, Bell (1995) contended that three factors of interest to whites led to the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that prohibited segregation in public schools- and a sudden moral awakening about racial equity was not one of them. In reality, U.S. policymakers in the 1950s Cold War era were competing with the Soviet Union to win the hearts and minds of people from developing nations. Bell (1995) identified ending school segregation “sent a global message that the United States

respected all races”. The landmark Court’s decision also coincided with “a time of rising anger and resentment among southern Black World War II veterans who had come home to violent attacks and discrimination (p.59). Finally, Bell (1995) observed that some southern whites were eager to end the conflict over school segregation in order to prioritize a shift from rural agriculture to a more profitable industrialized economy. Historically, legal arguments banning segregation had no impact, “but in 1954 these three white concerns combined to create a perfect storm of opportunity for whites to promote civil rights victory like *Brown v. Board of Education* (p. 59).

### **Social Construction**

Raskin et al., (2021) describe this tenant as “race and races are categories invented and manipulated by society.” (p. 59) Skin color and hair texture may be common traits of people with shared origins; however, these very small fractions of our genetic makeup do not biologically define a fixed “racial” category. As explained by Raskin et al., (2021) in spite of this scientific reality, society creates races-groups with pseudo-permanent characteristics- to manufacture differences. More than any other tenant, this “social construction” theme of CRT defines race- and its origins- as a relationship of power. Pulido (2006) describes the “idea of race” as an ideology that arose with imperialism and colonization:

A justification was needed to help rationalize taking over other countries and peoples, whether by usurping their resources, appropriating them as colonies, or enslaving them. The... notions of biological inferiority and superiority gave conquering forces ideological tools to dehumanize their victims and legitimize their actions. That racial ideologies are still with us... suggests that they are still useful in shaping contemporary

power relations. (p. 22)

### **Intersectionality**

“The idea that the multiple aspects of a person’s identity (e.g., race, gender, class, sexual orientation) create overlapping experiences of discrimination (Raskin et al., 2021). Kimberlé Crenshaw, a founder of CRT, “coined the term to describe the compounded ways that Black women are unjustly treated in society” (p. 94). Crenshaw (2018) argued that the courts, feminist scholars, and civil rights thinkers have approached Black women’s issues in one-dimensional ways that do not capture the reality of their lives: “Black women’s experiences are much broader than the general categories that discrimination discourse provides...Often they experience double discrimination-the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex” (p. 149). Crenshaw offers the concept of intersectionality “helps us understand that the “unique compoundedness” of identity creates experiences of oppression that are greater than the sum of their parts.

### **Summary**

This literature review addressed the history of Black females in education and educational leadership, barriers of Black women in educational leadership, implicit bias and the tenets of Critical Race Theory. Each area provided necessary insight on societal race and gender stereotypes that hinder authentic leadership. Having the above background information is vital to this study. The research questions are:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed administrative licenses?
2. What are the perceived barriers and challenges for Black women in educational leadership?

These questions drove this literature review. Unpacking these questions through topics related to them provided a baseline for the study and the methodology which provided the means to a greater sense of barriers I may encounter as an educational administrator.

The next chapter describes my research methods, how the data is collected, and the steps taken for the researcher to obtain results from participants. Also included is the creation of a survey and interview questions, with the approval of the internal review board application and consent forms. After approval, surveys were sent out for possible participants, setting up interviews, then analysis of content, narrative, and developing themes provided results from participants.

### **Chapter III: Methodology and Research Design**

*There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you*

-Maya Angelou

#### **Introduction**

Black women in educational leadership has grown from Black women secretly teaching members of their community at night to obtaining and maintaining principalship at steady rates. Recognizing the history and where Black women in educational leadership are now, the focus of the methods chapter begins with a selection of a paradigm for research.

Beginning this autoethnography, the selection of paradigm was based on my ability to share my own narrative to enrich the field of study. An autoethnographic study was chosen to provide a paradigm shift in others through raising awareness of my own experiences and providing readers the opportunity to see things differently. As I continued to journal, my level of consciousness became deeper, which drove the interview design and questions.

Digging deep into my personal experiences, obtaining interview participants , and choosing the proper methods took time in order to move onto the analysis portion; data went through a narrative analysis that looked for themes within the transcribed interviews to support my personal narrative as connected to the greater societal issue of lack of support for Black women.

#### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter describes the research paradigm, letter of interest and interview questions, history of autoethnography, the setting and participants, data collecting tools, methods used, and types of data analysis. Starting with how to obtain the data, an ethnographic study was selected to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed administrative licenses?
2. What are the perceived barriers and challenges for Black women in educational leadership?

Autoethnography research methodology is appropriate for this dissertation because it allows for the expression and interpretations of one's own life (Ellis, 1997). These characteristics are well matched for this study, which explores the experience of self as supported by three Black women as educational administrative license holders. This study was completed to better understand the journey of Black women in educational leadership. The use of autoethnography as the primary methodological research method process created the opportunity to better understand my own journey in educational leadership as a Black woman. There is research about school administrators. There is research about female school administrators. There is research about Black administrators. There is limited research on the barriers Black females holding administrative licenses in education face. Research becomes further limited as you begin to factor all of those items together. This study is rooted in my reality of being a Black woman holding an administrative license in education.

This research highlights the hurdles I have faced as a Black woman in a White male dominated field face through story. The examination occurs through open ended interviews which created the story which served as a data tool. As described by Adams et al., (2014) turn your attention to the injustice being done to us and others and use autoethnographic research to describe experiences of exclusion, disconfirmation, and degradation, the stories told through the interviews contained data which was compiled and used to understand

myself as well as the underspoken culture of African American women in educational leadership.

### **History of Autoethnography**

Autoethnography is a form of autobiographical writing in which personal experience is interlaced with culture and told in a narrative form. It offers nuanced, complex, and specific knowledge about *particular* lives, experiences, and relationships rather than *general* information about large groups of people (Adams et al., 2014). This form of writing can include stories and events that often provoke emotions not often revealed through traditional autobiographies. Autoethnography as a research method has only been around for roughly 20 years making it relatively new. It builds on the familiar more commonly known qualitative research term while creating a new way of gaining social knowledge. Researchers supporting this model argue that this approach is more authentic than traditional approaches because of the personal matter of form. It uses the voice of the insider and is more likely to be more accurate than an outsider's assessment (Wall, 2008). While notably a newer research method, Wall (2008), believes this approach is gaining more credibility and influences in education, communication studies, and qualitative research.

Adams et al., (2014) acknowledged the evaluation of autoethnography in research and provided four core ideals for researchers' focus to enhance validation. The ideals are:

1. Recognizing the limits of scientific knowledge (what can be known or explained), particularly regarding identities, lives, and relationships, and creating nuanced, complex, and specific accounts of personal/cultural experience

2. Connecting personal (insider) experience, insights, and knowledge to larger (relational, cultural, political) conversations, contexts, and conventions
3. Answering the call to narrative and storytelling and placing equal importance on intellect/knowledge and aesthetics/artistic craft
4. Attending to the ethical implications of their work for themselves, their participants, and their readers/audiences

Adams et al., (2014) shared their own experiences with autoethnography and how they used themselves to show their relationships with their respective communities.

As someone with personal experience of having an administrative license in education, and as a Black woman, I consider autoethnography to be a relevant qualitative approach to the study. My personal experiences with meeting and overcoming systemic barriers, specifically the lack of support for Black women within education and educational leadership constructed the context used to design and drive this ethnographic study.

### **Research and Design Methods**

An autoethnography of this writer and interviews (including the researcher) was used to explore the experiences and barriers I faced as a Black woman holding an administrative license in education. This research approach provided a detailed account of my own personal experiences. Purposive sampling of three Black female participants from various stages and areas of educational leadership positions was carried out. Interview data was reviewed for themes and coded to show patterns in experiences.

### **Setting and Participants**

In this autoethnographic study I am the main source of data. After identifying a variety of Black women in various levels of school administration in Minnesota a formal

invitation to participate was sent via email after Hamline University Internal Review Board (IRB) approval to three (in effort to address the research questions in a short amount of time) participants who occupy different positions in effort to get varied viewpoints with a response time frame of one week after the invitation was sent out on February 16th, 2022. All women who were invited responded with interest in participating. All three were sent emails back to confirm their desire to be a part of this autoethnographic study.

For the setting, Google Meet was used to hold the interviews. The ability to record the meeting through video and audio was available on the computer, no additional consent was needed for video recording as only audio was recorded. Through the interview process, the participants were each asked the same six questions with no prompting or follow up conversation.

### **Participants**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Years</b>
<b>Participant one</b>	<b>Assistant Principal</b>	<b>Middle School</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Participant two</b>	<b>Assistant Principal</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Participant three</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Participant four (Researcher)</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>1</b>

### **Institutional Review Board Process Overview**

Per the guidelines outlined by Hamline University this study is applied to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) as exempt research per category (2) Low-risk social research. Through this study the information was obtained in such a manner that participants cannot be readily identified. Application was submitted for review on November 7th, 2021 to

the Internal Review Board (IRB) at Hamline University. The application included: application, consent form, interview questions, and interest form (see Appendix A). Approval to research was approved December 29th, 2021, approval to research was received on January 5th. On the day of approval, the survey to participate in the study was posted on LinkedIn for potential participants. Five Black women completed the participation interest form. Two potential participants did not qualify. On the 20th of January, all submissions for participation from possible participants were closed. From the five submitted surveys, three participants were established on January 20th, 2021. All interviews were through google meet, recorded on the platform, and coded by MAXQDA for themes.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this study consisted of writing an autoethnographic account of my experiences as a Black woman with an administrative license in education through completion of the same interview as the external participants. All stories are told in the first person as “first-person narrators invite the readers to put themselves inside the action and in the minds, hearts, and bodies of the narrators” (Adams et al., 2014).

Paired with the writer's autoethnographic storytelling, the experiences of the three African American females with administrative licenses in education participants were obtained using a standardized open interview method. This method was chosen in an attempt to bring vivid and resonant frames of understanding to one's anguish and pain as described by (Ellis et al., 2008). Analyses are further used to determine the basis of the authors claim and to lay groundwork for future research. Designing and writing an autoethnography can be an overwhelming task for many reasons. Personally, the constant self reflecting and anxiety surrounding my ability to properly present myself was harder than expected. Nevertheless,

autoethnography is an appropriate qualitative method giving voice to unheard voices to help extend sociological understanding.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

An ethnographic analysis was used to expand and add to the research of Black women in educational leadership with an emphasis on my own experiences and barriers. The researcher recorded each participant's interview using Google Meet. The audio records were saved to a secured-password Dropbox folder. The recorded information was transcribed using the MaxQDA data software for organization, coding and identifying themes. Findings that emerged were captured and presented throughout the research. Copies of transcribed interviews were distributed to participants for comments and/or changes.

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined the research paradigm, letter of interest and interview questions, history of autoethnography, the setting and participants, data collecting tools, methods used, and types of data analysis. The next chapter will present the data collected in the study.

## Chapter IV: Results

*“When they go low, we go high.”*

-Michelle Obama

### Introduction

The goal of this research was to gather and amplify the voice of the Black woman in educational leadership. I designed the study to tell my personal story while incorporating my research participants' experiences to affirm my experiences. To achieve this goal, my research questions were as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed administrative licenses?
2. What are the perceived barriers and challenges for Black women in educational leadership?

### Can You Hear Us?

This section is a discussion of the data collected in my study from participant interviews. The conversations revealed in the interviews provided valuable insight into the lived experiences of all participants. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived barriers of Black women in educational leadership. This chapter is broken into two parts: part one, is my story. Sharing personal experiences and stories from my own journey to principal as a Black woman. Part two, reports the finding and shares the stories and experiences of three Black female administrators in urban education along with the researchers. These narratives were recorded virtually with cameras off to minimize facial expressions and gestures. Participants did not see or hear the questions prior to the interview.

Each account reveals an event in which each participant experienced and either survived or thrived despite the perceived barriers of race and gender.

### **Our Stories**

#### **Interviews**

Prior to my research study, I knew of two of the three participants as new Black administrators in the district where I was employed. The third participant was a newly appointed administrator in a local chartered public school. All interviews consisted of the same six questions with no prompting. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were aligned with my two research questions to emphasize the emerging themes (see Appendix B). To further illustrate participants barriers and lived experiences (see Appendix C and D) for visuals.

#### **Participants**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Years</b>
<b>Participant one</b>	<b>Assistant Principal</b>	<b>Middle School</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Participant two</b>	<b>Assistant Principal</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Participant three</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Participant four (Researcher)</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>1</b>

#### ***Race, Barriers, and Educational Backgrounds***

*Questions one, two, and three highlighted the lived experiences of the participants. Participants revealed their experiences surrounding being Black, barriers, and their own educational backgrounds. My experiences along with my research participants perspectives are revealed in these remarks,*

Both of the administrative spaces that I have been in, I have been the first of my kind (Somali woman) to ever be hired. So navigating through race was quite challenging, partly because you are in spaces that are predominantly White. I was navigating very White spaces, I did go through a culture shock. You are always, first and foremost seen as a threat because “it’s like a fake rap sheet that people have about Black women” , shares participant one. Even when you are talking low, trying to be cooperative, trying to really make yourself as non threatening as possible. Because of this you are constantly trying to disarm yourself when you know you are not even armed. That affects your effectiveness because you are not thinking about being a good leader and doing all that needs to be done, you are trying to make other people feel comfortable. You should be focusing on building structures and being an instructional leader, but you have this extra cloud and it is just there on day one. You spend so much time undoing the perceptions that people have of you and it is consuming.

“Sometimes I am not sure if it is my race or my gender” participant three shares. She goes on to share (feels like I am) “constantly battling others not following through as directed by me, but then if a White male, or my principal (Black male) says the same thing as me then they do it”. As a Black female leader I do not try to exert power from my title, I would much rather just talk to people and have an understanding. I do not like when people use their positions for power, it makes it feel inauthentic. As described by participant three, education is a boys club, every interview I have had was because I knew somebody. Being female, and black, I think you need somebody. An older white male vouched for me. If he had not, then I know I would not have gotten a position. I feel strongly that if he had not said anything, and I just put my application in with my credentials, I would not have got in. Participant three shares that she would not have advanced in many situations without a White male vouching

for her, “you need someone on the other side that will vouch for you, it is super hard to do alone”. The term “good old boys” networks (employers’ negative attitudes toward women which impact their professional networking) have been related to disparities that involve poor negotiation ability, and underdeveloped networking experiences, which have been identified as significant barriers to women’s advancement in educational settings (Coleman, 2005).

People often question how a Black person got in a certain position, then you realize it is because they are accepted. They are not difficult, or they do not speak what they really think, kind of like they are soft, so they fit in. Some Black people are better able to address issues without being so upfront or completely transparent and that makes them less threatening. People will reach out about me and I will hear, oh, yeah, she is great. But what does that mean? Great like, I will not rock the boat? What does that mean?

I am a woman, I cannot hide that. I am a mom, and it is a lot of work. I have had times where my child is sick, like I am a mom first, but I am also a leader. Trying to take care of my children but also thinking about how this is going to look, if I have to take time off to take care of my child? What are the people I manage or my supervisor going to think? Being a woman, being a mother, does not make me any less effective. When I was seeking leadership positions and interviewing I realized that is not enough. I thought if I came in and did my work and was good at what I do, my work would speak for itself and that would help me progress in my career. That is really not how it has been. It is really who you know within the power structure and them opening the doors when they felt like they wanted to or I was worthy or ready. I remember one conversation in particular that I had with a gentleman after I had interviewed for a leadership position. I wanted to know what I could have done better and these are not his words, but this is what was going through my head as he was talking,

this is how it landed for me. Little black girl. There is no room for advancement here for you in this organization. For other people on the planet that are not Black, that are not female I do not know that they feel that. I feel like they just think, oh I want to go do it and then apply for it and they interview for it and that is it. But I always have to be mindful of the fact that I am a woman of color in leadership and trying to balance that has been extremely exhausting. I just feel like it takes a lot of tenacity and grit to be able to show up authentically every day and still do the work that you know needs to be done and press on.

Women's positions in the United States workforce have been reflective of gender stereotyping within society. Gender stereotyping has been yet another form of discrimination that women in school leadership face. So it is important to know and understand that workplace equality is still something that is being worked through in our profession and in our country. That historical power structure is a barrier and the stereotypes and ideals that come with that. As I get older, I do not care as much, but just the idea of not wanting to be perceived as a stereotypical angry Black woman. I have worked really hard at that, even when there are times where I am justified in being angry. When I think about the responses that I have gotten from staff members, I often wonder, if this were a white man in this position would they be as up in arms about this decision? Would they be as offended and indignant as they are about this decision? I feel it most among other people of color- the buy in or belief from people of color into that power structure is a barrier.

Throughout my administrative career I have faced many issues related to race, gender and power acquisition. The most common issues surround power acquisition, but I believe both race and gender enhance the issues. As a Black woman my communication is often interpreted as aggressive whether it is verbal or via email. There have been times where I will

directly communicate expectations to my staff and older White women will reply all questioning what is being directed and why. Oftentimes copying and pasting parts of the communication to show that they know what was said- but would like to know why. In other instances staff members- again primarily older White women, have sent me emails in all caps telling me what they are not going to do and what or how I should do my job. I believe in my most recent building my race and gender creates the most issues as there is a large number of older White women on the staff that have zero to little respect for Black women as demonstrated through their rebellious actions and communications.

The aforementioned issues also present themselves as barriers for Black women in educational leadership. The most prevalent barrier would be the opportunity to lead authentically. Once a Black female has worked her way into the ranks of school administration, the expectation is that that Black woman will lead as trained. To lead as trained would be to lead in a manner which is aligned to the White educational system.

*All participants acknowledged historical structures in education, stereotypes and the need to have someone else vouch for them. These were common themes as evidenced in my literature on Barriers of Black Women in Educational Leadership.*

*Questions four, five, and six highlighted the role of networking, mentors, and empowerment for Black women. Participants shared their views based on their own experiences their perspectives are revealed in these remarks,*

As a Black woman, I feel like we are at the bottom of the pit. If there was a hierarchy, put Black female educators and administrators at the bottom, expressed participant one . I once reported to a Black woman, and she reported to another black woman, and it was literally Black women going all the way up to the top- and they were strong, powerful, not to

be reckoned with. Amazing Black women, they were doing their thing, brilliant and successful. Then they began to speak their truth as they saw fit, they were already seen as a threat- and when you go up that ladder, the threat just gets worse. So I watched strong Black women being questioned, all of the sudden people were allying against them. That was the first time I saw a strong Black woman being broken down. Her position was removed. The district said they no longer needed it. She stood there in front of her entire staff and everyone cried, it did not matter what race you were, everyone for the first time watched an injustice play out in front of them. I saw a powerful black woman be broken down and she still told us all “I stand for my convictions and I could lose a thousand jobs, but I know I will sleep well at night knowing that I stood for what I believed in.” At that point she cried. I remember thinking she was so strong the whole time until I saw her cry and I was like wow, they took this powerful black woman and they broke her down and she cried. I had never felt so small in my life. That is when I realized that this is going to be shark eat shark, how am I going to survive?

I believe empowerment goes a long way with Black females. I know first hand having a champion or someone that sees you and your work provides you a sense of serenity. There were many times that I felt overwhelmed and lost in the shuffle then another Black female would send me a message or give me an affirming head nod that let me know I was doing well. Empowerment builds one's confidence and lends to networking amongst Black women. In my experience, without networking there would be little to no Black people let alone women in educational leadership. School administration much like education as a whole has been a White arena. As Black women work their way into the arena promotion and recognition are often dependent on who you know- rarely your ability or skill.

In my experience empowerment, networking and mentorship all blended together. I was assigned a mentor my first year as a school administrator and have not had a formal mentor since. I believe having a mentor gave me the opportunity to voice my concerns in a safe space and work through my experiences, as acknowledged in the literature review mentoring and sponsoring are said to be two of the most important strategies utilized by women for career advancement. I do not feel as though mentorship assisted with my growth as a leader, but provided me space to grow in my own identity. Through networking I was able to gain a group of professional informal mentors that help me stay grounded and focused in my leadership.

### **Emerging Themes in the Data**

*(In order of frequency see Appendix C)*

#### ***Societal and Historical Barriers***

Descriptions	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender</li> <li>● Power</li> <li>● Race</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evidence of staff responding to male communications over participants</li> <li>● Being a mother</li> </ul>

All four participants were Black female administrators, representing the elementary level, middle school level and high school level. All could be described as fearless leaders. Despite the responsibility associated with leading urban schools, all participants addressed the barriers in place based on the history of the field of education. All participants spoke to the barriers faced while leading. Participant three emphasized the struggle to be a mother and new principal. Juggling being a leader and a mom with a sick child, “it’s like I am a mom first, but I am also a leader”. The idea of taking care of one's children provides an internal

struggle of “how is this going to look if I have to take time off to take care of my child? What are the people I oversee going to think?”

All four participants mentioned being a Black woman in leadership and the stereotypical angry Black woman idea. Participants noted how the stereotype is often in the back of their mind and the idea of not wanting to be perceived as an angry Black woman often plays in their minds. Participants three and four acknowledged working really hard on not being perceived as angry through their leadership, with participant four noting “even when there are times where I am justified in being angry, I just handle those situations differently.”

### ***Credibility***

Descriptions	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Questioning</li> <li>● Ability</li> <li>● Credentials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Passive aggressive emails/communications</li> <li>● Refusal to follow through with expectations as directed</li> </ul>

All four participants spoke to constantly having to address themselves when giving directives. Participant three recalls thinking to herself, would she face as much resistance if she were a male? While participant two shared stories of times when she would request assistance or asked for a response over the building walkie talkie and no one would respond. Participant two mentioned that she knows they heard her, and wondered if she had been a male would she have gotten a response? As participant four, I share the amount of education and various education centered training I have participated in to perform my job effectively and how it has proven to get lost in my race or gender upon obtaining a position in

educational leadership. Both participants three and four provide explicit examples of their credibility being questioned on multiple occasions via email communications.

### *Networking*

Descriptions	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advancement</li> <li>● Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Being looked over for positions without someone vouching for you</li> <li>● Others to connect with</li> </ul>

All four participants recognized networking as an essential part of reaching their current administrative position. Participant one was the only participant who entered her position blindly, without personally knowing someone affiliated with the organization or holding a previous position in the organization. While networking did not play a role in Participant one landing her current position, she now recognizes the impact networking has in the education field. Both participants three and four shared in their interview their knowledge of school districts and how they believe they operate. Participant three shares that she knows there are years of connections in her current district- ties as she calls them. Getting in good with members with ties allows one to eb and flow throughout the district or remain in place while others are transferred from building to building. It is networking that provides both participant three and four with a sense of security when it comes to positioning.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the data collected from interviews were presented and analyzed. All interviews were coded for themes. All four African American women administrators identified race, gender and power in both a historical and societal context as barriers to success in educational administration. From leading while being a mother and feeling guilty

for needing time off to care for children, to working twice as hard in order to be deemed credible. All four participants addressed the feeling of needing someone else to vouch for them in effort to advance, along with additional concerns around credibility regardless of their credentials and/or training. All of the research participants are successful leaders with the desire to lead without leaning on the power associated with the title.

The next chapter is the conclusion of the study. It will include a general summary of the findings, important conclusions, and implications for practice and future research.

## **Chapter V: Conclusion**

*Tremendous amounts of talent are being lost to our society just because that talent wears a skirt*

-Shirley Chisholm

### ***Introduction***

The goal of this research was to gather and amplify the voice of the Black woman in educational leadership. I designed the study to tell my personal story while incorporating my research participants' experiences to affirm my experiences. To achieve this goal, my research questions were as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed administrative licenses?
2. What are the perceived barriers and challenges for Black women in educational leadership?

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions of the study. This chapter consists of four sections. The first section gives a reflection on learning. The next section connects the learning with the literature review. The third section identifies implications and limitations of the study, and the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and plans for communicating.

### ***Reflection***

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into what a sample of Black female administrators experience as school leaders in Minnesota. Without the presented theoretical frameworks and conceptualizations, leadership institutions cannot adequately prepare future leaders to best serve the needs of other Americans who do not match the mythic norm of

leadership (Foster, 2005). This study highlights my personal journey by examining my personal experiences. The research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are my lived experiences as a Black woman who has completed an educational administrative license in Minnesota?
2. What are my perceived barriers and challenges as a Black woman in educational leadership?

Data for each participant was collected through virtual interviews and shared to create a single story.

### **Connections to the Literature**

Using the topics presented in chapter two (literature review), themes were unpacked from the four interviews. The topics in chapter two include: Black women in education, barriers of Black women in educational leadership, mentoring, gender stereotypes, and selection process. Key themes are pulled from the data collection under each of the topics. The connection between the data and the literature review is presented in this section and an overview follows each topic. This section reviews the data collected from the participants through the interviews.

### **Historical Perspective: Black Women in Education**

By looking historically at how African American women began to lead urban schools, and why African American students remain at the bottom of the educational achievement ladder, perhaps an intersection between the aspirations of African American principals and the academic needs of African American children will begin to turn the tide of inequity in America's most impoverished and destitute schools (Anderson, 2001).

As stated by Fenwick et al., (2001), in the last fourteen years there has been a 33% increase in the number of female school principals. Further, Fenwick et al., (2001) reports that there are still fewer women administrators than men. The connection between this topic and interview question three: How has your educational background influenced your leadership career? Results from this study noted that one in four of the participants experienced a Black woman in their formal education grades K-12. While one of four participants worked with a Black school leader, zero of the participants have worked with another Black woman as a school administrator. African- Americans have been underrepresented in school administration (Brown, 2005). This underrepresentation may be a reason for the decline of success for African American students. Thus, leading to the lack of representation in the field of education. Historically the United States was less diverse, however public education in America, which consists of a diverse population, should not only be reflected in its students, but among its school leaders as well (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003).

### ***Barriers of Black women in educational leadership***

During the last decade, African American women have pioneered and forged new frontiers as educational leaders (Rusher, 1996). The connection between this topic and interview question two: what are some barriers to Black female educational administrators' success? Results from this study found that all four of the participants described and acknowledged various barriers to their attainment of success in educational leadership (see appendix C). All four participants noted being a female as the biggest barrier. One participant shared how she is unable to be identified racially by her name when applying for jobs, but is easily identified as female by name alone. The participants all discussed the barriers from

different lenses- non-American born, being a mother, and age were common amongst participants. In regard to non-physical barriers all participants discussed how their voice and communication style appeared to create challenges for them. Currently, characteristics of female leadership once thought to be weaknesses are now considered ideal attributes of successful leaders (Grogan, 1999). Caring, effective communication, collaboration, and team building are now touted as necessary leadership traits in order to motivate and inspire teachers and students to meet the increasingly complex demands of today's (high) schools (Grogan, 1999). While ideal and necessary, participants in this study show that possessing the above characteristics as a black woman is still not enough to be respected in their roles.

### **Mentoring**

Though women have qualities that would make them capable leaders, they still frequently do not receive the mentoring, sponsorship or networking that their male counterparts do (Harris et al., 2007). The connection between this topic and interview question six: What role does mentorship play in the advancement of Black women in educational leadership? The participants of this study identified having a mentor and mentorship as a tool they use to overcome the barriers they encounter. Through mentor relationships the participants of this study identified that they are all able to share personal experiences through conversations from their perspective and receive the necessary support from one or many others with similar experiences. Participant two shares how she was seemingly taken under the wing by a veteran white male in her school district and referred to him as a "good ole boy" who has taken it upon himself to help open doors for her and vouch for her, however she struggles to consider him a mentor because he is using his position and privilege to help her. This study found that one of four participants worked with other Black

women in educational leadership, thus leading to the participants identifying males as immediate mentors in the workplace.

### **Gender Stereotypes**

The connection between this topic and interview question one: which, if any, issues that relate to race, gender, and power acquisition have you encountered in your administrative career? African American women not only experience gender bias that stems from the false premise that males are better suited to hold leadership positions (Bell & Chase, 1995). This study found that the participants all noticed differences in role expectations based on their gender. Participant one recalled a staff member telling her that they did not have to listen to her because she is a female. The conversation began through email and continued in person. When participant one inquired as to why the staff member had not responded to the email she was told by the white male staff member did not need to listen to her communications because she is a female. While the staff member did not specifically say a Black female, the statement still created an uncomfortable work environment. Participant three shared a similar instance when recalling several incidents where she would send communications or provide directives via email or on a walkie talkie and receive no response. In those events she would have a male colleague repeat what she sent or said and he would get responses. This data leads one to believe that while a woman may be in an administrative role, if there is also a male in the same position he is seen to be superior or more knowledgeable.

The second most prominent stereotype found in this study relates to the “Angry Black Woman” stereotype. (Motro et al., 2022) notes that the angry Black woman image is deeply rooted in American culture and dates back to chattel slavery in the U.S. that exists in many

parts of American culture. (Motro et al., 2022) found that when some people see a Black woman become angry, they're likely to attribute that anger to her personality — rather than an inciting situation. All participants acknowledged navigating this stereotype and having to make a conscious effort to not feed into said stereotype. Further research shows that African American women principals are often viewed as “othermothers” (Collins, 1998). The idea of othermothering pertains to African American women demonstrating maternal care for their Black students. Three of the four participants identified themselves as mothers. Those participants noted that their identity as a female leader and mother intersected in a manner which they felt expected to “mother” the Black students they serve. Female principals generally practice democratic leadership, sensitivity, and a cooperative attitude as they lead (Eby, 2004). Along with said leadership skills Black women are characterized as “caring for others” (Shakeshaft, 1994).

### **Selection Process**

The connection between this topic and interview question five: what role does networking play in positioning oneself for principalship? There is undeniably a greater number of Black women seeking the role of being a school leader today than decades before. The selection and appointment process exacerbates the progression of women and minorities in educational leadership because they overwhelmingly favor men (Gupton & Slick, 1996). Gupton and Slick (1996) conducted a study that concluded that strong networking helped women achieve leadership positions. In this study all four participants identified their professional network as means to landing their current positions in educational leadership. Participant three states that networking plays an extremely important role in administration. “I think if I had worked on networking a lot earlier with people that were connected, I would

have progressed a lot faster than I have”. Participant one acknowledges the importance of networking, and states “networking is extremely important, and as much as I want to believe that my work will speak for itself and that is what opens doors. It really is more often than not, who you know”.

African-American principals are typically selected to take positions in urban schools with a large population of students who are minority (Fiore & Curtin, 1997). Larson & Murtadha (2002), found that, “...principals of color, especially African American women, typically emerge as the leaders of urban schools that are under supported and economically depleted” (p. 6). Therefore leading to higher rates of burnout and lower success rates in the field. Participants in this study see their gender as the most prominent barrier to obtaining leadership positions and feel as though they must reinvent themselves in effort to be successful in their role once obtaining one.

### **Conclusion of the connections to the literature**

The data in this study aligned with the literature presented throughout the study. The topics included, Black women in education, barriers of Black women in educational leadership, mentoring, gender stereotypes, and selection process.

### ***Implications for further study***

As I conclude this study, I am thankful to have provided a voice to a few of the silenced inequities still found in educational leadership. This research shows that there is still work to be done in order to create change in a historically male field. Many Black female educational administrators are still hesitant to engage in conversation regarding noticeable issues faced. The Black woman’s leadership career is often short lived and includes a history of struggles against barriers put in place long ago and perpetuated in current day. The

participants in this study all lead low performing schools with both poverty and equity issues.

By looking historically at how African American women began to lead urban schools, and why African American students remain at the bottom of the educational achievement ladder, perhaps an intersection between the aspirations of African American principals and the academic needs of African American children will begin to turn the tide of inequity in America's most impoverished and destitute schools. (Anderson, 2001).

### ***Limitations of the study***

With this research study, there were limitations outside of the researcher's control. Being an autoethnographic study, research is limited to my own personal experiences. Other participants in the study were biased to their own experiences, using narrative analysis could miss themes, and or transcribed data could be missing or misinterpreted. I will discuss a few limitations I feel are important to discuss in effort to improve through reflection below.

### ***Autoethnography as Qualitative Research***

Autoethnography is relatively new as a research method. It uses the voice of the insider and is more likely to be accurate than an outsider's assessment (Wall, 2008). Using my personal experiences as a researcher is a limitation due to the subjectivity and emotional challenges present when writing about oneself, however as mentioned by Wall, first hand information is more accurate in research.

### ***Sample Size***

Originally the sample size for this research was going to be six participants. As a new educational administrator I recognized that I did not have the necessary time to successfully

complete a larger sample size and participate in six virtual interviews. Three participants were utilized along with my own narrative out of time constraints.

### ***Limited Historical Literature***

Going into the literature review, I was confident there would be a large amount of literature on Black women in educational leadership, specifically principalship within the last 20 years. Unfortunately, there was limited research. Currently, literature in the past 10 years (2012-2022) is filled with general Principal guides, successful leadership, and how to lead with little reference to race or gender. This limitation is one I aim to look more into for future recommendations of literature.

### ***Participant Experience***

All of the school leaders in this study were new leaders, with two or less years of administrative experience. The participation invite went out to school leaders with any amount of experience. The insight for those bringing in more years of experience would have been interesting to unpack.

### ***Participant Selection***

Participants were found using the LinkedIn platform. Many individuals shared the Google form to participate but few completed the form to participate. Because LinkedIn is not limited to Minnesota, many individuals sought to participate from outside of Minnesota and were denied participation.

### ***Summary***

This section addresses limitations in this research study. With the limited years of participant experience, participants background (i.e, length of time in the Minnesota educational system), and possible missed themes such as, imposter syndrome, self esteem,

and leadership style. The goal of the research study is to improve on lowering the limitations for future research. Learning from one's mistakes will ensure an improvement in any additional research into the topic of Black women in educational leadership.

### ***Recommendations***

Through this research I wanted to examine the lived experiences of Black women with administrative licenses along with the perceived barriers they have faced in educational leadership in Minnesota. The definitive answer from this research is while Black women are able to breakthrough and obtain positions in educational leadership, there are both societal and historical barriers present making their journey harder than others.

This study is valuable for individuals in hiring positions, white teachers, all school administrators, and all people of color that are interested in a glimpse of what Black women are experiencing in the field of education.

Readers of this work are challenged to engage with the work necessary to ensure that all educational institutions are places of belonging for Black women specifically. Some suggestions to minimize and work towards eliminating these barriers may include cultivating welcoming spaces for Black women, creating programs to support the growth and development of Black women and developing quality mentorship for Black women in educational systems. Knowing this, future research is to share the known barriers in networking groups, administrative licensure programs, and school districts to increase awareness and promote systemic change.

This research can be enhanced through reaching beyond the Twin Cities in Minnesota. Find the Black women in suburban and rural Minnesota and disaggregate the data on present barriers. In my opinion, it would be best to continue investigating the experiences

and barriers present for Black women in educational leadership in various environments and levels to understand the impact of their experiences on a larger scale.

### ***Plans for communicating results***

From the beginning of this research, I have not had the intention to publish my results. However, if warranted, I would share with the local Principal Association journals. Those associations include MESPA, and MASSP. As conferences return in person, I would be happy to present my findings and incorporate new ways to support Black women in educational administration. The areas I would like to guide to are the historical and societal barriers, support, and networking. As a new educational administrator, my hope is to gain further experience on this topic. At that time I would wish to present further on this topic.

### ***Conclusion***

This research represents a personal journey into my life. I shared my struggles of being a Black female principal in Minnesota. By examining my own path and taking the time to process my everyday life and occurrences, this study has provided me the opportunity to reflect and to grow professionally. It will also add to the research of African American female administrators regarding their role as a building leader.

McKay (1989) states: Black women use the personal narrative to document their differences in self perception as well as their concerns for themselves and others, their sense of themselves as part of a distinct women's and racial community, and the complexities of the combined forces of race and gender for the only group beleaguered by both.

There is limited knowledge constructed based on data gathered from African American women principals (Gooden & Dantley, 2012). The perspectives shared in this research seeks

to encourage other Black women in education into leadership positions, with knowledge of others experiences. It is without doubt that Black women are and will continue to be effective leaders amidst the growing barriers. Studies show, underutilized women and people of color are the untapped value that organizations of all types need to enhance creativity, change efforts, teamwork, and financial benefits (Northouse, 2018).

Until Black women's voices are present in the research progress will be limited and Black women will continue to endure traumatic experiences in educational settings. Let the following quote from participant three be the spark you need to create change,

“I always have to be mindful of the fact that I am a woman of color in leadership and trying to balance that throughout my career has been extremely exhausting, but something that I am proud of because I just feel like it takes a lot of grit and tenacity to be able to show up and show up authentically everyday and still do the work that you know needs to be done and press on”.

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## APPENDICES

## *Appendix A*

### **Letter of Informed Consent**

My name is Daria Caldwell and I am a doctoral candidate at Hamline University. I respectfully request your permission to participate in my research dissertation, *A Black Woman's Road to Principalship: An Autoethnography*. The purpose of this research is to gather information about Black female school administrators in regard to their lived administrative experiences in Minnesota and perceived barriers encountered. The research will be conducted through an interview and the data obtained will become a source of discourse which provides insight to present educational administration experiences and practices as experienced by Black women in educational leadership.

Participation in this study is voluntary and consent for participation can be discontinued at any time. As a participant, you will be orally sharing your own personal leadership experiences through answering open ended questions. The data collection will consist of one in-depth interview. The interview will last from 30 minutes to 1 hour. I am requesting your permission to audio record the interview. The audio recording and transcription will remain property of my possession and will not be released to anyone without your written consent. Any information obtained from the interview will be considered confidential and used solely for research purposes in partial fulfillment of my doctoral dissertation. To ensure confidentiality and protect you from any unanticipated risks there will be no identifiable reference in the published data to any specific district, school, principal, teacher or administrator. A pseudonym will be used in the published research, unless written permission is granted by the participant to use the participant's name. There is no anticipated risk on

your behalf for participation in this research. I sincerely appreciate your time and participation in my research.

*Completion of this consent form will indicate permission to use the data obtained in this study.*

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

For further information regarding this study, please contact:

Daria Caldwell

5632 Fair Haven Trl.

Woodbury, Minnesota 55129

(612)836-8555

Dr. Joyce Bell

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104

*If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Hamline University IRB Board at [IRB@hamline.edu](mailto:IRB@hamline.edu).*

**Interview Questions**

1. Which, if any, issues that relate to race, gender, and power acquisition have you encountered in your administrative career?
2. What are some barriers to Black female educational administrators' success?
3. How has your educational background influenced your leadership career?
4. How does empowerment or the lack of power impact the success of Black female educational administrators?
5. What role does networking play in positioning oneself for principalship?
6. What role does mentorship play in the advancement of Black women in educational leadership?

## Participant Interest Form

11/7/2021 A Black Woman's Road to Principalship:An Auto-ethnography - Google Forms

A Black Woman's Road to Principalship All changes saved in Drive  Questions Responses Settings

Section 1 of 2

### A Black Woman's Road to Principalship:An Auto ethnography

I am currently looking for three Black female educational leaders in K-12 education to participate in my dissertation study. Participants will attend a virtual 1:1, six question interview with the researcher regarding their experiences in educational leadership.

Are you interested in participating in this study? \*

Yes

No

Maybe

Section 2 of 2

After section 1

Continue to next section

Thank you for your interest!

*Appendix B***Question Matrix**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Research Question 1</u></p> <p>What are the lived experiences of Black Women who have completed administrative licenses?</p>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Research Question 2</u></p> <p>What are the perceived barriers and challenges for Black women in educational leadership?</p>	1, 2

*Appendix C***Lived Experiences as identified in interviews**

<b>Participant 1</b>	<b>Participant 2</b>	<b>Participant 3</b>	<b>Participant 4</b>
<b>Mother</b>	<b>Mother</b>	<b>Common American name</b>	<b>Uncommon name in America</b>
<b>No Black women administrators</b>	<b>No Black women administrators</b>	<b>No Black women administrators</b>	<b>Predominantly White population in schooling</b>
<b>Identified a mentor</b>	<b>Utilizes networking</b>	<b>Utilizes networking</b>	<b>Identified a mentor</b>
<b>Not born in United States</b>	<b>Identified a mentor</b>	<b>Identified a mentor</b>	<b>Low use of networking</b>
<b>Uncommon Name in America</b>	<b>Not born in Minnesota</b>	<b>Mother</b>	<b>Worked in over one school district</b>
<b>Attended boarding school</b>	<b>No Black women administrators</b>	<b>Doctoral degree</b>	<b>Worked under a Black female Principal</b>
<b>Worked in over one school district</b>	<b>Worked in over one school district</b>	<b>Receives support from male colleagues</b>	<b>Worked under a Black male Principal</b>

**Barriers identified by frequency**

<b>Participant 1</b>	<b>Participant 2</b>	<b>Participant 3</b>	<b>Participant 4</b>
<b>Not American Born</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Power</b>	<b>Power</b>	<b>Gender</b>
<b>Experience</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Experience</b>
<b>Power</b>	<b>Credibility</b>	<b>Credibility</b>	<b>Power</b>
<b>Networking</b>	<b>Networking</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Support</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>
			<b>Networking</b>