The Professional Educator 2021,
Vol. 44, No. 1, 8–20

https://doi.org/10.47038/tpe.44.01.04

"Leading from the middle": Exploring stories of women working for change in PK-12 Schools

Christopher Broadhurst
University of New Orleans

Leslie Ann Locke
University of Iowa

Sonja Ardoin
Appalachian State University

Despite recent improvements for women within education, marginalizing policies and climates are still very present in our schools. Activism by teachers and administrators can provide potent instruments for change in PK-12 schools. This study examines how women leaders within PK-12 are working for change in their schools. We employed a qualitive research design, influenced by narrative inquiry, to examine change efforts by women leaders in PK-12 schools. Women leaders shared stories of their experiences with institutional sexism, mentoring other women, and how they are working to change institutional policies and improve educational climates. Our research provided insights on ways to lead from mid-level positions and how to navigate institutional sexism to promote gender equity within education.

Keywords: activism; social change; women leaders; institutional sexism

In the 2011-2012 academic year, women earned 77% of all master's degrees and 67.7% of all doctoral degrees in the field of education (Snyder et al., 2016). Despite their educational achievements and that they represent nearly 75% of all public school teachers, women continue to be marginalized as leaders within PK-12 schools (Hill et al., 2016). Women principals still earn less than their men counterparts (Snyder et al., 2016) and, though they comprise 52.4% of school principals, they are underrepresented at the secondary level and tend to lead in higher poverty (i.e., more challenging) schools (Bitterman et al., 2013). This is further problematic as a primary path to the superintendent position is often through principalships at the secondary level or holding a central office position (Grogan, 1999; Sharp et al. 2004). Given that only 18.3% of superintendents were women in 2015, these organizational barriers are clearly evident (Finnan & McCord, 2016).

Women who do break into this 'boys' club' and attain leadership positions continue to face various forms of personal and institutional sexism. These forms may include overcoming others' assumptions about leadership and gender, dealing with questions about their organizational commitment because of familial obligations, feeling pressured to adopt different leadership styles, enduring comments on their physical appearance, and contending with feelings of isolation (Coleman, 2003; Sperandio, 2009; Tallerico, 2000). This can be particularly true in the Southeastern United States[1] where sexism is still engrained in the fabric of the region's culture and society and women continue to face substantial barriers to equity (Anderson et al., 2016). In a recent study of the continued sexism in the nation, of the 16 states in Southeast, five of the top six states that exhibited the highest levels of sexism were located in the region and most other states in the Southeast evi-denced higher than average levels of sexism (Charles et al., 2018). Since the main leadership role available is that of a primary school principal, women still endure inequities in pay: the average salary for a public pri-mary school principal was $89,200 in 2012, compared to $97,000 for that of a public secondary school princi-pal (Bitterman et al., 2013).

Because of these continued manifestations of patriarchy found in educational systems, women leaders can be forced to engage in various forms of activism to alter this system. Though research on resistance within edu-

Christopher Broadhurst, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations, University of New Orleans.

Leslie Ann Locke, Department of Educational Policy and Leadership Studies, University of Iowa.

Sonja Ardoin, Reich College of Education, Appalachian State University.

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Christopher Broadhurst, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations, 2000 Lakeshore Drive University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148. Email: cbroadhu@uno.edu

1 For this study, we utilized the definition of the American South by the U.S. Census Bureau to include the following states: Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware (United States Census Bureau, n.d.).

cational organizations has a long history, it often focuses on various forms of youth resistance or leaders working to alter student-oriented policies (Tuck & Yang, 2014). The literature tends to overlook the role that educational administrators themselves have in working for change for teachers, staff, and students. Grossman (2010) explains that, because of hierarchal nature of school systems, school-level actors, such as administrators and teachers, often find that their voice is not welcome in that system and can feel that they have little power. While teachers can engage in more subtle forms of resistance and undermine policy from within the classroom by not enacting policies or only half-heartedly supporting them, formal leaders within schools often do not have that ability. Educational leaders, especially those from groups within the system who feel marginalized, can use their positions and work within the system to challenge current policies and enact change by creating equitable practices (Bogotch, 2002; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Santamaria, 2014). These policies could range from perceptions that women are ineffectual leaders to structural barriers in the pipeline to senior positions. Grossman (2010) notes that the success of such insider movements can often depend on creating incremental changes in the institutional climate. Each incremental change, such as gradually increasing the representation of women in leadership positions or creating mentoring networks, would improve the chances that future changes will succeed by reducing the power differences between marginalized groups and their adversaries (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Women, as leaders in educational organizations, are in key positions to help challenge current policies and help create equitable schools for women (Jean-Marie, 2008).

For our study, we sought out women who choose to actively advocate for policy changes through formal, mid-to-senior level positional leadership roles in PK-12 schools, which provide them with some power to affect change within their institutions. This study focuses only on the experiences of cisgender women leaders and utilizes literature that speaks to experiences of cisgender women and cisgender men, or those assumed to identify that way. We recognize that educational leaders that are women of Color may have very different narratives due to the intersectionality of their identities (Aaron, 2020; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Martinez, Rivera, & Marquez, 2020), but chose to focus on the experiences of all women, given that those in the Southeastern United States historically and currently hold more conservative and oppressive opinions towards women (Charles et al., 2018; Rice & Coates, 1995). Employing methods that were influenced by narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005) and guided by the Social Change Model of Leadership (HERI, 1996), this study sought to understand the following research question: how are women leaders working for change within PK-12 schools?

Literature Review

There is a very prevalent pipeline issue for women securing leadership positions in PK-12 systems. As women earn the majority of degrees at all levels (Snyder et al., 2016), the problem for women obtaining leadership positions is not one of supply; rather, it is of demand (Hill et al., 2016). The career pipeline in education favors men and discriminates against women (Grogan, 1999; Mendez-Morse, 2004). Hiring committees, often comprised mainly of men, seek to hire those similar to them, creating a structural barrier for women to advance in school-level leadership roles (Tallerico, 2000; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). School systems create further barriers for women to advance to a superintendency, as hiring committees also favor those who have prior experience as a superintendent, assistant superintendent, or secondary school principal—roles typically occupied by men (Grogan, 1999; Palladino et al., 2007). As part of the pipeline problem, persistent negative climates for women within educational organizations may dissuade or discourage them from pursuing leadership roles (Hill et al., 2016).

Climates for Women Leaders in Schools

Assumptions about gender roles in schools and the exclusion of women in upper leadership positions have deep historic roots that date back to the 19th century (Blount, 1999; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Stemming from gender assumptions about the qualities and characteristics needed to lead, perpetuated by a patriarchal system, some within educational organizations question the very ability of women to effectively lead (Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Skrla et al., 2000; Sperandio, 2009; Tallerico, 2000). Women can feel silenced within organizations because of gender bias (Brunner, 2000) and have reported both pressures to adopt traditional masculine forms of leadership (Grogan, 2000; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006) and feeling the need to use men as 'mouthpieces' to have their ideas heard (Coleman, 2003; Skrla et al., 2000; Sperandio, 2009). Such barriers can be particularly true for women leaders of Color (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Méndez, 2004). In addition to encountering gender-related barriers within their

roles as educational leaders, women of Color are forced by the institutionalized racism embedded in schools to contend with cultural discrimination and perceptions of racial stereotypes, often forcing them to simultaneously combat both oppressive systems of sexism and racism (Aaron, 2020; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Martinez, Rivera, & Marquez, 2020).

Because of the dearth of women in leadership roles, feelings of isolation and increased stress are not uncommon (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006), originating from the needs to justify their leadership positions and to define their position in their own terms (Coleman, 2003; Grogan, 2008; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015). Holding leadership positions can have a greater impact on women with regard to personal and familial life (Grogan, 1999; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015; Sharp et al., 2004), as societal norms for child-care and family obligations can prompt anxiety in attempting to excel in both their professional and personal lives (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Coleman, 2003; Grogan, 2000; Grogan, 2008; Kashur-Reico & Wallin, 2011; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). Women can challenge these systemic obstacles by finding support from other women, creating networks, and having good mentors (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Copeland & Calhoun, 2014; Kashur-Reico & Wallin, 2011). However, because of the lack of women in such positions, networks may be small, and available mentors who can help women progress in their careers are often men (Méndez, 2004; Palladino et al., 2007; Sperandio, 2009). When women in leadership roles attempt to challenge this persistent gender inequity, for the good of the organization, they may face expectations of silence (Grogan, 1999; Skrla et al., 2000)

Educational Leaders as Agents for Social Justice and Change

Individuals working in PK-12 schools frequently use various forms of activism in their effort to foster social justice and create organizational change. While traditional forms of activism such as demonstrations, marches, rallies, boycotts, and legal actions can be used (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004), these are sometimes not the most viable forms of resistance that educators employ (Grossman, 2010; Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Picower, 2012). As insiders within the organization and system they are trying to change, educational leaders in particular, with first-hand insight into institutional injustices, can work from within the system to create incremental changes in policies and practices (Grossman, 2004; Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Within their dualistic roles as both a formal leader and an individual that seeks to challenge dominant and marginalizing cultures, educational leaders can "act as vital sources of resistance, [and push for] alternate ideas, and transformation within their organization" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 586). Those educational leaders who do actively work to foster change for social justice may face questions about their loyalty to the school or system and be labeled a "troublemaker" or "maverick" (Bogotech, 2002, p. 148).

Within PK-12 schools, formal leaders engaging in activism can often take the form of social justice initiatives to reduce inequities (Brown, 2004; Jean-Marie, 2008; Riester et al., 2002; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2010). Though, historically, educational administrators have not pursued social justice in schools, which have been described as hierarchal systems that reinforce marginalization and pass on normed social values of the dominant culture, there has been a greater focus on social justice issues in leadership preparation and practice the past few decades (Brown, 2004; Karpinksi & Lugg, 2006). This can be particularly true for educational leaders from marginalized backgrounds themselves, who may view their leadership role more as a calling than a job and are committed to changing inequities (Alston, 2005; Loder, 2005; Palladino et al., 2007). Leaders may employ a variety of methods to foster their social justice efforts, including educating teachers and staff about the issues students from marginalized groups face (Jean-Marie, 2008), having ongoing professional development (Theoharis, 2010), recruiting more teachers from marginalized backgrounds (Jean-Marie, 2008; Santamaria, 2014), infusing social justice issues into the curriculum (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Picower, 2012), and altering policies and programs that reinforce deficit-models (Picower, 2012; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2010). Typically, educational administrators do not act alone as change agents and use collaborative leadership to involve others (Beard, 2012, Brunner, 2000; Kashur-Reico & Wallin, 2011), particularly those from marginalized groups to incorporate their perspectives, in their continuing efforts to reform PK-12 schools (Riester et al., 2002; Santamaria, 2014; Shields, 2010; Theoharris, 2010). While much of the research examines how educational leaders are working for social justice and change for students within their schools, less examines how they are trying to alter institutional injustices that teachers and other administrators face.

Conceptual Framework

Developed by educational leaders and higher education scholar-practitioners to create a new model of leadership development for undergraduate students that focused on social change (Wagner, 2006), the Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM) "integrated findings from women's leadership studies, perspectives on social identities, knowledge of how leadership is developed, and content from the growing literature on civic engagement, service, and socially just processes and outcomes" (Komives et al, 2011, p.115). The model became a driving force in the curriculum of undergraduate leadership education throughout the U.S. (Dugan et al., 2008; Komives et al, 2011; Wagner, 2006).

SCM was a fresh perspective on leadership because it shifted the frame from leadership being an inherent, hierarchical, individual product to a learned, collaborative, values-based process focused on positive social change for the common good (Dugan et al., 2008; Komives et al., 2009; Wagner, 2006). Considered one of the contemporary leadership theories, the mindset of the model is that any individual can serve in a leadership capacity and contribute to positive change in his/her community. SCM is a holistic model structured into three clusters: individual values, group values, and society/community values (HERI, 1996; Komives et al, 2011; Wagner, 2006). Each contains critical values that influence leadership in that cluster, while there also exists a synergistic relationship between all the clusters (Dugan et al., 2008; HERI, 1996; Komives et al, 2011; Wagner, 2006). The clusters and their corresponding values are included in

Table 1
SCM Clusters and Values

Individual Values: Values Individuals Need to Pursue Social Change	
Consciousness of Self	An awareness of one's values, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions. This includes a combination of self-awareness, introspection, and reflection.
Congruence	Consistently acting in alignment with one's values, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions.
Commitment	One's ability to harness time, energy, and purpose toward social change; this includes one's investment in engaging with and follow-through on social change efforts.
Group Values: Values Groups Need to Pursue Social Change	
Common Purpose	An agreed upon direction rooted in shared vision, values, and goals.
Collaboration	Bringing together people across identities and talents to collectively pursue a common purpose through positive social change. Collaboration is rooted in mutually beneficial goals and seeks creative solutions through shared power, responsibility, and accountability.
Controversy with Civility	Understanding that collaboration requires hearing, valuing, incorporating different perspectives to work toward positive social change, groups should embrace open, critical, and civil discourse as a means of seeking creative solutions.
Societal/Community Values: Values that Communities Need for Social Change to Occur	
Citizenship	A connection to one's community or society that generates active engagement and social responsibility at the community/societal level to generate positive social change to benefit others.

Note. This table is adapted from Cilente (2009).

An eighth value of change was later added to complete the SCM that is known today. Change is the central value in the model, connecting the three clusters, and is considered the ultimate goal of the SCM model - "improving the status quo, creating a better world, and demonstrating a comfort with transition and ambiguity in the process of change" (Cilente, 2009, p. 54). For additional examples of each value in the SCM, please see Komives et al.'s (2009) *Leadership for a Better World*.

SCM advocates that growth across these critical values develops the leadership capacity of individuals, groups, and communities and fosters positive change for the common good (Dugan et al., 2008). Social change speaks to action that seeks to advance the human condition (Komives et al., 2009). Additionally, the SCM's focus on leadership as a values-based change process aligns with women's leadership research that finds women tend to lean toward leadership processes that are relational, collaborative, and democratic (Dugan et al., 2008). SCM research often highlights that women typically score higher on SCM value measures (Dugan, 2006; Dugan et al., 2008).

While SCM is primarily used in research on leadership in the collegiate context, similar concepts of social change have been used to study leadership in school counseling and PK-12 leadership (Matsopoulos & Gaughan, 1990). This study examines how women, as educational leaders, are engaging in resistance in the educational environment for other women in individual, group, and community contexts. Because of that, applying the SCM to women leaders who work in PK-12 schools offered the opportunity to examine if and how women identify themselves as values-based change agents in education.

Research Design and Methods

We employed a narrative qualitative research design to understand how women leaders from PK-12 environments are advocating for change (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Riessman, 2008). Chase (2005) makes clear that narrative inquiry is "a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (p. 656). Participants, by sharing their stories, both create their own realities and explain their experiences (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008). Narrative researchers, though understanding that every story is unique, can also realize that stories, influenced by both organizational and social memberships, can share patterns within in the stories and contain similarities and differences across the narratives (Chase, 2005). By examining those stories within an organizational context, narrative inquiry can move beyond the understanding of an individual story and provide insights about organizational power and resistance; such an understanding can potentially influence policy makers to be more supportive of the goals of social justice (Czarniawska, 2007; Hollingsworth & Dybdhal, 2007). We chose this form of qualitative research as we felt it would allow us to capture the stories of the oppression and sexism our participants encountered throughout their personal lives and careers. Additionally, we believed narrative inquiry could give us insights into how the participants developed as change agents. As we engaged participants during data collection and analyzed the stories they told, we discovered that narrative inquiry allowed us to both capture very poignant events of encountering oppressions and discover their journey as women leaders working for change within PK-12 schools.

Data Collection

As part of a larger study of women leaders throughout the PK-20 pipeline, we used purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling to recruit participants (Bold, 2012; Merriam, 2009). The only criteria for participation in the study was that the women educational leaders have at least 10 years of employment experience within PK-20 education, as we felt such work experience would have allowed them to achieve a position in education to create change. A total of 14 women leaders expressed interest in taking part in the study: seven work in PK-12 systems and seven work within higher education. This paper examines the narratives of those employed solely in PK-12 systems (see Table 1). All seven of the participants, in varying ways, self-identified as activists; six of the seven mentioned that feminism, for centering the experiences of women, influenced their identities. The participants' work experience in education ranged from 10 to 42 years and included a variety of leadership positions, including principalships, various central office positions, a superintendency, and serving on a school board. Five of the seven participants had completed doctoral degrees. Additionally, all seven participants either currently worked, or spent the majority of their professional careers, working in education in the Southeastern United States. We sought out participants who identified as women; however, we did not ask specific questions about the participants' race or ethnicity. Based solely

on observational data, only one of the seven participants was a woman of Color, representing a limitation for the study. After these seven individual interviews were completed, we felt that we had achieved data saturation and that the narratives allowed us to understand common experiences (Bold, 2012; Merriam, 2009). We felt that we were receiving "informational redundancy" and that further interviews would add little in the way of new data (Sandelowski, 2008, p. 875). Furthermore, as all elements of SCM were uncovered in the data, we believed we had reached theoretical saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For the primary method of data collection, we interviewed each participant once for approximately one hour to solicit stories about their salient identities, educational past and work history, encounters with sexism, and how they worked as activists in education. The problem-solution approach of narrative analysis influenced the development of the interview protocol; we sought out the key essentials of the narratives, such as the significant individuals in their professional journeys, the setting of their stories, the problems they met, and how they worked to resolve those problems (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Though we purposely chose to use semi-structured interviews to collect data, as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) assert that such interviews can sometimes produce narratives to better influence policy change, our participants often shared other stories that bettered our understanding of our original semi-structured questions.

Table 2
Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Years of Experience in Education	Position	Highest Degree
Tonia	38	Superintendent (retired)	Doctorate (Educational Administration)
Megan	29	Assistant. Superintendent	Doctorate (Educational Leadership)
Amanda	40	Principal (former); faculty (current)	Doctorate (Educational Leadership)
Erin	33	District Curriculum Director (former); faculty (current)	Doctorate (Educational Administration)
Joanna	10	Principal	Masters (Journalism)
Kimberly	13	District Curriculum Director	Masters (Elementary Education); currently completing doctoral degree (Educational Leadership)
Grace	42	Principal & School board member (retired)	Doctorate (Curriculum & Instruction)

Data Analysis

We used multiple steps for data analysis. The first step involved the use of an open coding process, which Bold (2012) advocates for narrative studies. As the project involved multiple researchers, we followed Saldana's (2013) recommendation that one researcher hold responsibility for managing and organizing the codebook. After each researcher performed this initial round of open coding, the research team conferred on the preliminary codes they discovered. The research team then utilized axial coding by synchronizing the individual coding and re-categorizing to uncover common themes (Saldana, 2013). At this point, during the data analysis, the research team decided to deviate from traditional forms of narrative analysis and begin a second level of a priori theoretical coding (Saldana, 2013). This shift in analysis was done to better allow the research team to discover the key concepts –or the 7 C's—of the Social Change Model of Leadership within the data. As we engaged in a priori coding, the core ideas of the 7 C's, as outlined in Table 1, provided the operational definitions for the codes. We did not incorporate the 8th value, Change, as it represents an overarching value for the entire model.

Trustworthiness

Throughout our data analysis process, to better ensure the trustworthiness that is essential for qualitative inquiry, we used both member checking and peer debriefing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). As the sole form of

member checking, we provided all of the participants in the study the opportunity to review their interview transcriptions to help guarantee that we sufficiently captured their stories and did not misunderstand their narratives. Peer debriefing proved valuable, as all three team members participated throughout the entire data analysis process. Merriam (2009) shows that trustworthiness can be improved by researchers understanding their own identities and positions, particularly how their connections and closeness to a research topic can impact analysis. Each member of the research team are educators who have research agendas that focus on improving conditions for marginalized groups within education and incorporate social justice issues into their professional practice. Each researcher has a unique positionality in regards to the focus of this study. Both Researcher Two and Three identify as a White, cisgender, straight women. Researcher One identifies as a straight, White cisgender man. Despite our unique identities, each researcher identifies as a feminist and advocates for women within education.

Findings

The data represented here stem from a larger study of the activism of women leaders from both higher education and from PK-12 schooling environments. Our purposes here are to focus on the perspectives and experiences of the activism of women leaders from PK-12 schooling environments only. Consistent with the Social Change Model, we frame our findings from the perspective and experience of the individual. That is, we looked at the personal values and qualities participants are attempting to foster and develop in others and those most supportive of group functioning and positive social change. As such, while all of the values, or C's, within the Social Change Model were present in the analyses of the data, we focused on the individual and group clusters with particular attention to the three most prevalent values described by the participants as they reflected on their identities and their educational leadership practices. These values include the individual cluster values of Consciousness of Self and Commitment, and the group cluster value of Controversy with Civility. The overarching value of change is weaved throughout the findings, much like it is in the SCM itself.

Consciousness of Self

According to the Social Change Model, the value Consciousness of Self includes being aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate a person into action (Cilente, 2009). Megan articulated this value, particularly as it relates to how she perceives herself, her leadership, and her support of women:

> I consider myself as a feminist because, first of all… I do recognize and understand that women often times do not have equal access to opportunities because they are a woman, because of their gender, and also, in knowing that, I feel that it's my responsibility to make a difference for the next generation…

Kimberly echoed this sentiment when she strongly stated that "women create our leaders…I am a feminist because I believe women rock and we are some of the greatest teachers in the world."

Megan and Kimberly understand themselves as someone who supports women, identifies as a feminist, and feels there should be no barriers to opportunities based on one's gender—beliefs, values, and attitudes that she brings into her work as both an educational leader and someone who is working for change for other women in education. Similarly, Amanda also understands herself to be a feminist, and qualifies that identity in terms of a modern, rather than an aged, conceptualization of a 'feminist.' She maintains that her actions within leadership remain central to that conceptualization:

> Now, [am I] out in the street marching or flying all over the nation when something happens and women have been mistreated, the kind of activism circa the 1960s? Not particularly. Do I mentor younger or less experienced women? Yes. Do I try to help my fellow female friends and colleagues negotiate the terrain of this sexist world that we live in? Yes. Do I try to work with other women to help all of us develop a sense of self-compassion so that we can be compassionate to others? Yes.

Like Amanda, Erin also is careful not to characterize herself as what might be stereotypically considered 'feminist.' She does, however, also ascribe to the central tenets of feminism, and those tenets manifest in her leadership:

> I don't know if I would say no I'm not, or yes I am [a feminist]. I am a person for all people. That's sort of a feminist approach. I'm very nurturing in being concerned for, um just people, and it's not in a rabble rouser sense, however when I have to, I would lose friends over it if I have to...

Similarly, Joanna agrees that "yes, I'm a feminist, I'm not like a protester feminist but like I am a feminist [in my leadership]."

While the participants are careful not to strictly align their leadership style with a stereotypical conceptualization of feminism (i.e., the 'rabble rousers' of the 1960s), they do align their leadership with feminist values, and these values motivate their activism. In doing this, our participants conformed to the characteristics often found among the third wave of feminists, those born in 1960s and after. Growing up in a time of backlash against feminism, when that word "became a pejorative term," third-wave feminists often sought to purposely distance themselves from second wave of feminists in their tactics and leadership (Kezar & Lester, 2008, p. 62). Aligning with the Social Change Model, it is clear these women leaders adhere to a non-hierarchical and collaborative leadership style, rather than one where they are seen as someone 'at the top.'

Aligned with the Consciousness of Self, these women know who they are as women, and also as leaders. Though they rejected the traditional conceptions of a feminist leader that was characteristic of second-wave feminists, "their day-to-day actions usually demonstrate that they are feminists working toward helping women to gain greater equality and equity in the world" (Kezar & Lester, 2008, p. 62). They seemed to bring these aspects of their identity authentically into their leadership. Collectively, their beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions also support them in their leadership and their sincere commitment to their students, families, as well as colleagues.

Commitment

According to the Social Change Model, the value Commitment represents not only the obvious aspects of 'commitment' such as obligation and dedication, but the psychic energy that motivates the individual to serve and that drives the collective effort (Cilente, 2009). Moreover, while Commitment requires knowledge of self, it also implies passion, intensity, and duration, directed both toward group activity and intended outcomes. Grace provides a simple summary when she notes, when trying to change systems, that "you have to meet authority head on." Regarding Commitment, Joanna stressed the need for women leaders to maintain their dedication, particularly when facing critique:

> I think people tell me every day that I am crazy and that my ideas won't work or they're stupid in a way. The fact that I believe that teaching is an art, the fact that I believe that sustaining or supporting teachers is the true root of what will make a good school, people think that is crazy. People think that I am crazy and staying true to what I believe in, has been for me standing up for women in this role... I think taking a stand in that way is like a fight for women in education. To not succumb, to not go [with] the status quo.

Clearly, Joanna brings the value of Commitment to her work. She is motivated for and dedicated to change and supports better collective understanding of marginalization by gender in her leadership. Erin takes a similar stand in her commitment to both women and leadership. Her commitment is so strong that she is willing to risk her position:

> I think the sexism is still there, the patriarchal climate is still there and all I can say is that I won't put up with it. … just be willing to have those conversations about your own power and position. Sometimes I am like this is so not right. I don't care if you fire me, I'll figure something else out, this is not right, I am going to address it with you. I feel like I've spent a lot of time looking through the glass ceiling teaching whoever is above me to function as a leader. It's hard to be an educational leader in a hierarchy.

Looking through the proverbial glass ceiling was something that Erin indicates is common, not only for her, but likely other women as well. Nonetheless, she shows her commitment to change is so strong that she is willing to teach those above her.

In a similar vein, Megan suggests that working within that hierarchy, for her, is working from the middle:

> … my whole career has been leading from the middle or alongside other people. Our community has changed dramatically, and I've been trying to say over and over, our community has changed, we are not meeting the needs of our kids, of all of our kids, and I could not get the board to listen, you know, they wanna blow it off, I could not get our new superintendent to listen. So, what I did was I started a book study, a very small step, where we're reading literature and teachers are starting to see, wow, that's us, and so the change comes from down below, but you know, the challenge is that I have to work really extra hard from the middle to make any difference at the top. I really spend a lot of time with them and having very frank conversations about being a woman… Um, my philosophy is more, uh, leading from within… whether I was as-

> sistant principal or principal and even now as assistant superintendent, I work from within, you know, and I feel successful when the people that would have been considered underneath me or whatever you wanna say, whenever they are successful, you know, my success is measured in seeing others be successful.

Megan articulates here how she must take small but deliberate, collaborative, and collective steps with others in order to make change. She feels this is the most effective means, where the most people can be successful. Even though these women leaders are theoretically at or near the top of their respective hierarchies, it is clear that in order to make progress toward change, they are committed to working with others in ways that allow for collective, grassroots-types of leadership, such that others can be successful as well.

Being committed to a collective, grassroots leadership style may be a result of more than effective leadership. It may be a leadership style that is a result of working within a patriarchal system—where women are expected to lead in particular ways. More specifically, they are expected to deal with controversy in particular ways. Relatedly, the final value of the SCM model that we highlight is Controversy with Civility.

Controversy with Civility

Clearly, these women leaders understood their leadership in terms of Consciousness of Self and Commitment, however, they were also very clearly aware of the differences that exist, particularly the patriarchal norms surrounding leadership. In line with the SCM value of Controversy with Civility, they understood differences exist, yet they believed that differences, along with conflicts, can be accepted and resolved through trust and open and honest dialogue (Cilente, 2009). Addressing these differences directly, Megan noted,

> … when you think that nearly 80% of all teachers are female and they make up, you know, hardly any [of] the superintendents in districts. So, the largest pool that you can choose from, very few of them get to the top, and it's not because they don't have the credentials or the degree. They have them, and they still don't make it there. So, we choose men because…for school superintendents…because when you say school superintendent, the vision people have in their head is typically a White male.

Certainly, Megan directly calls out the patriarchy still existent in PK-12 leadership, and she was not alone. However, confronting and managing the patriarchy required that these women address controversy with civility. Growing up in an age in which the patriarchal system fought back against the victories won by feminist leaders in the 1960's and 7190's, third-wave feminists sometimes are forced to engage in less assertive actions and favor incremental changes that may not be as overt (Kezar & Lester, 2008).

As Megan noted previously, the glass ceiling is real, as she has trained the people above her. Similarly, Tonia expounded on two unique experiences in her practice that exemplified both the patriarchy of PK-12 leadership as well as how she dealt with Controversy with Civility:

> When I was one of two female high school principals in [location], the men treated me like I needed to be taken care of a little bit. But I don't know if opening doors, lifting heavy items, moving furniture, etcetera is sexism. But when we would go to things like [conference], they called the guys Bubbas. The coaches loved that. So, they called me Bubbette. That's about as much as I can say. I just never entertained it. They would chew the tobacco and I would chew bubble gum. That kind of was play and I never took it as offensive. [In another example] as a high school principal, we had a high influx of Hispanics and this father came in and said he wanted the principal. So, they bring him to me and he says I am not talking to her. Well I only had one man on campus at the time, so I said go get Raymond. The father did speak to both of us and eventually came around to speak with me in the future. [You] just know they are watching everything you do to see if you can pull it off.

Here it is clear that Tonia is adept at dealing with Controversy with Civility. She discussed the ways she managed being one of the only women in a leadership role. Furthermore, like Megan, she also reminds us that having to manage conflict in particular ways is gendered. By noting that "they are watching everything you do to see if you can pull it off," she reminds us, again like Megan, that society does not expect a woman leader to be successful—perhaps because leadership is a role we expect a White man to occupy.

Finally, with regard to dealing with Controversy with Civility, the participants, like Megan also had some suggestions for moving forward:

> So … what [am I] doing to overcome sexism or to advance the cause of women? I would say maybe you should ask men that question because that's mainly where this is…you know, being perpetuated. [Furthermore] you've got to look at policies.

> You've got to look at institutions and how they operate. You've got to look at it very largely. It's not just about women advocating for other women. That's the micro of this. There is a macro that has to be looked at as well.

Dealing with the 'macro,' however, is not considered to be 'civil.'

Overall, the participants articulated a highly participatory, collaborative, and non-hierarchical style of leadership and a desire to create change—goals of the social change model. Moreover, while identifying strongly or weakly as 'feminists,' these educational leaders more definitively identified as women who "lead from the middle," their success is reflected in their work with others as well as the success of others. They are serious activists for other women making their way in academic institutions—from the center rather than the top (even if their positions were at or near the top). Furthermore, while they clearly understood aspects of their leadership that were out of their control—such as the glass ceiling and patriarchy, they found the ways and means to maneuver those systemic barriers in order to support others, in particular, other women. Aligned with SCM, these women sought to advance the human condition within their leadership and academic environments through Consciousness of Self, Commitment, and Controversy with Civility (Cilente, 2009; Komives et al., 2009).

Discussion and Implications

While women are gaining representation in PK-12 leadership roles, organizational barriers are clearly evident at the principal, superintendent, and central office levels (Grogan, 1999; Sharp et al., 2004). As the participants noted, to be most successful they had to lead from the middle (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Participants in this study represent women who are working to remove those barriers by re-envisioning leadership in PK-12 institutions through refreshing practices of advocating for and serving as mentors to other women as well as challenging system policy, practice, culture, and climate through a gendered lens (Coleman, 2003). These efforts at social change are "reducing the power differential between [women] and their opponents" (Grossman, 2010, p. 661), allowing more women to have the voice and representation they deserve at all levels of administration, and progressing gender equity throughout the PK-12 educational system.

The participants, even though they sometimes did not directly call it by name, knew well that sexism and gender bias are still prevalent in education (Brunner, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Grogan, 2008). Though 80% of teachers are women, the participants expressed that the lack of women as formal leaders at the school or district level often meant that when people think about a 'superintendent,' they think of a 'White man.' Because of this, the presence of gender bias regarding perceptions of leadership styles affected our participants. The concept of the 'nurturing' nature of women leaders versus the 'traditional' nature of men leadership can often force women to work collaboratively to achieve their goals and, through this collaboration, learn from both the successes and failures of others (Riester et al., 2002; Santamaria, 2014). This cooperative form of leadership can be particularly prevalent for women of Color (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Like other women leaders in education, our participants' actions would be described as quiet, deliberate steps in collaboration with others towards social justice (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). As opposed to openly direct methods to challenge gender bias, women leaders pursue equity with other tactics: book studies, educating others above them and below them about gender inequities, and infusing social justice topics into the curriculum and professional development (Jean-Marie, 2008; Picower, 2012; Santamaria, 2014; Theoharis, 2010). Making small incremental changes can not only achieve tangible victories, but help their efforts lead to allies, collaborations, resources, and possible future resistance (Meyerson & Scully, 1995).

The participants in the study sometimes felt that they not only faced barriers to advancement, but expressed that achieving leadership positions with little support essentially set them up failure: the often-termed 'glass ceiling' changed to a 'glass cliff.' This can be caused, in part, by the existing concepts of what leadership entails. Women leaders are often more comfortable expressing power as collaborative and move away from top-down forms of power. Pressure to adopt the latter form can force women to lead using styles with which they are uncomfortable (Brunner, 2000). The lack of available mentors to help women leaders avoid pitfalls can only exacerbate the potential for failure (Méndez-Morse et al., 2015). As women of Color are even more underrepresented at the senior leadership positions than white women, the dearth of potential mentors can be more problematic for them (Martinez, Rivera, & Marquez, 2020). As our participants noted, institutionalized sexism can easily maintain inequities and force activists to constantly work for organizational change. Using their formal positions, and working within the system, they were able to push for incremental change (Grossman, 2010; Hollander & Einwohner,

2004; Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Maintaining this struggle can be exhausting and discouraging (Picower, 2012). As leaders from a marginalized group, women sometimes must overcome stereotype threats and work "hard to dispel negative stereotypes for groups with who they identified" (Santamaria, 2014, p. 370).

The values of the Social Change Model (SCM) of leadership are not siloed, but are overlapping and dynamic in nature, as one value might influence or impact another. For women working for change in education, they often prefer, or are sometimes forced, to "lead from the middle." As society still equates the traditional concept of top-down leadership with men, our participants engaged in a collective, collaborative, grassroots approach to their leadership and activism because 'leading like a man' would not work for a woman (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Theoharis, 2010). Our participants openly expressed a consciousness of the gendered assumptions associated with their roles as women leaders. Because of this Consciousness of Self and knowing that women leaders are sometimes pressured to remain silent and not question organizational gender biases (Beard, 2012), they understood that they had to advocate and to deal with controversy through civility or they risk being ignored, denied, or minimized. They felt they had no choice in how they reacted if they want to be taken seriously. Despite these barriers, our participants were committed and resilient in leadership efforts, a trait needed to truly disrupt inequities and injustices (Theoharris, 2010).

Despite the achievements of our participants working for changes in education, they worked within a system where true gender equity can only be achieved by a complete transformation of the traditional concepts of leadership. One participant, Megan, expressed that one path to achieve this goal is to educate men and require that they reexamine leadership through a feminist lens: taking such a perspective would force men to "question why things are the way they are" and would imply a commitment to "ask tough questions" and "consider issues from multiple perspectives" (Grogan, 2000, pp. 132-3). Moreover, such education would force a critique of what we see as 'normal' in leadership. Leaders in education, from all groups, who are truly committed to social justice, actively work with others from marginalized groups to bring in their perspectives and allow them a voice in decision making (Bogotech, 2002; Brown, 2004; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006). This commitment is something men in leadership roles need to embrace by allowing women to have a voice and help challenge traditional ways of thinking (Santamaria, 2014; Shields, 2010).

Conclusions and Future Directions

What does this mean for justice and equity related to leadership in PK-12 schools and for moving forward? Women's paths toward and within leadership can be paved with biases, discrimination, and other challenges (Locke & Hayes, in press). These twisty tracks are often the result of patriarchy and other systemic means that perpetuate gendered inequities. Our participants were aware of these barriers, discrimination, and challenges, and were committed to leading differently in direct challenge to them—that is, to disrupt inequities and injustices (Theoharis, 2010). While the women in our study identified ways women perform activist leadership, all of the responsibility must not be placed on their shoulders.

While glaring gender inequities currently exist in the upper-level leadership of PK-12 schools and districts across the country, there are many ways in which schools, districts, and even institutions of higher education (those that train teachers and leaders) can work to address these inequities and related injustices. First however, PK-12 schools and districts must acknowledge the disparities in their leadership ranks and work to address them specifically through mentoring and leadership training opportunities focused on women leaders and their leadership. This gap is very apparent in the highest senior leadership positions in the Southeastern United States: of the sixteen leaders of the various state-level Department of Educations in the region, only five are women[2].

Relatedly, it is incumbent upon current leaders to push for examination of inequities and injustices, and then push for change. That is, specifically, men, who occupy the majority of leadership positions, must be willing to understand the barriers women experience when leading or when striving for leadership positions, and they must be willing to work to dismantle such barriers. Further, PK-12 institutions, and institutions of higher education that train PK-12 educators, must interrogate how gender inequities are perpetuated in policy, practice, and curricula—and train educators to challenge those norms and values, and disrupt gendered and inequitable leadership.

[2]A review of the websites for each of the 16 states' Department of Education showed that the senior leader of only five of those departments were women.

References

Abele, A. E., & Spurk, D. (2009). The longitudinal impact of self-efficacy and career goals on objective and subjective career success. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *74*(1), 53–62. https://doi.org/10/crh36x

Aaron, T. S. (2020). Black women: Perceptions and enactments of leadership. *Journal of School Leadership, 30*(2), 146–165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619871020

Alston, J. A. (2005). Tempered radicals and servant leaders: Black females persevering in the superintendency. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *4* (4), 675-688. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X04274275

Anderson, J., Shaw, E., Childers, C., Milli, J., & DuMonthier, A. (2016). *Status of women in the South: 2016*. Institute for Women's Policy Research. http://statusofwomendata.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/SWSouth2.24-for-posting-online.pdf.

Beard, K. (2012). Making the case for the outlier: Researcher reflections of an African-American female deputy superintendent who decided to close the achievement gap. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *25*(1), 59-71. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2011.647724

Bitterman, A., Goldring, R., and Gray, L. (2013). *Characteristics of public and private elementary and secondary school principals in the United States: Results from the 2011–12 schools and staffing survey*. U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics.

Blount, J. (1999). Manliness and the gendered construction of school administration in the USA. *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, *2*(2), 55-68.

Bogotch, I. (2002). Educational leadership and social justice: Practice into theory. *Journal of School Leadership*, *12*, 138–156. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268460201200203

Bold, C. (2012). *Using narrative in research*. SAGE.

Brown, K. M. (2004). Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy. *Educational Administrative Quarterly*, *40*(1), 79–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X03259147

Brunner, C. (2000). Unsettled moments in settled discourse: Women superintendents' experiences of inequality. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *36*(1), 76-116. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X00361004

Brunner, C. C., & Kim, Y. (2010). Are women prepared to be school superintendents? An essay on the myths and misunderstandings. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *5*(8), 276-309.

Charles, K., Guryan, J., & Pan, J. (2018). *The effects of sexism on American women: The role of norms vs. discrimination.* National Bureau of Economics Research. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w24904/w24904.pdf

Chase, S. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln, (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.) (pp. 651-679). SAGE.

Christman, D., & McClellan, R. (2008). "Living on barbed wire": Resilient women administrators in educational leadership programs. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *44*(1), 3–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X07309744

Cilente, K. (2009). An overview of the social change model of leadership development. In S. Komives, W. Wagner, et al. (Eds.), *Leadership for a better world: Understanding the social change model of leadership development.* Jossey-Bass.

Coleman, M. (2003). Gender and the orthodoxies of leadership. *School Leadership& Management*, *23*(3), 325–339. https://doi.org/10.1080/1363243032000112810

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, *19*(5), 2-14. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002

Copeland, S. M., & Calhoun, D. W. (2014). Perceptions of mentoring: Examining the experiences of women superintendents. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, *9*(2), 28-46.

Czarniawska, B. (2007). Narrative inquiry in and about organizations. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 383-404). SAGE.

Dugan, J. P. (2006). Explorations using the social change model: Leadership development among college men and women. *Journal of College Student Development, 47(2)*, 217–225. https://10.1353/csd.2006.0015

Dugan, J., Komives, S.R., & Segar, T. (2008). College student capacity for socially responsible leadership. *NASPA Journal*, *45*(4), 475-500.

Finnan, L. & McCord, R. (2016). *2015 AASA Superintendents salary and benefits study*. The School Superintendents Association.

Grogan, M. (1999). Equity/equality issues of gender, race and class. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *35*(4), 518-536. https://doi.org/10.1177/00131619921968743

Grogan, M. (2000). Laying the groundwork for a reconception of the superintendency from feminist postmodern perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *36*(1), 117-142. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X00361005

Grogan, M. (2008). The short tenure of a woman superintendent: A clash of gender and politics. *Journal of School Leadership*, *18*, 634-657. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268460001000201

Grossman, F.D. (2010). Dissent from within: How educational insiders use protest to change their institution. *Educational Policy*, *24*(4), 655-686. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904809335110

Gubrium, J., & Holstein, J. (2009). *Analyzing narrative reality*. SAGE.

Hill, C., Miller, K., Benson, K., Handley, G., & Birdwhistell, J. (2016). *Barriers and bias: The status of women in leadership*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women.

Higher Education Research Institute. (1996). *A social change model of leadership development: Guidebook version III*. National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.

Hollander, J., & Einwohner, R. (2004). Conceptualizing resistance. *Sociological Forum*, *19* (4), 533-554.

Hollingsworth S. & Dybdahl, M. (2007). Talking to learn: The critical role of conversation in narrative inquiry. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 146-176). SAGE.

Jean-Marie, G. (2008). Leadership for social justice: An agenda for 21st century schools. *Educational Forum*, *72* (4), 340-354. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720802362058

Kachur-Reico, D., & Wallin, D. (2011). The career paths of female superintendents in Canada in 2010: Changing times or reinforcing old news? *Journal of Educational Administration and Foundation*, *22*(1), 1-18.

Karpinski, C. F., & Lugg, C. A. (2006). Social justice and educational administration: Mutually exclusive? *Journal of Educational Administration*, *44*(3), 278-292.

Kezar, A., & Lester, J. (2008). Leadership in a divided world of feminism. *Journal of Women in Higher Education, 1*(1), 49-73.

Komives, S. R., Wagner, W., & Associates (2009). *Leadership for a better world: Understanding the social change model of leadership development.* Jossey Bass.

Komives, S. R., Dugan, J., Owen, J. E., Slack, C., & Wagner, W . (Eds). (2011). *Handbook for student leadership development.* Jossey Bass.

Liang, J. "Grace," & Peters-Hawkins, A. L. (2017). "I am more than what I look alike": Asian American women in public school administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 53*(1), 40–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X16652219

Loder, T. L. (2005). On deferred dreams, callings, and revolving doors of opportunity: African-American women's reflections on becoming principals. *The Urban Review*, *37*(3), 243-265. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-005-0010-6

Locke, L.A. & Hayes, S.D. (in press). Navigating the gendered labyrinths and managing the mean girls and queen bees within the academy: A dialogue between two women assistant professors. *SoJo Journal: Educational Foundations and Social Justice Education.*

Mahitivanichcha, K. & Rorrer,A. (2006). Women's choices within market constraints: Re-Visioning access to and participation in the superintendency. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *4* (4), 483-517. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X06289962

Martinez, M. A., Rivera, M., & Marquez, J. (2020). Learning from the experiences and development of Latina school leaders. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 56(*3), 472–498. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X19866491

Matsopoulos, A. & Gaughan, E. (1990). Social Change Model for school psychologists. *International Journal of Theory & Research in Education, 1*(1), 39-45.

Méndez -Morse, S. (2004). Constructing mentors: Latina educational leaders' role models and mentors. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(4), 561-590. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X04267112

Méndez-Morse, S., Murakami, E. T., Byrne-Jiménez, M., & Hernandez, F. (2015). Mujeres in the principal's office: Latina school leaders. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *14*(3), 171-187. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2014.973566

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey Bass

Meyerson, D., & Scully, M. (1995). Tempered radicalism and the politics of ambivalence and change. *Organization Science*, *6*(5), 585-600.

Ollerenshaw, J., & Creswell, J. (2002). Narrative research: A comparison of two restorying data analysis approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(3), 329-347. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004008003008

Palladino, J., Haar, J., Grady, M., & Perry, K. (2007). An efficacious theoretical perspective of rural female school superintendents' self-sustainability. *Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research*, *1*, 40-49.

Picower, B. (2012). Teacher activism: Enacting a vision for social justice. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, *45*(4) 561-574. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.717848

Rice, T., & Coates, D. (1995). Gender role attitudes in the Southern United States. *Gender and Society, 9*(6), 744-756.

Riessman, C. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. SAGE. Riester, A. F., Pursch, V., & Skrla, L. (2002). Principals for social justice: Leaders of school success for children from low-income homes. *Journal of School Leadership*, *12*(3), 281–304.

Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE.

Sandelowski, M. (2008). Theoretical saturation. In L.M. Given, (ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods, vol. 2* (875–876). SAGE

Santamaría, L. (2014). Critical change for the greater good: Multicultural perceptions in educational leadership toward social justice and equity. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *50*(3), 347-391. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X13505287

Sharp, W. L., Malone, B. G., Walter, J. K., & Supley, M. L. (2004). A Three-State study of female superintendents. *Educational Research Quarterly*, *27*(3), 22-37.

Shields, C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *46*(4), 558-589. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X10375609

Skrla, L., Reyes, P., & Scheurich, J. J. (2000). Sexism, silence, and solutions: Female superintendents speak up and speak out. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *36*(1), 44-75. https://doi.org/10.1177/00131610021968895

Snyder, T., de Brey, C., & Dillow, S. (2016). *Digest of education statistics, 2014*. National Center for Education Statistics

Sperandio, J. (2009). Confronting issues of gender and ethnicity: Women's experiences as aspiring urban principals. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *4*(4), 67-95. https://doi.org/10.1177/194277510900400401

Tallerico, M. (2000). Gaining access to the superintendency: Headhunting, gender, and color. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *36*(1), 18-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/00131610021968886

Tallerico, M. & Blount, J. (2004). Women and the superintendency: Insights from theory and history. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(5), 633-662. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X04268837

Theoharis, G. (2010). Disrupting injustice: Principals narrate the strategies they use to improve their schools and advance social justice. *Teachers College Record*, *112*(1), 331-373.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (Eds.). (2014). *Youth resistance research and theories of change*. Routledge.

United States Census Bureau (n.d.). *Census regions and divisions of the United States*. US Department of Commerce. www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf

Wagner, W. (2006). *The social change model of leadership: A brief overview*. National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs Concepts and Connections: A Publication for Leadership Educators, *15*(1).

First submission received August 17, 2020. Revision received March 14, 2021. First published online March 30, 2021.